Fortuitous

by Java_bean

Summary

Dave and Karkat build a pillow fort and an unexpected chain of events occurs.
The Establishment of Fort Davekat

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It’s no secret that, after being stuck together on a meteor hurtling through a vast nothingness for about a year (or a half a sweep, as the trolls preferred to term the allotted passage of time), Dave and Karkat had gotten close.

How close? Someone might hypothetically ask you.

Close enough, you would most likely reply with a smirk as if you knew something about it that they, the hypothetical questioner, did not. Honestly, you don’t know shit.

Dave and Karkat have become closer, that much is true, but how close they really are would be anybody’s guess at this point. You haven’t really gotten around to asking your brother (it’s been over a year and you still find it hard to call Dave your brother, the word feels foreign on your tongue) what exactly his relationship is concerning a certain loud, tantrum prone troll acquaintance of yours.

Dave and Karkat may have become closer, but you most certainly haven’t gotten any closer to Dave yet. Not that you haven’t meant to. Things have just been...busy.

“Rose?” You look up from the book on your lap and find your gaze stolen by Kanaya’s nocturnal eyes. “Are you lost?”

Lost. Yes, yes you are. Lost in those gorgeous, concerned gray irises of hers. They’re so deep you could practically swim in them. “What?”

“Are you lost? In the book? You stopped reading.” Kanaya clarifies. Your eyes drift down to her mouth when she speaks and you fantasize about the feel of her sharp fangs on your lips as she tries her best not to pierce your fragile human skin in the heat of the moment.

Not that you have to stretch your imagination very far for that. A similar scene already played out this morning. Just the memory of it makes your pulse race.

Busy...yeah, right.

“I’m sorry, Kanaya. I was just thinking.” You apologize, scanning the page with a finger for where you’d left off. “Where were we?”

“Right here.” Kanaya places one glowing finger on a line of text, illuminating it softly so your eyes are immediately drawn to it. “What were you thinking about?”

Dave. Dave and your very much un-sibling like relationship with him. Dave and what the hell all of his time spent recently with Karkat could mean. Dave, and the fact that he’s closer to a troll he’s only known for a year and didn’t even like at first than he is to you, his sister and one of his best friends.

“Nothing very important.” You shrug.

You have no idea how to tell Kanaya about your current quandary with Dave. You don’t even
know how to explain the concept of siblingry to her in terms you’re certain she could understand.
“We were right here?”

You point at the word Kanaya’s finger is on.

“Yes.” Kanaya replies. She looks at you doubtfully. “Are you sure it’s not important?”

You smile, grateful for the concern. “Yes. I’m sure.”

It is important. You’re sure of that. It’s just not something you can dump onto Kanaya. She probably has enough on her shoulders without you piling your own shiny new baggage onto her. This is just one of those things you’re going to have to deal with on your own.

“I’m sorry, which part are we on again?”

“I believe Bella was about to get hit by a van in her school’s parking lot.” She says, shaking her head incredulously. “Your public school feeding system sounds dangerous. Why don’t you have it all at your hives like they do on Alternia?”

“In defense of Earth’s education system, I don’t think the student parking lots were usually this bad. However, I can’t say for certain, as I’ve never been in one myself.”

You wonder if you’re ever even going to learn how to drive.

You clear your throat so you can read out loud, and you read out loud so you can clear your head of that stray thought.

What does driving even matter in the long run, anyway? You can fly.

“Just before I heard the shattering crunch of the van folding around the truck bed, something hit me, hard, but not from the direction I was expecting. My head cracked against-”

There’s a flash of light that happens out of the corner of your eye, and you turn your head to see that the transportalizer’s currently in use. You can’t tell who’s using it right now, but you have a fresh glare ready for whoever’s interrupting your personal reading time with Kanaya.

Lo and behold, in appearifies Vriska, dressed up in her homemade roleplaying pirate regalia. She scans the room and notices you and Kanaya on the couch. Your glare does nothing to dissuade her approach as she jumps off the platform and onto the stony floor.

She just stands there for a minute in the quiet room before lifting one of her red booted feet and stomping as loud as she can. The noise reverberates off the walls and pounds in your ears so bad that you have to cover them.

You only uncover them when she stops.

“You didn’t have to do that,” you say, closing the book and laying it beside you on the couch. You’ll pick up where you left off later, “the transportalizer’s fairly bright when it’s in use. You already had our attention.”

“Well,” Vriska replies, stomping her foot one more time for emphasis, “now I know I have your attention. Anyway, now that I have your attention, you’re not going to believe what I just found!”

“Weren’t you exploring with Terezi?” Kanaya asks.

“Yeah, so?” Vriska crosses her arms over her chest, not happy to be interrupted with a question she
probably didn’t care too much about.

“I was just wondering where she was.”

“Okay, so we both found it.” Vriska sighs, not wanting to share credit for this latest discovery. Whatever it was, it must be good if Vriska didn’t want to share it with her moirail. You’ll admit, you’re a bit interested.

“She decided to stay behind and hang out there. I’m not sure why she would ever want to hang around a couple of losers like them at all, but I’m not going to stop her if that’s something she wants to do. I’m her moirail, not her lusus.”

Losers. You could only think of two people that Vriska would refer to as losers. “So this has something to do with Dave and Karkat?”

“Yes! It does! Now stop interrupting me so I can talk!”

“Very well,” you do your best impression of a therapist to let her know you’re listening, complete with a notebook and a pen that you remove from your sylladex. The whole thing is actually just filled with poorly drawn wizard porn and partially written tales about said wizards in the porn, “proceed.”

Vriska runs over and jumps onto the couch, causing everything else on the couch-Kanaya and yourself included-to do the same. She has this grin on her face that you can’t tell means that there’s something good or dangerous coming. With Vriska, there’s a good chance it’s one and the same.

“Terezi and I were exploring the meteor, when we found a hall we’d never gone down before. So we went through it and discovered a ton of mostly empty rooms.”


Vriska ignores the sarcastic remark and continues her tale. “Then, when we got to the end of the hall, Terezi said she smelled something in one of the rooms we hadn’t checked yet. I kicked open the door and there they were.”

‘They’ of course being Dave and Karkat.

“So you found Dave and Karkat in an empty room together.” You reply. “Was there more to this story or was that all?”

“Oh, there’s more.” Vriska replies cryptically. “But this is something you gotta see to believe.”

She grabs both your hand and Kanaya’s before either of you can protest and starts dragging you towards the transportalizer.

Whatever it is, you highly doubt it’s anything as great as Vriska’s making it out to be. At any rate, it’s definitely not worth screwing up your reading time with Kanaya.

The hallway looks, unsurprisingly, like every other hallway on the meteor. The same could be said for the multitude of doors you rush past on your way to wherever it is Vriska wants you to go right now. She comes to a stop without warning, causing both you and Kanaya to fumble in stride behind her, since Vriska had refused to let go of either of your hands.
The door is slightly ajar and Vriska could easily open it by, say, her letting go of your hand and pushing it open or just by leaning on it if she didn’t feel like breaking contact.

But no.

Instead of doing either of those extremely viable options, Vriska kicks the door open as hard as she can. It slams open with a bang that makes you want to flinch, but you resist that urge and peer over Vriska’s shoulder and into the room instead.

There, as promised, are Dave, Karkat, and Terezi. The three of them are sitting on the floor, Dave and Terezi not paying any attention to the three of you, while Karkat levels a glower Vriska’s way.

It has as much of an effect on her as yours did.

“Stop doing that.” He says, lowering his hands from over his ears.

“What, does the noise hurt your delicate, sensitive auricular sponge clots, oh fearless leader?”

“No,” Karkat replies defensively, picking up a broken piece of black chalk off the floor, “I just thought you might want to try out knocking sometime. You’ll be less likely to scuff those ugly ass boots of yours that way.”

“They are not ugly!” She looks down and examines her boots carefully. “And why the fuck would I want to knock when just barging in like this is easier and clearly bugs you so much?”

As much as you love watching Vriska rile up Karkat to his tantrum boiling point, you can’t help but find yourself tuning it out and examining the room she’d been so interested in showing you and Kanaya for some reason.

It doesn’t take you very long to locate the reason.

There’s a couch in the room, which wouldn’t be strange in and of itself, but the couch is being utilized for not common couch purposes. There’s a mess of pillows and blankets all over and around the couch, piled into a hodge-podge of a rudimentary, disheveled looking shelter.

“You built a pillow fort?” You ask, unable to fight the smile pulling at your lips.

You can’t believe it. It’s so childish. So immature. Silly, even.

It’s almost sort of cute.

“Yeah.” Dave drags his attention away from Terezi, who’s currently munching on a piece of vibrant red chalk. “Fort Davekat.”

Karkat turns around so he’s facing Dave, apparently done talking to Vriska. “I thought we agreed on Kardave?”

“Nah.” Dave shakes his head. “I didn’t like that one as much. Davekat just sounds better.”

“How come your name gets to be first?”

“Alphabetical order, dude. ‘D’ comes before ‘K’.”

“Oh, really? Is that how the alphabet works? I had no idea. Do you really think I give a shit, Dave?” Karkat yells, throwing his piece of chalk on the ground. Bits of chalky shrapnel break off and go flying in a three inch radius.
“Well, you did last time we had this argument.” Dave shoots back. “But fine, Kardave, Davekat, whatever, I don’t really give a fuck what the name is. We can flip a coin over it if it bugs you this fucking much. Terezi?”

“You’re not getting this chalk back.” Terezi inches away from him on her knees, holding the piece of half eaten chalk closer to her so Dave can’t get it.

“No, I need a coin. You got a coin?”

“Oh. I think so. Give me a second.” She stows the piece of chalk in one of her pockets while digging through the other one. “Alright, got it. So, what are we flipping for?”

“Naming the fort.”

“I thought it was Fort Davekat?” Terezi levels the coin on her thumb.

“That’s what I thought, too.” Dave shrugs. “Karkat over here seems to think otherwise.”

“So heads Davekat, tails whatever shitty idea Karkat had?”

Dave nods. “Yeah. Go ahead.”

Kanaya leans over and whispers to you. Her breath is warm against your ear. “Are we being ignored?”

“It appears so.” You whisper back, leaning just a bit closer to her yourself. “Or perhaps they’ve forgotten we’re here altogether.”

“I feel like we should leave.”

You desperately want to take Kanaya’s hand in yours and abscond back into the common room so you can finish reading. There’s only two things keeping you from doing this.

One, you’re sort of curious to see how this whole thing is going to play out. You now have the opportunity to observe Dave and Karkat’s interactions, which has become an increasingly rare thing for you. Maybe you can get a good reading on their relationship if you stay here long enough. You doubt it, but it’s possible.

Two, Vriska has a death grip on your hand. If you were being honest with yourself, you’re mostly staying because you can’t seem to wiggle your fingers out.

Your hand is starting to get sweaty.

“Not so fast, bulgemunch!” Your attention is diverted away from Kanaya and back to the scene playing out on the floor in front of you. The coin Terezi flipped to settle the argument (which according to Dave had already been resolved, but you can’t be so sure because you weren’t present for that) is currently flipping through the air and making its’ way back down to the floor when Karkat catches it.

Or rather, attempts to catch it. He fumbles and drops it, but he does manage to get it before it hits the floor.

“Nice catch.” Dave gives Karkat a sarcastic thumbs up.

Karkat sneers at him and points at Dave’s extended thumb. “I’ll bite that off you if you don’t put it down.”
“Dost thou bite thy thumb at me, sir?” You mumble quietly to yourself.

“What?” Kanaya asks.

“Nothing.” It would take more effort to explain than it’s worth. At least you made yourself laugh. “Remind me that we need to read Romeo and Juliet next.”

“Really? You’re gonna bite it off?” Dave inches closer and waves his thumb in front of Karkat’s face, goading him on. You think you actually see one of Karkat’s eyes twitch. “Go ahead, I dare you.”

Karkat opens his mouth, either to respond or make do on his threat, when Dave suddenly moves his thumb again and sticks it right in the crease between Karkat’s eyebrows.

“You...fucking...shit whistle. “ He starts pulling on Dave’s arm, but his thumb stays stubbornly in place. “You know, before I was perfectly fine with just biting off your stink digit and spitting it out immediately, because fuck knows I don’t need that taste in my mouth. Now, though? Now I think I’m just going to fucking swallow this.”

“Are we still talking about my thumb?” Dave asks, raising an eyebrow. “Because dude, phrasing. Work on it.”

The crease in Karkat’s brow deepens. “What the fuck else would I be talking about?”

“Don’t even pretend that what you just said wasn’t suggestive as fuck.”

“It...wasn’t? I don’t understand what you’re talking about, Dave. Did you pop a vessel in your pan or something?”

“Seriously? Don’t act dumb, Karkat. I mean, I know you can be kinda dumb sometimes, but not about this kind of thing. Terezi, back me up on this.”

“I would if I could.” Terezi shrugs. “But I have no clue what you’re talking about.”

“Wait, really?” Dave turns and looks at you. “Rose, I’m not crazy, right? That was definitely a ‘that’s what she said’ kind of moment, right? Has my worst nightmare been realized? Have I filled my mind with one too many dick jokes that I literally can’t think of anything else anymore? Is my brain just a floating cesspool of seminal innuendo now? Rose?”

“No, I heard it. It definitely was a ‘that’s what she said’ moment, as you so eloquently phrased it.”

“Then what the fuck?” Dave turns back and faces Karkat again, who still looks confused about what’s going on.

As a matter of fact, none of the trolls look like they understand what’s going on. You, on the other hand, you understand perfectly.

This is one of those beautiful times when a deviation in both of your separate cultures makes something difficult or impossible to understand. It’s always awkward to try to explain, especially since the discrepancy always seems to be of a sexual nature (not hard to understand, what with the quadrant system being a major part of troll society and Dave’s propensity towards dick jokes).

“What do you mean, what the fuck?” Karkat asks. He’s stopped pulling on Dave’s arm, but his hand is still around Dave’s wrist. “I should be asking you that. I don’t get it. Kanaya, do you get it?”
“No,” Kanaya shakes her head, “I can’t say that I do.”

“I’ll explain it to you later, if you want.” You offer.

“That’s fine. I believe Dave is going to give us an explanation right now.” Kanaya points back to where Dave and Karkat are still seated on the floor.

Dave’s mouth is a thin line as he realizes the embarrassing situation he’s pushed himself into. There’s no way any of the trolls are going to drop this subject now that he brought it up, Karkat especially. You’re so glad you’re here to witness Dave try to explain this.

“Okay,” he begins, “so when a human is totally lusting after another human, they sometimes decide to do some shit that’s not straight up missionary vanilla, right?”

The trolls nod, but you can see from Karkat’s expression that he doesn’t actually understand what Dave’s talking about. That’s an explanation for a different time.

“And sometimes one of the things they do is they put their mouth on the dude’s dick and they do the oral do until one of them...you know...comes in the other’s mouth.”

“I’m sorry, did you just say you fucking come in your partner’s mouth?” Karkat repeats incredulously. “How the fuck do you not die from that?”

All of the trolls have a similar look on their face, and that’s when you remember what Kanaya told you about trolls using buckets in the same way that a human would use a condom. Literally, the sheer volume of a troll’s orgasm could potentially kill someone if they attempted what Dave was talking about.

“I-” Dave begins before shaking his head, “you know what, never mind. As I was saying, the dude jizzes in the other guy’s mouth-”

“So it’s a guy all of a sudden?” You say.

“Rose, we can talk Freud later.” Dave responds irritably. “Anyway, so the other person,” he says pointedly, “has the jizz in their mouth, and then they decide if they want to...spit it out or...you know, swallow it.”

He finishes his piece with a shrug.

Karkat looks completely disgusted. “You swallow it? Why the fuck would you swallow it? That’s so gross.”

Karkat removes his hand from Dave’s arm and backs away from him just enough so that Dave’s thumb is left floating in the space where Karkat’s forehead was.

All the trolls seem to have a similar grossed out expression on their faces. Apparently being appalled by oral intercourse is a species wide thing, and not just a Karkat thing. Or perhaps it’s only this group of trolls?

You make a note to ask some of the dancestors about their stance on oral sex next time you find yourself in a dream bubble.

“Correct me if I’m wrong,” Kanaya says, ending the troll’s disgusted silence, “but I don’t believe you ever settled on a name for your fort. That’s assuming you still wanted to name it?”

“Oh, right.” Dave replies. “Because some asshole decided to grab the coin midflip before we could
resolve anything fair and square.”

“Fair and square my ass,” Karkat spits back, “you didn’t even let me look at the coin before you decided to flip it.”

“Why the hell would you need to look at the coin? It’s a coin! All coins are the fucking same except for whatever fucking image is on them! Who cares?”

“I care!” Karkat yells. “You didn’t even let me examine it! You know Terezi’s used double sided coins in the past. Fuck, I’m probably holding one of those two faced shits right now!”

He holds the coin up and exaggeratedly examines both sides. It doesn’t take very long for his determined outrage at possibly being tricked to turn into consternation at the realization that no, it’s a normal coin.

“Shit.” He groans.

“Can I have my coin back?” Terezi asks, holding out her hand.

“No.” Karkat replies, shaking his head and holding the coin away from her.

“Karkat, what the fuck?” Vriska says, coming to her moirail’s aid. “Haven’t you already proved how much of a douchebag you are today? Just give her back the coin.”

“No,” Karkat repeats vehemently, “this may not be a double sided coin, but you have other tricks up your sleeves, Terezi. I know how you play your games. You don’t think I remember what happened at Lemonsnout’s trial? I do. I do, Terezi, and I refuse to have that same shit pulled on me. No, I wan to flip this.”

“Can I have it back after?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, fine. Flip it. I don’t care.” Terezi shrugs, pulling out her piece of chalk and chewing it carefully, trying to make it last. “Just as long as I get my coin back when you’re done.”

“You will.” Karkat nods.

He stares at the coin in his hands determinedly, and you all stare at Karkat as you wait for him to flip the coin.

Karkat looks over to Terezi, holding the coin out to her. “How did you flip this again?”

“Oh my god.” Dave groans. “Karkat, are you serious? How the fuck do you not know how to flip a coin?”

“Oh, you make a fist like this,” Terezi demonstrates. Karkat mimics her gesture, “and then you put the coin on your thumb, and you just flip it.”

She places the remains of her chalk on her thumb, flicks it into the air, and catches it in her mouth. “Like that.”

“Okay,” Karkat nods, “I think I got it.”

Karkat balances the coin carefully on his thumb and flips it. You all watch the coin ascend and descend in a tumbling arc in the air attentively as if the outcome of the toss really matters.
The coin hits the floor and rolls around before coming to a stop. You and everyone else lean just the slightest bit closer to try and get a good look at the result. You’re too far away to see anything, which is somewhat disappointing.

Dave and Karkat lean in close to the coin, their noses practically pressed against the floor.

“Fuck.” Karkat moans, pounding his fist against the floor.

“Ha ha!” Dave laughs victoriously. “Heads, I win! Fort Davekat stays!”

Dave stands up and brushes chalk dust off of his pants and starts walking towards the door. You try to move out of the way, twisting Vriska’s arm behind her back in the process.

Karkat sits back up. “Dave, where are you going?”

“I’m gonna go make a banner for the fort to commemorate this moment.” Dave announces. “I wanted to see if the Mayor had any markers I could use.”

“Can I help?”

“Sure, as long as you don’t fuck up my creative vision. I got one hell of an idea for this banner, and it’s going to be fucking awesome.”

Dave runs out of the room, and Karkat quickly rises to his feet and almost stumbles on his way out the door after him.

That just leaves you, Kanaya, Vriska, and Terezi in Dave and Karkat’s fort room.

Terezi stands up and stretches. You note that she is also wearing her roleplaying outfit.

“Are you done here or should I make Rose and Kanaya explore with me instead?” Vriska asks.

“Yeah, I’m done here.” Terezi sighs, picking her cane up off the floor. “You wanna go?”

“Fuck, yes.” Vriska finally releases you and Kanaya from her grasp and takes Terezi’s arm. Together, the two of them stroll arm in arm out of the room, leaving just you and Kanaya.

You go further into the room to take a closer inspection of the fort.

“Do you think Vriska only dragged us here in case Terezi didn’t want to keep exploring with her?” You ask as Kanaya follows you over and picks a pillow up off the floor.

“That’s definitely what it seems like.” Kanaya bends down and pulls back a blanket so she can place the loose pillow inside. You take the opportunity to peek into the fort yourself.

The inside looks warm and inviting. You sort of want to go in.

“Should we go in?” Kanaya asks, looking up at you as if she can read your mind.

The boys won’t be back for awhile. You both know that.

“I don’t see why not.” You shrug.

Kanaya crawls in, and she holds the blanket up so you can follow after her.

The inside is about as warm as you’d anticipated, though it is a bit cramped. There’s only enough
room for the both of you if you cuddle up close to Kanaya. Not that you’re complaining. In fact, it’s definitely a benefit.

If Kanaya’s skin wasn’t radiating such a sweet glow beside you, you think you could fall asleep right this minute. You fight back a yawn and lean in as close to Kanaya as you can.

Her hand finds yours, and you lean your head against her chest. You can hear her heart beating slowly in your ear.

“This is a lot nicer than I expected.” Kanaya comments quietly.

“It is.” You can’t help but agree. You squeeze her hand softly. “Maybe...”

You stop your thought before you can finish. It’s not a good idea. It’s too childish. Immature. Silly, even.

“Maybe what?” Kanaya asks. She’s practically whispering.

You can just imagine what reading time with Kanaya would be like, warm and half asleep cuddled up together in a pile of fluffy pillows and soft blankets. It’s so nice in here.

You know what? Fuck it. You’re allowed to be childish and immature sometimes, too. “Maybe...we should build a fort.” You suggest, feeling childish even saying it.

“Like this one?” Kanaya asks.

“Not exactly like this one.” You clarify. “We could build it similar to this one, but we’ll make it our own.”

“So...like this, but not like this?” She says. “Instead of Fort Davekat, Fort Rosekan?”

“We can work out the name when we work out the details.” You laugh softly. “But yes, that’s what I mean.”

“Shall we get started then?” Kanaya moves as if to exit the fort, but you hold her down.

“In a minute.” You pin her back down to the pile of pillows she’d been laying on. “Let’s stay in here and enjoy the moment for just awhile longer.”

“Alright.” Kanaya’s voice is barely a breath against your face. “Just awhile longer.”

Kanaya lays back down, and you’re lying almost on top of her, your arms wrapped loosely around her body. She leans her head against your own and closes her eyes, and you take the opportunity to press your lips softly against her own.

The two of you stay like that, wrapped up in each other’s arms and kissing each other softly for a beautiful, wonderful while.

Too soon, your time in the fort ends and you both have to leave so you don’t get caught by Dave and Karkat.

You exit hand in hand with Kanaya, and the two of you take the transportalizer back to the common room. You pick up your notebook and pen off of the floor and sit down on the couch next to Kanaya, flipping to a clean page.

Together, you and Kanaya begin to sketch out plans for your own private pillow fort. Just doing so
makes you feel childish and silly, but that’s okay, because you’re being childish and silly with Kanaya.
You can’t wait to get started.

Chapter End Notes

I started writing this and realized I have no real idea how to write something really fluffy...luckily this is going to have multiple chapters, so maybe I'll figure it out by then. That being said, I'm going to try and make this as fluffy as I possibly can, because that's the direction I really want to go with this fic.
I've never written Vriska before, so I'm hoping that didn't go too terribly? I'd love to say that it'll get better as this goes along, because that's what I'm hoping for, but we'll see.
Anyway, thanks for reading this first chapter, and I hope you liked it enough to read more of it as it progresses! :)

The Emergence of Fort Rosemary

Chapter Notes

It's a Dave pov chapter!
Since I'm planning on switching between different characters throughout this, I'll probably put a heads-up note at the beginning just because.
Anyways, hope you enjoy this chapter! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“This banner is shit.” Karkat says, struggling to carry his half of the big, rolled up banner. “I’m not just saying that, it’s actual shit.”

“Well you helped with at least half of it, so half of the shit is your fault.” You point out.

About a week ago, you and Karkat started working on a banner for your fort together. You’d told him not to fuck up your creative vision with the banner, but that went out the window when you got your hands on that huge ass roll of paper to draw on. Once you got that, you pretty much let Karkat do whatever he wanted.

“I was.” Karkat trudges slowly behind you, which would probably annoy the fuck out of you if you weren’t floating a half an inch off the ground and letting Karkat propel you forward. Honestly, Karkat’s really doing all the work here. “Making it was fun, I’ll admit that, but just because it was fun to make doesn’t make it fun to look at. Honestly, it makes me want to vomit out of my gander bulbs. Thick, mucusy strings of puke crusting over my look stalks and ruining my vision forever would be more ideal than having to look at this colorful shitfest clusterfuck masquerading as a bad excuse for “art”.”

He tries to do air quotes around the word ‘art’ and almost drops the banner in the process. You both manage to catch it before it drops.

“So I take it you don’t like it.” You say slowly. “What? Too many dicks?”

You did draw an awful lot of dicks on it. You didn’t really think about it, you just did it. You doubt that’s what Karkat’s problem is with it, though. He drew a bulge or two on there, too. Or at least his artistic version of what a bulge looks like. In this case you have no frame of reference.

“No,” he denies, shaking his head, “it’s not too many dicks. Okay, maybe it’s too many dicks to be a tasteful banner, but it’s fine, I don’t give a fuck about the dicks. My issue is that it looks like ass and I don’t want to hang a piece of ass over our fort.”

“Okay, I feel you there.” You agree. You look over your shoulder and note that you’re just a few feet away from the transportalizer. “I don’t think we should scrap the whole thing, though. We
spent a whole fucking week on this monster, I don’t want to think we wasted our time for nothing. If there’s parts you don’t like then I’m open to cutting them out if they’re really fucking hideous.”

“Really? You’re okay with that?” Karkat asks, you can see him trying to figure out if you’re being sincere or if you’re pulling his leg with some high level ironic bullfuckery.

“Yeah.” You assure. “We’ll just need a pair of scissors to cut the shit up with.”

“I don’t have any scissors.”

“Me neither, but the girls probably do. Do you want to drop this thing off at the fort and then go borrow some scissors, or should we turn around and get them now so we can get this shit started as soon as we get back to the fort?”

Karkat chews on his bottom lip, weighing both options carefully. You’re almost to the transportalizer.

“I want to get them right now.” Karkat concludes. “The sooner we can get started on this, the better.”

“Alright, let’s turn this bitch around.”

You start walking in the direction you came, towards Can Town and away from the transportalizer. Karkat trudges backwards, looking over his shoulder to make sure he doesn’t bump into anything, and you continue to do your subtle floaty thing so you don’t have to tire your feet with all of this back and forth footwork.

“Hey, if you had room in your sylladex, why are we even carrying this thing?” You ask as Karkat attempts to carefully maneuver the paper past a sharp corner. “Size doesn’t make a difference when you store shit.”

“Yeah, maybe not in your fucking god tier infinity modus, it doesn’t.” He snorts.

“God tier modus isn’t a thing.” You reply. “Or if it is, they ran out as soon as my body hit the quest bed, because I sure as hell don’t have one.”

“Okay,” Karkat says, “let’s say for a minute that I believe you.”

He stops looking backwards momentarily to give you a pointed look just to say that he doesn’t.

“My question is why the fuck I would have to put it in my sylladex when you’re just as capable of removing shit from yours and shoving it in there. Do you know how much useless crap you have cluttering up your sylladex, Dave? How many smuppets are you hiding in there, or do you not even know for sure?”

You know he’s just saying that because he feels like he has to defend himself against your question, which really was just a question and not some thinly veiled accusation, but damn if he didn’t make a good point.

“Wow.” You reply. “I am feeling so personally attacked right now.”

Karkat’s too busy looking behind him to even give your poker face a backwards glance, which is a bit of a disappointment because you thought it worked really well with your sarcastic tone.

“Good.”
“Maybe we should clean all of the useless shit out of our sylladexes before we get down to fucking around with the banner.”

“No.” He shakes his head insistently. “Banner first. If we don’t do it when we get back to the fort, then we might end up deciding not to do this shit at all.”

“Okay. I didn’t really want to clean my sylladex right now, anyway. I have a dead bird captcha’d in there somewhere, I think, and I really wasn’t looking forward to having to deal with that.”

That’s enough to stop Karkat in his tracks, and you both come to a sudden halt. He turns his head so he’s no longer twisting to look behind him, facing you so you can see his disgusted face.

“Why the fuck do you have a dead squawkbeast carcass in your sylladex, Dave?” He asks, wrinkling his nose.

You shrug. “I thought it was cool.”

“That’s disgusting.” He replies, holding his end of the banner at arm’s length so he can put as much distance between the both of you as possible. “You need to wash those fucking germ sponges you call hands before you come anywhere near me.”

“Seriously? I need to wash my hands? Bro, that was over a whole fucking year ago, don’t you think you’re over reacting a little?”

Karkat shakes his head again. “No, I’m not over reacting because I honestly don’t know if you’ve washed your hands once since you got here! You’re just a walking, talking bed of slurrying bacteria, Dave, that’s all you are, just a fucking mobile breeding ground for disease. You’re a sorry, revolting excuse of a sentient being, smearing your disgusting alien germs all over everything and getting everyone potentially sick because it doesn’t effect you because you’re a fucking god tier so none of our lowly mortal shit applies to you, right? Well guess what, your shit applies to us, Dave. And in this case I’m referring to your actual shit, Dave. The fact that you don’t wash your hands after you take a shit is probably the most nauseating thing I’ve ever heard. I almost feel like puking. But I won’t, because that’s just going to spread more unnecessary germs around the meteor, and we definitely don’t need that with you having two fucking load gapers for hands and spreading shit everywhere, you fucking sicko.”

He’s breathing heavily by the time he finishes yelling at you, his face slightly flushed from the effort. You give him a minute to catch his breath.

“Are you done?” You ask.

He nods. It’s taking him awhile to get his breathing back to normal. You wonder for a minute if he’s actually getting sick.

“Do you still think you weren’t over reacting? Because that was pretty much the dictionary definition of over reacting, if the definitions in the dictionary were longwinded speeches restricted to the topic of washing your hands.”

He looks ready to argue, but decides against it and closes his mouth. He shakes his head no, his eyes to the floor.

“I still think you should wash your hands.” He grumbles as he starts walking again. His face is turned away from you, but you have the very distinct impression that he may be pouting.

“And I will.” You reply, glad to finally get a move on while you search for the girls. “The next
time I drop a load I’ll wash my fucking hands, like I do consistently literally any other time I take a shit, contrary to the slanderous shit you were slinging earlier. Fuck, if anyone’s spread shit like butter on toast on this meteor, it’s you, you lying sack of hypocrite.”

Karkat opens his mouth to respond, but you continue before he can even get a word in.

“No, I don’t actually think you’re a hypocrite. Yes, I’m going to wash my hands eventually. Soap and water, ABC’s, get under my fucking nail beds, the whole nine. Yes, I’ll probably wash them if I take a piss, too. Yes, we’re still cool. I’d offer you a fist bump to demonstrate, but you don’t seem to want to get anywhere near my hands right now.”

He glances back at you. “I wasn’t going to ask any of that.”

“Sure you weren’t.” You call his bluff. “What were you going to ask, then?”

“What I was going to ask before you so rudely interrupted,” he replies, “is if you heard something just now.”

“I didn’t hear anything.”

“That’s because you were too busy exercising your chitinous windhole. Now shut up and listen.”

You shut up and listen, you really have to strain your ears before you can hear anything.

You can faintly make out Rose’s voice, carefully enunciating words in a syntax that’s not natural for normal conversation, even by her standards. Your guess is, she’s probably reading out loud.

“I think we found the girls.” You say. “We just gotta follow Rose’s voice and we’re there.”

Karkat nods in agreement and starts walking in the direction the sound is coming from. You drag along behind, redirecting him when he takes the occasional misstep. The hallways are really echoey, the source of the noise can be hard to pinpoint.

It takes you a few minutes, but eventually you find the room where Rose is having her own version of story time. Karkat presses his ear against the door and confirms that yes, this is it.

Awesome. You’re one step closer to obtaining a pair of scissors and cutting the shit out of this banner.

You briefly consider bursting in like Vriska did, but think better of it and settle on knocking instead. You readjust so one of your hands is free, you have the banner under one arm so you can do that. It’s not until you’re awkwardly knocking with your grip on the thing slipping that you wonder why the fuck you didn’t just knock with your foot or something.

Rose stops talking, and everything is completely quiet again as you fix your hold on the banner until she says “Come in.”

With both of your hands currently occupied, you decide to shove the door open with your shoulder. It swings open easily against your weight, and you unceremoniously fall in, Karkat stumbling behind you.

What you find isn’t anything you’d expected.

You’re not sure what the hell Rose used to get all that fabric on the ceiling so it drapes down like that, but you’re sort of pissed that you didn’t think to do anything like that. Then again, you didn’t do much of any thinking when you’d put yours together. You’d just piled all of the pillows and
blankets you and Karkat could find and reorganized until you could both chill in there comfortably. This one, well this one looked like it took some planning.

Rose and Kanaya managed to take your and Karkat’s idea and make it better than you could have even imagined. It’s really colorful and kind of pretty and clearly well thought out. It’s really fucking nice and you’re sort of jealous.

You don’t say any of that, though.

“Fuck,” you say instead, “it’s bigger than ours.”

There’s some rustling going on inside the fort, and Rose’s head pops out from the folds of the overlapping fabrics.

“Dave, Karkat.” She nods. “This is a pleasant surprise, I was expecting Vriska.”

She doesn’t sound that surprised. “What, was she invited to come check out your new fort?”

“No, she just said she wanted to hold a light players meeting.” Rose replies. “It has nothing to do with the fort.”

“Hey, Rose, do you have a pair of scissors?” Karkat interrupts, drawing her attention over to him. She shakes her head. “Not on me, no. Do you want me to ask Kanaya?”

“Yeah.”

Rose pops her head back in, there’s muffled whispering and more rustling inside the fort that makes you wonder just what the fuck they’re doing in there before Kanaya emerges.

Her lipstick is noticeably messed up, and it’s only then that you see the dark green oval on Rose’s neck, a bruise forming in the center.

Karkat’s making a point of not looking exactly where you can't seem to stop looking.

“You need scissors?” Kanaya asks, apparently oblivious to your and Karkat’s shared embarrassment.

Karkat nods, his eyes glued stubbornly to the space of the fort directly to Kanaya’s right.

“I may have some in my sylladex, if not then they’re definitely in my respiteblock.” She says. “Might I ask what you need them for?”

“We made a banner for Fort Davekat.” You say proudly, holding up your end of the rolled up paper. “There’s way too much shit going on in it, though. It’s a real busy scene. This scene is working two jobs while also going to night school to get its degree in hotel management. This scene doesn’t have time to stop and chat with you, Rose, this scene doesn’t even have time to grab lunch. This scene is starving itself slowly, but it literally can’t stop to eat because it’s just that fucking busy. Why don’t you leave the scene alone, Rose. You’re cutting into the scene’s valuable time. The scene is far too busy to deal with you.”

“Alright.” Rose nods, as if she followed any of what you just said. You’re not even sure you followed what you just said. “I’ll try not to bother it anymore. Could you please tell the scene that I’m sorry for having wasted its time and I hope that we can catch up soon.”

“No worries, I’m sure the scene will forgive you.” You reply. “I’ll tell it when it’s a little less
“busy.”

“Fair enough.”

“Also Karkat drew this really graphic picture of me eating a bulge and it’s gross and we need to cut it out to preserve my purity as a blushing virgin.”

“Why would you tell them that?” Karkat snaps, mortified.

“Did you really do that?” Rose asks with a laugh. “Dave, unfurl the banner. I want to see this.”

“You want to see a shitty drawing of your brother eating the alien equivalent of a dick?” You say.

“Well, when you put it that way...”

“I worked really hard on that drawing.” Karkat mumbles under his breath, slightly offended.

“Like it wasn’t one you were going to cut out.” You counter. “You only drew that out of spite because of all the ones I did of you eating dicks and you know it.”

Karkat looks at the floor and pouts, unable to come up with a comeback.

“So I assume there’s going to be a lot of holes in your banner after that.” Kanaya says, changing the subject. “What are you going to do about them?”

“You know, I didn’t really think about it.” You reply with a shrug. “I guess maybe keep it like that so it looks like swiss cheese? Or maybe get some construction paper and glue it over the holes?”

“Perhaps you could cut out the pieces you do like and make a collage out of them instead.” She suggests.

“Hey, that’s not a bad idea. What do you think, Karkat?”

You turn to get Karkat’s input, but his focus is already towards you elsewhere. Downward, towards your shoes.

More specifically, to the air between your shoes and the floor.

“Dave?” He asks.

“Yeah?”

“How long have you been floating?”

“I don’t know, that depends. What do you mean by that?” You say nonchalantly. “Maybe it’ll help me figure out what you mean if you define every word in that sentence.”

You can practically hear him gritting his teeth as he tears his eyes away from you and your floating feet and over to the girls for answers.

“He’s been doing that at least since you came in.” Rose says. “My guess is that since you didn’t notice until now, he’s most likely been doing it the entire time.”

“Dave, what the fuck?” Karkat’s turned back to you now, he’s full on pissed. “You were just pretending to carry this the whole time and letting me do all the work? What the hell?”
You’d honestly just planned on carrying it yourself, you really did. By the time you realized you were going to have to drag half of it behind you because of the awkward length, Karkat had already grabbed one end and started carrying it.

What were you supposed to do, tell Karkat that you didn’t want his help with it?

Actually, yeah. That’s probably what you should have done.

Karkat’s waiting for an explanation from you, but you’ve got none. “Well?”

This is the perfect timing for an interruption from the one and only spiderbitch herself, Vriska Serket.

“Rose!” Those fucking dayglo orange god tier pajamas she’s wearing make you thankful for your shades and the fact that she doesn’t wear them all the time. “Come on, we’ve got a strategy meeting!”

She stops when she sees you and Karkat and smirks. “So, you’re finally showing these two idiots Fort Rosemary?” She turns and approaches Karkat with a wide, conceited grin. “It’s really nice, isn’t it? Blows your shabby hovel right out of the fucking water. Not that it’s a contest or anything, but if it was, theirs would win, hands down. A perfect eight out of eight, don’t you think?”

Karkat doesn’t say anything, even when Vriska gets almost right up into his face. You can almost feel the steam rising off of him in his fury.

“If you like this one,” she continues in a whisper that’s practically in his ear, “you should see Fort Scourge.”

She pulls away from him, takes one good, long look, and laughs. That alone is almost enough to send Karkat over the edge. You can see it in his face. Somehow, though, he’s managing to suppress it.

His hands are two tight, shaking fists. There are parts of this paper that you’re not going to be able to salvage from this.

You’re not sure what benefits Vriska gets exactly by pissing off Karkat so much. You guess maybe the fact that she’s good at it is enough reason for her.

“I’ll wait for you in the common room, Rose.” Vriska calls over her shoulder as she saunters out. “I’ll give you a few more minutes in here before I start rescheduling.”

She doesn’t wait for a reply. She just leaves.

Once Vriska is gone, Karkat finally lets go.

“Carry this your fucking self, you lazy douche heeled waste.” He slams his end of the paper roll on the ground and stomps away. “And for the last time, wash your damn hands, you’re worse than a fucking oinkbeast.”

He slams the door behind him.

“I should go after him.” Kanaya sighs, emerging fully from the fort. “I was going to get him those scissors, anyway.”

She follows Karkat out, leaving just you and Rose in the room. Rose steps fully out of the fort and
holds one of the fabric’s corners aloft, allowing you entry.

“Did you want the grand tour?” She asks, inviting you inside.

Her fort looks a lot more spacious and lighter than yours does, probably from the use of that gauzy looking fabric inviting light to seep through. There’s not a lot of light on the meteor, but her fort seems to have captured what little light there is.

You’re alright, though. You almost prefer the dark at this point.

“No.” You shake your head. “I should probably get to lugging this thing back to the fort. Maybe some other time.”

“Oh.” Rose nods, letting the fabric and her arm drop to her side. She almost looks...disappointed?

No, that can’t be right. “Okay. Later would probably be best, anyway. I’m supposed to be meeting with Vriska.”

“Right, yeah. You have fun with that. Later.”

“Bye, Dave.”

You leave, and you don’t clean any room out in your sylladex to carry the giant fucking banner, so you do end up having to drag half of it behind you like an idiot all the way back to the fort.

You arrive at your fort to find Karkat already sitting on the floor, a pair of scissors in each hand.

“Kanaya said I could borrow two so we could get the work done faster.” He explains, opening and closing both pairs of scissors. He kind of reminds you of a crab when he does that.

“That was cool of her.” You reply as Karkat hands you your pair of scissors.

You unfurl the banner and prepare yourself to work. You’re going to cut out everything you like, just like Kanaya suggested.

“Wow,” you say, staring down at the banner, your scissors aloft and ready to cut at a moment’s notice, “this is worse than I remember it being. I honestly can’t tell if any of this is usable.”

“I told you.”

“Oh well.” You shrug. “I’ve already got scissors in my hand, so I might as well start cutting shit.”

You lean forward and locate a terrible picture of Sweet Bro making out with Karkat, which you carefully cut out like it’s the most important thing in the world.

“Seriously?” Karkat asks.

“Seriously.” You confirm.

Karkat joins you and starts cutting out random shit. Soon you both get to talking.

“I don’t really mind that Rose and Kanaya built their own fort,” you say, “you know, good for them and all, but I do mind the fact that Rose didn’t feel the need to tell me about it at all.”

“Is that important?”

“Yeah, it’s fucking important! Karkat, she told Vriska before she told us. Kanaya told Vriska
before she told us. You do realize that makes us less important than Vriska to them, right? Like, what the fuck? They knew all about our fort, but they weren’t willing to share jack shit about their own? That’s not cool, dude, not cool.

“And while we’re talking about it,” Karkat interjects, “what the fuck was Vriska talking about with Fort Scourge or whatever the shit? Why the fuck should I care about whatever business she’s doing with her moirail? Like it even fucking matters. Her fort probably sucks, anyway.”

“Dude, you know she only said that to get to you, right?”

“Yeah. And you know what the worst part is?”

“What?”

“It’s working.”

You keep cutting shit out, but you’re not really finding anything usable. This really was a waste of time after all.

“Hey,” Karkat says, breaking the silence and instantly grabbing your attention when he lays down his scissors, “I think I found something we could use.”

He picks up a cut out scrap and holds it up for you to look at. It’s one of the pictures the Mayor drew while you were both finishing up the banner in Can Town earlier. Most of the pictures had turned out to be plans for Can Town’s expansion. You’d already cut most of those out to give to him later.

This one that Karkat is showing you is not one of those ones. This one is a doodle of Karkat, the Mayor, and you, all holding hands and looking like adorable scribbles. It’s probably one of the cutest drawings you’ve ever seen, your heart’s melting. You can’t believe you missed it earlier.

“What do you think?” Karkat asks.

“I like it,” you admit, “but it’s definitely not big enough to be a banner.”

“Flags are good, too.” He states firmly.

“I agree, flags are good, too.” You nod. “It looks like there’s enough room to squeeze the name of the fort at the bottom, plus artist credit, obviously. Now all we gotta do is find a big ass stick and put this on it and bam, we’ll have a motherfucking flag.”

“Okay.” Karkat puts the paper down someplace far away from the other scraps so it won’t be mistaken for them later. “What the fuck should we do with the rest of this shit?”

“I think we should leave it for now.” You shrug. “We can clean it up later. Right now I’m sort of feeling like chilling in the fort and watching a movie is a good idea. You?”

“That sounds good.” He agrees almost immediately.

“You got your husktop?” You ask as you crawl into the fort.

“I always have my husktop, what kind of stupid question is that?” You make room for him as he follows you inside.

“Just thought I’d ask.”
He pulls up a movie and presses play, laying his husktop down on the floor by the fort’s entrance so you both can see it clearly.

“Hey, you know what we should do with that flag once it’s done?” Karkat says as the beginning credits start.

“I don’t know, what?”

“We should go find Fort Scourge and rub it in their faces.”

You can’t believe how childish and petty that sounds.

“Hell fucking yes, we’re doing that. That sounds awesome.”

You have no problem with being childish and petty, especially knowing that Karkat will be at your side, being childish and petty with you.

Chapter End Notes

I've never done a meteorstuck before or attempted something that's primarily (supposed to be) fluff, so I'm not sure if that's going super well, but I feel like this one is going okay. I definitely think it'll get better the further along I get into it, though. Thanks for reading this chapter, I hope you liked it!
You've been beating your thinkpan for ideas for perigees now. You're all approaching the new session faster and faster with every day that passes, it's been half a fucking sweep already! It's been half a fucking sweep, and no one's done anything to prepare for what's to come. Yes, you've been holding strategy meetings with Rose, and eventually you're going to present your plan to the rest of your friends, but how prepared you are isn't going to matter if literally everybody else is out of practice and isn't able to fight.

Some people need to get off of their lazy asses and start pulling their own weight around here. Some people meaning your "leader", Karkat.

You're not even sure how that good for nothing shit pan even got this far.

"Hey, Vriska." Your moirail is seated on some weird squishy red thing that Dave alchemized for her awhile back, if you heard him correctly it's a bag of beans that somehow functions as a chair. That sounds really uncomfortable and like a waste of food, but far be it from you to question another species' comforts.

Actually, no. You're going to ride him about that the first chance you get.

"Yeah, what?" You ask, pausing in your frazzled back and forth pace. You hadn't even noticed you were doing it. One of your hands is stuck in your hair.

"Could you stop moving so much? It's making you really hard to draw."

Yet another thing you'd failed to notice. While you were busy being lost in your own thoughts, Terezi had taken the opportunity to break out her seldom used set of watercolors and a sketchbook. It isn't her usual medium, but she's trying to expand her hobbies since you're all going to be on here for such a long stretch of time.

You, as a good moirail and all around awesome leader, suggested she work on combat training. She offered you her opinion on the subject by kicking your ass. In your defense, you tried not to use any of your god tier powers on her so the fight would be more fair.

That being that, you let her do pretty much whatever the fuck her little teal bloodpusher desires, which mostly meant drawing shit and roleplaying.

You have one more sweep to go.

You're detangling your hand from your hair-shit, it's really in there, maybe you should have
listened to Kanaya when she told you to brush it awhile ago. “Can’t you just sniff the air around me or something?"

“I am sniffing the air around you.” Terezi replies. “But you’re moving around so much that all I’m getting is a big blueberry flavored blur.”

She demonstrates what she means with her paintbrush, splattering blue paint around the room as she waves it back and forth. “Like that. It’s really hard to paint.”

A drop lands on your shoe, and you growl in frustration. You don’t know if the paint’s going to come off. You really fucking like these shoes. “Okay, I get what you mean. I’ll try to stand still so you can capture my awesome, fear striking countenance. But you better make it fast, because I’m only agreeing to do it for eight minutes.”

“Obviously. Now just pick a pose and stand still so I can finish this,” Terezi picks up her paints and brings them up to her face, sniffing at them until she finds the blue she was using. She licks it to get the paint wet before rolling her brush in it so it’s fully covered. You have to admit, the color is pretty damn close to your blood.

Terezi puts down her paints and puts the brush to the paper. You readjust yourself so you’re in the most striking and comfortable position you can manage. Terezi shakes her head at the paper and picks up her brush again. She gives it one solitary lick before replacing it on the paper.

“I don’t think you’re supposed to eat the paint while you’re using it.” You point out, fixing your glasses as they try to slip off your nose.

“But it tastes so good!” She insists, pressing the brush back down to the paper and scribbling.

“You have that whole fucking palette, just eat one of those.” You say, gesturing over to the discarded, still dry paints. “There’s probably a red in there, right? Just eat that.”

“I already did.” Terezi sniffs the air and reapplys paint to her brush. The bristles are standing up at angles you’re pretty sure they’re not supposed to be standing at. Whatever, you’re not a painter. “Now I’m all out of red.”

“Snack on a different color, then.” You shrug.

“I would, but you just told me that I can’t snack on the blue, which is the only thing I’m craving right now because this whole room reeks of it.” She grumbles. “Probably from you pacing around so much and throwing your scent everywhere.”

You didn’t know you were doing that when you walked. “Is that a problem?”

“No, it’s just that these are really close quarters and I’m not used to being trapped with only one strong scent in a room. It’ll be fine once we leave for today.”

You’ve been trying to make it a habit to visit your fort with Terezi for a couple hours every day since you’d built it.

Built is a strong word. Honestly, your “fort” is mostly just the weird chair and a couple piles of pillows thrown around the room along with a bunch of shit you both liked. That was magic eight balls and Nic Cage memorabilia for you, and scalemates and chalk and shit for Terezi. Naturally, your roleplaying stuff is all hung up in the back so you’re ready to go whenever the mood strikes you. It’d be just as easy to keep it in your sylladex, but this way more space in your fort is filled up.
You don’t even really like the fort all that much. Sure, it’s really cool and all, but that’s only because you and Terezi are here. You only wanted to build the damn thing because everyone else was building them. If it had just been Dave and Karkat, you wouldn’t have even given a fuck, but then Rose and Kanaya built one, too. Seeing Rose and Kanaya’s fort, all pretty and giant and eight hundred times better than that rinky dink mound those other two assholes constructed.

And just as that thought entered your thinkpan, you realized something else.

Dave and Karkat’s fort might be a literal shithole, but a shithole fort was technically better than no fort at all.

Damn if you were going to let that weak ass fucker have something even technically better than you to hold over your head.

So you’d built the fort, and once it was finished you’d taunted him about it. It was brief, but it was enough. You could see how pissed he was just from his eyes and the set of his jaw. You were a little disappointed that nothing more came out of it. You were hoping he might be angry enough to lash out at you and try to fight, which would have been interesting. But no, you didn’t get a fight. He didn’t even say anything to you.

He probably would have done something if there weren’t so many people there to hold him back. Everybody knows that if you were ever to get into a scuffle, you wouldn’t go easy on him.

You wouldn’t kill him, because that might mess up the timeline, but you definitely don’t have any issues with possibly hurting him.

Besides, he needs the practice.

“Vriska!” You’re suddenly assaulted by an airborne scalemate, causing your glasses to go askew.

“What?” You snap, fixing your glasses back on your face.

“You weren’t paying attention. You changed position.” Terezi sinks lower into her weird chair. You have no idea how a chair that squishy could be considered comfortable. “Almost messed up my whole fucking painting.”

You toss the scalemate back at her and try to put yourself in position again. Terezi manages to dodge your retaliation, and the little dragon knocks down a pile of your magic eight balls.

You tell yourself you’ll clean it up later.

You’re not going to clean it up later.

You stand as still as you can and watch Terezi work, since you have nothing better to do. Her tongue is between her teeth while she slowly presses the brush against the paper as carefully as she possibly can. She looks pretty intense. Her own glasses are slipping off her face, but she doesn’t seem to care. Her focus right now is entirely on this painting of you she’s making.

That’s pretty fucking cool.

There’s a knock at the door, which is weird, because you weren’t expecting anyone and you haven’t told them where the fuck your fort is yet.

“How the fuck is that?” You ask Terezi.
She shrugs and sniffs the air, perking up instantly. You know who it is now.

You don’t want to open the door.

“Hey, Terezi! Vriska!” Dave yells as he thumps against the door. “We know you’re in there! Open up!”

“Yeah, open the fucking door!”

Terezi lays her stuff down by her chair bag and approaches the door. She doesn’t open it yet, though.

“What’s the password?” She asks, face pressed against the door. You smirk. There is no password. They’re going to be out there for awhile.

For a minute, everything is quiet on the other side of the door. It’s so quiet that you have to wonder if they’re still there, or if they turned around and left already. It would be just like them to do that. You contemplate going back to your pose when there’s finally a response from the other side of the door. It’s a strange series of knocks that you don’t understand.

Terezi seems to get it and knocks twice on the door herself before throwing it open.

“Hey, guys! Welcome to Fort Scourge!” Terezi says proudly, moving out of the way so they can enter.

The smirk falls from your face and you’re just left frowning. You can’t believe how easily she just let them in like that. What the fuck?

Dave and Karkat both walk into the room and look around carefully. Dave’s holding something over his shoulder, and you can’t really tell what it is from here. A really long pole, maybe?

Why is this idiot carrying around a pole?

“So, what do you think?” Terezi asks them. Her back is to you, but you bet she’s grinning. She usually is.

The two of them exchange a look.

“It’s really something, that’s for sure.” Dave says with a nod. He’s doing that whole expressionless poker face thing that you can’t read. You hate it.

“You guys did a good job.” Karkat adds unconvincingly, giving her a thumbs up. You can tell he thinks the place is a total pit. What an asshole.

You can’t believe Terezi ever liked these guys. At least she had enough sense not to fill any quadrants with these dipshits. And her taste has definitely improved, as evidenced from her moirallegiance with you.

“So what brings you two over?” She asks.

“And how the fuck did you find our fort?” You demand.

“We followed the scent of highblood bitch and here we are.” Karkat replies.

You roll your eyes. Is that really the best he’s got? They probably wandered around until they found someplace that looked occupied and prayed to the horroterror that it wasn’t Gamzee in
“What brings us over,” Dave says before you have a chance to retort, “is this.”

He takes the pole or whatever the fuck it is and slams it on the ground. There’s a piece of fabric hanging on the end. Karkat takes it by the corner and holds it out so you can see what’s on it. Taped onto the fabric is some drawing that you think the Mayor must have done, because neither of them can draw that well.

“And why the fuck should we care about whatever that thing is?”

“It’s a flag for our fort and it’s awesome, that’s why the fuck.” Karkat waves it a little while he talks, as if that proves his point.

“Okay,” you shrug, “so what?”

Terezi tilts her head to the side. “I thought you were making a banner?”

“We were, but that fell through.” Dave responds. “There was way too much shit for anybody to handle looking at.”

“What about licking at?”

“That, too.” He nods. “Terezi, the shit on that banner was so wild and intense that I’m pretty sure your tastebuds would explode on contact knowing they would never taste anything as amazing and insane as that ever again.”

“Now that’s all I want to do!” You can hear how excited she is by the prospect of a taste bomb in her voice. She’s practically drooling. “Show me where the banner is, I’ll take my chances!”

“Can’t.” Dave shakes his head in mock sadness. Or at least, what you assume is mock sadness. You really can’t read what’s going on behind those stupid glasses. “We had to destroy it. For everyone’s safety.”

“Oh.” Terezi’s shoulders sag with disappointment. “Well, if it was for the greater good, then I guess I get it. I would have killed for maybe just a sniff, though.”

“Killing anything isn’t necessary.” Karkat replies, digging something out of his pocket. “These are for you.”

He hands her what you’re pretty sure is a bunch of paper scraps, and Terezi accepts them with as much awe and excitement as Nic Cage when he stole the Declaration of whatever the human thing was from the beginning of National Treasure.

“I thought I was giving them to Terezi.” Dave inquires.

“And you still can. We definitely have enough to give her and the Mayor one from each of us.” Karkat points out.

“Well, in that case.” Dave fishes something out of his sylladex. It’s revealed to be yet another pile of paper scraps. “These are also for you, Rez.”

Terezi snatches the papers from his hand and sniffs them greedily. “Shit’s like Twelfth Perigee’s Eve up in here. Thanks, guys.”

“Careful with some of those, there are some very sensitive blueprints for the further expansion of
“Can Town and the Mayor will be hella disappointed if we wrecked those before we gave them back to him.” Dave warns.

“Alright, got it.” Terezi gives him a thumbs up. “I’ll sniff with caution.”

“Oh, so you can make room in your sylladex for that shit, but you can’t make room for the whole fucking banner?” Karkat accuses, dropping the flag so he can cross his arms.

“Fuck, Karkat, I thought you’d be glad about that,” Dave complains, shaking his head, “I cleaned the dead bird out of it like you said I should.”

“Oh, wow, good job.” Karkat claps slowly, rolling his eyes. “You managed to clean a squawkbeast out of your sylladex that you left rotting in there of your own volition for almost a whole sweep. That must have been so hard for you, you lazy fucking trashbag.”

It’s weird to you how easily Dave and Karkat can get absorbed with talking to each other. You’d think after apparent hours of spending time with the other person they would get sick of it and want to talk to someone else for once. Shit, you don’t think you could stand even an hour of only having Karkat as a conversation partner. But no, here they both are, with you and Terezi right here just waiting for them to strike up a new conversation, and they choose to ignore both of you and engage each other instead.

Not that you want to talk to either of them, but it’s just fucking rude to waltz into someone else’s fort and ignore them like that.

“You know what, it actually was pretty hard, you asshole.” Dave continues, “I’ll have you know that I almost threw up four separate times, but I managed to swallow my vomit and my disgust for long enough to totally bleach the fuck out of the thing.”

“You only bleached it? Dave, that’s not cleaning.” Karkat shakes his head. “That’s barely anything. No, wait, I misspoke. It’s something. It’s fucking disgusting is what it is. I don’t know what I was expecting from a guy who doesn’t even understand the basics of washing his own shit filthy hands.”

“Dude, relax,” Dave moves his hand close to Karkat’s face and—

holy shit.

Did Dave just...

Did Dave just try to pap Karkat?

What the fuck is happening here?

“My hands are totally clean. See? Look at these bitches.” Dave waves his hand in front of Karkat’s face, but Karkat dodges before it can make direct contact with his skin. “You could practically eat off them.”

“Get your hands away from me, I can smell the shit on them from here, asscake.” Karkat bats Dave’s hand away with one of his own and glares at Dave in a way that’s...a lot softer than any glare you’ve ever seen him give. Like he’s only a mild level of annoyed as opposed to full on aggravated like he usually is.

“What the fuck are you talking about? There’s no shit here. I promise. I shit you not. Terezi?”
Dave holds out his free hand palm up for Terezi to sniff, and she takes to the task with gusto. She leans her nose close to his wrist and inhales deeply.

“Nope. No shit there. Just a whole mess of red.” She confirms, going back to her doodle scraps.

“There you go, no shit here.”

“Oh, there’s shit, all right.” Karkat replies. “Hoofbeast shit. Bleach isn’t fucking cleaning, dumbass.”

“Well, I bleached it already. I don’t know what the fuck else you want me to do about it.”

“Oh, I don’t know, how about you actually fucking clean that shit up. Having some dead thing decaying in your sylladex can’t be good, Dave. It’s not only gross, it’s dangerous and extremely hazardous to everybody’s health. You have to clean that shit up properly or you could get sick or something.” Karkat groans and holds a hand to his head, rubbing circles into his temple like he’s getting a headache. “Shit, I’m worried about you even attempting to do this by yourself. You know what? Fuck it, I’ll do it. I’ll clean out your sylladex while you just sit there on your ass and think about why the hell you thought putting a dead squawkbeast in there was a good idea in the first place. Cool?”

“Cool.” Dave agrees. “Just one thing, though. I’m not gonna make you clean it by yourself. This is literally my mess, so I should at least help with cleaning that shit up.”

“I appreciate that, but you have zero concept of how cleaning works, Dave.” Karkat points out.

“I can learn. It’s not like this is a one time thing. I’m almost guaranteed to make another mess sometime soon. For instance,” Dave picks up a scalemate from a pile to his left and lays it on the floor by their flag, “oops.”

“Okay, fine.” Karkat yields, rolling his eyes. “But don’t get in my way.”

“Is there a reason you’re both still here?” You interrupt. You’re getting so sick and tired of standing here and listening to them talk. It’s driving you crazy. You just want them to leave already so you can go back to hanging out with your moirail.

“Oh, right.” Dave almost sounds surprised, like he actually fucking forgot where he was. He turns his attention back to you. “Yeah, we had one more thing we wanted to come in here for. We have an announcement to make.”

“Fort Davekat is officially off limits.” Karkat announces, picking up the fabric again and showing off the image on it. “The only people allowed in are Dave, me, and the Mayor.”

Wow. That’s...so stupid. Like you even care about them or their shitty fort to bug them, anyway. Although, now that you’re apparently not allowed to, you really, really want to.

“So, it’s no girls allowed now?” Terezi asks, contemplatively licking some orange colored piece of shit doodle.

“The clown fucker’s not allowed, either.” Dave replies. “Neither are any of the dead trolls from the dreambubbles.”

“What the fuck do you have against the dead?” You ask, directing the question at Karkat. You have a feeling that was his rule.
“Nothing.” Dave says with a shrug before Karkat can answer. “Some places should just be private, you know?”

“And what exactly are you going to do to stop me from going into your fort and fucking shit up, hm?” You continue to inquire, smirking and knowing full well that they can’t do a thing to stop you if you really wanted to do some damage.

Karkat’s gritting his calcium nubs, you can practically hear them grinding to nothing from here. “I’ll fight you, that’s what I’ll fucking do. Don’t even try it, Vriska.”

It’s an idle threat, you know that. Karkat couldn’t do anything to you even if he wanted, just like you can’t do anything to him. The only difference is, Karkat couldn’t lay a finger on you before all this shit with timeline awareness happened, either. You’re stronger than him, and if it really came down to it, you know you can control his mind if you need to. He’s no threat.

But that does give you an idea, though.

“You know,” you admit, “that’s not a bad idea.”

“It’s not?” Karkat repeats, confused. From Dave and Terezi’s faces, you can see they’re just as confused about what you said as he is.

“Yeah, it’s not.” You continue. “Here’s what I’m thinking. Instead of an actual fight, we’ll do something more like, say, capture the flag.”

“You guys have capture the flag?” Dave asks Karkat.

“Yeah.” Karkat nods. “It’s more of a wriggler game. Kind of boring. Pretty nonviolent. Your species has it, too?”

“I guess it’s just one of those universal constants.” Dave shrugs. “Like cotton candy or Will Smith.”

“There’s a human Will Smith?” Karkat asks excitedly. Fuck, they’re getting off topic again. You have to shut this down.

“Anyway,” you interrupt, “the rules will be pretty much the same as normal capture the flag. Except, since we’ll be in teams, there’ll be two flags. Or, in this case, something that functions symbolically as a flag, since there’s no way in hell I’m going to sink to your level and make a flag myself. I have way too much to do with too little time to do it.”

“Why are we playing on teams?” Dave asks.

“You haven’t figured it out yet? I thought it was obvious. We’re playing in teams based on our forts.” You reveal. “You and Karkat against me and Terezi. Rose and Kanaya might join, too, but we’ll have to check with them first before we start.”

“Okay.” Karkat nods. “As fun as that sounds, why would we possibly want to do that? What’s in it for us if we play?”

“You made that new stupid rule about privacy for your fort, right?”

“Right.” They both confirm.

“There’s no way I’m adhering to that unless you beat me at this.”
“What the fuck kind of deal is that?” Karkat explodes. “Is a little privacy really too much to ask for?”

“Karkat, chill.” Dave says quietly, his free hand on Karkat’s shoulder. It’s almost a low key shooosh. You don’t know what to make of this. “What do we get if we win?”

“That’s for you to decide.” You shrug.

Dave looks at Karkat, and there’s something exchanged nonverbally between them that you can’t read. It’s driving you insane. They both turn back to you.

“We want your fort.” Dave says firmly.

That took you by surprise. “Over my dead body, you’re getting our fort!”

“To make it more fair, we can change the stakes a little bit. If we get both of your flags, we get your fort. If you get both of ours, then you can have it, all yours.” He says. You can tell he’s not up for negotiating.

This is what he’s willing to play. All or nothing.

You gotta admire that. “You know what, fine. I was willing to let you keep your crummy fort, but if that’s what you want, then I’m more than happy to take that shithole off your hands to expand Fort Scourge. And just so we’re clear, if you lose your fort, you’re not allowed to build another one anywhere else on the meteor. Got it?”

Dave nods. “Got it.”

“So when the fuck do you want to start?” Karkat asks. You haven’t seen him so determined to do something since before you all escaped your session.

“I’ll have to talk it over with Rose and Kanaya and see if they’re willing to play. As soon as that’s over with, I’d say the game’s as good as begun.”

“And you’ll tell us when you’re starting, right? No surprise attacks?”

“No surprise attacks.” You verify. “You have my word. I’ll pester you as soon as we start.”

“And if she doesn’t, I’ll pester you.” Terezi offers, knowing you well enough to guess that you’ll “forget” and attack their fort while they’re unprepared.

“Thanks, Terezi.” Dave says. He turns back to Karkat. “We should probably go. We promised the Mayor we’d meet him in Can Town in a couple minutes with his blueprints, and we still have to show Rose and Kanaya how our flag turned out.”

“Right.” Karkat agrees. “Hey, Terezi, you wouldn’t have happened to lick the ink completely off any of those blue prints we mentioned, did you?”

“Nope.” She hands Karkat a mostly dry stack of paper. “I separated them out from the others when Dave mentioned they were in there. Tell the Mayor I like the direction he’s headed in, those plans smelled delicious.”

Karkat accepts them and puts them back in his pocket. “Will do.”

“Well, this has been fun.” Dave says, throwing the pole over his shoulder once again, “but like I said, we gotta fuck off. Places to go, people to see, all that crap. See ya.”
Dave turns around and leaves, followed close behind by Karkat. Karkat turns around at the door and gives Terezi a final wave good bye, which she returns in kind.

“There’s more of those if you want them.” He says, indicating the heavily doodled scraps of paper in her hands.

“Thanks. I might have to come get them later.”

“I look forward to handing you your ass on a silver nutrition plateau.” You call after him as he leaves.

Karkat’s barely out of the doorway, but he stops long enough to show you his middle finger. “Fuck you, Vriska. We’re going to kick your ass and you know it.”

“I’d love to see you try.” You yell as you watch him run to catch up with Dave, who’s waiting for him down the hall. You slam the door shut.

Finally, it’s just you and Terezi at last.

“So we’re playing capture the flag now?” She asks, depositing her bounty of now soggy papers by her watercolors and sinking back into her chair.

“Yeah.” You return back to position. Or what you’re pretty sure your position was. “Hopefully that goes as well as I plan it to. But who the fuck knows?”

“Rose might.” Terezi suggests, reapplying paint to her now dry brush. “Stand still.”

“I am.”

You stay quiet for a little while until you start to get a cramp in your leg. “How much longer is this going to take?”

“I finished three minutes ago.” Terezi replies bluntly.

“Terezi, what the fuck?”

“I wanted to know how long you would stand there for.” She shrugs. “It was a lot longer than eight minutes.”

“Whatever.” You roll your eyes, stretching and vowing never to stand still for that long again. “Can I see it?”

“Sure.” She tears the page out of her sketchbook and hands it to you.

For the most part, it’s a big blue blur. There are parts that are definitely a body, and some that are probably hair. You can make out your glasses roughly to the right of the majority of the blur. “Shit, Terezi, this is really good!” You say, and you genuinely mean it. She spent a lot of time on this, and it’s really fucking awesome. “Can I keep it?”

Terezi shakes her head. “No. I was thinking, since Dave and Karkat made that flag with their pictures on it, why don’t we put our pictures up somewhere, too?”

“That’s an awesome idea!” You agree. “So where should we put this one?”

“The wall with our roleplaying stuff is mostly empty.” She suggests. “Why not there?”
“Alright.” You go over to the wall and tape the picture in between both of your outfits. It really ties the area together, you think. “Fuck, that looks fantastic! Do you want me to draw you now?”

“If you want to.” Terezi shrugs, getting up out of her chair.

“I want to.” You take up her sketchbook and pull a set of colored pencils out of your sylladex, making sure both the teal and the red one are freshly sharpened and ready to use, since you’ll be using those ones the most. “Get into whatever position you want, I’m ready.”

Terezi strikes a dramatic pose with her cane that might be difficult to draw for a lesser artist. Luckily, you know what you’re doing. Working with her posed like this is going to take some time, though, and your legs and feet still hurt from standing in your own position for so long. You sink into Terezi’s beanbag chair.

It’s not that bad.

Chapter End Notes

Me at the end of this chapter:...this is one of the hardest things I've ever done. I regret so much.

Anyway, things are starting to get going in this chapter! I hope everything made sense with the whole "capture the flag" bit, but if it didn't I do plan on going into more detail about that later, as that's going to be a major part of this fic, I think. I hope you liked reading this chapter!
I'm sorry this chapter isn't more interesting...it's mostly just explaining some of the rules and stuff that's going to come up during the game of capture the flag and stuff, which is actually really important because that's mostly what this fic is going to be about.

Vriska has once again called you out to have another meeting, that’s twice in the span of about a week. Only this time, surprisingly, she requested you bring Kanaya with you. Usually she wants to keep these things between just light players, as if your aspect dictates how well you would be able to conduct yourself during a meeting. If anything, you think class is more of a better determent for that sort of thing than a player’s aspect.

At any rate, you managed to convince Vriska to come to you and Kanaya, instead. It wasn’t difficult to do, especially once she admitted that this meeting actually had nothing to do with the end battle and everyone’s survival.

Why bother dragging yourself and Kanaya all the way to “the war room” when the meeting’s not even that important? You’d rather stay in your fort with Kanaya and do this over pesterlog, thank you very much.

In the end, Vriska insisted on a face to face discussion for this meeting. She hated holding conversations with more than one person over pesterchum (you think it stems back to all of Karkat’s past memos and how disastrous those usually ended up being). You managed to reach a compromise with her. You and Kanaya would both attend this unimportant meeting, but only if she was willing to hold it in your fort.

She was completely willing to oblige.

You and Kanaya are both sitting on the floor, talking about nothing in particular when Vriska brushes through the curtain and makes herself comfortable across from the both of you. You instantly lapse into silence midsentence and turn all of your attention to Vriska. Kanaya does the same.

Vriska, on the other hand, is paying no attention to you or Kanaya. Or if she is, she’s doing an excellent job at hiding it. You think she may be basking in all the attention she’s getting right now.

She clears her throat. “So you might be wondering why I called this meeting, since I said it has nothing to do with the battle or anything else that actually matters.”

“I was wondering, yes.” You nod.

Kanaya squints closely at Vriska, and you can see her lip twitch upwards ever so slightly. “You brushed your hair.”

You turn your gaze back to Vriska. Kanaya’s observation is right, Vriska’s hair is a lot smoother
looking than before. It’s still a long, tangled mess, but she definitely put some effort into it. You can see more of the length of her horns now, almost all the way to the burnt orange base. They appear a lot longer when not obstructed by hair.

Vriska’s face takes on the slightest blue tint at Kanaya’s remark. “That’s not what this meeting’s about.” She replies, shaking her head. “You’re already taking us off topic, Kanaya, and that’s not something I can have happen.”

“Sorry.” Kanaya says. “I’ve just never seen you brush your hair before. Which probably explains why you did such a terrible job at it. Perhaps you would like assistance next time?”

Vriska’s face is growing a deeper shade of blue. “Kanaya, I have a moirail.”

“That wasn’t a solicitation.”

You’re very glad you’re present for this. One, because it’s always nice to see how the trolls interact with one another, especially when the subject of quadrants comes up. That’s something you still don’t have as firm a grasp of as you’d like, despite all the immense amounts of research you’ve done on the topic. Two, you’ve never actually seen Vriska embarrassed before, so this feels like a once in a lifetime experience.

“Oh.” The blood drains from Vriska’s face until it’s returned to its’ natural gray hue. “Of course it wasn’t. I knew that.”

“Then why would you-”

“I was testing you.” She was quick on the lie, but less convincing than she could have been.

Kanaya nods anyway, exchanging a look with you that says she doesn’t believe it for a second, but she’d rather get on with the meeting than stay on this topic. “That makes sense.”

“Like I was saying,” Vriska continues, “you might be wondering why I called this meeting, since it’s got nothing to do with the battle.”

“The thought crossed my mind.” You say. “Go on.”

“Yesterday Terezi and I proposed a challenge to the boys, and we were wondering if you wanted in on the action.”

“A challenge?” Your curiosity is piqued. “What kind of challenge?”

“A contest.” Vriska explains. “The losers have to take down their fort.”

“That doesn’t explain what kind of challenge it is.”

“We’re playing capture the flag. Dave said you had that on your planet, too, so I’m not going to bother with an explanation.” She shrugs. “There are some changes to the rules that I’m going to need to explain, though.”

Vriska pauses as if she’s trying to read your level of interest off your face. You nod once to indicate that you are.

Kanaya seems to be just as interested as you. “Go ahead.”

“First things first, we don’t have enough players to even play with the normal two team structure. So there’s going to be three teams of two if you play, like I already said. Second, because of our
circumstances we can’t torture anyone on the opposing teams. As much as we’d like to,” Vriska grits her teeth agitatedly. You have a feeling you know who she’s thinking about, “we can’t. Not like we could back on Alternia or whatever the fuck your planet was called. America?”

“Earth, actually. But close enough.”

Vriska ignores your correction and keeps going. “Small injuries, like shallow cuts and bruises, shit like that, that’s still all fair game. Anything more extreme than that will hurt the rest of us in the long run when we get to the end.”

You nod again to show that you’re following, even though you don’t fully understand this rule. You haven’t played a lot of capture the flag yourself, but you don’t recall major injuries being a part of it. Maybe you’ll ask Dave about it sometime.

“Third rule, no imprisonment. Even though that’s half the fun of capture the flag, we can’t do that for the same reason we can’t hurt anyone. We’re just going to have to knock them out and dump their asses in the hall instead of holding them captive for a long period of time. Fourth-”

You lean over and whisper to Kanaya. “How many rules do you think there are?”

“My guess is that we will be the recipients to rules eightfold.”

“Fourth rule is fucking can it, both of you!” Vriska snaps. “Fifth-”

“I’m sorry, are we skipping fourth?” You interrupt.

“No, I said fourth.” Vriska disagrees. “Fourth was can it, which you’re still breaking.”

“I don’t know if I can remember that. Can I perhaps get a written copy of the rules?”

“I’ll write them down for you when I’m done.” She growls, unamused. “As I was saying, the fifth rule has to do with the flags themselves.”

“Are we making our own flags?” Kanaya asks.

“No,” Vriska shakes her head, “no one has time for that shit.”

“I have time for that shit.” She asserts. “I wouldn’t mind making one for you and Terezi, too, if you want.”

“No one is actually making a flag!”

“Dave and Karkat made a flag.” You point out.

“Okay, fine,” Vriska seems to be quickly losing patience with you and Kanaya, “no one who fucking matters is making a flag.”

Kanaya opens her mouth to argue against that point, but Vriska holds up her hand.

“I didn’t even get to the rule yet!” She yells.

“I’m sorry.” You say, even though you’re not. “Continue.”

Vriska takes a deep breath. Her voice is level when she speaks again. “Each team will have two flags. Symbolic flags.” She emphasizes. “If you want one of your flags to be an actual flag, then go the fuck ahead and do that. Whatever you do, you’re going to have to tell me what your flags are on
the memo.”

“So there is going to be a memo?” You inquire. “I thought you decided not to do that.”

“Just for the rules.” Vriska clarifies. “We won’t get too off topic just typing up what our fucking flags are.” She crosses her arms over her chest and grumbles to the floor. “You’d think we could at least manage that.”

You decide not to be offended by that. “Are those all the rules, Vriska, or are there more?”

“There’s more.” Vriska’s eyes snap back up to you. She’s glowering. “Rule six of six,”

She shoots Kanaya a glare. Neither of you had realized she’d heard the both of you talking earlier. Kanaya shrinks back, grinning sheepishly at you. You stifle a giggle behind your hand, which causes Kanaya to do the same. You both try to keep yourself quiet so Vriska doesn’t notice.

She notices.

“Rule six of six,” She repeats, “is that you can’t enter a fort and steal a flag without one of the members of the fort present to defend it. This is going to be a long game, probably spanning days. No one is expected to be in their forts that entire time, that would be stupid. It would also be stupid to go into a fort and just take a flag when no one is there. That defeats the entire purpose of the game. There always has to be someone present in the fort when you attack, and you can only take one flag if you win. That can either be one of that team’s flags, or you can reclaim one you lost. All of that make sense or do I have to go through it again?”

You shake your head. “No, I understand. Kanaya?”

“I understood everything she said.” She concurs.

“So,” Vriska asks impatiently, “do you want to play or not? If you don’t it’ll just be me and Terezi versus Dave and Karkat, which will make it a pretty short and boring game.”

“We’ll do it.”

You don’t even think about it when you respond. You don’t even bother to check with Kanaya first.

“Excellent.” Vriska stands up and stretches. “Terezi and I are ready to start this game whenever you are, so just pester me when you have your flags figured out.”

“Alright.” You nod as Vriska moves to exit. “We’ll do that.”

Vriska ducks out, the fabric flapping closed behind her as she leaves.

You slump down to the floor, your face buried in your hands. “Kanaya, I’m sorry.”

Kanaya prods one of your hands with her finger. “Sorry for what?”

“I didn’t ask what you thought, I just responded without thinking.” You groan, turning your back to her. “I’m sorry.”

“Rose, it’s fine.” Her hand is on your shoulder, and you can feel her weight pressed down against it as she joins you on the floor. “I wanted to play.”

“Yes, but what if you didn’t?”
“Even if I didn’t, I have a feeling we would have been sucked into playing, if only to stop the four of them from killing each other.” Her voice is soft in your ear, her nose pressed against your neck.

“That’s true.” You laugh. “But I’m still sorry about it.”

“And I’m still perfectly okay with it.” She’s tracing little infinity signs on the back of your hand with her fingernail. “It’s nice to see you so enthusiastic about something. My only question is what Vriska could have possibly said just now to spur such a response out of you.”

“Why, Ms. Maryam,” you smirk, lowering your hands from your face and turning so she can see your bemused expression, “do I detect a hint of jealousy in your tone?”

“Why, no, not at all.” Kanaya replies. She entwines her fingers in yours. “It was a simple question. No hidden jealousy whatsoever. It just wasn’t the kind of reaction I would expect from you, given the subject. It’s fine if you don’t want to tell me.”

The thing is, you do want to tell her. You’re just not sure you know how to form your reasoning into the correct words. “I thought this game might help me get closer to Dave, somehow.”

“Closer?” Kanaya furrows her brow. You want to smooth out the confused lines with your finger. “I don’t understand. You’re already fairly close with Dave. For awhile there at the beginning of our journey, I had such a hard time approaching you because you were always in close proximity to Dave. I thought the both of you had a very strong bond, honestly I would go as far as to say I was a bit jealous of Dave, at that point.”

The thought of Kanaya being jealous of Dave, of all people, makes you laugh again. “Yes, Dave and I are close, but we’re close as friends not as siblings.”

“It’s important?” She asks.

“Yes!” You insist. The moment the word leaves your lips, the certainty you’d uttered it with withers away, and you’re no longer sure. Until recently, you were an only child. You weren’t even that close with your mother when she was alive. You have no idea how you’re supposed to feel towards a family member. You’re completely lost. Your shoulders slump. “Probably. I don’t know.”

You thump your head onto Kanaya’s shoulder, the fabric of her shirt feels nice on your face. You can feel her chin on top of your head. You remove your hand from hers and wrap your arms around her waist. Her own are around your shoulders. She’s running a finger down your spine. You shiver and press your face harder against her shoulder.

“I’m sorry I don’t know how to help you with this.” She whispers, pressing her face into your scalp. You can feel her lips moving when she speaks.

You drum your fingers against her hip. “It’s fine. It’s a very human issue, I wasn’t expecting you to do anything about it.”

“That’s exactly why I’m sorry about it. I want to be able to help you with these things because I want to, not because you expect it of me.”

You think your heart just burst. “Kanaya, that is so incredibly sweet of you to say, thank you.”

Your face feels like it’s on fire, and you bury your blush deep into her collarbone, fully aware that it’s still visible on your exposed ears and neck.
For awhile, neither of you say anything. You both just lie there, you, seeing and breathing in Kanaya with every intake of even breath as the blood in your face disperses back to the rest of your body, and Kanaya, whose only view is the top of your head, her only source of oxygen infused with the scent of your shampoo.

“It’s so strange that you don’t have horns.” Kanaya comments after a moment. “I keep expecting to be poked, but the only thing that even comes close is your headband.”

“I could take it off, if you want.” You offer.

“No, it’s fine.” She says. “I liked it.”

“It’s strange to me that you do have horns. But I like them,” You reach up a hand and stroke one. The texture always throws you off, they feel smoother than they look. You wonder what they’re made of, “I like them a lot.”

“I like you a lot.” Kanaya replies, leaning in to your touch.

You snort, unable to fight off your grin. “I like you a lot, too, Kanaya.”

“Hey, Rose.” Kanaya removes her face from your hair. You miss the extra weight on your head immediately.

“Kanaya?”

She tilts your chin up so your eyes meet hers. The look in her eyes is both dead serious and beautiful. It’s impossible for you to blink or turn your eyes away from her. Your heart skips a beat.

“Rose, I just wanted to tell you...” she sounds just as grave as she looks, “you’re like my own personal brand of heroin.”

Your alien vampire girlfriend just quoted Twilight to you with the straightest face in the universe.

That’s all it takes for you to lose it. You burst out laughing, unable to control yourself. Kanaya lowers her head so her forehead is pressed against yours and laughs with you, loud and carefree. You can hear it echoing off the walls and falling back to you as an intermingled mess of giggles.

It’s a lovely sound. A pleasant sound. The kind of sound that melts your troubles away and reminds you that you’re with someone amazing. You’re with someone special. It’s the kind of sound that leads you to believe that maybe, just maybe, complete and total happiness is an achievable goal, and not just some dream that will always be out of reach. It’s the most beautiful sound in the world.

You muffle the sound with your mouth, pressing it hard against hers.

Chapter End Notes

I'm working on formatting more like this from now on, maybe. Just a heads up.
Anyway, I hope you liked this chapter!!!
Battle 1-Davekat Retreats

Chapter Notes

Yo!!! It's a long chapter!
The POV switches from Dave to Karkat about halfway through the chapter, which is a tactic I'm thinking about employing every capture the flag chapter, but who knows?

I'm sorry in advance about the blood during the Karkat half (don't worry, it's not a lot, it's really the reactions to the blood I'm apologizing for).
Anyway, I hope you like reading this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dave vs. Rose

You’re chilling in your fort and scrolling through recent pesterlogs on your phone while Karkat paces outside.

“What did you say their flags were again?” This is his fourth time asking you that since you’d both decided on your current plan of attack.

You scroll through the capture the flag memo Vriska created a few days ago until you find a familiar purple shade of text. You already know what it says, you practically have it memorized already.

“Rose’s knitting needles and Kanaya’s...lunchtop? Do you know what that is? I don’t know what the fuck that is.”

“Yeah, it’s a husktop shaped like a lunchbox. It’s a lot more durable and easier to carry around like that, so it can withstand a lot of shit. I didn’t know she still had that.”

You knew. You knew because you’ve had this exact conversation three fucking times already. Karkat hasn’t seemed to notice that he’s answered the same question in the same exact way more than once. He’s clearly nervous.

He’s making you nervous, too.

You stretch out in an effort to make yourself more comfortable. Your feet stick out of the entrance. You don’t plan on being here long enough for them to get cold, so you just leave them there.

“You have all your stuff? You filled your strife specibus?” You can hear him continue to stomp agitatedly outside your field of vision.

“I shoved a couple pillows into my sylladex, but like I said I ‘m not putting those in my strife specibus. They could get all slashed up to shit in there with all my swords and junk.”

You’d thought about cleaning out your strife specibus when you’d cleaned your sylladex, but the thought of even touching another sword twisted your stomach into knots. There’s already sweat
You need to distract yourself. “What about you? Did you get all of your shit? I haven’t seen you grab any pillows or anything.”

“I have all of my shit.” You hear him pause. His feet stop moving. “I have some shit. Probably not enough shit.”

You can hear him right outside the fort.

“Here.” You punch one of the pillows above you so it falls out and makes a hole in the side of the fort. You poke your hand out and point down in the direction it fell. “Take that.”

“Do you think this is enough?” He asks.

“Dude, one pillow and whatever fucking else you have in there is way more than enough.” You reply. “You’re taking this too seriously. This isn’t a war, it’s capture the flag.”

“I know.” He groans. “I fucking know, okay? Just because I know that isn’t going to stop me from losing my shit about it. What if something goes wrong? What if I screw some shit up beyond repair and we get fucked over and we lose? Dave, what if...what if we lose the fort?”

“Are you actually worried about that?” You sit up and look at him through the hole in the wall. He crouches down to meet you at eye level, clutching the pillow to his chest. He really does look worried. “The fort’s not important. Yeah, it’s cool and all, but it’s nothing worth popping a fucking blood vessel or losing your shit over. Even if we lose the fort, which we definitely fucking won’t, we can just find somewhere else to chill and watch movies and talk and shit. Can Town, your room, my room, you name the place and we can hang there. It really doesn’t matter. There’s nothing for you to freak out about.”

The way Karkat’s biting his lip leads you to believe he’s still not convinced. You don’t know what to do about that.

“Hey, you’re over thinking this, you know that, right? Everything’s going to be fine.” You don’t sound too reassuring. “We’re just going to bust into that room, hit some girls with some pillows, capture their flag like we came there to do, and then abscond the fuck out of there before the goose down settles.”

“Feathers. In the pillows. We’re gonna abscond the fuck out of there before the feathers from the inside of the pillows settles on the ground.” You continue. “And if something else happens, like we bust into that room only to have our asses kicked by some admittedly very strong and kind of scary girls, then that’s what was supposed to happen. It really doesn’t matter if we win or lose this thing, as long as the experience doesn’t fucking suck.”

You lapse into silence. That’s it, that’s the end of your motivational rope. You don’t know if you helped at all, but you tried. That’s what counts, right?

You’re about to start talking again, if only to fill the conversation void when Karkat tosses the pillow into his sylladex.

“Stop hiding in the fort like a wriggler who’s too scared to face the trials in the brooding caverns and let’s go already. We have asses to serve on a silver nutrition plateau.”
You have no idea what the fuck most of what he just said means, but he definitely sounds more motivated. Maybe you should quit your job and become a motivational speaker. No, motivational rapper. That would be so fucking cool. Or so fucking stupid. If it turns out to be dumb as shit then you can just pretend you’re doing it to be ironic.

Karkat stands up, and you’re greeted to the realization that your eyes are pretty much at crotch level. He stretches, and you’re treated to a sliver of grey stomach skin. Rose would have a field day with the way that you poked a hole in your fort and are now just quietly watching Karkat like some pillow fort peeping tom.

You wonder if trolls have bellybuttons, but then decide that that inquiry is for a different time. Right now you need to get going. Before that, though...

You stick your fist out of the hole.

“Dave, what are you doing?” Karkat asks, leaving you hanging.

“Bump it.”

“Why?”

“It’s good luck!” You insist, waving your fist around. “Come on, man, one bro bump for luck?”

“Fine.” Karkat sighs. You can’t see it, but you have a feeling he’s rolling his eyes at you.

He gives your extended fist a firm, wholehearted bump. “Can we go now?”

“Yeah, sure. Just give me a sec, I’m coming out.”

If Rose could hear you now.

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Your progression over to Fort Rosemary is slow going. It literally takes you twice as long as it should because Karkat is determined not to make any noise. On top of that, he keeps pausing every couple feet to look around and make sure you’re not being followed.

“This would go a hell of a lot quicker and a hell of a lot quieter if you just let me fly over there.”

“And have you leave me here on the ground like a pile of flightless trash?” Karkat whispers. He’s so quiet that you have to lean in close to him to even hear what he’s saying. “I’m not taking that chance, thanks.”

“Obviously I’d take you with me, dumbass.” You whisper back. You’re not as quiet as Karkat is, but you honestly don’t think it really matters all that much. No one can hear you in the hall, anyway. “I could just fucking drag you there.”

Karkat puts a finger to his lips in the (apparently) universal signal of ‘be quiet’. “No, that’s stupid. You’re staying on the ground. Just move your fucking fronds you lazy flatulence balloon and pretend the laws of gravity apply to you, okay? It’s not that hard. Don’t be a floating douchebag.”

“I’ll be whatever kind of douchebag I want to be,” you say, “you can’t hold me back, Karkat. I am a strong and independent young god. I am a literal rising star, Karkat. Do you know what stars are man? Stars are-”

“Hot balls of gas?” Karkat cuts in.
Exactly.” He thinks he’s derailed your train of thought, but he’s got another thing coming. This locomotive is staying firmly chugging across your one track mind. “They’re fucking hot, Karkat. They are so hot that M.C. Hammer can’t even think about touching them without bursting into flames. Do you understand how hot that is, man?”

Karkat’s continuing down the hall, and you slide across the floor in your socks (Karkat insisted neither of you wear shoes during your ambush to reduce the possibility of sound). He waits until you’re right behind him before he answers, fully aware you wouldn’t be able to hear him otherwise. “Pretty fucking hot.”

“That’s right. Pretty fucking hot. About half as hot as me, to be exact. My land was heat and clockwork for a reason, dude. Even Sburb knows how much of a big fucking deal I am, and clearly it was unable to handle me or my rapid spitfire raps. So if the game that created both of our fucking universes couldn’t keep this hella cool dude down to earth, what the fuck makes you think you’re capable of handling all this?”

You moonwalk around Karkat to demonstrate exactly what you mean and raise an eyebrow at him. He’s glowering at you, completely unamused with his arms crossed over his chest in an attempt to contain his growing agitation. He looks you up and down, and you’re starting to feel a self conscious burn in your face as his eyes trail slowly down the length of your body. You wish you could have forced yourself to stay quiet for once and not drawn Karkat’s attention to you, or at least, you wish you hadn’t drawn his attention to what you look like. This is actually sort of embarrassing.

The way Karkat’s eyeing you makes you want to curl up in your cape and hide in a corner. Not like that would fucking work, since your cape is bright red and all of the corners in the meteor are definitely not.

“Dave?” Karkat finally says. You almost didn’t hear him. He’s still whispering.

“Yeah?” You attempt to whisper back.


Karkat makes a move to violently stomp on your foot, and you restrain yourself from flinching at the expectation of pain from having your toes curb stomped back down to the ground.

The pain never comes.

Karkat pushes your foot gently down with his own until your whole foot is firmly planted on the floor.

You weren’t expecting anything like that at all. Karkat’s still visibly pissed at you, but he didn’t even really try to do anything, which is weird. This kind of thing has happened before, and every time it does it throws you just the slightest bit off. You never know what to make of something like that.

Your other foot finds the ground of its own accord, and you’re just standing in front of him. The girl’s fort is only a short jaunt away right now. Neither of you move.

“I didn’t even know I was floating.” You admit, shrugging it off like it’s unimportant. “I’d planned on it, but that wasn’t when I meant to.”

Karkat shakes his head. “It’s fine. Just...try not to do it if you can help it.”
He brushes past you and towards the girl’s fort, dropping the pillow out of his sylladex on his way. You follow after him and take out your own as you approach the door.

You get to the door and are once again faced with the ‘do I or do I not kick open this door’ conundrum. If you knock, the girls will be alerted to your presence and you’ll lose the element of surprise. On the other hand, the door might not even be unlocked, in which case you’d have to knock anyway, only this time with an injured foot and a bruised ego. On the other hand, if the girls are surprised enough they might not have time to guard their flags at all and you can just go in and snatch one without even having to fight them.

You’re still debating about it when Karkat pushes the door open and walks in.

The room is quiet in that eerie way that rooms on the meteor tend to be quiet. This may be your inner big city Texan talking, but there’s something disturbing about complete and utter silence, just like there’s something disturbing about total darkness. You wonder if anyone else is having the same issue as you until your remember that you’re the only one who grew up in that type of urban environment.

They’re obviously not here. You should just call it quits and try again another day.

“I don’t think they’re-”

“Dave, look out!”

Before you have time to react or finish your sentence, Karkat is using his pillow to block an oncoming barrage of yarn balls.

Karkat manages to block about four of them with his pillow before you see a light purple one burst out of the fort. He’s so distracted by the head on bombardment that he doesn’t even notice the airborne ball of yarn descending towards him in an arc.

“Dude, move!” You push him out of the way right before it hits.

Karkat stumbles, but manages to catch himself. The expression on his face is far from grateful for the rescue. “The hell did you do that for?”

You point to the now nonthreatening ball of purple yarn. “You were almost hit. It’s okay, though, man, I got your six.”

He opens his mouth, probably to ask you what the fuck that’s supposed to mean, and does he actually want to know, when he suddenly grabs you by your sleeve and hauls you over to him. Another craft product projectile bounces across the space where you were standing just now. It’s followed by several more, carefully aimed at your current location.

“Holy shit, we need to move.” You say.

Unfortunately, there’s not really enough time for you to move. Granted, you could always freeze time if need be, but using your god tier powers for this feels like cheating. You’d rather not use your god tier powers at all for anything.

The yarn is falling faster.

You grab Karkat and get low on the ground, using both of the pillows and your cape as shields. You can feel them softly pummeling the side of your face. Karkat pulls your cape tighter around the you both and tries to make himself smaller as the balls of yarn continue to beat down on you.
like woolly hail.

“How many of these does she have?” Karkat mutters.

“An infinite supply.” You respond. “You better get comfortable, because we’re gonna be here awhile.”

You’re only sitting there with Karkat for about two minutes before he starts to get antsy. He squirms, clearly locked in an internal struggle between getting up and facing them head on by himself or waiting for you. With him this close to you, you can practically feel how tense he is. It occurs to you right then that this is the closest you’ve ever actually been to Karkat.

That’s a weird thing to think about.

Your hands are touching. His fingers are cold and twitching.

“Hey,” you grab Karkat’s attention and his hand. You can’t tell if he even registered the movement, his eyes are focused on you, “we should split up. You go around the back and take Kanaya. I’ll charge the front and get Rose.”

His hand balls into a fist under yours. “Splitting up is a dumb idea. What if you get hurt or something?”

“Dude, it’s literally yarn, I’ll be fine.” You’ve been knocked completely unconscious by a ball of yarn to the head before, but Karkat doesn’t need to know that.

There’s a doubtful look on his face like he’s not sure he believes you, but he nods anyway.

“We don’t leave until we grab a flag, right?”

“Right.”

You untangle him from your cape and break the pillow shield, handing Karkat back his own. Karkat takes it, gives you one final look, then throws his pillow over his head and runs away from you to the other side of the fort. That just leaves you alone to be pelted by soft, colorful projectiles. Honestly, you’re just glad they aren’t smuppets.

You take your pillow in both hands and pull it over your head like you saw Karkat do and run straight at the fort. You bust through the entrance and immediately get into battle stance, which is actually sort of an awkward thing to do because you’re used to holding a sword and not a floppy pillow.

The fort’s empty. At least, it looks empty. Karkat must have gotten Kanaya outside the fort where there’s more space to move around. Smart move.

A ball of bright red yarn bounces by your foot from above. You look up, and there’s Rose, seated on some fucking makeshift swing deal attached to a hook on the ceiling. She waves at you with her free hand, holding yet another ball of yarn in the other. She looks smug. You grit your teeth and point down to the floor.

“Get the hell down here and fight me.”

She hold up the ball of yarn in her hand. “I’m not sure if I want to do that, Dave. Why don’t you come up here?”
You could easily go up there and fight her, but you’d rather fight on solid ground. Fuck that. You toss your pillow up at her in an attempt to knock her down.

The pillow hits her, but it does nothing because it’s a pillow. You’re really not sure what you were expecting from that. More than that, at least. You take out another pillow from your sylladex and throw it at her again. She dodges, and the pillow fwumps back down to the ground. You don’t really care that much about it. You have plenty more where that came from.

Three more, to be exact.

You continue to throw pillows at her, trying to get her down to your level, but she keeps dodging them. She’s just floating around up there and avoiding them like they’re nothing. Which, admittedly, they are.

You’re down to your last pillow. You have yet to land a hit.

Alright, here you go. Gotta make this shit count.

You take the pillow in both hands and use all of your strength to toss it Rose-ward. She shifts deftly to the right, and your pillow hits the wall of the fort and slides down to the floor in a sad goose downy heap.

That was your last shot. Your sylladex is officially void of pillows.

The other side of the floor is littered with your failed tosses. All you have to do is go over there and pick them up. But that would mean exposing your back to Rose and risking getting hit by that fucking ball of yarn from behind.

You look from Rose, with her ball of yarn held aloft in one hand and a smirk on her face. Then you look over to the pillows, just lying there, waiting for you to grab them and keep this game up.

As things are, you have nothing to fight her with. This is a risk you’re going to have to take.

You run for the pile of pillows, arms outstretched to grab as many as you can, when you feel the vaguely deja vu-ish thump of a ball of yarn aimed expertly at the back of your head.

The last thing you see is the floor rushing up to meet your face before you black the fuck out.

Karkat vs. Kanaya

This is one of the shittiest ideas you’ve ever had and you have no fucking idea what you’re doing.

What the hell were you thinking? Agreeing to attack Kanaya? Kanaya fucking Maryam? How many of your pan cells had to rot away and leave giant, gaping craters in your dome to even consider that a good idea? What the fuck is wrong with you?

Lots of things. Lots of things are wrong with you.

A few of those things wrong with you have put you in your current position of running around the back of the fort on the slight advantage of catching Kanaya off guard.

You’ll need any advantage you can get.
You have to pretty much fight your way through several layers of blankets and sheer fabrics before you emerge on the inside of the fort. There was a lot of struggling and some light cursing on your end. So much for the element of surprise.

Something slams you so hard in the face that you’re knocked straight out of the fort and onto your ass. You’re head’s left spinning from the impact, and there’s a stinging on the edge of your lip that tastes an awful lot like blood.

Everybody already knows what color your blood is and what it means. Nobody gives a damn about it. You know it’s completely irrational, but you can’t suppress the panic bubbling up inside your chest at the taste of salt on your tongue.

Kanaya will be out here any second now. She’ll see. She knows what color you blood is, but she’s never seen it. What if it disgusts her to the point where she doesn’t want to talk to you anymore? What if she...

What if she tries to cull you?

_That makes absolutely no fucking sense, _you yell at yourself as you try to stop the bleeding. _Kanaya wouldn’t do that, she’s your friend, you anxiety riddled shitheel!_

You know that, you do. In the back of your pan, you’re fully aware that Kanaya would never do anything like that to you. Just because you know that doesn’t stop the thoughts from invading your headspace and drowning out all your rational thoughts.

Your breath is coming in, fast and shallow. You need to calm the fuck down. You have no idea how to do that.

Your hands are trembling as you scrub at the shallow wound on your lip with your sleeve in an attempt to wipe all the blood away. You only succeed in irritating the cut and causing it to bleed more.

It’s only been a matter of seconds since you were knocked out of the fort, but by the time Kanaya exits you feel like you’ve been sitting on the ground and rubbing the bleeding part of your lip for hours now. She comes out of the fort, her expression dead serious as she brandishes her pillow in preparation of another strike.

She’s about ready to hit you when she catches sight of your face. You have no idea what your face looks like, but you have a feeling it can’t be anything pleasant. The pillow slips from Kanaya’s hands.

“Karkat, you’re bleeding.”

“Don’t look!” You turn away from her and cover your mouth with your hands. It’s too late, though, she’s already seen.

She comes over and kneels down in front of you, eyes full of concern. “Are you okay? We can call a time out and finish later, if you want.”

You open your mouth, but snap it closed again. You hate yourself just a little bit more for even considering taking the offer.

Kanaya had a hole blasted through her stomach and lost a shit ton of blood, she fucking died and she didn’t even seem phased once she came back as a rainbow drinker. Vriska had her arm and eye blown off in a bloody fucking explosion, and she hadn’t given a damn after she got her prosthetic
from Equius.

Now you’re over here, freaking out over a tiny, nonlethal cut on your lip you got from playing Capture the Flag with your friends.

You’re pathetic. There’s no way you’re going to survive the game if you can’t even handle this meager amount of blood. You’ll be dead weight for everybody else to carry during the fight, just like you were during Sgrub.

You don’t want to get to the end and realize you’re fucking useless. You don’t want to be a hindrance to your friends, you refuse to go through that again. This is just something you’re going to have to work through.

You shake your head at Kanaya and pick your pillow back up. Kanaya looks uncertain about continuing, but you manage to convince her by hitting her in the ear. She scrambled back up to her feet to go grab it, and you get yourself back up to standing to take her on.

She shows no mercy when she hits you, slamming her pillow so hard against your chest that you almost fall again. Somehow, you manage to stay on your feet, but you are pushed a few steps backward just by the force of the blow. You retaliate with what should have been a pretty solid chest hit, but she dodges and you only manage to brush past her shoulder.

Kanaya is a lot faster than you are, you don’t know if it’s just her natural ability or if it’s some new increased rainbow drinker reflex or some shit, but she keeps dodging your attacks and landing her own at least three times as much as you are. She hits you in the face again, and you fall unceremoniously on your ass for the second time today, sending a shock up your posture pole. You’re about to sweep the legs out from under her when you glance up for a second and find your eyes stuck there.

Kanaya is staring wide eyed at her pillow like she’s never seen it before (until recently, none of you really had, but you’d all gotten past that awhile ago). There’s something else other than curiosity in that stare that you just can’t seem to place. She brings the pillow closer to her face, and that’s when you’re finally able to tell what that strange look in her eyes is.

It’s hunger.

There’s a splotch of bright red staining the pillowcase. Your tongue instinctively darts over the cut on your lip and confirms that yes, you’re still bleeding. That’s your blood smeared on Kanaya’s pillow.

Kanaya’s a rainbow drinker, you know she can’t resist blood. She doesn’t need it to survive, obviously, but the desire for it is still there. You’ve been fighting her this whole time with your fucking lip bleeding, practically throwing that fact in her face like an ignorant diarrhetic asshole.

“Kanaya?” You stand up and try to get her attention. “Hey, Kanaya?”

She doesn’t seem to hear you. Either that or she’s too entranced with the thought of getting to quench her desire for blood after so long that she doesn’t care. It’s been perigees for her.

“Kanaya.” You never read up on the shit that rainbow drinkers can do, but you’re certain what you’re about to do is not recommended. “Kanaya listen, I’m going to take this from you for a minute. I promise I’ll give it back, I just need it for a minute.”

You reach over and pull the pillow out of her hands. Her grip on it is so tight that it takes all of your strength, and it leaves in shreds from just how far sunk in her claws were.
She hisses and swipes at you, but you manage to dodge and take a few steps back. You stash Kanaya’s destroyed pillowcase in your sylladex. There’s a bunch of fluff falling out of her pillow which you suppose must be that goose down or whatever the fuck Dave was prattling on about earlier, but other than that it remained surprisingly intact.

“Karkat?” Kanaya says your name quietly, almost uncertain. Like she doesn’t know if she wants you to respond.

You turn around. She’s wringing her hands and staring at the floor, but otherwise she looks back to normal. You’re just glad she’s not pouncing on you and trying to suck your blood or something.

Can rainbow drinkers even drink mutant blood?
You don’t know, and you sure as fuck don’t want to know.

You walk over to her and hold out her partially damaged pillow. “We can keep playing, or we can pick this up again some other time. Whatever you want to do, I don’t give a shit.”

She looks at you, shocked. This clearly wasn’t the kind of reaction she expected after that. You don’t think it’s that big of a deal, though. She didn’t hurt you at all, and based on what little knowledge you have on rainbow drinkers, she barely even tried.

Her gaze travels from your eyes to the cut on your lip, and it takes everything in your power not to cover it up. Her eyes find your again, and she takes her pillow back from you. “I’d like to keep playing, if you don’t mind.”

“Not at all.”

You attempt to smack her in the face, but she ducks and you end up getting your pillow caught on the hooked end of her horn. Kanaya disentangles your pillow from her head and tosses it back to you. Now both of your pillows are equally damaged. It’s an even playing field, sort of. You’re still not as fast or as coordinated as her, but you’re not going to let that stop you.

As you continue on with your fight, you and Kanaya edge further and further away from the fort and towards something that’s more of a hobby space. Rose and Kanaya apparently use the place for their textile projects. There’s whole reams of fabric strewn across the floor and those half body mannequins that Kanaya alchemized almost immediately after you all realized you were going to be here for awhile scattered around in various states of dress. Apparently Kanaya’s been keeping busy. No wonder you don’t see her around much anymore.

Kanaya whaps you between the horns with her almost empty pillow, and your focus is back on her. You land your own hit on her side, but it doesn’t really do anything because whatever was inside your pillow has been falling out every time you fucking move. At this point you’re just swinging an empty sack of cloth. Kanaya, you notice, is having the same issue.

Your fight eventually devolves from hitting each other with pillows to just shoving one another.

“What the fuck are we doing?” You ask as you push her. You’re not even pushing her very hard.

“I don’t know.” She admits, pushing you back. Hers is barely a push, either. “I only had the one pillow.”

“Me, too.” You stop pushing her. “So, how do we know who wins?”

“You’re just supposed to find one of our flags and abscond, aren’t you?” Kanaya asks. “I haven’t
played capture the flag in awhile myself, but I’m fairly certain that’s the objective.”

“So as long as I get out of here with a flag, I win?”

“Yes.” Kanaya tilts her head. “I’m surprised you weren’t aware of that, Karkat. Haven’t you ever played capture the flag before?”

“No.”

“Well, that’s how it’s generally played.” Kanaya shrugs. “Since we are both out of pillows to fight each other with, and you have yet to find either of our flags, I suggest you retreat and try again at a later date.”

Fuck, you were hoping it wouldn’t come to this. “I had a different idea.”

You take out the scissors in your sylladex and quickly grab one of the mannequins before Kanaya can do anything to stop you. You genuinely hope it’s one she hasn’t been working too hard on. You feel terrible about this.

Kanaya stiffens, holding her hands pleadingly out to you. “Karkat, you wouldn’t.”

“I really don’t want to.” You admit, bunching up part of the skirt and placing it between the open blades of the scissors. “But I will.”

“Don’t, I worked so hard on that!”

“Bring me your lunchtop and I won’t.” You counter. “I’m not leaving without a flag.”

You told Dave you wouldn’t leave without one.

Kanaya lowers her hands in defeat. “Alright. You win. I’ll go get my lunchtop. Just promise me you won’t cut up my dress before I return.”

You nod. “I promise.”

Kanaya backs away slowly, keeping her eyes on you until she’s forced to turn around and enter the fort. You’re minutes away from victory, but you feel like a lousy piece of shit. You have a feeling getting Kanaya to surrender her lunchtop over to you isn’t going to make you feel any better about this.

You wonder if Dave’s having an easier time with Rose.

There’s a soft sound behind you that leads you to the conclusion that no, Dave did not have an easier time with Rose. Rose is standing right behind you.

“Karkat.” She says your name like it’s a warning. Your entire body freezes at the sound.

You have no idea what the fuck she’s going to do to you. It can’t be anything good.

You can feel her fingers on your sides. If she’s about to do what you think she’s about to do, then you were right. This is far from good.

You swallow. “You wouldn’t.”

“Are you going to leave?”
“Fuck no.”

“Then, as you said to Kanaya, I really don’t want to, but I will.”

You beg your body not to react what you know Rose is about to do, but your pleas are ignored the moment she starts tickling you.

“Rose, no, quit it!” You yell at her between fits of laughter. You fucking hate that you’re this sensitive to touch, but you can’t seem to stop yourself from laughing. “Stop!”

You squirm away from her and bat her hands off of you, but it doesn’t do anything, she just moves her hands to a different location. It eventually reaches a point where you’re laughing so hard you can’t even stand up anymore. You fall to the floor and double over, trying to block her from all of your more sensitive areas like your stomach and your neck, but unfortunately you’re just as ticklish pretty much everywhere else.

Rose has already figured that out for herself and keeps at it, attacking your back and your sides even though you’re begging her to stop.

“Fuck, stop!” Your stomach hurts. “Rose, get off me!”

“Say uncle.” She commands, unrelenting.

“What the shit is uncle?” You ask, wiping tears off your face. You can’t remember the last time you laughed so hard you cried. You’re certain it was a more pleasant time than this, though.

“The meaning of the word’s not important.” Rose says. “You just need to know that if you say it, I’ll stop, and you and Dave will have to leave. Understand?”

You nod.

“So say it.”

You refuse to say it. This is torture, but you won’t give her the satisfaction of knowing she beat you like this. You grit your teeth and shake your head.

You can endure this. She’ll get tired of it eventually.

Rose attacks a newly exposed patch of your skin mercilessly, and you can’t do this. You honestly can’t.

Your bladder is uncomfortably full.

“Rose, get off.” You beg. “Let me up, I give. I’m done.”

“Say uncle.” She repeats.

“Seriously, let me up!” You squirm, but it only causes more agitation for you and nothing for her.

“Then say uncle. That’s all you have to do. Say uncle.” She continues to tickle you and holy fuck, it’s agonizing. You’re not laughing anymore. Your lungs hurt.

You give in. “Uncle.”

“I’m sorry, what did you say? Speak up.”
“Uncle.” You reply vehemently. “Uncle uncle uncle uncle uncle! Now let me the fuck up right now before I piss on you.”

Her hands are gone, and so is all of your dignity as you sit up and try to rise to your feet. Rose stands and wipes dirt off of her dress. In her hand she holds the pair of scissors you’d brought.

“That was an odd threat, Karkat.”

You’re staring at your socks. “It wasn’t a threat.”

“Ah.” She nods. “I deposited Dave outside of the room, if you wanted to take him back to your fort when you leave.”

“Okay.” You start to shuffle off towards the door, but there’s a question nagging at your pan and you won’t be able to leave until you have an answer. “How did you know? About...?”

You gesture down to your shitty ass, overly sensitive body.

“Kanaya told me.” Rose admits, shrugging.

You sigh. “I thought as much.”

You trudge defeatedly to the door feeling worn out both from your pillow fight with Kanaya and the intensity of the unexpected tickle attack from Rose. You leave Fort Rosemary with nothing to show for your efforts but a cut on your lip and a ruined pillowcase in your sylladex.

You’re leaving without a flag. You failed.

You find Dave slumped outside the door, his head on his chest. He’s obviously unconscious. Clearly this wasn’t a victory for either of you.

You toss Dave over your shoulder like a sack of tuber roots and retreat from Fort Rosemary.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I know the actual capture the flag element was almost non-existent in this chapter, but it'll get there eventually, I promise!
Parts of this chapter were really hard to write, like the part about Kanaya and her reaction to the blood along with some other parts of this chapter, but I'm sincerely hoping that my own struggle writing it didn't make it bad to read.
I'm going to pretend that I planned for this chapter to be finished during Terezi week...so happy Terezi week, everybody! Here's a chapter full of the adventures of tealdragon and spiderbabe just chilling and having a fun time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

**Vriska vs. Some Dumb Idiots**

*(Dave and Karkat)*

You don’t have any non-lethal weapons in your sylladex. Up until now, you didn’t have any reason to have non-lethal weapons at all, ever, especially on Alternia. The closest thing you have to a non-lethal weapon is your magic eight balls or maybe your bag of eight sided dice. Granted, you can’t use your eight sided dice as a weapon right now because you decided to make them one of the Fort Scourge flags alongside Pyralspite.

“Hey, Terezi?” You look up from your book over to Terezi, sitting relaxed across from you on the couch. Your bare feet are in her lap.

“What?” She cocks her head to indicate she’s listening while she plays with your feet. “Your toenails are gross.”

You wiggle your admittedly gross toenails in her face. They’re sharp and jaggedly cut. You’ve been meaning to trim them, but you’ve been busy. “They’re biological weapons. Feast your bulbs on these bastards.”

Terezi places her glasses on her head behind her horns and leans down to inspect your thick yellow toe claws. Her eyes are the same vibrant red as her glasses. You can’t even tell the difference between her sclera and her iris. Everything is just red.

“I’m gonna feast my nasal cavities instead.” She proclaims. One of your toenails is scratching up against her nose as she takes a big, long whiff of your feet. She pulls back quickly and makes a face. “These are some seriously dangerous weapons you have here, Vris. These are armada grade stink bombs attached to your fronds. Do you ever wash these?”

“As often as I wash the rest of me.” Which isn’t very often, honestly. You’re way too busy for that shit. You poke Terezi in the nose with your big toe.

Terezi wrinkles her nose and pushes your feet off of her lap. “Get this shit away from me! I have to get up and clear the scent of your gross sweaty stumps out of my sniff nodes.”

She’s smiling, so you don’t take offense when she gets up off the couch and shuffles over to the coffee machine. You put your book down when you reach a good stopping point (fuck if Mindfang
couldn’t turn a phrase) and join her. It’s still pretty early and you could probably use the caffeine boost.

You get over there and stand next to Terezi just as she’s putting two empty cups down.

“How long does this thing usually take?” You ask after several minutes of waiting. Waiting isn’t really your strong suit.

Terezi shrugs. “It varies.”

“Based on what?”

“How the fuck should I know?” She asks. “I have no idea how this thing works. I once heard Dave rap at the machine for ten straight minutes before it deposited anything.”

“Rap?” You repeat. You’re unfamiliar with this word.

“Human slam poetry.” Terezi clarifies.

“So you’re saying the machine is powered by slam poetry?”

Her mouth quirks into a shape reminiscent of a surprise noodle. “That’s not what I was saying at all.” It somehow manages to bend itself back into its’ natural, open grin as an idea strikes her. “If you want to perform some freestyle slam poetry at it, I’m not gonna stop you.”

She phrases it as if you have a choice between performing some slam poetry or not, but you know better. This is a challenge, plain and simple.

You’re not one to shy away from a challenge.

“Okay, I will. For twenty boonbucks.” If you’re going to do something you don’t want to do, you may as well get compensation for it.

“Ten.” Terezi counters.

“Fifteen.”

You watch Terezi repeating the sum, just mouthing the number as she considers your counter offer.

“Twelve.” She finally says.

You’ll take it. “Done.”

You and Terezi shake hands, sealing the deal in a binding contract. You can’t help but feel triumphant over this exchange. You honestly would have settled for two.

“Terezi,” you command, clearing your throat in preparation to giving this coffee machine a major verbal smackdown, “give me a beat.”

Terezi covers her mouth with one hand and starts beatboxing at a pace so rapid that you’re not sure you’re going to be able to keep up with. You wait it out until you understand the rhythm better (you are good at many things, hell, you’re fucking excellent at pretty much everything, but you’ve never been able to keep a beat very well).

Terezi, still beatboxing like a fucking maniac, elbows you in the arm and glares at you.
“Okayaaaaaaay, jegus fuck, Terez.” You rub the spot on your arm indignantly.

You take a deep breath. You have no idea what you’re going to say, all you know is that you want your attempt to be at least a passable as slam poetry both to impress Terezi a little and to ensure you get your twelve boonbucks. “I—”

The machine sputters and spits out the coffee in and all over your cups like you’d both been waiting for. You close your mouth and pick up both steaming cups.

“It looks like you’re in the clear for slamming some freestyle poetry.” Terezi says, accepting her cup of coffee from you. “Aren’t you lucky?”

“Luck ain’t got nothing to do with it.” You reply, smacking her on the back. “I’d keep those boonbucks on hand, if I were you.”

Terezi raises an eyebrow. “You’re still planning on performing slam poetry?”

“In exchange for increasing my stash of loot? Fuck yeah, I am.”

You keep your hand on Terezi’s back (you can feel the bumps of her spine through her shirt) and guide her back to the couch. She doesn’t need you to lead her there, but she also doesn’t mind you doing so every once in awhile.

You both flop back down on the couch, taking up as much space as you possibly can so that your legs are entangled together with hers. Terezi pushes her legs against yours, grinning widely as she kicks at you.

“So what did you want to do today?” She asks, taking a deep drink of her coffee. “Since you’re not spitting any mad rhymes?”

“I was thinking we should hurry up and plan our attack against one of the forts.” You suggest. “Rose and Kanaya already kicked Dave and Karkat’s asses. It’s about time we get in on the action while it’s good.”

Terezi purses her lips in contemplation, and you sniff at your own coffee as you wait for her response. It smells bitter. You take a sip, and it’s just as bitter as it smells.

“So what did you want to do today?” She asks, taking a deep drink of her coffee. “Since you’re not spitting any mad rhymes?”

“I was thinking we should hurry up and plan our attack against one of the forts.” You suggest. “Rose and Kanaya already kicked Dave and Karkat’s asses. It’s about time we get in on the action while it’s good.”

Terezi purses her lips in contemplation, and you sniff at your own coffee as you wait for her response. It smells bitter. You take a sip, and it’s just as bitter as it smells.

“Okay.” She finally nods. “Which one should we strike against? Rosemary or Davekat?”

“Good question.” You stroke your chin thoughtfully. “Rose and Kanaya’s guards might be down because of their blatant victory over Dave and Karkat. Dave and Karkat will be easiest, though, since they’re losers and not much of a threat to begin with.”

“Hm.” Terezi folds her legs under her, cup of coffee clutched in both hands. “Tough decision.”

“It really is.” You agree. “So what do you think? Flip a coin on it?”

“No.” Terezi takes a long sip from her coffee and shakes her head. “It’s a tough decision, but I think we both know who we’re going with.”

“I wasn’t sure if you’d want to do that.” You admit, placing your coffee on the table in front of you. Terezi does the same as you turn to examine her face. “You’ve been awfully chummy with both of them lately.”

“Of course I am,” Terezi shrugs, “they’re my friends. Messing with my friends is my second
favorite thing to do.”

You want to resist the urge to ask her what her first favorite thing to do is because you know that’s what she wants you to do, but you can’t fight the urge to know. “So what is your first favorite thing to do?”

She laughs. “Mess with my moirail.”

Fuck, you should have seen that coming. Terezi slumps heavily against you, and you lean away from her so her head flops onto your lap. Her horns are poking into your thigh.

You poke Terezi a couple times in her exposed stomach. “If we’re attacking Dave and Karkat, then I’m going to have to borrow some scalemates or some shit to throw at them. I don’t have anything like that in my sylladex.”

She shrugs and pokes you in the cheek. “I wasn’t planning on throwing any shit at them.”

“Then what are you planning on doing? What’s the plan of attack here?”

Terezi plucks the glasses off your face. Everything is blurry and you can’t make out shit. “You just leave that to me.”

Terezi’s plan is pretty simple. The both of you are going to go and bust into Dave and Karkat’s fort and just grab their big fucking flag and abscond. Simple as that.

You’re back in your fort with Terezi, all dressed up in your flarping outfits and ready to launch an attack. “What if they’re not in the fort?”

Terezi waves your question away. “No, they’re in the fort. They’ve been there all night.”

“How the fuck do you know?”

“Who do you think I was talking to on Trollian all last night?” She points out. “Dave messaged me with his commentary about some movie he and Karkat were watching.”

That explained all the laughing Terezi did last night. You’d been too busy rereading Mindfang’s journals (you’d been wanting to do that since you met your dancestor Aranea, and you’d only just found the book again on a lucky break).

“Ohay,” you stop pacing the floor and put your hands on your hips, “but just because they were there last night doesn’t mean they’re there right now.”

“Based on Dave’s last message,” She pulls out her palmhusk and scrolls through, “I think it’s safe to say that he’s definitely still there.”

She shows it to you, and from the jumble of nonsense red letters on the page it’s clear Dave fell asleep mid-message. Your assumption is proved true when you decide to read the last message because not only is the text glaringly red, it’s also ENTIRELY IN CAPS LOCK like some other asshole you know and despise.

“Jegus, is Karkat being paid by the word?” You complain. “It doesn’t take five fucking paragraphs to say ‘sorry Terezi, Dave fell asleep during my boring as hell movie because I have shitty taste and am a total douchebag.’”
She doesn’t even argue as she puts her palmhusk away again. “Yeah. That was only a few hours ago, so I’m guessing they’re both still asleep in the fort. Going in and stealing their flag while they’re asleep is fair game, according to the rules Rose, Kanaya, and you came up with.” She grins widely, pleased that she found a loophole in the game’s rules. “We should justifiably be able to walk in, grab a flag, and walk out without having to break any rules or fuck shit up.”

“But fucking shit up is the whole point of the game!” You protest.

Terezi is lounging in her bean chair, your glasses still on her face. Her own are perched on top of her head. “I thought the whole point of the game was to steal the other team’s flags to prove we’re the alpha couple on this rock?”

“That is the point.” You agree. “And I want to make sure they remember that by beating it into their pans with soft dragon plush and insults.”

“I’m not sacrificing any of my forensics team for this game.” Terezi shuts you down immediately, shaking her head. “Don’t you think they’ll remember that they’re losing better if they wake up and find one of their flags is gone?”

“Really? You wouldn’t even sacrifice Lemon Snout’s son?” You ask, picking up a yellow blurry thing you think might be the right scalemate and waving it around. “What if I need him for something?”

You drop the scalemate that may or may not be Lemon Snout’s kin and kick it away from you. “You’re a hoarder, you know that, right? You’re a scalemate hoarder.”

“And you’re a magic eight ball hoarder. Half of these are smashed to pieces, and yet here they are, wasting all of our fort space.”

“They’re not all broken.” You reply defensively, examining a pile of admittedly pretty much completely broken magic eight balls.

“Maybe not now,” Terezi picks up an undamaged one from a pile near her, “but they will be soon.”

“You don’t know that for sure.”

She takes the magic eight ball in both of her hands. “Magic eight ball, is Vriska going to break you and all of your spherical comrades in this fort?”

Terezi shakes it vigorously and licks the surface of the ball before announcing the results. “Outcome likely.”

“Have you ever tried smashing one?” You say, picking up a piece of a ball and examining it. “It’s pretty cathartic. Try it. Break that.”

Terezi doesn’t require more persuasion than that. She takes the magic eight ball and chucks it at the wall. It smashes and splatters blue liquid all over the wall, dripping slowly down to puddle onto the floor.

“Okay, that was fun.” Terezi admits, standing up and inspecting the damage she’d done. She stands close to the wall, her face practically pressed against it. “What do you think this water tastes like?”

“It tasted like shit when I drank it.” You shrug. “But for you? Probably like magic since you’re
such a taste freak.”
“I’m gonna lick it.”
“Do it, I dare you.”
“I’m going to.”
“Do it.”
“I’m gonna.”
“Just can it and do it already!”

Terezi gives the wall an experimental lick and backs a step away from it to consider the taste. “I can’t tell if this is good or not.”
“What did it taste like?”
“Kind of like what I assume your blood would taste like, but really watered down.”
“Oh.” Now that she says it, the color does resemble your blood a bit. “Sounds gross.”
“It is.” She concedes. “But it’s like one of those gross things that I would definitely lick again just to remind myself of how uniquely gross it is.”
“So the verdict?” You ask.
“Eight times out of ten, I think I would do this again.” She nods solemnly at the stain on the wall. “I’ll finish the rest off later. We should get a move on before the boys wake up and ruin our plan.”

Terezi marches out of the fort, and you follow close behind with your boots making that satisfying clomping noise as you go. You grab ahold of Terezi by her teal sleeve and get her to slow down. She turns around and tilts her head quizzically at you. You can just make out that weird mouth quirking again. How the fuck does she even do that?

“Give me back my glasses.” You demand. “I can’t see shit.”
“That’s funny!” She cackles, removing your hand from her sleeve and holding it in her own. “Neither can I!”

With one hand holding her cane out in front of her and the other hand holding yours hostage. Your protests dissolve into fits of giggles as you and your moirail both start running down the hallway, you occasionally having to slow down so you don’t overtake Terezi’s stride. It’s a classic case of the blind leading the astigmatic as you both race towards the transportalizer and over to the boy’s fort to launch your siege against Fort Davekat.

You both arrive at the door hand in hand, at which point Terezi returns your glasses. You’re in charge of the actual capturing the flag, and you’re going to need to be able to see in order to do that. Terezi pushes the door open with her cane. You poke your head inside. You can hear soft breathing from inside the pillow mound.

“You go in.” She whispers. “I’ll keep watch and create a diversion in case they wake up.”
“Alright.” You hold up two fingers. “I’m going in.”

Terezi presses her fingers against yours, completing the diamond. “Good luck.”

“Don’t need it.”

You sneak into the room, and your eyes immediately light up on their stupid flag leaning against the wall. You float yourself over to it on your big flutterbeast wings and land as quietly as you possibly can. You pick up the flag by the pole and heave it over your shoulder. This is even easier than you expected. Easy as fucking grubloaf.

You’re struck on the back of the head by something soft, but the momentum of it causes your head to hit the wall. You turn around, and see Karkat’s head and shoulders popping out of the top of his fort, dislodging a couple pillows in his wake. He’s glaring at you with his teeth bared as he pulls his arm back to hit you with another of the many pillows surrounding him.

You block the oncoming shot with the flag pole and pick both the pillows up off the ground. You open your mouth to yell at him, but you don’t get a word out before you’re struck in the mouth by yet another fucking pillow. It hits you in the mouth, and you tear it apart with your teeth.

Karkat has a finger to his lips and shushes you, pointing down to the fort. You’re not sure what he’s trying to say, all you know for sure is that he wants you to be quiet.

So, naturally, you aren’t.

“What?” You ask at a completely normal volume. It’s thunderously loud in the quiet of the room.

He throws another pillow at you, which you easily dodge. “Dave’s sleeping.” He hisses in a pseudo whisper.

Well, duh. That was the point. Dave’s sleeping, Karkat’s supposed to be sleeping, too. You’re guessing he doesn’t want you to wake Dave up.

Whatever, you don’t want to wake Dave up, anyway. It doesn’t matter if he’s awake. It doesn’t matter if either of them are awake. Especially not now, the fight’s over. You already have the fucking flag. All you have to do is get it out of this fort and into yours.

“Terezi,” you say, again not lowering your voice at all, “catch this.”

You toss the flag at her like a spear, and she catches it with one hand before turning around and promptly absconding down the hall.

Karkat lets out a strangled growl, clearly annoyed but still trying not to disturb Dave. He disappears back into the fort and crawls out, getting to his feet quickly and chasing after her.

There you go. Your part is done. Everything rests on Terezi getting back to your fort before Karkat can catch her.

Your victory is assured.
You’re absconding as fast as your legs will take you, swinging your cane around everywhere to make sure you don’t bump into any walls and no one even tries to get in your way right now. You don’t have time to warn people or wait for them to move. You’re on an important mission right now.

Behind you, you can hear Karkat gaining on you. For someone his size, he’s surprisingly fast. But you’re faster. You pick up speed.

You arrive in Can Town, you can tell because it’s thick with the scent of reds and yellows and blues above an undertone of tin. It’s beautiful here. You went this direction just so you could make a justifiable detour and sniff out the new attractions. You’re careful to maneuver between the pedestrians and the high rising hive stems (some have gotten so tall that they almost reach past your horns now, you’re loving the new architecture) as well as the chalk murals lining the new and improved entertainment district. You’re going to have to come by later and take a longer whiff of this later, you think.

“Hi, Mayor!” You greet, sniffing out your favorite carapace. He’s sitting on the floor, surrounded by a crowd of his adoring citizens. He waves you over, but you have to decline. “I’d love to help you gather up the troops, but I’m in the middle of a game right now.”

Speaking of which, here comes Karkat. Oh shit.

You leave Can Town and the Mayor behind you, heading off for the nearest transportalizer. Behind you, you can hear Karkat stopping to chat with the Mayor. You chuckle to yourself. You knew he couldn’t resist talking to the Mayor. No one can.

You have the upper hand now!

Well, technically you had the upper hand the whole time, the advantage has always been yours. Now you have twice as much advantage.

In the distance, you can hear Karkat saying “Bye, Mayor!”

Where the fuck is the transportalizer?

You could have sworn the distance wasn’t this far last time you went down this hall.

...assuming the hall you’re thinking about is this hall.

Shit, did you go down the wrong hall?

Your cane connects with something that is definitely not a wall. Yep, you went the right direction. You just hit the transportalizer.

“Terezi!” Karkat yells. He’s right behind you now.

You could easily hop on the transportalizer and leave him here while you stroll into your fort with your winnings like you’re hot shit, but that’s boring. Instead you turn around and face him. It’ll be better, or at least more interesting, if you give Karkat the chance to fight for his flag.

You lay the flag against the wall by the transportalizer and get into battle stance with your cane. Karkat comes to a halt a good distance away from you, far enough so he’s out of reach of your cane.
His breathing’s labored from all the running to catch up with you. “Terezi.”

“Karkat.” He’s holding something in his hand that makes your nose crinkle. “Is that your shoe?”

“Yes.” He admits. “I didn’t have time to grab a real weapon.”

You tilt your head. “With all those pillows around?”

“Fuck you!” Karkat replies defensively. “You caught me off guard!”

You smile. Everything worked out just as you thought it would. “That was the plan.”

Without further warning, you both strike. Karkat throws his shoe at you, and you deflect it with your cane. You land a soft hit to his side and back up so you’re closer to the flag and the transportalizer.

Karkat has another shoe, and this one you’re less than prepared for. It scuffs your shoulder blade, and you retaliate by poking Karkat straight in the knee.

You hear him hiss and go down to one knee. You take the flag back up again and step onto the transportalizer.

You appearify in a hallway near Fort Scourge. You step off the transportalizer and wander leisurely in the general direction of your fort, trusting your memory and sense of smell to guide you there.

You catch a whiff of a familiar scent that tugs at the corners of your mouth. “Vriska!”

“Hey,” she saunters over to you, her boots clicking with each step in your direction, “took you long enough. I thought you were lost.”

“Nope,” you shake your head, “just taking my time, enjoying the sweet taste of victory.”

You lick the pole, and Vriska laughs.

“Save some of your appetite for that blue shit on the wall.” She suggests, linking her arm in yours. “Unless you wanted something else for breakfast.”

“I was thinking we should have some celebratory grubloaf.” You admit. “But I’m more than willing to lick that blue shit as an appetizer.”

You stroll arm in arm into the fort with Vriska. You unlink once you’re in the fort and hold the flag pole in both of your hands, facing her with a solemn expression.

“Marquis Spinneret Mindfang,” you announce, falling to one knee and holding the flag up to her, “I bequeath unto you the spoils of Fort Scourge’s first victory.”

“Why, Redglare!” She feigns a gasp, taking the flag from your outstretched hands. “What a generous gift to offer! This will look great next to all of my piles of loot. Just for this, I’m naming you my ship’s co-captain.”

She touches the flag pole to both of your shoulders and your horns. “Rise.”

Vriska takes your hand in hers and helps you to your feet. You both start laughing as Vriska sets about trying to find the perfect spot to display the flag.
“You know,” you hear her shout from the back of the block, “I think I like it right here. It looks good.”

“I’m sure it does.” You agree. “So, are we having grubloaf or not? I’m hungry, and we deserve a victory feast!”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m on it.” She says. You can hear her boots as she crosses over to the door. “I’ll go get it right now. I’ll clean up the wall shit if you don’t feel like licking it.”

“Nah,” you shake your head, “I think I’ll lick it. Hurry back so I have something else to fill my stomach.”

“Right away, Miss Legislacerator.” She offers a deep, dramatic bow and disappears out of the block, leaving nothing but her dissipating scent behind.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all liked this chapter! Despite the difficulties of writing Vriska and Terezi (two girls whom I love but I am not confident in writing) and writing something pale and/or fluffy, this was still pretty fun to write. Just in case you didn't hear it the first time, happy Terezi week! >:]}
Chapter Notes

This chapter was originally supposed to be split 50/50 between Rose and Kanaya, but that didn't turn out as planned, so I hope no one minds an emphasis on the Kanaya pov.

I feel like I'm taking forever to write these chapters, so I'm sorry if it feels that way waiting for them, too.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rose vs. Freud

You’ve never had a problem being by yourself. Really, it was a given seeing as you’d lived in a big, secluded house in the middle of the woods in upstate New York. Yes, you went to school. Yes, you had classmates. No, you didn’t have friends.

Actually, that’s not true. You had a cat. Jaspers was your friend. But Jaspers died, and there went your sense of comradery.

Back in New York, in your giant house with no one but your drunk mom to keep you company, you’d gotten used to spending long periods of time by yourself. If you were being honest, you’d even started to enjoy it. Truly nothing could substitute the sound of a spring’s breeze through the trees outside your house.

You don’t mind being by yourself, but you also don’t mind the occasional break from yourself, either. So when Dave comes into the room and interrupts your reading, it’s both a pleasantry and an aggravation.

“Rose.” He moans, dragging his feet behind him.

You close your book. “Dave.”

He shuffles over to the couch and slumps face first into the cushion. He groans loudly into it. This looks like a job for Rose Lalonde-amateur therapist.

“What’s the matter?”

His reply is muffled by the couch. “Karkat.”

You’re surprised it took Dave this long to need a breather. He’s been spending so much time alone with Karkat lately that you haven’t seen either of them apart for quite awhile. You don’t hate Karkat or anything, but you don’t think you could stand being with him that often without any time alone for yourself. You don’t even think you could be with Kanaya as often as Dave’s with Karkat without time alone for yourself, and you’re practically in lo-

it’s too early to think about that.

“What about Karkat?” You ask.
Dave lifts his head off the couch and stares up at you, you can barely make out the form of his eyes through his shades. “He’s upset about something and I don’t know what to do about it.”

You tilt your head to indicate that you’re curious and listening. “Isn’t that always the case?”

“Yeah,” he admits, “but it’s usually a tantrum and a couple rants. You know, cussing, throwing shit, basic stuff. It’s pretty entertaining to watch. You ever seen him throw a bitch fit? He can twist himself up into positions that a fucking double jointed yoga instructor would go green over.”

“Green?”

“With jealousy.” Dave explains, still half on the floor while he sits up. “A couple hours of that loud, colorful shitstorm and those nasty sewage clouds eventually part by themselves without me having to do anything about it. Even when I do have to do shit, it’s usually just basic friend shit like feelings jams and just being there.”

Something in his tone is odd. It’s subtle, but there’s a shift there when he mentions having to perform “basic friend shit”. You doubt Dave has any issues with talking issues out with Karkat, if that were the case, Dave wouldn’t be friends with Karkat at all.

No, you think a specific word is the root to this almost overlooked tonal change. “Friend” being the most likely culprit.

Friend......Friend....

You play around with the word for a bit, trying to gather a meaning behind the change when it hits you.

Does Dave want to be...more than friends with Karkat? Is Dave finally coming out to you? Is he asking for your advice on how? Holy shit, is he going to ask you for help on wooing Karkat?

You truly hope so. You’ve been waiting so long for this.

This is all speculation on your part. To really determine if your hypothesis is correct, you’re going to need more information.

“So,” you try to keep your tone even as you persuade him to keep talking, “what’s different about this time?”

“You heard Vriska’s announcement a couple days ago, right? How she stomped in here while we were all just chilling and then bragged for a good ten minutes about how we were losers and she got us and there was no way we were going to recover from a loss like that to our fort?”

“Yes, I do recall that.” You nod. “You and Karkat disappeared in quite a hurry after she left.”

“I had to go make sure Karkat didn’t try to smack a bitch.” Dave replies. “Not that I blame him. She said she was going to use our flag as toilet paper, Rose! That’s not cool.”

“You’re right, it’s not.” You agree. “But what does that have to do with now?”

Dave groans and leans his face against the couch again so his cheek is pressed against the cushion. “I thought he was pissed at Vriska for stealing our flag and bragging about it.”

“An understandable conclusion.”

“Fuck yeah, it is. That’s something I could understand being pissed about. Hell, I could understand
him being pissed at me, at that point. My lazy ass slept through the whole thing and Karkat had to take on Fort Scourge by himself. But-

Dave stops talking. You think he’s considering his options between continuing his story and getting whatever the fuck this is off his chest (which is a surprising lack of homosexual urges, but you’ll get there), or keeping it to himself. Not that Dave has ever succeeded at keeping a secret once in his life.

You lean in closer and try to use as many nonverbals as you can to express your interest in the matter. You’re honestly not even sure if Dave can read body language that well, so the gesture might be lost on him. “Go on.”

Lost in translation or not, it still works on him. “But he’s just pissed at himself. He keeps saying he’s sorry over and over again like a broken fucking record no matter how many times I say everything’s fine or that it doesn’t matter and I don’t actually care. And when he’s not busy apologizing over the fucking nothing that happened, he’s pulling this whole huge, insulting self-deprecating bullshit that I can’t stand because no matter what I say or do, I can tell he doesn’t believe me. He just...fucking grinds me the wrong way, you know?”

“I believe the way Karkat grinds on you is something you should take up with him, not me.” You tease, raising your eyebrows suggestively.

You see it in his face when the reality of what he said hits him. It’s subtle, but it’s there. There’s just the slightest downturn of his lip, the faintest hint of pink brushed under his freckles. “That’s not what I meant.”

You nod sagely. “I know.”

“You meant he rubs me the wrong way.”

“Is that much better, Dave?”

“Grinds my gears?”

“Better.” You nod. “Although that could still be taken a different way, considering your aspect.”

You point out the picture of the gear on his shirt and lift an eyebrow. “So tell me, Dave, does Karkat grind your gears?”

“Fuck you, Rose.”

“That’s not what we’re talking about right now.” You reply. “What we were talking about is your current issue with Karkat.”

“Right, yeah. Karkat’s really upset about losing the fort. I don’t know how to deal with him being actually fucking upset about something, I can only deal in pissed and agitated.”

“Well, I would love to help you in your quest to deal with basic human emotions, Dave. Do you want my advice on the matter?”

“I want to know where Kanaya is.” Dave says bluntly.

Whoa. That came out of left field, what the fuck?

“Kanaya?” You ask, confused by the unexpected request. You thought you were having a nice
conversation. “Why do you want to know where Kanaya is?”

He shrugs. “If anyone’s gonna know how to deal with Karkat, it’s her. So what do you say, Rose? Can you hook a guy up?”

“I would, but unfortunately, I can’t. I have no idea where she is right now.”

“What, you don’t have your gaydar trained on her exact location constantly? Is your GPS broken?”

You decide to play along. “Dave, what are you talking about?”

“Your gay positioning system.” He says, his face completely void of expression. If you didn’t know any better, you’d say he was serious.

But you do know better, so you pretend he is.

“Oh believe me, Kanaya and I have been attempting *many* positions in a certain system.” Your eyebrows go up again, and you smirk. “All of which happen to be *very* gay. However, that is all information that I don’t feel comfortable disclosing to you for obvious reasons.”

“Rose, the last thing I want to hear about right now is your sex life.” He frowns. “If you don’t want to disclose that information, can’t you just tell me where Kanaya is?”

“I would, Dave, but like I said, I don’t know where she is.” You shrug. “I’m perfectly willing to help you with your predicament if you want to talk about it with me.”

You silently will him into staying and talking with you about this. You haven’t had a good talk with Dave in a long time and you’d love to rectify that.

He shakes his head, and you try to keep the disappointment off your face. “Nah. I’d rather talk to Kanaya about this. She’d know what to do in this situation.”

Dave would rather talk to Kanaya than to you. That...that sort of hurts. Of course he doesn’t mean anything by it, but you can’t help but feel a bit insulted about this.

“That’s true.” You nod, reopening your book and finding where you left off. “In that case, I suggest you stop brothering me and look for Kanaya yourself, since I’m reading right now.”

You pretend to read, but find it impossible to actually do so with Dave staring at you, not moving from his spot.

“Rose?”

You don’t look up. “What?”

“Brothering?” Dave says.

It takes you a moment to understand what he just said and why he said it. “It was a slip of the tongue.”

“Yeah,” he scoffs, standing up, “a *Freudian* slip of the tongue. I’m on to you, Rose. Looks like the therapist is becoming the therapowned.”

“Whatever you need to tell yourself, Dave.” You roll your eyes and pretend to go back to your book. You’ve lost interest in it now. “You and I both know that wasn’t the case, but I’ll let you keep that delusion if it makes you more open for discussion in the future.”
You’re hoping he’s more open for discussion right now. You don’t think he is, though.

He shrugs, shoving his hands in his pockets. “I’ll think about it. You sure you don’t know where Kanaya is?”

“Somewhere on the meteor, I believe, but your guess is as good as mine.” You turn a page so you can continue your reading illusion.

“Alright.” Dave nods and trudges off towards the transportalizer. “I’m gonna go wander around this fucking ginormous meteor maze and hunt me an alien vampire.”

“Try not to stake her,” you call as he leaves, “she’s not into that.”

You hear him trying to offer a retort, but it’s drowned out by the transportalizer. There’s a loud noise and a flash, and then just like that you’re alone again.

You close your book and slump on the couch, unable to focus on the text. You wish Dave had stayed longer. You wish Dave was more willing to talk more in depth emotionally with you. More than that, you wish you’d had the guts to tell him so.

You’re really starting to miss your cat.

Rosemary vs. Scourge

You’re in your block attempting to knit like how Rose showed you when there’s a knock at your door. You lay your work down on the floor and stand to answer.

You open your door, and there standing in the hall is Rose. She’s looking up at you from under her orange hood. There’s a hard look in those lavender gander bulbs of hers that makes you think she’s not happy and is in need of a feelings jam.

“Would you like to come in?” You ask, stepping aside.

“Yes, I would.” She smiles and glides in, her god tier dress fluttering behind her. You’ve noticed that she’s always gliding. She walks like she has trouble keeping her feet on the ground. You love the way she moves, every motion deliberate and languid. She’s beautiful to watch.

Rose takes a seat on the floor by your knitting, examining it closely. You sit down beside her, your fingers brushing against hers.

“You’ve redecorated since I was here last.” Rose surveys your recent changes.

Your block is now an exact replica of your respite block back on Alternia, save for the lack of sunlight filtering in through strategically placed openings like they were back on your hive. There’s barely any light on this entire cold rock, and you find yourself craving the warmth and light of the sun almost constantly. The craving has subsided almost completely now with the light of your own skin and the warmth of Rose’s soft body against yours.

“I like it.” She says, nodding. “It’s nice.”

“Thank you.” You’re proud of your recreation of this one tiny piece of your hive. Granted, it’s nothing like what you had back on Alternia, but it’s enough to stave off any feelings of hivesickness you may have. “Was there something you needed to talk about, Rose?”
You weren’t exactly an excellent moirail to Vriska in the past, but what you were good at was listening to her talk about her feelings. You’re really good at feelings jams. You consider it your forte when it comes to pale relationships.

Your relationship with Rose is far from pale. You haven’t really discussed the quadrants in full detail with her yet, but you feel safe in claiming flushed. The things you learned about humans since you began your relationship with Rose is that humans have no sense of intimate boundaries in a relationship. When you date a human, you get a taste of everything and every quadrant.

It’s strange, but you were expecting strange when you entered into a relationship with an alien.

“Yes, there was, actually. You don’t mind if I vent to you a little, do you?”

“Not at all.” You get yourself comfortable. “Proceed.”

Rose clears her throat. “Dave is looking for you.”

“Oh. Is he?”

Rose nods, looking down at her hands and fidgeting with your knitting needles. “Yes.”

“What about?”

“About Karkat. He wanted advice on what to do with him.”

“Okay.” You say. “I’ll find him and talk to him later. What did you want to talk about?”

“That.” She admits. “And some other things pertaining to Dave, if that’s alright.”

“That’s perfectly acceptable.” You don’t understand human relationships all that well, but recently you’ve noticed Rose has had an influx of worries about Dave. You’re more than fine with lending Rose your hear ducts about it for awhile. “Go on.”

“Dave interrupted my reading earlier to talk about what’s going on with Karkat...”

Rose goes on to explain the entire conversation she just had with Dave, as well as her feelings about what happened.

“So what you’re saying is, you’re upset Dave doesn’t trust you enough to confide his problems in you and ask for your advice?”

“Yes,” she sighs, “I suppose that’s the gist of what I was saying. It sounds so stupid when you boil it down like that.”

“It’s not stupid.” If Rose were your moirail, you would probably be lightly shoosh papping her cheek to placate her. You settle on patting her hand gently instead. “You’re just worried about the state of your relationship with Dave. He’s like your human equivalent of a moirail, isn’t he?”

“Something like that, yes.” She agrees.

“So your concern makes sense.” You continue. “You’re just worried about growing distant to your moirail. That’s a perfectly understandable fear.”

“Well, I wouldn’t say ‘fear’ exactly.” Rose replies. “Though you’re right, I am concerned about it.”

“Which is completely fine.” You repeat, squeezing her hand. “Is there anything you plan on doing
“About the current situation, or about Dave in general?”

“Let’s start with the current situation.”

She bites her lip, and all your attention is diverted to the soft flesh of her mouth. You want to kiss her. You want to press her tender mouth against your own and take her in slowly.

How long could you spend breathing her in without breaking apart for new oxygen?

How hard could you bite her lip without drawing blood?

How much could you touch her before you’re going too far?

Rose’s face—her mouth specifically—is suddenly closer than you remember. Her eyes are also much, much closer.

Where has your hand gone?

“Kanaya,” Rose’s sweet breath breezes warm across your face, “what are you doing?”

Ah, there’s your hand. Cupping her breast.

She laughs. “Kanaya, you’re blushing.”

You can feel the blood hot in your face. You can’t imagine how green you are right now.

“You have very pretty eyes.” You blurt. You’ve never been very good around pretty girls. “They’re like a sea dweller’s, but the hue is so bright that there’s no way it would exist naturally back on Alternia. I would look at them forever if I didn’t have the constant need to blink.”

“Thank you.” She presses her forehead against yours, staring deeply into your eyes with her breathtakingly blazing lavender ones. Her free hand presses softly against your chest. You wonder if she can hear how your bloodpusher is fluttering. “I could say the same about yours. I love the color in your eyes. The gray, the yellow, it’s beautiful.”

“They’re going to change color when I reach adulthood.” You admit, inching ever closer to her. Your noses are squished together. “The gray will change to my blood color once I turn ten.”

“Will they?” She says softly. She’s squeezing your breast. “Well, I can’t wait to see that.”

She swoops in and starts kissing you before you can make your move. You melt into her. You can’t help yourself.

Your eyes close of their own accord and you wonder if you can get an answer to at least one of your previous questions. You most likely will. There’s no way you’re removing yourself from this unless you absolutely have to.

Her tongue slips into your mouth and oh, mother grub, what kind of delicious sensation is this? Breathing is becoming more difficult with every second that passes. You shiver, even though you’re warm. You’re so warm, warmer than a ray of Alternian sunshine.

You wish your aspect was time so you could freeze it and make this moment last forever.

But it doesn’t. It lasts awhile, but not as long as you wish it would.
Rose is the first to break contact, and you groan and lean your head heavily against her shoulder. The sudden addition of your weight makes her fall over onto the ground. You land on top of her and stay there.

Rose starts showering you with kisses. The corner of your mouth, your cheek, your jaw, your eyelids, everywhere she can reach without moving.

“So what’s the plan?” You ask, kissing her on the nose and leaving a black and green lipstick smudge on the tip.

“Plan?” Rose asks between pecks.

“Yes, didn’t you want to help Dave with his predicament?”

“That’s true, I did. The best I can come up with is a revenge plan.”

“Revenge?”

“Against Fort Scourge’s sneak attack.” Rose explains, leaving a crown of kisses across your forehead. “If they hadn’t done that, the boys would still be in the game.”

“I don’t think I understand how they’re out of the game,” you admit, “Fort Scourge only took one of two of their flags. They should still have one flag left, shouldn’t they? Unless there’s some strange human rules I don’t know about?”

“No, you’re right, technically they should still have a flag left. Karkat left his outside our fort not long after he and Dave made their escape. I think he may have a fundamental misunderstanding of how this game works.”

“That’s entirely possible.” You agree. If you remember correctly, he’d said he’d never played before, and you doubt he bothered to learn all of the rules. “Did you not return it to them?”

“I would have, but it’s such a good read!” She laments. “It’s also very informative regarding your romantic quadrants. I’ve been taking notes.”

“Is it?” You wonder if it’s one you’ve read before. Perhaps you and Rose could read it together and you could explain some of the intricacies of troll romance in greater detail to her. “I suppose that’s fine, as long as you return it when you’re finished reading. I think Karkat would approve of your use of his flag.”

“I hope so,” Rose wiggles a bit against you, scooting herself high enough so she can reach your horns. She kisses both of them, “because I’ve been reading his own notes extensively. His handwriting is a bit hard to decipher, but some of his insights are rather astute. I think I would like to discuss them with him.”

“Perfect, that’s his favorite conversation topic.” You need to change the subject off of Karkat. It’s sort of turning you off of your kiss/cuddle fest. “So what’s the plan?”

“The plan? It’s simple enough.” Rose pulls away from you and sits up, rolling you off of her. “We’re going into Fort Scourge, and we’re not leaving until we have one of their flags.”

“That’s the whole plan?” You ask, propping yourself up on your elbows.

She gives you a solemn nod. “That’s the whole plan.”
“That doesn’t sound too difficult to execute.” You stand up and offer Rose your hand. “Shall we, then?”

“We shall.” Rose clasps your hand, and you help her to her feet. “Just one little thing first.”

“What would that be?”

Rose stands on her toes and kisses you again. “You have lipstick all over your face.”

It takes you a good five minutes to remove all of the lipstick from your face. Cleaning it off your horns proves to be the most difficult challenge. You get it all off eventually. You’re glowing green the entire time because you can’t stop thinking about how it all got there in the first place.

Rose is waiting for you outside when you leave. You take a shortcut you’d stumbled upon by accident over to Fort Scourge, ready to face off against Vriska and Terezi.

“What do we do if they’re not there?” You’re moving at a slow pace so you can keep in step with Rose.

“Then we leave and try again later.” She says with a shrug. “Perhaps you could show me that knitting you were working on.”

You’re making her a scarf. “I could do that. Sure.”

You reach Fort Scourge. The door is already open.

“Hello?” Rose calls as she walks in, pushing the door further open. You go in after her.

Fort Scourge is messier than you remember. Not that you’re one to talk about mess, your own block isn’t exactly clean itself. There’s junk everywhere, piles of scalemates, papers scattered and crumpled all over the floor, posters and strange stains on the walls that you’re not sure you want an explanation for. On the very back wall, hung like a trophy between Vriska’s Mindfang costume and Terezi’s Redglare, is Dave and Karkat’s flag.

Vriska is in the middle of the fort, lounging on a strange squishy lump and throwing darts at the high ceiling. She turns her head and pushes her glasses further up the bridge of her nose when she sees the both of you.

“Hey,” Vriska sits up, the weird squishy thing shifting under her, “what’s up?”

“Those darts.”

“Not much.” Rose responds. “Where’s Terezi?”

“Can Town. She wanted to hang out with the Mayor.” Vriska shrugs and tosses another dart up into the air. It sticks into the ceiling easily.

“Is that so?” Rose nods, exchanging a look with you. “Then this should make things easier for us.”

Rose is running before either you or Vriska can even so much as form a response. Her movements are no longer slow, but they are definitely just as calculated in their speed. She’s nothing but an orange blur, barely visible as she reaches the back wall without hindrance.

Vriska jumps to a stand and is ready to toss her few remaining darts at Rose in an attempt to stop
her, but Rose isn’t the only one who’s fast. You can rely on your rainbow drinker speed in this situation. Vriska’s arm goes backwards, and she sends the dart flying through the air. You catch it in midair before it can so much as graze its intended target.

You do the same with the next few shots, covering Rose’s back as she lifts the flag up from its place and rolls it back up around the pole so it’s easier to carry.

“Wait a gog damned minute!” Vriska yells, pausing her assault. “You can’t take that flag, it’s against the rules!”

Rose puts one hand on her hip, the other one still holding the flag upright. “How is that against the rules?”

“The rules clearly state that you can take either one of our flags, or a flag that your team lost.” Vriska explains. “Last time I checked, neither of you were part of Fort Davekat.”

“That’s true, we’re not, but that rule wasn’t very clear.” Rose puts the flag back and straightens it out between the two costumes. “You need to make an amendment to whichever rule that is. Or perhaps another rule altogether?”

“I’m not putting an amendment on rule six.” Vriska sneers. “No one else had an issue with it, it’s perfectly clear.”

You tilt your head. “I thought rule six was the rule about someone having to be present in the fort?”

“No,” Rose shakes her head, “that’s rule three.”

“I’m fairly sure rule three was can it, wasn’t it?” You ask. “I believe you’re thinking of rule five.”

“Rule six is about having someone in the fort and which flags you can take.” Vriska corrects. “Rule four is can it, which you’re still failing miserably at.”

“Oh, darn.” Rose deadpans sarcastically. “I suppose we’re just going to have to keep quiet as we abscond with one of your flags.”

“Good luck finding them,” she scoffs in reply, “you couldn’t get your fronds on our flags if they came over and gnawed your face off.”

“Vriska, I can see your bag of eight sided dice right there.” You point out the bag looped through a hole in her belt.

She covers the bag with her hand. “This is obviously a different bag, Kanaya.” She defends. “Wearing it on my belt would be fucking stupid, I’m not an idiot, Kanaya. I don’t have my head shoved up my seedflap.”

“There has to be a rule against wearing the flag on your person.” Rose mumbles to you.

“I don’t remember many of the rules Vriska said,” you confess, “but I don’t recall that being one of them.”

“Well, it should be.”

“You could ask Vriska about it. Perhaps make it another rule?” You suggest.

“Hey, Vriska!” Rose yells over to her. “Isn’t a basic rule of capture the flag that you can’t guard the
flag too closely? Isn’t what you’re doing in direct defiance of that rule?”

“That’s not a real rule!” She shouts back. “And even if it were, the whole purpose of this game is to practice basic combat skills and shit like that. This way hand to hand combat is pretty much a given.”

“Wow, that explanation almost sounded reasonable.” Rose says, slightly impressed.

“I still think there should be a rule about it, that doesn’t seem very fair.” Rose replies to her.

“Life’s not fair!”

“This isn’t life,” you chime in, “this is a game.”

“Okay fine!” Vriska snaps. “I’ll make the stupid rule! But it won’t come into effect until after I write it, so the dice stay on!”

“Fair enough!” Rose yells. She turns to you and whispers, “I’ll take Vriska, you look for Terezi’s flag. My guess is it’s somewhere in the piles.”

You nod. That sounds as likely a place to keep it as any. Without further discussion, Rose charges at Vriska, who runs to meet her. You make yourself busy with finding Pyralspite, Terezi’s favorite scalemate.

You don’t watch a lot of the fight as you search, knowing that Rose is really mostly keeping Vriska busy as you rummage around and disturb the piles of scalemates. You only look over every once in awhile to make sure Rose doesn’t need help. From what you’ve seen it looks like Rose has everything under control.

You search through three or four small piles of scalemates, but somehow keep coming up short of the one you’re looking for. So far you’ve successfully located Professor Pucefoot, Doctor Honeytongue, and a myriad of other colorful forensic specialists. There’s no Pyralspite to be seen.

It’s a real head scratcher, one you have no way to solve until you see Rose and Vriska slamming each other into the walls. The vibrations from the impact are loud, but they seem fine, so you leave them alone. While this is happening, your eyes slide over to the back wall, where Fort Davekat’s flag and Terezi and Vriska’s flarping outfits are. It’s only then that you recall that Pyralspite only comes out in public when Terezi is in character as Redglare. So it would make logical sense for it to be...

You approach the back wall and kick one of Terezi’s boots aside. Sure enough, there he is, looking up at you with those red button eyes.

Pyralspite.

You pick up the scalemate and hold it aloft for Rose to see. The two of them had recently taken their fight to the air, since they can both do that as god tiers.

From the looks of things, Rose is winning the fight. Either that, or Vriska volunteered to be tied to the ceiling, held up with only yarn and darts.

“Rose, I got it!” You yell up to her.

“Good job, Kanaya!” Rose gives you a thumbs up. “Toss it here!”
You throw Pyralspite up to her, and she catches it easily. She floats down to you. You take her hand while she’s still midair and guide her to the ground. Rose takes Pyralspite and puts him in her sylladex for safe keeping.

“You can’t do that,” Vriska yells, squirming in her yarn cocoon, “it’s against the rules!”

“I don’t remember there being any rules about that!” Rose shouts back up to her.

“I’ll make the rule!” She threatens.

“Okay,” Rose says, unphased, “but it won’t come into effect until after you write it, so the scalemate stays there!”

She begins walking out of the fort, a smirk on her face with her head held high. Without looking behind her, she grabs your hand.

“You’ll pay for this!” Vriska screams as you leave.

“Oh, I’m sure we will.” Rose replies over her shoulder as the two of you walk out hand in hand. She slams the door behind her, blocking out anything else Vriska might have to say on the matter.

Your victory stroll over to Fort Rosemary is shortlived, but the feeling of victory isn’t. This is the first time you’ve willingly participated in the game, and you liked helping the offense much more than fending off for defense.

Rose carries you up to the top of the fort where you’ve been secretly hiding your flags in a fold of fabric to keep them safe. She deposits you on her swing (a somewhat newer addition to the fort, built more for nostalgia than for function) and adds Pyralspite to your growing pile of flags. The fabric bulges out just a bit, you can see the outline of your old lunchtop through it. If anyone were to look up, they would know exactly where you keep your winnings.

Rose comes and sits down next to you on the swing, you have to scoot to make room, but you’re more than fine with the proximity. She wraps her arm around you and leans her head against your shoulder as you both just sit and sway a bit on the swing.

“You know what I just realized?” She says, looking up at you with those big, impossible eyes.

“No, what?” You can’t help but smile when you look at her.

She laughs and smiles back. “I think we’re winning.”

Chapter End Notes

I really took a shot at writing Kanaya there, I realized that besides the Mayor and Gamzee (whom I'm not even sure will make an appearance? I dunno 100% yet) she's the only one I hadn't tried writing yet.

Anyway, I hope you liked this chapter! Thanks for reading! :)


Only in Dream Bubbles

Chapter Notes

It’s a long chapter about Dave having a conversation and exploring his feelings in a dream bubble! It takes place right after everything that happened in the last chapter, just so you know.
I’ve never written anything in a dream bubble or with any of the dancestors before, so I hope that turned out okay.
Anyway, I hope you like reading it!!

Karkat hates the dream bubbles. He hates them with an intensity that only rivals how much he despises arguing with every shitty, fucked up version of himself.
His words, not yours.

You’d noticed his issues with the dream bubbles early on in your broship with Karkat.

By the time you’d started hanging out with him in Can Town, helping the Mayor out with construction and shit, all you really knew how to do with Karkat was push his buttons and mess with him. You’d had no idea how to talk to him without riling him up, so you’d just chatted up the Mayor and rapped under your breath to fill the silence. After a couple days of that awkward shit, the Mayor pushed you at Karkat and made you hold a conversation like an actual normal dude.

“Hey.” You’d said. It was the first thing you’d said to Karkat since you’d said hey to him when he came in two hours earlier. The Mayor gave you his nod of approval.

Karkat glared at you. The look was so sharp that it brought to mind memories of all those shitty swords that filled the fridge in your apartment. The scars on your feet throbbed. “What the fuck do you want, Dave?”

“Nothing,” you’d shrugged, “just trying to make conversation.”

“Congratulations, you did it. We conversed. You just cleared another rung on your echeladder of stupidity. Now shove a throb stalk in it and go back to building the communal hive stems like a good little fuck and leave me alone. Your face is starting to agitate my aggravation sponge.”

There were a lot of words in that that you hadn’t understood, but you decided to focus on one piece of troll terminology at a time. “What’s a communal hive stem?”

Karkat stacked a can on top of another one and then backed away to examine his work. “Don’t be stupid, Dave. You know what a communal hive stem is, you lived in one for shit’s sake.”

“You mean an apartment building?” You’d asked. “Why the hell do you have such a complicated word for apartment building? Is that even what it’s actually called, or are you just making stuff up and bullshitting me?”

“That’s what they’re called!” He’d said, voice growing louder with insistence. “I’m not hoofbeast shitting you. Sollux lived in one, that’s what he calls it.”

“Sollux. That’s the guy who left, right? What’s he like?”
That turned out to be the right question to ask. For the next four hours, you stacked cans with Karkat and listened to him talk about his friend, Sollux Captor. You learned that Sollux is a hacker, a fucking genius when it comes to codes and shit. He has a weird obsession with the number two and a lisp that everyone makes fun of, but in that way that friends make fun of other friends, more teasing than demeaning. Karkat also sometimes really hated Sollux (at this point his ears had gotten pink, and you’d wondered if he was still pissed at Sollux about something since this was before you’d understood what Karkat really meant by “hate”) but it never developed into anything because in the end Karkat was too worried about losing Sollux as a friend to ever really try anything like that with him.

“Eridan hates Sollux a lot,” he’d continued, “because of what happened with Feferi.”

“What happened with Feferi?” You’d asked. This was the most Karkat had ever talked to you. He’d really seemed to be enjoying the topic, he hadn’t cussed you out once since he started talking about his friend. “Also, who the fuck is Feferi?”

“Feferi?” He’d repeated, handing you a can so you could stack it onto the growing tower of cans you’d both been working on. He could no longer reach the top himself. You have no idea where the Mayor went at this point, you were completely alone with Karkat. “She’s a sea dweller. Heiress to the entire Alternian Empire. We’re not that close, but she’s okay. She’s really excitable and loves fish puns, but all those fucking brine encrusted chum buckets are into those. Eridan is, at least. Fuck, he has this massive flush crush on-”

He’d stopped midsentence. You’d stared at him and waited for him to continue his one sided conversation about his friends, only to see the excitement drain from his eyes. His shoulders slumped, and he closed his mouth and stopped talking altogether.

You stacked a couple more cans with him in silence for about five minutes before he left you there without a word. It was only after he was gone that you realized what the problem was.

He was talking about them in present tense.

This turned out not to be a one time thing. He always talks about his friends like that. Is instead of was. Are in place of were.

He talks about them like they’re still alive. Every time without fail.

The worst is when he catches himself doing it. There’s this recognition in his eyes that makes him freeze up. When he does force himself to metaphorically thaw out, he just closes his mouth and stares at nothing. He always looks so distant, so small and sad. Sadder than you think you’ve ever seen a person. Sad to the point of exhaustion.

You don’t know what to do about it when he gets like that. Really, there’s nothing you can do when he gets like that. So you do what any person in your situation with your set of social skills would do.

You do nothing.

You never talk to Karkat about the way he talks about his friends, and you never actually had a conversation with him about his feelings towards the dream bubbles. You never talk about it, but you can sense it. There’s this unease that radiates off of him in waves any time you’re about to collide with a dream bubble. You don’t think he realizes how obvious his discomfort is, or that you know he’s running off someplace to be by himself until the bubble passes and hopefully not run into anyone inhabiting it.
You get why he does it, or at least you think you do. It must be so easy to slip and forget the pain when you’re surrounded by ghosts.

It must be so hard to fall back into reality and remember it all over again when they’re gone and all you have is bad memories.

So long story short, Karkat hates the dream bubbles, and he hates them for good reason. If you were being honest, that was part of why you’d made the fort in the first place. You don’t know where Karkat used to go when the dream bubbles came, but you’ve convinced him to stay in the fort with you to wait them out. You feel better knowing that he’s at least someplace nice during your short voyage through the bubble.

Karkat hates the dream bubbles, which is why you’re so fucking relieved that he’s already in the fort when the whole meteor smacks into one without warning.

One minute, you’re walking around on the meteor, searching for Kanaya, and the next minute you’re someplace that is definitely not home sweet space rock. The way the sand’s whipping your face and the sun’s beating down on you leads you to believe that you’re in a desert. Why the fuck you’re in a desert is beyond you, but hey, that’s just how dream bubbles work. You pull up your hood and trudge ahead, continuing your quest to find Kanaya.

It doesn’t even have to be your Kanaya, it could be any Kanaya. It wouldn’t make too much of a difference, you think her advice would be the same. A dead Kanaya would probably be better to talk to, at least then you won’t have to worry about her getting the wrong idea and shooting you knowing looks whenever you’re with Karkat.

Which is all the time.

Why does everybody think you like Karkat? Rose has never said it to your face, but you know her. You know that’s what she’s thinking, you can just fucking tell she thinks you’re attracted to Karkat. The Mayor has literally pushed you at Karkat in the past. You understand what his game is. Not that you really mind with the Mayor, he’s a sweet alien dude who doesn’t know any better. Maybe all your chilling with Karkat is some form of courtship on his planet, you don’t know. You know dick about the chess guys.

Terezi, on the other hand, she’s perfectly aware of what she’s doing. She’s been pestering you about it ever since she found out you and Karkat were hanging out regularly. She keeps teasing you about it and you keep on denying, but she never listens to you. Recently she’s been telling you that you need to lock him down in a quadrant while he’s available and you still can.

But like you’ve been saying, you don’t like Karkat like that at all. He’s your friend, your best bro, even, you like him a lot, but you don’t like him in any romantic sense. Everything you do with him is strictly platonic, regular bro kind of things.

...except for that time you held his hand briefly right before the fight against Fort Rosemary and didn’t stop thinking about it for a week. You’re not sure what the deal was with that. Probably just adrenaline or something. You don’t know.

Even if you did think about Karkat like that (which you definitely don’t), you have no idea how to go about starting a relationship with him to begin with. You don’t understand quadrants at all. You get the basics, sure, there are four of them and they’re all separate and important to troll culture and hard as fuck to pronounce, but you don’t understand the driving concepts behind them. Why does a troll need three other partners to fulfill their emotional needs? Are trolls only capable of feeling one way towards a partner? Do you get dumped if your feelings change, or do you just switch
quadrants? What if you don’t know what quadrant you want? Do you ask? Is there some ritualistic courtship you’re supposed to perform when you want to start a relationship with someone? What if he says no?

Not that you’re interested. You’re not. You just have a healthy curiosity, that’s all.

Karkat could do better than you, anyway. He’s hot, he could have whoever he wants.

By troll standards. By troll standards he’s hot.

Terezi told you that.

You in no way, shape, or form think your best bro is hot. Not to say he’s unattractive, per se, there’s definitely parts of him that could be considered cute from a universal standpoint. Parts that everybody would find adorable and nobody would be able to dispute without lying through their teeth.

Okay, maybe you do in some way, shape, or form think Karkat is hot from a very friendly, platonic perspective. Yes, his face is aesthetically pleasing. Yes, his hair is a cute mess. Yes, he’s got a freaking hot b-

You’re starting to forget where you were going with this.

You hope you find Kanaya soon. Any Kanaya. You need someone to help clear your mind of this sudden onset of weird, Karkat related thoughts.

The terrain’s started changing while you were lost in your own head. You’re no longer just shuffling sand around, you’re reaching a long, jaggedly rocky cliffside. You can already taste the sea salt on the breeze.

You trudge along until the sound of the waves crashing against the rocks is practically pounding at your ears. You reach the edge of the cliff, where a steep drop off awaits. You consider stepping off and flying around until you find some dry land, or you could always turn back and try your luck with the desert again.

You plop down on the cliff’s edge and just listen to the waves as you weigh your options. You’ve never seen this much water in person before. Does it count if it’s technically somebody’s memory of water that you’re looking at?

Yes. You think it does.

There’s a blotch against the horizon that’s fluttering slowly closer. You watch the blotch increase in size and become easier to make out as it approaches and takes shape. There are wings, big, green, translucent butterfly wings that beat effortlessly at the wind. There’s a god tier outfit with a style and sigil you’ve never seen before. You haven’t seen a lot of god tiers before, so that’s not surprising. There are horns that are easily recognizable to you as Kanaya’s, only the troll landing a few feet away from you is clearly not Kanaya.

It’s her dancestor. What’s her name.

You turn around to watch whatever her name is stretch with her arms over her head, her back to you. You don’t know if she even knows you’re here.

“Hey,” okay, she knows you’re here. She spins around so she’s facing you. She has a fuckton of piercings on her face. That’s...actually pretty cool. “mind if I sit here?”
“Nah, go ahead.” You scoot over and offer her the spot next to you on the edge.

She takes a seat and stretches her legs out. “I’m exhausted. Flying takes a lot out of a troll.”

“Yeah, I bet. You gotta beat those wings to get anywhere. Me, I don’t even have to think about it, I just do it.” You shrug. “Name’s Dave, by the way.”

She’s not looking at you, her attention focused on the sea. “I know. This isn’t our first time meeting.”

“It’s not?” You wrack your brain for any memory involving her and come up empty.

“I’ve met plenty of dead Daves.” She says. “There are quite a lot of you populating the bubbles.”

“Yeah. That’s the kind of thing that happens when you’re dealing with all of these time shenanigans and shit.” You admit, remembering all of the times other Daves died in your place during the game. “So clearly my reputation precedes me, but who are you, Kanaya look-alike?”

“Porrim.” She turns her head to face you as she introduces herself. “Porrim Maryam, Maid of Space.”

“That’s cool. I’m made of irony and Doritos.”

Porrim smirks, her piercings catching the light and flashing gold. “That was an odd thing to say, Dave.”

“Porrim, I’ll let you in on a secret, I’m just chock fucking full of odd things to say. I am so full of strange phrases I’m close to bursting at the seams over here. The stitching on my god tier pajamas is fucking straining under the added weight of my bullshit. If I don’t talk some of this shit out of my system, I’m gonna explode and splatter brains and bullshit all over this scraggly rock and maybe into the sea, too, I don’t know the exact trajectory of my shit missile yet.”

Porrim doesn’t respond, and instead turns back towards the sea and closes her blank eyes in a clear indication that she would rather listen to the water than to you. You don’t mind, you’re not sure what the fuck you were going on about.

You stare out at the sea. You’re not really sure you understand why people make such a big deal about seeing it. It’s just a big body of water.

You’ll admit, the sound’s not terrible. Maybe Kanaya’s dancensor has the right idea. You close your eyes and join her in absorbing the sounds of the choppy waves against the rocks. The rhythm’s almost soothing.

You allow yourself to get lost in the sound, which consequently leads you to being lost in your thoughts once again. You don’t know how long you’ll be in this dream bubble for, but you have a sinking feeling you won’t be finding Kanaya any time soon.

But you have her dancestor, who could possibly help you with your questions if you asked and who probably won’t start spreading rumors all over the dream bubbles about you liking Karkat.

Which would be lies, because you don’t.

The thing is, you’re not sure how much help she’s really going to be to you. You were looking for Kanaya because she and Karkat are friends and you figured she would know what to do about the current situation you’re in. As far as you know, Porrim’s never met Karkat and can’t offer you any
helpful insights.

May as well try anyway. “Hey, Porrim, do you know Karkat?”

“I’ve met him, yes.” She nods. “What about him?”

“It’s kind of a long story,” you begin. Porrim holds up a hand to stop you from continuing.

“I dated Aranea for half a sweep,” she says, as if that’s supposed to mean something to you, “I can deal with long stories.”

“Awesome.” You pause to make sure she’s not going to add anything more. She waits patiently for you to begin. “I built a fort with Karkat, there was no real reason why, it was just something to do. Then all of this other shit happened where suddenly everybody was building their own forts because they wanted to copy what the cool kids were doing, we’re total fucking trendsetters, obviously. Then Vriska challenged us to capture the flag, and you can’t back down from a challenge like that, it would just be stupid. So we agreed to play even though we didn’t like the stakes and we tried really hard to win or at least hold our own, but we couldn’t do it. All those girls are too fucking much to handle, so we lost and now we have to take the fort down like we agreed to do if we lost. I don’t really care that much about losing the game, but Karkat keeps blaming himself for what happened and I don’t know what to do about it.”

Porrim crosses her legs and leans back casually, you wonder if all those criss-crossing bandage looking things on her calves are part of her god-tier outfit or something she did to show she’s edgy and stylish. “You told him it’s not his fault, then? Other than that, I don’t see how there’s anything you need to do.”

“I guess,” the thought of not doing anything had never occurred to you, “but I can’t just leave him like that. He’s upset. Not even about the shit he’s normally upset about, he’s pissed off at himself. I know I don’t have to do something about it, but I want to do something about it.”

“Hm.” She touches her lip ring thoughtfully. “Dave, before I give you any advice, I need you to answer a question for me.”

“Okay, what?”

“What’s your relationship with Karkat?” Porrim asks, staring at you curiously. “Are you moirails?”

Your denial is immediate. “What? No, we’re just bros.”

“Are bros on Earth usually this concerned about each other’s emotional well-being?” She shifts so she’s facing you, staring you down with her dead, blank eyes. “Trolls who are simply “bros” on Beforus definitely aren’t, unless they have underlying pale feelings for their friend.”

Underlying feelings?

Underlying like...how much you like his smile? Or how fucking accomplished you feel when you make him laugh?

You always attributed that weird feeling you got whenever you saw him smile as discomfort because you’ve never seen a genuine smile in person before. The feeling definitely makes you uncomfortable, you always feel light headed and like a ton of butterflies are trying to escape from your stomach by beating their dumb, tiny wings against it. After awhile you just accepted it and named it your Karkat feeling, because for some reason you only get it around him.
You’d never really questioned why you felt this way around Karkat before. Is this why?

Do...do you...like Karkat?

No. No, of course you don’t. You’re just friends with Karkat. Your feelings don’t run any deeper than friendship. That’s all.

Is it?

“I’m not the best to ask about issues regarding your potential conciliatory quadrant, Dave.” She admits. “I’m considered more of an expert in the concupiscent.”

“Concupiscent?”

“Sex.”

“Oh. We’re definitely not doing that.” Your denial, again, is immediate. “Nope. Me and Karkat, having the full on sexy times? No, gross. I don’t care how attractive he is, that’s ridiculous. We’re just friends. Why would you even say that, Porrim?”

Porrims tilts her head, a strange look on her face that you don’t understand. “I didn’t say anything about you and Karkat. Your protests lead me to believe otherwise. You’re experiencing a certain mating fondness towards Karkat, aren’t you?”

“What? No, of course not. I said no.”

“Dave,” she holds up her hand again to quiet you, “this clearly is about more than just your fort. You obviously have some unresolved emotional issues centered around Karkat. Now normally I would suggest you consider pailing him to see if the mating fondness is still there or if this is just a case of simple pale to red vacillation.”

Hold up. Did she just say you should try pailing with Karkat? Isn’t that the troll word for sex?

Pailing with Karkat?

Pailing? With Karkat?

The thought makes you more nervous than disgusted like you thought it would.

Why aren’t you disgusted?

Why is your face so hot?

“Um-”

“Obviously, you’re too young to be doing anything like that.” Porrim continues. “Have you ever talked to him about how you feel?”

“No,” you feel like a broken record, constantly repeating to her what you’ve been saying the whole time, “because I don’t have any-”

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!” Someone’s running towards you and Porrim. You’re already turning around, completely prepared to attack, when you realize who it is.

Karkat stops running and falls to his knees, breathing so hard he’s almost wheezing. His head is down, so you can’t see his eyes. You know it can’t be your Karkat, because you left him in the fort,
but there’s always the chance. Stranger things have happened. You approach him slowly.

“Karkat?”

He lifts his head, and the yellow of his eyes confirms for you that yes, this is your Karkat. “Dave?”

“Last I checked, yeah.”

Karkat frowns, squinting suspiciously up at you. “Dave?”

Oh, right. You’re wearing your shades, so he can’t see your eyes to confirm if you’re alive Dave or dead Dave. Duh.

You lift your shades, squinting through the shock of brightness that hits your poor eyes. How the fuck do the trolls handle this much light when they’re nocturnal?

Karkat peers into your eyes, and for some reason making direct eye contact with him makes you hold your breath. Your heart’s pounding loud against your ears. Normally you’d ignore it, but you can’t help but dwell on it after your talk with Porrim.

It doesn’t mean anything. It’s just your normal Karkat reaction, along with nervousness about being looked at without your shades on.

You don’t go around without your shades a lot. Texas was really fucking bright, so you wore them pretty much all the time back home. On the meteor, where it’s cold and the lighting is always dim, you wear them for John. You haven’t seen John in so long, and it’ll be longer still before you see him again. You miss talking with him. You’re glad you have this memento of John to remind you of him.

Plus your bro always said your eyes show too much emotion. There’s too much vulnerability there. You need to hide that.

Karkat nods his confirmation, and you slip your shades back on.

“What the fuck are you doing here by yourself?” He asks, getting to his feet.

“I’m not by myself. I was talking with Porrim.” You gesture back over to the cliffside, but there’s no one there anymore. It looks like she left while you were talking. “Shit, she’s gone now. Whatever, it doesn’t matter. I thought you were in the fort, what are you doing here?”

“I was.” He says. He rubs his neck and looks at his feet. “I mean, I-”

“Karkat, you bitch! Get the hell back here and fight me like a real troll!”

You and Karkat both jump at the sound, and holy shit, here comes Vriska. She’s running full speed at you, kicking up a dramatic amount of dust behind her as she runs. She looks fucking pissed.

Karkat’s staring frozen and bug eyed at the speedy approach of angry Vriska. “Run.”

“What?” You have no idea what’s going on.

Karkat reaches out for your hand. “Run!”

Your heart’s already pounding with adrenaline as you prepare to run the moment Karkat’s hand meets yours. Unfortunately (unfortunately?) the moment never comes.
Karkat grabs for your hand and starts moving, planning on dragging you along if he has to, only to have his hand go right through yours. You blink and look down at your hand, surprised by what just happened. Karkat is doing the same, holding his hand away from him and examining it curiously.

“No wonder I was able to get it so easily.” Karkat says to himself.

“Get what so easily?”

He lowers his hand and looks behind you, and the fear in his eyes lets you know what you already dreaded; Vriska is still coming. Karkat shakes his head. “It doesn’t matter, just run.”

Karkat turns around and beats it towards the desert you’d come from earlier. Yeah, that shit’s not gonna work very well if you’re running, he’s just going to make negative progress and maybe get half as far as he could on normal terrain, if even that much.

“Karkat, wait!” You yell, already starting off down the rock strewn landscape near the cliff. “Make a U-turn and get your ass over here, this way’s better!”

Karkat races over, tripping on the sand on his way. In the ever decreasing distance, you can hear Vriska charging and spouting more curses at Karkat as she goes. What the fuck did Karkat do to piss her off so bad?

Karkat is huffing at your side, but he quickly surpasses you. He’s a lot faster than you thought, and you find yourself being left behind to dine on his dust. Vriska’s feet are pounding as loud in your ears as your heart is. You run harder, closing the distance between you and Karkat and hopefully increasing it between you and Vriska.

“So,” you ask between gasps of air, “what did you do?”

He looks at you out of the corner of his eye, and his eyes are off the ground just long enough for him to hit a jagged rock jutting out of the ground. You reach out to catch him before he hits the ground, only to remember that you, for some strange dream bubble reason, can’t do that. Luckily, he manages to catch himself and keeps going.

“Karkat, are you asleep?”

“Yes. I am.” He admits, nearly breathless from the added effort of speaking while running at full speed. “And I think I might be waking up soon. I can feel it.”

“Shit, really?” You glance behind you. Vriska’s a lot closer than you remember her being.

“Yeah,” he replies regretfully as he digs in his pocket for something, “so I’m going to have to leave you to deal with with arachnid’s prick back there. And this. I don’t know if I can take solid objects with me when I wake up, and I definitely don’t want to solve that mystery right now when the stakes are so high.”

He puts something in your hand. It looks like a small, lumpy canvas bag with frayed pull strings. Is this what Vriska is chasing him over? What the hell?

“Okay, got it.” You nod. “What the fuck should I do with this?”

“Put it in your sylladex. Or your pocket. Or your fucking hood, I don’t give half a damn where you put it, as long as Vriskass the Terrible doesn’t get it.”
“Alright.” You think you have enough room left in your sylladex. “I’m on it. See you back at the fort?”

“Yeah,” he scoffs bitterly, “if there’s a fort left to get back to.”

He picks up the pace and leaves you behind. As he gets further and further away from you, you think you can see him begin to fade. You blink, and he’s gone altogether.

That leaves you alone with the amazing spiderbitch. You wonder how much longer you can run before she catches up with you.

It doesn’t look like long.

“Dave!” She screams, and you stumble over nothing at the sound.

Vriska uses your unsteady footing to her advantage and tackles you to the ground. You both roll from the momentum and end up, thankfully, in the soft, hot sand. She’s on top of you, pinning you down with one hand. She’s really strong, which you sort of guessed she would be already. All the trolls seem to be hella fucking strong.

“Where is it, Dave?” She sneers.

“Where’s what?”

“You know what!” She pounds you square in the chest with her fist. “Give it back!”

“Make me.” You retaliate by flicking her in the glasses.

Vriska growls, and you think this maybe wasn’t such a good idea after all.

She starts screaming, nothing intelligible, just mindless screaming as she slaps you around. Literally, she’s just slapping you. It seems like a weird tactic, but you’re okay with that. It could be way worse, but it’s sort of annoying.

“Vriska, stop!” You yell, hitting her back. You manage to knock her glasses off her face. “I’m not giving it back, just let it the fuck go. It’s not even important!”

You try to get up, but you’re pushed back into the ground. “It is important, that’s our flag, you dirty fucking cheat! Now give it back, you’re not even playing anymore, remember? You lost!”

“It’s your flag?” Holy shit. Good job, Karkat. “Then there’s no way in hell I’m giving it back to you.”

You manage to overtake her, and the two of you are rolling across the desert like the world’s weirdest tumbleweed once again. This time, you’re on top of her.

You stare down at her, and she glares back up at you. She looks angrier than usual without her glasses. Speaking of which, where the hell are her glasses?

Probably somewhere in the desert.

“Whatever you’re going to do,” she sneers, “just do it.”

“I don’t have anything I really need to do.” You shrug. “This dream bubble’s about to pop.”

You indicate the iridescent, shiny edge of the bubble that the two of you are rapidly approaching.
If you just hold Vriska down for long enough, you can make your escape towards your fort and lock the door. No more Vriska. Bam, problem solved.

You close your eyes and feel yourself pass out of the bubble and back onto the meteor, where you are currently straddling Vriska in a hallway near a transportalzer. You get off her and hop onto the transportalzer before she even makes it to her feet.

You scramble down the hallway towards the all too familiar door of your fort room, unable to shake the feeling of being chased even though you haven’t heard Vriska since you got on the platform. You make it into your fort and slam the door, locking it as you heave in oxygen in an attempt to fill your lungs properly.

Karkat’s already started to dismantle the fort. Whatever semblance of structure it had before is gone, now it’s just a nest of pillows and blankets dumped on the floor next to a couch. Curled up into the middle of this fluffy mess is Karkat.

He sits up, his hair is sleep tousled and messier than usual. He rubs his eye with the heel of his hand. “Hey.”

“How’d it go?” He asks.

“Hey,” you walk over and sit down by the pile, your back against the couch, “long time, no see.”

He snorts, a tired smile on his face from your lame attempt at humor, and you can’t fight the smile spreading across your own. Karkat seems...better. Better than when you left him, anyway. Maybe that nap did him some good.

“How’d it go?” He asks.

“Oh, right.” You pull the bag out of your sylladex. “Here.”

He holds out his hands, and you drop the bag into them. He pulls the bag open and dumps its contents out onto his palm. Inside there are eight eight sided dice. You’re honestly not even surprised.

He picks one up, examines it, and puts it in his pocket. He dumps the other seven back in the bag.

“Hey, Karkat,” Karkat looks at you, his eyes still bleary with sleep, “we’re not in the game anymore, why did you take their flag?”

He shrugs. “I just wanted to prove I could do it.”

He holds the little bag in both hands, smiling down at it. He looks proud of himself. Fuck, he should be proud of himself. He just took Vriska fucking Serket’s flag, all by himself. Nobody else has done that during this entire game of capture the flag. That’s awesome. You’re proud of him.

“I thought we could give it to Rose and Kanaya, or we could give it back to Vriska if she bitches because of her hoofbeast shit rules or something.”

“Why did you take out one of the dice if we’re supposedly giving it back.” You ask, poking the bag with one finger. “Shit’s counterproductive, Karkat.”

“I did it because it would piss Vriska off.” He admits.

“Fuck, dude. She put eight dice in the thing and then gets it back only to discover that there’s only seven? That is some diabolical shit right there, man. You are straight up evil incarnate.”
“I know it doesn’t seem like I’m doing bulge here, but this is the kind of thing that will grind against her thinkpan and make her go shithive fucking maggots.” He laughs, only to have it cut off with a yawn.

Karkat looks like he could drop any second. “Hey, I know you just woke up and all, but maybe you should go back to sleep? You look beat.”

He nods. “Yeah. I didn’t sleep well. I’m exhausted.”

“Then you should sleep.” You agree, holding your hand out to him. “Here, I’ll hold onto the flag for you.”

“Kay.” Karkat drops the bag into your waiting hand, slumping back down into the pile of pillows and blankets.

His hand is still on top of yours. You can almost feel the heat radiating off his palm. It’s nice. You wish you didn’t have the bag between your hand and Karkat’s.

There’s that stupid feeling in your chest again. The heart thumping, fluttery stomach, light headed feeling. It’s so much harder to ignore that feeling or think of it as nothing after your talk with Porrim.

You have to get his hand off yours right now.

“Hey, Karkat?” You whisper.

There’s no response. You lean in forward to look at him. His eyes are closed. He looks so relaxed. You think he’s already asleep.

“Karkat?”

He snores. Yeah, he’s definitely asleep. That was quick.

You move his hand off of yours and lay it down carefully so you don’t wake him.

“Have a nice nap.” You whisper as you leave him, closing the door carefully behind you.

You still have the bag in your hand, you think you can still feel the residual heat from his hand in the canvas. You can’t seem to move away from the door or bring yourself to put the bag in your sylladex just yet.

Your heart is still thrumming in your chest.

You think Porrim might have been on to something earlier.

You think you might like Karkat.
The Can Town Compromise

Chapter Notes

Hi! I'm sorry this chapter took so long! On the bright side, it's also pretty long, so I hope you enjoy that. :)

It's a Vriska pov chapter. I feel like it's been forever since I did one of these, so it was sort of difficult, but I pulled through.

Also just a quick warning: Vriska spends a large chunk of this chapter in the underwear, but it's not in a sexual context at all and she doesn't care.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You are so. fucking. pissed. You can’t believe this shit actually happened, to you, of all trolls. One minute you’re just lounging around in your fort, minding your own fucking business and pretty much guaranteed a win, and the next minute you’re flat on your seed flap with both of your flags taken from you in a two hour time frame.

What the fuck.

You could handle that first flag being stolen (part of you kind of wishes it hadn’t been pyralspite, because you really didn’t want to have to explain what happened to Terezi) because it was Rose and Kanaya who took it. They were difficult competitors, and you loved the challenge they presented. Facing them was nothing like that easy as pie attack you’d waged against Fort Davekat. No, this actually took some effort.

You’d fought Rose by yourself and pretty much ignored Kanaya, since you and Rose were pretty busy aerially mauling each other. You know Rose is strong, but you weren’t expecting her to be so fucking fast. Of course, maybe if you’d watched her fight during her session instead of fighting with Terezi and paying so much attention to John, you would have been aware of what to expect. But hey, them’s the breaks. You were sort of okay with the loss. Obviously you weren’t happy, but at least you got a pretty good fight out of it.

Then Karkat just waltzes in during a dream bubble and takes your flag. He just takes it like it’s nothing. You tried to stop him, which normally wouldn’t be that hard, only to have your hands go through him because he’s afuckingsleep. What kind of hoofbeast shit was this? Then Karkat noticed you and ran, and gog could that asshole run. He’s one of the fastest runners on the meteor, probably because his fight or flight instinct is wired to piss himself and run screaming at the first sign of trouble.

He may be able to run fast, but his endurance is shit. So you gave him something to run for. You were so confident that you were going to catch him, because really there was no reason why you shouldn’t have caught him, taken your flag back, and walk away with the promise of finding his body and kicking the everliving shit out of it. But no, that’s not what happened. That’s not what happened at all.

What happened was you fucking lost. You fucking lost to Karkat, who’s not even supposed to be playing anymore. But no, he blatantly ignored that and just walked right in and took your flag
during a dream bubble and ran away like the coward that he is.

You think the worst part about it all is that it wasn’t even a shitty idea. Attacking during a dream bubble was a pretty good idea. It was like the kind of thing you would do, except yours would be better executed. If it were you, you wouldn’t have even been seen taking it, let alone being chased all over the dream bubble.

This is the kind of plan you could steal and improve upon (replacing Karkat with you would be an improvement in and of itself, just like it was with the current leadership position). This is the kind of plan that could ensure your victory against Fort Rosemary.

Only now you don’t have the chance to try it out. Because you’re fresh out of flags. You lost. Rose and Kanaya won and they barely did shit. Here you are, the most competitive, ruthless troll on this fucking meteor, you’re the highest on the hemospectrum (granted, you don’t think that matters as much as it seemed to on Alternia, but the fact still is that yours is currently the highest caste), and you lost to Karkat, the fucking weak ass cherry blood who throws grub-level tantrums and can’t pull his own (continually increasing) weight if his life depended on it.

How the fuck did you lose to that?

He caught a lucky break. That’s the only reasonable explanation.

Fuck, you’re pissed.

It’s been a few days, and you’re still pissed. You’ve been spending these last few days in your block, breaking magic eight balls and running your hands through your hair in that way you really shouldn’t do unless you want your hands to get stuck again.

You’ve canceled a strategy meeting with Rose because you have zero new ideas to bring to the table right now. It has nothing to do with her and Kanaya winning capture the flag. It would be so stupid to let that interfere with your work.

You really don’t have any new ideas. That’s pissing you off, too. You lost a small, insignificant game, and now you can’t think of a way to keep everyone from losing at the biggest, most deadly game of their lives. Yes, technically the dream bubbles will be there, so you’ll all just end up somewhere in the afterlife with some other iteration of you taking place as the leader. But you’ve seen the dream bubbles. You don’t want to live there, a girl could go soft in a place like that. You don’t want to lose.

You can’t go to Rose with nothing, but nothing is all you’ve got right now.

You pick up a magic eight ball and throw it at your door in frustration. It shatters, and the sound is beautiful. You think that might be your favorite sound.

Your favorite sound is closely followed by your least favorite sound- a knock at your door. An interruption. You grind your teeth and stomp over to your door, the pieces of broken ball crunching under your shoes.

You throw the door open, prepared to scream your fucking throat to shreds at whoever thought bothering you was a good idea.

You really shouldn’t be surprised when you open the door and find Terezi standing out there. She’s grinning ear to ear as usual, all of her razor teeth exposed like she’s both happy to see you and also ready to bite the shit out of you at any second.
“You want something?” You ask, leaning against the doorframe.

Terezi takes a deep breath. “You smell like shit.”

“Thanks. Did you want something?”

“Not really.” She shrugs. “I was wondering if you wanted to go clown hunting with me? I’m going either way.”

Clown hunting? You take a look at all the havoc you wrecked on your block. You could probably use that kind of outlet. “I think I’m down for hunting a clown today.”

Terezi nods like she was expecting as much and leaves. You’re obviously expected to follow her. You keep about three steps behind her as she leads you back to the remains of Fort Scourge. You’ve both pretty much trashed the whole thing already, but you’ve both left one or two things inside. Mostly all of your flarping gear.

Your gear is still all set up in the back of the room, with your and Terezi’s portraits hanging up on the wall between them.

Plus Dave and Karkat’s shitty, stupid flag. The only flag you’d managed to capture. Looking at it makes you feel both proud and frustrated at yourself for being even remotely proud of that insignificant accomplishment.

Oh wow, you took Dave and Karkat’s flag. Whoop dee doo. It was Dave and Karkat, it wasn’t hard. Rose and Kanaya got one, too, and they didn’t even attack Fort Davekat.

“So what were you doing all by yourself in your respiteblock these past few days?” She asks, pulling her shirt off over her head.

You shrug your own shirt off. “Nothing. Just making plans, strategizing. I got a lot of irons in the fire, Terezi, you know that.”

“Too many irons in the fire to use the fucking ablution trap every once in awhile?” Terezi leans forward and sniffs at your neck. “I could help you out with that if you want.” Her tongue flicks out, and you can feel it wet and strangely warm on your skin. You hold your breath and resist the urge to shiver.

“Fuck, Terezi, are you vacillating on me?” You take a step back and rub at your neck. You’re kidding, but you’re anxious about your relationship with Terezi possibly changing. You know it won’t, but still, the feeling’s there. “Give a girl some warning first, would ya?”

“Relax, Vriska.” She laughs. “I’m just messing with you. You’re still the pale diamond of my eye, babe.”

She winks as she kicks off her shoes and wiggles out of her jeans. You do the same and start helping her into her teal body suit.

The door slams open, and you jump and accidentally slice your claw all the way up Terezi’s back.

“Fuck!” She screams, leaning away from you. “I thought we agreed we weren’t vacillating! What the hell is this kismesis shit?”

“Vriska!” Dave yells, barging into the room. “We’re here to- satan’s burning shit hole, why are you naked?”
“I’m not naked, you dumbass!” You can't believe you were caught with your pants down. “Why didn’t you knock first?”

“You never knock!”

“You’re never changing!” You shout back, gesturing down to your Spider-Man underwear. You’re only embarrassed because you were caught off guard. You don’t give a damn about being seen half naked, you’re not ashamed of your body at all. Your body’s fucking amazing, and you know it.

“Oh gog, Karkat, shield your eyes!” Dave flails his arms around behind him, hitting Karkat a couple times in the face. You didn’t even know he was here, your view of him is blocked by Dave. “You’re way too young to be exposed to this level of villainous tit. Just the sight of those chest cushions is enough to corrupt your fragile maiden’s soul.”

Karkat bats Dave’s hand away. “Dave, I’m older than you. If anybody should be getting their bulbs covered, it’s you, you infantile grubworm.”

He throws Dave’s hand off his face and gets a load of you in your underwear. His eyes go wide at the sight of you, and you honestly can’t tell if he looks embarrassed or nauseous. You don’t care which it is, because either way it’s upsetting him and you like that.

“Fuck!” Karkat screams and covers his face with Dave’s hand. “It’s burned into my retinas! It’s all I can see now, all of my vision has been replaced with Vriska’s cartoon crotch. No one deserves to experience this sickening kind of torture. Just the thought of it makes me want to blow chunks all over the floor of this grime encrusted filth block. My stomach is roiling, I can feel my lunch coming up. I am going to lose it, I am going to fucking lose it, I feel so sick. That’s it, here I go, the vomit’s rising right back up my nutrition tunnel. Run, Dave, run while you still can.”

“You know, I would totally make my escape like the amazingly brave guy I am while you stand here and retch everything in your system out onto this floor because you saw a semi-nude girl, but you’re hanging on to my arm and I can’t move.”

You put your hands on your hips. “Was there something you dunderfucks wanted? Because if there isn’t, then you should swallow your puke like a grown ass troll and get the fuck out of here, and if there is something you wanted, you should just can it and leave before I kick both of your asses straight off this rock.”

“No. No, shove a rusty nail up your bone nook and screw yourself, Vriska, we’re not leaving!” Karkat says defiantly, stomping his foot. It’s hard to take him seriously with him holding Dave’s hand over his eyes. Not that you’ve ever taken him seriously, he’s an idiot. “You can’t get rid of us as easily as the fleas that took residence in your wastechute and choked on shit. Despite the fact that you are literally full of shit, there’s not enough shit in your entire body to kill the both of us.”

“Dude, if you’re going to make me drown in shit with you, can you at least cover my eyes for me? I can’t make myself not look. Come on, help me out here, bro.”

“No, I got you, dude.” Karkat shoves his hand under Dave’s shades. “What are you going to do about it now, Vriska? We’re unstoppable against your flood of torrential diarrhea. We’re going to stand our ground proudly right here no matter how much it resembles a broken loadgaper or how soaked our pant legs get with your rank bowel overflow.”

What the fuck? “Okay, fine. I don’t have time for your weird nonsense shit. Don’t tell me what you guys want. Stay here with your eyes covered like a couple of dumb, perverted grubs while Terezi
and I get changed. We’ll kick your asses afterwards.”

“What are you doing here, anyway?” Terezi asks. “You never told us what you wanted in the first place, dummies.”

Dave puts his hand on his hip and straightens up to look more intimidating. All it really does is make Karkat have to stand on his toes to keep Dave’s eyes covered for him. They look fucking stupid. They are fucking stupid.

How did you lose to something that fucking stupid.

“We want our flag back.”

“Oh, that’s what you’re here for?” You look over to the flag hanging off your wall. It looks just as stupid as they do. “Then we can settle this right now. No, you’re not getting your flag back. It’s ours now, we won it during the game, remember?”

“Yeah,” Dave nods slowly, not backing down, “and the game’s over now. Give it.”

“No.” You refuse. “We didn’t get any of ours back, so why should you get yours?”

“You didn’t? You could probably just ask Rose and Kanaya for it back, I don’t think they’d care.”

“Dave’s right, they wouldn’t care.” Terezi points out, pulling her body suit all the way up and over the scratch on her back. “But what about your flag, Vriska? Don’t Dave and Karkat have yours?”

That’s right, they do. The thought of either of them messing around with your dice is enough to make you grit your teeth.

“We could trade for it!” Terezi suggests. “You could give back Vriska’s flag, and we’ll give you back yours.”

“That would be fair.” Dave agrees. “Except we don’t have it anymore. We gave it to Rose and Kanaya.”

“In that case, you’re not getting your flag back.” You deny immediately.

“Oh come on, just give us the damn flag, Vriska!” Karkat demands. “We can get your stupid dice back if that’s what we have to do for you to stop being a horrendous bitch about this. Give us our flag and we’ll get you your dice, okay?”

You shake your head. “What, you think I’m a chump? I’m not giving you your flag until my my dice are in my open frond. Until that happens, get the fuck out of here and pray to the horrorterrors that I don’t do something vicious to it.”

Dave gasps. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Yeah, Vriska, you wouldn’t!” Terezi says quietly. “The Mayor made that.”

“So what? Who cares if he drew that garbage for them? What’s the big deal about the Mayor, anyway? I never understood everybody’s fascination with him. Like Karkat said before, he’s not even a real Mayor, he’s a Mayo at best.”

“Yeah, but he’s our Mayo and he’s great!” Karkat yells indignantly at you. “I swear, if you were wearing clothes right now, I would come over there and kick your ass so hard over that slander against the Mayor that my foot print would be permanently embedded across your ass.”
You smirk. “Oh, so you’re saying the only thing stopping you from strifing me right this fucking minute is the fact that you caught me in my underwear?”

Karkat couldn’t really hurt you even if he wanted to, that’s something he and you both know very well. Despite the fact that he’s obviously bluffing, he nods. “That’s the only reason.”

“Well, that can be fixed.” You shrug nonchalantly, calling his bluff. “I’ve been meaning to get dressed, anyway. It’s pretty nippy in here. If you assholes still wanna rumble when I’m dressed and dangerous then by all means, feel free to. It definitely won’t be my corpse box we toss off here.”

You wonder if Karkat’s going to commit to his lie and try to fight you or if he’s going to turn tail and abscond like the coward he is.

Your boonbucks are on the abscond.

“It sure as fuck won’t be mine.” Karkat replies, surprising you with his intention to continue.

“The fuck do you mean “you assholes”?.” Dave demands. “I never agreed to a fight.”

Karkat turns to address Dave, which is stupid because both of their hands are still covering each other’s faces so they can’t see. “You don’t have to if you don’t want to. I can take her by myself.”

No, he can’t. Even if you weren’t a god tier, Karkat would still be no match against you. Everybody in this block knows that.

“Nah, I’ll stay.” He says. “Back up’s always better than going in alone. I still got your six, dude. Besides, we’re playing by capture the flag rules, right? Shouldn’t be too bad of a beat down.”

You weren’t planning on using the capture the flag rules, you wanted an actual real, skin tearing, flesh gouging, blood everywhere kind of fight. The kind of fights you’d had on Alternia in the same flarping outfit you were planning on wearing for this scuffle. But you know what? If Dave wants to fight using wriggler rules, then that’s fine with you. Anything to get one of your top fighters off his ass and practicing for the fight to come. Dave has been less and less interested in practicing combat the longer he wastes his time with Karkat. You think Karkat’s laziness is rubbing off on him.

“Wow, I really admire your confidence, Dave.” Karkat deadpans sarcastically.

“Hey, I’m just being realistic here. Me and you, against two vicious, bloodthirsty girls like them? Okay, technically the only bloodthirsty girl is Kanaya but metaphorically these girls are out for blood or I guess a different way I could phrase that is they have a pretty big penchant for violence and aren’t afraid to show it. As for you and me? Dude. Come on. You can’t tell me you don’t know how this is gonna end.”

“No, I do, despite all evidence to the contrary I’m not a total panless idiot, Dave. I have enough sense to know when the situation’s been fucked to no return. In cases like these you just have to ignore how hard the universe’s grip on your shameglobes is and pretend you stand even a fraction of a chance against whatever the fuck it is that you’re facing right then. So to help me do that, since I’m not the most imaginative member of the asshole alliance, I would really appreciate it if you could do me the favor of faking it for me.”

Terezi presses her mouth against your ear so the boys can’t hear whatever it is she’s about to say. “I bet that’s not the only time Dave’s had to fake it for him.”

You laugh, but more because of the way Terezi’s tongue flicks against your ear and not because of what she said. “What the fuck does that mean?”
Terezi shrugs. “I heard Rose say it once. I think it’s a human innuendo.”

“Oh.” Dave and Karkat are still talking, facing each other with their eyes covered. “Are you boys done whispering about your feelings for each other or do I need to separate you both with a stand stump to the face?”

Dave jumps, which is also something of a surprise to you. He has a weird expression on his face as he forcefully grabs his hand back from Karkat. “Vriska, what the fuck are you talking about?”

Karkat quickly covers his face with his free hand. “We’ll be ready once you put some fucking pants on your twig legs and hide your crappy cartoon covered shame.”

“Crappy cartoon?” You gasp. “You take that back, asscrab! For your information, Spider-Man is a fucking web slinging treasure. He’s eight times the troll as your precious Will Smith and eighty-eight times the troll you could ever even hope to be.”

“Wait, so there’s a troll Spider-Man and a troll Will Smith?” Dave asks. “Are all of our actors just humanifications of your troll performers or are all actors universal constants? Is acting the real way to ensure reincarnation between the different universes or is this all just coincidence? What about the other arts? Are our human rappers the same as your slam poets of old? Was there a troll Picasso? Did he go through a blue period, or was it more like a blue blood period? If I had focused on my comics as much as I’d wanted to, would I have become such a big fucking deal that the universe would have spit me back out with the gray skin and the horns and all that other troll shit just so I could do it all over again? Seriously, what the fuck?”

“Dave, that’s a really interesting line of questioning you have there and I can’t wait to have a more in-depth discussion with you about this later, but right now I need you to shut the fuck up because this shitstained toolsack just insulted my favorite actor and I will not let that stand.”

“Oh, really? You’re not going to let that stand? What are you gonna do about it, fight me?” You goad him on nastily.

“I will.” He growls angrily. “As soon as you put on a pair of fucking pants.”

Karkat turns around, which is an awkward move on his part because his hand is still over Dave’s eyes. The move skews Dave’s shades so they almost fall off his face. Dave fixes his shades and turns around. You’re finally able to get changed. The best part, you’re going to strife Dave and Karkat and prove once and for all that you really are the greatest troll around.

Not that there was ever any question about that.

You and Terezi finish getting changed into your flarping outfits and do a little stretching to prepare yourself for what should be a quick and easy fight.

“Okay!” You shout to them. “We’re ready!”

“You’re decent?” Dave yells back to you.

“Never!” You scoff. “But we’re dressed and ready to brawl.”

They’re still standing with their backs to you, talking about something or other almost inaudibly. Honestly, it kind of pisses you off. Do they want a fight or not?

Suddenly, Dave says “One...Two...Three!”
They both turn around and run at you, and you’re totally prepared to strike either or both of them if they get close enough. But then Dave veers off, you guess he’s going for Terezi. Karkat, though, Karkat never strays off course and runs straight at you. Your hands curl into fists. This shouldn’t be too hard, even with the rules in place.

You’re completely prepared to punch him, preferably in the stomach because you don’t think faces are allowed if you remember the rules correctly. What you’re not prepared for is Karkat tackling you. He’s got both weight and momentum on you, and you crash immediately to the ground. Your horns meet the floor, and there’s a sharp, stinging sensation running all the way across the length of them. They’re not used to that kind of hurt.

Your head shoots back up from the floor immediately, and your head slams right into Karkat’s. You blink back the dark spots clouding your vision and push him off you. You get to your feet. Karkat’s still on the floor, curled in on himself with his face in his hands. You don’t think you drew blood, but you don’t think it really matters if you did, anyway. You prod him roughly in the stomach with your foot.

Karkat reaches out and strikes at your leg. You’re quick to move away from his hand, but you don’t leave unscathed. There are some shallow scratches on your leg. They’re bleeding a little, but it’s nothing too painful. Nothing you can’t handle.

Karkat’s sitting up now, but he’s still on the floor. Jegus, if that was enough to keep him on his knees, he’s even weaker than you thought. Pathetic.

You raise a boot up to stomp on his hand. He looks up at you, and you don’t look away. You sort of want to see how much this is going to hurt. That would teach him not to mess with you ever again.

The thing is, he doesn’t look scared or nervous at all, he’s just glaring at you. He’s not even moving his fucking hand, and you’ve been nice and given him plenty of time to do so. It’s like he’s challenging you to do it. He doesn’t think you will. He thinks you’ve gotten soft. How else would you have lost both of your fort’s flags so easily in one day?

How the fuck do you expect to really fight when the time comes if you’re too soft to step on Karkat’s hand?

Fuck that. You’ll show him who’s soft.

You don’t break eye contact at all as your foot descends. As much as you want to put all your weight on your foot and break his hand, you know that’s not something you can do. Not because you’re soft, but because Karkat’s probably going to have to fight at some point during the final battle. As much as you don’t like Karkat, you can’t risk indirectly creating a casualty. That would defeat the purpose of you being here, wouldn’t it?

You never get to find out how much weight you can put on your foot before breaking anything. Karkat moves just as your foot is hovering centimeters above his hand, and you end up slamming your foot full force onto the floor instead. You knew he was too much of a cluckbeast to go through with that.

What you didn’t know was just how fast Karkat’s reflexes really are. In the split second between him removing his head and your boot meeting the floor, he strikes out and head-butts you in the stomach. It’s enough to knock the wind out of you and send you staggering backwards a few steps.

Shit, that was...not something you’d expected. You can literally feel the twin indents on your
stomach radiating a dull pain all the way up your chest. If Karkat’s horns were just a little bigger, just a little sharper...that could have been a death blow. His horns are so nubby, though, you doubt it’ll even leave a bruise.

Karkat stands up, and you can tell just from his face that he knows what he just did, that he knows exactly what it meant and exactly what could have happened if just one thing was different. From that look you can tell that even if just that one thing was different, he still would have done what he just did. You don’t think he would kill you- you don’t think he has the guts to kill anyone- but he would at the very least try to cause you actual harm as opposed to the weak grubsauce he’s capable of inflicting on you.

You hate to admit it, but you’re sort of impressed. You always considered Karkat a definite liability to the battle ahead. Honestly, if the game didn’t think he was necessary for some reason you would just sit back and let him get killed. But if he’s willing and able to hold his own against an opponent (albeit, an opponent who’s not really an enemy and can’t even hold the threat of death over his head without causing a doomed timeline) maybe there’s hope for him to not completely suck and die just yet.

Who knows, maybe you won’t end up pulling his weight for him, after all.

You straighten up and snarl at him. You were totally willing to go easy on him and play this by the rules, but clearly that’s not what Karkat wants to do. If it’s a strife he wants, it’s a strife he’ll get.

Karkat runs at you, and you dodge him easily by floating out of the way on your awesome as fuck god tier wings. You’re respect for him (if you could call it that) is gone since he’s doing the same extremely predictable move he tried a minute ago. If only he actually understood how to fight, then he might stand the chance of holding his own against you on one of your worse days. Say, like, when you’ve suffered a severe amount of blood loss and your glasses are gone somewhere else. Yeah, if Karkat just knew a few moves for hand to hand combat, he might be able to take you under those or worse conditions.

But he doesn’t know other moves, because all of his so called “training” was from obsessively watching reruns of Thresh Prince of Bel-Air. And you’re not suffering from severe blood loss or worse conditions, because you actually understand how fighting works and on top of that you’re a mother grubbing god tier.

You kick him. Hard. Right in the square of his back. He falls just as hard, unprepared and not able to brace for the impact. From your place floating above him, you can see his hands fly out in front of him in an attempt to break his fall, but he only succeeds in scraping the skin of his palms against the hard floor. You float yourself up towards the ceiling so he has to work to retaliate against you and you can survey whatever damage you inflicted on him.

He hisses and pulls his sleeves up over the freshly injured areas before you have time to see if his little slide across the floor actually scraped off his skin or if it just wounded his pride. Karkat gets up again and glares up at you, sneering. There’s rage in his eyes. Not surprising, that’s been there since this began. The only difference is that now you can see the resolve mixed in with the loathing. He’s not leaving here until he defeats you.

Whatever defeat actually means in this situation.

Good.

You keep eye contact with him for what would be an awkward length of time in any other situation. Since this is a fight, you’re completely fine with holding his gaze unblinkingly for as
long as possible, because whichever of you blinks and breaks contact first loses the mental battle, and then it’s only a matter of time until the loser succumbs to their fate in the physical one.

Karkat blinks first, just as you’d anticipated. He breaks contact and concentration, glaring back up at you again quickly and with far less intensity than before. He almost seems distracted. Maybe he realized just how fucked his situation is and decided it was time to admit defeat.

Maybe he’s about to do something stupid.

He’s about to do something stupid.

Karkat starts running again, only this time he’s not running towards you, he’s running away from you and screaming at the top of his lungs as he does so. You watch him as he breaks right into the middle of Dave and Terezi’s fight, which mostly just seems to be Dave trying to keep Terezi and her red loving tongue away from him. They both stop what they’re doing to look at him, surprised by his sudden interruption.

Karkat reaches the back wall and wrenches the flag forcefully off of it. He whips around, gripping the pole tightly in both hands as he absconds with his dumb flag waving freely behind him. He has yet to stop screaming.

“Karkat?” Dave yells, the first to break the silent, frozen spell between the three of you left in the block. “Where the hell do you think you’re fucking off to? You can’t just leave me in here like this, you douche!”

You grit your teeth, biting back the scream building up in your own chest. Fuck if you’re going to let him get away with this.

You are not losing another flag to him.

You shoot off down the hall after him and manage to catch up quickly. You could easily just glide down and snatch the flag out of his sweaty hands with minimal effort on your part. You could just take it back and leave him there, defeated in the middle of the hall. It would be that easy.

But no. That’s too easy.

That’s too easy on Karkat.

Instead, you surpass him and block his path further on in his escape route. You land in Can Town and wait for him there. The Mayor guy is here, but he doesn’t acknowledge you, so you don’t acknowledge him.

You can hear Karkat sooner than you see him, his feet are beating hard against the floor and he’s still (still!) screaming. You get yourself ready for what you’re about to do because you’re a little rusty. It’s been awhile.

Finally, Karkat catches up with his voice and slows his procession to a halt when he sees you, the flag draping over his shoulder when he stops. He stops screaming. Everything is quiet.

He continues his approach slowly, staring at you through wary, narrowed eyes. He doesn’t know what to expect from you, but he knows that whatever it is, it’s nothing good.

You smirk. At least he’s aware of that much.
You place your hands on your temples, which actually does nothing to help you out with this, it just always seemed like the natural thing to do and you have no idea what else you would do with your hands, anyway. Just that is enough to make Karkat freeze where he stands. He recognizes the gesture.

Or maybe he can already feel you forcing your will on his squirming little think pan. Either way, he knows what’s going to happen next. Even better, he knows there’s nothing he can do about it.

You’re reveling in the knowledge that you’ll always have this power over him. You have the power to make him do whatever you want, whenever you want. There’s nothing he can do to make himself immune to you or your sick ass mind powers. You drive this point straight into his think pan as hard as you can by taking over complete control of his body while leaving him fully aware of what’s going on.

He’s trying his best to fight against you already, but is unable to do anything as he moves his foot slowly across the floor towards you. You keep him going at the same agonizingly slow pace he was at before. You can feel him struggling feebly against your control, but all he’s really accomplishing is tiring himself out so he’s easier to control. It’s fucking great. Fantastic, even! You almost feel like laughing.

Not yet, though. You’ll scoff in his face once you have the flag back in your hands and you can truly rub your victory in his face. Preferably by wiping your snot all over his shitty flag or something. You don’t know yet. You haven’t thought about exactly what you’re going to do with it just yet.

He’s starting to sweat, the effort of his mental fight against you showing on his face. His movements are shaky, his whole body is shaking. He thinks he’s winning against you. He doesn’t know about the wiggle room you left him. Just as he musters up enough focus and strength to move one of his feet himself, you recapture that part of his pan and squash his hopes like a bug under your foot.

Something that’s a cross between a groan and a whine escapes him as you move his feet a few more steps. It’s a pathetic, agitated sound. He knows he’s defeated, but he’s still having a hard time accepting it under these circumstances. He’s almost to you now.

The Mayor jumps out of his stacks of cans and starts pulling on Karkat’s sleeve in an effort to get his attention. When that doesn’t work, he starts pushing at him to get him to stop or to go a different direction. His interference isn’t doing much, really, since the Mayor has no idea what’s going on, but you don’t like it. That’s when another idea pops into your pan.

You can see the regret immediately on his face when you force him to push the Mayor out of his way and into a neighboring tower of cans. It falls to the ground with an audible crash. You don’t let Karkat linger on the Mayor too long and force him to face you as he takes yet another tiny, horrible step towards you.

“Mayor? Are you okay? What happened?” Dave and Terezi run in seconds after the crash. “Mayor!”

Dave and Terezi both rush over to where the little carapace is lying on top of a pile of cans. Karkat is still coming towards you steadily, but his strange behavior is being ignored until they reach the bottom of what happened to the Mayor.

“What do you mean, Karkat pushed you?” Dave asks the Mayor, helping him to his feet. “That doesn’t sound like something he would do.”
“You don’t think Karkat would push someone?” Terezi says doubtfully.

“No, he could.” Dave corrects. “I just don’t think he’d push the Mayor.”

“Oh.” Terezi purses her lips and nods thoughtfully. “You’re right, that doesn’t sound like something he would do. Dave, wait right here, I’ll be back.”

Terezi runs away. Karkat’s only feet away from you now. This will be over soon. You hold out your hands to receive your loot.

Dave and the Mayor finally come over to check out what the fuck’s up with Karkat, just in time for Karkat to hand you the flag.

”Hey, dude, are you alright? The Mayor said you don’t seem too good, what’s up with you?” Dave asks, waving a hand in front of Karkat’s face.

“Dave...” Karkat’s voice is barely a whisper, it’s taking all of the energy he has left just to speak at this barely audible level as his arm reaches out towards you, trembling from the effort of trying to stop. “help.”

“What do you mean, help? Help how? What’s going on with you? Are you okay?” Dave leans in closer to Karkat, looking him up and down as he does so. “Oh shit, dude, you’re not okay. You look really fucking pale. Maybe you should sit down or something. Here, I’ll take the flag and you can just-”

Karkat pushes Dave away from him and starts to hand you the flag again just like you wanted, but then Dave does something you didn’t expect.

Dave pushes Karkat back. Next thing you know, Karkat’s in a shoving match with Dave while you just stand here and watch Karkat get pushed further and further away from you. You start to hover near the fight so you can see what happens and so you can retrieve the flag again once all is said and done.

“Seriously, what the fuck is wrong with you?” Dave demands as he continues to push Karkat. Karkat’s unable to say anything. He simply pushes back when you make him. It only pisses Dave off more. “Quit pushing me, you asshole! I’m trying to help you! Why aren’t you answering any of my questions? Vriska, what did you do to him?”

“Me?” You repeat, feigning offense. “Why the fuck would you accuse me of doing anything?”

“Because Karkat’s acting weird and you’re here.” He replies. “Logical conclusion.”

You make Karkat shove him even harder than before, causing Dave to go down. His arm slams into some cans and knocks them down, too. Then you have Karkat get down on top of Dave, the flag dropped behind him and onto Dave’s legs to free up Karkat’s hands. One hand is splayed on Dave’s chest to hold him down, and the other is curled into a fist.

“Vriska, stop!” Terezi yells. A magic eight ball flies right past your ear and knocks down yet another precarious stack of cans.

“Oh my god, Terezi, your aim is shit!” Dave yells, taking your moment of distraction to knock Karkat off of him and rolling on top, holding him down with both hands. Karkat starts thrashing underneath him.

“I’m blind, what do you want from me!” She replies as she enters the room. She picks up the
magic eight ball, which is somehow magically unscathed, and knocks it gently against the side of your head. “Stop it.”

“Why?” You ask. It’s a legitimate question. You’re just paying them back for last time when they used underhanded tactics to get what they wanted. Why is it okay when they do it but somehow worse when you do it? What kind of double fucking standard is that?

Terezi shrugs. “Not worth it. Come on, with all the cool shit we could be doing right now, do you really want to waste your energy on this?”

She has a point there. You just don’t want to lose again, because if you can’t win against a powerless, soft panned idiot like Karkat, then there’s no you’ll win against some all powerful universe destroyer. If you can’t even do that, then what’s the point of you existing in this time line?

“Vriska,” Terezi’s hand is on your shoulder. Her claws are digging into your skin, “let him go.”

“Okay, fiiiiiiine.” You drag out your groan as you finally release Karkat from your hold. Bending people to your will is actually more strenuous than you remember it being, and you’re a bit exhausted from the effort.

Terezi grins and links your arm in hers. “Hey guys!”

Dave is still on top of Karkat, who looks about as exhausted as you feel. You doubt either of you will be sleeping anytime soon, though. “What?”

“We decided you can have your flag back!” You’re about to ask her when the fuck you decided that when she continues. “On a few conditions!”

“What conditions?”

“Get our flags back from Rose and Kanaya.”

It only takes a second for Dave to think it over. “Okay. And?”

“And?”

“You said conditions. That was one. Uno cindicion, if you pardon my French. So what’s the other condition?”

Terezi turns to you and shrugs, apparently that was her only idea. Luckily you have one of your own.

“Teach that dummy you’re straddling how to fight better.” You point to Karkat, who barely seems to be paying attention to the conversation. “What’s the point of him wasting so much time with one of our best fighters if he doesn’t even learn anything?”

“I can fight just fine!” Karkat protests as Dave scrambles off of him.

“You fight like an ass.” You retort. “Now are you taking the deal or not?”

“Deal.” Dave says quickly before Karkat can so much as open his mouth. A wise decision. “Hey, quick question. Does the no fort building rule apply to watch towers?”

“Watch towers?” Terezi asks, tilting her head to show she’s intrigued.

“Yeah. After what just happened, it’s pretty clear that the good citizens of Can Town need
protection, and who better to protect them than two bona fide knights? Don’t you agree, Mayor?”

The Mayor nods enthusiastically and waves Dave and Karkat’s flag around.

Terezi grins. “As long as it’s not built with pillows and blankets, it’s fine. Can I help with it?”

Dave shrugs. “Sure, why not? First things first, we’re going to clean up all these cans. Do you want to help with that?”

“I would,” Terezi replies, leaning her head against your shoulder, “but I’ve got a paledate with my moirail to get to.”

With your arm linked in Terezi’s, you leave the boys there to clean up what could be considered your mess so you can enjoy a relaxing day of flarping and clown hunting with your moirail.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading this chapter! I hope you enjoyed it!
The next one won't take as long, promise!
I'm finally, finally, FINALLY done with this chapter!!! Sorry about the wait, I have a feeling that's going to be a common occurrence with these longer chapters.

Anyway, warning- Rose drinks in this chapter. Really, most of the chapter is Rose drinking and talking to Karkat.

You would love to say that you’d kicked the habit the moment Vriska slapped your drink out of your hand and told you to get your shit together. You would love to say you haven’t thought about so much as touching a single drop of alcohol since that very moment. You would love to say that you had more than enough willpower to overcome an addiction without anyone else’s help, that you were just that strong.

But that’s ridiculous. No one’s that strong. It would be stupid to assume all of your problems would solved because someone told you you had a problem. Of course you have a problem, you’re not stupid. You already knew that. Admitting you have a problem is just the first step to recovery, though, everybody knows that.

You’d been able to stay away from drinking for awhile. You were proud of yourself when you’d realized you had gone a couple of weeks without even so much as thinking about drinking. You patted yourself on the back for that. A week after that you drank yourself into a stupor alone in an abandoned room (you think it may have belonged to one on the dead trolls, but you didn’t feel the urge to look into it to make sure), passed out, and returned back to your daily tasks with no one being the wiser. You hate yourself for falling off the wagon that time, and for doing it again and again and again without fail even though you keep telling yourself that this time is the last time, and after you get drunk off your ass this last time, you’re going to find all of the bottles you’d stashed all over the meteor and throw them out to the horrorterrors. Who knows, maybe they like gin.

You never get around to that, though. You hold your pounding head in your hands and swear that you’ll never do it again, because why the fuck would you want to, if this is the result? It’s so bad that you can’t even look at a bottle without having the urge to throw up. So you leave it for a different day, for a Rose who can handle the sight of alcohol without needing to have it in her system, a Rose who isn’t constantly disappointing herself because of that need and her inability to stop herself from indulging in it. You leave it for a future Rose, a Rose who is put together and is everything she always thought she would be. A Rose that would make everyone proud. A Rose that would make herself proud.

But that Rose never comes, and so you’re never out of alcohol when you need it. It’s a vicious cycle of self indulgence and self disgust.

You are currently in the self indulgence stage of your cycle.

This time, you were thinking about Dave before you started. You were thinking about how, despite the fact that Dave is definitely one of your closest friends, you still can’t seem to get close
to him in the way you want to. Maybe, you thought, the problem wasn’t really Dave like you’ve
been thinking it was this whole time, maybe it was you. Maybe you ruined your chances of having
a familial relationship with Dave by pretending to be his therapist and saying everything was an
allusion to him being in the closet (though most of the time that was true, you stand by that), or by
letting him fake flirt with you for all those years (which seemed harmless at the time, but now that
you know he’s your brother it’s really disgusting to think about and you’d rather forget that ever
happened), or maybe it wasn’t even anything you did or said. Maybe, in the end, it was just you.
Maybe you’re just unable to forge meaningful, lasting bonds with people. Friendship you could do,
but beyond that? Beyond that you’re a hopeless mess.

For some reason, your inability to form a good relationship with other people (specifically your
brother, Dave) got you thinking about your mother again. You’d been thinking about her a lot
recently. Ever since you got to the meteor and found yourself crushed by the weight of what had
happened, you couldn’t help but think about her. Was she really as bad as you’d always made her
out to be?

Were all of those times she gave you all those gifts you didn’t want just her being antagonistic
towards you, or was she genuinely trying to express her love to you?

Were all of those times you thought she was making fun of your interests really that, or was she
trying to connect with you in a way you just couldn’t understand?

Was she aware that all of this was going to happen? Did she know that you were going to play this
game? Did she know that there was a good chance that you would die while you were playing? Did
she know that she was going to die while you were playing? Did she know what was going to
happen to her and to you and the world? Was she scared?

Did she drink because she was scared?

It’s at this point you realize that your feet have led you right to one of your old booze hiding places
and that the bottles are shaking in your hands. You’ll never know for sure if your mother drank
because she was scared, but you’re sure as hell you’re going to. You stash the bottles in your
sylladex and sneak off to go find someplace quiet and private to drown your sorrows and your brain
cells for awhile.

You found yourself a nice little spot sequestered away from all of the others near Can Town.
You’ve never seen it before, but you haven’t really been into exploring the meteor as much as
Vriska and Terezi, and unlike Dave and Karkat, your interest in Can Town itself is minimal, at
best. The spot’s not as secluded as you wanted, but it’s fine because everyone’s either asleep or
locked in their respective bedrooms pretending to be asleep. It’s just one of those days.

You’re laying on your back on the floor. It’s cold, but it feels nice paired with the heat in your
stomach. You take a gulp from your bottle and sigh contentedly. You’re already getting something
close to a buzz on. You’re going to hate yourself for this later, you know that. Right now you’re
just going to try to enjoy yourself.

There’s no lights on the ceiling, which is still a strange concept to you. You’ve been here for
awhile now, and you still can’t get over that little idiosyncrasy. Your whole life, every time you
looked up, there were lights. Whether it was the sun, a lamp, or a glow from a chandelier, there
was always lights. Even your room on Derse had lights. Here, there’s almost a complete absence of
light. The only thing standing between you and total submersion into the dark is the dull glow of
the rarely used computer screens and the light that emanates so beautifully off of Kanaya’s skin.
Kanaya...fuck, she’s going to be so disappointed in you when she finds out about what you’re doing. And all of the other times you’ve done this since you claimed you quit. You don’t know how you’re going to face her. Once shit hits the fan and your issues are finally exposed for her to see, you doubt she’ll even want to be anywhere near you.

The whole point of this was to take your mind off of your extremely real and possibly debilitating relationship issues, not make yourself depressed by ruminate on them. You sit up to take another drink and feel the alcohol burn its way down your throat. You shake the bottle and listen to the liquid sloshing around inside. You sigh in defeat and flop back down onto the floor. The bottle’s already half empty and you’re not really feeling much of anything yet. You’ve built up too much of a tolerance. It might take you more than what you have with you to reach that level of blackout forgetfulness you crave.

You’re not drunk enough to forget your troubles, but you’re drunk enough to forget to be on the lookout for anybody who might catch you. Fuck knows how that will play out. You’re freaked out enough at the prospect of admitting your issues of your own volition, it’ll be so much worse for you if they’re realized without your consent.

That’s why you drink alone and in secret, that’s why you’re always vigilant. For some reason, though, be it forgetfulness or some subconscious drive to get caught, you didn’t do any of those things. You don’t even react when you hear the footsteps coming until it’s too late.

You do your best to hide the bottle, but can’t find a suitable hiding place in time. You’d hide it in your sylladex, but it’s an open bottle and you have no idea what will happen if it spills in there. For all you know, it could wreck all of your stuff and irreparably ruin your sylladex. You’re not risking that.

You end up just hiding the bottle behind your back and hoping your intruder leaves quickly.

Given your earlier statement of everyone being asleep or pretending to sleep, you shouldn’t be surprised to be discovered by your resident insomniac, Karkat. But, because of your inebriated state, you are just the slightest bit surprised.

Luckily, so is Karkat.

He walks around the little wall that’s obscuring you from view and turns the corner right into your hiding spot. He stops the moment he lays eyes on you.

“What the fuck are you doing in here, Rose?” He asks, clearly startled to find someone already occupying this space.

You shrug and try to act casual as you lean back in an attempt to hide the bottle more effectively. “I could be asking you the same thing. What the fuck are you doing here, Karkat?”

“I have every right to be here, since I built this shit.” He gestures at the little area you’re sitting in. “Most of this shit.” He corrects himself, idly touching one of the walls. He’s mostly talking to himself, you think. It’s not like you really care about the construction. “I did a third of the work.”

“The other two thirds of the work being undertaken by Dave and the Mayor, I presume?” You reply, phrasing it like a question even though you already know the answer.

“Of course.” Kakat says, just as you’d predicted. “Why wouldn’t the Mayor be involved? This benefits him as much as it does Dave and me.”

“Does it now.” You don’t really care. You just want him to go away so you can get back to what
you were doing. “And what do you mean by that?”

“You don’t know?” His furrows his brow at you. “This is the Can Town watchtower. We built it after Vriska destroyed the business district like one of your deity lizards over a large metropolitan area. Did Dave not tell you about it?”

“No,” you mumble regretfully. You haven’t really talked to Dave since right after the last dream bubble when he gave you Vriska’s bag of dice to hold onto, “he didn’t. That still doesn’t explain why you’re here, Karkat.”

“Oh, wow, you’re right! I’m sorry I was so rude to you, Rose, I just started exercising my squawk blaster so exorbitantly while simultaneously self stimulating my bone bulge with such fervor that I’m just barely holding back from spewing the strongest slurry of genetic material and pan matter out of every bodily orifice and splattering myself with such force that my fetid, disgusting material will penetrate the distant edges of the universe and impregnate the universe with a galaxy of shit. Remind me before I rid myself of this awful burden in my throbbing bulge and make myself so weak from the sheer mass of my self flagellating embarrassment that I just lay here in a pool of my own steaming waste until it slowly cools around me while I die of shame. What was your question again? Wait, no, my entire depressing existence is flashing before my bulbs, I remember now! I remember what you asked me! Rose, take my hand.”

Karkat grabs your hand in his before you can say no and throws himself onto the floor in front of you so he’s forced to stare up at you. He’s grasping your hand at an angle that looks uncomfortable for him, but he doesn’t seem to care.

”Rose, listen to me.” He’s speaking quietly, so quiet that you have to lean in closer to hear him speak. ”With my last breath, I want you to know...” Karkat takes a deep breath and puts his other hand against your cheek. ”It’s none of your fucking business.”

He goes limp, his hand sliding off your face and his tongue lolling out of his mouth as he plays dead. He’s holding his breath, one hundred percent committed to this scene. It’s all very dramatic.

“You’ve been spending way too much time with Dave, Karkat.” You’re completely unphased by his theatrics. “He’s rubbing off on you already. If you keep this up you’ll be busting sick rhymes and denying your sexuality before our three years are up.”

Karkat sits up. “Fuck off, Rose.”

“Fuck off?” Did you strike a nerve there? His insults are usually better than this. If so, which part of what you said caused it? “My, how original.”

“You haven’t told me why you’re here, either.”

You shrug. You’d never bothered to come up with a real excuse for why you were in here. You honestly didn’t think you were going to get caught today. “It’s quiet here.”

“The whole meteor’s quiet if you’re by yourself.” Karkat points out. “This place isn’t special.”

“True.” You nod, leaning back further and scooting the bottle carefully to your right with your elbow so it’s safely out of his line of sight. “This place just seemed right for what I wanted to use it for.”

“What? Sitting in the dark with nothing but cans to keep you company? You can be alone with your thoughts anywhere here if you put in half an effort. Or have you learned nothing from our drugged up subjugglator in the walls?”
He gestures upwards in the rough direction of a vent. You look up, and for a second you swear you can hear a faint scurrying sound above your head. You fight off the urge to shiver.

You didn’t hear anything. It’s just your mind playing tricks on you.

You look back at Karkat, his face is enough to convince you that you aren’t hearing things. He definitely heard it, too.

He stands up. “You know what? Fine. You can have this for whatever clandestine affair you have going on in our little makeshift view hive here. I don’t give a shit, but you clearly want privacy for fuck knows what you plan on using it for. I don’t want to know, just promise me you’ll keep one of your look stalks out for any suspicious Vriska-I mean people-who might try to disrupt a quiet, solemn night in the newly developed communal hivestems and...houses? Houses. In the new residential ring of Can Town.”

“Of course.” You agree. “Wouldn’t want anything happening to such nice, expensive looking homes. May I ask where you’re going, Karkat?”

Karkat looks up at the ceiling, his eyes trailing the sound’s path down the hall. The look is brief, but it’s slow enough that you catch it. "It's not important."

He starts to leave, but you reach out and grab his arm before he can go very far. He looks at your hand quizzically.

You have to admit, you’re just as surprised about this as he is. “Wait.” You say. “You should stay here.”

He looks from you, to the wall, then back to you, clearly weighing his options. You tighten your grip on his sweater in case he decides he’d rather face a clown than talk to you. You are more than willing to act as a dead weight to keep him here.

If it were any other reason, any other person, you’d let him go and bask in the relief of being alone again. No matter how much you want Karkat to leave you alone, though, you don’t want to be left alone at his expense. There’s no way he’s going to leave a fight with Gamzee physically or emotionally unscathed, no matter how good of friends they used to be.

“Come on, we could talk!” You pull a bit on his sleeve, trying to coax him back to sitting down. “You look like you have something on your mind.”

That’s true, but he always looks like he has something on his mind. He’s still considering it, you can read the indecision on his face. His eyes drift away from your face. That’s when you realize that, from this angle, your bottle’s not hidden at all. Who knows, maybe he won’t notice.

“Rose, what’s that?” He asks, dashing all of your hopes of secrecy.

Shit. “What’s what?”

It’s a very poor attempt at feigning ignorance, especially since he can see you’re hiding it behind you, but it’s the best you can do right now. You’re certain if you were sober you could come up with something better. You’re not sober, though, there’s a warmth in your head that’s slowly turning your brain to mush.

Karkat reaches over before you can do anything to stop him and picks up the bottle carefully by the neck. He holds it up so it’s out of your reach, but you can still see it. “This.”
Your heart drops into your stomach as your brain scrambles itself. You can’t believe you were caught. You were caught by someone you’d never even anticipated getting caught by. Karkat’s going to take your bottle and abscond with it. He’s going to go find Kanaya and Dave and tell them all about your graceless descent from the sobriety wagon. You’re not even going to do anything about it when he does. You’re going to lay back down and drain the other bottle you conveniently stored in your sylladex. You’re going to drink yourself into oblivion and wake back up on a dark, cold rock full of quiet aggravation and disappointment towards you. This is all going to happen, and you won’t do anything about it.

You’re a near all powerful god, yet you feel powerless to stop this.

Karkat sits back down next to you, yanking his arm out of your grip. He has his knees pulled all the way up to his chest and balances your half empty bottle of booze on them, using one hand to keep it steadily in place.

“I thought you quit.” It’s not a question, it’s a statement as he peers through the colored glass.

It hits you as you’re sitting there completely perplexed by his interest in it that, as an alien with a culture that’s quite different from your own, Karkat may have never actually seen a bottle like this up close before. Sure, you’ve drank in front of him before (his rants are really funny when you’re wasted, you couldn’t stop giggling half the time he spoke) but that was when you were more open about your drinking and you used cups.

Ah, the days of nursing your addiction inside a cup like a civilized being. Those were the days. You miss drinking booze out of a cup instead of straight out of the bottle like you have to now. It makes you feel like a stereotype.

“I did.” You admit. There’s no point in lying now. He already knows.

You could just reach over and grab the bottle and run away with it back to your room. You could lock the door and drain the rest of it and pretend this didn’t happen. Tomorrow you can lie your ass off about it after Karkat tells everyone. Would anyone believe him without any proof, anyway?

The bottle’s right there.

Your hand is itching to take it.

“Oh.” Karkat sets the bottle down beside him so you’d have to stretch over him to get it. He turns so he’s facing you, and you stare guiltily back at him, your hand outstretched and twitching with missed opportunity. He either misses both of these things or ignores them completely, you’re not sure which. “So what did you want to talk about?”

You put your hand down. “Aren’t you going to yell at me about how disappointed you are in my lack of self control? How you expected me to be better than this? Scream at me to get myself together because our situation demands I be in top shape for the battle to come? Anything?”

Karkat’s brow furrows again. He seems just as confused by your outburst as you are by his lack of one. “Did you want me to yell at you about this? I can if you want me to, I could rant at you at the top of my air sacs until your fucking spongeclots bleed and you’re as deaf as whatever the fuck Nepeta’s dancelor’s name is, and I won’t stop there, Rose. I’ll keep screaming nasty, degrading insults about your stunning lack of restraint and your purposeful attempt to cripple your own mental faculties even though they’re all you have going for you. No, I’ll keep screaming until I lose my voice, even though you can’t hear me, just for you I’ll use sign language to convey my meaning simultaneously. You’ll be completely deaf and blind from the thick film of shame tears as
you ugly cry yourself to sleep right at the climax of my speech and drown in the salt puddle. Yes, I could do that, and I won’t hesitate in doing just that if you ask me to, but I don’t want to. Who the fuck is that going to help?”

He stares at you, waiting for you to respond. You don’t really have anything to say to that. His reasoning is sound, you think, but also confusing and not what you expected at all. You were expecting a verbal smackdown from whoever found you, regardless of what it could possibly mean to you. You’re a disappointment, why would your feelings be a factor? You have nothing to say about this. You just sit there and blink back at him.

“So what did you want to talk about?” He repeats. As if that’s going to help you out at all.

You don’t have any idea what to talk to Karkat about, so you just say the first thing that comes to mind. “Kanaya and I finished that book.”

“Really?” You can tell he’s interested, leaning in closer to hear you better. “What did you think?”

“It was good.” You say. “I’ve never read anything like that before, it was quite the experience. Especially how the quadrants were described. We didn’t have any literature about the benefits and difficulties of a polyamorous relationship on Earth, or at the very least we didn’t at my house.”

“Then what the fuck did you have?”

“Single partner relationships.” You admit with a shrug. “Mostly of heterosexual couplings. Sometimes there was some minor homosexuality hinted at in unimportant secondary characters, but even that much was a rarity.”

“I still don’t understand those words.”

“Which ones? I used a lot of them just now. You’ll have to be more specific.”

“Those ones about your human sexuality.” Karkat replies. “I’ve tried to get Dave to explain them to me before, but every time we talk about it he goes off on those long tangents with the mixed metaphors that mean shit and don’t answer my initial question at all.”

He’s furious by the end of this admittance, practically glaring at you as if Dave’s sidestepping uncomfortable conversations is your fault.

“Dave doesn’t exactly have a firm grasp on his own sexuality yet, so he’s probably not the best person to ask.”

Karkat looks at you curiously, like he’s looking at a human up close and personal for the very first time again. “Do you have a firm grasp on your sexuality, Rose?”

“Yes.” You can’t help but laugh. “Yes, I do. I’m a homosexual, though I prefer the term lesbian, myself.”

“So homosexuals are also called lesbians?” He asks, tilting his head.

You nod. “Yes, the female ones are. The male ones generally go by gay.”

“So that’s what gay means.” You can see something akin to understanding dawn on him. You can’t imagine how many times Dave has used that word and not explained to Karkat what he meant. He continues to press you for information. “But what the fuck does being a homosexual even mean.”
“Being a homosexual just means you’re attracted to your own gender, and only that gender.” You explain, trying to be as clear as possible. “For example, I’m with Kanaya, and we’re both girls, so that makes us a homosexual couple.”

“Okay.” Karkat nods. “Since Terezi and Vriska are together, are they a homosexual couple too, or does that just apply to concupiscent quadrants?”

That’s an excellent question, but you’re not confident in your ability to give a completely comprehensive and well thought out answer. “Well, since all of the quadrants are considered romantic in nature, I would argue that yes, they would qualify as a homosexual couple. I have only a vague understanding of the quadrants, though, so I can’t verify that for sure. We would have to get an expert’s opinion on that, otherwise I suppose it would depend on how they define their relationship.”

“I think it counts.” He immediately affirms, ready to put his new relationship information to practice.

“Well, you are a romance expert, so it must be true.” You agree teasingly, using his self proclaimed title against him. You’ve seen nothing but a collection of worn out romance novels to verify his claim as such.

He crosses his arms over his chest and frowns down at his feet. “Shut the fuck up, I’m more of an expert than you are.”

“And I’m agreeing with you. I’m well aware of that, I read your notes in the book.”

Karkat stiffens for a moment before covering his face with his hands and groaning into them. “I completely forgot about those! I wrote those so long ago, they make me cringe. I had such a poor grasp on the quadrants and the subtle complexity of the characters and their dynamics it makes me wish I was a time player so I could go back in the past and slap that Karkat in the face for being a dense bulge panned fuckwit.”

“I didn’t think they were that bad.” You remark. “Though a lot of the ideas weren’t fully formed, I still agreed with most of your opinions. Since you used examples to support all of your theories behind who you thought were good pairings and in which quadrant, it was fairly comprehensive for me, which I appreciated.”

His hands fall back to the floor, but his gaze is on his shoes. “Thanks.”

He doesn’t sound like he believes you. You’re reaching an awkward lapse into silence. Karkat still looks like he has something bothering him, it’s clear from the way he’s chewing on his frowning bottom lip. Maybe he really does have something on his mind.

“Was there something you wanted to discuss?” You coax, his eyes flick over to you momentarily, and you smile reassuringly even though you have the feeling it comes off looking more like a smirk. “We may as well talk about whatever it is while we’re both here.”

Karkat takes a deep breath and opens his mouth. “Dave-”

He stops. What was he going to say about Dave? Karkat turns away from you momentarily and picks up the bottle again, holding it up and staring at it thoughtfully. “How bad is this? Dave tried to explain it to me once, but I couldn’t understand what he meant with all of the inane shit he was spouting.”

“Well,” how do you explain this properly? “it’s generally fine in moderation for humans. It’s often
drank at parties or other social celebrations or alone in a dark room with nothing but your thoughts. In those cases it’s fine, but some people” like you, “can become addicted and dependent on alcohol by drinking too much of it too often.”

“Can you get addicted immediately?” Karkat asks, tipping the bottle on its side and watching the liquid swish around. You have a feeling you know where this is going, but you have a hard time believing he’d actually do it.

“I think it depends on the person, but I don’t really know.” You admit. “I’m not an expert on the subject.”

“Okay.” He nods and unscrews the lid off the bottle. Is he going to do what you think he’s going to do? He’s not, is he?

Karkat rubs his sleeve across the lip. You should take it from him before he does something he’ll regret later.

He takes a deep breath and drinks straight out of the bottle. You sit and watch wide eyed as he chugs it at a faster pace than you ever would.

“Holy shit.” You say as he finally puts the bottle down and screws the cap back on.

Karkat coughs and makes a face. “That was disgusting, I want to scrub my tongue with my claws until I can’t taste anything but my own foul blood in my mouth anymore.”

“It’s an acquired taste.” You sneak a hand over and slide the bottle closer to you while he’s distracted with getting the taste out of his mouth. You note that he drank about half of what you had remaining, so a fourth of the bottle. That’s quite a bit for a first drink.

It takes effect almost immediately. He unfolds his legs out in front of him and puts a hand to his head to hold it steady. He’s swaying a bit. “That was a terrible idea.”

“It was.” You agree. “Why did you do it?”

“You’re a lot easier to talk to when you’re drunk,” he admits, turning so he’s completely facing you, “you’re more easygoing and open about shit, like you don’t care about what you’re saying at all. I thought maybe if I tried getting drunk I’d be less self conscious about what I’m going to ask you.” He groans and flops onto the floor, his hands once again over his face. “Jesus Christ, did that backfire quickly.”

“Of course it backfired,” you snort, “you tried to make me your role model.”

“I wouldn’t phrase it like that.”

“Well, that’s what you just said.” You point out, tapping the hand on his face. “Why do you need to be less self conscious? Whatever you wanted to talk about couldn’t be that uncomfortable.”

His voice is muffled by his palms. “Yes, it could.”

“Oh, please. Dave once told me all about a wet dream he had involving Tony Hawk, me, and a human sized Dorito in full detail and asked me to interpret it for him. He talked for three hours about how the Dorito dust clung to the legendary skateboarder’s hard, hairy body like a second skin and how he couldn’t get it off him no matter how hard he rubbed at it. Three whole hours, Karkat! And that was just the start of it. There’s no way whatever you have to say could be any worse than that. Come on, try me.”
He laughs. It’s quiet and he stops as soon as he catches himself doing it, but you think it definitely relieved a bit of the tension. You wait patiently for him to speak.

“Rose,” he looks up at you through his fingers, hands still covering his face, “do you think that Dave...pities me?”

You have to stop yourself from saying yes immediately. You’re well aware of what the word ‘pity’ means to a troll, but you also know what it means in human terms.

“Troll pity or human pity?” You ask for clarification.

“Human.”

“Karkat, that question doesn’t even make sense! You and Dave are friends, why the hell would you think he’s pitying you?”

His hands slide off his face and rest on the floor beside him. “He’s been...weird lately.” Karkat begins, “I don’t know how to explain it, because we still spend time together and we do pretty much the same shit we always do, but it seems...different. He doesn’t get as close to me as he used to, it’s like he put up some boundary between us that shocks him every time one of us crosses the imaginary border into the other person’s territory. We talk still, it’s fucking impossible to spend time with Dave and not have a conversation going all the time, but...he doesn’t say as much anymore. Yes, he still talks so much that I’m afraid he’s going to end up choking on his own tongue half the time, but it’s all empty talk. His head and his pusher aren’t in it anymore, he’s just saying words because he knows I’m waiting for a reply, and it’s so disappointing when you can hear how hollow and void of thought his words are now.”

He sighs and wraps his arms around himself, curling up on his side and turning so he looks like he’s talking to the wall. “I can feel him pulling away from me. He obviously doesn’t want to spend time with me anymore, but for some reason he feels obligated to do so. I can only think it’s because he thinks I’m a pitiful fucking mess.”

Right now, he does sort of look like a pitiful fucking mess. That’s understandable, you can’t imagine how sad and distraught you would look if you thought Kanaya was only with you because she felt sorry for you.

Even just the thought of it is enough to sting.

You take a quick drink. “Karkat, that’s ridiculous, Dave doesn’t pity you.” At least not like that. “You guys hang out all the time, I’m almost jealous of you. If Dave seems distant it’s probably because he’s just going through something right now. I’m sure you’re just reading too much into it.”

Karkat’s silent for a moment before responding quietly, “You’re jealous of me?”

“Yes.” You slump against the wall and slide down to join him on the floor. “Of your relationship with Dave, anyway. I’m not as close to him as you are.”

“That’s funny,” Karkat rolls onto his back, “I’m pretty jealous of you and Kanaya.”

“You are?” You never would have guessed. He’s never shown any signs of this.

“Fuck yeah, I am.” He replies with conviction. “You have such a great relationship with her. You’re both so obviously happy and good for each other that I honestly can’t imagine Kanaya being as happy with anyone else as she is with you. Every time I see you two together, I’m
reminded of how much I want that for myself. I want what you have, and I hate myself for that. I should just be happy for you and Kanaya because fuck, Kanaya deserves this, and so do you, but no, instead my stupid self obsessed think pan has to dwell on the fact that not only am I going to die, but I’m going to die without even experiencing a moment even half as romantic as my hand fondling my own shame globes while I make a futile attempt to shove my tongue inside my own puckered wastechute while crying from the strain on my slowly bending spine and the crushing weight of the loneliness pressing down on me until I’m flattened to nothing and the life is squeezed out of me alongside my shit and blood and vomit.”

“You won’t have to be jealous for very long.” You’ve seen the way Dave looks at him, it’s only a matter of time. “I think you’ll have something like this for yourself.”

Karkat rolls his eyes. “I doubt that.”

He stretches a hand out to you, and you take it and pull him upright. Karkat doesn’t let go of your hand while he unscrews the bottle’s cap with one hand. He drinks deeply and passes the bottle back to you. You accept the bottle and take a drink yourself as he flops back onto the ground. The bottle’s almost empty now. You should open the new one soon.

“You and Kanaya are so great together,” he continues, his words beginning to slur, “really, I’m so glad you found each other. Kanaya deserves to be happy, she’s been through a lot of shit. Too much shit. She fucking died and came back to life, Rose, and she didn’t even get to god tier! She just came back to life to fuck shit up and deliver some much needed beat downs. She has every right to bitch and moan about her pissy circumstances as a rainbow drinker, but instead of that she just accepts it and remains this fucking sweet dork who still reads rainbow drinker novels even though she knows they’re cheesy and nonsensical. She even had a good place on the hemospectrum! Back on Alternia I’d never once heard her complain about how she was going to have to live in the fucking caverns so she can take care of eggs and hatch them and then care for grubs until they finally begin pupating on an endless cycle of hatchwork. The game took the life she was supposed to have away from her and replaced it with literal shit, and she doesn’t even seem phased by it. She must have been upset about it, at least a little, but that’s the thing about not having a moirail. You have no one to vent all of your feelings to and you have no one there to pat you on the cheek and tell you your feelings are natural and valid and that they’ll pass. If she was upset about it, she sure as fuck didn’t show it. That’s why I’m glad she has you. She talks to you. She’s open with you and it shows. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her so deliriously blissed out and relaxed in my entire life. She’s literally glowing, Rose. You make her happy in a way no one else could. Fuck, I know I couldn’t.”

Karkat sits up again and takes the bottle from your hands. He drains the remaining sips you had left in the bottle and lays it down on the floor beside him. Karkat lays back down and spins the bottle idly with his fingers, apparently finished talking.

You don’t know how much alcohol a troll’s body can handle in comparison to a human’s, but you can say with certainty that Karkat is pretty drunk. His eyes have that heavy, glazed over quality that you often associate with too much liquor in too little time. Not to mention how much slower and less intelligible his speech has gotten since he started talking about Kanaya.

He just said a lot about Kanaya, some of which is making you think you may have been misreading him this whole time. “Do you like Kanaya?”

He answers without hesitation. “Of course I do! Wait,” he furrows his eyebrows and levels an unsteady look at you, “do you mean like as in as a friend or like as in that immature, asinine way your species uses it to vaguely insinuate harboring a flush crush on someone?”
“Vaguely insinuating harboring a flush crush on someone, thought honestly I was leaning more towards vaguely insinuating a pale crush.”

He nods and looks away from you, holding up his hand in an effort to keep you from saying anything until he figures out how he wants to answer this. His mouth is moving, but if he’s speaking you can’t hear it.

Finally he hangs his head and sighs, his hand falling to his lap. You don’t need him to say anything more to understand what he’s trying to convey.

“Have you told Kanaya how you feel?”

He shakes his head slowly. You crawl closer so you’re sitting on your knees in front of him. You go in for a slight pap to get his attention, but you miscalculate and end up hitting him pretty hard on the nose instead.

Karkat jumps at the unexpected smack, his hands cupping his probably throbbing nose and glowers at you. Well, at least you have his attention.

“Listen,” your own speech isn’t exactly coherent, either. You’re not as flat off your ass drunk as you’d planned to be by this time earlier, but you’re drunk enough that you can definitely feel the effects in your head a bit more now. Your thoughts are just on the verge of fuzzy. “I’m okay with Kanaya being in quadrants with other people if that’s what she wants to do, since it’s a part of her culture and I respect that. So if you really want to try being in a moirallegiance with my hot alien girlfriend, you have my blessing.”

For good measure, you pick up the pretty much completely empty bottle of booze and wet your fingers on it. You flick gin at him in the sign of the cross, and then cross yourself and suck the remaining alcohol off your fingers.

“Rose, what the fuck?” Karkat demands, wiping your blessing off his forehead in disgust.

“It was a blessing!” You proclaim. “I was giving you my blessing to go have feelings jams with Kanaya!”

Thank god you’re not drunk enough to start messing up her name yet.

“Oh.” He rubs his soon to be sticky fingers together and stares at them, unsure of what to make of your blessing. He reaches over and pokes you in the head with one of them without saying a word.

You rub at the spot. “What was that for?”

“Returning the favor?” He doesn’t sound certain if that was his reason behind it or not. Most likely he just did it for no reason at all. “Thanks, but I can’t do it.”

You tilt your head in confusion. “Why not?”

“Kanaya, she only likes girls. She’s a...” he’s struggling for the word. He stares up at the ceiling, concentrating on something, trying to isolate the specific syllables he wants. “a homosexual. A les...bean. She likes girls in all of her quadrants.”

“Oh.” You didn’t know this. You’d never really discussed your separate sexualities with Kanaya before. “I thought your whole species was pansexual?”

“Okay, first? I don’t even know what the fuck that means. Second, no, we aren’t all the same, we
do have preferences, we just don’t have labels for them. Besides, even if Kanaya did like guys, she
deserves a better quadrantmate than me. It doesn’t matter how pale for her I feel for her right now,
I’m going to end up vacillating with her eventually. I always end up vacillating.”

Karkat looks up at you like he’s worried about what you’ll say, you nod for him to continue.

“Rose, I don’t know if you know this, but I used to have a thing with Terezi...calling it a
relationship would be a fucking overstatement. She and I had something sort of flush, at first. We
were doing pretty okay, I thought, but then I had to go and fuck it up by pitch flirting with her,
aggravating her and goading her into fighting with me over stupid shit that didn’t even matter. I just
kept switching back and forth between pitch and flush without warning, half the time I didn’t even
notice I was doing it. All of that vacillating shit coupled with my overbearing personality was more
than you could ask any reasonably sane troll to deal with. I don’t know exactly what happened, but
after awhile Terezi stopped hanging out with me and we drifted apart. The worst part of it is that I
knew this would happen. I know I have a problem...I always want someone in any way possible, as
soon as anyone shows even the slightest inkling of maybe being interested in me in any fucking
quadrant I just...I get needy and jealous and desperate for attention. I...I want them in every
quadrant, Rose, that’s not something that’s supposed to happen. You’re supposed to feel a certain
way about the person, and your attraction stays the same. Yeah, there are cases among the young
when pale turned red and vice versa, it’s not exactly rare, but never at the same time. It never
happens suddenly or without warning, and generally when you vacillate you stay in the new
quadrant, and that’s the end of it. But no, I have to vacillate into every quadrant every other
fucking day like some insane emotional glutton, feeding off the feelings of others until they have
nothing left for me and I’m alone again waiting for the next unsuspecting victim of my constant
flipping and need for attention. Do you know what’s even worse than all of that, Rose? Do you?”

Is he actually waiting for you to answer? You shake your head no. He groans and falls back down
onto the floor, his head hitting the ground with a distinct thump.

“The worst part, the worst worst part of this,” he says quietly, “is that I don’t even notice I’m
doing it until it’s too late. All these emotions, they just feel...natural. There’s no quadrant division
in my bloodpusher to tell me how I’m supposed to feel about anyone. Usually it’s okay, but with
some people it’s hard, it’s so fucking hard. Like what happened with Terezi, or Dave, for instance.
Dave’s my best bro, but I hated him with such an intense animosity when you both got here that I
genuinely thought he was the one, my perfect kismesis. The search for someone I hated even more
than myself was over. But then we actually started hanging out with each other and it turned out he
wasn’t so bad, afterall, and things got very pale very fast. We’re not moirails, because Dave doesn’t
want to do quadrants, but in every other respect we may as well be. Yes, he sometimes pisses me
off, but not as much as he used to. As if all that wasn’t bad enough, now sometimes when I just
look at him my bloodpusher does this really stupid thing and I—”

He clutches the spot over his hearts, bunching the sweater in his fists. “I don’t know what to do
about it.”

This is turning into an extremely emotional conversation. You lay down on the ground next to
him. “You have a crush on Dave.”

You fucking called it.

Karkat stares at you, wide eyed with surprise, apparently unaware of the implications his words
had made.

“Holy shit, why did I tell you that? What the fuck is wrong with me?”
“Nothing, you’re drunk.” You explain. “You’d probably tell me anything right now.”

“You’re not going to tell Dave or Kanaya about what I said, are you?” He’s so worried about it, you can hear the panic in his voice and see the pleading for your silence in his eyes.

“I won’t tell anyone.” You promise. “I have enough practice with doctor/patient confidentiality to know when something is okay to talk about.”

He squints at you suspiciously. “How do I know you won’t talk about it? There’s nothing stopping you.”

“That’s true.” You agree. “What if I told you a secret of mine? That way you’ll have leverage to stop me from talking about it.”

“Your solution is blackmail?”

You shrug. “Essentially, yes.”

After some consideration, he nods. “Okay. Go ahead.”

“I’ve...” do you really want to tell him about this? “been having a hard time with Dave recently. Dave is one of my best friends, probably the friend I was closest to, and as soon as I learned we were related through ectobiology, I started to feel this kinship that I’d never felt before. I want to explore that further. I want to know what it’s like to have a brother, to have family that loves and supports you,” though recently you’ve been thinking you may have had that the whole time, “to have that closeness. I don’t know how to talk to him about it, though. I don’t know if he wants the same things as me in that regard. Even if I knew what to say, it’s not like it would matter. I can never seem to get him alone, he’s always with you, Karkat.”

“Hey,” Karkat defends, “I haven’t talked to Kanaya in weeks because of you.”

“That’s not true,” you argue, “you talk to each other all the time!”

“Yeah, but it’s not the same, because you’re always there!”

“Kanaya’s my girlfriend!”

“Dave’s my best friend!”

“Those aren’t the same things, Karkat!”

“Yeah, I know!” His voice has been getting steadily louder each time you exchanged comments. He’s practically shouting now. “What were you saying?”

“That was about it.” You admit.

“Oh.”

Things grow quiet between the two of you. Should you be getting out that second bottle?

“Hey, Rose?” Karkat inquires after a few minutes. “Why don’t we ever talk?”

“Probably because of awkward silences like the one that just happened.”

“Dave and Kanaya talk a lot.” He continues, as if he didn’t hear your answer.
“Yeah, but that’s Dave and Kanaya. They’re not us. You do realize if we talked all the time, we wouldn’t stop complaining or making snarky, sarcastic comments at each other until someone else intervened.”

“We’re not doing that right now.”

“Yes, but we’re also both drunk. You more so than me. Trust me on this Karkat, if we weren’t even the slightest bit inoxicated, this conversation wouldn’t have lasted this long.”

“So...this is a one time thing? This conversation?” Karkat asks. “We’re not going to be doing this again?”

“This extensively? No. I’m certain we’ll talk again at some point, the meteor’s only so big and there’s only the eight of us here. In the sense of subject matter, I’d say this weird heart to heart we have going on here is a one time thing.”

Karkat doesn’t say anything. He just nods and stares up at the ceiling.

You take the opportunity to take out the new bottle. It doesn’t seem like Karkat’s going anywhere, and you don’t want to walk around later with a full bottle in your sylladex, just sitting there and tempting you in the middle of a strategy meeting or a date with Kanaya. You’d much rather drink it now.

“Since that’s the case,” you pause and take a drink. It hits you harder than you expected. “I say we get as much off of our chests as possible.”

Karkat looks at you carefully, then accepts the bottle from your hand and drinks. You have a feeling he’s not going to remember much of this in the morning.

You’re both really drunk, drunk enough that everything makes you laugh, which makes Karkat laugh, which makes you laugh even harder. It’s an endless laugh track that you sometimes manage to break through by admitting something you’d never told anyone before. Granted, some of the confessions are really dumb, but you’re drunk so you don’t really care about that.

“Karkat, Karkat!” You wave a hand in front of his face to get his attention, which you already had, “I have a question! What were you planning on doing...when we heard what’s his clown earlier?”

“What’s his clown?” He’s lost all sense of volume control, so now every time he speaks it sounds like shouting. “Who, Gamzee? I don’t know. Nothing, probably. It’s been so long since I’ve seen him, I just wanted to follow and see if I could catch a glimpse of that motherfucker. Maybe I would have tried to hit him, but that wouldn’t have gone over very well, I think.”

“Oh.” Apparently you’d had nothing to be concerned about. It’s your turn to admit something. You take another drink. You’re running low on alcohol again, but you have no intention of getting up and getting more. You think you’ll just finish it off and pass out here eventually. “I worry about Kanaya sometimes, with the glowing and shit? Like, does glowing take up a lot of energy? How many extra calories does she have to have in order to maintain that glow? Does it ever turn off?”

“I don’t know.” Karkat admits. “I think Kanaya would know all that shit? I kind of like it, though.”

“Yeah, it’s nice!” You agree. “She’s like a lightbulb!”
You just compared your beautiful, sophisticated girlfriend to a lightbulb. What the fuck. You can’t stop laughing, you’re practically doubled over, which is weird because you’re lying down. Karkat starts laughing too, he has a tendency to do that even when he’s not sure what the joke is. That’s probably just a drunk Karkat thing and not a regular Karkat thing, though.

You’re both laughing your asses off until your fit dissolves into random bursts of giggles. Karkat goes silent altogether and rubs his eyes with his hand. “What’s a lightbulb?”

And just like that, you’re gone again. You don’t think you’ve ever laughed this hard in your entire life. At least, you haven’t sober.

“Okay, Karkat, it’s...it’s your turn.” You can’t stop laughing long enough to get the whole sentence out. “Tell me something.”

“I...um...” He’s searching for something to say, still laughing himself. “I had a crush on John for awhile.”

“That’s not a secret, Karkat!” You chide, poking him in the forehead. “Now you have to do the penalty.” You hand him the almost empty bottle. “Drink the rest of this.”

He rolls his eyes but takes the bottle from you. This isn’t his first penalty.

“Chug, chug, chug, chug!” You chant as you watch him drink the rest of it. He finishes it off and comes up in a coughing fit. Eventually, it dies down by itself, and he tips the bottle to prove that he drank all of it.

“What are we going to use as a penalty now?” He asks.

You shrug, unconcerned. “I’m sure we’ll think of something.”

The absurdity of your situation hits you again, not for the first time tonight. You’re sitting here drinking and having what you would call probably a good time with Karkat Vantas, the last person you thought you’d do that with. After this, you’ll probably be closer to Karkat than you are to Dave.

What. The. Fuck.

You start laughing again because yes, this is a ridiculous scenario, but that doesn’t make it any less real. This is actually happening, and you can’t stop laughing. Neither can Karkat, but again, it’s because he’s drunk off his ass. He couldn’t explain what was funny if you gave him a map with clear directions leading right to the punch line.

That makes you laugh even harder, you can’t seem to make yourself stop.

A shadow falls over you, and you look up and find yourself completely capable of stopping. Nothing is funny anymore.

Karkat sits up quickly, a hand reaching up to steady his head. The room’s probably spinning for him. He drank a lot. “Dave.”

Dave stands over the both of you, his arms crossed over his chest. He’s sneering down at you. He’s probably disgusted, disappointed in you. You’re disgusted and disappointed in you. You want to shrink away from him, but will yourself not to. You wait for him to speak.

“Just what the fuck is going on here?”
I hope this chapter wasn't too bad to read! The next one's supposed to pick up right where this one left off, so hopefully it doesn't take forever to write.
A Drunken Lament

Chapter Notes

Okay, some notes about this chapter:
Dave does a lot of yelling. Like, a lot of yelling, and it's not good and I didn't like writing it which is partially what took so long.

Second, Dave has something that could be construed as a panic attack (or at least has some symptoms similar to one) so just a warning about that. It's very brief but it's there.

Other than that, I hope you like this chapter!

You already knew what the fuck was going on here before the question left your mouth. What with that shameful and slightly glazed over look on Rose’s face and the empty bottles on the floor, it was as obvious as the shades on your face. It doesn’t take a genius to put two and two together.

“Just what the fuck is going on here?”

Rose shrinks at the accusation in your voice and turns away from you. Her cheeks are burning with shame and embarrassment. Good. She should be ashamed. She should be embarrassed. You can’t fucking believe she’s drinking again.

“Well?”

She doesn’t say anything. She has nothing to say for herself. Not that there’s anything she could say that would assuage you at this point. You thought she was doing better, it’s been months since she’s had a drink. Months!

At least, you thought it had been months. Maybe she’s been doing this the whole time, and you just hadn’t realized it.

The thought of that alone is enough to fill you with outrage and disappointment.

“Dave?” Karkat says your name again. His voice is slow and heavy, and when you look over at him his eyes have that same glazed quality as Rose’s, only more visible.

Why the shit is Karkat here, and why the fuck is he drunker than a fish in a beer keg? What the hell is with this?

“What, Karkat? Do you have an explanation?” It comes out louder and more demanding than you mean, but you don’t really care because you’re pissed about this fucked up situation you just walked in on.

You just wanted to go for a walk around the meteor to tire yourself out a bit more, maybe shoot the shit with any passerby who happened to be doing the same. But no. Instead of any of that, you had to walk in on drunk Rose in a usually quiet corner of Can Town with Karkat, who is also incredibly shit faced.

On the bright side, you are suddenly very, very tired.
“What the fuck are you yelling about?” He shouts back at you. You honestly can’t tell if he means to shout or if he’s so drunk he’s unable to exercise the little amount of volume control he has.

“What am I yelling about?” You repeat just as vehemently. “This! Clearly, I’m yelling about this disturbing dick slip of a situation the universe decided to fuck over our sweet assholes with.”

You spread your arms out wide to indicate the span of the drunk disaster you’re talking about. “Do you have anything to say to that, Karkat? Do you want to explain to me why the fuck you and Rose are both sloshed? Do you have anything to say in your defense?”

You wait, and Karkat opens his mouth like he’s going to say something. Rose prods him in the arm and draws his attention to her. Something in her face must make him change his mind.

“No.” He shakes his head reluctantly, leveling his glare at the ground. “I don’t.”

“Then shut the fuck up.” You go back to Rose, who’s clearly bracing herself for whatever verbal smack down your about to deliver on her drunk ass. It’s like she was expecting this. Of course she was expecting this! She’s a fucking Seer! Her whole god damn thing is knowing when and how shit’s gonna go down! She probably saw this coming before she even started drinking tonight, and yet she went ahead and did it anyway. “You quit.”

She nods, staring at her folded hands in her lap. “I did.”

You take a few steps closer to her, and she flinches like she’s expecting you to hit her or something. You don’t think you would ever do that, no matter how pissed you get. You’d like to think that Rose knows that, too. You kick one of the glass bottles and send it rolling across the floor. It makes a hollow sound until it bumps into the wall and stops. “How the hell is this quitting? Do you have some different definition of quitting that I don’t know about? Where the fuck does relapsing fit into the twelve step program?”

“Dave, I’m sorry, okay? I’m sorry! I didn’t mean for this to happen. I...I messed up.” She looks up at you, pleading for understanding. “I’m sorry.”

She looks like she might cry. In a regular situation, you would try your hardest to watch what you say from here on out because you have no idea how to deal with someone if they start crying. You’ve never even seen someone cry before, and you definitely don’t want to start seeing that now.

This isn’t a regular situation, though. You’re tired and pissed off and Rose is fucking drunk even though she knows she has a problem with alcohol and she said she was working on it. You thought she was getting better, but obviously she lied to you. You can’t even imagine how many times she sat around somewhere and drank herself stupid while you went on being proud of her for taking initiative and stopping her problem in its tracks.

You don’t care if she cries.

“Yeah, well, sorry’s not gonna fucking cut it, Rose. I don’t care how many times you say it, you can beat the horse to death with your limp noodle of an apology and it still won’t be enough. Not for this. Not after what you did after you swore, you swore you weren’t going to do this shit again.”

Rose’s eyes are so watery, they’re practically glistening. Her hands are at her sides. “Dave-”

“No.” You’re not done. She doesn’t get to talk. What could she even have left to say? “I can’t help or support you if you’re not even willing to try and stay clean, Rose. I was completely willing and able to help you out. If you’d just talked to me or even fucking pestered me I would have come and
helped you deal no matter what I was doing before that. Shit, Rose, I would have given you my all twenty-four seven if that’s what it took to keep you from doing this to yourself. You know that, there’s no way you didn’t know that. But now? After this? I don’t think I can do that anymore.”

“What are you saying?” Her eyebrows knit together, but from the look in her eyes you can tell she knows exactly what you mean.

Karkat reaches over and grabs her hand, and they both look at you, waiting for you to keep going. They both look up at you, solemn and resigned, like they’re waiting for you to drop a death sentence on them. In a way, you feel like you are.

“I’m done with you.” You finally say. Rose knew this was coming, but you can still see her deflate almost instantaneously. She’s practically collapsing in on herself. She’s staring back down at her lap again. You can’t tell for certain, but from the hitch in her breathing she’s fighting a losing battle against her tears. “Until you get your shit together, I’m done dealing with you. I don’t want anything more to do with you.”

You reach around her and grab Karkat by the sleeve of his sweater and drag him to his feet. He’s really unsteady. You tighten your grip on him in an effort to keep him upright.

“We’re leaving.” You start pulling Karkat away. “Bye, Rose.”

You don’t know if she’s crying when you leave.

You don’t look back.

“Dave?” Karkat asks as you leave Can Town and Rose behind in exchange for the quiet darkness of the hall. The only sound is your feet and his voice echoing in the emptiness. “Where are we going?”

You don’t answer him.

Karkat’s not moving fast enough to keep in pace with your stomping. He’s stumbling over his feet so much that he eventually stops moving them altogether and lets you drag him.

“Can we stop?” You still don’t respond, instead you grit your teeth and continue on.

“Dave, you’re going too fucking fast! Can’t we take a break for a minute?” He begs. “Please?”

It’s the please that gets to you, and you find yourself coming to a sudden stop. You’d changed your hand’s position from his sleeve to his wrist, and you keep your grip tight around it so he doesn’t try to leave.

It’s taking him a long time to catch his breath, longer than you think it would take normally. You turn to look at him, and yeah, he looks...not good. Almost like he’s sick, you’d say. His face is blotchy and his eyes are out of focus. He’s trying to steady his rapid breathing, you can hear it and feel it from the speed of his pulse beneath your fingertips. He swallows.

You hope he doesn’t throw up.

As mad as you are at him, you can’t help but ask. “Karkat, are you alright?”

He nods.

“Are you sure?”
He takes a second to think about it, then nods again. That pause was enough to convince you otherwise. You sigh and let go of him, running your fingers through your hair as he takes back his hand, rubbing his probably sore wrist.

“Here,” you turn around and get down on your knees, “get on my back. You’re clearly just going to drag behind and trip over your own feet with the grace of an inebriated elephant the way you are now, it’ll be easier for me to just carry you.”

He’s hesitant. It’s a long, awkward moment of Karkat standing over you, staring at your back in front of him. It’s long enough that, try as you might to stop yourself, you start to feel...exposed.

Vulnerable.

You’re in a bad position, a fucking terrible position. Your head’s lowered, you’re facing the wall. Karkat’s behind you, you can’t see him. He could do whatever he wants to you right now and you can’t do anything about it because you can’t see and you’re on your knees. It would be so easy for him. He could just stab you right now if he really felt like it.

You need to get into a better position. You need to get off your knees right now and into a better stance right fucking now you need to get up you need to get the fuck up where did you put your sword it’s in your specibus isn’t it it is right where the hell else would it be what’s taking you so long you need to get on your feet already and defend yourself before he has a chance to strike first before-

There’s pressure on your shoulder.

You flinch at the feeling, waiting for pain to come as you turn on your heels and prepare for the strife you know is coming because a strife is always coming it always is because that’s just how it is that’s how it’s been your whole life

but...

but it’s different now. Things are different now. Your life is different now. The pain never comes, and the strife never happens.

You haven’t really had to fight anyone since you came to the meteor. There’s no reason to.

You’re not in Texas anymore.

No, you’re not in Texas. Texas is gone. Earth is gone.

Your bro is gone.

You’re in a hallway on a meteor hurtling through a vast nothingness with no signs of stopping until your three years are up. Standing over you isn’t your bro with a sword, ready to attack you whenever he sees fit.

It’s Karkat. He’s staring wide eyed down at you, clutching his offending hand close to his chest. That pressure on your shoulder. You can recognize it now as a touch, just a touch. Nothing more.

You’re fine. You’re perfectly fine.

But you don’t feel fine.

“Are...are you okay, Dave?” Karkat asks. He sounds scared, his voice barely above a whisper. “I’m
He gets down on his hands and knees and crawls closer to you until he’s just an arm’s length away. He reaches out a hand like he’s going to touch you, only to pull back before his fingers can even brush against your skin. You can feel the stirring of the air by your face at his sudden change in decision, and it cools the sweat on your face a bit. When did you start sweating? “I’m sorry.”

He doesn’t ask you anything, and you don’t give him any information. You just sit there on your knees, staring at him and breathing slowly. The adrenalin pulsing through your body hurts your head and your chest. You’re just trying to calm yourself down.

Karkat keeps eye contact with you the entire time you’re doing this.

You manage to get yourself down to a normal heart rate and start to stand. You really hope Karkat doesn’t notice how shaky your legs are.

You look down at him on the floor. You don’t think he noticed. He’s still too drunk to make those kinds of observations. Karkat continues to stare at you, confused about what happened. Other than that, he looks better. At least, he looks less likely to blow chunks everywhere now.

You finally manage to speak. “Let’s go. Come on, get up.”

He starts to stand, but he’s moving too slow and you want to move and forget whatever the fuck just happened as quickly as you possibly can. You grab him by the arms and hoist him up. He still looks a little unsteady on his feet. You don’t think you’re going to have the patience to slow down if he starts dragging behind.

You’re going to have to go with your original plan after all.

You take a deep breath, hold it, and turn around. It’s the only way you can think of to keep you from breathing too quickly and losing your cool again. Fuck knows if it’ll actually work, but you’re willing to do anything if it means you don’t repeat that shit.

This time, you stay upright. The feeling of having someone standing both behind and over you while you were powerless on your ground on your knees might have been a root cause of the shit that just went down. You reach your hands out behind you, and Karkat takes them without question. They’re hot. Really fucking hot, almost boiling. You place his hands on your shoulders.

“Alright, hop on.”

“What?” He sounds confused. Given his reduced mental state and what you’ve both been doing for the last few minutes, it’s possible he could’ve forgotten what you’d offered to do.

“I already told you I’d carry you.” You reply. “What, you’re gonna say no to a free ride on the Strider express? Who the fuck do you think you are? Get over here and ride me bareback already, you engorged asshole.”

“Holy shit, Dave! Dave, Dave, Dave!” Karkat starts tapping your shoulder excitedly.

“What?” You turn your head to look at him, and he has the widest, dumbest grin you’ve ever seen in your life. “Karkat, what?”

“It happened! One of those reference moments you and Rose are always talking about!” He’s so excited about whatever the hell that he’s practically jumping up and down.
You don’t get what he means. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

“That’s what she said!” He yells enthusiastically, pulling on your sleeve. “That’s what she said!”

You don’t say anything and wait for him to stop. Who knows, maybe he’ll tire himself out. Drunk Karkat is weird.

“Dave,” he repeats with final emphasis once it’s clear you’re either not getting it or don’t care enough to reply, “that’s what she said.”

You sigh, shaking your head. “Oh my god, you’re an idiot.”

“Hey!” He punches you in the shoulder in pretend offense. The punch barely even registers with you because of how obviously fake it was. “Takes one to know one, fuck stick.”

“Fuck stick?” You repeat. “You know what, fine, whatever, I’ll take it. I’m a fuck stick. Get the hell on this fuck stick you jag weed, and let’s get going.”

You take his hands again, and he offers no complaint as you guide them back to your shoulders. This time, he finally complies to your request. You brace yourself to support his additional weight as he climbs onto your back and hangs on to your shoulders so tightly that you can feel his claws just barely pricking your skin. The rest of him is just as hot as his hands are, and you can already tell as you reposition your hands for a better grip under his knees that you’re going to be uncomfortably sweaty by the end of this.

You start moving, and even though having Karkat on your back is slowing you down, you still prefer it over dragging his drunk ass across the floor. Karkat’s unusually quiet for the first few minutes of your walk, you think it’s probably just a side effect from all the alcohol in his system. Just as the thought crosses your mind, you feel his head fall to your shoulder, his nose pressed against your neck.

“Hey, Dave?” He says quietly. His breath is warm and sour. You can feel it on your throat.

“What?”

“Are you mad?”

“Mad?” The question catches you so off guard that you don’t even have time to think about lying. “Fuck yeah, I’m mad.”

“At me?”

“A little.” You admit. “I’m mostly mad at Rose right now.”

“And that’s why you yelled at her like that.”

It’s not a question, but you answer him anyway. “Yeah, that’s why I yelled.”

“You didn’t mean all that shit you said, though, right?” He repositions so he can see your face, his cheek resting on your shoulder. “You’re not really going to stop talking to her because of this, are you?”

“Karkat, I’m going to be honest with you here,” there’s really no point in lying or pretending that this isn’t what’s happening, “I meant every word I said. I’m done with Rose. I’m not going to hang out with her or talk to her or be anywhere near her until she gets her shit at least partially together.
The way she is right now, though? I doubt that’ll happen any time soon.”

“Why not?”

“Because she’s a fucking disaster right now, and she clearly doesn’t want any help to stop her from being one.” You reply, fuck, you’re still pissed about this. “If she really wanted help, she could have asked. But no, instead she tried to hide her problem by drinking in secrecy and acting like nothing was fucking wrong. The worst part about that is, for a long time it actually worked. She must have felt like a genius in a room full of dense morons since no one caught on for so long.”

But tonight, someone did catch her in the act. You did, you caught her two bottles in to what might have been (and still could be, because you left her there without making sure she didn’t have anymore alcohol on her, idiot) an all night binge. But before that...

Before that, Karkat was there.

“Karkat,” you continue after a moment’s thought, “what the fuck were you doing there, anyway?”

You can feel more than see him shrug. “I don’t know. I was bored and I thought you were sleeping, so I went to see if the Mayor was awake. Then I saw Rose and I stayed.”

“So you stayed because Rose was there?”

He nods and turns his head again so his forehead is pressed into your shoulder in what you guess is probably a more comfortable position.

“So if you were there because Rose was there, why didn’t you stop her? You could have at least tried, but you didn’t do anything. You didn’t do shit. No, scratch that, you did do shit. You participated and drank with her is what you did. You made her think this shit was okay to do.”

Your voice is gradually getting louder and more accusatory the longer you think about it. “Karkat, what the fuck were you thinking? You just sat there and let her drink in front of you even though you know she has issues with alcohol. You...you enabled her fucking problem, Karkat.”

Your voice is echoing throughout the empty halls, throwing your own practically shouting voice back at you. You’re shouting and you angry and you don’t even care at this point who the fuck you’re directing your emotions at because all of the feelings you’ve been bottling up for so long are overflowing inside you and you just want them out no matter what the cost.

“You know what? Never mind. Forget what I said earlier. I’m not mad at you, Karkat. I’m pissed. I can’t believe you right now, how could you do that? What Rose did was dangerous and stupid, but I can understand that because she actually has a problem that she can’t fully control. You, though? You have no excuse, not even the depressing and shit thin one of not being able to help yourself like Rose has. You just did it because you could, and that was irresponsible and harmful and just plain fucking idiotic. You do know what you just did, right? You know what alcohol does to people, don’t you?”

You don’t wait for him to answer. You just keep going without stopping.

“It’s poison. It literally takes your soft little brain cells and fucking murders them all slow and painfully until there’s nothing left but dumb, useless mush. And that’s just to people, we don’t even know what this shit will do to trolls. For all we know, this could kill you. You could be dead in five minutes. I can’t believe you would be that stupid and reckless about something like this, Karkat. I’m-shit- I’m so disappointed in you.”

You’re still boiling over with rage, but you feel a bit better now that you have all of that shit out of
your system. It feels like a weight’s been lifted off of your lungs and you can breathe again. You feel looser, like all this time you were a taut rubber band just waiting to snap, and now that you finally did you snapped so hard you broke yourself in half and now you’re just a random piece of regular old rubber. You wonder how much better you’ll feel after Karkat replies and this turns into a fight.

You receive no response from behind you, only silence and shivering. That’s ridiculous because there’s no way he’s cold while you’re dying of heat stroke. You keep moving, and Karkat seems to stiffen behind you, his shivering intensifying to the point where you’re not sure if you can keep carrying him. Eventually, though, it subsides, and there’s a damp warmth on your shoulder that explains everything.

“I’m sorry.” Karkat mumbles, his voice quiet and choked from effort wasted on trying to hold back tears that are already falling. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sor-”

You cut him off. ”Sorry doesn’t mean shit, Karkat.”

“I-” He stops, overtaken by sobs and unsteady breathing. He buries his face in your cape and tries to dampen the sound against the fabric. You continue to walk and don’t say anything about the way he’s staining your clothes with salt water.

Karkat goes boneless and starts to slide down off of you. You loosen your grip on his legs so he doesn’t end up falling on his head or his back or something. He lands on the floor in a soundless heap and covers his face with his hands. The only sound you can really make out is his breathing. You stand over him and watch him for what feels like an agonizingly long period of time, but couldn’t be more than a couple minutes. He just lays there, quiet and unmoving with his face pressed into the ground. If you didn’t know any better, you’d think he’d passed out.

There’s a cold, slowly drying spot on your back that tells you otherwise.

After a long while of standing awkwardly and listening to what little noise he’s making, he sits up. He’s facing away from you and rubbing his face with his sleeves. He takes a deep, shaky breath.

“I’m sorry, I...I didn’t mean to....I-” he’s not making much sense, just starting sentences and letting them break down into fragments, “I’m trying to be better. Stronger. Smarter. But it’s...it’s so hard, I’m trying so hard, I promise I am. I just...I can’t do it. I can’t make myself any better than this, and it’s terrible because I’m just so weak and immature and grubbish and I hate it but I can’t stop myself from doing it because it’s just who I am now and I fucking hate that guy which means if I hate me then it won’t be long before everybody else comes to their senses and realize that they hate me, too. Even you, Dave. I just thought...with the way things were going...that I would have more time with you. At least another perigee of broship with you and the Mayor. But then I...then I messed everything up like I do with everything and now you’re....you’re disappointed in me and now you probably won’t ever talk to me again like what you said to Rose and then...and then I’ll have no one left. I can’t do that. I can’t go back to being alone again, please don’t leave me alone, Dave, please. I’m sorry, I’m sorry I’m sorry.”

He just keeps repeating it, over and over and over like an apologetic mantra as he tries to stop or at the very least hide the flow of tears with his hands. You’ve never seen or heard anyone cry before, so it’s out of sheer curiosity and nothing more when you walk around Karkat and kneel down in front of him so you’re face to face. You still can’t see his face through the cover of his fingers.

You take his hands in both of yours, lacing your fingers between his, and slowly lead them away from his face.
You had a basic idea of what people looked like when they cried, you’ve watched movies and shit, it’s not like you lived under a rock. Seeing the Hollywood version of tears does nothing to prepare you for the real deal.

Karkat’s a mess, his face an emotional disaster zone. His eyes are puffy and red rimmed, his face flushed in uneven patches on his cheeks. His nose, his ears, his cheeks, they’re all a vibrant red that draws your attention to those spots specifically.

There’s way more snot than you expected. Not to say you weren’t expecting any, because you’ve cried before and experienced it first hand, but yours wasn’t this excessive. It’s like his nose is auditioning for a bit part as a leaky sink and fucking killing it. You could have gone your whole life without knowing what Karkat’s snot looks like, but now you know that it’s pink and thin and unceasing. It’s close to the point of dripping off his face.

The first thing you notice about his eyes, once you tear yourself away from the mucus river, is that he’s still not looking at you. Karkat’s eyes are downcast, a few tears slipping down his cheeks as he refuses to make eye contact with you.

“Karkat, look at me.”

He does, but apparently that’s too much because he just starts crying harder than before. You’ve never seen anyone look so helpless before in your life. There’s nothing you can do besides sit there with his hands in yours and watch him break down.

And just like that, all your anger shrivels up and dies. If you were being honest with yourself, you never really took the time to think about what you were saying and how it would effect other people until long after you’d done it. Tonight was no exception. It had never occurred to you that what you said might actually hurt someone that badly. And now that you know exactly what it looks like, you sort of hate yourself for making someone cry.

Two someones. Wasn’t Rose crying when you left her?

You never did stay and find out.

Were you too harsh on her? On Karkat?

You play back what you said in your head and cringe. Yeah, that definitely wasn’t good. You’re going to have to talk to her later.

But first, you have Karkat to deal with.

“Karkat.” You let go of his hands, and he immediately starts scrubbing his face with them. All he really succeeds in is irritating his skin. “Dude, listen, I didn’t mean what I said. Well, no I did mean what I said, I am mad at Rose and I am disappointed in you about this.” He flinches, but you’re quick to continue before he can start berating himself again. “But that doesn’t mean I’m going to abandon you by jumping ship and stop being your bro. Yes, what you did was stupid, but it would be just as stupid to leave you because you made a mistake. I would never do that to you.”

He sniffs and rubs one still teary eye with his fist. “What about Rose?”

“There’s a big difference between what you did and what Rose did. Honestly, though, it was mostly an empty threat. I think she knew that. There’s no way in hell I’d be able to survive the rest of this trip without talking to her. So...hey, everything’s fine, do you think you could stop crying?”
“I don’t even know why I’m crying.” He admits. “I haven’t done this in a really long time. This isn’t even that big of a deal.”

“You’re drunk.” You reply with a shrug. “Emotions run higher and shit when you’re drunk. It’s normal. Do you need any help getting up or do you got it?” He nods, which isn’t really an answer, and sticks his hand out for you to take. You help him up, and he leans heavily against you.

“I’m really tired, Dave.” He mumbles almost unintelligibly around a yawn.

“Me too, man.” You admit. You’ve been tired this whole time, you’re pretty much just running on fumes. “We should probably hit the sack.”

You start walking and, because you’ve been doing it pretty much the whole time, you pick Karkat up and start carrying him princess-style.

"Dave, put me the fuck down." He wiggles around, "I can walk."

"You sure about that?"

"No." He stops wiggling and settles into a more comfortable position against you.

Now that you actually have a destination, it doesn't take you very long to get to Karkat's room.

You kick the door open and survey the room carefully, looking for some place to drop him before retiring to your own room. It takes you longer than you want to admit to remember that trolls don't sleep in beds, they sleep in those weird plastic looking cocoon things full of slime.

Karkat's pseudo-bed is in the back of the room, near the wall. It looks barely big enough for him to lie down in.

How the fuck does he not injure himself tossing and turning in his sleep? You put him down next to it and he immediately crawls in through the hole in the top and disappears inside.

You start to leave, but Karkat's hand shoots out of the hole and beckons you forward to him. You comply and poke your head inside.

You can just make out Karkat's face inches away from you.

"Where are you going?"

"Oh, you know, bed." You attempt another exit, but Karkat grabs your collar and tries to pull you in. "Karkat, what the hell are you doing?"

"You should stay here." Your noses are practically touching. You can almost taste the liquor on his breath. "With me."

It takes a lot of effort on your part not to close the distance and taste for real. "As much as I want to do that, I don't think I'd be able to sleep in here."

"Yes you could! Here," he smears some room temperature goo on your face that you hope to fuck is not snot because that's definitely what it feels like before applying it to his own, "that should help."

What the hell, why not? You already have slime on your face, may as well go the whole nine and sleep in a bug bed. You shove yourself all the way inside, it's so cramped that there's barely enough room for the both of you.

"It's cold in here." You comment. "Where the fuck are your blankets?"
"Having a snuggleplane in a coon would be a stupid thing to do." He replies. "You'd ruin it, it would get nasty and sticky from the sopor."

"What sopor? This thing's empty."

"Gee, thanks, Mr. Observant, I had no idea." He rolls his eyes. "I smeared the last of it on our faces."

"Oh." You don't know what to say to that, you know trolls need this weird shit to sleep well or whatever and that it's in pretty low supply. You don't want to tell him that it's wasted on you. "Are you cold, though?"

"A little, I guess." He shrugs.

"Okay, come here."

You shimmy your cape out from under you and wrap it around him and then back around you so you're both warm and pressed together.

He sighs and lays his head against your chest, nose pressed into your collarbone. His arms are around you, keeping you close as if you'd even try to run away.

"Hey, Dave?" You wonder if he can feel just how fast your heart's beating.

"Yeah?" He's really warm. You're having a hard time staying awake.

"You're my best friend." Karkat nudges your chin with his horn in a sleepy, affectionate gesture.

You stifle a yawn and pull your cape tighter around the both of you. "You're my best friend, too, Karkat."

You close your eyes and sleep like the dead.
I'm sorry about how long this chapter took, I've been studying for finals and stuff....
Anyway, this chapter takes place right after the drinking chapters. Vriska gets up and has no idea what happened the night before. That's pretty much it.
There's also some weird pale stuff but other than that, that's it.
I hope you like reading it :)

You were right in the middle of an insult battle against Damara with what you were sure was the winning blow right between your fangs when you were wrenched out of the world of the dead and dreaming. Obviously, this sudden absence makes you look like a forfeiting wimp and leaves Damara to claim the title of smack-talk champion.
Today’s already turning out shittier than expected.

You emerge from your block, irritated and more tired than you were when you went to sleep in the first place. You drag your feet all the way to the common area in the hopes that a cup of coffee will be enough to rouse you from half dazed rage. That’s when you see Rose and Kanaya sitting on the couch, facing each other and hunched over their own cups of coffee.

There’s barely any space between them, but you think you can make room for you if you tried. Rose and Kanaya would definitely listen to you complain about your bout of shitty luck, not that you’re going to give them much choice in the matter. You stroll into the block and grab your mug out of a cabinet. Neither of them acknowledge your surprisingly lackluster entrance.

You put your mug down and press the button on the machine. Behind you, Rose and Kanaya are whispering to each other. Their voices are so low that you can barely hear them speak, why the fuck are they being so quiet? It’s like they don’t want anybody to listen in on their conversation. Well, fuck that. This is a communal block, and they gave up every right to privacy when they decided to have their discussion in here.

You inch closer, but you still can’t hear them clearly from this distance. You sneak even closer to them, close enough to the point that there’s no way they don’t know for sure that you’re present and listening. Knowing that, you lean against the back of the couch and don’t even bother to hide it.

They’re mumbling into their coffee and not saying anything really important, talking about some book or other. They changed conversations once you came closer, you can tell. There’s no way the atmosphere between them would be this tense because of a gog damn book. You frown to yourself, disappointed by their discussion. At least you get to hear what they’re talking about.

Even that consolation is gone once the coffee machine whirs to life with a wet, mechanical cough. You can’t hear anything over that noise, Rose and Kanaya could be screaming at the top of their air sacs right now and you wouldn’t be able to hear a fucking word they said. It kind of pisses you off.
What pisses you off even more than that is the fact that you know they’re not screaming or whispering right now. They stopped talking the moment the machine became more than background noise. Rose and Kanaya both turn and stare at you, quiet and frowning. Rose looks like shit. Her eyes are all puffy and bruised from lack of sleep, and her lipstick (you’d honestly thought her lips were black for awhile because she wears it so often) is messy and fading.

She’s glowering at you. “Vriska, could you leave? Kanaya and I were in the middle of an important conversation.”

“No.” You refuse immediately. The machine sputters and dies, releasing one long stream of dark liquid into your waiting mug. You walk backwards over to it so you don’t break eye contact with Rose. “This is a public area and I can be here if I fucking want to be here. If your conversation’s so important and my being here is such a big deal, why don’t you just go have your conversation somewhere more private? You could use your fort, since you still have one unlike the rest of us. If you don’t want to move, then you’re just going to have to suck it up and deal with it, because I’m staying right here.”

You take a long sip of your coffee without breaking contact with Rose’s eyes. The fact that they look like a high blood’s elicits a subconscious rise out of you that almost feels like a challenge. You burn your mouth, but you don’t care. You’re proving a point here.

Kanaya touches Rose’s arm, and her eyes are instantly torn away from yours. You win. “Vriska has a point. This doesn’t seem like the right place to be discussing this topic. We should go to the fort.”

Rose shoots another displeased glare at you before turning back to Kanaya and sighing. “You’re right, it would be best to finish this conversation someplace private. You win, Vriska, you can have the room to yourself.”

Rose stands up, and Kanaya takes her hand in hers and leads her away towards the transportalizer. You stand with a cup of steaming coffee clenched in both hands and watch the two of them get whisked away in a flash of bright light. Then you’re alone in the communal block, which wasn’t even what you were trying to accomplish in the first place.

You plop your ass down on the couch and take another sip of your coffee, it only tastes half as bitter as you are.

You don’t feel like a winner.

After finishing your cup of coffee, you get up and shuffle back over to the coffee machine for a second caffeine boost. You’re still tired and annoyed. You fight off a yawn while holding your face close to the steam to try and wake yourself up more. All it does is steam your glasses so you can’t see for shit. You put your cup down and clean your glasses off on your shirt, growling softly and gritting your teeth. You pick your cup back up and shuffle out of the empty block and into the hall.

You need someone to talk to, someone to vent at. Your first choice would obviously be your moirail, obviously, but you haven’t heard anything from Terezi yet, which means she probably hasn’t dragged her lazy ass out of her ‘coon yet. The last thing you need right now is listening to her loud griping over stupid shit like that. You love her, but you don’t need to be talked at right now, you need someone willing to let you talk at them.
So Terezi’s no longer an option because she’s not awake, and Rose and Kanaya absconded the fuck out of the block the moment you tried to make conversation with them, so they’re both out. That leaves you with very few options.

You’re not talking to the Mayor. You haven’t gone anywhere near Can Town since you fought with Dave and Karkat. Someone’s going to expect you to apologize for what happened, and like fuck you’re doing that.

Gamzee’s definitely not in the running. Fuck that guy, you wouldn’t even give him the time of night.

That just leaves you with Dave and Karkat. Two subpar options. But if you had to choose one over the other to vent at with the least amount of annoyance on your part, you’d have to go with Dave. Karkat’s voice grates on your auricular cavities on a good day, right now it would be the definition of hell. Dave might never shut up, but at least he’s quiet enough that you can talk over him and just leave once you’re done.

Okay, Dave it is.

You start dragging your feet in the direction you think Dave’s block is while you sip your slowly cooling coffee. You don’t use any of the transportalizers on your way because you’re not one hundred percent sure where it is and you feel more like walking right now, anyway. Stretching your legs out feels better than sitting on your ass, but it takes you longer than it should to find what you’re pretty sure is Dave’s block.

The doors to everyone’s blocks are generally unlocked, and your hands are currently occupied with your cup, so you kick open the door. The door gives without trouble and swings open wide until it hits the wall. If Dave’s asleep in here, he’s definitely awake now.

You step inside and survey the block. It’s messy with wires and records and random shit everywhere. There’s one of those weird squishy human sleeping platforms in the middle, the snuggleplanes on top of it crumpled into a heap in the middle. Any doubt you’d had about the place is gone. This is definitely Dave’s block.

So where the fuck is Dave?

You leave the block and start looking for him elsewhere. You don’t look very hard, you’re not that concerned with finding him. It’s mostly just an excuse to move around more. You check the common block again, but it’s as empty as you left it with no sign of anyone else coming in or out since then. Then you turn around and shuffle over to the outskirts of Can Town. The only one there is the Mayor, standing around by Dave and Karkat’s new lame “watchtower” thing. He waves at you, apparently unconcerned with what happened last time you were here. You wave back at him and continue on your way without asking him if he’s seen Dave. With both of those places out of the way and their fort destroyed, you can only think of one other place he could possibly be.

When you reach your new destination, you kick the door only to have it stay stubbornly closed. Karkat’s the only one on the entire meteor who locks his fucking door. At least now you know for sure someone’s in there. You knock on it hard with your fist.

No one answers. You knock harder.
Still, no answer.

“Karkat, open up!” You yell after a couple minutes of ceaseless pounding. “I know you’re in there!”

The lock clicks, and you take a step back just as the door opens. Karkat’s standing in the doorway, completely barring you from entering the block if that’s what you intended to do. He looks as tired and irritated as you feel. His clothes are obviously slept in, and there’s sopor stuck in his hair. He also has on a very familiar pair of dark sunglasses.

You’ve definitely found where Dave is.

“Vriska.” He grumbles. “To what the fuck do I owe the displeasure?”

“I’m looking for Dave.” You admit, trying to look past him and into the block.

Karkat remains in your way. Dave’s shades are too big for his face and they make him look even more like an idiot than usual. “What do you want him for?”

“That’s none of your fucking business.” You snap. “Just tell me where he is!”

Karkat scowls back at you, and you’re ready for a fight. Honestly, it would probably be beneficial for you right now. You’re still annoyed as hell, and a fight with Karkat would definitely help you blow off some steam. You’re surprisingly disappointed when one never happens.

He sighs and moves so he’s not blocking the door anymore and shouts behind him. “Dave!”

Dave appears out of nowhere at Karkat’s side. “What’s going on?”

Dave doesn’t look too good himself. He’s got a bad case of bed head and there’s a green smear on his cheek. Somehow he’s still wearing his shades.

“Vriska wants to talk to you.” Karkat says, patting Dave’s arm as he moves past him and back into the block.

You’re finally alone with Dave like you wanted, but now that you are you don’t know how to get all of this shit off your chest. You were expecting this to go differently. You were expecting Dave to look together in his dumbass shades and his god tier, talking nonstop hoofbeast shit ad nauseum like usual. You weren’t expecting Dave to be standing in Karkat’s block quietly and not talking, looking like the junkiest sack of shit in the universe.

“What’s up, Vriska?” He crosses his arms over his chest and leans against the doorway. “You calling me for a meeting or something? A god tier rendezvous in an ominously lit chamber of the meteor with one of those big dead monsters in it to remind us about our current quest of killing a big monster dead? Hermes calling all the gods up to Mount Olympus’s war room to council or whatever the fuck? Is that what’s going on here?”

“No.” Although that’s not a bad idea. You normally conduct meetings just between yourself and Rose because of how disastrous those first few meetings were with everybody there. Maybe Dave would be less distracted without Karkat there. “How many pairs of these stupid glasses do you have?”
“I made a couple during the game, but the ones Karkat’s wearing I alchemized earlier today. Why, did you want a pair? I’d be willing to surrender one to you for a couple hundred boonbucks if you’re interested.”

“Why the fuck would I want a pair of your useless solar shields?”

“Because they’re cool as fuck?” Dave replies. “Think about it, all the cool kids on this rock wear shades. Terezi, me, Karkat now too, technically, I guess. Do you really want to be lumped in as lame with everybody else, Vriska? Give in to the peer pressure and just buy the shades already.”

“You’re a shrewd businessman, Dave, but you lost me the moment you called Karkat cool. I’m not buying your shades.”

“Okay. Well, you’re not here for a meeting, and you’re not here to buy my shit, so what the fuck are you here for? Is this important or not?”

“Jegus, I just wanted to fucking talk! What, is basic conversation too much to ask for?”

“Usually? No. Right now, though? Yeah, it kind of is. I had a pretty bad night last night and I’m really fucking tired. If it’s not anything important, then I’d rather not talk right now and go back to bed.”

What the fuck is up with everybody today? You get being tired from just waking up and shit, because you’re still tired yourself, but you’re starting to suspect there’s more to it than that. Did something happen while you were asleep?

“Is she still here?” Karkat yells from someplace you can’t see inside the block.

“Yeah.” Dave shouts back.

“Could you tell her something for me?”

“Sure.” Dave turns back to you and holds up a finger. “This’ll only take a second.”

He shuts the door almost all the way, using his foot as a doorstop to keep it slightly ajar. Inside, you can hear Karkat talking, but you can’t hear a word he’s saying because it’s too muffled by the door. Whatever it is, it takes him a few minutes to say all of it and probably contains a lot of expletives.

Dave opens the door again, but only enough to poke his head through the opening. You wait for him to repeat back to you what Karkat said.

“Karkat said you should leave us alone and fuck off.”

He closes the door without another word. You’re left standing alone in the hallway with nothing to do but stare at it. Nobody wants to talk or listen to you. They’re all ignoring you.

So what the hell are you supposed to do now?

You have no idea. You look down at your now cold and only half drank cup of coffee as if it has the answers you need. You don’t even think you care much about what happened with Damara in
the dream bubbles anymore (though you are still a little pissed that you woke up before delivering
the verbal smack down to end all verbal smack downs) now you just want to know what the fuck
happened to everyone. Whatever it was, it must have been intense for them to be acting like this
right now.

But you don’t know that for sure, because you don’t know what the fuck happened. No one is
talking to you right now and even if they were, they would probably claim what happened was a
secret.

Assholes.

You stare at your coffee. You’ve lost all desire to drink it. Maybe you should go back to your
block and just sleep some more. No one wants to talk to you, and you have nothing to do, so
what’s the point of being awake right now?

You drag your feet in what you vaguely recall is the direction of your block, still unwilling to use
the transportalizer over your own two feet. You’re halfway there when your palmhusk buzzes.

Your palmhusk hasn’t buzzed in ages.

You quickly dig it out of your pocket and check it. You have a new message on Trollian. It’s from
Terezi.

GC: WH3R3 4R3 YOU

You don’t respond because you have a feeling you know where she is and you’ll be able to be
there in less than a minute if you use the transportalizers, so what’s even the point of messaging
her back? You rush over to the nearest transportalizer and jump on. In less than a second, you find
yourself back in the main communal block again. This time, it’s not empty.

Terezi is lounging on the couch, taking up as much space as possible. She looks bored as fuck,
poking at a mug on the coffee table with her cane. You step off the transportalizer, and Terezi’s
head snaps immediately over to you the moment your feet meet the floor.

“There you are!” She grins. “I thought everyone disappeared in a dream bubble or something, I
can’t find anyone.”

“So you don’t know what happened?” You hop onto the couch next to her.

“No. Something happened?” She frowns, eyebrows furrowing.

“Yeah, everybody’s acting weird, but no one’s talking.” You admit, putting your cup down on the
table.

Terezi pokes at your cup with her cane. “If they don’t want to talk about it, then it’s their problem,
right? It’s got nothing to do with you, so why bother yourself with it?”

She makes a good point. “But if it stays an issue and nobody fucking talks to each other at all, then
that’s going to be everybody’s problem later when we get to the end. How the fuck are we
supposed to fight as a team if we can’t even fucking speak to each other?”

“Is that seriously what’s bothering you, or are you just pissed about being ignored?”
Fuck, are you that obvious? “I can have more than one reason!”

Terezi shakes her head, she’s laughing at you. “No you can’t.” She grabs your arm and pulls you over to her so your face is smooshed into her chest.

Her face is in your hair, pressed between your horns and against your scalp. Now normally, you don’t mind a little cuddling with your moirail, but this is a lot closer and a lot more public (or it would be if everyone was acting normal) than you’re used to. You have to fight very hard to keep the blood from rushing to your face.

Then you feel something wet on your head, slowly running down the length of your hair and coming back up again. That’s her tongue. That’s Terezi’s tongue. Holy shit. You shiver involuntarily at the strange sensation.

“Terezi, what the fuck are you doing?” You ask.

She pauses so she can respond, you can feel her lips moving on the top of your head. “I saw Nepeta’s lusus do this to her once and I thought it looked pretty pale. I’ve wanted to try it for awhile.”

“You’re weird.”

“Whatever, fuck you.” She replies before resuming.

It’s really weird, but...it’s nice. Terezi’s focusing all of this time and energy on grooming you, and with her tongue, no less. She does everything through sight and taste, and now everything is going to taste and smell like you for awhile.

You can’t believe she would do that for you just because your ego was bruised.

You are so fucking pale for this girl.

You don’t want to admit how much you’re enjoying this, but your body betrays you.

“I knew you liked this, you weirdo.” Terezi chuckles, nipping softly at the base of a horn. “Listen to you, I have you purring like a fucking domesticated meowbeast. You’re putty in my fronds, Vriska.”

Your face heats up, you can’t imagine how dark cerulean it is now. “Fuck you.”

“Wouldn’t you like to.”

“Shut the fuck up and just...” this is so embarrassing to request out loud, “keep going. With this.”

“Okay, but you owe me one.”

“This was your idea!”

“Yeah, but you just asked me to keep going. So you owe me one.”

“One what? Tongue ablution? Because I’m sure as fuck not doing this.”
“No. Something else.”

“Something else?” You repeat back. “Like what?”

You can feel her sly grin against your head. “You’ll find out.”

“Fine,” you relent, “but I’m not owing you shit until you get back to this.”

“Sure, whatever you want, Vris.”

She complies with your request and keeps going. You have no idea how long she keeps it up for, because after awhile you fall asleep.

You wake up well rested and sprawled on top of Terezi. She’s out cold, too, snoring and chewing on your hair. You sit up slowly and yank it out of her mouth, feeling the slight sting as a few are torn from your head because they’re snagged between her sharp teeth. Terezi groans beneath you and opens her eyes, blinking slowly.

“Hey,” she sits up and starts feeling around for her cane.

“Hey,” you hand it to her, and she uses it to help her get up off the couch. She pulls your hair out of her mouth.

“Are you feeling better now?”

“I guess.” You shrug as you get up. You never did get to complain about what happened in the dream bubble before you woke up today, but honestly it doesn’t matter at all. Who the fuck cares if you didn’t finish a fight in a dream bubble? Those are temporary and filled with the dead and incapable. You’re alive, you already win by default.

“I had an idea while you were asleep!” Terezi announces proudly. “But I’m going to need your help with it.”

“Okay,” you nod, “lay it on me.”

Terezi grabs your hand and starts walking towards the nearest transportalizer. “First you have to show me where the intercoms are.”

A few minutes later, you’re holding one of the speakers close to you, but it’s not on. “Terezi, I don’t get it. This is your idea, why the fuck would you want me to announce it?”

She shrugs. “I don’t know how to work the thing.”

“It’s not that hard. You just press the-”

“Shut up and make the announcement already!”

“Fine, I’m on it, sheesh.” You roll your eyes before clearing your throat and turning on the speaker.
“Hey, everybody!” You shout into the speaker, just to make sure no one can claim they didn’t hear you later. “Stop whatever stupid shit you’re doing and listen up! In honor of Rose and Kanaya’s victory, Terezi and I will be hosting an all day shindig in a couple days at Fort Rosemary. Don’t even try not to show up, because we all know you have nothing better to do. There’ll be games and food and whatever other party shit we can think of, so all you guys have to bring is your asses and sleeping gear. If you want anymore info about the party for whatever reason, don’t bother talking to either of us because there’s literally nothing more you need to know. That’s all.”

You turn the speaker off and put it back where you found it. “So, this party...what did you say it was called again?”

“A slumber party! Humans have them all the time.” Terezi says excitedly. “I think it’ll be fun!”

Chapter End Notes

I wish I knew what I was doing with the pale stuff...because I honestly love moirallegiance but sadly I have no idea what I'm doing. Hopefully I'll figure out what I'm doing someday. Stuff's going to be happening in the next few chapters (specifically the slumber party), so hopefully I can get those written up quickly. That shouldn't be too much of an issue, though, with summer coming up and all. Thank you for reading this chapter, and I hope you liked it!!!
I can't believe both how long this chapter is and how long this took to write....I mean it feels like it took forever..... Anyway, hey, it's the slumber party chapter! (I don't know why I called it that and kept using that term, because I've never said "slumber party" in my life, I've always said sleepover but oh well). It's really long, but it's (I hope) good. It's mostly just the kids playing games like truth or dare and stuff.

I hope you like reading it!!!

*Update note* Hey!!! There's some really amazing art to go along with this chapter now!!! I'm going to see if I can figure out how to embed the image into the chapter myself, but until I learn how to do that, here's a link that I hope works.

A Link To Some Super Amazing Art That I Hope Works

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Because of what happened before, you’re no longer allowed to leave Kanaya’s side. You’re fine with this for the most part. You already spend most of your time with her already, this changes almost nothing for you except for where you sleep. So far, you’ve both agreed that switching every other day between your room and hers would work.

There are, however, some things you could do without. You love being close to Kanaya, but recently she’s been three steps behind you everywhere you go like a living shadow. You feel like a child being monitored because you did something wrong, and you hate getting that feeling from Kanaya because of the horrible fact that it’s true. You are a child, and you did do something wrong. Terribly, terribly wrong.

The constant reminder leaves a bitter taste in your mouth.

You know things could be worse. In other timelines, they have been worse. Kanaya could have broken up with you. She could have abandoned you the moment you admitted to her that you’d lied and hid bottles all over the meteor after you promised you’d fixed everything. Fixed your problem. Fixed yourself. But no, she didn’t do any of those things. She stood by you and told you that she would help you work through this. She told you she would support you, and that she would help you get rid of what was left of the alcohol when you were finally ready to do so.

Yes, it could be worse, and you’re so thankful that it’s not. Kanaya’s forgiveness of your slip up is something you desperately need, but not something you deserve. You just wish she would show you her support in a way that made you feel less terrible and claustrophobic.

You feeling terrible- childish and untrustworthy- isn’t just because of the way Kanaya’s been treating you lately. If you were to be honest with yourself, most of it is because of Dave.

Dave hasn’t spoken to you once since it happened. Not a word, not even an acknowledgment of your presence when you enter a room. When you come in, he just leaves quietly without even
looking at you. It’s like all of that hard work you’d put into your relationship with Dave has been
laid to waste. Even your friendship with Dave is on questionable ground at this point. You’re
going backwards, and it feels like hell.

You haven’t talked to anyone about this, because really, who could you talk to? You don’t want to
bother Kanaya with this. You can’t think of anything she could really do to help you besides offer
you comfort, and she’s already offering you so much of that already. You can’t make her worry
about you more, it wouldn’t be fair to her. So you’ve been keeping quiet about this subject, about
your slowly disintegrating relationship with Dave and how awful and guilty you feel about it.

You hope the slumber party that Terezi and Vriska have planned alleviates some of your guilt. At
the very least, you hope your presence there doesn’t cause Dave to leave or, even worse, not show
up at all.

“I don’t understand the point of a group nap party.” Kanaya admits when you exit your room,
dressed in your freshly alchemized pajamas.

Sleepwear hadn’t been on your list of concerns when the game began, and it had ceased to be a
concern once you’d reached god tier. You were perfectly fine with staying in your god tier
pajamas, but Vriska and Terezi had insisted you and everyone else have to wear real pajamas to
make the party more humanly authentic.

Kanaya looks somewhat uncomfortable in the nightgown you’d helped her alchemize with your
own pajamas. It’s less than fashionable and not exactly to her taste, but you think she looks good
in it. You hope she warms up to it. It would be so nice to just hang out together in your pajamas
and be lazy in your pillow fort all day.

“Is that common practice, Rose?” She continues, you both start walking down the hall together
towards your fort. “Having a party just so you can sleep near everyone?”

“Actually, it’s not.” You say, smiling. You never thought a slumber party was a concept you
would have to explain. “The point of a slumber party is that you try to stay awake for as long as
possible. There’s no sleeping involved at all.”

“Then why refer to it as a slumber party if there is no slumbering?” Kanaya asks, confused.
“That’s just contradictory.”

“Humans are like that.” You shrug. “Being contradictory is in our nature. Iceland is green and
Greenland is ice. No one sleeps at a slumber party. That’s just the way humans are.”

She hums. “I suppose I understand. Trolls can be like that, too, sometimes, but not for the reasons
your species does. Perhaps it’s a universal trait.”

“Yes,” you agree, intertwining your fingers into hers, “perhaps it is.”

You arrive at your fort room. The door is closed and, you presume, locked. You exchange a look
with Kanaya, roll your eyes, and knock on the door.

The door is thrown open immediately, revealing a widely grinning Vriska who you believe was
waiting right there the whole time for that specific moment.

“Rose! Kanaya! You sure took your sweet time.” Vriska steps out of the doorway and and ushers
you inside with a sweep of her hand. “Welcome to the party!”

“Thank you for hosting, Vriska.” You reply as you walk inside. You look around the room carefully, it doesn’t look like they’ve disturbed much. “So what do you have planned for this party, since, as I have recently told Kanaya, we won’t be sleeping anytime soon?”

There’s some rustling going on in the direction of your fort soon after you ask this question, and you turn your attention to the movement curiously. A gray arm pops out of your fort and waves you over.

“We’re having games in here!” Terezi informs you excitedly. “Come on!”

You all enter the fort at Terezi’s behest. It’s pretty much the same as you last saw it, before Vriska and Terezi kicked you and Kanaya out so they could make preparations. The pillows are a bit more disheveled than you recall, and there’s some junk spread out on the floor that you can easily clean up once the party’s over. You have a feeling these are the preparations they were talking about.

Terezi sits down on the floor and starts gathering the junk closer to her. The mess mostly consists of an empty bottle and a bunch of loose playing cards.

“What are you planning on doing with all of these, Terezi?” You ask, taking a seat on the floor. You pick up a playing card and examine it. The number seven is stamped on the front, and the background is completely violet. Are all the cards like this?

“Are we playing Unculled?” Kanaya is looking over your shoulder at your card and picks up another close by one for comparison. It’s a dark red ten. “I haven’t played that in sweeps.”

“Of course you haven’t.” Vriska replies, plopping down onto a pillow next to Terezi. She starts shuffling the cards into a deck. “None of us have. It’s a fucking grub’s game.”

“Then why are we going to play it now, if it’s such a grub’s game?”

“Easiest deck to alchemize.” Vriska shrugs. “And it was the only non-violent game we could think of, since you guys are still boring and against that.”

“At a party? Yes.” You hand Vriska back your card, and she slips it back into the deck. “In your spare time? Do whatever you want, as long as no one dies.”

Vriska rolls her eyes and places the now shuffled deck by Terezi’s feet. Terezi picks it up and starts snifffing the cards.

“What the fuck are you doing?”

“I’m just making sure you did a good job shuffling.” Terezi explains. “It would be a sucky game if we all had the same numbers or colors.” She lays them back down at her feet. “This deck’s good.”

“Duh.” Vriska crosses her arms indignantly. “Shuffling’s not hard.”

Terezi reaches over and lightly punches Vriska in the arm. Vriska uncrosses her arms and does the same. “We were thinking we would play Unculled last so we can all unwind after, since it’s
simple and kind of boring.”

“Okay, so Unculled is last.” You repeat with a nod. “But what are we playing until then?”

“We could play truth or dare, or maybe spin the bottle.” Terezi holds up the bottle and grins, wiggling her eyebrows suggestively.

Oh god, no. You’re not playing that. No.

Kanaya turns to you for an explanation. “What’s spin the bottle?”

“We’re not playing spin the bottle.”

Terezi pouts, laying her chin against the lip of the bottle. “Why not?”

“You are aware of what spin the bottle is, right?” On the one hand, you really hope she does know because you don’t want to be the one to explain this to her. On the other hand, you hope she doesn’t because that would mean she thought this was a good idea to play anyway.

“I think so.”

“Rose, what’s spin the bottle?”

“I’ll explain it to you later, Kanaya.”

“Or you could explain it now, since apparently we’re missing something here.”

“What’s everybody missing?” Dave throws back the front blanket. “The life of the party? No need to fear, y’all, I have arrived.”

“You do realize that this party is for Kanaya and myself, right?” It’s been days and you can’t believe this is the first thing you say to him. “There wouldn’t be a party without us.”

“Okay, that’s true. I give you that. Thank you, Rose and Kanaya, for supplying the dried husk of a corpse for me to revive with my sweet life nectar.”

You shake your head in mock disapproval. “This isn’t that kind of party, Dave.”

“Then it’s not really a party, is it? Scooch over, I want to sit.”

You and Kanaya both move to make room for Dave. He takes a seat next to Kanaya. You know there’s not enough room for him to sit comfortably next to you, but you still feel snubbed.

“So what are we talking about?” He asks, stretching his legs out in front of them so he’s almost touching Vriska.

“Spin the bottle.”

“Oh, fuck no, I’m not playing that.”

“But Dave, it was your idea!” Terezi protests.
“Yeah, as a joke. No offense, but I’m not exactly up for kissing any of you because physics some fucking bottle told me to. That’s gross.”

“Wait a minute, why is it gross?” Vriska demands.

“Wow, you actually want me to explain this to you? Seriously? Are you sure you want to hear this?”

Vriska leans in closer, her expression is dark and certain. “Yes.”

“Okay, for starters one, Rose and I are related, that would be so fucking gross. That would be the pinnacle of disgusting, I can’t even imagine that without wanting to barf. I would rather have a sloppy make out session with the genesis frog than lock lips with her for one second. Even if I wasn’t going to blow chunks at the very suggestion and I didn’t know we were related or whatever, she’s still gay so that would be disgusting for her, too, regardless of relative status. So yeah, no way in hell am I kissing Rose.”

“Wow, thanks, Dave.”

“Don’t even pretend to be offended, I know you feel the same.” Dave continues. “Kanaya’s Rose’s gal pal and also hella gay, so I’m definitely not macking on that anytime soon or ever at all.”

“Thank you for being so considerate, Dave.”

“No prob, that’s what I’m here for, welcome to the consideration station all aboard the train of thought we will be traveling down the path of understanding and reaching our final destination of enlightenment in precisely however long it takes everybody not to be an asshole and get over themselves because the road is paved with some seriously jacked up concrete and whoever made this path to the place was a total dickweasel so he made it as hard as possible, just like the dick he was weaseling. Where was I?” He stops talking for a second, and you all wait for him to remember what exactly the topic at hand was. “Right. Terezi is also a no go because I have no idea where the fuck her mouth has been. Not a clue. She eats chalk on a regular basis. I’ve seen her drink paint water before. I have a feeling if I put my mouth anywhere near hers I would die, and it would be a just death because what the fuck was I thinking, I knew what I was getting into by sticking my tongue into that poison maw. Vriska’s not much better. Based on just her breath and the color of her teeth alone, I’d say she’s never met the business end of a toothbrush. I definitely don’t want to have the taste of whatever nasty shit she’s been eating over the past month in my mouth. Plus her teeth look fucking sharp and I don’t want to snag my poor sexy lip on her rotting danger teeth.”

He lapses into silence again. You can’t see his eyes, but you have a feeling he’s looking anywhere but the four of you.

He clears his throat awkwardly. “So yeah, I’m not playing spin the bottle. Y’all have fun, though.”

You lean over Kanaya so you can get a better look at Dave’s face. “What about Karkat?”

“He can play spin the bottle if he wants. I’m not in charge of what he does or who he does it to.”

“No, I meant you gave reasons for why you wouldn’t want to play spin the bottle and kiss any of
us. What about Karkat? Would you be willing to play spin the bottle with him, or do you have reasons against that?"

Dave is trying his damndest to keep his cool. It’s working for the most part. The only change in his expression is his frown. He’s doing a good job controlling his blush, but it’s not good enough to hide from you. There’s a bright red sliver of skin peeking from under his collar.

You try your best not to smirk.

“Rose, what the fuck, of course I don’t want to do anything like that with Karkat, don’t be ridiculous. He’s a dude.”

“So?”

“So?” He repeats back to you. You wait for him to give you an explanation on why that’s a bad thing. You wait for him to reaffirm for the nth time that he’s straight. “Karkat’s my bro, Rose.”

Wait. Did you miss a step here?

Did Dave just...not insist he’s heterosexual?

Holy shit.

Dave finally had a breakthrough about his sexual orientation, and he did it without your help.

Holy shit.

“Plus, have you seen the guy’s mouth? It looks like if you hired a wasted carpenter to redo all of your hardwood floors and gave him a bucket full of fucking railroad spikes and a hammer and just told him to do it, he’s got five minutes to do the whole floor or you’re not paying him a fucking dime. He’ll get nine pennies tops if you’re feeling generous. So then after that you just live with these really shitty hardwood floors with long ass spikes holding them just barely in place because they are just so fucking crooked and messed up that you have no idea how the guy even managed to hammer them into the floor without hurting himself he did such a shitty job. Then you die, and your children live with the fucked up floor, but they deal with it because who fucking cares if the nails are all messed up or if some of them are barely even hammered in and it scrapes the skin off your toes, just wear shoes all the time, dumbfuck, people do that all the time, quit complaining at least your toe didn’t get completely chopped off by one of the spikes, poor Nigel Nine-toes, you know with a name like that we should have seen that coming but oh well that’s in the past now. The grandkids, though, they won’t stand for such a shit floor. They really fucking love their feet and they want to walk around barefoot in their own home like a bunch of foot obsessed savages. So they start prying the floors up with an old crowbar and eventually they work this old warped, termite infested board full of rusted and crooked railroad spikes off and they all just kind of stand around looking at it in their shoes because they still have to wear shoes right now but that’ll change soon, trust me. They all just stare at it and the oldest, he turns to his sister and he goes “Shit, doesn’t this look exactly like Karkat’s mouth? What the fuck is up with that?” And she leans down to get a closer look and then she turns back to him, removing her glasses dramatically and says “Oh shit, you right.”

“Wow. Rusted, crooked railroad spikes. You know, I would argue with you, Dave, but I’m afraid I might get too upset about it and accidentally stab my termite swollen lip with one of my giant fucking teeth and give myself tetanus. Fuck knows I need that right now.”
None of you heard Karkat come in, but there he is, standing over all of you with his arms crossed and glaring down at Dave.

Dave holds his hands up. “Dude, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean anything by it. I just don’t want to play spin the bottle.”

Karkat’s anger is shortlived. He tilts his head, his arms falling loose to his sides. “What’s spin the bottle?”

“Oh my god,” Dave groans, “I am not explaining another of these concepts again. Rose, it’s your turn.”

“Yes, Rose. You never did tell me what it is.” Kanaya looks at you, gray eyes full of curiosity at yet another new concept. “What exactly is spin the bottle?”

“It’s a party game.” how exactly do you explain this? “Often played by adolescents at parties with a lack of adult supervision. This mostly meant slumber parties, so Terezi was correct in her assumption that, in different circumstances, perhaps with a different set of players, this would be an appropriate game to play.”

Terezi beats the bottle against the floor. It makes a hollow sound. “I knew it!”

“So how you play is,” you take the bottle from Terezi and lay it on the floor, “you lay the bottle like so. Karkat, can you sit down, please? For the demonstration?” Karkat nods and takes a seat next to Dave. “Now I would spin the bottle like this.” You pretend to spin it. “And once it comes to a stop,” You point the bottle at Kanaya, “you have to kiss the person it landed on. Allow me to demonstrate.”

You scoot closer to Kanaya and cup her face in your hands, pulling her closer to you for a kiss. It’s a quick peck, but you go in deeper and linger longer than you should for a simple demonstration. You close your eyes and feel yourself melt just a little against her. It feels like forever since you’ve kissed Kanaya. You haven’t done it since you’d told her about your slip up. You didn’t want to bother her with intimacy when she was already expending so much effort on your half, it just didn’t feel right. Now, though? Now it does. You want her to know how much you appreciate her, how much you need her, how happy you are to have her in your life right now. All the things you always have trouble conveying perfectly with words can be easily articulated through your mouth’s movements.

Someone coughs awkwardly, and you force yourself to pull away and pretend that you didn’t get lost in the moment. It’s been so long you’d almost forgotten everyone was there and watching. You open your eyes and find that everyone is trying their best to pretend that they weren’t doing just that, even though you told them to. Dave and Karkat look incredibly uncomfortable, Dave’s blush creeping all the way up to his cheeks now. Karkat glances over at you and Kanaya, but quickly looks away when he accidentally makes eye contact with you and stares up at the ceiling instead. Vriska’s pretending she’s not affected by it, but you can tell by the set of her mouth and the way she’s once again fiddling with the playing cards that she’s almost as uncomfortable as the boys are. Terezi seems to be the only one left unphased.

“And that’s how you play spin the bottle.” You explain. “Does anybody need me to repeat that demonstration or did you all understand it?”
“I think they got it just fine, Rose. Karkat, you get it, or do you need her to do that again?”

“I got it, you spin the thing and you have sloppy make outs with whoever it lands on, the end. It’s not that hard to understand.”

“Okay, everybody gets it. You’re going to have to come up with a better excuse to make out with your girlfriend in front of us.”

“I don’t think I get it.” Terezi announces, raising her hand. “Could you do another demonstration?”

“I have to agree with Terezi.” Kanaya says quietly, grinning. There’s black lipstick on one of her fangs. “I wouldn’t mind a repeat performance.”

“Okay, even though you’re both obviously lying because if Karkat understood there’s no way you two didn’t, I’m going to say this anyway. It doesn’t fucking matter if you understand how the game works, because we’re not playing it.” Dave stresses, exasperated. “Come on, what else is there to play? Terezi?”

“We’re saving Unculled for later, so that just leaves truth or dare.” Terezi answers, taking the playing cards out of Vriska’s hand and placing them on the ground. She puts the empty bottle on top of it to keep them in place.

“Wait, what the fuck is uncled?”

“We’ll explain the rules when we get to it. Do you wanna play truth or dare, Dave?” She asks excitedly, ignoring his initial question.

“Sure, fine, I guess. We can play truth or dare.” He shrugs. “Who goes first?”

“Rose or Kanaya should go first, since this party is for them.”

“Okay.” You nod. “Kanaya, you can go first.”

“Alright. Thank you, Rose. Vriska, truth or dare?”

“Dare, duh.” Vriska scoffs, rolling her eyes.

“I dare you...” Kanaya purses her lips thoughtfully. You wonder what kind of torturous dare she’s going to suggest to start off the game. “...to spin the bottle.”

Oh. That was...disappointingly tame.

“Oh fuck.” Vriska’s yelling almost makes you jump, and you pull away from Kanaya to see what’s going on with her dare. “I’m not doing it. Fuck that. I’m not. No.”
“If you forfeit a dare you have to cluck like a chicken.” You say. It’s not even a hard dare, why would she give up so easily? You look down at the bottle.

Oh, that’s why.

“Cluck like a what?”

“A cluckbeast.” Kanaya explains. “If you don’t do this you have to be a cluckbeast.”

Vriska opens her mouth, but closes it again quickly and sneers. She’s clearly torn between the two options. She doesn’t want to be branded a chicken, much less humiliate herself by clucking like one. But as much as she doesn’t want that, she’s also against the dare itself. You all watch with bated breath as she carefully weighs her options.

“Can’t I just slap him?” She groans, running her fingers through her hair. “I’d rather slap him.”

“That wasn’t the dare.” You shake your head. “The dare was you had to play a round of spin the bottle, which means you have to kiss whoever the bottle lands on. The bottle landed on Karkat, so now you have to kiss him whether you want to or not, unless of course you’d rather be a cluckbeast.”

“Given options.” She says pointedly. “I’d rather slap him.”

“That’s not an option.”

“Believe me,” Karkat interjects, “I wish it was. I hate the idea of this even more than you do, the actual thought of doing this makes my shameglobes physically shrivel up and contract back into my body. I’d slap you in the face before letting your sour puckered flaps anywhere near my mouth.”

“It’s nice to know that you both feel the same way about this dare,” you say, “but that doesn’t change the fact that it has to be done.”

“You can both slap each other while doing it, if you want.” Kanaya suggests. “That’s completely fine with me, as long as the dare is done.”

“Wow, really?” It doesn’t sound like Vriska believes her.

“Yes.” Kanaya repeats with a firm nod. “I don’t particularly care how you go about performing the dare, as long as it is done soon or you start clucking.”

Vriska licks her lips and looks down at her hand, then at Karkat. Her decision has been made.

“Let’s get this over with.”

Vriska crawls to the middle of the floor, knocking the bottle out of the way, and Dave coerces Karkat to join her there so they don’t have to drag out what turned out to be an unexpectedly sick dare. Neither of them look happy to be there.

“Do it on the count of three.” Kanaya instructs, unphased by both of their obvious discomfort. They both nod. “One,” their hands go up, Vriska’s left and Karkat’s right. Neither hand is steady.
“two,” they both lean in the slightest bit closer to each other, eyes squeezed tightly shut. It’s so painfully awkward that you’re not sure you can watch, but you fine yourself unable to tear your eyes away. “three.”

**Smack**

It’s over and done with in a second, so fast you’re not sure if anything even happened. One moment they were both sitting there, tense and awkward and uncomfortably close, and the next second they’re both leaning heavily on the ground and holding their faces.

Vriska scrubs at her mouth with her sleeve and spits on the ground. “That was the most disgusting thing I’ve ever had to do in my entire life.”

“That’s what you get for choosing dare.” Kanaya replies unsympathetically. “And don’t spit in my fort.”

Karkat crawls back over to his seat next to Dave, holding his cheek with one hand and visibly gagging.

“How was smooching the spider bitch, dude?” Dave asks.

“I think I’m going to throw up.” Karkat flinches at the memory and wipes blue lipstick off his face.

“Hey!” Vriska yells, offended. Her hands fall away from her face, revealing a hand imprinted in blue on her cheek. “That was way better than anything you were ever going to achieve by yourself. The only one who should be disgusted here is me, being forced to bring myself down to your level like that. You should feel honored to have had the privilege of kissing me, fuck you!”

“Holy shit, shut the fuck up!” Karkat snaps at her. “I get it, you didn’t like it! Do you think I care about how it was for you? No, no I really don’t, I’m sorry if I gave you the impression that I give a damn how you feel about anything! My bad. I don’t know about you, but I would like to start repressing that awful memory as soon as fucking possible, so can we get on with the game already?”

“Karkat, truth or dare?” She snaps back at him quickly.

They’re both staring each other down, the atmosphere between them is intense.

“Should I try auspistizing, or would that be too awkward since we’re at a party?” She whispers.

“It might be too early for that. Let’s see where it goes from here.” You reply. You want to see how this ends.

None of you are surprised with Karkat’s answer. “Dare.”

Vriska gets up and stomps out of the fort only to come back seconds later carrying a two liter bottle of what you assume is the Alternian version of a soft drink. She slams it down in front of Karkat.

“Drink this whole thing.”

“Okay, I can do that.” Karkat shrugs. You have to admit, this is also an unexpectedly tame dare.
He unscrews the cap, and it hisses as the carbon inside is released. He sets the cap aside and picks up the full bottle. “Anything to wash out your aftertaste.”

Karkat lifts the bottle to his mouth, but before he can start to drink, Vriska smirks mischievously. There’s more to this dare than she originally let on. “Without stopping.”

Karkat slowly draws the bottle away from his mouth. “What?”

“I dare you to drink the whole thing. All at once. No stopping.” She’s standing over him with her hands on her hips, smiling victoriously. “And if you can’t do it, you have to be a cluckbeast.”

Karkat frowns at the bottle in his hands.

“Bro, don’t do it.” Dave advises. “I’m usually all for this shit, but there’s no way you’re going to win this one. It’s literally impossible for you to drink all of this at once, just cut out the middleman and do the fucking clucking.”

Dave’s advice is sound, but the resolve on Karkat’s face tells you that he’s not going to listen to reason on this one.

“I’m drinking it.”

He picks up the bottle and starts chugging. You all watch him drain about half the bottle with ease so fast that it’s almost impressive. It’s not long after that thought that his pace starts to slow. He’s obviously struggling, but he keeps going for as long as he can. You can’t help but wonder how much longer he can last.

He takes a few more long, difficult gulps before he tears himself away from the bottle and starts to cough so hard that he folds in on himself, covering his mouth with one hand and clutching his stomach with the other. You can’t tell if he’s choking or trying not to throw up, with how fast he was drinking either one is a possibility. You hope that he makes it to the bathroom or at least out of the fort if he does end up feeling sick.

Dave starts smacking him on the back, you assume in an attempt to help as Karkat’s cough ceases to subside. Eventually he manages to stop coughing and just sits there, still folded in on himself with his head down. Dave’s hand hovers above his bent spine, ready to resume smacking if the need arises. Everybody’s quiet as you all wait for something to happen. Vriska takes a step back, clearly having the same thought as you. Kanaya reaches over Dave quietly and takes the bottle and the cap. She screws the cap back on and hands it over to Terezi. It’s all done without a sound.

Karkat makes a small noise, and you all freeze. This is it, just like you thought. He’s going to puke. You probably won’t be able to get the smell out of all of this fabric and you’re going to have to dispose of it all. What a waste.

Karkat covers his mouth with both his hands, takes a deep breath through his nose, and burps.

Well, you definitely can’t say you saw that coming.

“Dude,” Dave laughs, taking his hand away from Karkat’s back, “that was some belch.”

Karkat sits back up and wipes his hands on his pajama pants. He doesn’t look like he’ll be sick anytime soon.
“Karkat, don’t do that.” Kanaya chides. “You’ll wreck them.”

“I’ll wash them after the party.” Karkat replies, waving away her concern.

“I hope so. I think that’s the only cute piece of clothing you own.”

You didn’t bother looking at Karkat’s pajamas when he came in, so you take the opportunity to do so now. They’re covered in quadrant symbols, the pattern of which looks vaguely familiar...

“Karkat, are those Dave’s sheets?”

Karkat nods. “Dave’s sheets and an old pair of sweat pants. I think they turned out well.”

“Quit gabbing!” Vriska interrupts. “Karkat, you didn’t finish. You have to cluck now.”

Karkat rolls his eyes. “Seriously?”

“Sorry, asshole, them’s the rules.” Vriska says, not sounding the least bit sorry.

“Fine.” Karkat sighs. “Cluck cluck cluck cluck clu-”

“No, you have to do it better than that!” She insists. “You have to be a believable cluckbeast!”

“She’s right,” Dave agrees, “if you’re gonna cluck, you may as well go all out. Do the whole fake wings thing and try to sound as realistic as possible. Where’s the fun in just saying cluck all dead pan like that?”

“Dave, whose side are you on?” Karkat snaps, putting his hands up to his armpits to make fake wings.

“I’m on my own side.” He says. “And my side wants to hear some hella good clucking.”

Karkat rolls his eyes again. “Fuck you.”

“Don’t you mean cluck you?”

Karkat groans loudly. “I can’t believe you had the audacity to make a pun about this situation. I hate you, Dave. I really mean that.”

“Can it and get to clucking already!”

Karkat starts clucking more realistically this time, and it is far less satisfyingly embarrassing than any of you hoped. Karkat doesn’t even seem that phased by it. Yes, he’s annoyed, but what else is new? You’re going to have to come up with a more suitable punishment for the rest of the game, because this just doesn’t cut it.

“Okay, you can stop now.” Vriska mutters, going back to her seat next to Terezi.

Karkat stops clucking and lowers his hands. “Dave?”

“Yeah?”
“Truth or dare?”

Dave takes a moment to think about it, but you don’t think anyone’s surprised when he continues the current trend. “Dare.”

Karkat, apparently aware of this, had a dare ready to use. “I dare you to shut the fuck up until someone picks you again.”

“You monster.”

Karkat shrugs. “You’re the one who chose dare.”

“But...don’t I have to pick someone to truth or dare?” Dave asks. “How am I supposed to ask them anything personal or make them do something inappropriate if I can’t talk.”

“You can take your turn and *then* shut the fuck up.”

“Okay, fair enough. Terezi, truth or dare?”

The game went on like this for sometime, but it wasn’t long before it devolved to Vriska and Terezi daring each other to do stupid stuff. Nothing about this turn of events was unexpected or surprising to any of you.

“Since our gracious hosts are now ignoring us, I think now is as good a time as any to play that game you were talking about earlier, Kanaya.”

“Unculled? I suppose we could. But shouldn’t we wait for Vriska and Terezi? They’ll have to be running out of dares soon.”

You turn and look at the girls in question, who are both sitting together giggling in a corner. They don’t seem like they’ll be running out of ideas any time soon. Terezi stands up and runs out of the fort, closely pursued by Vriska.

“I think it’s safe to presume that they won’t be finished anytime soon. So, should we play?”

“Sure,” she sighs, picking up the deck of cards, “why not?”

She starts dealing the cards to all of you one by one, facedown. The backs of the cards are a dull black. You start to pick up your cards and look down at them. They’re all different colors, just as you’d already assumed from your previous look at them.

“So, you’ll teach us how this game works? Two of the four of us have never played before.”

“Three of us,” Karkat amends, shuffling the cards in his hands, “I’ve never played, either.”

“Karkat, you haven’t played Unculled?” Kanaya says with surprise as she places what’s left of the deck back facedown on the ground. “Not even with your lusus?”

“My lusus was a giant crab, Kanaya.” He replies flatly. “The one time we tried to play, he kept accidentally cutting the cards in half. So no, I’ve never played Unculled.”
“Oh, well that’s fine. I can teach all three of you. So here’s how it’s played.” She removes the topmost card from the deck. It’s a deep blue three. “You see this card? It’s the starter. The first player then lays down a card with the same number or color. But if you don’t have the same color, you can use a higher one on the hemospectrum, like this.” Kanaya picks up a card and lays it down on top of the three. It’s a purple ten. “Just like that. Then it’s the next person’s turn. Karkat, you can go next.”

He stares down at all of his cards, shuffling them around in his hands. “I don’t have anything.”

“Oh, okay,” she picks a card up off the deck and hands it to him, face down, “does that one work?”

He shakes his head. Kanaya picks up another card and hands it over to him, but that one doesn’t work, either.

“Karkat, why don’t you come sit by Kanaya and show her your cards so we can get through this faster?” You suggest, making room between yourself and Kanaya.

Karkat takes you up on your offer, and the two of you switch seats. She leans in and looks at his cards, picking up the deck and searching for one he could use. He glances over to you, and you wink at him.

“Oh, I found a ten.” She hands it over to him and folds the cards back up.

Karkat lays his ten down on top of the other. It’s maroon.

“I think I understand how this game is played. It’s like uno, right?” You ask, sorting through your cards and laying down a maroon card of your own.

“Yes.” Kanaya agrees immediately. “What’s uno?”

“Well, the object of the game is to be the first player to lose all of their cards.” You explain. “This seems to be a similar concept.”

“In that case, you’re right, that is the point of the game.” Kanaya nods. “Dave, your turn.”

He lays down a card on top of yours, and for awhile the game is played exactly like uno, just with more colors. After a few more turns, Dave flops over onto the floor. “I understand why Terezi and Vriska wanted to play this last. This game’s duller than taking a standardized test with a pencil with a broken point.”

“We haven’t gotten to any of the fun parts yet.” Kanaya replies cryptically, picking up another card from the deck.

“I can see all of your cards, Dave.” You point out, flicking one with your finger.

“Really? Can you?” Dave sits up and waves his cards in your face. “How about now?”

“Better than before, actually. I just can’t see all of the numbers.” You pluck the cards out of his hand and hold them up and out of his reach.

“Rose, what the hell? Give me those!” He stretches his arm out to get them.
“I think not, I’m strategizing.” You hold the cards over your head, and Dave just waves his arm in front of your face. “Quick, Kanaya, Karkat, look at these!”

You turn the cards around to show them, but before they can get a good look at them, Dave slaps them out of your hand and sends them all scattering to the floor.

“No one look at my cards!” He yells, throwing himself on top of the card deck.

“Oh come on, Dave, if this is anything like uno then it doesn’t matter if anyone sees your cards.”

“Actually, it does.” Kanaya interjects. “Depending on what cards he has, he could lose immediately if someone sees them.”

“Really?” Well, that’s certainly different from uno. “Which cards are those?”

She glances briefly over at Karkat. “The mutant ones.”

“So what are you supposed to do if you have one?” You ask, looking down at your cards. You’re honestly not sure which ones are considered mutant aside from your own blood color. “If they’re not supposed to be seen, then they obviously can’t be played like a normal card.”

“You don’t play the mutant cards at all.” She explains. “You also don’t want to have it in your hand if you’re close to winning. If you’re found with one of those cards, then you lose immediately. The point of those cards is that you have to try to sneak them back into the deck without anyone noticing.”

“Okay.” You lay down a card. “Is that something that has to be done on your turn?”

“No, it can be done at any point during the game.” Kanaya replies. “Just don’t get caught.”

You all keep playing, laying card after card on top of one another on the growing pile. You watch everyone carefully for signs of replacing cards in the deck. Either you miss it or no one’s had a mutant card yet.

You lay a gray card down. Dave’s about to lay his own card down when Kanaya stops him.

“Rose didn’t say what color she wanted.”

“So gray’s like a wild card?” Dave puts his card back into his hand. He only has a few left.

“It’s an anonymous card. If you play the card then you have to choose a color from the lower end of the hemospectrum to play, since the anonymous color is mainly used by those of a lower caste.”

“I’m sorry, refresh me on which ones are the lower caste?” You look down at your cards again and try to rearrange them in order of place on the spectrum.

“My hue or warmer.”

“Yellow, then.”

“Fuck you, Rose, you know I don’t have that color.” Dave mumbles, grabbing card after card
from the shrinking deck. Fourteen cards later, he’s finally able to lay down a card. “Suck it.”

“I’d rather not.” Kanaya lays a yellow card on top of Dave’s.

You all keep going, and it’s not long before the round ends. Unsurprisingly, Kanaya wins.

“Do you want to play again?” She asks, reshuffling the cards.

“Nah.” Dave shrugs. “This game’s kind of boring. If we’re going to keep playing, we need to raise the stakes a little.”

“Well, then what do you suggest?” Kanaya asks, dealing herself a few cards.

“I don’t know. Strip unculled?”

“I can’t believe you would suggest that after how upset you got about spin the bottle.” You say.

“Dave, I’m wearing a nightgown, I’m not doing that.” Kanaya denies.

“You’re wearing socks, though, right?” Dave’s sticks his leg up into the air and starts pulling off his sock. “Like that, see? You can just do that.”

He tosses his sock away from him, and it lands next to Kanaya. She wrinkles her nose in disdain. Karkat picks the sock up and tosses it back at Dave.

“You need to wash those, they smell like shit.” Karkat says. “And I’m not playing if we’re doing that.”

“Dude, just take off a fucking sock, it’s fine. It’s not like your toes are gonna freeze off or some shit.”

“I’m not wearing socks.” Karkat replies, gesturing down to his foot. “I’d have to take off my shirt or my fucking pants, and unlike you, you disgusting pervert, I’m not exactly comfortable exposing myself in front of other people for the sake of a shitty card game.”

“Jesus, Karkat, I didn’t expect you to be such a huge prude about this. It’s not like anybody’s asking you to nude up or some shit. No one cares if they see your fucking chest, so it doesn’t matter if you take your shirt off. And if you lose a second time, which let’s be honest, you probably will, it won’t matter if you end up taking off your pants, either. I mean, you’ve got underwear on, right? You’re not gonna be flashing anyone your junk at all, so there’s no issue with inappropriate content here. Everything will stay completely PG-13, dude.”

Karkat still looks unconvinced and uncomfortable. “I just don’t want to play this, okay? You guys can if you want to, I’m not going to stop you from doing whatever the fuck you want at your own party. Pester me when you’re all done and fully clothed again.”

Karkat gets up to leave, but you motion for him to sit back down. He scowls at you, but does it anyway.

“What I think Dave means,” you begin, “is that if we were to play a strip version of this card game, which was merely a suggestion, no one has agreed to it yet, that we would only remove small, insignificant items of clothing. Socks, my headband, Dave’s shades, those kinds of things.
“Nothing too risque. Am I right, Dave?”

“Yeah.” He agrees. “Obviously we’re not gonna do anything extreme where stripping down to our skivvies is even an option, I was just saying that if he did do that it wouldn’t be a big deal. Like Rose said, though, it was just an idea. We don’t have to do that. Do any of you guys have suggestions?”

Dave looks around, but unfortunately, none of you have any other ideas. The only thing you have to offer is a shrug.

“Okay, fine.” Karkat throws his hands up, exasperated. “We can play Dave’s gross game.”

“Are you sure you’re fine with that?” Kanaya asks. “We can do something else?”

“What the fuck else is there to do?” He counters. “It’s fine, I’ll just make sure I win this time.”

Kanaya deals cards out to everybody, and just as you’re about to start the game again, Dave drops something out of his sylladex and tosses it at Karkat. Karkat grabs the thing and stares at it.

“Dave, what the shit?” Karkat asks, holding Dave's cape up for explanation.

“So you have something to take off in case you don’t win.” He says simply. “If you don’t want it, I can take it back.”

“No, I’ll wear it.” He pulls it on over his head and puts the hood up.

Kanaya, as the winner of the last game, gets to go first. She lays the first card down, and the game begins.

Dave had the right idea with raising the stakes. The game is going much quicker and feels much more intense with an incentive, even if that incentive is just to keep your socks on. The game is over before you’re ready, and Karkat is declared the winner.

“Damn, guess you had nothing to worry about, Karkat.” Dave comments as he removes his sock. You and Kanaya both do the same.

“What are we supposed to do with our discarded socks?” Kanaya asks, holding up the green knee high sock she’d just been wearing.

“That’s an excellent question, Kanaya.” Dave replies. “You can put your sock on...” He looks around, trying to think of a good place to put them. “Karkat.”

“What?”

“Yeah, see the losers have to take off an article of clothing, and the winners have to put on the clothes. Get what I’m saying? That makes sense, right, Rose?”

“It does.” You nod. You’re very glad you went with your squid themed toe socks today. You toss it at Karkat.

You watch him struggle to put on everybody’s socks as he grumbles obscenities under his breath. It takes him over a minute to try to get your sock on because he can’t seem to get his toes to fit in
it correctly. He gives up and leaves the toe part empty, sliding the sock half off his foot. Kanaya’s is easier for him to put on, but it reaches past his knee, so he has to roll up his pants to put it on all the way. That just leaves Dave’s dirty sock.

“What the fuck am I supposed to do with this one?” He asks. “I only have two feet.”

“Wear it on your hand.” Dave suggests.

“That seems like a good idea.” You agree. “Wear Dave’s sock on your hand, Karkat.”

“Yeah, do it.”

“Do it.”

“Do it!”

After some coercion, Karkat finally gives in and puts Dave’s sock on his hand.

“Okay, cool.” Dave nods. “Next round.”

The deck is reshuffled and new cards are dealt. You pick up your cards and start organizing.

“How do I do this with a sock on my hand?”

“You’ll figure something out, dude.” Dave replies. “I have faith in you.”

It’s halfway through this round (which is dragging on much slower than the last one, you think Dave is doing this deliberately) that you finally hear from Vriska and Terezi again.

Vriska pops her head into the fort, ready to say something when she sees what the four of you are up to. She raises an eyebrow questioningly. “What the fuck are you guys doing?”

“We’re playing Unculled.” Kanaya responds.

“Oh okay,” she says, nodding, “but what the fuck’s going on with Karkat? Is that a punishment or something?”

Karkat answers quickly before anyone else has a chance to reply. “Yes.”

“He won last round.” Kanaya says, as if that clarifies the situation at all.

Vriska looks at all of you, as if expecting one of your faces to reveal that this is a weird attempt at a joke at her expense and there’s a different, more sensible explanation for why Karkat’s wearing Dave’s cape and everybody’s socks. You all just stare back at her with blank, serious faces.

“I just came in here to tell you that I dared Terezi to climb all the way to the top of the fort.” She says. “So if you hear anything weird, it’s probably her. There’s also a chance that she might screw up and fall through, so watch out.” She gives you all one final glance. “Deal us in next round.”

The rest of the round goes on without much trouble. You do hear some rustling sometimes, and you look up just to make sure there’s no girls suddenly falling down from the ceiling (of all the times for that prayer to be answered, now seems less ideal). Luckily, Terezi never does, and
neither does Vriska when you hear Terezi dare her to get her down from the top of the fort without using her god tier powers.

Kanaya wins, and you each surrender another sock to her. Karkat takes Dave’s sock off his hand triumphantly and hands it over to Kanaya. Kanaya, not wanting to put Dave’s unpleasant smelling socks on her hands and with her feet already occupied by your sock and the one she had remaining, decides to put his socks on her horns. You try your best not to laugh, but fail miserably. You don’t know if it’s because of how ridiculous Kanaya looks with Dave’s socks on her head or if it’s just because it’s late and your laugh is infectious, but soon after you start the other two lose it, too.

Vriska slides back into the fort with Terezi on her back while you’re all just sitting here giggling stupidly.

“Great Caeger’s dream ghost,” she says, plopping down onto the floor next to you, “this must be some game of Unculled. What’s going on here?”

You explain the situation to them as best you can between giggles and try your best not to look directly at Kanaya so you don’t start back up again. When you finish, Vriska shakes her head.

“No, that’s stupid.” She says. “What’s the point if you’re just switching socks around? That doesn’t sound fun at all.”

“You just don’t want to wear Dave’s socks.” Terezi comments teasingly.

“You’re right, I don’t. I’m not ashamed to admit that. They smell disgusting and I don’t want them anywhere near me.”

“Well, as we said to Karkat earlier, we can play something else.” You reply. “What did you have in mind.”

“Terezi mentioned that watching movies was one of the things you humans did at these parties. We could pick a movie and then play for which one we watch first.” She suggests.

It’s not a bad idea. “I don’t know if we’ll have time to watch six movies.”

Vriska’s eyebrows furrow. “Why wouldn’t we? I thought people didn’t actually sleep at these parties.”

“They don’t.” You try to explain this as best as you can. “But they do pass out from exhaustion, I just don’t think any of us will be able to make it through six movies.”

“Okay, fine. Three movies, then. You and Kanaya can pick one, we’ll pick one, and Dave and Karkat can pick one. Better?”

You nod. “Yes.”

You let Vriska tell everybody the new plan, which they all agree to immediately. Karkat and Kanaya return everybody’s socks, and you all split up to go pick a movie. You tell Kanaya that she can pick out whatever she wants, because even though you’ve exposed her to many of your favorite films, you’ve still seen very little Alternian cinema.

When you all return, Kanaya immediately goes to reshuffle the deck. Vriska takes it from her
“This party’s for you and Rose.” She explains as she rearranges the deck herself. “You don’t have to play for a spot, we can watch your movie first.”

“Oh.” Kanaya says, sounding surprised. “I’ll just monitor the game, then.”

“Suit yourself, but it’s gonna be pretty fucking quick.” Vriska starts dealing cards.

“Since Rose and Kanaya aren’t playing, this seems like a good time for you to talk to Rose, Dave.” Karkat says. “Didn’t you have something you wanted to talk to her about?”

“What?” Dave questions, confused. Karkat gives him a look that must mean something, because the next second Dave is rising to a stand. “Oh, right.”

He starts to leave and gestures for you to follow him. You’re not sure what’s going on, but you follow Dave out of the fort anyway. Dave leads you not just out of the fort, but out of the room entirely. He starts walking quickly down the hall, so quick to the point where you have to almost jog to keep up with him. He doesn’t look back at you the entire time he’s walking.

When you almost reach the end of the hall, he stops. You manage to halt at a distance a little more than arm’s length away from him. Dave turns around and faces you, but he’s still not looking at you. He’s staring at the floor.

You stare at him patiently and try to keep your breathing even. Whatever happens next, you’ll wait for him to start.

“Rose, I-” He stops and glances up at you briefly before forcing himself to look back down at his feet. “Rose...”

You take a step closer. “What?”

The word comes out sharper than intended. You’re nervous about what he has to say to you.

“About...what I said before? I didn’t...I’m...Rose, I-” He’s struggling. It’s so strange, you’ve never known Dave to struggle with words before. But here he is in front of you, barely capable of forming a sentence. You take another step closer. Your heart is beating so hard in your chest.

“Dave, what?” You want to hear what he has to say, but you’re also afraid of it. Whether it’s something good or bad, you’ve resigned yourself to hearing whatever it is he wants to tell you.

He takes a deep breath. “Rose, I’m sorry.”

His head snaps up, his eyes meeting yours and you both just stand and stare. You don’t feel like you could break the gaze even if you wanted to. You’ve never looked at his eyes this long before. There’s an intense amount of relief swirling around in them.

“Rose, listen, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean what I said before. I mean, I did, some of it, but not the way I said it.” He’s talking so quickly, like choking out that one sentence was enough to open the floodgates. “I meant it, but it was...it was harsh, and you don’t deserve that shit. I’ve been thinking...a lot, I haven’t stopped thinking about this since I laid into you like that and said all of that and...and sorry’s not enough for me to say to you, I know that, but it’s all I have to offer right
now. I did mean it when I said I was disappointed in what you did and that I would have helped you if you’d asked for it. But still, that’s no excuse, of course you wouldn’t ask for me to help you. I knew you had a really horrible problem and that you would need help and look at how I reacted like a fucking jackass. I... fuck, I still...I’m going to help you out with this. I don’t have a lot of experience being supportive and shit, but I’m going to try my hardest to support you because so far I really...I haven’t. Rose, I want you to get better. To get past this, because I know you can. You’re really fucking strong, and I want to help you keep being fucking strong. I want to help you and support you and be there for you if you need me. Just...know that, okay?"

Dave stops talking, breathless from the effort of saying so much so quickly. You’re dizzy from having all of that emotion thrown at you so suddenly. How are you still standing?

You and Dave are just standing there again, staring at each other. That relief that was so prevalent just a second ago from regaining the power of speech is gone now, anxiety and fear of your reaction are left in its wake.

You know the feeling all too well.

“Dave-” you stop. You don’t know what to say. What’s the proper response here? You’re not even sure how you feel now.

Dave said he was sorry for how he reacted to your relapse.

Dave just told you that he would support you and help you however he can.

Dave wants you to get better.

It’s strange. This whole experience is strange. All of your emotions are a torrent in your system, you’re relieved and disbelieving and so, so fucking glad that Dave is talking to you again because he’s your best friend in the whole wide universe and you don’t know what you would do without him in your life, especially right now when everything’s already so hard. You feel boneless, and you feel like you could cry. You’ve never done that in front of Dave before, and it would be awkward, but you feel like you could.

You feel so supported and so relieved and so much closer to him right now than you ever have before, not just as his friend, but as his sister. You want to tell him all of this, but you don’t know how to articulate your feelings into something that makes sense. You don’t have the words yet to describe something like this yet.

Dave’s eyes snap back to the ground. He’s no longer looking at you.

“Dave?” You repeat. He glances up at you. He looks as nervous as you felt at the beginning of this talk. You still don’t have the words to describe exactly how much you appreciate what he said and how it made you feel, but you have to say something. He should have a response. You smile.

“Thanks.”

Neither of you are exactly to the point where hugging is okay, so you offer him your fist instead. He bumps it.

“Don’t mention it.”

You both start walking back to the party, you leading this time. When you return, the cards are
being packed away and everyone’s sitting around doing absolutely nothing. You missed this entire
game of Unculled.

“What’d we miss?” Dave asks.

“Karkat won.” Terezi grumbles. “Our movie’s going last.”

“Oh, that sucks for you guys.” Dave wanders over to where Terezi’s sitting to continue his
conversation with her. “How’d you lose?”

Karkat’s sitting cross legged on the floor near Kanaya. You go and sit by them. Karkat leans in
close to you and whispers behind his hand. “How’d it go?”

“It went fine.” You answer, emulating his whisper. “We fist bumped.”

“That’s great!” He drops his hand and continues in his normal, too loud tone. “We were just going
to the common room to set up a husktop and start watching the movies. You might want to grab
some pillows, there’s not enough room on the couch for all six of us.”

You nod and take one for yourself. The six of you begin your short trip from Fort Rosemary to the
common room. You set up all of Kanaya’s and your pillows on the floor by the couch while
Vriska sets up a husktop to watch the movies on. Kanaya hands her the first movie, and Vriska
presses play while Dave runs to turn off the lights.

You snuggle up against Kanaya, suddenly feeling tired. It’s warm and dark in this room, which
isn’t a great combination if you’re meant to stay awake for the next several hours. You try your
best to stay awake.

It’s easy to keep your mind focused on the first film because you have to read the subtitles to
understand what’s going on. You only have the reading level of a three-sweep-old when it comes
to Alternian, though, so Kanaya also whispers all of the dialogue into your ear throughout the film.

The second film you find much harder to stay awake for. You’ve seen it before, so you’re not that
interested in watching it, and the dialogue is quiet enough that it practically lulls you into a state of
half sleep. You yawn and wrap your arms around Kanaya, completely abandoning the pillow you
brought with you. Somehow, though, you stay awake enough for the third movie to start.

It’s another human movie, but this is one you haven’t seen before. Right from the start, you can
tell it’s one of those generic b-horror movies with a lack of plot and excessive amounts of gore.
You resign yourself to falling asleep to this.

When the over the top bloodshed begins, you hear someone on the couch behind you get up and
sidestep away from you and Kanaya.

“Karkat, where are you going?” Dave whispers frantically.

“Loadgaper.” He replies.

You slip in and out of consciousness for the remainder of the film, and are only vaguely aware
when those around you drift off completely. Kanaya’s breathing softens, and every exhalation is a
gentle tousle of your hair.
You’re completely awake momentarily at the end of the movie only to find that everybody around you is already asleep.

Everybody but one.

“Dave?” You whisper quietly, trying not to disturb any of those sleeping around you.

“Yeah?” He’s so quiet you have a hard time hearing him.

“Why are you still awake?”

“Karkat never came back.”

“Oh.” Didn’t he go to the bathroom? Was that just an excuse to leave? Is Dave worried about him and is that why he’s not sleeping? “Did you want to go look for him?”

Dave stays quiet, a response you both know is as good as a yes.

“What about your party?”

“Dave, everyone’s asleep, and I don’t care.” You say. “You can go find him, it’s fine. Just come back after.”

“Okay.” He crawls off the couch and steps around Terezi, who’d passed out face down on the floor next to you. “I’ll see you later.”

“Bye.” You wave to him as he leaves, but it’s too dark for you to really see him go.

You rest your head against Kanaya’s chest and squeeze her tightly. You yawn and close your eyes. Her heartbeat is slow and rhythmic and sounds like a lullaby.

You fall slowly into a deep, lovely sleep in her arms.

Chapter End Notes

There was a lot that went on in this chapter, and I hope it wasn't... too much if that's a thing? I can definitely promise that the next chapter (or probably all future chapters, if I'm being honest) won't be this long.

Thank you so much for reading this chapter! I hope you liked it :)
This chapter (like most chapters recently I don't know what's up with that) took me a
bit longer than expected and also kinda got out of hand which is why it is...so long. A
lot of stuff happens, mostly dialogue based. They talk a lot, but it's not really about
anything super important.
Dave has another episode resembling a panic attack, it's pretty brief but it's also sudden
so I thought I would mention it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Karkat left for the bathroom during the last movie and he hasn’t come back since. Everyone else is
still asleep in the other room. You’re trudging down the hallway in your socks, searching for
Karkat and wishing your pajamas had pockets because you have no fucking idea what to do with
your hands right now. What the fuck does Rose usually do with her hands when she’s walking, her
god tier outfit doesn’t have pockets at all. How has she gone this long without pockets? Or Kanaya,
for that matter? Do they just...swing their arms when they walk? Keep them at their sides? What
the fuck?

No, you stupid dipshit, they probably hold hands. They’re always walking together and neither of
them have pockets and they’re dating, so of course they’re going to take advantage of that lack of
innovation in women’s clothing and use it as an excuse to lock phalanges.

Damn, you wish you had someone to lock phalanges with right now. Or preferably, pockets to
shove your hands into. Your fingers are cold. You cover your hands with your sleeves and clench
them into fists to try to keep the warmth in.

You pass Karkat’s room, but you have a feeling he’s not in there. He didn’t seem like he’d planned
on not coming back. He probably just went someplace to chill for a bit and lost track of time. Odds
are he’s in Can Town or something.

You head over to Can Town and sure enough, there he is, you can just barely see his horns over the
watchtower’s wall. His back’s to you, and as you approach you see he’s not alone. You lean over
the can wall and poke him on the head.

Karkat tilts his head back and looks up at you. “Hey, Dave.”

“Yes.” The Mayor turns and waves at you, and you wave back immediately. “Sup?” You move
around the wall and plop down next to Karkat and the Mayor. “What’s going on?”

“Not much.” Karkat shrugs. His knees are pulled up to his chest. “What the hell are you doing
here, Dave? Aren’t you supposed to be watching that fuck awful movie with everybody?”

“It ended already.” You reply. So he did leave because of the movie. “How do you know it was
fuck awful? You only stayed for five minutes before hauling ass out of there.”

He raises an eyebrow. “Are you really going to sit here and tell me that movie wasn’t a stupid piece
of underdeveloped shit still steaming and spewing everywhere inside the severed, disease riddled
intestine the writers tried to pass off as a plotline? Because if that’s really how you feel, Dave, fine, you’re entitled to your own opinion, but if that’s what you’re going to fucking say to me, with zero sarcasm at all, then I’m going to lose every ounce of respect I have for you. I am going to vomit all of it out onto the floor right fucking now if I have to. Here I go, ready to retch it out of my body. You can smell it wafting on the thick breeze of flatulence that was that steaming, blood soaked bowel explosion of a movie. Good bye, respect in Dave Strider’s opinion. Welcome back, disgust in Dave Strider’s taste in movies.”

“Okay, you’re not wrong, but again you were only there for five minutes. You didn’t have enough time to form any kind of opinion about that movie, no matter how much of an obviously shit film it was. Hell, you were barely there to see the first person get dismembered. Which is a real shame because I would love to hear all the scathing verbal diarrhea you’d spit if you’d actually seen the shitty special effects they’d used. Seriously, I think the majority of their budget was spent on making sure the leading actress’s tits were big enough to fill the whole screen or some shit, because they sure as fuck didn’t spend more than the five dollars needed on fifteen gallons of bright red dollar store paint and a box of penny condoms because that movie was so bad it was downright fucked up.”

“I only needed to watch five minutes of it to understand it was shit. Besides,” he admits, “I don’t like those kinds of movies.”

“Dude, I know you hate everything that isn’t a romantic comedy, but seriously it’s getting ridiculous. There was a romantic subplot I’m sure you could have sat through that shit flick.”

“It wasn’t about that.” Karkat shakes his head. “I’m perfectly fine with a movie not focusing on romance! You know that, I’ve sat through plenty of your weird movies to prove that as a fact. I just don’t fucking like those kinds of movies.”

“What kind of movies?” You’re being dense, you know that, but you want to make sure you don’t misinterpret what he means and end up sounding like a fucking moron.

Karkat frowns, but doesn’t say anything about your ingenuine density. “Horror movies.” He says. “No, not even horror movies, I can handle a damn jump scare or some of that monster ghost haunting shit or whatever. I just don’t like gore. It’s so fucking unnecessary, why would you even create a form of media like that? Is there not enough gratuitous violence and death on Alternia already that there’s an actual fucking need to churn out film after god awful blood soaked film about it until everyone is completely numb to the idea of killing someone at the drop of a hat? It makes no sense to me, you watch a movie to get away from reality, not to see a hyped up, grandiose version of shit that’s going on in your hive area every fucking second of the night! Where’s the entertainment value in watching someone die? I don’t-”

Karkat’s been slowly gaining volume and working himself up to the point that he’s practically shouting his explanation at you. The Mayor reaches over and pats Karkat on the knee, and Karkat immediately stops talking. He turns his head to look at him, and the Mayor gestures for him to move closer to him. Karkat leans forward, and the Mayor pokes Karkat’s cheek a couple times and stares expectantly up at him.

“Thanks, Mayor.” Karkat smiles at him, his voice softer than before. He settles carefully back against the can wall and uncurls himself so he’s sitting cross legged, his hands at his sides. He clears his throat. “I don’t like blood.”

“Oh.” That’s understandable. “Yeah, me neither. I can’t fucking stand the sight of blood. Same boat, bro. My question is, if you really don’t like seeing blood to the point that you got up and fucking left the party, why didn’t you say anything about it? We could have put on a different
movie.”

“Are you kidding me? Fuck no. I may not like it but I’m enough of a masochist that I can sit there and take it for ninety fucking minutes. I’m not a wriggler, Dave, I don’t need to be coddled.”

“I don’t know if you can handle it, Karkat. You did leave for the bathroom as soon as shit started hitting the fan, and by shit I mean human body, and by fan I mean axe.”

“This was a special situation!” Karkat argues defensively. “The blood’s not usually that color! It threw me off and I couldn’t sit there and just fucking look at it like it wasn’t some weird, unnatural color, Dave. It almost felt like-”

He cuts himself off and brings his knees up to his chest again, wrapping his arms around tightly around his legs. He settles his chin between his knees.

“Like what?” You urge him to continue. You inch closer and stretch out to poke him in the leg with your foot. “Hey, dude, you can talk to me.”

“I know.” He pushes your foot off him. “Your foot smells like someone took a dump on it and you tried to wash it off with vomit only to get feculent chunks lodged impossibly far into your claw beds without a chance in hell of getting them out, so you just let them fester in the humid environment of your rank, sweaty feet until the shit molds over and covers all your toes in a thick layer of stink fuzz they you have no fucking idea how to get rid of so you just let it eat away at your skin and try to hide your disgusting fungal mass inside a dangerously dirty tube sock. Keep your disgusting saprophytic pods away from me, you nasty fuck.”

“Okay, I get it, my feet stink. Noted.” You take your foot back. “That’s a hilarious bitch fit coming from you, Captain Nasty. I think I’ve lost forty percent of my scent glands since I started chilling in close quarters with your stank ass. When’s the last time you stumbled your way into a shower, grease ball? Have you even so much as washed your fucking face since you started your maiden voyage on this dirt rock? While we’re at it, I’d like to point out that you wore my dangerously dirty tube sock that probably had residual fungus spores inside it on your hand for an entire round of Unculled. You’re probably already infected with whatever alien foot mold I have. Just saying.”

Karkat slowly brings his hand to his face and sniffs it experimentally. He grimaces in sticks out his tongue in disgust. “Ew.”

“Told you, bro.” You chuckle. “Now quit changing the subject. What were you saying before you threw your second tantrum of the night about my smelly socks touching your delicate skin?”

He rolls his eyes at you. “It wasn’t anything that mattered, but if you insist on hearing my complaints about that particular blood porn under the guise of an actual movie then fuck it, fine. I didn’t want to watch it because it felt like a personal attack against me, all right? And that’s all I want to say about it, okay? I don’t want to get into it right now.”

It’s not like Karkat not to admit his issues and bitch at length about them using every word in his extensive vocabulary as loud as he possibly can. Shit, he’s acting like...

He’s acting like you.

Or how you used to act, anyway. You want to question him about this, but if you ask too much about what is clearly the one subject he won’t open up about at the slightest provocation then there’s a chance he might clam up about it for good. Fuck, what if he stops talking to you about anything important altogether and your broship sinks and you start to drift apart? You have a good
thing going, the last thing you want is for your friendship to move backwards.

So what the fuck are you supposed to do?

Ignore it, you guess. “Well, like I said, the movie’s over now. So are you gonna head back with me or what’s the plan here?”

Karkat looks up at you, obviously shocked by your deft subject change to a more comfortable topic. “I don’t know, I didn’t really think about it. You can go back if you want.”

“Nah. I told Rose I’d come back with you, and like fuck I’m going back empty handed.”

“Empty handed?”

“Fuck off, you know what I mean.” You poke him with your foot again.

“Hey, quit it!” He swipes your foot away, but you persist. “I thought I told you to stop that shit already.”

“I’m a rebel, Karkat. You can’t make me do shit.”

“If that’s how it’s gonna be, then two can play that game. Take that!” He kicks you on the side of your leg. It’s not a hard kick, but it’s enough to illicit a kick back.

“I see. So you like it rough, huh? Gotta say, Karkat, I’m not surprised.”

“Once again, you’ve lost me. What the fuck are you talking about?” He kicks you harder this time and withdraws his leg before you have a chance to strike back.

“Oh come on, you’re really going to play dumb and pretend you don’t understand what that means? I know you have the concept of rough sex on your planet, bro. You have an entire shape on your square board dedicated to it.” You reach over to kick him again, or at least jab him with your toe, but he keeps moving out of range. You’re practically lying down on the floor now. “Hey, come on, that’s not fair. That’s too far away for me to reach, get back over here.”

“And give up my advantage?” Karkat scoffs. “Now why the fuck would I want to do that?”

Before you can say anything in reply, he jumps to his feet and runs out of the makeshift tower and into Can Town. He stops in the center of Can Town and turns around to face you.

“Well?” He says, crossing his arms and looking at you impatiently.

“Well, what?” You ask, your ass firmly planted on the floor. You understand what he’s getting at, but you’re not going to fucking move unless you’re going back to the other room.

“So that’s it, then? You’re giving up that easily? I’d love to say I’m disappointed in you, but you quitting so you don’t have to have get your ass beaten to a pulp and served to you on a silver nutrition plateau by me isn’t a shock at all, you fucking coward.”

“Oh wow, is that seriously your way of trying to persuade me to...what, fucking chase you around Can Town like we’re four years old and we have nothing better to do than play tag?” You criticize.

“Oh, I get it, so now that I’m the one initiating game play, suddenly it’s too fucking wrigglerish for you to even consider playing and I’m left standing here with my amicably presented invitation taken, torn to shreds, and shoved wrist deep into my engorged nook with enough force to punch a hole right through the fabric of reality and disorient some dead alternate universe asshat in the
process. No, I understand, I got the message loud and fucking clear. We can build a pillow fort, we can play capture the flag and unculled and fucking jumpscotch and any other stupid idiotic shit that strikes your interest, but obviously this crosses the line. I’m sorry to have even suggested something so uncultured and offensively lowbrow, how could I ever think you would sink to something at that level? How stupid of me! Here, I’ll glue my big trap shut so you don’t have to listen to my dumb pupa drivel anymore while simultaneously cramming my suggestion into the nearest free orifice. Does that work for you, Dave?”

“Okay, I’m going to critique this latest rant, because everyone’s a fucking critic and I want to go beyond everyone and become the ultimate critic. The critic supreme. The motherfucking god of criticism, if you will. Karkat, I am going to lay into you so hard about this latest burst of misguided aggrievance directed towards me over something this insignificant that you don’t even give two fucks about that I’ll rip you a constructive new one before you even have time to process what I said. You get what I’m saying, man?”

His hands drop to his sides. “No, I don’t get what you’re saying. What?”

He looks genuinely confused. “Okay, let me make this easy for you to understand. I’m going to complain about what you just said, and I want you to think long and hard, like my dick, about my complaints and use them to help you form a better executed angry shit storm next time you want to rant about something. Got it? Alright, one, I never said I was against playing, what I said was your attempt at getting me to play was pathetic and completely obvious. Two, it’s called hopscotch. I don’t know how many times I have to say that to you, you always say jumpscotch I don’t get it it doesn’t even fucking sound any better than hopscotch. I think you’re doing it on purpose just to fuck with me, you asshole. You know what, I take it all back. Call it whatever you want, I don’t fucking care. Point two is officially removed from this critique because the entire point of your rant was to try to stir a reaction from me and you know what, a plus work there, bro, really got under my skin with that jumpscotch bit, you cheeky ass face. Third and final point,” you honestly can’t help yourself, “I never said I wouldn’t play.”

You’re up and running before he even has time to react. You charge straight for him, and he dashes out of your way and into downtown just as you reach the center. You give chase.

“How fun trying to catch me, douche peddler.” He taunts, dodging you again and running so he’s just out of your reach.

“Oh please. If I was going all out this would be over in two seconds flat.”

It’s true. If you really wanted to, you could just fly over there, tag him, and then chill on the ceiling until Karkat gives up and calls game over. But where’s the fun in that? All you’d succeed in doing is pissing Karkat off, and that shit happens every day. Why ruin a good thing by being a total dick about it?

You’re both weaving your way around stacks of cans, neither of you running very fast and just missing each other by inches. At this rate, you could be doing this all night. You’ve already circled the entirety of Can Town once without so much as touching him yet. There’s no foreseeable end to this game.

The Mayor’s been trailing behind you for a bit. You think it’s because he’s worried about you guys accidentally knocking over some of the cans and endangering his citizens. You want to tell him that you and Karkat are going to be careful and that he’s got nothing to worry about, but then you remember what happened the last time a game ended up near Can Town and how disastrous that had been. Keeping that in mind, his worries are completely warranted, so you don’t say anything as he follows you around and frets quietly over the cans.
You’ve started your second rotation around Can Town. The Mayor pulls at your sleeve and draws your attention down to him. You don’t remember knocking over any cans, but maybe in you didn’t hear it in your haste to catch Karkat. You look at him and nope, all the cans seem to be in order. He had something else in mind that he wanted to talk to you about.

“Shit, that’s an awesome idea.” You nod. “Fuck yeah, let’s do it.”

You bump fists with the Mayor, and he goes off in the direction opposite of the one you’re headed. This is going to be over sooner than you thought. Karkat doesn’t stand a chance against a double team.

The Mayor approaches Karkat from behind and gets his attention so Karkat has to turn around to talk him. While the Mayor is distracting him, you sneak up behind him and make your move. Just poking him and saying “tag” doesn’t feel like enough, though. No, you have something better in mind.

You reach over and grab his sides. Karkat jumps at the unexpected contact and chokes back a laugh, only partially succeeding in his effort to do so. He turns on you, biting down hard on his lip to keep himself from grinning involuntarily, and punches you hard in the shoulder as a warning to stop what you’re doing right fucking now.

Yeah, you’re not doing that. You honestly haven’t even done anything yet. You barely even touched him! Just how ticklish is he?

You move your hands experimentally, at first nothing happens, but you can see how hard he’s fighting against any sort of reaction on his face. This is a battle he’s going to lose, he’s practically shaking from the effort and still biting his lip. You persist until finally he bursts out laughing, unable to contain himself anymore.

“Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck, stop.” He yells between fits of laughter as he tries to pry your hands off of his body. You refuse to stop and move your hands to different locations. He tries to guard the more obvious targets for your attack by scrunching his shoulders up to protect his neck and folding himself over with his arms wrapped protectively around his midsection. Unfortunately for him, that means he’s leaning forward a bit more than before and exposing pretty much his whole back to you. From what you heard from Rose, that’s a surprisingly sensitive area in and of itself. You want to know that for sure firsthand. You go for it.

Karkat’s body tenses up immediately the moment your fingers touch his back. There’s a sharp intake of breath like he knows this is it, he’s done for now. He should have seen this coming. You show him no mercy.

He collapses to the floor, first onto his knees and then on his side. Karkat’s still laughing as you attack every exposed area of his body relentlessly. He kicks out at you, but it’s a weak attempt to get you away from him. “Dave, quit it! Get the fuck off me! Uncle! Fuck! Stop!”

He’s pleading so insistently with you that you relent a little and eventually stopping entirely. Karkat’s breathing so hard he’s almost panting, and you’re breathing pretty hard yourself, too. You’re both just sitting there on the floor, trying to catch your breath when you realize something you hadn’t noticed you’d done while you were too busy playing.

You’re straddling Karkat’s hips.

The moment you realize you’re on top of Karkat is the moment you lock eyes with him. Your heart skips a beat and you can feel the blood try to rush to your face. You try your best to control it and
hope it’s not too noticeable. Neither of you say a word, you just stare at each other and breathe.

A sly look crosses Karkat’s face, and he starts to sit up without warning. Suddenly you find yourself under him, pinned to the floor. He brings up a hand and-

oh fuck, this is going to hurt so much this is what you get for letting your guard down, you stupid asshole now you’ve done it fuck, you can’t move you’re trapped right here your Bro’s grips like fucking iron you hope he goes easy on you but when has he ever gone easy on you oh fuck-

“Dave?”

shit.

“Dave, are you okay?”

shit shit shit shit shit shit shit.

You don’t know why this keeps happening. You know better. You know he’s gone, he’s been gone for over a whole fucking year already it’s been over a year since you’ve had to strife with him or fucking anybody so, why can’t you just...stop this? Your heart is beating so fast it feels like it’s struggling under the constraint of your ribs. Breathing is a conscious effort. Why are you still sweating and filled with so much anxiety and dread, feeling weak and fucking drained of all energy like you are at the end of every strife you’ve ever had in the boiling Texas sun against your Bro? There’s a heavy weight on your chest. You feel like shit and you don’t understand why.

The heaviness pressing against your chest lifts, and it takes you longer than it should to realize the weight on your chest was real and was Karkat’s body pressed against you. It’s gone now. Karkat and the Mayor are sitting at your side, staring at you worriedly.

“Dave, what’s wrong? Are you okay?” Karkat asks. He’s fidgeting, clearly wanting to do something to help, but uncertain on how to do so.

“Yeah.” You reply immediately before shaking your head. “No. No, but I’m fine. I’ll be fine in a minute, anyway, I think. I think I’m just gonna lay here if that’s cool.”

“Of course. That’s cool. That’s perfectly fucking chill.” He replies. “Do you mind if we lay down with you?”

“Nah. Do whatever you want, man.” Your heart’s racing, but it’s not as bad as before. “Knock yourself out.”

Karkat crawls a bit closer to you and lays down beside you. It feels awkward, but it’s nice. Karkat’s lying close to you, but not close enough that he’s invading your personal space, which you really appreciate right now. His hand is right next to you. It would be so easy for you to take his hand in yours. So, so easy.

You resist the urge.

It’s so quiet in here right now, it’s strange. You don’t think it’s ever been this quiet between the two of you. It should be a relaxing change of pace, but really it just seems off putting. You’re not used to this.

Much to your relief, Karkat breaks the silence. “Dave?”

“Yeah?”
“About what just happened...do you want to talk about it?”

“Not really, no.” You really don’t feel comfortable talking about whatever the fuck this is. “I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Okay.” You see him nod out of the corner of your eye. His fingers brush against the palm of your hand. You can’t tell if it’s on purpose or accidental. “I’m always open to jam about shit if you ever feel like it.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” You reply. “Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it. What else are bros for?”

You both lapse back into silence, staring up at the ceiling and definitely not sneaking glances at each other. At least...Karkat probably isn’t. You don’t know, you can’t tell.

Yeah, you fucking hate silence.

“Hey,” you finally say after it’s become too much, “I just remembered another party game we didn’t play today.”

“We played spin the bottle already.” Karkat points out.

“No, I remember. How the fuck could I forget that? You slap smooched Vriska Serket. It was epic, one for the ages, man.”

“Oh, shit.” Karkat gasps.

“What?”

“I just realized Vriska was my first kiss.” He groans. “Fuck, I’m never going to live this down.”

“Dude, relax. Dare kisses don’t count.” You don’t actually know that for sure, but whatever.

“They don’t?”

“No.” Probably not, but who the fuck cares? Besides Karkat, obviously.

“Oh, thank mothergrub.” He sighs. “So you said you didn’t mean spin the bottle?”

“No, I didn’t. See, what I was thinking was, maybe if you’re up for it, we could play a game of Fuck, Marry, Kill.”

“That sounds like a fucked up game.” Karkat replies. “But I don’t have anything better to do, so I’ll bite. How do you play?”

“Okay, it’s real simple. So what you do is you say three people’s names, and out of those three people you have to choose which one you’d rather fuck, marry, or kill.”

He nods. “And then?”

“And then that’s it. That’s the whole game.”

“Oh.” Karkat sounds slightly disappointed. “That just sounds like a watered down human version of nail, pail, rail.”
“Well why don’t you elaborate on that so the rest of us can compare it, then.”

“It’s pretty much the same thing.” He admits. “You pick three trolls and out of those three you decide whether you want to be kismesis, matesprits, or moirails with.”

“Yeah, that sounds like it’s the exact same game, just under a different title.” You agree. “But if it’s based off the quadrants, why is it called that?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean why the fuck are you calling it nail, pail, rail instead of the actual square name or whatever? And what happened to the other square, don’t you have four?”

“If we played it with auspistice as an option, we’d need to add two more names, and that just makes the game needlessly complicated because you have to figure out which ones you think would be in a blackrom relationship and how that correlates to any of the other quadrants you may have wanted them in. As for why it’s called nail, pail, rail as instead of kismesis, matesprit, moirail, well, since I’m obviously not the asshole responsible for this game’s creation, I’d have to guess it’s probably because it saves time and it sounds better.”

“Well, it definitely doesn’t have the same ring to it as fuck, marry, kill, but shit if I’m not a sucker for rhymes. Let’s do that one.”

“Okay,” Karkat nods, “are you well versed enough in the quadrants or do you need me to refresh your memory?”

“No, I think I got it.” You dismiss. “In terms of this game, at least, I got it. Who wants to go first? Mayor, you want to go first?”

You sit up a bit so you can see the Mayor lying next to Karkat. He shakes his head. You don’t think he’s interested in playing at all.

“You can go first, Dave.” Karkat suggests. “Come on, say some names so we can start.”

“I’m on it, shut up so I can think for a minute will you?” It’s then that you realize you don’t actually know a lot of people. Oh well. “Jade...Terezi....John.”

“Shit. We’re getting personal immediately, huh?” Oh, right, he had crushes on all of those guys at one point. You’d sort of forgotten about all of them besides Terezi. “Fine, I can work with that. Terezi’s in a pretty sweet moirallegiance with Vriska right now, so I guess that takes her out of the running for rail-”

“Wait, you have to keep the person’s current relationships into account?”

“No,” Karkat shakes his head, “I just do. I’ll get back to Terezi. If I had to put either John or Jade into a quadrant...well, I don’t think Jade likes me enough to feel anything but fucking bothered if she has to deal with my hoofbeast shit, so she would probably be a pretty sucky moirail. So that just leaves...John as my moirail? Fuck, what the hell’s with that?”

"Keep going,” you urge, “you haven’t even said what you’re doing with Terezi and Jade yet!”

“Right, right, I’m getting there. Jade and Terezi, Jade and Terezi. Out of the two of them, I’ve known Tez the longest and I’d feel weird about getting into a matespritship with someone I barely know. Not to say that those feelings weren’t there, it was just...adolescent mating fondness. Plus, out of the two of them, Terezi’s the only one who ever gave an indication that she’d want
to...pail...with me.” He stops talking and takes a deep breath, embarrassed by his own explanation. You can practically feel the heat radiating off of him. “I’d nail Jade, pail Terezi, and rail John.”

“Wow,” you laugh, “Karkat, that’s not where I was expecting it to go at all. Is that how you normally play it?”

He turns onto his side so he can look at you, eyebrows knit together in confusion. “What do you mean?”

You decide to lay on your side so you’re facing him, too. “When you were sorting everybody into a relationship box, you tried to keep everybody’s feelings about you into account before you made your final decision. Is that how it’s usually played on Alternia?”

“Fuck if I know. I only played this once before with Eridan.” He shrugs. “Why, is that weird?”

“It’s not weird, it’s just different.” You kind of like it. “When most people play, they just fuck the hottest one, marry the nice, second hottest one, and kill whoever’s left. I guess when you really think about it, it’s sort of bogus because you’re really just making decisions based on the level of blood in your dick.”

Karkat wrinkles his nose in disgust. “How can you measure the blood levels in your human genitalia? That sounds gross.”

“It’s not gross, it’s an erection.” You explain. ”See, what happens is, you see a mighty fine babe just walking down the street, and all of your blood goes south for the winter and fills your dick up with blood until it’s able to stand up by itself and-”

“It stands up when there’s blood in it?” Karkat interrupts. “It inflates? Like a fucking balloon? And you...copulate with that?”

“Karkat, I will have you know, my penis is a fucking balloon. It is a balloon used for the sole purpose of fucking someone else, now if you don’t mind I wasn’t done giving my explanation on how the human penis works. So it stands by itself and-”

“That’s enough.” Karkat waves his hand. “I don’t want to hear anymore about your human anatomy unless I swallowed poison and I need to induce vomiting. Please, for the love of fuck Dave, keep it and your explanation of how it works in your pants where it belongs.”

You roll your eyes. “Okay, prude. You know, one of these days you’re going to have to give me an explanation on how your doohickey works, since apparently mine is so fucking disgusting you can’t even stomach the thought of basic reproductive anatomy. I’m kind of curious now.”

Karkat glares at you. “I’m not giving you a tutorial about how my bulge works.”

“Not even for science? Come on, Karkat, sweet lady science wants to peek on your peen for research purposes. She’s craving some of that weird alien dong you’re packing, Karkat. Now come on, drop trow and make this noble sacrifice for science. She needs that vitamin D, dude, don’t let her down. Expose yourself for science!”

“The only thing I’m exposing is my middle finger to your face.” He sneers at you. “I’m not doing that, not even for science. Fuck science.”

“I think science would like that.”

“Fuck you!” Karkat yells. “And stop staring at my crotch!”
“I’m not.” You insist as Karkat shoves both of his hands between his legs, blocking your view of his crotch entirely. Fuck, this is getting ridiculous. “Karkat, I wasn’t. Dude, listen, it doesn’t matter, okay? You don’t have to tell me anything about it. I don’t give a fuck how your species gives each other fucks. Can we just get on with the game already?”

Karkat nods, but keeps his hands firmly in place. “Same group.”

“What the fuck? No, you have to pick new people!”

“Why?”

“I don’t know, just fucking because is why. I just asked you about that group, ask me a different one.”

“John, Jade, Terezi.”

“You’re not gonna let this go, are you?” You groan.

“Since you’re so against it, no.” He smirks.

“Ugh, fine. Honestly, though that’s a pretty boring thing to do, Karkat. Have your own ideas for once, dude. Be original. I’d probably keep John as rail, because dude’s my best bro and I can’t imagine doing the do with my main dude. I’d probably flip flop Terezi and Jade, though, for pretty much the same reasons you did. I mean, Jade’s never really shown interest in getting it on with me, but come on, who could resist all this, right? So I guess what I’m saying is I’d nail Terezi, pail Jade, and rail John.”

You played a few more rounds of the game with some pretty consistent results. You both agreed that Rose and Kanaya were off limits because neither of them were into dudes at all. Whenever John was mentioned, he was almost always railed, although one or two times Karkat said pailed instead. You always saved your nailed answer for last because even though you told Karkat you understood the quadrants enough to play, you still didn’t have a clear grasp on what it meant to have a kismesis. It wasn’t long before you exhausted all of your alive friends and things got weird.

“Okay, I got one. Kankri, Porrim, and a dead alternate timeline version of you. Go!”

“Oh, fuck, that’s hard. Why the fuck would you put a dead me and Kankri in there? Shit. Porrim seems really nice, I don’t think I would mind being in a moirallegiance with her. But Kankri...fuck, I hate that guy he never shuts his fucking mouth! I’d love to punch him in the face or something, but that feels sort of pitch, and he’s celibate and as much as I hate the guy I don’t want to force him into—”

“Dude, we’ve talked about this. This is all theoretical, it doesn’t really matter.” You interrupt.

“We left Rose and Kanaya out entirely because of their sexual preference.” He counters.

“Oh, fair enough.”

“I think the only quadrant that Kankri would even consider might be pale? Fuck, I don’t know, but I definitely don’t want to pail him because that’s disgusting, he’s my dancestor. Dave, you’re gross. You’re gross for even making me have to think about that, what the fuck is wrong with you?”

You shrug. “I thought this would be a difficult decision. Turns out I was right.”
“I hate any version of me, so I’m fucking nailing myself, no question.” He continues. “So that means I...fuck, I have to pail Porrim.”

“I heard she’s good at that.”

“Yeah, whatever. Fuck you, Dave.” Karkat replies. “Just for that I’m giving you the Mayor, Kankri, and...I don’t know, Rufioh, I guess.”

“Karkat, how dare you drag the Mayor into this!”

“You started it.” He rebukes before twisting around to address the Mayor. “Sorry, Mayor.”

“First things first, I’m definitely not having sex with the Mayor.” You begin. “Oh, fuck, I see what you did there, Karkat. You’re making me decide which way I’d rather have sex with Kankri, you disgusting pervert. I...shit, I gotta fucking pail Rufioh, he’s so fucking cool, we had that awesome game of fidusspawn and he says bangarang and shit. I barely know Kankri but I guess I gotta nail him. Fuck, that’s gross. It’s like nailing a lankier, more annoying version of you, Karkat.”

“Wow, thanks Dave.”

“Don’t mention it, bro.”

Things continued on like that until you once again ran out of options and you were both laying there quietly on the ground just like how you’d started, only several hours had passed and your back hurt now.

“Shit, I think that was everyone.” You say after a futile minute of trying to conjure a new name out of the abyss of your brain.

“Yeah, I think it was.” Karkat agrees.

“The fuck do you mean you think it was? You didn’t remember half those assholes names. Do you know how confused I was when you asked me if I would rather nail Carlos, Carlos, or Carlos? What the hell, man?”

“I’m not good with names.”

“Yeah, no fucking duh.” You snort. “Hey, I just thought of something. You up for maybe a bonus round?”

“That would depend on what the bonus round is.” Karkat replies. He’s trying to act like he doesn’t care, but you can tell he’s intrigued.

“Well, we never actually asked,” you swallow, suddenly aware of how bad this idea is now that you’re saying it out loud, “about each other.”

“So, in this round, you want to ask me who I’d rather nail, pail, or rail if given the choice between you and two other people? Like a normal fucking round except you’re in it for some reason?”

“No,” you clarify, shaking your head, “I was um...thinking...it would just be the one person, and you’d have to choose if you’d rather nail, pail, or rail them. By themselves. No other option.”

“Oh.” He says, and for a moment your heart sinks at such an apathetic response until you see the meaning of your explanation hit him. “Oh. Sure, okay, if...if that’s something you want to do then yeah, we can do that.”
You both go silent, waiting nervously for the other to begin talking and trying very hard not to look at each other. There’s no way in hell either of you are going to start this embarrassing as fuck speech without being prompted. There’s also no way in hell you’re going first.

“Karkat,” you say softly, “it’s your turn to answer.”

“I know.” He nods. He’s already been thinking about how to answer this.

Fuck, you’re nervous. You don’t know if you’ve ever been so nervous for someone’s answer in your life. What is he going to say? What’s it going to mean for your relationship when he finally gives you a response? Why are you putting so much stock on his answer to a dumb game? It’s nothing serious, definitely not something you should be freaking out about.

Your hands are shaking.

Karkat’s staring down at his hands, playing with the sleeves of his sweater. He’s chewing on his lip again as he thinks this question through, clearly just as serious about this as you are. At this point, you’re not sure if that’s a good or bad thing.

He glances up at you, and there’s a thoughtful, worried look in his eyes. Karkat forces his gaze back down to his hands. “Dave, I...” he sighs deeply, “I don’t know how to answer this honestly. You’re my best friend, obviously, but it’s more complicated than that. It feels wrong to finally admit this, because I want to give you a concrete answer, I really do, but I... don’t think there’s a quadrant that perfectly describes how I feel about you.”

He looks back at you imploringly. “I’m sorry. I know that’s not what you wanted to hear.”

“No, that’s...” definitely not what you were expecting. Honestly, you don’t know what you were expecting. “Fine. If that’s really how you feel, it’s perfectly okay. Karkat, you know you don’t have to use quadrants, right? If they don’t work for you?”

“Everybody uses quadrants.” Karkat argues weakly.

“Humans don’t.” You point out.

“Yeah.” He agrees. “Humans don’t. But I’m not a human, Dave, and I like the quadrants.”

“Okay, I get it. You don’t have to stop using the quadrants if you don’t want to, Karkat. Maybe just don’t limit yourself to one quadrant if you don’t have to.”

“Wow. I’ve thought about it before, but it sounds a lot less like a shitty idea now that I’ve heard it from somebody else.” Karkat says, changing the subject, “Speaking of which, you didn’t say how you felt about me yet.”

“You didn’t say how you felt about me yet.” You inch closer to Karkat, so close that you can see his eyes widen with expectation and excitement.

“Do you mind if I...?”

“Go ahead.”

You’re slow, you have no idea how to go about doing this. You bring your hands up to his face, running your thumbs in parallel lines across the soft gray skin of his cheeks. His face is warm under your touch. You bury your fingers in his hair. It’s even thicker than you expected, and surprisingly soft. You pull him closer and press his forehead against yours. His breath is hot against your face.
Then you do it, you finally close whatever distance is left between you two. You’re kissing him. You’re kissing Karkat, and nothing feels real except his mouth against yours. Everything is slow and soft and incredible. Time feels like it’s slowing down to a crawl as you press insistently against him, and Karkat responds in turn.

There’s soft sparks between you both, like lightning bugs lazily floating around you. It’s the slowest electrical current in the universe.

Fuck, you don’t want this to ever end.

But eventually it does end, and there’s nothing you can do about it. There comes a point where you just have to give in and break apart. You don’t want to, but you can feel it happening anyway despite all your wishes against it.

You both separate and spend the next minute just staring at each other, because what the hell are you supposed to say after something like that?

“So...” okay, so that’s what you’re supposed to say after something like that, you guess, “we did that.”

“Yeah.”

“And it was...good, right?”

“Yes.” Karkat says without hesitation. “So...do you think we can do that again sometime?”

“Fuck yeah, we can!” Karkat's excitement is making you excited, too.

“Sometime soon?”

“Dude, I would do it again right fucking now if I wasn’t tired and if I hadn’t just remembered that the Mayor’s here.”

“Oh, fuck.” Karkat’s face is in his hands, apparently he had also forgotten the Mayor’s presence. “I can’t believe we just made the Mayor watch us make out. Holy shit, that’s so fucking embarrassing, I’m so sorry you had to see that, Mayor.”

The Mayor doesn’t seem to mind what happened that much, which is good because you and Karkat are both embarrassed enough for all three of you.

“So, what do we do now?” Karkat asks, sitting up.

“Well,” you prop yourself up to a half sitting position on your elbows, “we could always head back. Put on another movie or something. There’s enough room on the couch for two, if you want.”

He nods. “I’m okay with going back.” He stands up and stretches, stiff from hours laying down on the floor.

You get up, brush dust off of your pajama pants, and start walking towards the hall. You turn around when you realize that he’s not following you. Karkat’s standing where you left him, touching his mouth gingerly.

“Karkat?”

“I was just wondering what this meant,” he says, “for us? What are we now, Dave?”
He’s looking back at you like he expects you to have a real answer to this question. And you guess, when you really think about it, you do.

“I was thinking boyfriends.” You admit. It sounds so right to you, you almost sound confident saying it.

“Boyfriends.” Karkat repeats the word experimentally. “Boyfriends. Yeah, I think I like that.”

“Boyfriends it is, then.” You grin. You’re elated, you’re fucking over the moon about this. “Cool.”

You start walking down the hall, and before you can even so much as mention it, Karkat takes your hand in his and squeezes it tightly. You hold hands all the way back.

Chapter End Notes

you heard it here, folks, Dave and Karkat are bros who like to make out sometimes and stuff.
Thanks for reading this really long chapter, I hope you liked it!
(Sorry if the kiss scene was bad, those are hard)
That's a Rap

Chapter Notes

Sorry about the long wait, everybody! On the bright side, it's another long chapter. This chapter's mostly concerns that part during sleepovers where everybody's just waking up and (I don't know if anybody else experiences it like this, but I sure do) you don't know what you're supposed to do for the rest of the day. Other important things to know about this chapter; the coffee machine sucks, and Vriska does some rapping (which I had some help with from a really awesome friend of mine). Anyway, I hope you like reading it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Your neck is killing you. It doesn’t take a god damn genius to figure out why. You sit up on the couch with a groan and crack your neck in an attempt to work the kink out of it. So far, no dice. How the fuck did you manage to sleep at such a weird angle? You open your eyes, and the reason why becomes clear to you.

The couch and the floor are completely covered with sleeping people. Rose, Kanaya, and Terezi are all on the floor, though you do recall Terezi snoring close to your ear at the end of the movie. You guess you managed to kick her off the couch so you could have more room for yourself. That would explain why she’s laying face down, anyway.

Rose and Kanaya are all cuddled up together next to Terezi with their arms wrapped around each other. They look like the sweetest, most calcium-nub rotting pair you’ve ever laid your bulbs on. They’re not even conscious and they’re still the cutest matesprits you’ve ever seen this side of Karkat’s embarrassing romcoms. They have no right to be this adorable this early. You grit your teeth and have to look away from them. It’s too early in the morning for all of that affectionate shit.

You may have managed to kick Terezi off the couch, but you didn’t get the whole thing to yourself. Dave and Karkat are taking up the other side. Dave’s laying on top of Karkat and looks like he’s practically crushing him under his weight. It doesn’t look comfortable.

Speaking of uncomfortable, your entire body feels stiffer than you’d originally thought possible. Your sleeping position turned out to be worse for more than just your neck. You need to get up and stretch your muscles, but you don’t think you’ll be able to get off the damn couch without waking someone up.

You rouse Terezi with your foot until she grumbles and swats at it absently with her hand.

“What?” She rolls over onto her side so she’s facing you, baring her teeth.

“Oh good, you’re awake.” You say nonchalantly, as if you didn’t just wake her up yourself. “I’m gonna get some coffee. Come with?”

“Get it yourself.” Terezi whines, rolling back onto her stomach. Her voice is muffled by the floor.
“I don’t want to move.”

“Come with me or I’m rolling you out of my way so I can get up and get some myself.” You reply, nudging her with your foot again. “You’re moving either way.”

“Fine. You can roll me, I don’t care. Just bring me back a coffee, would you?”

“No.” You deny, shoving her a couple inches. “Get it yourself or you don’t get it at all.”

“Fuck you, Vriska.”

“Sorry,” you stand up and stretch, “them’s the breaks.”

You take an exaggerated step over Terezi’s body, and she reaches out and grasps your ankle with one hand. She uses your leg as an anchor to pull herself up to a kneeling position. You give her your hand and help her the rest of the way up to her feet.

“Fuck your breaks and lead me to the coffee.” She demands, linking her arm in yours and leaning her weight against you.

You start walking, pretty much dragging Terezi’s tired, lazy ass all the way over to the nutrition block. You wrench your hand out of her tight grip so you can get your hands on some cups. Behind you, Terezi plops herself down into a chair.

“Hey, Terezi, get your ass over here and make yourself useful for once.” You nudge the cupboard closed with your elbow. Terezi doesn’t so much as budge from her seat, so you drag the chair closer with your foot. Terezi holds on to the sides to keep herself in place.

“What’s the big idea here, Serket? You trying to knock me off?” She accuses. “Well, joke’s on you. It takes way more than that to knock me off my game. You better educate yourself, a legislacerator is always on the alert. I sleep with one bulb open.”

“Didn’t look like it to me.” You reply, rolling your eyes. “Both bulbs were screwed shut and were smashed into the floor from my vantage point. Not like it would matter anyway, since you can’t see for shit.”

“You know what I meant.” She punches you in the thigh. “I don’t need eyes when my nostrils never close!”

“You mouth doesn’t do much closing either.” You take the cups and put them on Terezi’s horns. They stay on perfectly when you let go.

“Vriska, what the hell?”

“I needed a cup holder.” You reply with a shrug. “Are you gonna get off that chair or do I have to push it all the way to the coffee machine?”

Terezi folds her legs up onto the chair and grins. “Do you even have to ask?”

You don’t even know why you bother giving her options.

You get behind the chair and push it in front of you with all your might over to the machine. The
sound of wood scraping against the floor is grating against your auricular sponges. You have no idea how any of those guys haven’t woken up yet, they must be some damn heavy sleepers.

You halt at the coffee machine and pluck one of the cups off of her horns and shoving it under the spout. Terezi’s humming to herself and tapping a rhythm out with her claw on the other cup.

“I thought you wanted coffee?”

“I do.” She nods. “But I also thought you might want to deliver that slam poetry you promised me earlier.”

“What, now?” You reach over to grab the cup, but Terezi dodges your hands and continues tapping.

She’s cackling. “Yes, now! Go ahead, Vriska, slam some poetry at me! Come on, it’ll be funny!”

“And just what the fuck is so funny about me doing slam poetry?” You demand. “I can turn a verse just as well as the next guy.”

“Fine, you’re right. I’m sure you would be a fantastic slam poet.” Terezi replies, humoring you. “But we’ll never know that for sure if you don’t slam anything.”

“What does it matter if anyone else knows? I know.”

“How else are we going to get the coffee machine to work if you don’t slam some poetry at it? We’ll be here all fucking night if you don’t suck it up and start spitting your flow at it, Vris! Come on, show that dumb machine what you’ve got!”

Well, fuck. You’re running out of excuses not to do it. Terezi makes a pretty persuasive argument, but you’re really not up for it right now. “I don’t even have a beat.”

“You want a beat? I’ll give you a beat.” She starts beatboxing and continues to tap against the cup to keep time.

Shit. Guess you have no choice now. You take a deep breath and hope nobody wakes up anytime soon. You doubt this is going to go well for you.

“Any time now.” Terezi goads.

“Okay, just give me a second, fuck, is that so much to ask for?”

“Yes.”

“Fuck, fine. I’m starting. You ready?” You take another deep breath and hope this doesn’t suck as much as you think it will.

“I... am a literal god of light” so far, so good.

“I’m the scourge of the universe

And the best part is how unreal I smoothly spit my verse” Nailed it.
Terezi stops beatboxing and gives you a dirty look. “That sounded a lot like something Dave would say, Vriska.” She says. “You can’t steal other people’s lines.”

“Shut up, yes I fucking can.” You reply defensively.

“No,” She shakes her head. “If I wanted to hear human slam poetry I would have just woken Dave up. I wanted Alternian Slam poetry. This is just disappointing and sad.”

“What the fuck do you want from me?”

“Something original”

“Holy fuck, Terezi,” You sigh. She’s asking for too much here.

“I’m a thief!!!!!!!

I take things, it’s what I do

Be it your rhymes your shit your loot

I’ll take it as mine, no dispute.

I don’t care how much you fight

You’ll succumb to my boot,

When it’s shoved up your wastechute.

You’ll have no choice but surrender your booty

I’ll take it all for my hoard

I don’t care how much you hate

I got hate in spades

Motherfucker, you think I’m that easy to get?

You want me you gotta earn my respect

But you won’t

I have no interest in your unwanted attention

I’ll just take your feelings

And lord them

Over your stupid lack of comprehension

Squash them into a ball and stomp on them til there’s nothing left
But….” You search for a metaphor, “nothing, I guess.”

“Um…"

Terezi stops again. “Vriska.”

“What?”

“Vriska.”

“What?”

“You’re floundering. Hurry up and end it already.”

“Okay, okay, I think I might have one thing left and then I’ll be done. This is stupid, anyway.” You take one final deep breath and continue.

“Fuck you, you want to fuck with me? I’ll stomp you into the floor until you choke on your own blood.

This ain’t no debate.

I’m a fucking god, bitch,

All you are is dead weight.”

Boom. You fucking did it, you’re done. You slammed the fuck out of that poetry.

Terezi taps a few more times at the cup and then falls into silence. “Wow.”

“I know, right?” You smirk, pleased with yourself. “I’m a fucking genius at slam poetry! So, what did you think? Did that blow your pan or what?”

“Well, they were definitely verses. And they were very much slammed. Repeatedly. Into the ground.”

“Fuck you, those were good!”

“Eh. They were okay. I was just hoping for something better after spending all that time waiting. I guess I set my expectations too high.” She shrugs. She has a big fucking grin on her face, so you know she’s just messing with her. You still don’t appreciate it. You flick her horn, and she sticks her tongue out at you. She cocks her head to the side. “Is the coffee machine not doing anything?”

You turn to look at it. You’d forgotten about it while you were busy trying to do impromptu slam poetry. So far, the cup’s still completely empty. The machine’s not even making a sound.

“Holy shit,” Terezi cackles, “you broke it! Vriska, your mad rhymes broke the coffee machine!”

“Can it, no they didn’t!” You deny furiously. “It’s always stupid like that, you know that.”

“Yeah.” Terezi nods with a sigh, uncurling her legs and slouching so she’s practically laying on
the floor. She grins mischievously as an idea occurs to you. “You know what that means, Vriska?”

“What?” You ask warily.

“You’ve gotta keep going.” She says excitedly. “You have to do another slam poem.”

“And why the fuck would I do that?” You ask, raising an eyebrow.

“Because the deal was you would slam until the machine worked. It’s not working yet, so you have to keep going.”

You don’t remember agreeing to that, but that sounds like you alright. It’s not like you can get yourself out of this one, either, Terezi’s definitely going to hold you to this whether you want to do it or not.

“Come on, I’ll give you another beat.” She starts tapping on the side of the cup again.

“Well, if you’re going to beg for it, I guess I could humor you.” You smirk. “Just this once.”

You nod along to the beat Terezi’s laying down for you and try to get the feel of it. You close your eyes.

“Any time while we’re still on this rock would be nice.” Terezi says, interrupting your train of thought.

“Great, Terezi, I was about to start, but you made me lose my thought!” You snap at her.

“Yeah, I’m sure that’s what happened.” Terezi replies sarcastically.

“It is!” You insist. “Now why don’t you shut that big mouth of yours and let me think!”

“Alright, fine. Just hurry up and recover that lost thought so you can fix the machine with your sick beats already.” She taps faster against the ceramic and resumes beatboxing.

You get back to nodding along and trying to figure out when to begin while also trying to will the coffee machine to hurry up and do it’s damn job already. Unfortunately, your powers don’t seem to extend to faulty meteor technology.

Terezi stops again. “You don’t have to do it if you can’t think of anything, Vriska.”

“No, I got it! Genius takes time, Terezi. Just give me a second.”

“That’s a total load. It’s fine if you can’t come up with anything right now. We can just stand here in silence and wait for the thing to work.” She takes the cup off her horn and hands it to you. “Here, I’m going to lay back down. Bring me my coffee when it’s ready, okay?”

“Wait!!!!!!!!! Wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait.” You shove the cup back at her.

“I have more, I can do better, I have more. I’m...uh...I’m...”

“You’re what? Face it, Vriska, you got nothing.” Terezi taunts, laughing at you as she starts
tapping against the cup again.

“Oh, I got something alright.” You respond. “Shut up and listen to this, it’s gonna rock your socks off.”

You clear your throat.

“Gonna slap you so high up the hemospectrum you’ll be drooling cerulean

A quick laid wham bam fuck you, ma’am from your deadly neighborhive Spider-Man-"

“You would bring up Spider-Man, you nerd.”

“Fuck you, I’m not done.”

“Whatever, it’s not like the coffee machine’s going to be working any time soon.” She points out.

“But fine, keep going. I won’t interrupt you.”

“There’s not a spot of rust on my pan,

No sir, not like all you other fuckers who should just learn how to

Can

It

By which I mean your god-damn mouth, take a hint

Shove a lid on your shit running machine

Stop letting your filth all rise up and sit there to fester and coagulate

Around our feet like the grossest fly bait—”

“Holy shit, Vriska, shut the fuck up!” Dave snaps. You turn around and see him sitting up with one arm slung over the back of the couch. “That was the worst rapping I’ve ever heard in my life. It was so bad that the gods of rap woke me from my deep slumber so I could put a stop to your cruel and unusual crimes against lyric and rhymes. It’s too early for me to come over and try to battle you or whatever, so just please, for the love of god, promise me you’ll never spit anything even resembling a flow ever again.”

“Nobody asked for your opinion, Dave!” You yell back louder than you probably should.

“Well yeah, nobody ever asks for an expert’s opinion, that’s the thing about being an expert, you get to criticize the hell out of everybody and they don’t even give a fuck. They just go ‘thank you, sir, more please, sir. May I kiss your ass, sir?’ So of course you didn’t ask for my fucking opinion. I just wanted to give you some much needed advice to aid you in the craft. That advice being this: give it up right fucking now unless you’re trying to use it as a torture device. My ears are bleeding.”

“Why don’t you stuff a sock in it, asshole!” You retort indignantly. “For your information, Terezi practically begged me to perform that slam poetry for her.”
“Yeah.” Terezi agrees. “And she’s not allowed to stop until the coffee machine works. And it hasn’t yet, so you better get to it, Vriska.”

"With pleasure."

“Oh please, fuck no.” Dave whines, covering his ears with his hands.

You’re about to start up on a third verse when a gurgling noise behind you makes you pause. The coffee machine finally decided to work.

“Yes! Finally!” Terezi snatches the now full and steaming cup of coffee and replaces it with the empty one. She gets up and starts heading back to the couch.

“Hey! Where do you think you’re going with that?” You demand, reaching for the cup of coffee.

Terezi keeps it away from you. “I’m going to drink it, dumbass. What else would I do with it?”

“That’s my cup,” You say, trying to take the cup from her. "hand it over."

“Doesn’t look like your cup to me.” She dodges you easily and takes a long, noisy sip from it. “Besides, you can just wait for the other cup to fill, can’t you? Don’t be an impatient ass.”

She strolls over to the couch and plops down next to Dave. You turn around and wait for the machine to start working again.

“Jesus, that smells good.” You hear Dave sigh. “I want coffee.”

“Sorry, coolkid, this one’s mine. If you really want some you’re gonna have to get up and get it yourself.”

“Get up? Shit, I don’t wanna get up. Vriska!”

That one’s directed at you. You turn around and face him, crossing your arms over your chest. “What?”

“Make me coffee.”

“After all that shit you said about my slam poetry?” You scoff as the machine begins to sputter and fill the room with the bitter smell of coffee. “Yeah, I don’t think so. Get it yourself, you lazy asshole.”

You take your coffee and sit down on the floor near Terezi. Dave groans and flops back down so his face is in Karkat’s shirt. It doesn’t look like a comfortable position for either of them. Not that you’re going to question Dave about it. You sip at your coffee, and it burns your mouth immediately.

Dave starts poking Karkat in the face. “Karkat. Karkat, wake up.”

Karkat grumbles and pushes Dave’s hand away, but Dave persists.

“What’s all this noise about?” Rose mumbles, sitting up.
“Dave wants coffee but he won’t get up to go get it.” Terezi says.

“He’s being a lazy piece of shit.” You add.

Kanaya yawns. “What else is new?”

“That’s harsh, Kanaya.” Dave says, still poking Karkat’s face. “Karkat, seriously, wake the fuck up.”

“Dave, you don’t even have to technically get up, you’re a god tier, you can just float over to the coffee machine. Your feet don’t have to touch the ground at all.” Kanaya points out. “So of course you refusing to get up and instead waking everyone else is definitely cause to brand you a lazy piece of shit. A lazy piece of anything, really.”

“Yeah, well, fuck you too, I guess.” Dave rubs his hand across Karkat’s face. “Karkat!”

“Ow, what? Stop hitting me. What? The fuck do you want?” Karkat demands, swatting Dave’s hand away.

“Get me coffee.”

“Get off me first.”

“No.”

“Then no.” Karkat clamps his hand over Dave’s mouth. “Shut up and let me sleep, douche face.”

“Speaking of coffee,” Rose yawns, “I think I may get myself a cup. Kanaya, would you like anything?”

“No, that’s fine.” Kanaya replies with a shrug. “I don’t like coffee.”

“It doesn’t have to be coffee, I could get you something else if you’d prefer.” Rose says, standing up and stretching.

“I wouldn’t mind a cup of scalding leaf juice.”

Dave wrenches Karkat’s hand off his mouth. “A cup of what?”

“Tea, Dave.” Rose clarifies. “I don’t think I would mind a cup, myself. I’ll put a kettle on.”

Terezi hands you her coffee and winks. You accept it without comment.

“Wait, Rose! Could you-”. Terezi pounces on Dave from behind and covers his mouth with her hand.

“I’m sorry, Dave. What were you saying?” Rose asks.

“I believe he was saying you should make that green one.” Kanaya replies.

“The green tea.”
“Yes, that one. Whatever it’s called.” Kanaya nods. “If you wouldn’t mind.”

“Not at all.” Rose smiles. “I’ll get right on it. Thank you for the suggestion, Dave.”

She slinks away to the nutrition block.

Terezi releases Dave, and you return her coffee to her.

Dave rubs at his mouth and shoots her a glare. “Terezi, what the hell?”

“The quiet was nice while it lasted.” Karkat sighs, sitting up. “If I’m going to suffer through another night on this rock dealing with all of your insufferable bullshit, I may as well get myself a cup of coffee first.”

“Are you going to get me a cup?”

“Only if you get the fuck off of me.” Karkat replies, pushing Dave off of him.

Dave falls off of the couch and lands on the floor between you and Kanaya. “Ow.”

Karkat gets up off the couch and drags his feet over to the nutrition block. You get up onto the couch and take a seat next to Terezi, stretching your legs out to cover the whole couch.

“Vriska, what are you doing?” Kanaya asks.

“Claiming this couch.” You explain. “It’s official Scourge territory now. All you losers can have the floor.”

“Not that I really care about chilling on the floor, but why?” Dave asks. “There’s enough room on that thing for two more asses, three if we really squeeze our cheeks and shit. Technically only one person has to sit on the floor. Y’all are just being rude assholes.”

“I can’t help but agree with Dave on this one.” Kanaya adds. “There’s definitely enough room on this couch for several more people. I would just like to remind you, Vriska, that Rose and I slept on the floor while Dave and Karkat took up a large portion of the couch for themselves.”

“Hey, you chose to sleep there.” Dave says pointedly. “That’s not my fault.”

“I chose to sleep there because there wasn’t enough room on the couch for all of us, as previously stated.” Kanaya retorts.

“You had pillows and shit, you had the same experience as sleeping on the couch, except probably a hell of a lot less cramped. I mean, look at all this fucking room you had to spread yourself out. You had the entire god damn floor, Kanaya, I had five feet of cushion.”

“I’ve never heard anyone describe Karkat as five feet of cushion before,” Kanaya replies, “but I can assure you without a doubt that your position was nowhere near comparable to lying on the cold ground for several hours.”

You clear your throat. “Can it, you two.”
They stop and turn to face you, waiting for you to continue. You look over at Terezi briefly, poking her discreetly to let her know that you want her opinion. She nods, and you interpret it to be an unspoken agreement with your thought.

“Kanaya, I grant you permission to come aboard.”

You curl your legs under you, and Kanaya comes up to join you on the couch, leaving Dave alone on the floor.

“Wow, fuck you guys.” He says, shaking his head. “I see how it is. Only girls are allowed on the couch? Well, get a load of this. The floor is for boys. Only guys are allowed on the floor now. You can’t have it. Only me, Karkat, the Mayor, and that clown dude are allowed on the floor anymore. Not just this floor, any floor. Hardwood, carpet, bathroom, dance floor, you can’t touch any of them with your lady toes. For us, the floor will still be the floor, but for you, the floor’s lava. Got it.”

“That’s quite the extreme and childish reaction to not having permission on the couch, Dave.” Kanaya says. “How exactly are you going to enforce this floor is lava rule? What are you going to do to stop us from touching the ground?”

“Believe me, Kanaya, you don’t want to know.” Dave warns.

Kanaya looks at him, takes her foot, wiggles her toes for him to see, and plants her foot firmly on the ground next to him.

“Well,” Kanaya says, “would you look at that, Dave. It seems a rebellion is afoot.”

“Damn it, this calls for drastic measures.” Dave lays down on top of her foot. “Take that.”

“Take what? This?” Kanaya takes her foot out from under Dave and puts it on top of him.

“No, not that.” Dave replies, “But whatever, fuck this. Fuck the couch, fuck the floor. I don’t even care.”

“I don’t think it’s wise to fuck the floor, or anything right now for that matter.” Kanaya replies. “We don’t have any buckets.”

“No, we do.” Terezi chimies in. “There was that one that hit Karkat in the face before we left, remember?”

You can’t help but laugh. “That was classic!”

Terezi nods. “It really was.”

“Right, it appears we do have a bucket on the premises.” Kanaya says. “In that case, Dave, feel free to fuck whatever you wish. Though I would prefer you do it someplace more private, like your own block, perhaps?”

“Jesus, Kanaya. I know you’re kidding, or I hope to shit your kidding, but your tone of voice sounds so fucking serious that I almost think you mean it.”

“Oh, I do. The last thing I want to see is you performing indecent acts with the floor.”
There’s a loud banging going on behind you. You all turn your heads and watch Karkat hit the coffee machine.

“Why the fuck won’t this worthless piece of shit work?” He yells.

“Did you try hitting it?” Kanaya asks.

“That’s not gonna help at all,” you say, “if you really want it to work faster, you have to rap at it.”

“Rap?”

“You know, that thing Dave does a lot,” Terezi explains, “slam poetry.”

“Fuck no, I’m not doing that.” Karkat objects, grimacing, “I’m not performing a fucking slam poem just so I can maybe get a cup of caffeinated liquid ass faster.”

“That description completely encapsulates my distaste for coffee.”

“Kanaya, you know you don’t have to drink it straight up, right?” Dave says, “People put other shit in it, usually.”

“Do they?”

“Yeah, they put in sugar and cream sometimes, I think.” He replies. “Or milk or whatever.”

“Milk?” You wrinkle your nose. “Your species actually drank that stuff?”

“Not everyone, and not all the time.” He shrugs. “I never really liked the shit. But for the most part, yeah, lots of people drank milk. At least where I’m from. What, is this the part where you tell me that only weirdos on Alternia drank milk?”

“The only troll I can even remember drinking milk was Equius.” You say. “He got it from his lusus.”

“I never drank it myself,” Terezi admits, “but it never sounded appealing.”

“Wait, when you say he got it from his lusus, you don’t mean...?”

“He got it from his lusus. There’s not a doubt in my pan that Equius didn’t squeeze those fucking teats for all they were worth until they ejaculated just enough of that frothy white shit to fill his cup all the way and drain it in one gulp.” Karkat says. “He was probably sweating the whole time, too. Nasty fucker.”

“Equius? That’s the horse guy, right?”

“Yeah, that’s him.” You nod.

“Figures. I’ve seen him in a couple dream bubbles. He seemed like a weirdo.”

“He is a weirdo.” Karkat agrees. “But he’s definitely not the worst troll I’ve ever met.”
“Karkat, how’s that coffee going?” You ask, smugly drinking from your own cup of coffee.

He punches the coffee machine again. “It isn’t.”

“Face it, Karkat, you either have to perform some sick beats for the coffee machine or stand there and try to be patient for something that might never happen.” You smirk.

“I refuse to grovel to this junky rust machine and recite scathing poetry for its amusement.” He says stubbornly.

“Then you’re shit out of luck.” Terezi grins, and the two of you bump mugs. “That’s how we got ours.”

“No, I’m not doing it.” Karkat pauses for a second before calling over his shoulder. “Dave!”

“What?” He yells back.

“Do you want to come over here and rap at the coffee machine for me?”

“Sorry, bro, I can’t do that.” He replies. “It’s not something I can turn on and off at will. I gotta wait for the muse to come and strike me with something hot so I can drop it like all the pimps of old used to do in their cribs, man. You can’t expect me to come over there and just start spitting some delirious shit like that. I can’t abuse this talent by wasting it on procuring what you literally called cups of caffeinated liquid ass. The muse may never come and bless me with dope rhymes anymore if she finds out I’m using it for selfish purposes. The gods may no longer smile down upon me and whisper sweet beats in my ear if I went through with what you’re suggesting. Nah, man. Can’t do it. Sorry, bro, you’re on your own.”

“Okay, that’s it.” Karkat throws his hands up in the air exasperatedly. “We’re having tea!”

Rose exits the nutrition block with two steaming mugs. “There’s enough left for the both of you if you’ve really given up.”

Kanaya scoots over closer to you so Rose has room to sit on the couch. Rose hands Kanaya her mug and sits down beside her.

“Oh, I do give up. I surrender. I’m going to wave my fucking defeat flag in the air for all to witness how I, Karkat Vantas, am unable to hold my own against a heap of malfunctioning wires and beat up scrap metal. I give up! This piece of shit has bested me, I can no longer take this anymore. I’ve leaked more fluids in my twenty minutes standing here than this machine has our entire time on this fucking rock. And yet, between this literal piece of junk and myself, I have proven myself to be the more obsolete of the two. I don’t care anymore! I-”

The machine makes a gurgling noise, and you can hear the coffee splashing into the mugs. Karkat closes his mouth and shuts up for the first time in his life. He picks up the two mugs and proceeds to grumble some shit you don’t care about under his breath on his way back over. He sits down on the floor next to Dave and hands him his mug.

“Finally!” Dave takes the mug and immediately takes a drink and frowns. “This tastes like ass.”

“Yeah, no shit.” Karkat rolls his eyes and takes a sip from his own mug, grimacing. “I didn’t call it liquid ass for nothing.”
“Maybe you should have given up and drank tea instead.” Rose says. “I can honestly say one hundred percent that this doesn’t taste like ass at all.”

“I refuse to drink that.” Dave says, shaking his head. “Not my style, Rose, you know that. Totally goes against my brand.”

“Yes, of course. Tea is very anti-Strider. How could I forget?”

“I might need some to wash this burnt shit taste out of my mouth when I’m done.” Karkat says as he takes another drink.

“And you’re welcome to do that, Karkat. As long as it doesn’t go against your brand.”

“I think Dave’s the only idiot here who prescribes to having a brand.”

”Y’all wish you had a brand.” Dave retorts. “Obviously none of you are cool enough to have any of your interests trademarked.”

“Trademark this, Dave.” You flip him off.

“Okay, just give me a minute to find a pen.” Dave replies, completely unphased by your middle finger.

Dave doesn’t move, and it doesn’t take long to figure out that he doesn’t intend to do anything right now. Apparently his laziness today knows no bounds. Not that you’re doing anything that can’t be classified as lazy yourself. No one’s really doing anything except sitting around.

You finish your coffee and debate getting a second cup. You don’t know if it’s worth it with the machine only working at half assed capacity. You definitely don’t want a cup of scalding leaf juice. Mostly you just want to leave and get out of these pajamas and do something. Which brings a different question to mind.

“When exactly does this party end?” You ask. “What happens next? We already did the sleeping part.”

“That’s a good question.” Rose nods. “I can’t speak from experience, as I’ve never attended one myself, but I think at this point was usually happens is the host makes breakfast, everyone eats and gets dressed, and then eventually everyone goes their own separate ways.”

“Yeah, that sounds about right.” Dave agrees.

“If you’re really that anxious for this party to end, I suppose we could skip the breakfast portion. Assuming everyone else is okay with that, of course.”

There’s some nods and mumbled agreement from everyone else.

“Alright. If that’s the case, then Kanaya and I had one last thing we wanted to do before the party officially ended.” She stands up and gestures for everyone to follow her.

Rose leads all of you down the hall and back to her fort.
“Kanaya and I thought, since this party calls the end of the official end of the game, that this would be a good time to return the flags we took to everyone.”

She and Kanaya both disappeared into the fort, and you and everybody else wait outside of it.

“I found that pen I was looking for.” Dave says.

“You’re not trademarking my finger, Dave.” You reply, flipping him off again.

“Oh, yes I am.” Dave reaches over and tries to jab your finger with the pen, but you’re quick to pull your hand away.

Terezi grasps your wrist tightly and holds it in place. “Terezi, what the fuck? What are you doing?”

“Helping.” She says, shrugging. “Go for it, Dave.”

“You don’t have to tell me twice.” Dave reaches over and takes your middle finger in his hand and draws on it. “Okay, you can let her go now.”

Terezi lets go of your hand, and you examine your now drawn on finger. There’s a TM written on it.

“The hell is this?”


Rose and Kanaya come out of the fort, their arms full of junk.

“I took good care of Pyralspite.” Kanaya says, handing over the dragon toy to her. “And your bag of eight sided dice should be fine, too, Vriska.”

“Great.” You take the bag from her, it feels suspiciously lighter than you remember. Whatever, it’s probably nothing. “See you guys around.”

You and Terezi leave the fort, carrying your returned loot with you. “So what do you want to do now?”

You twirl around your bag of dice and consider your options. Your neck is still sore. You rub at it with your other hand. “Well, now that we have Pyralspite and my dice bag, I say a celebratory flarp session is in order.”

“Yeah!” Terezi agrees excitedly. “Our recent flarp sessions have felt off without having Pyralspite with me. But before we do that, can I get another cup of coffee first?”

“Sure, why not?” You shrug. “But you’re doing the slam poetry this time.”

Chapter End Notes
Thanks for reading this chapter :)

You close the book in your lap with a thud and lay it down beside you on the floor. You hadn’t realized just how close to the end you were when you started reading a few hours ago and decided to power through the rest of the book while you still felt the urge to.

“Well,” you sigh, stretching your arms over your head, “that concludes our exploration of human literature.”

“For today, right?” Kanaya asks, looking up from her sketchbook. “There’s no way that’s the end of the series. And what about all of your species other rainbow drinker novels? That surely can’t be all the lore your species had concerning them.”

“You’re right, Kanaya, it certainly wasn’t.” You reply. “However, it was the only lore I managed to salvage before our planet’s destruction. So for all intents and purposes, Stephenie Meyers’ Twilight Saga is all we have in terms of human vampire mythos. I’m sorry there isn’t more human literature for you to consume on the subject. Or any more human literature, for that matter.”

“So that was really the last of it?” She reaches past you and takes the book in her hands, laying her sketchbook down on the floor. “That’s disappointing. I was looking forward to reading more of your human literature. Are you sure there isn’t any more?”

“Not unless you want me to read you some of Dave’s most recent Sweet Bro and Hella Jeff panels.”

“No thank you, I think I’ll pass.” Kanaya declines as she flips through the book.

You lay down on the floor next to her. “I don’t blame you for that.”

Kanaya pats her lap. “I don’t think the floor is the best place to be laying down, Rose. Why don’t you come here?”

The floor’s not actually that uncomfortable, but like hell you’re going to pass up a chance to lay your head down on Kanaya’s lap. That’s every girlfriend’s dream.

You crawl over and lay your head on her lap. “Of course, all this really means is that you can read some of your species books to me now. I’ve been meaning to learn how to read Alternian, anyway.”

“How are you going to learn it if I’m the one reading it to you?” You can feel Kanaya’s fingers combing through your hair. You’re glad you listened to that little voice in your head that told you brushing your hair today was a good idea. “Alternian is a very difficult language, Rose.”

“So is English, but you seemed to pick up on it with ease.” You point out. “Plus, you forget, I have the gift of gab.”

She’s twirling a lock of your hair between her fingers. “I’m still not certain what that means.”

“Yeah,” you sigh contentedly as you relax. Kanaya’s hand playing idly in your hair is amazingly calming, “me neither.”
“Do you really think this gift of gab thing will help you learn Alternian faster?”

“It couldn’t hurt.” You shrug. “It’ll give us something to do, at the very least.”

There hasn’t been much to do since the game of capture the flag Vriska orchestrated ended, not that you were very involved with that to begin with. You really don’t mind not having anything to do, aside from your strategy meetings. Those have also been winding down to a close recently. You have no idea what you’re going to do with all that extra time when they’re finally finished. Practice, you suppose. But in the meantime...

“You never did show me any of those rainbow drinker novels you were so interested in, Kanaya.” You continue, folding your hands over your stomach for lack of anything better to do with them.

“I’m...less interested in them now.” She admits, her fingers pausing. You can feel a pin prick of pressure where her claws are on your head. “After my transformation, I realized just how romanticized and inaccurate those novels are. In my opinion, there’s nothing overtly romantic about this situation.”

“Oh. I’m sorry, Kanaya. I didn’t know that.” You reach your hand up to her face, but pause before making contact. The gesture you’re going for is almost completely pale in nature, and you would like her consent before going ahead with it. Kanaya leans her face into your hand. Her cheek is warm and soft on your palm. “I wish you would have told me about that sooner, I wouldn’t have made you sit through all four Twilight books.”

Kanaya chuckles and puts the book down so her other hand is free. “It’s okay, I wanted to learn more about your vampires. Having you read stories about them to me only piqued my interest further.”

She holds your hand in place and kisses it. Your face is unexpectedly burning. You don’t think you’re ever going to get used to this sort of thing. “Kanaya—”

“Sorry, was that too weird?” She releases your hand and smiles sheepishly, her face tinged green.

“No.” You’re already blushing at maximum capacity, yet you can still feel the blood rushing towards your face. “It’s not weird at all.”

You remove your hand from her and stare at it. There’s a black kiss mark on it, a smudged imprint of Kanaya’s lips on your hand. You bring it down to you and kiss it.

The flustered look Kanaya gives you is enough to tell you that that was too much. The way your heart is pounding in your chest explains that it was also too much for you, too. Your face just keeps getting hotter and hotter, it’s embarrassing.

Your hand feels around on the floor looking for something you can hide your face with when your fingers stumble across Kanaya’s sketchbook. You’re certain she won’t mind you glancing through it so you can block her view of your face as it cools off and your blood returns to its rightful place. You turn your face away from her so you’re laying on your side and begin flipping through her sketchbook, holding it close to you so it obscures your face. Kanaya’s hand is still on top of your head, motionless. You think she’s fully aware of what you’re doing, you’re not even staying on the pages long enough to really look at the designs. That’s probably the only reason she’s okay with you doing this.

All of the clothing designs you do look at are very nice. Kanaya has quite the eye for color and design.
“This one is very pretty.” You say, pausing your page turning and pointing at a green and pink sundress.

“Thank you,” Kanaya replies. Her fingers twitch absently in your hair. “I was thinking I would make it after the game ends and everything is settled.”

“Why wait that long?” You ask, flipping the page. Everything on this one is also very good. “We have time.”

“Yes, but not that much time.” She explains. “I’m not certain about the time frame I would need in order to make this on top of everything else I plan on making before we arrive at our destination. I think it’s best I save this one for later.”

“Everything else? What else did you plan on making?” Your blood has retreated back to your veins once again, so you no longer have any qualms about propping yourself up on an elbow and looking up at her.

“Not much. Just some things.” She leans over you and flips a few pages. “Mostly these, if I ever get around to it.”

You look at the pages she’s indicated. The outfits are a lot less fancy and detailed but seem a lot more practical than what you were looking at before, which is slightly disappointing.

“Why would you waste your time making these?” If there’s only so much time left, why doesn’t she just spend it making something she would actually enjoy wearing?

“Because if I don’t make these for them then they’ll just keep wearing those old clothes and I don’t think I can take that for much longer.” She groans. “Terezi and Karkat have been wearing the same clothes for a whole sweep already! I don’t even know if they’ve ever washed them. They need new clothes, Rose! They can’t meet up with everybody how they are right now! Karkat especially, his are getting a bit too snug in some areas and I don’t think he’s noticed. Or if he has noticed he hasn’t bothered to do anything about it.”

“Okay, I get it now.” You laugh. “You just don’t want to look bad in front of all the new people.”

“First impressions are important.” She grumbles, miffed at her own transparency.

“Yes, but they aren’t everything.” You counter. “I seem to recall that we didn’t have a good start ourselves, and now look where we are.”

Kanaya nods. “You make a good point, there. However, I’m going to disregard your point and make the clothes anyway.”

“Okay.” You shrug. “If that’s how you want to spend the rest of your time, then that’s fine. I actually think it’s very sweet you want to make new clothes for your friends.”

“Thank you.”

“Maybe I could practice reading Alternian out loud while you’re working on that.” You suggest.

“I thought you wanted me to read out loud to you this time?”

“Well, yes, but if you’re busy doing something else then that’s fine. I’ve always been pretty good at teaching myself things. I think I should be able to figure it out.”
“Oh.” Her fingers abandon your hair and brush your cheek softly. “Then yes, that would be nice. I would like that.”

“That’s good.” You’re flipping through her sketchbook out of sheer curiosity now. “When were you planning on getting started.”

“Hopefully soon. Within the next week or so.” She says, continuing to stroke your cheek. Her touch tingles softly. “Of course, I’m going to have to find a way to get their measurements first.”

“Couldn’t you just ask them to let you measure them?” You ask. Something catches your eye and you stop flipping.

“Well, yes I suppose I could. But then they’ll know what I’m doing and where’s the surprise in that?” She shrugs. “I’m sure I’ll figure something out.”

“Kanaya, what’s this?” You point at a particularly well drawn sketch. “Is it what I think it is?”

“What’s what?” She peaks over your shoulder. “Nothing. That’s nothing. Here, I’ll just take that.”

Kanaya reaches over you to grab the sketchbook, but you pick it up before she can get to it and roll off of her. You stand up and hold the book close. “Kanaya, is this me as a troll?”

Kanaya rises to her feet stiffly. “Maybe. Why?”

“This is so cute! Look at my horns! And my shirt!” You’re gushing, you know you are, but you can’t resist. “You made me a sign and everything!”

“You weren’t supposed to see that.” She replies, embarrassed. Kanaya holds out her hand. “Can I have it back?”

“Of course.” You close the sketchbook and hand it back to her. “I did like it, Kanaya. The shirt especially.”

Her eyes are to the floor, her face bright green. “Thanks.”

“Do you think, when all of this is done...” You have to stop for a moment, that’s such a strange thing to think about. It’s been so long. “...do you think you could make a shirt like that for me?”

Kanaya looks back up at you, surprised. She doesn’t say anything, and you wonder if you said something wrong.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to, of course.” You rectify.

“No, no I would like to.” Kanaya shakes her head slowly. “I just can’t believe you would want me to.”

“Why wouldn’t I want you to?”

“Because...it’s a clearly Alternian design.” She holds the sketchbook close to her chest. “This symbol is a prominent part of our- my- culture. I know there’s so much of your own species culture that needs preserving, are you really so sure you’re okay with taking on part of mine?”

“Kanaya, of course I’m okay with that.” You take one of her hands in both of yours. It’s so warm. “I know how important your culture is to you, and honestly there’s not really a lot of my own culture I’m concerned about.” You pull her down to you and kiss her softly. “I want to learn and
participate in as much of your culture as I possibly can. That is, if you’ll have me.”

She kisses you back, and her mouth is sweet and warm and soft. A honey soaked sunrise after years and years of nothing but the dark. Your eyes are closed, but you feel like you can finally see and feel the light, and it’s beautiful and wonderful and all you’ve ever wanted.

Kanaya’s sketchbook drops to the floor and her hand is at your waist. You let go of her other hand and encircle her neck, pulling her even closer to you. The space between you is almost nonexistent.

You can feel her fangs poking your bottom lip gingerly. It’s enough that you can feel them nipping sharply against your mouth but not enough to break the skin. You bite back.

Kanaya shivers and grips your hips harder, her claws are poking through your god tier pajamas and pricking skin. Your nails are too blunt to return the gesture in full, but you manage to bring your hands up to her horns and stroke them. It doesn’t do anything for her, but the warm, smooth texture feels pleasant on your fingers.

Then, slowly, her mouth drifts. She leaves a trail from your lips to your chin and all the way down to your neck. You run your fingers through her hair and plant a kiss of your own on her horn as she begins to suck at your skin.

You both sink back down to the floor in almost the same position you started out in. Kanaya is still drawing a bruise out of your neck, and you’re still kissing any part of her available to you. Eventually, you both give up these pursuits and meet each other’s lips once more.

“Kanaya,” you breathe, barely a whisper. Your mouth feels weak.

“Rose,” she mimics your tone, lifting her face away from yours to look you in the eye.

“You never answered my question.”

“Did you ask something?”

“Yes.” You laugh. “I asked you if you wouldn’t mind sharing your culture with me.”

She smiles, and it’s so bright it’s almost blinding. “I would be happy to.”

You’re both back to lying down on the floor now, arms wrapped around each other. You feel like you could just nap here. You’re not tired at all, but you feel like you could do that. You feel safe here with Kanaya. Here you feel...lighter. Better.

If you stay here with her long enough, you feel you could reach your full potential.

It’s been almost a full month since you finally sobered up for real. You can’t say it’s been easy. There have been urges, of course there have, those don’t just go away immediately. Perhaps they will with time, but for now they have remained. The urge, the thirst, has been there, still insistent and practically omnipresent, but you have been able to pull through every last one of them. You’ve survived, and there’s not a doubt in your mind you could do that without Kanaya. She’s been your anchor through this storm, and you can’t thank her enough for that. You don’t know how you’ll ever repay her.

You snuggle a bit closer to her. Kanaya’s face is buried in your hair, and she yawns. You might not be tired, but she definitely seems like she is. You stroke her back lightly and hum the tune to a half forgotten lullaby.
“Do you want me to get you anything?” You ask quietly.

“No,” she sighs contentedly, “I’m good.”

You’re so close together that your nose is pressed directly into Kanaya’s throat. You’re filled with the heady scent of her. She smells like greenery and sun baked earth. A deep, unseasonably warm spring. It’s earthy and distinctive, subtly sweet. You can’t get enough of it.

Kanaya’s been luminescent for some time now, since about halfway through your makeout session. You’ve always liked that. It’s another strange and lovely piece of a strange and lovely girl that makes her amazing and more than you feel you deserve. Now the glow is flickering, and that by itself is almost sweeter. She’s tired, but she’s fighting off sleep for lord knows what reason and her body’s having difficulty choosing between maintaining the glow or falling asleep.

Your heart is beating in time with hers, you can feel them reaching a slow synchrony until they almost feel like one in the same. She doesn’t sleep, but she lies there wrapped around you for a good quarter of an hour resting nonetheless.

Kanaya sits up slowly and turns her head to look at you. You’re still lying on the ground.

She smiles down at you. “Was there a specific book you wanted, or would just any old Alternian text do?”

“For what?” You ask, readjusting yourself so you can take up the warm spot she left on the floor when she got up.

“I was just thinking,” Kanaya says as she rises to her feet and stretches. All of her motions seem slow and lethargic right now, “since I plan on starting my project soon, now would be a good time to get you that book you requested.”

“If that’s it, then I’ll join you.” You sit up and run a hand through your hair. It’s messy from all of the tousling and laying on it. “No use making you search by yourself when you won’t even be the one reading it.”

“That’s true.” She helps you to your feet. “What kind of book were you interested in?”

“Those shadow droppers you mentioned before sounded like an intriguing concept.” You reply, intertwining your fingers in hers. “Do you have anything on those?”

Kanaya considers for a minute as the two of you begin walking. You have no idea where you’re going, and you don’t think she does, either. “I’m not sure. I would have to check. I hope I do, though, it’s been ages since I’ve read a good shadow dropper novel.”

“Well, even if we can’t find that, I’m sure we can find something interesting to occupy our time.”

What little of it is left.

“You’re right.” She nods. “Even if we can’t find any shadow dropper novels, there must be something. You wouldn’t possibly be interested in an extended guide to Flarp, would you?”

“We’ll save that as a last resort.”

You walk hand in hand with Kanaya without a destination. You’ve never been more aware of time in your entire life. You don’t have much longer left here, your time on this meteor is coming to a close much sooner than you anticipated. You want to make the time you have here last, stretch out every second so it’s an eternity.
You want to experience as many of these small moments with Kanaya as you can for as long as you can.

Most importantly, you want to do it sober.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading this chapter!! I'm sorry, I know it's been awhile since I've posted last. I hope this chapter made up for it at least a little even though it's so short...
I'm hoping the next chapter won't be as much of a wait.
You’d guess it’s been a week or so since you and Karkat became an official thing. Official of course meaning you kissed and then held hands and shit. It was awesome. Your heart fluttered in your chest just thinking about it, which you kept to yourself because fuck if that wasn’t the most embarrassing thing to have to say out loud. You were more than certain that Karkat was already well aware of this, though, and you were sure the feeling was mutual.

What you were less certain about was what the fuck you were supposed to do now. Were you supposed to tell people? Keep this to yourself? Could you kiss and hold hands in public, or would that be too sudden? Too awkward? Did Karkat even want to do that? Did you even want to do that?

You have no idea. You’ve never had to deal with this kind of question before. This is something completely new to you.

Luckily, this wasn’t something you’d had to deal with just yet. You haven’t seen anyone else for longer than a few minutes, which was definitely not enough time for you to even think about mentioning your newfound relationship.

So far the only one who knows that you and Karkat are anything is the Mayor, and that’s because he was there when it started. You doubt you would have been able to gather up the courage to tell even him about it.

Not that there was even much to tell at this point. You and Karkat are together, yes, but you haven’t really done anything since that night. You’ve held hands once or twice, and you had a pretty nice cuddle session the other day while watching movies in your can tower. Other than that, there’s been nothing. You haven’t even so much as kissed since then.

You want to, you really, really do. There’s nothing you would like more than to kiss him again, but you have no idea how to tell him that.

Just how the fuck are you expected to tell someone that you want to spend time with them and touch them and lock lips with them casually? How the fuck are you supposed to do that?

You have no idea.

“Dave, are you okay?” Karkat’s looking at you, his eyebrows doing that whole furrow thing where it looks like a big worry caterpillar.
“What? Yeah, I’m fine. Why?”

“You haven’t said anything for awhile.” He says. You watch him stack cans into a haphazard pyramid shape. You’re chilling in Can Town as usual. The Mayor told you that Can Town’s construction was pretty much finished, but that it was okay for you two to do whatever you wanted as long as you put everything back when you were done. You’ve just been sitting here stacking cans into whatever shape you can think of for the past couple hours. “As much as I love finally being able to experience the joys of silence for the first time in weeks, it’s worrying as fuck having you sitting right here and not even mumbling some nonsensical hoofbeast shit under your breath like you usually do. Which begs the question again, what the fuck’s up with you, Dave?”

Karkat’s clutching a can tightly in his hands. It’s been awhile since he trimmed his nails. They look almost sharp enough to pierce through the tin. You wonder what they would feel like if you reached to hold his hand right now.

You keep that thought to yourself. “Nothing’s up with me, dude. I’m perfectly fine, I’m just in the zone. The can zone. Gonna build this tower up as high as I can and hope it doesn’t fall over and possibly break something. Karkat, do you think it would count as a heroic death if I threw myself in front of these cans when they fell so they don’t injure any of the poor innocent citizens of Can Town? If I were to get crushed by these dumb cans and suffer a surprising amount of injuries that led to my eventual demise, would I wake up or do you think I’d stay dead? Shit, wouldn’t that suck? Imagine reading that on my fucking grave. Dave Strider: Cool dude, death by Campbell’s can. This was what Andy Warhol was talking about when he painted all those fucking cans. I knew the guy didn’t just have a thing for soup. I mean yeah, tomato is a fucking classic, you gotta eat that shit whenever you have a grilled cheese sandwich, but no one likes it enough to put that much time and effort into painting the can, get what I’m saying? He was trying to warn us all along. Trying to tell us something in these paintings. It was like the Da Vinci Code but with soup. The Campbell Code. I can’t believe it took me this long to realize, Karkat, I mean it’s always been pretty obvious. It could only be more obvious if he emptied a shit load of alphabet soup into a pool and rearranged the letters to say something like ‘in the year of our lord whatever the fuck, one of the universes remaining heroes, Dave Strider, Knight of Time and one of the coolest people to ever grace our meager planet with his presence, will be struck down in the prime of his young god life by a wayward can of chicken noodle soup while on his way to defeat an evil more powerful and horrific than our feeble sixties brains can even comprehend. Enemies far beyond the stretches of our imagination. H.P. Lovecraft himself would describe these monsters as indescribable. I, however, am better than Mr. Lovecraft, god rest his decaying bones, and will describe the enemies this brave, rad soul was going to fight before his unfortunate but unavoidable demise. A giant green skull monster and also a weird chess dude who is for some reason a dog, as well as an assortment of other strange alien entities, probably. May he rest in peas.’ Shit, it would be just like Andy Warhol to end my cryptic soup epitaph with a motherfucking pun. What an asshole. But what can a guy do? I wasn’t there to tell him what he should and shouldn’t write in the soup, I wasn’t even born yet. I doubt his friends could stop him, either, they probably had no fucking idea what was going on. They don’t know him or his life, they don’t know what drugs he took so he could have visions about soup related deaths. Shit, maybe he didn’t have to take any. Maybe he could just see into the future when his favorite liquid noodle meal was involved. Who knows, maybe that was his thing. His title probably would have been something like Andy Warhol: Seer of Soup. Yeah, that would have been it. Shit, do you think these cans are actually going to fall over? Karkat, you’ll help me out, right? Catch some when they start toppling or at least be a cushion for when I fall? I would rather fall on top of you than the floor, to be honest. You’re a lot softer than the floor. Landing on you would be like slamming myself into a big stale marshmallow as opposed to on literal rock. As long as you’re okay with that. I don’t know how you feel about me falling ass first on top of you. Thoughts?”
You stop talking and look at him, waiting for his response. He looks somewhat less concerned now, you think.

“Fuck, Dave.” He says, shaking his head. “I know I said I was worried because you hadn’t talked in awhile but if that weird rambling about death and soup and some guy named Warthog was an attempt to dissuade my worries, you did a shit job at it. Congratulations, fuckbag, now I’m more concerned.”

Shit, guess you were wrong. He takes a deep breath and stacks a few more cans before he turns and looks you right in the eye. It’s always been weird to you how he can do that. Your eyes are pretty much completely hidden by your shades, but Karkat’s always been able to find where you’re looking and drag your gaze back to him. Does he know that that’s not a normal thing, or does he think everyone can do that to you? You’ve never really bothered to ask. Who knows, maybe sometime you will.

“Whatever it is, I’m not going to sit here and try to force it out of you. Far be it from me to stick my big cartilage nub someplace it doesn’t belong. This is clearly not something you want to talk about right now. We can both just hang out here and not talk if that’s what you want to do. That’s fine by me. There’s a first time for everything, right?”

The thing is, you do want to talk about this shit. You want to talk about it so fucking badly, you just don’t know how to start. Where to begin. You don’t have the words for this kind of thing.

So instead you nod. “Right.”

You spend the next few minutes in silence with him, not doing much of anything. Karkat’s disassembling and reconfiguring whatever the fuck thing he’s creating with his stack of cans. You’re doing the same thing, but you’re mostly just watching him when he’s not paying attention. You know you’re staring, and you really shouldn’t, but you can’t seem to help it. You keep looking at his hands as he rearranges cans, at his mouth when he chews absently at his lower lip while he focuses. Occasionally your gaze does drift down to his stomach when he has to stretch to stack the cans higher, which causes his shirt to ride up and reveal smooth gray skin beneath it. You want to poke it really bad.

You resist the urge and stack a few more cans. The only sounds in the room is the cans clinking on top of each other and the occasional shuffling of feet across the floor. The silence is almost deafening and all you want to do is open your mouth and fill the empty void with bullshit. Not talking is so much harder than you ever thought it would be when you’re forced to actually think about it.

This silence is too stifling, you can’t do it. “Hey, Karkat.”

He jumps, almost dropping a can in the process. “What?”

You don’t actually dropping a can in the process. “What?”

You don’t actually have anything to talk about. Your eyes settle on a sliver of exposed stomach. “Do trolls have belly buttons?”

Karkat must feel your stare, because as soon as the question leaves your mouth he puts the can down and readjusts his shirt so everything’s covered. “What the fuck is a belly button?”

“So I’m guessing that’s a no?”

“And I’m guessing that’s something you need to explain to me.” He says firmly. He sits down in front of you. He’s practically glaring at you, his mouth a thin, determined line. You have his full
attention. "You better not be shitting me about this button thing, Dave."

You hold up your hands in surrender. "Believe me, I'm not shitting you. No shit here, bro. You smell that in the air, Karkat? You know what that is? It's the smell of a complete lack of shit. No shit here. Just lemon scented freshness, dude. All the shit's where it's supposed to be. This, right here, right now, is a shit free zone. You have my word on that."

"Okay, I get it. There's a lack of shit befouling the air. That's great and all, but can you get on with the explanation already? Tell me about your button! Does it have a function, or is it just for decoration?"

"I wouldn't really call it a decoration, but there are some people who decorate it." You've never heard anyone refer to any part of the body as "for decoration" before. What the fuck. "They pierce it and put jewelry in it and shit like that."

"They pierce it?" He repeats, tilting his head questioningly. You know the concept of piercings isn't foreign to his species, but obviously piercing a part of anatomy that he's never heard of sounds pretty weird. "Why the hell would anybody do that?"

"I don't know." You shrug. "That's just what people do."

He inches closer on his knees. "Is yours pierced?"

Karkat's eyes drift down to your stomach, and you start to feel self conscious about it. You're so glad it's already covered with your shirt. Your hand drifts forward to offer more coverage, anyway. "Nope. It's just a regular old hole in my belly."

"What the fuck do you mean it's a hole?" Karkat groans in confusion. "You just said it was a button! You specifically referred to it as a button several times over the course of this very short discussion! Are you telling me now that it's not even a button in the conventional and most logical sense of the word? It doesn't stick up out of your stomach and nothing happens when you press it? Is that what you're telling me? It's a god damned hole? That is a motherfucking misnomer, Dave, and I am not okay with that! A hole? A hole? Are you shitting me? I know you said you weren't, but I honestly can't believe it, I think you are shitting me, Dave. Your bellybutton is a big fucking hole. I bet it's not even on your belly, either. Dave, if bellybutton just turns out to be Strider code for asshole, I'm going to kick you so hard up your bellybutton your rectum will be bleeding and leaking shoe material for the next perigee and a half."

"Jesus fuck, Karkat, no. That's not what's going on here, although that would be hilarious. No, I actually do have a belly button. You're right, it is mostly a misnomer. I say mostly because there are people who have outy buttons. By that I mean yeah, some of them do resemble actual buttons. I don't know what happens if you press it. Probably nothing. Maybe they get annoyed, who the fuck knows. I certainly don't, because I have an inny. Now here's the part where you would inevitably ask me "hey Dave, what's an inny?" Well I'm glad you asked, awful impersonation of Karkat I just did. See, an inny is a belly button that sinks into the belly and makes that hole you were bitching so much about earlier. An outy, on the other hand, sticks out of the belly and forms that titular button that you were also bitching about. As for what they do, well, nothing I guess. They do jack shit, really. Or if they do serve a purpose now I have no fucking clue what it is."

"So they are for decoration? It's just some useless and unnecessary part of your anatomy? Is that it, is that what you're telling me?"

"Yes and no. It served a purpose at one point." Karkat opens his mouth to argue, but you hold your hand up. "Keep your thoughts to yourself for a minute, I'm trying to get my explain on. See,
when human babies are in that whole developmental stage in their prelife and trying to form themselves into something that doesn’t look like a clump of nasty play-doh, they have to absorb food from this tube that pumps the good stuff right into their belly so they don’t actually have to do shit and can focus on the more important things like becoming something that roughly resembles a person. Although if I’m being honest they don’t really do a bang up job on that front, babies usually have a tendency to look more like wrinkled appendaged potatoes to me. Anyway, when a baby’s birthed they gotta cut the feeding tube to detach the kid from the human incubator it was in, also called a mom, and the kid’s gotta learn to eat with its mouth just like everybody else because newsflash baby: you’re not special. I’m pretty sure the bellybutton itself is from when they cut the feed tube, which has a different more scientific sounding name that I for the life of me can’t remember right now. So yeah, I guess you’re right, this is a completely useless part of human anatomy now since it does fuckall unless you’re in the womb and you still have the attachment. Shit, now that I think about it, it would be double as useless for me, since I never even had a womb in the first place. I was an ecto slime baby, there’s no reason for me to have a bellybutton, what the fuck.”

You can’t believe it took you this long to realize this, what the actual fuck. It feels like you’ve been lied to.

“So,” Karkat begins slowly, “it’s just a weird thing from when you were a baby? Only you didn’t really need one because you weren’t born in the usual human way and you just fucking have one because?”

“Yeah.” You nod. “That about sums it up.”

“So what you’re saying is, yours really is only for decoration?”

You nod again and pat your stomach. “Shit’s just straight up ornamental, dude.”

Karkat leans in closer to you, staring curiously at the hand covering your abdomen. “Can I see it?”

“No, Karkat, you can’t see it. What the fuck kind of question is that?” You lean away a bit.

“Come on, you gotta admit that everything you just said sounds like a load of hoofbeast shit.” He replies, inching closer on his knees. “You took in nutrients from a tube in your stomach while you were living inside another human? And then when you finally exit the other human’s insides they cut it off like it’s nothing? The more you tell me about your human anatomy, the more ridiculously fake it sounds. You’re out of your fucking pan if you think I’m going to accept every dumb thing you say as fact without proof just because we’re dating now. Either you show me proof of your stomach hole or I’m calling you out as a damn liar.”

“Oh, fuck. Not a damn liar! My reputation will never recover from that!” You say sarcastically. “Seriously, though, I’m not lying. Everything I said, regardless of how gross and stupid it sounded, was completely and one hundred and twenty percent true. Or as true as it could be given my very limited understanding of how that sort of shit works. Believe me, my button is definitely there. I couldn’t make this stuff up if I tried. Well, I could, but it would be a lot funnier if I did make it up.”

“Oh, okay, let’s say for argument’s sake that you do have a bellybutton, because without some evidence to back your claim then that’s obviously still something that’s up for debate.” Karkat’s eyes flick back down to your hand. “How come you won’t just show it to me and get this shit over with already? Is it one of those things you’re not supposed to be showing to people because of some cultural shit, or do you just not want to for personal reasons?”
You need a minute to think about that. “Both, I guess. It’s not exactly something people go around doing a lot, it’s definitely on the weirder side of requests. If it were only that, though, I don’t think it would stop me. I guess it is mostly for personal reasons. I would just rather keep my shirt on, you know?”

You shrug in an attempt to make it sound casual, but it really doesn’t help much. You feel kind of awkward about admitting something like that. You’ve never actually voiced your discomfort about this kind of thing before, and revealing something like that to Karkat out of the blue just felt strange. You wonder if you would have been more uncomfortable lifting your shirt and exposing your stomach than you are right now.

“Okay.” Karkat nods. “I can understand that. I wouldn’t be comfortable doing that kind of shit either.”

Karkat stops talking after that, and you have nothing much to say. It’s the second time today that you’ve both sat here quietly, only this time Karkat is sitting closer than before.

Much, much closer.

Karkat’s hands are resting in front of him. Fuck, you want to reach over and touch them so bad it almost hurts.

“Shit, I am really curious about your fucking human bellybutton now, though.” Karkat sighs. “It sounds so stupid but definitely like a thing your weird as fuck species would have, considering you have a balloon for a bulge. I guess if it really matters that much I could just ask Rose. She’d have one of those, right? It’s not just a male thing? Maybe she’ll show me hers if I ask nicely or give her something in exchange. Or I could ask Kanaya, she’s probably seen- Dave, what are you doing?”

Your hand moved without your notice and was now resting on top of Karkat’s. What the hell, when did that happen? Karkat’s staring at you with wide, grey eyes, waiting for you to answer his question. You don’t have an answer. You don’t know what the fuck you’re doing. Your hand is shaking a little. This is stupid.

“Dave?”

You gotta play this cool. You have to act like you did this on purpose, like there’s a reason you just suddenly reached over and grabbed his hand.

“Listen, I know I said I’m not okay with showing you my bellybutton for reasons both cultural and personal, but that doesn’t mean I can’t prove it.” You take his hand and guide it over to your stomach. You feel like a fucking idiot. What happened to playing cool? “You can definitely feel it through my shirt if you try hard enough.”

“Dave, what the fuck? I don’t want to stick my finger in there, that sounds so weird!” He struggles to get his hand out of your grasp, but not very hard. He’s not as against this as he claims.

“It’s only weird if you make it weird, Karkat.” You reply, even though he’s right. This is fucking weird as shit. But what the hell else are you supposed to do, your hand acted against you! You needed an excuse and this was all you could come up with.

After some coercion on your part, you manage to get Karkat’s dumb wiggling finger to touch your bellybutton. His finger pokes into it through your shirt. It’s super fucking weird.

Karkat goes wide eyed. “Oh wow, holy shit.”
You nod. Your hand is still on his. “I know, right?”

“So that’s a belly button.”

“You.”

“Huh.” Karkat says, staring down at his hand. His face is pretty much blank, like he has no idea how to react to this situation. He probably doesn’t. You don’t even know how to react to this situation and you’re the one who started it.

Out of nowhere, he starts laughing. It’s not even a fucking chuckle or whatever other word there is for a soft laugh, it’s this sudden, loud burst that makes you jump from how unexpected it was. The entire room is filled with his laugh. It’s not an unpleasant sound, in fact on most days you would be happy it was happening at all, but right now you have no idea what happened to cause it and you’re left feeling a little wary about it.

He laughs so hard he can’t keep himself upright and falls down next to you, holding his stomach. You look down at him and decide your best course of action is to emulate what he’s doing and lay down next to him. You don’t say anything, you just watch him and wait.

Eventually, it dies down. “Sorry,” he says, wiping a few tears from his eyes, “it just occurred to me how fucking ridiculous this whole thing is. I just stuck my finger into my alien boyfriend’s stomach hole. What the fuck’s with that?”

Saying it out loud sends him into another fit of giggles, but this one he manages to contain. He grins at you, and you can see all of his small, sharp teeth. You can’t help but smile back.

“What the hell, dude. I am so offended. I went to all the trouble of letting you touch my bellybutton and this is the response I get? Fuck you, man.”

Karkat rolls his eyes. “Yeah, sure. Fuck you, too.”

He inches closer to you, not that there was much distance between you both right now to begin with. Karkat’s so close, but you’re still not touching.

“Hey, Dave?”

“Yeah?”

“This whole thing wasn’t really about your bellybutton, was it?” It’s a question, but it’s pretty clear that he already knows the answer. You may as well tell him what he already knows.

“No,” you admit, “it wasn’t.”

“So what the fuck has this all been about?” Karkat presses. “What’s been up with you lately?”

“It’s nothing. You don’t have to worry about it. Seriously, it’s not important.”

“Fuck that! If it’s bothering you, then it’s important.” He replies, poking you in the chest. “Now spill. I can’t help if I don’t know what the fuck’s bothering you.”

“I...” you hesitate. You want to tell him, but you don’t know what to say.

“Don’t think too much about it. Just say what’s on your mind.”

“We...haven’t really done much since we started this. I mean, yeah, we’ve held hands a couple
times and we cuddled and shit, but it doesn’t feel like we’ve...done anything? This doesn’t feel any different than before.”

“Is it supposed to?”

“Fuck, I don’t know.” You shake your head. “I thought it would. I at least thought I’d stop feeling weird about-”

“About?”

You swallow. This is an embarrassing thing to admit. “About wanting to touch you. Kiss you. All that fun dating stuff.”

“You feel weird about that?”

“I...yeah. Yeah, I feel weird about it. Not about the actual act of doing those things, but I feel like I can’t just do it without a reason.”

“Isn’t wanting to reason enough?”

“You would think, but it’s not. I don’t know why, but it’s not. I’m trying to work on it, really, but I don’t know what the fuck I’m supposed to do. Which really sucks because I...I really fucking want to.”

You fall silent. You don’t have anything more to say but you still have to fight the urge to keep talking about nothing. You could talk for hours still, but you have nothing more to say. You bite your tongue.

Karkat has yet to say anything. Your heart is pounding.

“Dave,” Karkat’s hand is on yours. It’s a light touch, barely anything, but it feels nicer than anything. “that’s okay. It’s weird for me, too. I’ve never actually been in a relationship before, and being in one with my best friend feels too good to be real.”

He intertwines his fingers with yours and gives your hand a soft squeeze. You can feel his nails in your palm. “The only reason I haven’t been doing any of that stuff myself was because I didn’t know what you were comfortable with, so I thought I would wait for you to initiate something again, but you never really did. I figured you just didn’t want to.”

“Fuck, no.” That couldn’t be more wrong. “Karkat, that’s all I’ve wanted to do.”

“Glad to hear we’re on the same page about this.” Karkat reaches over and grasps your shirt in his fist, dragging you slowly closer. “So Dave, are you okay with me taking initiative on this one?”

You bring your face in close to his. Your noses are touching. “Bro, that is more than okay by me.”

Karkat squeezes his eyes shut and closes the distance. It’s a brief, soft meeting of your lips. It feels even more amazing than you remember.

Just like that, it’s over. Karkat breaks away from you and rests his head on your shoulder. The bit of his face you can see is burned bright red. You’re sure yours looks the same.

“Sorry.” He mumbles into your shirt. “I don’t think I could handle anything longer than that right now.”

“Don’t worry about it.” You laugh. “That was great. Besides, we’ve got all the time in the world
“Yeah,” Karkat agrees, “you’re right about that. We do.”

“I’m actually pretty hungry right now, though.” You start sitting up. “All that talk about soup and shit got to me, dude.”

“Okay.” Karkat lets you go and gets up onto his knees. “I could eat. Mind if I join you?”

“Hell yeah, you can join me. We can have a lunch date!” You stand up and pick up one of the extra cans. “Grilled cheese and tomato soup sound good to you or do you want something else?”

“I don’t care what we eat.” He shrugs. “Everything tastes great as long as I’m with you.”

“Shit, you’re a fucking sap, Karkat.” You punch him lightly in the shoulder. “But seriously, grilled cheese? I’ve got a craving and I want it settled pronto.”

“I’m gonna be honest with you, I have no fucking idea what a grilled cheese is.” Karkat replies with a shrug. “But I’m not against trying whatever the fuck it is.”

“Shit, seriously? You’ve never had a grilled cheese? Well, we gotta rectify that situation right away.” You wrap your arm around his shoulders. “This okay?”

“Yeah. As long as you’re okay with this.” He snakes an arm around your waist.

“Hell yeah.” You grin. “Come on, we gotta head to the kitchen and get you a grilled cheese.”

“Okay.” He snorts. “But you’re gonna have to make up for this by eating something Alternian next time.”

“Does this count?” You swoop down and lick his cheek.

“Ew!” He laughs, pushing your face away from him. “Fuck no, it doesn’t!”

“Well, I tried.” You shrug.

He stands on his toes and pecks you on the cheek. “It was appreciated, though.”

“Thanks. I guess I could eat some of your weird alien shit. Now on to the kitchen!”

You and Karkat head off to the kitchen with your arms around each other. It’s going to take awhile for you to get comfortable talking about shit, but just knowing that Karkat’s feeling the same is enough to make you feel better.

Whatever happens from here, you and Karkat are going to get through it together.

Karkat glances up at you and squeezes your hip. “You still good, Dave?”

“Yeah.” You nod. “I’m still good. Everything’s perfectly fine.”

And for the first time today, you actually mean it.

Chapter End Notes
Thanks so much for reading this chapter!!! I know this one was short, and I am sorry about that, but I can promise you that the next one will be longer. I don't know how much longer, but it will most likely be longer than this one.

On a different but still relevant note, I don't know exactly when that chapter will be up. It'll probably be awhile. I won't go into too much detail about it, but I have some other things I need to write that may or may not make it onto this site depending on how the people I'm writing them for feel about that. So I'm sorry to say it might be a little bit, but I'll pick up on the next chapter as soon as I can. I hope y'all don't mind the wait too much :)

The Can Town Compromise-Revisited

Chapter Notes

Hey!!!
I know it's been awhile since I updated this fic, but I'm back now with a new chapter. I know the chapter's a little short (and not the best but oh well) but I hope you like it! <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

If anybody asks, you gave them the benefit of the doubt. You took them out of the bag. You counted and recounted and then just to drive the point home, you recounted them again. You checked the bag to make sure some idiot didn’t poke a hole through the fabric. You turned your block upside down and then right side up again to make sure you didn’t lose it. You cleaned the whole place out, that alone took you a solid two days to do. Then, after that was all said and done, you counted for a fourth time in case it magically appeared back in your bag while you were tearing the place apart.

But no, every time you count, the amount remains the same. You had eight dice in your bag when you lost this shit.

Now you only have seven.

There is obviously only one solution to be drawn from this: some asshole is screwing with you.

Of course, there’s only one thing you can do in this situation: retaliate by wrecking havoc and breaking shit.

“Redglare!” You’re pounding on her door. “Redglare get the fuck out here right now! We’ve got a job to do!”

Terezi’s door creaks open, and she glares at you sleepily. Her hair is a complete mess and standing at illogical angles around her face. She rubs one bright red eye with her fist. “Vriska, what the fuck? It’s early. Or late. I don’t know. Not the right time for this, though, I know that much.”

“Get dressed, sister!” You shove her flarp outfit at her. It falls to the floor. “There’s no time for sleep today! Only vengeance!”

“Did you just call me sister?”

“Yeah. That’s what we are. Scourge Sisters. That’s our thing.”

“Well, yeah, obviously.” Terezi replies as she picks her clothes up. “But we’ve never said it.”

“Maybe we should.” You shrug.

“No, we shouldn’t.” She shakes her head. “You saying it out loud like that made it sound dorky, and I for one am not a dork.”

“Whatever! We don’t have time for this!” You snap at her. “Just get in your clothes and come on, we have business to get to here and I need Redglare for this shit.”
“I’m on it.” She closes the door. You lean heavily against the door as you wait for her. You can hear the rustling of fabric on the other side.

The door is pushed open again so quickly that you don’t have time to move before it hits you right in the ass. “This is about your missing die, isn’t it?”

“Yeah.” You nod emphatically. “It is.”

Terezi sighs. “I thought as much.” She steps out of her block. “So what are we doing? What’s the plan?”

“We’re going to get my die, what the fuck do you think we’re going to do?” You grasp her by the wrist and start hauling her away. “Come on.”

“Do you even know where it is?” Terezi asks.

“Technically, no.” You admit. “But I have a pretty good idea who has it.”

You haven’t stepped foot into Can Town since it happened. Things got a little out of control the last time.

No, not things. Everything was pretty much in control the whole time. It was just you that got out of control. Not that you would ever admit that what you did was a mistake because fuck, it got those boys to actually consider getting off their asses and make an attempt at training, at least. Losing your composure like that and using your powers over a stupid game of capture the flag wasn’t something you were proud of, but you definitely had nothing to apologize for.

Terezi stops walking and pulls you back over to her right when you’re about to cross the threshold into Can Town. “Vriska,” she points her cane at you accusingly, “you’re not going to pull any of that shit you did last time, right? Because if you are I won’t hesitate to take action against you again to defend the poor citizens of Can Town.”

“Relax,” you push her cane away from your face, “I don’t plan on doing anything like that. Besides, I think they learned their lesson from last time, they know better than to mess with me now.”

She frowns. “Vriska.”

“What? I’m just being real with you here, Terezi. Yeah, it wasn’t the greatest idea I ever had and I’m not gonna do it again, sure, but I can still reap the benefits from the time I did do it. Let’s not pretend any of us are above that.”

Terezi’s cane meets the floor again with a thump. You think she has more to say about this, but she shakes her head. “I don’t know about that. Just...don’t do it again, okay?”

“Terezi, what the fuck, I already said I wasn’t!” You snap. This is getting ridiculous. You just want to get in there, get your die, and get out. Well, that and fuck some shit up, but you’re not going to have to use any of your natural talents for that.

“Alright, just wait a second. I’m gonna ask the Mayor for permission to let you in.”

Terezi walks into the block and motions for you to stay back. During her search for the Mayor, she disappears from your sight. She returns to you a couple minutes later.
“I told the Mayor what’s going on and he said you can come in.”

“Then let’s go already!”

You stomp into the block. Whatever element of surprise you had was gone the moment Terezi asked for permission, so you may as well come in with confidence.

They’re both glaring at you from their Can Tower. Or at least, Karkat’s glaring, Dave may just be frowning. You’ve never really been sure with him.

Dave doesn’t look away from you, but goes right back to doodling. “Hey, Vriska. What’s up?”

“What’s up is I want my fucking die back.”

Dave’s expression doesn’t change, but his hand stops moving. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“What the fuck are you even doing here?” Karkat demands. “You’re banned! You can’t just strut your ass into places you’re banned from. That’s illegal.”

You smirk. “I got the ban lifted, bitch.”

“What?” Dave’s eyebrows furrow. “No way, seriously?”

“Yeah, I’m a free girl now. I’ve got express permission to be here.”

“Well good for you, Vriska. But unless you’re here to check out the sweet architecture or enjoy the view, you’re gonna be sorely disappointed, cuz like I already said, we don’t know where your die is.”

“Yeah, I think you do know where it is, you know exactly where it fucking is.”

“No, we really fucking don’t.” Karkat denies, shaking his head. “No one gives a shit about the die you somehow managed to lose.”

“I didn’t lose it, you fucking stole it, you sack of shit.”

“Jegus, Vriska, no one cares enough about your dice eightfold or whatever the hell to steal them. Just admit that you lost it and alchemize a new one already. Stop being a bitch and wasting everybody’s time.”

“Wow!!!!!!!! Thanks for the advice, douchelord. I would totally take your hypocritical words to bloodpusher, but seeing as I didn’t lose the damn thing, I’m going to stay right here and make a huge ass scene until you give me back my die that you definitely fucking stole.”

“Dammit, Vriska, for the last time, I didn’t steal your die!”

“Yes, you did!”

“No, I fucking didn’t.”

“Yes, you fucking did.”

“No.”

“Yes.”
“No!”

“You can say you didn’t until your god damn vocal apparatus ruptures, but we both know that you’re a lying ass for pan and that the truth is you definitely fucking did.”

“I wouldn’t waste a good lie on you even if my life depended on it, which it never would. So for the last time, you deaf idiot, no, I did not agree to never coming in here again. Now quit saying I did so I can get down to the real issue here. You just wish I stole your die so you don’t have to admit that you misplaced something so gog damn important to you like the moronic fuckwit you pretend you aren’t.”

Karkat’s fucking smug tone is really starting to grind on your nerves. You can feel your blood practically boiling under your skin. You ball your hands into fists at your sides and can feel your nails biting into your palms.

“Listen,” you speak slowly, trying deliberately to sound calm even though you’re seething, “I’m going to ask you this nicely. Give me back my die. Please.”

Dave leans forward over the edge of the tower and raises his eyebrows, clearly intrigued by your failing restraint. “Or what?”

You grit your teeth and take a deep breath. What the fuck are you going to do? You promised you weren’t going to do anything like what you did like the last time you were here. Yeah, you might be a bitch and kind of a jerk sometimes (who isn’t?) but you’re not a promise breaker. “Or-”

“We’ll beat your asses!” Terezi interrupts with a passion, brandishing her cane at them. “Until you confess or surrender the stolen property that rightfully belongs to Team Scourge!”

Whoa, what the fuck? You’re loving Terezi’s energy, but you have no idea what the hell she’s talking about. You agreed to not pull that shit, and here Terezi is pulling you right back into it.

“Yeah, well, like we've been saying this entire time on a fucking loop, we don’t have-”

“Yeah. You fucking knew it.

“Welp,” Dave looks at you and gives an exaggerated shrug, “guess we killed this charade.”

Then he disapears behind the tower’s dull aluminum wall.

You and Terezi share a grin. The fight is officially on. Oh hell, yes!

You run at the can tower and use your god tier powers to help you do an awesome jump over the side.

And your face is immediately smashed with a pillow.

It’s a hard enough hit to send you flying straight out of the can tower, but not before you manage to knock a couple cans off the wall. You tuck and roll so you at least avoid landing square on your ass. You’ll admit, it was a pretty solid hit.
Terezi yells and runs at the can tower, swinging her cane in wide, mad arcs. A row of cans crashes down on top of the boys. They’re both yelling unintelligible profanities at her as she pokes them repeatedly with her cane. You run back into the fray.

They’re both on the floor, mostly curled up under a pile of fallen cans but occasionally trying to defend themselves by hitting Terezi with pillows. Unlike the surprise attack on you, these strikes are ineffective.

“Come on,” Terezi insists, “give it back!”

You kick over what’s left of the wall and start dropping the discarded cans on them. Mostly on Karkat. “Yeah, give me back my die, you asshole.”

Karkat tosses one of the cans back at you. “No, never, fuck you!”

“Jegus, Karkat, how hard is it to give it back?” You criticize, dropping more and more cans on him. “Just hand it over and I’ll leave! Or does bulge get into that much of a knot just fucking up my day and inconveniencing me slightly? That’s pathetic, Karkat, really.”

“Wow,” Karkat laughs derisively, tossing another can at you and covering his head with a pillow for protection, “you’re awfully fucking full of yourself. You really think I’m deriding more sick joy from fucking with you than I am from royally screwing myself with a up my own wastechute with a rusty spike? Yeah, you wish.”

And then, out of bum fuck nowhere, another surprise attack.

Your legs are swept out from under you, and you hit the ground hard. An electric shock runs up your posture pole and you’re so fucking glad you saved your ass this pain earlier. Before you can get up, you’re pinned down by Karkat. You’re struggling under his weight when Terezi is pushed down next to you.

Karkat scrambles off of you and grabs Dave by his cape, dragging him with as he absconds to the other side of the block. You and Terezi are quick to chase after them. They keep running so they stay at least a few feet ahead at all times. You roll cans across the floor to slip them up and to prevent further damage to Can Town.

Eventually, they get themselves cornered, and you and Terezi are quick to block any chance of escape. Dave tries to push past Terezi, but she blocks him with her cane and grins.

“Give up?” she grins, “There’s nowhere left to run.”

Dave looks around. “Fuck, you’re right. We are out of places to run.”

He’s agreeing, but you have a feeling this isn’t by any means a real surrender.

Dave grins. “But we’re not out of places to fly.”

Dave links his arms around Karkat’s middle and starts floating upwards and out of reach.

Yeah, like you didn’t see that coming.

Apparently Karkat didn’t see this coming, though. He’s freaking out and squirming in Dave’s arms like a newborn wriggler.

“Put me down put me down put me down put me the fuck down!” He screams at the top of his
lungs. “Dave, I hate heights, put me down! I’d rather take my chances with Vriska!”

“And you’re going to take your chances with Vriska!” You yell up at him.

You throw a can up at them, but it falls in a wide arc that barely grazes Dave’s cape. You throw another one, this time Dave barely manages to avoid it. Another. By this time Terezi joins in on the can tossing.

Dave continues to narrowly avoid the cans while Karkat makes it more difficult than necessary.

“Hey can you stop kicking me and chill, I’m trying to get us out of the line of fire!”

“No, Dave, put me down! Just drop me, I don’t want to be up here anymore!”

One of your cans almost hits, but it glances off of Karkat’s shoe and bounces harmlessly to the floor. Fuck, you were so close. Dave floats a little further up in an attempt to avoid the cans better.

“Dave, you’re going the wrong way, you direction impaired moron!”

“Dude, shut the fuck up, I’m a little busy trying to save us from a cantastrophe!”

“Dave!” You yell up to him, interrupting their argument as you throw another can. “Are you seriously doing puns now?”

“Yeah?”

“You realize I have to kill you know, right?”

“That’s true.” Terezi nods beside you. “That’s the law now. Dave, are you ready to accept punishment for your crimes?”

“That depends, is it somehow worse than what I’m dealing with right now? Because this already blows pretty hard.”

“Terezi, was that a fucking pun?”

She tilts her head. “Was what a pun?”

“You said punishment.”

“Oh. Yeah, I did say that.” She nods. “But it wasn’t a pun.”

You squint suspiciously at her. “I don’t know if I believe you, Terezi.”

“Well,” she shrugs, “you love me, so it’s not like you’re gonna do anything about it.”

“Fuck, you got me there.”

Dave’s taken the opportunity to float out of your line of fire. It doesn’t take long for you to catch up with them and continue throwing your cans at them futilely. Honestly, you could easily fly up there and tackle them or toss your cans at them from a closer distance, but you think Dave’s going to exhaust himself carrying Karkat pretty soon. You’ll just bide your time, you have nowhere to go.

You just keep throwing and throwing these cans up into the air and hitting nothing, but coming close. You’re honestly surprised none of these cans have burst yet. These are some pretty strong fucking cans. Fuck you just want Dave to get down here and face you already.
This is taking a longer time than you expected. Your arm is getting tired. From the corner of your eye, near the door, you spot a blur of orange.

Rose enters the block and stops dead in her tracks. “Oh. I see you’re busy. I’ll just leave, then.”

“Wait, Rose, did you need something?” Karkat yells over to her as he continues to struggle in Dave’s apparently titanium grip.

“I just wanted to borrow Dave for a bit.”

“You can have him, I’m not exactly having the time of my fucking life with him right now.”

“God, I’m just trying to help! I didn’t realize you were gonna be a raging asshole about it.”

“Go hang out with Rose, Dave.”

“Yeah, Dave!” You yell your agreement. “Drop this shitlord and go hang out with Rose!”

“I’m going. I’m going! Fuck!” Dave drifts closer to Rose and drops Karkat off in the ruins of their can tower. “Bye, I guess.”

Dave shoves his hands into his pockets and walks out of the block, but Rose hangs back for a moment. “What do you girls want with Dave and Karkat, anyway?”

“Karkat stole my die and he refuses to give it back!”

“See.” Rose nods. “You know, he’s particularly ticklish.”

No, you did not know that. But now that you do, there’s a whole new world of possibilities open to you for your next attack.

This must show on your face, because as soon as Karkat’s done hurling profanities at Rose’s back, he turns to look at you and immediately tries to break for the exit.

Yeah, like you’re gonna let that happen.

Karkat’s pretty fast, but as a god tier you still have advantage. Launching yourself up into the air in an arc and flying back down in the same way gets you to the door a split second before Karkat does. You lean against the wall and block it with your leg.

He pushes against your leg, but you refuse to budge. “Move.”

“Can’t.” You shrug. “If you want me to move, you have to pay the toll.”

“Like hell I’m doing that.” He takes a step away from you.

And bumps right into Terezi. She wraps her arms tight around his chest and squeezes. “Come on, Karkat, just hand it over.” One of her claws moves to his side and scratches down. Karkat stiffens. “And then we’ll leave you alone.”

He gives a long and exaggerated sigh. “Okay, fuck, fine. Fine. Give me a second to get it, I hid it in the tower.”

Terezi lets him go, but you keep your position just in case he tries to make a break for it. You watch Karkat drag his feet all the way to the ruins of the can tower. You hear more than you see him push cans out of his way as he searches. They roll aimlessly in every direction.
Karkat stands back up and faces Terezi. “I found it.”

“Sweet, hand it over.” She holds out her hand to take the die.

“No,” he takes a step backwards, “I already told you, if you want it you’re gonna have to rip it out of my cold, slimy sphincter.”

“Karkat, what the hell do you-”

Before either you or Terezi can make a move, Karkat tilts his head back and swallows it. Or at least, he tries to swallow it.

He starts choking almost immediately.

Terezi doesn’t seem like she’s sure of what to do in this situation, so you leave your post by the door to try and help. Karkat’s doubled over and still struggling to swallow your die. From experience, you know this is harder to do than it looks. You smack his back in an effort to help.

In less than a minute, he’s able to swallow it down. You step away from him as he straightens up.

He coughs and crosses his arms over his chest. “So there.”

His voice is hoarse.

You laugh, not just at Karkat (though it’s mostly at Karkat), but at this whole stupid as shit situation. You laugh so hard you have to cover your mouth with your hand just to keep your voice down.

“Fuck, Karkat, if you wanted it that badly, you could’ve just said so. Anyway, enjoy whatever residual luck my hands rubbed on to that thing as it dissolves in your acid sack and you shit it out. Come on, Terezi, let’s go alchemize a new one. Or better yet, a whole new set.”

Terezi turns to Karkat and gives him a light punch on the arm. “I can’t believe you just fucking did that!”

“Me neither.” He admits, rubbing his probably raw as fuck throat. “Spur of the moment.”

“Well,” you choke back a final giggle, “I can’t say it’s been fun, but it’s certainly been entertaining. See ya, Karkat.”

“Bye, Karkat!” Terezi waves. “Maybe see if you can choke down some scalding leaf juice or something.”

ELECTING TO STAY QUIET FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS ENTIRE GOD DARN LIFE, KARKAT NODS AND WAVES TO YOU BOTH AS YOU LEAVE.

“So,” Terezi says conversationally as you stroll over to the nearest alchemiter together, “a whole new set of dice?”

“Yeah. With that one stewing in Karkat’s digestive tract, the rest of these dice are basically shit to me now.”

“Hm.” She nods. “So what color were you thinking? Blue again?”

“No.” You give Terezi a sideways glance. Her glasses are glinting with what little light there is in the hall. “Red.”
Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading this!! And thanks for putting up with me during this fic's hiatus.
Draining

Chapter Notes

Yooooooooooooo!!!!

Here’s a new kind of heavy Strilonde chapter! It’s a bit of a shift in tone compared to the last one, lol, but it was really fun to write and I hope fun to read!

(important to note that Rose's alcoholism is a big theme in this one)

You’d spent a lot of time considering if you should ask Dave for help with this particular venture. Hours upon hours wasted pacing your room and wondering if Dave would even want to help you at all if you asked. What if your request annoys him? What if you were just being a bother? It’s not like he’s going to get any benefits from this.

In the end, you decided to swallow your doubts and just do it. The worst he could do was say no, right? And if he didn’t want to help you, well, Kanaya already volunteered, so it’s not like you would be doing this alone either way.

But when you found Dave, you felt your mouth go dry, and your question withered to nothing on your tongue. Not only did he look busy, but he looked like he was having fun. You didn’t want to drag him away from that.

So you tried to leave. But your presence was questioned instantly. You had no choice but to admit the truth- that you were there for Dave. You needed him for something. That’s all the detail you were comfortable sharing with so many people present.

And just like that, Dave agreed to come talk to you.

You felt bad for dragging him away instantly. But there was nothing you could do about it now.

Dave walks ahead of you down the hall. You both walk far enough away from Can Town that you can’t hear Karkat, Terezi, and Vriska fighting anymore. You wonder briefly as you walk behind Dave if the girls used your information to their benefit. You’ll probably find out later.

“So,” Dave turns around to face you, “what’s up? You wanted to borrow me for something? Is there a damsel in distress who can only be saved through the power of rap? Do you need me to play the knight in red pajamas and help you rescue her with my sick beats? Because I will, Rose. Just point me in the direction and I’ll start dropping some word bombs all over the danger zone for you.”

“Thank you for the offer, Dave, but I’m more than capable of spitting my own ill Fires for the sake of a distressed damsel.” You reply. “That’s not what I wanted you for.”

“Okay.” He nods. “So what is it?”

“I was wondering,” you swallow thickly. You’re not sure if you should really ask this. No, no you already took him away from having fun with Karkat, the least you can do is offer him an
explanation, “I was wondering if you wouldn’t mind...helping me find some things.”

Dave tilts his head curiously. “What kind of things?”

“My...ah...” god, you hate saying this, “my stash.”

He looks surprised, but he doesn’t say anything. He just waits for you to continue. You take a deep breath.

“I’m trying my best to stay sober and recover, but if I’m really going to be serious about this I think it’s about time I get rid of all the alcohol on the meteor. That includes everything I’ve hidden around in places I don’t remember. The thing is, even if I do manage to recall where they’re all hidden, I may not...have the willpower to dispose of all of them by myself. So I was wondering...if you wouldn’t mind helping me do that?”

You need to stop to breathe for a minute. Dave just stares back at you, not saying anything. You can’t read his face. Aside from your breathing, the hall is silent. It hangs awkward and heavy between you.

“You don’t have to, obviously.” You’re quick to add.

“Rose,” Dave runs a hand through his hair and sighs, “fuck, I just can’t believe you really thought you had to ask that. Course I’ll help.”

Oh, wow.

“Thanks, Dave.” A weight lifts off your shoulders and you smile. You no longer have any doubts about calling Dave away, every negative thought replaced with feelings of relief. Of course he’d want to help you. He’d already told you as much before. “Shall we, then?”

“Hells yeah, lead the way.”

You take Dave around the meteor and show him all of your old hiding places. It’s like a game of hide-and-seek, but instead of having a fun time looking for your friends, you’re trying to remember where you stashed away your vices in shame. Honestly, some of these hiding places are pretty clever, but you hate what you ended up using them for. You could’ve hid knitting supplies here, or some books, shit, anything would’ve been better than this.

That’s in the past now, though. You’re putting this behind you. More accurately, you’re putting this in Dave’s sylladex.

“Damn,” Dave says as he plucks a couple of your bottles out of a loose air vent, “where did you even find all of these spots? My sylladex is practically swimming in booze over here.”

“Perseverance, luck, many hours spent wandering around looking for obscure places to hide things for the express purpose of someone not finding them.” You shrug.

“Well you did a fucking fantastic job. I would’ve had no idea these were here if you hadn’t shown me.” He hands you one of the bottles. “Shit, honestly I probably wouldn’t’ve even known about this entire part of the meteor.”

You take the bottle by the neck in one hand and try not to look at it. “I hid a number of my stash
here for that very reason.”

You try to hand the bottle back to Dave, but he shakes his head. “My sylladex and hands are both full, I don’t have any room left. Can you carry that one?”

You look down at the bottle and consider it.

“I get if you can’t, we can circle back and snag this one the second time around.”

You shake your head. “No. No, it’s fine. I can carry one, it’s no problem.”

“Alright, if you say so.” He shifts the bottles in his arms into a more comfortable position. “What are we doing with all these, anyway? Are we gonna take this party outside and toss these out into the abyss? Hey, do you think if we throw these hard enough they’ll hit Jack? It’ll be hilarious if a bottle bounces off his face and drenches him. Shit, I’d love to see that. Do you think if we looked really hard we’d be able to see it happen? Because if there’s any justice in this universe it most definitely fucking will.”

“I actually had a different idea.” You say as soon as Dave pauses for breath. “I thought we could take these into the bathroom and maybe pour them down the drain.”

He gives you a short nod. “Sounds good.”

The two of you continue your journey over to the nearest bathroom. This time, Dave is walking ahead of you. You can hear the bottles clinking together with every step he takes. Your grip on the single bottle you’re carrying is so tight you fear you might accidentally shatter it.

“Hey, do you think the vent clown filched some of your stash? You hid some of these in there, right?”

“Yes, I did.” Are all the bottles accounted for? You can’t remember.

“You think he’s just hanging out in there someplace, getting buzzed off his gourd in the dark?” You think you hear him laugh a little, but you can’t be sure.

The words slip out before you can stop them. “You mean like I did?”

You feel bad about it instantly. Dave is doing you a favor here, he’s helping you because you asked him to. You don’t mean to sound defensive, you really don’t. But that’s how it comes out, and it’s not like you can take it back once it’s said.

“What? No, of course not.” Dave spins around so he’s facing you, but continues to walk. “I didn’t mean it like that.”

“Of course you didn’t.” You sigh. Your grip on the bottle tightens once more, your knuckles going white. “I know that.”

You don’t say anything more. You stare at the ground as you walk. Still, you can feel Dave’s eyes on you. You think he wants to say something, but he doesn’t. Maybe he doesn’t know how to phrase it?

No, probably not. Dave’s never been at a loss for words.

He opens his mouth.

You stop walking. “We’re here.”
He closes it again, gives you half a smile. It looks awkward and a little strained. “Let’s do this.”

You push open the door, and the two of you step inside. It looks like every other bathroom you’ve seen here. There’s a sink, toilet, and a bathtub, all of which are a bit off. They’re not exactly the same as they were on Earth, and you assume they’re not exactly the same as they were on Alternia. Not that you’ve ever asked.

Dave walks over to the tub and dumps everything in his sylladex into it. You perch on the edge of the sink, wringing your hands around the single bottle you’d carried.

“Alright, so what do we do now?”

“Drain them?” You shrug. “There are three separate drains in here, it shouldn’t be too difficult to pick one and start.”

You force open your bottle. “I call the sink.”

“Okay.” He nods. “Guess I get the toilet, then.”

Dave puts the lid of the toilet seat up and sits on the edge of the tub. He plucks one of the bottles out and starts pouring the contents out. You do the same. You watch the alcohol form a shallow pool in the basin and swirl lazily down the drain. You set the bottle to the side.

You grab another bottle out of the tub and walk back over to the sink and continue. You take the entire process as slowly as possible, one bottle drained carefully at a time. Watching it makes your skin crawl, so you close your eyes. You wish you could do something about the sound, but you can’t hold a bottle and plug your ears at the same time.

You don’t understand. You should feel better about yourself for doing this. Relieved, maybe even a little bit proud. Instead you feel awful. Disgusted. Weak.

You couldn’t even manage to drain a couple bottles by yourself.

Okay, a lot of bottles, but the point still stands.

You’re so weak willed that just a couple open bottles is enough to make you fear a relapse. What’s wrong with you? How are you incapable of doing even this much for yourself?

You have to bite back a self pitying groan as you finish emptying another bottle and grab another from the tub.

“Hey,” Dave elbows you lightly to get your attention, “did you know there’s no water in this shitter?”

“There isn’t?” You glance over his shoulder and yeah, it doesn’t look like there’s anything in there. “That’s strange.”

“Yeah. Check this out.” He opens a bottle and starts pouring it down the toilet. It goes straight down the bowl. “Like what the fuck, right?”

You nod. “Definitely the fuck.”

“I wonder if it still flushes.”

“There’s only one way to find out.” You lean over Dave and jiggle handle. Nothing happens.
“This toilet is a piece of shit.” Dave tsks, shaking his head in disappointment. “We should dismantle it and flush it down a working one. Give it the funeral it rightfully deserves.”

“That’ll be our next project after this one.” You take your bottle and go back to the sink. You start pouring this one out. Dave comes over and stands next to you, watching as you do so. It makes you a little uncomfortable.

“What?”

“I was just wondering if this sink has any water in it.”

“Oh. Hm, I don’t know.” That’s an interesting question. “I never thought about it.”

You finish draining the bottle before you attempt working the faucet. It drips slowly, but doesn’t do much more than that.

“This is a weird bathroom.” Dave concludes.

“I can’t help but agree with you.” You glance curiously over to the bathtub. “Do you think the shower still works?”

“I’m all over it.” Dave rushes over to the tub and turns the knob before you can say anything more.

The shower sputters to life. Unlike any shower you’ve ever seen before, the water flows out in a torrential stream similar to that of an average faucet and not a showerhead. The water splashes noisily onto the bottles still in the tub.

“Rose!”

“Dave.”

“Rose!” He gestures at the makeshift waterfall. “What the fuck is up with this bathroom? The plumbing is wonked to hell!”

You snort. You can’t help yourself. “I think we should be grateful that most of the plumbing here is functional at all. Or any of the things here, for that matter. The amount of upkeep needed just to keep a place like this maintained is staggering. Have you ever stopped to think about the fact that we have not just one, but several working coffee makers? Not to mention the stove and the refrigerator. And the lights? We’re lucky anything here is even usable.”

“I’m not saying I’m not grateful for all of the quality bathrooms -and I use the term quality loosely-all I’m saying is that the plumbing in this one is a particular kind of fucked up. The likes of which I’ve never experienced before.” Dave shrugs and pops open a bottle from the bathtub. He pours it straight down the tub’s drain. “Are you really going to stand there and tell me that this isn’t the weirdest bathroom you’ve ever been in here and keep preaching about how I should be happy with all the bathrooms I do have, or are you gonna come over here and dump booze down this shitty tub with me?”

“I don’t see why those two things have to be mutually exclusive.” You say as you pluck a bottle out of the tub pile. It’s slick from the water, and you have to clasp it hard to keep it from slipping from your grip as you open it.

You tip the bottle upside down and watch the alcohol mix seamlessly into the water and gurgle down the drain. It’s easy to pretend it’s water like this. If you don’t focus on the smell, you can’t
tell the difference. It puts your mind at ease to the point where you don’t have to close your eyes when you do it.

You and Dave empty bottle after bottle into the tub. There are so many bottles it seems never ending. You don’t remember alchemizing all of these. You guess alchemizing so many any time you decided to drink one was bound to add up to something. You don’t think you’d have been able to finish all of these even if you’d wanted to.

Neither of you say anything as you continue your task. Occasionally you bump hands or shoulders with Dave as you reach for another one. Sometimes you glance at him, and you can’t read his face. You don’t think you’ve ever seen him look so serious before.

It makes you not want to talk.

Eventually, somehow, you reach the last of the seemingly endless amount of bottles. Your hand falls and curls onto the last one. The glass is wet and room temperature. For some reason, it feels heavier than all the ones that you lifted before it. Maybe it’s your imagination, or maybe it’s the weight of Dave’s gaze as he watches you pick it up.

This is the last one.

All of your actions feel slow and strange. Like you’re trying to operate in a dream, but you’re still not aware that you’re asleep. You spend two hours opening it. Four hours watching, unblinking, as the contents slip down the drain. You can’t hear anything but the splash of the liquid on the metal tub, and louder than that is the pounding of your heart in your ears. It’s slow, just as slow as all of your other actions, but you can feel it through your whole body.

Then the bottle’s empty.

The whole ordeal took roughly three minutes.

You set the bottle on the ground beside you and release a trembling breath. Were you holding that the whole time? You have no idea. You take another breath. Blink. Breathe. Let your heart relax a little.

That was the last one. It’s over now.

There’s a hand softly grasping your shoulder. “Hey,"

You jump a little. You’d forgotten Dave was here with you. You don’t look at him, instead you focus on the water running down the drain.

You take a deep breath, it’s almost completely steady now. “Thank you for being here, Dave. I really appreciate it.”

“Like I said, it’s no problem.” He takes his hand off your shoulder and lays it on one of your own hands, which are tightly gripping your dress. “I’m glad you asked, even though I don’t think I really did anything helpful.”

You shake your head. “Don’t be stupid, Dave. Just you being here with me was helpful. I don’t think I would be capable of doing this at all if I was by myself.”

“And no one’s expecting you to do this by yourself.”

You knew that, but still it strikes you hard in the stomach like a revelation, and you’re left unable
to reply.

Dave doesn’t say anything. You both sit beside the bath tub and watch the water run. You’re both surrounded by empty glass bottles. Dave’s hand is still on yours. It’s cold and a little wet, but you don’t mind. There’s droplets of water splashed onto his shades. You wonder why he hasn’t wiped them off yet.

You don’t ask. You don’t say anything.

Dave takes a breath, and the intake sounds like a preparation. His hand is still on top of yours.

“Rose, I’m proud of you.”

Your vision blurs to the point where you can’t see. It’s so sudden you can’t even comprehend what’s happening until the first few tears slip and burn a trail down your face.

You break down.

“Oh, shit!” Dave’s panicking next to you. He pulls his hand away from you. “Rose, are you okay?”

You can’t stop crying. You fold in on yourself and cover your mouth with your hand to hold back your sobs.

Dave’s arms are wrapped around you. The gesture’s awkward, and a little uncomfortable, but still it’s nice. He’s trying his best to comfort you the only way he knows how.

And that makes you cry even harder.

You don’t deserve this.

You really don’t deserve this.

Dave grips you tighter. His head falls against your shoulder.

You hug him just as tightly.

Just as you eventually reached the end of the bottles, you reach the end of your tears. It’s just as unexpected, and the disentanglement from Dave is just as slow and awkward.

“Welp,” he sniffles and wipes one of his eyes under his shades, “that happened.”

“Yes,” you laugh as you scrub your face free of any tear tracks, “it was definitely a thing that happened. A very emotionally charged moment.”

Part of you feels like you should apologize, another part of you feels like that would invalidate the whole experience.

You feel empty, but in a good way. A little drained. You feel better, and closer to Dave than you’ve ever been before.

This is an experience you want to keep.

“So,” Dave says, “what do we do now?”
“First of all, we should turn this shower off.” You do just that. The room feels too quiet without the sound of rushing water in the background.

“Okay, but now what? I mean, do we just leave all these empty bottles here? Are you gonna use them for something?”

“Now that you mention it, we probably should pick these up.”

You start gathering up the empty bottles, and Dave joins you. Truthfully, you’re not sure what you’re doing anymore, both with the bottles and in general. You’re sure the bottles can be used for material in something, at least

“Hey, Rose?” Dave asks as he picks up a few more bottles. “I was wondering if you maybe wanted to...ah...hang out? You know, just chill together sometime? I feel like we don’t do that enough, which is a god damn travesty.”

“You want to hang out?” You pick up a couple more.

There’s only one bottle left.

“Yeah, if you want to.”

You pick it up and toss it in your sylladex.

“Yeah,” you smile, “I do want to.”

Whatever happens now, you’re gonna be okay.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading this! <3
The Strilonde Hang

Chapter Notes

Sorry about that...smaller hiatus after that big hiatus. Some stuff happened last month that kept me busy for a bit. But I'm back again now and hopefully the rest of this fic will be done on a smoother schedule now! Thanks to everyone for being so patient! <3

Now, for the actual chapter: Dave and Rose finally hang out together.

I hope you like reading it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A couple days ago, you asked Rose if she wanted to hang out with you sometime. You haven’t talked to her since, but you have been extensively planning out what you want to do with her. All you really have planned is that you’ll probably end up watching a movie. Still, that’s better than nothing. Kinda. You guess.

Fuck, this is a shitty plan.

But it’s the plan you’ve got, so whatever.

You tell Rose the barely a plan and ask her to bring her choice of film, while you’ll bring one of your own. On the day of your scheduled hang, you wait for her on the couch. She’s taking awhile, you think. Maybe she’s having trouble finding a movie she wants to watch. Maybe she didn’t actually want to hang out with you and she only agreed because you helped her out when things were tough earlier.

God, you hope that’s not it. It’s probably not it.

You distract yourself from it by playing around with Karkat’s laptop, which you borrowed for the sole purpose of playing movies on. You open something that you think is probably the troll ms paint app or whatever their equivalent of free shitty drawing ware is and scroll through Karkat’s array of fan art.

Not to be an asshole to your boyfriend but holy fuck, this is so bad. It’s bad to the point that it’s good. God, you wish you knew how to copy his art style because it would be killer in an sbahj comic, you think. Maybe you should ask Karkat if he wants to collaborate on one sometime.
Actually, you probably shouldn’t. As much as you love how incredibly bad this looks, you know telling him that is just gonna hurt his feelings. Yeah, there’s no way he doesn’t know that these aren’t exactly what someone would call good, but it’s not something he needs to hear. Especially from you, the king of bad art.

You’re about to close out of it entirely out of guilt when you see a folder labeled with your name on it.

Oh, that’s interesting.

You hover the mouse over to it.

“Wow, a whole folder with your name on it.” You jump and turn around. Rose is standing behind you, leaning over the couch and smirking. “Whatever do you think that could be?”

“Just some bullshit doodles or something, probably nothing.” You say quickly, exiting out of the program altogether and sending it back to the homescreen. “What’d you bring?”

“Oh, just this great little film called Demonic Toys.” She slides a dvd case down to you, and you take it from her.

“Cool, we’ll watch yours first.” You open the case and pop it into the dvd slot. “You wanna sit down?”

She nods, but doesn’t move from her spot. “I was just wondering if I should get snacks while the previews are running.”

You’d just been planning on skipping the previews, but if she’d rather leave them on to get snacks... “Sounds good. I think there’s popcorn and a couple alien sodas in the fridge.”

“I’ll be back in a few minutes.”
You shoot her with a fingergun as you press the play button and start the previews up. “I’ll be here.”

She turns on her heel and runs to the kitchen. You turn the screen up to full brightness and lean back against the couch. Fingerguns? What the fuck were you thinking? There’s not a dorkier move in the entire goddamn world you could have pulled just now.

God, that was so fucking terrible, you hope Rose wasn’t paying too much attention to your stupidity.

Rose comes back five minutes later, carrying a large bowl and two cans of soda. “Did I miss anything?”

“Nope. Just previews for shit that came out a decade ago.” You take the bowl from her and set it down on the table beside the laptop. Your gaze lands briefly on the popcorn inside, and you can’t help but notice that it’s black. “Rose, did you burn this? What the fuck?”

She takes a seat near you on the couch and hands you one of the cans. It’s ice cold. “What can I say, I misjudged the cooking time.” She shrugs and opes hers, sipping slowly. “I’ve only made popcorn a handful of times, I’m still figuring out how it works.”

“Ohkay, but...how?” You’re completely floored by this. “There’s literally a button for that.”

She shrugs again. “I didn’t see it.”

“You didn’t...see it? Isn’t that your whole thing? Seeing shit?”

“Yes, but that I didn’t see.” Rose puts the can down and picks up the bowl of popcorn instead. “I’m not on the job right now, I don’t have to see shit.”

“That’s gonna make it pretty hard to watch the movie, then.” You point out. “Unless you were planning on leaning into the screen and lapping up the visuals like a thirsty dog at a bowl of water like how Terezi does.”
“That was definitely the plan, Dave.” She nods, plucking a few pieces of darkened popcorn out of the bowl and eating them. “Just give me a few minutes to cleanse my palette so I can taste the images properly.”

“I’m not sure how much that popcorn’s gonna do for you, there. Your mouth’s just gonna taste like ashy butt.”

“Good.” She looks you right in the eye and pops a completely black piece into her mouth. “That’s exactly what I was going for.”

You kill the lights and start the movie up. “So what the fuck’s this about, anyway?”

“Exactly what it says in the title.” She shrugs, leaning her head against the couch so she can see better. “There’s a warehouse of toys, they get possessed by a demon who is buried beneath said warehouse, the toys come to life and brutally murder the people in the warehouse.”

“That’s it?”

“I believe there is a fight between the forces of good and evil thrown somewhere near the end. Other than that, yes, that’s it.”

“No offense, Rose, but your movie kind of sounds like it sucks.”

“Full offense taken, Dave.” Rose offers you the popcorn bowl. “You like shitty movies, that’s why I picked it.”

“Cool.” You take some of the popcorn and eat it slowly. It’s burned worse than you thought and leaves a bad taste in your mouth. “I picked Zoolander.”

“Excellent choice.”

You pop open your can of soda and down half of it to wash the taste out of burnt popcorn out of your mouth. It’s so fucking bad. You can’t believe Rose hasn’t even mastered the fucking microwave yet. That’s surprising as hell.
Clearly, despite everything you’ve been through together, there’s still a lot you don’t know about her.

You try to think of something to ask as you continue to shovel popcorn into your mouth and regretting it the moment it meets your tongue.

“So,” you end up saying after another swig from your near empty soda, “Kanaya.”

Rose nods. “Yes, Kanaya.”

God, what the fuck is wrong with you, that wasn’t even a question. “You like her?”

“Yes,” She laughs, “I like her very much.”

“How’s dating her going?” What the fuck kind of questions are these? Seriously, what the fu-
“Holy shit, did that doll just draw a pentagram in that dude’s blood?”

“Yes, that doll did just draw a pentagram in that person’s blood, and dating Kanaya has been great so far. She’s fun, and smart, and strong and I love spending time with her. She’s really made this whole trip go by faster.” She takes a sip from her can. “And what about you, Dave?”

“Me? I like Kanaya, she’s cool. Talking to her is fun as fuck. Usually she’s pretty chill to hang with, but sometimes she says something so fucking savage it just eviscerates me and I have to spend the rest of the day shoving my guts back into me. I like her, she keeps me on my toes. You’ve chosen well.”

“Thank you for the kind endorsement of my girlfriend, but I meant how were you doing? Dating wise?”

“Dating wise? I’m not.” You reply quickly. “Can’t be doing anything dating wise if you’re not fucking doing the date.”
“So you and Karkat wouldn’t classify your relationship as dating?” Her eyes slide from the movie screen and over to you, a smirk playing on her lips and a knowing look in her eyes.

You stiffen without meaning to. “No, I wouldn’t.”

At least you wouldn’t refer to your relationship like that comfortably in front of another person.

“I don’t know if I believe you, Dave. You and Karkat seem to have grown even closer than you were before the sleepover. If that was even possible.” What the fuck, you didn’t think you were acting any differently? Are you so completely obvious that everyone’s already put two and two together and now everyone’s just waiting for you to call Karkat the ‘b’ word?

The other ‘b’ word than the ones you already jokingly call him, of course. The serious ‘b’ word. Oh god, just thinking about trying to say that out loud is freaking you out a little.

“But, despite my disbelief, I’ll take your word for it for now.” Rose continues. “I can wait and be patient if it means you’ll eventually be comfortable enough to discuss this in depth with me.”

“Well fuck, Rose, I don’t think I’ll ever be comfy enough to do that.” You shiver at the thought of all the prying questions Rose might ask. “No one would be.”

“Relax, you can ask me questions that are equally as intrusive about my relationship.”

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, I would.” She eats some more of the popcorn unflinchingly, her eyes go back to the screen. “Of course, you don’t have to answer the questions if you don’t want to, but I will still ask them.”

“Fair enough.” You shrug. “Rose?”

“Yes?”

“What the fuck is up with this movie?”
“Well, that possessed teddy bear just chewed that man’s face off.” She points out, as if you can’t see the cheap gore for yourself. “As for what else is happening, I have no clue.”

“God, this movie really is shit in the worst way,”

“I know, right?” Rose agrees. “Isn’t it wonderful?”

“I honestly don’t know how I feel about it. On the one hand, horrible shitty movies are right in my wheelhouse of interests for sure. But the second hand I have right here’s grown a pair of googly eyes and become possessed by the spirit of Grampu from Oobi just to whisper tantalizingly into my ear and tell me that I’m a slut for dumb comedy. Love to whack my dick to that slapstick, you know? Oh wait, shit, if I use my Grampu hand to do the beef jerky does that mean it’s technically a blow job, since my fingers are his whole mouth? Or is it still a hand job because he’s a fucking hand?”

“I don’t know, Dave, I’ve never given much thought to what kind of roleplaying you’ve been doing with your hand while masturbating.”

“I’d hope you wouldn’t be thinking about me masturbating at all.”

“I would hope so, too.” Rose shrugs. “But you make it difficult sometimes.”

“Sorry.” But since you’re on the subject. “So which do you think? Hand? Blow? What kind of dirty acts is this hand man performing on me?”

“I think you should stop ruining my vague recollections of Oobi and watch this instead.”

“Alright, but I still don’t know if I’m enjoying this or not.”

Rose pats you on the arm. “Reserve your judgements for the end of the movie.”

You hold your tongue the best you can for the remainder of the movie, but it’s hard sometimes because god, what the hell is up with this shitty ass film. Where the fuck did Rose even find this bargain bin Chucky wannabe? And one of the main villain dolls you’re pretty sure is named Miss
Oopsie Daisy? What the fuck?

You think you must be getting to the end of the movie. The pregnant cop lady or security guard or whatever the fuck her job title is you honestly weren’t paying attention, is about to get attacked by the demon guy because apparently he can’t exist on earth unless he impregnates a lady with himself and the baby survives the birth or something. You don’t know, it sounds convoluted as hell and you weren’t paying attention that time, either.

That’s a really stupid plan, though. You know that much.

You’re about to tell Rose as much when she covers your mouth with her hand. “Ssh, we’re getting to it.”

You resist the urge to lick her hand and watch the fuckery playing out on screen.

Out of fucking nowhere, some toy soldier suddenly transforms into a human kid. What the hell is up with this pinocchio-esque shit?

The kid and the demon start brawling while the lady is just kinda forgotten for awhile. Is this it? The final boss battle? Is the ultimate evil gonna be defeated by this toy soldier that’s been touched by an angel or something?

What’s happening in this movie?

The woman picks up the toy soldier’s sword, which you guess he dropped like an idiot at some point during the fight, and manages to stab the demon. It’s a fatal blow, and the demon...dies? You guess? Okay, then?

You want to talk, but Rose’s hand is still clamped firmly over your mouth. You slobber spit all over her hand.

“Uck, Dave.” Rose grimaces and takes her hand off your mouth and wipes your spit on your leg. You revel in your victory for a whole second before she covers your mouth with her other hand. “You realize I have two hands, right?”
You want to say something in response, like the fact that she can’t eat any of the popcorn anymore because of all the spit on her hand, but you still can’t talk. Instead you try glaring at her, which also doesn’t work out in your favor. She’s still watching the movie, and even if she was looking your way, you’re still wearing your shades.

You turn your attention back to the movie. It’s gotta be close to over by now.

The weird toy soldier angel dude turns to the protagonist and tells her he’s the soul of her unborn fucking baby holy shit.

Then he just...fucks off back to heaven or whatever you guess to wait to be born.

There’s a couple more minutes left in the movie, but you don’t care about the rest because what the fuck was that.

Rose removes her hand from your mouth as the credits begin to roll. “So, what did you think?”

You finish off your soda to wash the taste of Rose’s hand out of your mouth. “Rose, what the hell was that shit you just made me watch?”

She frowns. “What, did you not like it?”

“I wouldn’t say that.” You answer. “Did I like it? Fuck if I know. But if I absolutely had to say anything about this movie, I think I would have to say it’s probably my favorite horror movie now. Not that it had much to compete with before this, that was a competitionless marathon that bitch was running in, going full speed towards the epic finish line of my number one spot with no one there to get in its way or hold it back at all. Which is good for it, of fucking course, I just wish it knew that before it wasted all that time doing that wicked training montage and was totally ready to bust up Apollo Creed’s face while screaming for Adrien only to realize Apollo didn’t even fucking exist. He was just a figment of Rocky’s giant musclebound mind the whole goddamn time, Rose, sorry to spoil the twist for you. He won by default and so did...what was this movie called again?”

She takes the disc out of the laptop and pops it back into the case. “Demonic Toys.”

“And so did Demonic Toys.” You finish. “So there’s my thoughts on that bullshit.”
“Hm.” Rose nods thoughtfully. “I didn’t know you disliked horror movies, Dave.”

“It’s not that I don’t like them, they’re just not really my thing.” You shrug. “I’ll watch them, sure, but I’m not a fan and if given the option between watching a horror movie and literally anything else, I’d rather watch the other thing.”

“I wish I’d known that beforehand,” she laments, laying the dvd case down and picking up her empty can instead, “I would have picked a different movie.”

“Rose, it’s not a big deal at all. Like I said, I’ve seen horror movies before. And even though they’re not my thing, this one came pretty damn close. Anyway, it’s not like I was expecting you to try to cater towards my admittedly awful taste in films for this hang in the first place. The point of this was to pick something you liked that we could watch together. Do you really think I picked up Zoolander and went ‘gee, this flick will definitely appeal to Rose’s sensibilities and her undying love for Ben Stiller’?”

“I don’t know how you learned about my secret shameful lust for Ben Stiller, but I guess you’re right.” She sighs, leaning back against the couch. She’s pressing her thumb into the can gently enough so that the metal indents, but springs back into place with a soft pop when she removes the pressure. “I just wish I’d been aware of that before. As your sister, it seems strange that I don’t know something as basic as what kind of movies you don’t like.”

“Dude, it’s not like we grew up together.” You shrug. “Just cuz we’re related doesn’t mean we’re suddenly gonna know everything about each other. And since we’re doing honesty time over here I think it’s time I confess something to you, too. There’s still a metric load of shit I don’t know about you, either, and it rubs me all kinds of wrong, Rose. Sandpaper on my baby smooth ass wrong. But you know what? That just means we need to hang out more. We need to chill together and watch shitty movies, play some games, and dig into each other’s brains with tiny pick shaped inquiries like how you like to do to everybody all the fucking time. Not that I’m complaining, I’m just saying in this case you have an unfair advantage.”

“So you’re saying this is something we’re going to be doing again?”

“Yeah, obviously. What, you thought this was a one time thing? Fuck no, we’re doing this at least once a week, tops.” You pick up the popcorn bowl, there’s still a significant amount of burnt to shit kernels in it. “If that’s something you’d be interested in.”
Rose strokes her chin thoughtfully, “Do we have to watch movies every time?”

“Course not. If we get sick of movies we can just fuck around and do whatever.” You stand up and start walking towards the kitchen. “I don’t really care what we do, as long as we’re hanging.”

God, that was such a fucking outpour of emotional diarrhea you just spewed all over Rose just now. You barely let her get a word in edgewise as you puked your heart out onto her lap. You’re so glad you were able to abscond with the popcorn bowl before she could see just how heated your face is with embarrassment.

You dump the remains of the popcorn into the trash and start popping a new bag. During that time you pace around the kitchen and chug another soda, hoping it’ll help your face cool down a little before you have to face Rose again.

The two minutes go by quickly, and you take a deep breath before you head back to the other room with the bowl.

“Well would you look at what I have;” you announce loudly on your return, “popcorn, popped to golden perfection with the aid of a certain magic button created for that very purpose. Seriously, check this shit out.”

You pick up a kernel and flick it at her. The popcorn bounces off her cheek, and she gives you an unamused look before digging her hand into the bowl and flinging one right back at you.

“It looks good, Dave, I’ll give you that much.” She says. “But mine wasn’t as god awful as you want to claim it is.”

“Rose, the bowl was smoking.”

She shrugs. “Bowls do that sometimes.”

“What the fuck kind of explosive dishware have you been using?”

“The good kind.” Rose leans forward and presses play. “Do you want another drink? I’m
considering getting myself another.”

“Nah, I’m good. Thanks.”

Rose gets up and leaves, only to return a moment later with a new can of alien soda. At this rate you’re going to burn through the troll’s whole stash of the shit before any of them even get any. But hey, you’ll deal with that later.

“So,” Rose says as she pops the top, “aside from Ben Stiller, who else is in this?”

“A whole shit ton of people.” You reply, trying to remember ever actor’s name off the top of your head and counting them off on your fingers. “Will Ferrell, David Duchovny, Vince Vaughn, Owen Wilson, probably other people, and Stifler’s mom.”

Rose furrows her eyebrows. “Who’s Stifler?”

“You know, that dude from American Pie. She plays his mom.”

“Never saw it.”

“The part of me that’s your friend and loves recommending horrible and inappropriate shit for you to watch and regret later wants to tell you that you need to watch it, but the part of me that’s your brother and will have to forever live with the knowledge that I told my sister to watch a movie where the main character sticks his dick in a pie is begging me not to do that. This is such a hard dilemma, Rose. I don’t think you’ll ever have to deal with making a decision as difficult as this. This predicament has torn my fragile conscience assunder, and I don’t think it’ll ever be pieced together correctly ever again.”

“I’m going to save you the dilemma by applying a large bandage over your problem in the form of ‘I don’t think I want to watch that, and even if I did, I wouldn’t tell you’.”

“Your secretiveness is a healing balm to my broken soul.”

You watch the movie. Yours doesn’t elicit the type of “what the fuck am I subjecting my eyes to”
experience that Rose’s did, but let’s be real, you picked a pretty main stream comedy for your first real sibling hang out. You could find one that had that same vibe in your extensive film collection if you tried. Your movie does manage to make Rose laugh a couple times, though, so that was cool.

There’s no popcorn left over when the movie ends. You’re about to point this out to Rose when she throws all the empty cans you both forgot to throw away into the bowl. “I’m gonna clean this up.”

“And by clean up you mean put the bowl in the sink and deal with it later, right?”

“Obviously.” She stands up and starts towards the kitchen, and for a second you think that’s the end of it. Your hang hit an awkward stop and you’re done now. Time to pack up and go your separate ways for the night.

But then you hear Rose pause. “Dave?”

You twist around on the couch so you’re facing her. She’s halfway to the kitchen. The bowl is gripped tightly between her hands. “Yeah?”

“This was fun.”

“Yeah,” you nod in agreement, “it was.”

“We really should do it again sometime.”

“Fuck yeah, we should! I’d ask if you’ve got anything special planned this time next week, but we both know neither of us has any shit scheduled from now until we hit the lilypad or whatever the hell it’s called.”

“I want to disagree and say I have a multitude of important things to do, but you’re right.” Rose shrugs. “Same time next week, then?”

“Yeah.” You start packing up your stuff and close Karkat’s laptop. “And same time every week after that, too. You know, if that’s chill with you.”
“Of course, that’s more than chill with me.” She slides an inch closer to the kitchen. “And who knows? Maybe we could even invite Karkat and Kanaya over sometime, make an evening of it.”

“Yeah, like a double date.” You stick the laptop under your arm as you stand. “That’d be cool.”

Rose smiles at you, and it takes you a split second to realize what you said. Fuck.

“A double date would be nice.” She turns on her heel and strolls away. “Remember, your words, not mine.”

“Yeah, yeah.” You roll your eyes as if your slip didn’t phase you at all. You’re lucky she’s not looking at you, otherwise she would call you out on how red your face is right now. “See you around, Rose.”

You’re so glad you were able to do this with Rose tonight. Yeah, the whole thing was kind of awkward, but more than that, you were able to really bond with her and feel like you connected on a different level than before. You finally got to hang out with your sister one on one in a totally casual setting and you grew closer because of it. You’re looking forward to next week, and all the weeks to come after that.

You wave goodbye to her even though she can’t see you as you trudge off towards the transportalizer. This hang out went a lot better than you expected, and you’re really excited to tell Karkat all about it when you return his laptop. Maybe you’ll even ask him if he wants to join you and Rose in a few weeks to watch movies and shit.

There’s nothing you want to do more than chill and watch movies with your loved ones.

You can make snarky comments with your sister while you sit next to your boyfriend and hold his hand. Maybe even cuddle a little if you ever get brave enough to do that in front of her. Even if you aren’t, there’s not a doubt in your mind that you won’t feel as comfortable and safe as humanly possible.

You’ll be surrounded by family, and you’ll be happy.
That’s the dream, and you can’t believe you’re finally living it.

Chapter End Notes

Note: the file on Karkat's computer is just a bunch of different drawings of them kissing, most of which were done before they started dating.

Anyway, I hope you liked this chapter, and thank you for reading! There's only two more left after this <3
Oasis in a Bubble

Chapter Notes

Here it is!! The last Scourge chapter and the second to last chapter over all! I hope you like reading it!
(I'm sorry it's so short)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You know there’s not much time left before this trip is over, which means there’s not much time before you set your plan into motion. You only have so long left to spend time with Terezi before you leave and potentially never return.

You know this, you both do.

You’d like to think you’ve made your peace with that.

There’s only one thing on your pan right now, and that’s hanging out with your moirail while you still have the chance to. You’re going to flarp your little fucking pump biscuit out.

You have everything all prepared for this first day of your long flarp session, book under your arm and freshly alchemized dice bouncing against your leg in their pouch. Terezi is keeping step with you as you both head to your respective blocks to change into your proper flarping costumes.

You’re walking down the cold dull gray corridor with a purpose, but then you take another step and find yourself standing in bright sunlight, your feet sinking into pink tinged sand.

You’ve managed to walk straight into a dreambubble.

And fuck, it’s hot here.

You groan as you begin to perspire, taking off your sweatshirt and tying it around your waist.
“Well what the fuck do we do now?”

“I don’t know.” Terezi shrugs. “Wander around and fuck shit up?”

“Yeah,” you sigh, “fine with me.”

You shove your hands in your pockets and shuffle off through the sand. Terezi follows after you, her cane occasionally prodding against your ankle as she walks. Whatever planet this is, it’s boring as shit. You can’t seem to find anything in this landscape but sand. Coarse, rough sand that’s irritating and gets everywhere.

Fuck sand. You hate it.

Why is this planet so fucking dull? Where’s all the shit?

You would even kill for one of those stupid puzzles Tavros was so intent on doing during your sgrub session. You just want something to do.
You press on.

The sun beats down on you, slowly burning your scalp and part of your forehead. Your hair is heavy with heat and your neck and spine are soaked with sweat. You wish you brought something to tie your hair up with.

Or some water would have been nice.

Granted, you could always turn around and go back to the meteor on the corridor instead, but that feels like giving up at this point. No, you’re staying in this fucking bubble until it disappears and you’re gonna explore and cause some damage in here because that’s just how you are. Fuck this bubble if it thinks it’s going to get the better of you.

But seriously, fuck this bubble. You feel like you’ve been walking forever.

“Hey, Vriska?” Terezi prods you in the back with her cane. You turn around and watch as she sniffs the air. “Do you smell that?”

“No, what?”

“This way!” She points to her left, you see nothing but sand stretching out towards the horizon. Before you can tell her as much, she grabs your hand. “Come on!”

And then she races off in the direction she was pointing, dragging you along with her. Terezi is kicking up sand as she runs, and you have to spit it out of your mouth. It’s disgusting and only manages to make your mouth feel even drier.

Then you think you can see something in the distance. From here it looks hazy, like it could be nothing but a mirage. And maybe it is.

But it looks like the direction Terezi’s leading you.

Is there such a thing as a mirage that you can smell?

You don’t know, and you might never know, because whatever Terezi’s leading you towards isn’t a mirage. It’s as real as the sand in your face and the bubble it’s housed inside.

Terezi stops just short of the edge of a shallow pool of crystal clear water, shaded by trees. The water looks so cool, all you want to do is dive in. But you restrain yourself, it doesn’t seem like there’s enough water available for you to even submerge yourself fully.

Terezi lets go of your hand and starts taking off her shoes. You do the same.

She rolls up her pantlegs and plops down into the sand, shoving her feet into the water. It reaches up to her ankles.

Terezi sighs and leans back far into the sand so she’s practically laying down. “Vriska, get in here. The water’s nice.”

You roll up your own pants and join her. God, she’s so right, this water feels like heaven on your hot, sweaty feet.

You wiggle your toes. “We should just wait out the bubble here.”

“So much for fucking shit up.”
“Kinda hard to fuck shit up when there’s nothing even here to fuck up.”

“True.” She nods. “I’ll give you that.”

Your palm meets hers in the sand, and you rest your hand loosely there. Terezi doesn’t say anything about it. You take that as meaning she doesn’t mind.

You lay back into the sand and stare up at the sky. It’s a clear and vibrant blue, not a single cloud visible. It would be beautiful if it wasn’t so fucking humid.

“Fuck,” you sigh, burrowing your other hand into the sand, “this is so nice, but so boring.”

“It’s called relaxing, Vris,” Terezi sits up and splashes you, “ever heard of it?”

“No, and I don’t think I like it.” You kick your legs in the pool, water splashing up from the force.

“Well shut up and deal with it, because it’s what we’re doing today.” Terezi laughs as she flops back down into the sand.

“Okay, fine.” You sigh. “I wish we’d at least brought snacks or something.”

“I got you covered.” She digs around in her pocket and pulls out a broken piece of chalk.

You push it back towards her. “I don’t want that.”

Terezi shrugs. “Suit yourself. More for me.”

She shoves the chalk into her mouth.

There’s a hot breeze blowing through the desert, it rustles the leaves in the trees and blows some of your hair into your face. You huff and shake your head in agitation.

Your little oasis is completely silent save for Terezi’s chalk crunching and the rippling of the waves in the pool. You sigh and shift closer to Terezi. You’re practically leaning against her. Again, she doesn’t move, so you assume she’s okay with it.

As if she can sense you wondering, Terezi squeezes your hand.

Fuck, this actually is really nice. There’s a lot more to this chilling thing than you originally thought, once you got used to it. Why don’t you have more moments like this?

Maybe...maybe instead of doing as much with Terezi in as short an amount of time as you can, you could just...do this? You could just spend your time with her, doing absolutely nothing at all.

You breathe a deep sigh. Yeah, this sounds amazing.

You stay together with her in this small corner of the dreambubble, holding hands and leaning against each other in the warm sand while the cold water chills your feet. Eventually, you pass all the way through the bubble.

You’re laying on the floor with Terezi in a random hallway. Your feet feel freezing in the exposed air. You stand up and put your sweatshirt back on.

“Well,” Terezi stretches as she stands, putting her shoes back on, “I guess it’s time we get our flarp on.”
“You know what,” you shake your head, “I don’t think I actually feel like flarping anymore.”

“Oh?” Terezi tilts her head curiously. “Then what do you want to do?”

“I don’t know,” you shrug, “maybe we could watch a movie or something.”

She snorts. “You mean like Dave and Karkat do?”

“No, not like how Dave and Karkat do.” You shake your head emphatically. “Obviously we’re gonna watch cooler shit than them.”

“Obviously.” Terezi bumps you with her hip and holds her arm out to you. “Come on, let’s go pick something awesome.”

You take her arm and start walking. Neither of you are leading, you’re just wandering around. You have no idea where you’re going, but that’s cool, you’ll figure it out.

Your dice pouch is bouncing against your leg, but you have no urge to take them out. Flarping can be saved for another day, because that’s not the most important thing right now.

No matter what you’re doing, the most important thing is that you’re spending time with Terezi.

And really, what else could you ever want to do?

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading this chapter, I hope you liked it!! <3
Well, here it is!! The final chapter!

Thank you so much for reading this fic and for sticking with it for so long. Really, thank you!

I had a lot of fun writing this fic, and I can only hope you had at least half as much fun reading it.

I hope you like this chapter <3

You’re strolling hand in hand with Kanaya across the meteor. You’re enjoying the warmth of her palm against yours as you drag your feet across the cold floor.

“So,” you squeeze Kanaya’s fingers between your own affectionately, “what should we do now?”

“Hmm,” Kanaya taps her bottom lip thoughtfully with her free hand and looks up to the ceiling as she thinks, “well we already had breakfast-”

“Thank you for that, by the way.” You think back to the oddly colored and slightly oozing meal Kanaya greeted you with when you stumbled into the kitchen this morning. It hadn’t looked very appetizing, but looks can be deceiving and you relished every bite. “It was very...inventive.”

“I wanted to offer you something for the many times you’ve done the same for me.” She laughs. “Though it was harder to make scrambled embryonic cluckbeast and bug loaf than I was expecting. Most likely because we don’t have all the ingredients readily available here.”

You nod. “Of course. That’s also why the meals I’ve made for you could be considered a bit less than perfect, even for human cooking standards.”

That and you can’t cook.

“Oh. I just thought that’s what human food was like.”

“Oh Kanaya, I’m so sorry.” You laugh. “Someday I’ll try to cook you real quality human food. But this doesn’t answer our current predicament. What should we do with the remaining day?”

“I suppose that depends, did you have anything particular in mind that you wanted to do?”

You think about it for a moment and shrug. “Not really. I’m open to anything, as long as it’s with you.”

“Thank you, Rose,” Kanaya blushes a deep green. “that was both sweet and not helpful in the slightest.”

“It’s what I’m here for.”
“So you’re open to doing anything right now,” Kanaya’s thumb brushes over the back of your hand as she considers what to do, “I am also open to that.”

“Great, so we’re on the same page.”

“Yes, the same completely blank page.”

“Since that’s the case, we could say whatever activity comes to mind and see how we feel about doing that?” You suggest.

Honestly, you have no idea what you want to do. Kanaya could suggest you just laze around in your fort for the day and maybe make out a little, that would be fine with you.

That sounds great, actually. Maybe you’ll suggest that.

Then again, that’s what you did yesterday...and the day before that...

“We could play Unculled?” Kanaya says, sounding uncertain about her own suggestion.

“I don’t know.” You shake your head. “That doesn’t seem like an all day activity. And it seems more like a group game, anyway.”

She frowns. “I suppose you’re right. It’s not as fun with only two people. What do you think we should do?”

“I really don’t know,” you admit with a heavy sigh, “we finished reading Twilight two weeks ago, so that’s off the table. Other than that, I have no idea.”

“Wasn’t there some other human literature you said we should read together?”

You shrug in reply. Maybe you did suggest something else at some point, but if you did you don’t recall. You’ve had so many conversations with Kanaya that it’s hard to keep track of everything you’ve about.

“Yes, I remember distinctly,” Kanaya’s looking up at the ceiling and squinting in concentration as she goes over the past event in her mind’s eye, “you said something archaic about me biting one of my fronds. I told you I didn’t understand what you were saying, and you said that I should remind you to read-”

She pauses, worrying her lip between her teeth. You still have no idea what she’s talking about, though it sounds vaguely familiar.

She hangs her head. “I don’t remember what it was called.”

“Do you remember anything else that was happening at the time? Maybe I could remember what it was called then.”

You watch her fangs work her full bottom lip with rapt attention. You wish it was your teeth her lip was between right now. “I know that Dave and Karkat were there...and Terezi, I believe. Vriska, too.”

“So, everybody?” That narrows it down a bit. There are only a handful of times when you’ve all been in the same area together for an extended period of time.

God, you want to kiss her so bad right now.
“Yes, everybody.” Kanaya nods. “I think...we may have been at their fort? I think Dave and Karkat were doing something stupid.”

“As they do.”

“-yes, as they do. Does any of that sound familiar to you?”

“A little. I’m still uncertain about what book it was, though.”

You consider everything carefully. You and everyone else were at the fort, Dave and Karkat were both being ridiculous as they usually are, and you made a strange reference to biting something. One of your fronds. That could mean anything from your hands, your feet, or your toes or fingers. You don’t recall ever saying anything about biting feet.

Biting hands, though...fingers...that sounds more like something you might say.

Fort...biting fingers...the boys being stupid...

“I think there may have been a coin flip involved?”

Then it hits you, and the memory comes back to you full force.

“Right, I remember now! Vriska dragged us away to Dave and Karkat’s fort, Terezi, Dave, and Karkat were all sitting on the floor and we both had a front row seat to them acting stupid, and I made a reference to...to...Romeo and Juliet!” Yes, you figured it out! Your joy over this, however, is shortlived. “Oh, wait...fuck.”

“What?” Kanaya’s eyebrows furrow with concern.

“I didn’t bring a copy with me when the planet was destroyed.” You sigh. “We won’t be able to read the play, after all.”

Now that you think of it, there’s not a single surviving Shakespeare work in the universe now. At least, not that you know of. You never even had the chance to really read one. That’s a little disappointing.

“That’s alright, though.” You give a curt nod. “I have a vague idea of the basic plot, and I do have a copy of the 90s film version that I lent to Karkat and still haven’t gotten back.”

“So should we just watch the movie, then?”

“Yes. Watching this movie and then seeing if we can find some people to play Unculled with for awhile sounds like a day well spent.”

“Perfect.” Kanaya smiles. “We can see if Karkat wants to play it with us later, since we’re going to have to find him to get the movie back.”

You lean forward and stand on your toes so you can kiss her. Her lips are supple and warm against yours and made slightly sticky by her dark lipstick. It’s delightful and makes you smile.

You feel her fangs nip gently at your lip, and you take the opportunity to nibble her bottom lip just like you fantasized about earlier. It makes Kanaya giggle.

“Sounds like a plan,” you grin, “let’s start this search.”
You and Kanaya start looking around for Karkat. You don’t think he should be that hard to find, you have a pretty good idea of where he hangs out. And even if you can’t find him at any of those places, you assume you could just follow his voice when he eventually starts shouting about something.

But just as you’d thought, it doesn’t take very long to find him.

You and Kanaya approach Can Town, the third place you’re looking into because both his and Karkat’s rooms are along the way. When you’re only a few feet from the door, you think you can hear something...music?

Well this is intriguing.

You exchange a look with Kanaya, and she shrugs back at you. Apparently she also doesn’t know what’s going on.

You both come to the conclusion that stealthily tip-toeing your way to the entrance so you can spy is the best option. You move slowly and peek around the edge.

You quickly realize that sneaking around was unnecessary, because he’s definitely not paying attention to you. He only has eyes for Dave.

Karkat and Dave are dancing together. Or at least, you think it’s dancing.

They’re grasping tightly to each other’s arms and are moving their feet, but their movements are off beat and clumsy. You know Dave knows how to dance, but you guess you don’t know if he’s ever danced with another person before and it’s harder than he expected or if he’s just trying to show Karkat how to dance. It could be a combination of both things.

You don’t think you’ve ever seen Dave’s face this vibrant before, or his smile quite this wide.

Karkat’s laughing. You realize this is only the second time you’ve ever heard it, aside from the drunken evening you’d spent together. But this is a better sound. A brighter one.

Watching them is...really sweet. So sweet that you can’t help but smile.

You squeeze Kanaya’s hand.

Dave tries to spin Karkat, probably in an attempt to play up his incredibly false persona as a smooth, suave cooldude and not the raging dorkaholic he so obviously is. You watch as Dave pulls Karkat and manages to get him to do a half turn.

Then Karkat stumbles over his own feet, and he starts to fall. Dave is quick to try and catch him, but his arms come too late and he’s pulled down with Karkat instead.

You hold your breath and wait for their reactions. Maybe Karkat will be upset that Dave wasn’t able to catch him or didn’t tell him what the fuck he was doing. Or perhaps Dave will say something about Karkat being clumsier than he thought he would be and they’ll give up dancing altogether.

But instead of any of that, Karkat continues to laugh.

“Dave, what the fuck? What kind of catch was that?”
“Sorry, man.” Dave shrugs between his own laughter. “Guess I can’t help falling for you.”

“Don’t use cliche lines with me!” You can see Karkat’s face redden from here. “Fuck you!”

“You loved it and you know it. Fuck you.”

Dave starts to sit up, but Karkat pulls him back by his cape and draws him down closer to him until...

until...

oh god, they’re about to kiss you can’t be here you can’t watch Dave’s not even comfortable discussing the fact he has a boyfriend with you right now, there’s no way he’d be alright with you and Kanaya catching him making out with him.

There’s not a lot of time, you have to act quickly.

“Kanaya, I think I saw something over there!” You say a little too loudly as you point down the hall, blocking her view of the boys. “We should go look at it.”

“Yes, I agree, let’s go.” Kanaya replies a little too hastily for her not to be aware of what’s going on in the other room.

You’ll question her about it later. For now you satisfy yourself with dragging her down the hall and away from the scene.

There is, of course, nothing to look at anywhere near the end of the hallway. You both put on quite the show of acting like you thought you saw something very interesting that turned out to be a shadow or a stain on the wall.

You look at Kanaya and you shrug. “I guess there was nothing here after all.”

Kanaya nods. “Yes. What a shock.”

“I guess that means,” you begin before clearing your throat and trying to act casual as you yell down the hall, “WE SHOULD SEE WHAT THE BOYS ARE UP TO.”

“Yes, the boys.” Kanaya emulates your screaming. “I think they’re in Can Town. Should we check there?”

“I don’t see why not.” You grab her hand once again. “Here we go, off to Can Town.”

“We’re such great friends.” Kanaya mumbles to you as you walk slowly down the hall, allowing the boys enough time to separate.


“They owe us now.”

“Obviously.”

You knock on the wall before you enter Can Town just as a courtesy to them. The music’s still playing, but instead of dancing they’re standing a few feet away from each other. Dave is looking at at the floor, his hands shoved in his pockets. Karkat’s arms are crossed over his chest, and he glares at you as if you just ruined his day.
Which to be fair, you may have unintentionally done.

“Was there something you wanted?” He asks. You can tell he’s trying and failing not to snap at you. Again, you can’t really blame him.

“Yes, actually.” You reply, strolling into the room. “There was something from you I wanted to get, Karkat. Before I do that, though, I’m curious. What are you two doing?”

“That’s none of yo-”

“I was trying to teach Karkat how to dance.” Dave interrupts, drawing all the attention onto him. His face is a deep shade of tomato red. “It’s about high time this asshole learns how to cut the absolute fuck out of a rug. Turn that boring ass Jute into a flurry of snowflakes and paperdolls using nothing but his own sharply busted moves. Then he’s gonna drop it like it’s hot and set fire to that fucked up rug because let’s face it that shit’s never gonna be the same again and no way is grandma gonna be okay with you cutting up her rug like that. Because really Karkat, what the fuck, that bitch was an antique and you all went and wrecked it worse than that time Fluffy got explosive diarrhea and literally shit all over that thing. Literally worse than old liquid dog shit is what you did to this ancient rug, Karkat. What do you have to say for yourself?”

He glares accusingly at Karkat.

Karkat’s eyebrows are furrowed in confusion. “I’m....sorry?”

“Yeah, you fucking should be, Karkat.” Then Dave turns back to you and shrugs. “Also maybe the robot at some point if I feel like.”

“That’s an awful lot of dance moves you’re trying to teach, Dave.” You say. “Just how are you planning to manage that?”

“By putting my blood, sweat and tears into it, Rose.” Dave replies. “And by taking notes during Step Up.”

You snort. “You watched Step Up?”

“We actually watched Step Up, Step Up 2, and A Bronzeblood Causes Destruction To A Schoolfeeding Hive System Dedicated To Rhythmic Gyrations And Is Sentenced To Torment With-”

Dave puts his hand over Karkat’s mouth.

“-we watched Troll Step Up.”

Karkat rips Dave’s hand off his mouth. “And we also watched The Sequel In Whch Similar But Not At All Related Events To The First Feature, Titled A Bronzeblood Causes De-”

“Troll Step Up 2!” Dave yells over Karkat’s seemingly flawless recitation of the exhaustively long title. “We also watched Troll Step Up 2.”

“I can’t believe you watched Troll Step Up 2 without me, Karkat.” Kanaya shakes her head in disappointment. “You know how I feel about the tealblooded dancer in that movie.”

“Sorry.” Karkat doesn’t sound sorry at all. “I’m all for watching it again if you want.”

“Of course you are.” Kanaya rolls her eyes and smirks. “Any excuse to watch that bronzeblood
rhythmically gyrate, right?"

“I’m not ashamed to admit you’re right.” Karkat grins, offering her an unapologetic shrug. “I know what I like.”

“Wait a minute, you’re telling me you only wanted to watch those movies so you could look at Channing Tatum shake his groove thang for six hours.”

Karkat turns his head and without skipping a beat says, “Yes.”

“Alright, fair enough.”

“So all of your dance knowledge is information you gleaned from this series of dance movies and its alien equivalent?” You ask, returning to the original subject.

“Yeah,” Dave nods, “that and my personal experience. You know how good I am at dancing, Rose, you’ve witnessed my glorious pock and lock firsthand.”

“Yes. Actually, it’s a little known fact that your moves were so sick I contracted a life threatening disease and died. That’s actually how I god tiered.”

“Interesting.” Kanaya says. “And here I was under the incorrect notion that it had to do with you blowing up the sun.”

“No, that happened after.” You correct. “Dave slayed me with his dancing first. That’s what got me.”

“So where the fuck are these killer moves now, Dave?” Karkat asks, tilting his head towards Dave. “Show them to me.”

“I don’t know, Karkat.” Dave says, shaking his head uncertainly. “Are you sure your poor mortal eyes will be able to handle it?”

Karkat holds up a finger and rummages around in his pocket for a moment before pulling out a pair of shades, almost identical to Dave’s own. He smirks. “I’ll take my chances.”

“Alright,” Dave holds his hands up in surrender and backs a few feet up, “if you insist.”

He looks like he’s about ready to start busting some sweet moves, but then he pauses.

“Hey, Rose,” Dave holds a hand out to you, “wanna join me?”

You try to contain your elation at the offer behind your smile as you take his hand. “Of course.”

You fail miserably.

Luckily for you, so does Dave. “Awesome.”

You and Dave start dancing together. The song isn’t particularly fast or easy to dance to, and upon clearer focus on it you believe it might be an old Dave Strider original. You try to keep the beat as best you can, and when you can’t you just try to look like you’re doing it on purpose.

It takes a few minutes for you to loosen up and really get into the groove, but when you do you feel the music more than you hear it, and you stop caring about how you look dancing at all. In fact, you have fun with it.
Dave grabs your hand and spins you. Unlike Karkat, you manage to stay on your feet.

“See, Karkat, that’s what I was trying to do with you.” Dave says. “It’s not that hard.”

Karkat raises his shades long enough to roll his eyes at him. Then he turns to Kanaya. “Do you want to dance, Kanaya?”

“Well, I was hoping my matesprit would ask me,” Kanaya sighs, sliding her gaze over to you. You shimmy your shoulders and wink at her, “but since that has yet to happened, I would love to.”

“Glad to be your second choice.”

“Honestly, out of the three of you, Dave would be my second choice.” Kanaya takes Karkat’s hand. “You’re a little stiff.”

“Ha!”

“Fuck you, Dave!” Karkat snaps at him.

Watching Kanaya dance is wonderful because despite what you may have thought, she’s almost as bad as Karkat. Her movements are fluid, but incredibly awkward. It might be in the way she moves her shoulders, are how her hips somehow always manage to sway perfectly off beat. Maybe it’s the fact that she’s trying to dance with Karkat, who apparently doesn’t understand the concept of tempo or moving his feet.

A song that is by no means slow but is probably the closest you’re going to get to slow in this case starts.

God, you just want to dance with Kanaya so badly right now.

“Karkat,” you call over to him, “can I cut in?”

“Rose, I don’t give a shit what you cut into, please don’t ever make the mistake that I do again.” Karkat says as he walks over to trade places with you. “Go ahead.”

You give Karkat a quick high five to Karkat on your way over to Kanaya. She’s smirking at you by the time you get over to her.

Kanaya wraps her arms around your neck. “So I see you couldn’t resist forever.”

“Have you seen yourself dance?” You laugh as you lay one of your hands on her hips and the other on her shoulder. You press her against you. “How could I not?”

She rolls her hip against your hand, and you burst into a fit of giggles. You press your face into her shoulder and start swaying.

You don’t actually know how to slow dance, but you think this is the general idea. Pressing your body against hers, her skin warm beneath your fingers. Shuffling your feet every so often and swaying so it at least seems like you’re actually moving as opposed to just cuddling while standing up.

In this moment, you feel like you could melt into her.

So you do.

“Rose!” Kanaya chuckles as you lean all your weight against her and close your eyes.
You want to stay like this forever.

You feel like if you tried hard enough, you could do just that.

Across the room, you can hear Dave and Karkat laughing again. You crack open an eye and glance their direction.

They’re holding hands and spinning around. It’s...not exactly dancing. They’re an entire arm’s length apart and they’re not moving to a specific beat or anything. Just spinning.

But they definitely look like they’re having fun, and really that’s what’s important, right?

There’s stomping rapidly approaching Can Town, and of course you know exactly what it is that’s making those sounds. You elect to ignore it until you actually need to deal with it.

“Hey!” Vriska yells as she enters the room. “Just what the fuck is going on in here?”

She’s scowling, both her hands on her hips. You can see Terezi still ambling her way down the hall behind her.

“Sup, guys.” Terezi greets as she squeezes her way into the room, past Vriska. “Why the hell wasn’t I invited to this?”

“You?” Vriska derides. “What about me?”

“What about you?” Terezi teases back, bumping her with her hip. “Obviously you're my plus one.”

“And yet you wonder why you’re not invited to anything anymore.” Karkat calls out to her as he lets go of Dave’s hands.

Out of all the relationships you’ve analyzed you still can’t figure out why Karkat seems to love talking shit with and about Vriska so much. You don’t really care enough to spend more time thinking about it than you need to. As far as you care, that’s just how they are.

“Well fuck, that’s too bad.” Vriska rolls her eyes. “I was just over here dying to get in on your spinning party.”

“It’s this new craze called dancing, Vriska.” Kanaya says as she dips you. “Perhaps you’ve heard of it?”

From your current upside down dipped position, you watch Vriska grit her teeth. “Oh yeah, I’ve heard about dancing before. In fact, I’d say I’m pretty fucking great at it.”

“I can’t believe you guys were having a dance contest without us!” Terezi says disappointedly.

“We’re not having a contest,” you correct, “we’re simply dancing.”

“Oh, so you guys are just split up into teams of two for no god damn reason and the Mayor is just over there judging nothing. Nice try, Rose, but you can’t fool me. We want in on this.”

“Okay, sure, whatever.” Dave shrugs. “It’s a free space rock.”

“What were you planning on getting out of this?” You ask out of curiosity as Kanaya pulls you back to standing.

“Bragging rights.”
“The satisfaction of kicking your wastechutes at yet another thing.” Vriska answers. “And since Terezi and I are late, I think it’s only fair that we get to choose the next song.”

“I have no problem with that.” Dave gestures for them to follow him. You guess he’s taking them to wherever he’s keeping his music player.

Karkat is left by himself. He takes off his pair of shades and shoves them back into his pocket.

You exchange a glance with Kanaya. This seems like the best time to ask about your movie.

You hate having to pull away from her, but you resign yourself to just holding her hand. “Karkat.”

He almost jumps. “Yeah?”

“We actually did come in here for a reason,” you admit, “I wanted to get my Romeo and Juliet movie back. You remember, the one that I lent you awhile ago? We wanted to watch it.”

And by lent you mean he found it and informed you he borrowed it to watch and promised he would bring it back later.

“Oh, fuck.” Karkat’s eyes widen with surprise. “I completely forgot about that, it’s just taking up space on my shelf right now. Shit. Could I watch it with you? Or was that something you wanted to do by yourselves? You know what, that was a dumbass question I’ll just borrow the shit again later.”

You and Kanaya exchange another look. She arches an eyebrow, and you nod.

“Karkat, I don’t think either of us would mind if you wanted to watch it with us.” Kanaya says.

“Cool,” Karkat grins, “I’ll go tell Dave the new plan.”

Karkat runs off to where Dave and the girls are standing. You look up at Kanaya and smile at her. “I guess we have our group for Unculled now.”

“Yeah, I guess we do.” She laughs. “I hope they don’t mind that we’re going to be kissing quite a bit during the movie.”

“They’ll live,” you shrug, “they’ll be talking through most of it, anyway.”

Vriska and Terezi sidle back over beside you and Kanaya. Dave and Karkat, you note, stay put where they are.

Vriska stretches. “I hope you guys are ready, cuz you’re going down!”

“It wasn’t a contest, but sure.” You wrap an arm around Kanaya’s waist. “Bring it.”

It strikes you right then as you watch Vriska continue to stretch and you tune out her smack talk (and Terezi does some actual smacking to reign her in a little), as your brother and his kind of secret/totally obvious boyfriend hold up the dance contest you are now a part of so they can talk more by themselves, as you stand here, holding your girlfriend close to you, that this is it.

This is it, and it’s already so much more than you ever expected to get.

Your friends, your girlfriend, your family, you found them on this meteor, and you found your love there, too.
This is the happiest and most content you’ve ever been in your entire life. You’ll admit, there were a lot of moments throughout this journey that you’ve felt a little too immature, a bit childish, silly even. And you’re certain there will still be many many more of those moments to come.

But that’s alright. You’re allowed to be childish and immature and maybe even silly if you really feel like it.

There will be time for growing up, in the future that you are certain will come.

Until then, you’d like to enjoy being a kid for just awhile longer. After all, you have people to enjoy the experience with.

Chapter End Notes

~The End~

I’d like to take this time to thank everyone who read this fic again. Thank you so SO MUCH for reading this giant ball of fluff and occasional feelings, and I hope you liked it! You’re all wonderful and I appreciate you so much for reading and being so patient with me between updates and just being all around sweet and kind people.

Thank you so much for reading, and I hope you have a beautiful night <3 <3

Works inspired by this fic:

Read a dark road but we'll cross it together by CitrouilleRouge

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!