Silent So Long

by FrauSchneider

Summary

This was written as the prequel to 'Box of Delights' - I soon noticed that the timeline I set it in didn't quite match up to the events on B.O.D. so I had to wrap the original piece within another story and make a few adjustments - especially when I noticed Rammoj had been writing on a similar theme in 'Let Me Break' (go read it if you haven't already!) - so I'm still doing some editing to make sure my story is as different as possible.

Notes

As always, this is a work of fiction.
Richard awoke with a start, heart pounding a staccato tempo in his chest, his breath coming in rapid, shallow pants, sweat beading at his brow. He dislodged the arm of the sleeper next to him… Jane, Janet, Jackie? Not that her name mattered to him, she was just one more in a long line of groupies he’d wound up in bed with over the years, in the end they tended to blur into one nameless, faceless entity.

He got halfway to the bathroom before Schneider spoke from the other bed in their shared hotel room, the drummer whispering so as not to wake either of the young women in their beds.

“Reesh, are you okay? You were talking in your sleep again.”

Richard paused and turned his head to look at his bandmate.

“Yeah, it was just a bad dream, sorry if I woke you. Look, would you mind…?” He trailed off, gesturing at the two groupies, before disappearing behind the closed bathroom door.

Schneider rolled his eyes and sighed, waking them up and politely asking them to get dressed and leave quietly – it was still early morning and he’d prefer them not to wake up the other guests in the hotel. After he’d locked the door and put the security chain on, just to be sure, then padded barefoot to the bathroom door, knocking softly.

“Reesh, they’ve gone now. Is it okay for me to come in?”

Getting a positive response, he pushed the door handle down and stepped inside, the tiled floor feeling cool underfoot. Nothing could have prepared him for what followed.

“Okay, so tell me about this drea…oomph!”

Schneider suddenly found himself with a stark-naked Richard flinging his arms around his neck and apparently trying to perform a tonsillectomy with his tongue, in a state of obvious arousal. After the initial shock wore off Schneider gently but firmly pushed the younger man off him and held him at arms length.

“Jeez Reesh! What’s got into you? Don’t tell me you’ve fallen off the wagon and taken ecstasy?”

Richard shook his head. “I’ve not taken anything. I’ve just finally realised that I shouldn’t put things off any longer, that I should say what I think and tell people how I really feel… tell you how I feel about you… that I love you…”

“I love you too Reesh, I love all you guys in the band…” he stopped as Richard shook his head again, frustration evident on his face.

“I don’t mean like that. I mean I’m in love with you. That I want to be with you, as more than friends.”

“Not that I’m not flattered, because I am, I have no interest in becoming just another number on your list of conquests. Just what the hell were you dreaming about anyway? You looked like you’d seen a ghost when you got up!”

“I don’t want you to be ‘one of my conquests’ as you so eloquently put it, I want to be one of yours!” Richard replied, cheeks flushed with embarrassment at his admission, his eyes fixed on the floor, unable to meet Schneider’s steady gaze.
“You want to…oh!” Realising the implication of what Richard was saying hit him. “Are you sure this isn’t the booze from the after-show party talking? Or some other substance?”

“It isn’t! I wasn’t all that drunk, and I’m still clean. I mean everything I’ve just said.” He looked up now, and Schneider could see that Richard’s blue eyes were clear.

“You’ll have to forgive me for sounding dubious, but this all seems to have come out of nowhere. If it’s the dream you just woke up from that’s prompted all of this, then you really need to tell me about it, maybe it’ll help me understand better.”

Schneider noticed that Richard was beginning to shiver in the cool night air. He grabbed one of the complimentary bathrobes – ubiquitous white towelling variety, with the hotel logo embroidered on the chest – from the hooks on the back of the bathroom door, and made Richard put it on.

“Right, we’re both going back out to the bedroom, I’m going to make coffees for us both, and you’re going to tell me everything from the start, okay?”

Perhaps still partly under the influence of his dream, Richard automatically replied, “Yes master.”

Schneider’s eyebrows shot up in surprise, back turned to Richard, his hand hovering above the metal door handle. “Oh boy…” he said under his breath, opening the door and ushering his friend through ahead of him.

“You…sit there…” Schneider pointed to Richard’s bed, “…and I’ll make the drinks.”

He busied himself with the kettle and pouring out the contents of the various sachets into the pair of mugs each room was provisioned with, while Richard obediently sat down on his bed, propping himself up with the myriad pillows and cushions that the hotel apparently deemed necessary, tucking his feet under the covers to keep them warm.

Coffees made, Schneider set Richard’s mug down on the nightstand next to him, and moved round to the other side of the bed, towards his own.

“Christoph… will you…that is, would you mind sitting next to me while I tell you? I’m not sure how thin these walls are, and if I speak much louder than a whisper, I’d be worried that Till and Flake next door might hear me, and I’m sure I’d never hear the end of it, whatever the outcome with you.”

“The thickness of the wall, or lack of, didn’t seem an issue for you earlier when you were screwing that groupie!” Schneider responded, amused. “That was different- they would have been expecting to hear that. Please, Christoph…”

Knowing that Richard generally only addressed him by his first name when he was feeling insecure, or in need of something, Schneider relented.

“Budge over a bit, then. I’ll fall off the edge if I try to sit on the small strip next to you.”

Once Richard had given him sufficient space to settle on the mattress, Schneider sat down on the bed and, after carefully checking for the location of the damp patch, stuck his legs under the covers too. Picking up his mug of coffee with one hand, he slung his other arm around Richard’s shoulders.

“Come on then, out with it…”
Richard shifted so that he could cuddle up to Schneider, resting his head where he could hear his friend’s heart beating out a strong steady rhythm, before taking a deep, calming breath.

“From what I can remember, it started out almost like a flashback, only this was around the time we released ‘Reise Reise’…” he began.
Chapter One

Chapter Summary

Enter the dream...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter One

“For fuck’s sake – it’s just like ‘Mutter’ all over again!” Paul exploded into the dressing room, slamming the door behind him.

“What’s he done now?” There was no need to point out who ‘he’ was.

“He’s not leaving Zoran alone to do his job – sticking his nose in everywhere, picking faults… can’t you do anything about it Till?”

Till rolled his eyes and stubbed out his cigarette, exhaling the last of the smoke as he stood up from the couch.

“I’ll have another word with him, but quite frankly I don’t think it’ll do any good. There’s something eating at him lately, and he refuses to tell me what it is.”

“Do you think anyone will notice if we swap Richard for his doppelganger? Surely it’s worth a try?” Flake suggested, having been subjected to Richard’s controlling behaviour earlier on in the video shoot.

“Don’t put ideas in my head!” Till responded, as he made his way back to the set, in search of the lead guitarist.

The band had been shooting the video for ‘Mein Teil’ over the last couple of days. They’d filmed some external scenes on the Sunday, as they needed a relatively quiet day traffic-wise, causing as little disruption as possible for their fellow Berliners, as it took longer than normal crossing Bismarkstrasse on all fours, particularly for Till, whose old knee injury complained through every take.

Richard had seemed distracted then, seemingly staring off into space. Although he denied it, Till was certain that Richard had snorted coke before they started, he’d noticed that his best friend always seemed to have a stash on him lately.

“Scholle!” Richard turned around at Till’s use of his old nickname.”Can you come here a minute? If that’s okay with you, Zoran, or do you need Richard?”

“No…no…please take all the time you need – I won’t need Richard again until tomorrow,” the director mouthing a silent ‘thank you!’ to Till, unseen by Richard as he approached the singer.

“What do you want, Till?” Richard demanded irritably.

“I was wondering if Khira Li has told you that Nele wants to take her away on holiday?”
Richard nodded.

“So, we need to discuss details, they’re both at my house now, so let’s go!”

“We’re in the middle of shooting a video, in case you haven’t noticed…”

“I had, and we’re both done for the day. Zoran doesn’t need us watching him like a hawk, so come on!”

Very reluctantly, but seeing the determined set to Till’s jaw, Richard acquiesced, picking up his jacket and following Till out to the car park. Till had given him a lift in that morning, so he would have had to ask one of the others to drive him home if he’d stayed behind, but as he’d been at loggerheads with them all day, they would probably have told him he had to walk back.

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Back on set the following morning, while Richard was shooting his scenes with his double, the other members had an impromptu meeting in the dressing room to discuss his behaviour.

“We can’t go through this again – I’ll end up killing him, if he continues for much longer!” This, coming from the normally easy-going Ollie, gave an indication of how bad things were getting between Richard and the others.

“Did you get anything out of him last night, Till?” Schneider asked. “We know last time his divorce was largely responsible, but what’s the reason this time?”

Till sighed. “I tried to get him to open up yesterday, but he clammed up and told me to mind my own business. He’s not had any serious girlfriends lately, so it’s not that. Whatever it is, it’s bad enough to make him start taking coke regularly again, and to lie about it too. I asked Nele if Khira Li had said anything that might give us a clue. All she said was that Richard has been going out almost every night for weeks now, and he was often wasted when he got home, on the nights that he actually made it home. Khira Li said there have been a number of times that he’s not returned until late afternoon. She’s understandably upset and worried. We need to find a way to rein him in and get him off the drugs again.”

“He seems happy enough when he’s working, ignoring his control-freak behaviour. When we were filming on Bismarckstrasse he was joking and happy, wiggling his ass at Schneider for fun!” Flake remarked, before continuing, “Perhaps he just needs another project to work on, or a new hobby?”

“I don’t know about that, but maybe we can get Zoran to agree to a scene change, and get Schneider’s ‘Fraü’ to beat the crap out of Richard? With several takes preferably!” huffed Paul.

Schneider laughed, “I think the ‘Fraü’ would be more than happy to give Richard a good spanking, with or without the cameras rolling!”

“So what are we going to do? Give him an ultimatum or we chuck him out of the band?” Paul asked.

“We better check how we stand legally before doing that, but I’m sure there would be nothing to stop all of us quitting the band instead, leaving him on his own.” Flake replied.

“Look, I know we’re all pretty pissed off with him right now, myself included, but I think we need to uncover the cause of his actions before issuing ultimatums – if for no other reason than to help Khira Li deal with him.”
The others all grumbled, but agreed to give Richard a few weeks to get his act together before taking any action, during which time it was hoped that the cause would be discovered and dealt with.

There was a knock at the door, one of the film crew runners sent by the director to call Schneider to the set for his final scenes. They all decided to watch for a few minutes – the sight of Schneider strutting about in high heels (making his already long legs look longer), and acting coquettishly, being highly entertaining to them. Wolf-whistles and lewd comments followed the drummer all the way from the dressing room, prompting him to verbally chastise them all in the ‘Fraü’s’ most matronly manner.

Richard grinned as he watched Schneider approaching, evidently finding the rare sight as amusing as his colleagues, even slapping Schneider on the backside as he made his way to his mark, earning a sharp slap to the face in response, which the rest of the band applauded.

“Quiet on set please, we’re about to roll. Let’s try and get this done in as few takes as possible, we’re running behind schedule because of all the retakes.”

Richard scowled, knowing that Zoran’s comment was aimed at him, but said nothing, instead sitting down to watch the proceedings. Oliver, Paul and Flake waited until the first scene was in the can before saying their goodbyes, deciding they’d be happy to wait until post-production was finished to see the rest of Schneider’s performance. Till, who’d given Richard a lift in again that morning, resigned himself to waiting until filming was finished, as Richard sat near Zoran, watching every take intently, but only making a few suggestions – much to everyone’s relief.

With the video finally wrapped, Schneider tottered off to remove his costume and makeup. After a brief chat with Zoran, Till wandered outside and found Richard resting on the bonnet of his car, finishing a cigarette while he waited.

“Could you drop me off in town instead of home, please Till? I’ve got a few things I need to get sorted.”

“Sure. Is it anything I can help you with? Stuff for the girls’ holiday together?”

“Uh…no…just some legal stuff. Papers to sign, that kind of thing…”

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Till pulled the car up to the kerbside in the heart of Berlin’s business district. “I can wait for you if you like?”

“Thanks, but I don’t know how long I’m likely to be. You know what sheets full of ‘legalese’ are like to wade through. I can make my own way back, you get off home.”

“If it’s late I’d prefer you to call me rather than taking a taxi.”

“Oh, I won’t be here all night – it’s movie night with Khira Li, she’ll bend my ear if I’m late, not to mention make me pay for several new outfits as an apology – you know what kids are like!”

“Yeah, tell me about it! I’ll probably see you at the weekend to finalise the holiday details?”

“Sure, your place or mine?”

“I’ll call you in a couple of days to arrange it. See you later.”

As Till drove off, he watched Richard enter the front door of a high rise containing several law
firms. What he didn’t see however, was Richard re-emerging onto the street once Till had turned a corner, before disappearing in the opposite direction.

Chapter End Notes

I know the Mein Teil video was shot midweek and not on a Sunday, but I've altered it for artistic purposes
Chapter Two

Till’s phone buzzed noisily on the nightstand, waking him. His bedroom was dark even though it was midsummer, the blackout curtains doing their job effectively. Till looked blearily at the alarm clock, it was a little after 7am, and groaned, reaching for his mobile to answer it.

“Allo?”

“Uncle Till, it’s Khira. Did vati stop over with you last night?”

“No, he said he had business in town, then movie night with you…” he sat up, fully awake as the implication hit, “…did he not make it home last night?”

“When he was late for our movie night, I sent him a text. He replied saying he was still on set and would be late home and not to wait up. I went to bed, but I’ve just gone in to his bedroom to take him a coffee, and his bed’s not been slept in. I thought that maybe you all went to a bar or something after filming, and he ended up crashing with one of you.”

“He’s not here. Don’t worry, we’ll find him. You stay home in case he calls or turns up. If he does, let me know straight away.”

“Okay, thank you. I’ll call the others, shall I? See if he’s with any of them?”

“No, leave it to me, I believe you’ve got some packing to do! I’ll call later, liebchen. Bye.”

“Bye, uncle.”

Till hung up, feeling simultaneously angry and worried. It was very uncharacteristic of Richard to miss anything when it came to Khira Li, and for him to have lied to her – did someone make him do it, or was he trying to hide something? To stop himself from brooding he called the others, on the remote chance that Richard had somehow ended up sleeping over at one of their homes. When all enquiries met with negative responses, they arranged to meet up at the band’s offices in town, and work out a strategy from there.

After a brief discussion over coffee, they decided that they wouldn’t report him missing to the police just yet. It was less than 24 hours since he was last seen, so wouldn’t be considered missing by the authorities until more time had elapsed. Added to that was the possibility that if he was found in possession of coke he would be arrested, and the authorities and critics were just waiting for a reason to tear the band down. Opting to search for him themselves, they split up in order to cover more ground, visiting all their favourite haunts, checking the back streets around the law firm that Till had dropped Richard off outside the previous afternoon.

It was late morning when, after some conservations and exchanges of cash, Till was told by a junkie in a run-down area near the main entertainment district, that Richard had been seen entering a well-known coke den nearby. Fury rising once more, Till phoned Schneider to explain what he’d found out.

“I’ll be happier if I’ve got someone watching my back as I go in, whether we find Richard there or not.”

“I’ll be with you shortly, I need to pick something up on my way to you.”

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Schneider picked Till up, then following his directions to the den, parked round the corner. As they got out of the car, Till saw Schneider tucking a pistol under his shirt.

“Just in case, hopefully we won’t need it,” the drummer stated, noting Till’s expression.

Till nodded, and the pair made their way into the building, a former factory that had obviously seen better days. There was a chain-link fence encircling the perimeter, which had long since been cut open to allow passage through. Inside, the building was dusty and had fallen into disrepair. There were a few rooms, presumably former administration offices, that had been taken over by addicts – filthy mattresses littered the floors, bed sheets and blankets covered in dry vomit and who knew what other stains on them providing minimal cover for the makeshift beds’ occupants.

There was no sign of Richard in these first few rooms, so the pair moved further on, checking each room methodically. The main factory-floor area was now a cavernous space, and judging by the large quantity of cans and bottles and a stack of amplifiers and disco lights at one end, it was apparent it was the location of illegal raves and parties.

Carrying on through the building, they climbed a set of stairs to the first floor, finding a few people wandering about, obviously having only just woken up. One of the men drifting about was wearing the distinctive jacket Richard had been sporting the previous day. Grabbing the man, Till growled, “That’s my friend’s jacket – take it off! Tell me where he is!” He raised a fist, threateningly.

“My jacket now – your friend gave it to me as payment, so get your mitts off!”

“Payment for what?”

The junkie looked at Till as if he were stupid. “Blow, of course! He’s back there, you can ask him yourself!”

“Hold him Schneider, I want to check his pockets.”

Till patted the man down, checking that the jacket didn’t contain Richard’s phone, wallet and keys. Finding nothing, Till moved on to the room that the junkie had indicated. Opening the door he said, “You can let the little prick go, he’s telling the truth.”

Schneider joined Till in the dingy room. There were cushions strewn all over the floor, and a couple of sofas pushed up to one corner. It was on one of these that they found Richard, obviously out cold, evidence of drug use on an adjacent table. There were half-snorted lines on a mirror, a razor blade that had been used to cut the coke into lines, along with a few straws for inhaling the powder. Bottles of vodka and beer cans all but covered the floor around the cushions, as were a few people the pair didn’t recognise.

After checking Richard for a pulse and that he was breathing, he then made sure there were no needle marks, as anybody could have done anything to the guitarist while he was lying prone.

“Richard – wake up!” Till shouted, slapping the guitarist about the face to try and rouse him, to no effect. Exasperated, he turned to Schneider, “I’m going to have to carry the little shit – can you see if you can locate his stuff when I pick him up?”

Schneider nodded, moving forward. Till picked up Richard in a ‘fireman’s lift’ and waited while Schneider conducted his search. Fortunately it appeared that Richard had put his valuables in his rear jeans pockets, and having fallen asleep on his back, made it extremely difficult for anyone equally wasted to rob him. There was no sign of his cigarettes though, a major loss for Richard, but his friends decided he could live without them, adding to his punishment. Whether or not he’d
want to live after they’d finished with him when he finally woke would be another matter.

They made their way out to the car, a couple of the addicts trying to stop them, but just the sight of the pistol as Schneider moved his hand to it, sent them scurrying away like the rats that roamed the factory.

Till dumped Richard unceremoniously onto the backseat of Schneider’s car, before sliding in to the front passenger seat. Engaging the child-lock as he started the engine, in case Richard tried to make a run for it if he came round, Schneider turned to Till. “So, what now? What do we tell Khira Li and the others?”

“Our friends, we tell the truth. I’ll think of something to tell Khira Li. We need to take him somewhere to dry out. The hospital’s out of the question, as they’ll involve the police, and the paps would probably find out...we’ve tried taking him to rehab before, but he’d just leave at the first opportunity, with it being voluntary. I can’t take him to mine, as Nele will feel bound to tell her sister everything, and I don’t think either of them should have that worry.”

Till’s brows furrowed in concentration, as he considered their dilemma.

“In which case, we can take him to mine, I can chain him up if necessary!”

“Chains?” Till raised an eyebrow, curious.

Schneider rolled his eyes, seeing where Till’s train of thought was headed. “Bike chains, Till, and the chains I use for securing the power tools in my garage.”

“Right, I believe you!” Till smirked.

“Look, the others will most likely want to kill Richard at the moment, especially after this stunt, and while I could quite happily strangle him myself right now, I’ve learnt how to keep my anger in check.”

“Okay, I’ll help you with sorting him out, then I’ll think of what to tell Khira Li on my way home. I’ll update the others while you drive.”
Chapter Three

Chapter Notes

I know these chapters are coming fairly quickly - they were pre-written, I’ve just been busy with work, and I want to get as much uploaded as possible before I go away next week. Hope you enjoy!

“Oh god – I’m gonna puke!” Richard announced to the room as he woke up.

Schneider, who at that moment was passing on the landing as he gathered various items he thought he’d need to help sobering Richard up, heard him and dashed into the room, before practically throwing the smaller man into the en-suite bathroom.

“If you’re going to barf, you can do it in the toilet and not on my clean sheets!”

He lifted the seat up, and propped Richard over the bowl, just in time. Richard heaved several times, emptying his stomach, before finally sitting back, body trembling from the exertions. He accepted the glass of water Schneider was holding out for him, taking a few sips, before leaning back against the cool tiles on the wall.

“Are you going to be sick again?” Schneider asked as he closed the toilet lid and pressed the flush.

“I don’t think so, not for a while…”

It dawned on Richard who he was talking to, and where he was, having visited Schneider numerous times in the past. His eyes widened as reality hit home.

“How…how did I get here?”

“After Khira Li phoned Till this morning asking if any of us knew where you were, we mounted a search party. Till and I found you in that old factory – you’re lucky you weren’t murdered in your sleep…”

“Oh, they wouldn’t have hurt me, they know I have money, so they want me to keep coming back.”

“I wasn’t referring to the junkies and dealers.”

Richard looked up at Schneider, the drummer’s blue eyes ice-cold and hard.

“The others have been wanting to torch you for weeks now, and even Till was ready to beat you to a pulp after how and where we found you. Right now, he’s working out what to tell your daughter, who’s been frantic with worry since she realised you were missing. Honestly, you’re a lying worthless piece of shit! I ought to shoot you and put us all out of your misery!”

“You don’t mean that…?” his voice wavered and he paled further as Schneider casually pulled the pistol from his waistband and set it to one side.

“No, you’re right. I’d stage your death as a suicide instead. No prison for me that way, so the band can continue without you. We’ve already discussed that as an option…”
“You wouldn’t! You…you can’t!” Richard stammered.

“Do you really want me to call the others so that you can ask them yourself? Are you sure you can handle the truth? Or do you want to test our resolve by going out and getting wasted again? Are you sure you can trust junkies and dealers not to kill you or rob you blind? Who’d look after Khira Li then?”

“Stop, please…stop it! …I… you don’t understand…you don’t know what I’m going through!”

“Till’s given you plenty of opportunities to tell him, but you just push him away.” Schneider responded accusingly.

“I know… I just…I can’t…shit…!” he lurched forwards toward the toilet, managing to get the lid and seat up high enough to stick his head over the bowl as another wave of nausea hit. Schneider pushed the seat the rest of the way up, waiting patiently for Richard to finish, before handing him some more water. Richard accepted it gratefully, rinsing his mouth out first, then swallowing the remainder, as he felt dehydration setting in.

“Thank you” he said in a small voice, handing the empty glass back.

“Come on, let’s get you cleaned up, these clothes you’re in stink.”

He helped Richard strip off, the guitarist still feeling wobbly and weak, then opened the shower cubicle door. He set the water running and checked the temperature before pushing Richard inside. The guitarist sat in one corner, knees drawn up, head resting on his folded arms. Much to Schneider’s surprise Richard started sobbing as the water started to flow over him.

Schneider had initially decided that he would be tough on his friend when he regained consciousness, but seeing the younger man in such a distressed state, took pity on him instead. Stripping himself down to his underwear, he got into the cubicle and knelt down next to Richard. He squirted some shampoo into one hand, then ran it over Richard’s hair, creating a lather as he worked it through to his scalp, before rinsing it off and repeating his actions with the matching conditioner.

When he was satisfied that Richard’s hair was clean, he picked up a sponge and squeezed a dollop of body wash onto it, the viscous liquid foaming up as he worked the sponge over Richard’s lithe muscular frame.

“Reesh, turn around so I can wash your front, please.”

Richard did as instructed, but kept his head bowed down, not meeting Schneider’s gaze. Having finished with the sponge, the drummer grabbed a facecloth, and with his free hand lifted Richard’s chin up so that he had access to Richard’s face, slowly and carefully wiping away the remnants of the makeup that had been applied for the video shoot.

“At you get, let’s get you towelled down and into bed.”

After turning the shower off, he helped Richard to his feet and led the submissive younger man from the cubicle, before draping a large bath towel around him, starting to dry him off, rubbing the towel over Richard’s chest, back and arms.

“If only you were this submissive all the time, things would be so much easier for everyone.”

Richard looked up at him, eyes puffy and bloodshot from crying. “I would be, for you, if you want me to.”
Schneider smiled. “You shouldn’t tease, Richard. I’d be tempted to take you on as my submissive, given half a chance.”

“I’d let you…”

“Okay, you’re obviously still under the influence of whatever the hell you were drinking and snorting last night. Here, put on this t-shirt and these boxers, and then you can get into bed and sleep it off. We can talk in the morning, when you’ll no doubt be mortified at the memory of saying that, and deny all knowledge of it too!”

Richard was still unsteady on his feet, so Schneider half-carried him to the bed, popping him under the duvet before looking for some clean and dry clothes for himself to wear.

“Doom?”

“Yes, Reesh?”

“Will you stay with me tonight?”

“I am, I’ll be dozing in that chair, making sure you don’t choke on your own vomit in your sleep.”

“Would you mind cuddling for a bit, then? Until I’m asleep?”

Schneider turned from the chest of drawers he’d just retrieved a t-shirt from for himself and regarded the guitarist, surprised at the plaintive tone coming from the normally proud, arrogant young man.

“Sure, as long as you promise not to kick or punch me in the morning when you remember.”

“I promise, I swear.”

Slipping the t-shirt on, Schneider moved to climb into bed beside Richard, thinking just to hold him, spooned together, but once he was under the covers, Richard turned around and buried his face against Schneider’s chest. He flung one arm around Schneider’s side to his back, his hand grabbing onto the spare fabric of Schneider’s t-shirt, as if it could anchor him there.

The older man was surprised for the second time in as many minutes, and hesitated for a moment, before wrapping both his arms around Richard, holding him close, as the guitarist quietly cried himself to sleep.
Richard didn’t let go of Schneider all night, his sleep restless and full of nightmares. Schneider held him through all of it, whispering soothingly to try and calm him.

“I’m here Reesh, I’ve got you. I won’t let anyone hurt you, or any thing…” He just wished he knew what it was that was tormenting the younger man, what demons had driven him back to taking drugs.

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“Schneider?”

“Mmm?”

“Thank you… for looking after me… I know you didn’t have to, and that I don’t deserve it…”

“I wasn’t about to abandon you, when you need help the most. You’d have done the same if our positions were reversed.”

“You would never be as big a screw up as me, and anyway I’m too selfish, don’t argue, please…I know I’m a shitty friend and an even worse father.”

“You’re a better man than you give yourself credit for, I’ve seen proof of that many a time over the years. It’s evident that you’ve got some stuff to work through at the moment. Are you ready to tell anyone what it is? If not one of us, maybe speak to a professional?”

“I don’t want to see a therapist…”

“Do you want me to call Till, then? You can normally talk to him about anything.”

“Can I just stay here for a bit? I feel comfortable and safe with you…”

Schneider sighed. “Yes, you can stay, but you need to tell someone what the problem is soon, so we can help you, okay?”

“I will…just, not yet.” He was quiet for a moment. “Has Till spoken to Khira Li?”

“I had a text from him last night, after you fell asleep. He’s let her know that you’re safe but not feeling well, so we’re looking after you while she’s away so she doesn’t have to worry. He’s helping her and Nele sort their trip. They fly out tomorrow morning, so I can take you home after she’s gone if you don’t want her to see you in this state.”

“Thank you.” He snuggled closer to Schneider and promptly fell back to sleep. Schneider looked down at his friend nestled in his arms and smiled fondly, tracing the outline of Richard’s face with one hand.

***

Schneider woke Richard reluctantly mid-morning, needing to relieve himself, gently untangling himself from the guitarist. As he was washing his hands, Richard appeared in the doorway, looking tired and dishevelled, stubble forming a shadow on his face.

“Miss me already Reesh?” Schneider asked amused.
Richard managed a weak smile. “Something like that, yeah. Uh, I was wondering if you’d take a look at something for me, give me your opinion…?”

“Of course, what is it?”

As Richard started dropping his boxers, Schneider remarked, “If you’re going to ask me if I think your dick is big enough, I can tell you already that the answer’s yes.” Anger etched on his face Richard retorted, as he started pulling the underwear back up, “You see – this is why I haven’t spoken to anyone, I should’ve known better…”

“Richard, I’m sorry – old habits die hard I guess. I can see whatever it is means a lot to you, I promise, I’ll take it seriously. Go ahead, what is it?”

Richard inhaled deeply, as if steeling himself for what followed. “A few weeks ago, while I was, well… that bit doesn’t matter… I found a lump here…” he indicated the left side of his scrotum, the lump wasn’t immediately noticeable, until slight pressure was applied.

Nodding that he could see what Richard was referring to, Schneider asked, “What has your doctor said about it?”

“I haven’t been…” the younger man admitted, somewhat guiltily.

“What!? Jeez Reesh! You should’ve gone to get it checked out straight away! What if it’s cancer?”

“That’s why I’ve not been. I’ve been too scared to find out the truth. I thought, maybe, it was nothing and would go away on its own, but it hasn’t.”

“And you’ve been stewing on this for weeks? It’s no wonder you’re such a basket-case! Right, we’re going to have breakfast, get dressed and then I’m driving you straight round for a proper check-up – and no arguing – I’ll drag your unconscious form there if I have to! After that, you’re going to apologise to the others for acting like a complete asshole!” Schneider states, plans of action and strategies for dealing with Richard formulating in his mind.

“Can’t it wait…” The rest of Richard’s question was literally choked off as Schneider moved swiftly, grabbing Richard by the throat and slamming him against the bathroom door.

“You will do what you are told, when you are told, or you will be severely punished, you whiny little bitch!”

Eyes wide with shock, Richard struggled and tried prying Schneider’s hands from his throat, gasping for air. Schneider released his grip, allowing Richard to drop to the floor. The drummer crouched down in front of him. “Still want to be my submissive?”

Richard looked up at him, stunned.

“Well, I’m waiting…”

“Yes…”

“Yes, WHAT?”

Realising his omission, Richard responded, “Yes, master.”

“Good boy. Do as you’re told today and you’ll get a reward later.” He helped Richard up. “I do have to ask though – why do you want to be my submissive, all of a sudden? Had I known you
were into dom/sub play I would’ve pegged you as a dom, for sure…”

“You’d have been right. Up to now, whenever I’d managed to persuade any of my previous lovers to try it, I’ve always been the dominant one, regardless of whether they were male or female. I’ve always thought that because I’ve always been a bit of a control freak…”

“I’m shocked, I had no idea you were…” Schneider interrupted, feigning surprise.

“Haha, very funny. As I was saying… because of my control tendencies, I thought that being a dom would be perfect for me, but I didn’t really derive any pleasure from it. After that photoshoot for Kerrang! Something clicked. I realised that I needed to relinquish control, then seeing you as the ‘Fraü’ and being one of her ‘dogs’, I figured that if I was going to experiment with it, who better than someone in the band?”

“So not me specifically? I’m hurt…” Schneider mock-sniffed.

“Oh, definitely you specifically. While I know that Till would probably be willing to give it a go, assuming that he hasn’t already, I think it would be a bit too weird considering our shared history. Paul would definitely get a kick out of tying me down and having his way with me, but I don’t think I could take him seriously as a dom. You, however, are taller and stronger than me, not to mention incredibly good-looking, and as you’ve just proved, are more than capable of throwing me around when it’s called for. It’s an open secret that you’re experienced as a dom, too. As for time-wise, now that I feel as though everything is unravelling around me, I think that now’s the perfect time for someone to step in and take control.”

“You’ve given this a lot of thought, evidently. Okay, if I agree to take you on, until we both decide to dissolve the agreement, whenever we’re together I’m in charge, both in private and in public. Calling me ‘master’ in public is prohibited, but required in private at all times. Similarly I will not make any references that would tip anyone off that you’re my sub. However, if I make a suggestion or tell you to do something while out in public, it should be treated as a command. Disobedience will be punished behind closed doors at my convenience. Good behaviour will similarly be rewarded as it pleases me to do so. Obviously, when we’re working, you have complete autonomy artistically, as any change would be regarded suspiciously by the others. We need to establish your safe word, for when you feel you cannot fulfil a particular command, or if you’re in too much pain. Do you agree to these terms?”

“Yes, master. Could I ask a question, please, master?” he added just in time.

“Yes, master. If you’re willing, I’d like us to have a…a romantic relationship, master.”

Richard nodded, apprehensively, as the thought that Schneider might not harbour any romantic feelings for him occurred to him.

“Use your words, Richard.”

“Yes, master. If you’re willing, I’d like us to have a…a romantic relationship, master.”

Schneider pulled Richard close to him, and cupping the smaller man’s chin in one hand, tilted Richard’s head up to meet the kiss he was leaning down for. They kissed hungrily, tongues jostling with each other until Richard relaxed, reminding himself that he needed to surrender
control to Schneider. Just as Schneider felt his cock beginning to twitch, he broke off.

“I’m not going to fuck you, or mark you in any way, until after you’ve been to the doctor, and spoken with the others. As they know you spent last night with me, it would be obvious who was responsible, so the sooner we get your visits done, the sooner we can get started. Just one last thing, if you’re found doing coke again, from here on out, the deal finishes, all of it. No second chances, you will be left to fend for yourself. Understood?”

“Yes master.”

“Okay, let’s find some clothes to fit you, and we’ll set off straight after breakfast.”
Richard extinguished the cigarette he’d been smoking in an effort to calm himself before he joined Schneider, who was patiently waiting by the door leading to the band’s private office space. They’d driven there directly from the doctor’s surgery, where Richard had been given a referral slip. Once he’d spoken with the band, Schneider would be driving him to his appointment, which wasn’t for a couple of hours.

“Ready?”

“No… but it’s not as if you’re giving me any choice in the matter, is it?” Richard replied, sounding very much like a surly emo teenager, causing Schneider to grin.

“What?” Richard demanded, eyes narrowing.

“I’ll tell you later. After you…” Schneider held the door open.

“Is that so I can’t make a run for it?”

“No, it’s so I can watch your sexy ass wiggle as you climb the stairs in front of me.” He slapped Richard’s backside to get him to move.

When they reached the top of the stairs, they walked down the short corridor leading to the large office space. Pushing the door open, Richard could only spot Till and Flake, occupying a sofa each, chatting genially. Till’s facial expression soured on seeing the guitarist, but still got up and gave him a hug.

“Paul and Ollie will be here in a few minutes, you might as well make yourself comfortable while we wait. Hey Schneider, how are you?”

Richard busied himself by making coffees for both him and Schneider, while the drummer exchanged small talk with Till and Flake. He sat down on the chaise-longue, tucking himself into the corner rather than stretching out as was his usual custom. Schneider perched next to him, knowing that his proximity would help calm some of Richard’s nerves and deter him from bolting for the door. While the three other men engaged in conversation, Richard sat with his head bowed, nursing his coffee in both hands while simultaneously smoking a cigarette. If any further proof of his anxiety were needed, one of his legs was jiggling up and down, which Richard seemed oblivious to until Schneider nudged him in the side.

“Hey, earth to Richard…did you hear what I said?”

Richard snapped out of his reverie. “What?”

“I’ve told the others that you need to get something off your chest and they’re not to interrupt you. So, off you go…”

Richard was startled to discover that Paul and Ollie had arrived, got drinks, and sat down, all without him noticing. He realised that he was now the centre of attention, which would normally be his ideal state, but now only served to make him feel very small and uncomfortable. At further prompting from Schneider, he told the others about his discovery, and how that had resulted in him trying to escape reality rather than facing the issue head on, apologised for his poor behaviour and attitude over recent weeks. He continued by telling them that, following his visit to his doctor that morning, he would be going to see an oncology specialist at a private hospital that afternoon. He omitted any mention of his and Schneider’s personal arrangement, save for Schneider agreeing
to keep him in line, making sure he attended all appointments, keeping him off all drugs (apart from any prescribed by medical staff), and looking after him in the event that further treatment were needed. He asked Till if he’d be willing to look after Khira Li if he needed in-patient treatment, which the singer agreed to unequivocally. If he was hurt that Richard had chosen to confide in Schneider rather than himself, he was careful not to show it.

The others were naturally shocked and upset at the possible diagnosis, and accepted his apology for his behaviour. Wishing him good luck for the afternoon, they took turns hugging him and telling him that they’d be there for him, no matter what, Paul visibly shaken, tears collecting at the corners of his eyes.

Feeling as though a great weight was lifted from him, Richard left the office with Schneider, headed back to Schneider’s for a quick lunch, before continuing on for the consultation. He didn’t really feel much like eating, but he was given a direct order, so forced down his meal.

“Good boy, come here.”

Richard got up and moved round to the other side of the table to where Schneider was seated.

“Sit on my lap.”

As Richard did as instructed, Schneider put his arms around him. “I’m really proud of what you did this morning, I know that was difficult for you to do. You’re going to get a reward for that before we go back out.”

Schneider pulled Richard closer and started kissing him, and biting at the younger man’s lower lip causing Richard to hiss a little from the pain. Schneider moved his mouth onto Richard’s jawline, planting a row of kisses there before nipping at the soft flesh of Richard’s exposed neck, a bruise blossoming in his wake. Richard moaned and tilted his head back for more.

“Oh, no, sweetheart, that’s not your reward. Get on your knees, you’ve got dessert to come yet…” Schneider smirked at his double-entendre as he undid his belt, and pulled down the zip on his jeans. Eyes wide, Richard dropped to the floor and knelt facing his master.

“You know what to do, pretty one…”

Richard moistened his lips before bending forward, opening his mouth wide to take as much of Schneider’s erection into himself as he could manage, closing his lips around the shaft then slowly drawing back, leaving Schneider’s cock slick with saliva. Locking eyes with his master, Richard swirled his tongue around the tip, lapping up the precum there before dipping his head again to lick stripes up the length, bobbing up and down with varying pace, alternating between sucking, licking and blowing, every action bringing Schneider closer to the edge.

“You’re such a good little cock-sucker, aren’t you? I bet you’ve fantasized about me fucking your mouth, haven’t you?”

Richard, his mouth full, could only nod in response, his blue eyes fixed on Schneider’s face. The drummer grabbed Richard’s head by his hair and started forcing him to move up and down faster, making Richard take in more of his length until it was hitting the back of his throat with every thrust, Schneider starting to gasp and moan.

“That’s it baby, take it all…you’re so good…” Schneider shuddered as his climax hit, filling Richard’s mouth as he thrust a few more times before sitting back, panting. Richard swallowed around Schneider’s cock before pulling away, the drummer’s grasp on his hair relaxed.

Schneider fastened himself back up, and pulled Richard to his feet, as he stood up himself. He
pressed his lips to Richard’s, prising the other man’s mouth open with his tongue, licking the roof of his mouth and sucking on Richard’s tongue, causing Richard to moan and whimper, wanting his own release.

“Sorry baby, you’re going to have to wait until later for your turn. Go and get washed up, and no jerking off – I’ll know if you do. I want you horny as hell for later. Now, be quick!”

Schneider gave Richard’s backside a sharp smack as he dispatched him to the bathroom, musing that that was his new favourite activity.
“Mr. Kruspe? Shall I go ahead and get you booked in?”

“Could you give me a minute with Richard please, doctor? It’s obviously a lot for him to process.”

The oncologist stood up from his desk and exited the room, shutting the door behind him. For the second time that day Richard’s expression was vacant. He seemed to Schneider to have simply ceased functioning once the specialist had finished his examination. He’d concluded that the lump was highly likely to be malignant and wanted to get an ultrasound scan and some blood tests done immediately to be certain. The lack of other symptoms gave him the belief that it hadn’t metastasised, and would therefore be operable and require minimal after-treatment.

“Reesh, baby…I know that was the last thing you wanted to hear, but you agreed that you would do whatever needed to be done to treat it. I’m going to be with you every step of the way.”

Richard whispered, “I don’t want to die, Christoph. Please don’t let me die…. ” Tears started rolling freely down his cheeks.

Schneider drew Richard into his arms, kissing him on the forehead. “If what the doctor said is accurate, then they should be able to treat you, and you can go on to lead a happy normal life, for many years to come. I know you’re scared baby, but you need to get these tests done as quickly as possible. It’ll just be a couple of hours, then we can go home, okay?”

He wiped the tears away with his thumbs, and kissed Richard softly on the lips. The younger man sniffed, accepting the bunch of tissues that Schneider passed him, and took a deep breath.

“Okay,” he replied meekly.

Schneider went to the door and spoke quickly with the consultant, arranging for the tests to be done swiftly, before Richard had the opportunity to change his mind.

***

Richard had remained passive during the rest of the afternoon, his mind elsewhere throughout the battery of tests, only focusing on what was happening around him at prompts for Schneider.

He was silent all the way back to Schneider’s house, and when they got inside he stood in the middle of the lounge looking hopelessly lost. Schneider knew that this was the reason Richard had looked to him to take control. He was in desperate need of direction otherwise he would undoubtedly begin to spiral down again when he finally came back to his senses. Schneider needed to find a way to get Richard out of his own head safely.

“Richard – go to the bedroom and take off your clothes.”

When Richard didn’t respond he added, “That’s an order, bitch! Go and take off your clothes and wait for me.”

Registering the underlying threat in Schneider’s tone, Richard stirred and moved off in the direction of the stairs, leaving the drummer to think what actions he could take that wouldn’t leave a lasting mark, in case Richard was admitted for surgery in the next few days. While the private
hospital wouldn’t share information to outside sources, he wanted to avoid having Richard being the subject of salacious gossip amongst the staff.

Finally deciding on what kind of toys to use, Schneider gathered the necessary items, and made his way to the bedroom. Richard was sitting on the edge of the bed, fidgeting nervously.

“For future reference, if I command you to get undressed, having done so you should wait for me on all fours on the floor of the room I tell you to wait for me in, understood?”

“Yes master.”

“For now, however, I want you on all fours on the bed, feet at the bottom end, so I don’t have to reach for you.”

Richard moved so that he was positioned as required and waited patiently while Schneider finished his preparations.

“I really ought to punish you for your recent bad behaviour, but as it occurred before our agreement, it wouldn’t be right. What I’m going to do with you now is what I call a ‘teaser.’ From what you’ve told me, you’ve not had any ‘hard play’ yet, so we’ll work our way up to that. Your safe word is ‘red’- that will stop everything immediately. While you’re getting used to our new arrangement and having treatment, I’ll allow you to use a second word; ‘black’ – use this if you just need a pause, I’ll stop and give you a minute before resuming play. Any questions before we begin?”

“No master.”

Schneider began by blindfolding Richard. The loss of one sense, even temporarily, heightens the other senses, including touch. Next, he fastened his submissive to a spreader by his ankles, using padded cuffs, restricting Richard’s movements. Schneider reached for a silk scarf, using it to bind Richard’s wrists together. Then, raking his fingers lightly down Richard’s side, he moved to the nightstand and retrieved a bottle of lube. Squirting some into the palm of his hand, he warmed it up a little before spreading it against Richard’s entrance, then pushed his finger inside, making Richard gasp at the intrusion. After a moment he added a second finger, working Richard until he was moaning and panting. Schneider removed his fingers, satisfied that he’d stretched Richard sufficiently, and replaced them with a butt-plug.

Wiping his fingers with a damp cloth, Schneider picked up a pair of nipple clamps. He trailed his fingers against Richard’s body again as he moved to a position where he could better access Richard’s torso. Richard hissed at the pain caused by their attachment, but maintained his position. Confident that his lover wasn’t in too much discomfort, Schneider picked up a soft-tipped flogger and started flicking it over Richard in a random patter, letting the ends hit every inch of flesh, apart from Richard’s balls, knowing that would probably be far too painful in his current state of health. Unused to being flogged for significant lengths of time, the last occasion being during the filming of ‘Rosenrot’, Richard flinched with every strike, making the plug shift about inside him, hitting his prostate, causing Richard to writhe against his restraints, moaning ever louder.

Just when Richard thought he couldn’t handle any more, Schneider stopped. There was a brief pause before the next sensation began – Schneider had put on a fuzzy glove and was running it over every part of Richard’s body. When he found which areas Richard was particularly ticklish in, Schneider concentrated his attention on them, making the younger man squirm and gasp so hard he started begging for mercy, struggling to breathe properly. Schneider grinned sadistically throughout, making a mental note of the weak spots.

Once Richard was sufficiently red-faced and short of breath that Schneider thought he might
actually pass out, he relented and removed the glove. With one bare hand he alternated between
stroking and spanking both of Richard’s buttocks until they were glowing a deep pink and
radiating heat, again the motion of the plug had Richard on the verge of blacking out, his need for
release almost overwhelming.

“Please master…” he managed to beg, in between pants. Schneider stopped smacking Richard,
but it was only so he could grab a couple of ice-cubes he’d taken from the freezer, which had been
sitting in a glass on the nightstand. With one in each hand, he started at the top of Richard’s spine,
moving the cubes down its length, making Richard shudder as goosebumps rose in the wake of
the cubes’ progress. The melting water trickled down his sides and between his buttocks, the
submissive felt like he was being driven slowly insane by the continuous onslaught of sensations.

By now, Schneider’s erection was pressing painfully against the fabric of his jeans. Leaving the
remaining ice to melt freely, he stripped off before applying lube to his cock. Unlocking the
spreader, he knelt between Richard’s legs and removed the plug, making Richard whimper at the
loss. As Schneider penetrated him, Richard threw back his head and shouted out his lover’s name.
Deciding to let the infraction slide this once, Schneider wasted no time getting up to speed,
thrusting hard against Richard’s sweet spot, the sound of flesh meeting flesh punctuated by the
moans of both men as they neared their climaxes.

Schneider came first, no longer able to hold himself back at the sight of the younger man
completely in his thrall, riding out his orgasm as Richard followed him, screaming Schneider’s
name out in ecstasy, collapsing forward onto his arms as his muscles began to give way.

Schneider pulled out, and quickly undid the silk fabric, rubbing life back into Richard’s hands,
before removing the nipple clamps and blindfold. Using the damp cloth he wiped them both
down, before clambering onto the bed beside Richard, who was lying on his side, cheek resting
against a pillow with his eyes closed, still breathing rapidly.

Concerned, Schneider asked, “Hey, you okay there, love?”

Richard cracked open one eye. “Can I get back to you on that, master?”

Schneider snorted. “I’ll take that as a compliment, there I was taking it easy on you for our first
time, too!”

Both Richard’s eyes widened in mock horror at the thought that what he’d just been subjected to
was ‘taking it easy’, then thought about the ‘hard play’ to come, and gulped audibly. “Oh
fuck…!”

“What, already? We’ve only just finished!”

“Eeek! No, master! That’s not what I meant!”

“I know baby, I’m just teasing. Come here, I want a cuddle.”

Richard shuffled himself over, and snuggled into Schneider’s embrace, finding comfort in the
warmth and strength emanating from his friend.

“Can I make a request for our next time, master?”

“You can ask, I can’t promise I’ll grant it.”

“Um, would you talk dirty to me in future, call me names like ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ rather than
staying silent?”
“Does Bitchard get off on bad words, hmm?”

“Bitchard? Ooh, I like that master, and yes – the dirtier the better!”

“I’ll consider it…” he nibbled at Richard’s ear, “… but you’ll definitely get the silent treatment for when I’m angry or I’m punishing you.”

“Thank you, master.”

“Oh god, you’re going to be the death of me.” Schneider said, his cock twitching at the guitarist’s continued subservience. He yawned, “I don’t know you, but I’m ready for a snooze.”

Getting no response, he nudged Richard. His action was met by the sound of gentle snoring.

Chapter End Notes

A small tip of the hat to one of my regular readers/commentors in there. I will try in future works to plant similar 'easter eggs' for my other regulars :)

Seven

Chapter Notes

This will be my last update for a week or so - holidays await! Yay!

“Herr Kruspe? I’m calling about your test results…”

“Hang on, I’m putting you on speakerphone, so my friend Christoph can hear everything, that way I don’t have to repeat it.”

Schneider took hold of Richard’s hand to offer reassurance.

“Of course, hello Herr Schneider. As I was saying, we’ve only had a couple of results back so far from the blood tests we ran, but the indications are sufficient enough, in conjunction with the physical examination, for us to advise you to come in at the earliest opportunity for surgery. We have an opening in our theatre schedule tomorrow morning – if you could be here for seven am, we can proceed at nine. We would ask you not to eat or drink anything after midnight tonight, just take sips of water if your throat is dry. Shall I book you in?”

Richard had turned a whiter shade of pale as the oncologist spoke, his facial expression totally blank. Noticing that Richard had zoned out again, Schneider answered for him.

“Herr Doktor, as you can probably appreciate Richard’s in a bit of a state of shock, but I will make sure that he is there on time and that he follows your instructions. He’s agreed that the sooner this is dealt with the better. We’ll see you in the morning – does he need to bring anything with him?”

Schneider made notes of everything the consultant said, then hung up. Richard had the appearance of a deer caught in the headlights, frozen to the spot.

“Reesh, it’s gonna be okay, don’t worry. I’m going to be by your side through all of it, love.”

He pulled Richard into his arms and held him, talking to him soothingly as tears started cascading down Richard’s cheeks again. Schneider pressed gentle kisses to his lips and forehead until the younger man finally fell back to sleep. Schneider woke him a little before midnight and forced him to eat, as he knew that given the opportunity Richard would ‘forget’ his instructions and eat something in the morning if he felt hungry, in the full knowledge that it would mean postponing the operation. While Richard ate (under protest that he wasn’t hungry), Schneider busied himself gathering the few items that would be needed for Richard’s brief stay in hospital.

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“He’s coming round – I’ll get the consultant…”

The nurse, who’d been checking Richard’s vitals on the monitor, disappeared out of the private room, leaving Schneider alone with Richard, who was slowly regaining consciousness, the oxygen mask over his mouth and nose blowing cool air into his lungs, and clearing the fogginess created by the anaesthetic.
“Hey babe, it’s about time you were waking up!” he smiled, giving Richard a kiss on the cheek.

As Richard became more aware of his surroundings, and remembered why he was in hospital, his initial instinct was to reach under the covers to check that he was intact….

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“…and that’s the point where I woke up…”

“So your dash to the bathroom when you got up earlier was so that you can check your ‘family jewels’ were still there?” Schneider asked, somewhat amused.

“Hey, it’s not funny! How would you feel if you’d had the same nightmare?”

“You’re right, I’m sorry. There’s no need for me to ask what the result was – I got quite the view when you leapt on me in the bathroom,” he grinned, before continuing, “so, your take away from your nightmare wasn’t that you should quit smoking to reduce your risk of cancer, but that you should sexually assault me instead?”

“Yes, I mean no… that is…um…. It made me realise that if I don’t act now, I may not have the chance in the future, so…” he trailed off, unsure how to articulate how he felt, or what Schneider’s response might be.

“Let’s see if I’ve got this right, the feelings that ‘dream you’ had for ‘dream me’ are just as true in reality. You’re apparently in love with me and want us to be a couple?”

“Yes…I’ve actually been in love with you for years…” he admitted.

“Years? Why’ve you stayed silent about your feelings for so long?”

“In the beginning, because it was illegal...later...the time never seemed right.” He sighed.

“And would you want to incorporate dom/sub play into any relationship?”

“Actually, I’m not quite so sure about that bit, I don’t know why I dreamed about that. I mean, I’ve tried a bit of bondage previously, you know, handcuffs and blindfolds, that kind of thing, but never done anything more than that. I guess the reappearance of your ‘Fraü’ when we play ‘Bück Dich’ sparked something in my subconscious. I think I’d want to try a bit more BDSM stuff, and see where it goes from there.”

“Okay, well…that gives me something to work with.”

“It does? Does that …does that mean you’re willing to give it a try?”

“Yes, you idiot! Have you any idea how long it’s been that I’ve wanted to get in your pants, too?”

“Oh! Really?” Richard’s face lit up with a beaming smile. “Er, could we, you know…?” his face flushed, suddenly feeling bashful under his friend’s gaze.

“Of course we can – let’s wash off the touch of the girls from us both- bathroom, shower, now!”

As Richard moved to get out of bed, Schneider gave his backside a firm slap, the sound muffled thanks to the robe, but it was still hard enough to startle Richard. He looked back at Schneider with a raised eyebrow.
“We’ll call that an I.O.U.” Schneider explained with a mischievous grin, as he too got off the bed to follow Richard into the bathroom, pausing momentarily to snatch up a bottle of lube.

Richard set the shower running, as Schneider divested himself of his clothing, before placing the lube amongst the various bottles of products Richard deemed necessary for bathing. Satisfied that the water wasn’t so hot that it would scald them both, Richard shucked off his robe and stepped into the cubicle, followed closely by an appreciative Schneider. The pair stood under the hot stream, the water bouncing off their heads and cascading down their bodies, steam curling upwards to condense on the ceiling.

Schneider quickly washed himself then turned Richard around to face him, locking eyes with him as he started using a sponge on the younger man, creating a lather with the body-wash he’d picked up from the shower-tidy. He methodically cleaned Richard from head to toe, then rinsing the foam off. When he’d finished, Schneider pulled Richard closer with an arm around his waist, and began kissing him on the lips.

Unlike the previous occasion when Richard had launched himself at him, this kiss was slow, almost tentative at first, both men feeling a little awkward at being so intimate with each other after having been friends and colleagues for such a long time. It wasn’t long before it became more passionate, hands exploring each other’s bodies, feeling at once familiar yet new.

Schneider broke the kiss and reached for the bottle of lube. He pulled Richard away from the full flow of the shower, then squirted some of the lube onto one palm. Using his free arm to hold Richard steady, he coated Richard’s entrance before pushing the index-finger of the lube-slick hand inside the younger man, prompting a gasp then moans from him. Schneider gently worked his finger in and out, brushing against Richard’s sensitive spot, then added his middle finger, scissoring the two to help open Richard up. When he was satisfied that his new lover was ready for him, he removed his hand then liberally coated his own erection.

He pushed inside slowly, letting Richard grow accustomed to his presence, before rhythmically thrusting inside him, every stroke hitting Richard’s prostate, the sensation making Richard feel weak at the knees, forcing him to bend forward slightly, resting his hands against the tiled wall to steady himself. Schneider’s movements became more urgent as his orgasm started building in his abdomen. Reaching his hand lower down Richard’s front, he found the other’s erection and started pumping his hand up and down in time with his thrusts. That was enough to bring Richard to his climax, the dual sensations leaving him reeling. With a loud moan he came in Schneider’s hand, and as his muscles constricted around Schneider’s length, the drummer filled the younger man with his semen.

Schneider rested his forehead on Richard’s shoulder as he rode out his orgasm, until he felt able to stand straight again, withdrawing from his lover as he did so. Once they were both rinsed off again, they stepped out of the cubicle, drying themselves off quickly before donning their bathrobes.

Schneider took hold of Richard’s hands, brushed a kiss over his knuckles, then led him by the hand back to bed. He pulled back the blankets, but opted to smooth the top sheets down so that they would be lying on a dry surface. Richard laid down, propping his head up on one arm while Schneider laid down beside him. The drummer settled himself, then held an arm outstretched so Richard could snuggle up close, resting his head against Schneider’s chest, sighing contentedly as he pulled the blankets to cover them both.
Eight

Chapter Notes

Okay, apologies for being a little longer than anticipated with this update, following my holiday. I should be adding the final chapters shortly.

Perhaps as a consequence of the coffee they’d drunk, neither of them were able to get back to sleep, so they laid together, lazily kissing and caressing each other, reluctant to break physical contact in case that would shatter the enchantment they felt they were under. As the clock drew closer to 7am, they decided to get up and have breakfast as soon as the hotel restaurant was open.

They dressed quickly, both opting for jeans and t-shirts, and after checking that they each looked vaguely human despite the early hour, they exited their room, shutting and locking the door behind them. The carpeted hallway muffled their steps as they headed for the lift that would deposit them at the rear of the lobby area.

Richard moved a hand to cover his mouth as he yawned, just as they approached the staff member on duty at the restaurant door, crossing guests off his list by room number, ensuring all meals were billed appropriately. Schneider gave their room number to the young man, then the pair headed inside, the smell of hot food and fresh coffee making their stomachs growl.

***

Not long after they’d returned to their room, there was a knock on the door. Using the spyhole, Schneider was relieved to see it was Paul and not the groupies trying to get back in, and opened the door.

“Good morning Paulchen!”

“Hey! We’re all just on our way down for breakfast – are you two ready to join us yet, or do you need a few minutes?”

“Actually, we’ve had ours already …”

“Of course you have… seriously though, how long are you gonna be?”

Schneider took on a more serious tone. “I’m not joking. Richard couldn’t sleep, so we went down for breakfast as soon as the restaurant opened. We’re just finishing our packing now, and will meet you guys on the bus when you’re ready.”

The other three band members had arrived by the time Schneider had finished talking. Although somewhat surprised that their two friends had eaten already, they accepted Schneider’s explanation and said they’d catch up with them on the tour bus.

Richard had been picking up his clothes from where they’d been strewn on the floor and packed them into a plastic bag he used for dirty laundry, before placing them in his suitcase, while Schneider had been talking with the others. As he emerged from the bathroom where he’d been scooping up his toiletries, Schneider grabbed hold of him and pushed him towards the nearest bed.
“While the others are downstairs eating breakfast, we don’t have to worry about making any noise, so… let me see you stripped!” he said with a devilish grin.

“Oh god, you’re so corny, Doom!” Richard couldn’t help but return the grin, though, as he very quickly removed his clothes and practically jumped onto the bed, pushing the covers down before settling on his back with anticipation.

Schneider climbed on beside him, but flipped Richard over. “We’ve probably only got half an hour before they get back, so I’m afraid we’re just going to have wild animalistic sex. I’ll make it up to you later.”

With that, he pulled Richard into a kneeling position on all-fours, and made short work of preparing the younger man, before pushing his cock inside Richard’s entrance. Richard yelped in pain as he was penetrated but soon started moaning in pleasure as Schneider fucked him hard and fast as promised. He started feeling light-headed as he reached his orgasm, spots seeming to dance in his vision. He all but shouted Schneider’s name as he ejaculated onto the sheets, Schneider still thrusting against his prostate as he worked his way to his own climax.

“Fuck… it feels so good being inside you…” Schneider said as he came, his semen filling Richard’s ass. Spent, he withdrew and quickly cleaned them both up.

“I’m sorry that wasn’t very romantic, but we need to get a move on if we’re not wanting to raise the others’ suspicions,” he said apologetically, darting about getting re-dressed and finishing his own packing haphazardly.

“Well, I guess I know what it feels like to be a groupie now,” Richard groused, fastening his belt, “Wham, bam, thank you man…”

Schneider rolled his eyes, and pulled Richard into a hug, giving him a deep kiss. Caressing the side of Richard’s face with his thumb as he broke off, he said, “I promise that it’ll be much better next time, and don’t you ever compare yourself to a groupie again. You mean much more to me than that, and you know it! Now, if you’ve finished packing and whingeing, let’s check out and get on the bus to wait for the others.”

***

Schneider was standing with their driver when the others strolled over, each pulling their luggage behind them.

“Where’s Reesh?” Till asked, surprised that the guitarist wasn’t chain-smoking cigarettes until it was time to leave.

The drummer pointed to the bus behind him, “He’s sitting down in there – he’s still pretty tired after this morning.” At the others’ puzzled looks he elaborated, “He had a bad nightmare last night, which is why he was having trouble getting back to sleep,” yawning as he finished.

Flake laughed, “Let me guess, because the princess was awake, you weren’t allowed to sleep either?”

“Something like that, yeah. We got the girls out of the room so we could have a chat, we never know how much German the fans understand, so…”

He followed the others on to the bus, still yawning. They found Richard in the dining area, head resting on his folded arms, slouched forward over the table, dead to the world around him.

“Oh great, now he sleeps!” Schneider said with mock-exasperation.
“Do you think we should wake him?” Paul asked, with an air of mischief.

“No – I’ll put him in one of the bunks.” Till said, bending down to pick Richard up.

Ollie, who had been putting his bag down on a bunk at the back of the bus, returned to the communal area. “Um, there’s only four bunks back there – but there is a double bedroom right at the back…not sure what management were thinking…”

They turned to look at the driver. “This was the only tour bus available last minute, not your management’s fault that your jet developed a safety issue. The seats in the lounge there can be turned into a bunk if none of you fancy sharing…” he smirked.

Till carried Richard into the bedroom and gently settled him on the double bed, covering him with his long coat. The guitarist didn’t stir throughout the transition. Closing the door quietly behind him, Till rejoined the others.

“Let’s try and keep the noise to a minimum so Richard can rest. We can sort out the sleeping arrangements later.”

“Right, like you aren’t all thinking that the shortest person gets to sleep on the sofa,” Paul grumbled.

With all the talk of beds and sleeping, Schneider found himself trying to stifle another yawn.

“Looks like you could do with taking a nap too, Doom!” Ollie observed.

“I suppose I could put my head down for an hour or so,” the drummer agreed.

“It’ll be quieter right at the back with Reesh,” Till commented, “what with the bedroom door as well as this partition to muffle Paul’s noise,” he grinned, as Paul flipped the bird at him.

“Good idea,” Schneider agreed, as he shuffled past them, yawning again, prompting looks of mild surprise from his bandmates.

Till shrugged, and started conversing with Flake about some ideas he’d had to play around with some of the stunts they performed together. Paul turned his attention to the TV, flicking through the channels to find something bearable to watch, while Ollie fished out the novel he’d been reading, and settled back on one of the couches.

Meanwhile, Schneider made his way into the small bedroom at the tail-end of the bus, being as quiet as humanly possible, while he removed his sneakers, so as not to disturb Richard. He stretched out on the bed next to him, smiling at how peaceful the younger man looked whilst asleep. He leaned over and planted the lightest of kisses on Richard’s lips before drifting off to the land of nod himself.
When Paul snuck a peek into the bedroom after a quick trip to the bathroom about an hour later, he saw that the two men on the bed had gravitated to each other in their sleep, with Richard’s arm draped over Schneider’s midriff. He was sorely tempted to snap a quick photo with his phone’s camera, but the possibility of it somehow getting leaked online inadvertently, plus the thought of incurring the wrath of not just the two photographed, but Till as well, was enough to make him leave the phone in his pocket.

He shut the door, and crept back down the narrow corridor between the bunks and through the partition, to retake his seat in front of the TV, a big grin plastered on his face.

“What have you done, Paulchen?” Flake enquired, noticing his friend’s expression.

“Nothing!”

“Why don’t we believe you?” Till countered, sipping his coffee.

“Honestly, I’ve not done anything!” Paul insisted, pouting. He sat quietly for a minute, which put the others on the alert, before whispering in a slightly sing-song manner, “Doom and Reeshy sitting in a tree, K-I-double S-I-N-G…”

Till practically snorted his coffee at that. “What?” he asked as he wiped spilt coffee from his face.

“I checked to see if either of them were awake and maybe wanted a drink, but…”

“But what?” Flake demanded, intrigued.

“Okay, they weren’t actually kissing as they were both fast asleep, but they were snuggled together looking very cosy! Richard even had his arm around Schneider!”

Till rolled his eyes. “Is that all? It’s not like any of us haven’t shared beds before, especially when we were starting out, and they can’t help what they do when they’re asleep.”

“Spoilsport!” Paul replied, feeling a little deflated that his revelation hadn’t garnered a bigger reaction.

“Doom probably mistook Richard for a woman in his sleep, what with his pert behind and his shapely pecs,” Flake deadpanned, making Till snort again, wiping tears from his eyes as he laughed at that thought.

***

The two lovers awoke a short while later, thanks to the jerking motions of the bus as it navigated some heavy traffic. Richard blinked in momentary confusion at his surroundings, brain still
sluggish from insufficient sleep.

“Hello gorgeous,” Schneider greeted him, smiling at how bewildered Richard looked, before craning his neck towards the other man in order to steal a kiss from him.

Richard’s lips met Schneider’s eagerly, the pair of them wanting, needing more, but all too aware that their friends were just a few feet away and could burst in at any moment. Richard closed his eyes as Schneider deepened the kiss - tongue exploring the younger man’s mouth – before opening once more betraying his disappointment when Schneider broke contact.

Reading Richard’s expression correctly, Schneider explained, “It's almost lunchtime, love. We need to be getting up and ready – we’re probably booked into a restaurant somewhere, and although I think you look incredibly sexy as you are, I’m guessing you’ll want to fix your hair and make-up before venturing out in public.”

Richard pouted, not wanting to move. Then, as his brain woke up a bit more, looked alarmed and said, “How do we explain to the others about us sleeping together just now? They’re bound to have noticed!”

Schneider laughed, “There’s no need to panic – Till moved you from the dining area to the bed – then later suggested I join you back here, as I apparently looked equally exhausted, and because it would be much quieter here than on a bunk. It was his idea, and the others agreed!”

“Oh. Well, that’s a relief, I don’t think I would’ve been able to come up with something plausible. Er, did they ask why we’re both so tired? I don’t want to contradict anything you might have told them, if they ask me.”

“Yeah, I explained that you’d had a nightmare – I didn’t give them any details, before you start getting flustered – and that we’d chatted because you couldn’t get back to sleep. It’s the truth, so you don’t need to worry about remembering a lie. Now, let’s go get a drink, and if they ask anything that you’re not sure how to answer, yawn or something, and I’ll intervene, just follow my lead. We could have a bit of fun messing with them!”

Schneider gave Richard another kiss, much quicker this time, and got up off the bed, straightening out his clothes. Seeing that Richard had made no move to get up, he rolled his eyes. “I’ll go and make coffees for us both, If you join the rest of us in the next five minutes, I’ll get a treat for you later.”

Richard groaned. “Can’t you make that ten minutes?”

“No! – Now, move your sexy ass, or I’ll send Paul in to annoy you!”

Richard stuck his tongue out. “You’re being mean to me!”

“Sweetie, trust me, you’ll know when I’m being mean!”

With that, Schneider bopped Richard on the head with one of the pillows, then left in search of caffeine.

***

When Richard emerged from the sleeping area, the others were having a discussion about where they each wanted to explore that afternoon. In order to stop them all going crazy from being cooped up on the bus, the tour manager had arranged for them to stop off at a city along the route for lunch and a spot of sight-seeing.
Paul, Flake and Ollie were in the lounge area, poring over leaflets for various attractions, whilst Till – at the kitchen table – was making notes in his journal about lyric ideas he’d had. Schneider was seated opposite Till, two hot cups of coffee steaming away in front of him. Richard flopped down onto the seat next to him and gratefully accepted the mug Schneider nudged over to him.

“Nice of you to join us, Scholle!” Till said by way of greeting.

“I was told there would be coffee, otherwise I would’ve stayed on the bed.” Richard replied, stifling a yawn. “Have I missed anything?”

“The three amigos over there are looking for places to visit this afternoon, I was thinking about going for a walk in the country park, get some fresh air in my lungs. Care to join me?”

Richard was unsure whether Schneider would want to spend the afternoon with him or not, and hesitated. Fortunately, Schneider helped him out.

“That sounds like a good idea, Reesh – fresh air and exercise should help you to sleep better tonight, which means whoever you’re sharing with later will also get some sleep too, which - judging by the fact the others appear to have claimed all the bunks – is probably me…”

As Richard stuck his tongue out at Schneider again in response, before taking a mouthful of coffee, Till continued, “That reminds me, Paul is of the opinion that the two of you are shagging each other…”

The coffee didn’t make it to Richard’s stomach, instead it wound up being sprayed out of his mouth in shock. Till misinterpreted Richard’s response as amusement at the notion, and carried on, “…He’s got a one-track mind of course, and the thought of you two fucking each other will probably be jerk-off material for him for the foreseeable future, despite us reminding him that we’ve all shared beds with each other in the past without screwing one another. Just because the two of you wound up snuggling in your sleep, it doesn’t mean anything.”

Richard was busying himself cleaning up the coffee from everywhere it had landed, fastidiously looking anywhere but at his friends, afraid he would say something that would confirm Paul’s theory. Schneider valiantly came to his rescue again.

“Oh, I don’t know – I think we’d make a fabulous couple, don’t you, Reeshy darling?” Totally over-the-top camp attitude.

“Yes, definitely.” Richard answered honestly, nerves calming as Schneider took control of the situation. Depositing the soiled paper towels he’d been using to soak up the coffee into the bin, he sat back down next to Schneider.

Feeling mischievous, Schneider decided to use Paul’s theory to his and Richard’s advantage. Under the table he gave Richard’s closest leg a gentle squeeze for reassurance before he started.

“Sit on my lap, Reeshy. I want a cuddle.” He patted his legs to reinforce the suggestion.

Guessing what kind of performance Schneider had in mind, Richard obliged, sitting sideways on and looping his arms around Schneider’s neck and shoulders. Till was already shaking his head, dreading what was about to unfold right in front of him, while the others were starting to take notice and had stopped talking to watch.

“Give me a kiss, baby boy,” Schneider prompted. Richard smiled shyly, before leaning in for a big, sloppy, hands-everywhere, noisy kiss.

“Oh god, you’ve created a monster!” Flake complained to Till. “Make them stop, I’m going to puke!”
Paul piped up, “Okay…okay… we get it – the idea of you two being together was stupid, not to mention gross! I’ve learnt my lesson – you can pack it in now!”

“Stop? We’ve only just started!” Schneider teased as he broke off the kiss. “If you only knew what plans I have in store for this beauty for tonight – you might want to put your earplugs in when you go to bed, as Reeshy’s going to be screaming out my name!”

Richard’s cheeks had flushed pink at that, and he bit at his lower lip in embarrassment, before burying his head in the crook of Schneider’s neck, waiting for his colour to return to normal.

“Knock it off now, the pair of you, I’m trying to concentrate. And Paul, be careful what you insinuate in future, I think we’re all agreed that we don’t want to see a repeat of this!” Till scolded, grimacing.

Richard decided that he was comfortable in his current position, and made no move to sit back down next to Schneider, who in turn was in no hurry to end the embrace. Instead, he gulped down the rest of his coffee, then reached for a blueberry muffin, which he held up for Richard to take a bite out of, head resting on Schneider’s shoulder while he chewed, eyes closed, before taking another bite.

Till sighed loudly, and returned his attention to his journal, thankful that they were being quiet at least.
The tour bus pulled into the parking lot of the restaurant where they had reservations for lunch. The six of them took turns in the small bathroom on the bus to freshen up before they went in. Richard and Schneider were in their bedroom, putting the finishing touches to their appearances together.

As Richard put down his eyeliner, Schneider pulled him in close, taking in a lungful of the younger man’s cologne.

“You smell good enough to eat!” he announced, giving Richard’s earlobe a small nibble, before continuing, “I think we’ve convinced the others that we’re not together, at least for the time being, so to reinforce it I think we should split up for the afternoon, spend time with different people so we don’t arouse suspicions.”

Richard pouted again, but agreed nonetheless. Schneider rubbed their noses together in an eskimo kiss. “You can be such a girl at times, Reesh. It’s just a few hours, and we’ve got the rest of the tour to be together. Come on, let’s go eat…”

***

Following lunch, Richard spent the afternoon hanging out with Till, who’d changed his mind about the country park and instead dragged Richard around a historical site, which boasted some ancient monuments. After a couple of hours or so exploring in the frigid air, Till finally relented to Richard’s increasingly impassioned pleas to find a ‘nice warm bar’ to relax in, away from the biting winds.

As evening drew in they returned to the bus, ready for a hot meal. Flake and Ollie were already aboard, and were both stretched out in the lounge area, reading to pass the time while waiting for their bandmates to return. Flake snickered on seeing Richard, who looked positively frozen from the walk back.

“You’re looking a little blue there, Richard. Have you been auditioning to be one of the ‘white walkers’ on ‘Game of Thrones’?”

He got a series of expletives in response as Richard pushed his way past Till to get to the bedroom. Flake turned to Till.

“I take it that Reesh didn’t appreciate your cultural trip, then?”

Till grunted as he switched on the kettle.

“Let’s just say that I’ll not be taking him anywhere that doesn’t have hordes of semi-naked women running around for quite some time to come. For now, I owe him a large cup of coffee and a packet of smokes.”

Paul and Schneider arrived a short while later, both brandishing shopping bags and mystery packages which they each stowed on their respective beds. Richard tried to sneak a peek into the bags Schneider had brought, but got his hands rapped and a ticking off from his lover.

“You’ll get to find out what I’ve bought later Reeshy! But right now it’s time for food, so move
that sexy ass of yours into the dining area.”

Richard wiggled his hips provocatively as he left the bedroom, making Schneider’s cock semi-hard in appreciation as Richard intended, forcing Schneider to wait for it to subside before following – time he spent burying his purchases in his holdall, locking it shut as a precaution.

***

As the night wore on, the friends retired to their bunks one by one. Richard - feeling drowsy from the combination of fresh air, exercise, alcohol, a hot meal in warm surroundings, together with the lack of sleep from the previous night – succumbed early on, and was sleeping peacefully when Schneider joined him in bed.

He smiled fondly at the sight of his love, and gently kissed his cheek before draping an arm around Richard’s waist, spooning up to him. Richard muttered incoherently in his sleep but didn’t wake, shifting position slightly, taking hold of Schneider’s hand instinctively, making Schneider smile again as he too drifted off to sleep.

***

The bus drove on through the night - the sound of the engine and of passing vehicles – creating an audio backdrop to the bandmates’ sleep. A particularly sharp corner on a mountainous stretch of road caused Richard to roll and bump into Schneider quite hard, waking them both.

“Hey babe, how are you feeling?” Schneider whispered, mindful of the thin partition walls of the bus.

Richard yawned before replying, “I’m still a little fuzzy from the beer, but otherwise fine, I think…”

“You don’t sound too sure, love. Maybe I can do something to change that…”

He started by kissing Richard on the lips, before moving to his jawline, the hand that had previously been clutched in Richard’s sliding down under the covers to stroke Richard’s cock into wakefulness. Richard moaned softly and thrust his hips forward to increase the contact, sleep deserting him as his arousal grew.

“We need to keep as quiet as possible, do you think you can manage that?”

Richard nodded in the dim light, not wanting to give Schneider a reason to stop.

“Okay, hang on a moment then…”

Schneider broke off contact while he reached into his holdall to retrieve a bottle of lube. Removing the t-shirt that he’d been wearing since that afternoon, he placed it under Richard’s now bare behind. He gently bent Richard’s legs back, shifting so he was knelt between them, and kissed the soft flesh on the inside of Richard’s thighs. Slowly, he inserted a lube-slick finger in the tight hole before him, prompting a stifled gasp from Richard, covering his mouth with his forearm to deaden the sound. Schneider paused, listening for any sign that they’d been heard. Certain that the others were all still sleeping, Schneider added a second finger, scissoring them both to work Richard open more.

Once he was happy that Richard was ready for him, he wiped his fingers on the shirt. Leaning forward, he covered Richard’s mouth with his own as he pushed himself inside the man laying beneath him, swallowing the noises Richard was making, as he started thrusting slowly. He grabbed Richard’s hands and pinned them either side of his head, providing him with more
Their love-making was unhurried, both of them exploring each other’s bodies with every touch and caress. Their lips bruised and swollen from their continual kissing, they separated just long enough to fill their lungs with air before resuming, intensifying as their orgasms built up. Richard came first, a loud moan wrenched from him, escaping the seal of their shared kiss, bringing Schneider over the edge with him as his muscles contracted around his length, squeezing tight.

They lay in the quiet dark, panting softly, their toned bodies beaded with sweat, causing them to shiver in the cool air seeping through the ventilation grille. Schneider withdrew as his erection softened, and, using the shirt that he’d placed under Richard to prevent staining the sheets, wiped the pair of them down before placing the shirt into a bag of rubbish he would dispose of at the next stop.

Noticing that Richard had started shivering, he made him put his shirt and boxers back on while he did the same, albeit with a fresh shirt, before pulling the covers back over them both. As he settled himself down on his pillow, Richard scooted closer and lay his head in the crook of Schneider’s shoulder, resting his arm on Schneider’s chest and stomach, grabbing a handful of the shirt almost possessively.

“I love you, Christoph,” he whispered, feeling incredibly happy.

“I love you more, Reesh,” Schneider replied sleepily, kissing the top of Richard’s head, but Richard didn’t hear him, already fast asleep and snoring softly. A few minutes later, Schneider was deep in dreamland.

***

In the small toilet cubicle, located next to the bedroom, Ollie was momentarily frozen in place, unsure if what he’d heard through the thin wall was a figment of his imagination - created by the mixture of the beers he’d drunk to accompany dinner with Paul’s insane theory – the beers being responsible for him needing to go for a piss in the middle of the night.

He waited until all he could hear was snoring before depressing the flush button and returning to his bunk. He wouldn’t remember anything about the events of that night for a while to come, until a comment from one of the others sparked his memory.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for all your kind messages/comments/kudos, peeps! I appreciate each and every one. :)
The next few weeks proved interesting, as the new couple tried to keep their relationship under the radar. In order to keep up appearances, they both flirted with groupies at the after-show parties, although neither of them took anything beyond a kiss and a fumble. They had to come up with creative ways to ‘lose’ the groupies when they wanted to go to their rooms - there were only so many times they could give out one of the other band members’ room numbers before they noticed, and if they both disappeared for a smoke and didn’t return they were sure word would get around the fans about their behaviour.

They were drawing close to the end of the current leg of the tour, ready for the Christmas and New Year break. The band members thoughts were beginning to turn to how they would be spending their time off, and what they were thinking of buying for friends and relatives. While he was down at breakfast, Till had received a call from his daughter Nele asking whether he knew if Richard would be accompanying Khira Li to their mum’s home for Christmas, or if he’d got other plans, as they wanted to sort out sleeping arrangements for guests staying over.

Till had tried knocking on Richard’s hotel room door as he passed on the way to his own room, but getting no response, he frowned. The guitarist would normally hang the ‘Do Not Disturb’ sign on the door handle if he was going to have a lie-in, but as there was nothing there that morning Till assumed Richard must be up and about already, he’d have to catch him later when they went out around town for the day. Before he continued to his room, almost as an afterthought, he crossed the corridor and knocked on the door opposite Richard’s. After some shuffling sounds, and a brief pause – presumably while the occupant checked the spyhole to see who was knocking – the door was unlocked and opened partially. A bleary-eyed Schneider stood in the opening.

“Hey Till, what’s up?” he asked, wiping the sleep from his eyes.

“Sorry if I’ve just woken you, I was looking for Richard and he’s not answering his door, so I wondered if you’d spoken to him this morning?”

“Not yet, no. Do you need him urgently?”

“It can wait until later, I just thought I’d catch him on my way back to my room. Actually, while I’m here, do you have that book you were telling me about? I’ve just finished the one I was reading and as I’ve a couple of hours to kill before we go on our trip, I thought I’d make a start on it.”

“Yeah, sure, just a sec, I’ll get it for you…”

Till started to follow Schneider inside, in order to continue the conversation, prompting the drummer to think quickly.

“Ah, Till, sorry but can you wait there, please? I’ve got company and they’re currently asleep - not to mention topless - and I wouldn’t be much of a gentleman if I let people in while they’re unawares, would I?”

“Since when are you a gentleman?” Till joked, but stayed put, reaching for his phone so he could send Richard a text message.

Schneider walked off to track down the book, leaving Till at the door. If Schneider hadn’t only just woken up he might have taken more notice of the placement of certain objects in the room. Almost immediately after hitting ‘send’ there was a buzz from inside the room, prompting Till to
look up. From where he was standing, he could see the bed’s reflection in a mirror on top of the desk positioned by the wall nearest the door. There was a bottle of lube on the nightstand next to the bed, cap flipped open. A pale arm was hanging over the edge of the mattress, the hand’s nails painted black…

Till shifted position slightly so he could see more of the bed in the mirror. Schneider hadn’t lied about his companion being topless, but he’d conveniently omitted the fact that his companion was male, and a certain spiky-haired guitarist! As Richard rolled onto his side, still asleep, he dislodged something from the bed - the item fell with a muffled thud onto the carpet and stopped where it landed, where Till could see it in the mirror.

*Kinky sneaky bastards!* Till thought to himself on spotting the flogger. Hearing Schneider returning to the door, he turned his back to the room and pretended to be engrossed with something on his phone. He turned his head as Schneider reached the doorway, keeping his expression as neutral as possible.

“Here it is – I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.”

Till accepted the book and stepped away from the door. “Thanks. I’ve sent Reesh a text, but if you see him before I do can you check he’s seen it? I want to phone Nele before we go out this morning to arrange things for Christmas.”

“Will do. What time are we all meeting up this morning, anyway?”

“The minibus will be picking us up out front at 11, so as long as we’re all down in the foyer a few minutes beforehand, we can get off on time.”

“I’ll see you later, then.” Schneider replied, as he closed the door.

Till made his way down the hallway back to his room, and spent a few moments patting down his pockets in search of his keycard absent-mindedly, while he pondered what to do about his discovery. Finally locating the elusive plastic rectangle, he swiped it on the locking mechanism, and stepped inside, thoughts falling over themselves in his mind.

***

“Babe? Wake up, sweetheart…”

Schneider picked up the long feather - that had been part of the previous night’s fun - from the bed and used it to tickle Richard awake. Richard’s nose wrinkled as the feather swept over his face, and he tried swatting it away with one hand. Schneider chuckled as an aggravated growl came from Richard, finally waking up as the tickling continued.

“You make the most adorable faces when you’re asleep, Reesh!”

Richard scowled. “You woke me just to tell me that?”

“No, I woke you because you and I need to have breakfast before we go out with the others later. We burnt off a lot of calories last night!”

That brought a grin to Richard’s face. “Didn’t we just! How about we burn off some more?”

He pulled Schneider down next to him before rolling on top and reaching for the waistband of Schneider’s sweatpants. Schneider stopped him by grabbing hold of his wrists firmly.

“The other reason I woke you is because Till was just here looking for you…”
“What?” Richard looked over at the door sharply, almost expecting to see the singer looming there disapprovingly.

“Apparently he’s sent you a text after being unable to get an answer from you when he knocked on your door, so he came across to see if I’d spoken to you today. I didn’t let him into the room, so you needn’t look so worried! I told him I’d make sure you saw the message if I happened to see you before he did.”

Richard reached over to pick up his phone from the nightstand, and unlocked it so he could read the message. He chewed at his lower lip while he did so, a habit Schneider had noticed he did whenever nervous or anxious about something.

“Um, I can’t believe I’m saying this, but could you not wriggle about so much while you’re straddling my crotch?”

Richard lowered his phone and looked down at Schneider beneath him. “You weren’t complaining when I did it last night.”

“We didn’t have anywhere else we needed to be last night, this morning we do…and if you keep wiggling about on top of me I’m going to have to do something about it, which means we’ll end up missing breakfast, being late to meet the others, then they’ll have to come in search of us…”

“Okay okay…I’ll get off you – but you’ll have to make it up to me later!”

He swung himself off Schneider and over to the side of the bed, looking for his clothes. Schneider sat up and hugged him from behind, nuzzling at the base of Richard’s neck. “I’ll think of something special while we’re out, and as we’ve no show tonight we can take our time. Now, get over to your room and get changed. I’ll knock on your door in half an hour and we can go for breakfast.”

As Richard stood up wearing his previous day’s clothes, Schneider added, “And don’t forget to reply to Till’s text!”

“What shall I say if he asks why I didn’t answer the door?”

“Tell him you were asleep when he knocked and didn’t hear him. It’s completely true, if not entirely accurate.”

“You’ve got an answer for everything!”

“I told you weeks ago that I’ve got your back, and I meant it. Hang on, let me check the hallway before you leave, make sure no one is around to see you. Keycard at the ready?”

Richard waved the card in his hand. “Yep!”

Schneider opened the door and stepped halfway out, checking both ends of the corridor. Finding it empty, he gave Richard a quick kiss and ushered him out of the door.

“See you in a bit, sweetie.”

Richard swiftly opened his door and flashed Schneider his dazzling smile as he crossed the threshold. “You sure you don’t want to join me for a shower?” he whispered, hopefully.

Schneider tapped his watch. “Not enough time – scoot!”

That signature pout again. “It better be very special tonight…!”
Chapter Twelve

Till decided not to say anything for the time being, as what he saw would, in legal circles, be called ‘circumstantial evidence’ at best. He thought it best just to wait and watch for any other signs, or to see if any of the others mentioned anything. If it turned out to be a one-time-only event then there was no point revealing their secret, it would only stir up a hornets’ nest, especially with Richard.

However, should it become obvious that something more serious was going on, then there would need to be a discussion, workplace relationships being notoriously hazardous. Any problems with the two of them had the potential of impacting negatively on the band. He sighed, gathered his phone and wallet, and headed out for the foyer.

Somewhat amazingly, he was the last to arrive. He was certain that they would have to chase Paul out of his room. Instead the shortest member of the band was talking animatedly about his new camera to any one of his friends who would listen.

“…so I was thinking about this idea I’d had for a series of candid shots of everyone, which I can have made into a limited edition run of prints we can sell on the website, so if I take some shots of you today while we’re out I can get started on getting them printed professionally…”

“Paul…”

“…perhaps some black and white shots…”

“…Paul…”

“…then maybe some colour action shots…”

“Paul!”

“No need to shout Reesh, I’m not deaf! Anyway, what?”

“Those photos you want to take of me? I’ll put them on my to-do list…”

“Really?”

“Yeah, it’s the first thing on my list after having a frontal lobotomy…”

“Cool, when are you having that done, then?”

“If you ask me, he’s already had it done!” Flake interjected.

“Fuck off, Flake!”

“Having trouble keeping the kids under control, Ollie?” Till asked as he joined the others.

“Oh, keep me out of it! I’m pretending I don’t know them if anyone asks…”

“Probably a good idea.”

Till looked over to the hotel’s main entrance to where Schneider had been ogling a motorcycle on the drive. A black minibus with tinted windows pulled up. “Looks like our ride’s here. Come on…”
Till kept a close eye on Richard and Schneider for any hints that anything serious might be going on. If anything though, there was an almost complete lack of interaction between the pair – Schneider spending a lot of time with Ollie when he wasn’t nipping off to buy something from the shops they passed, whereas Richard had the dubious pleasure of Paul’s company all afternoon. Till had to admire Richard’s remarkable restraint in not throttling the other guitarist, he apparently had more patience than usual.

They returned to the hotel late afternoon and reconvened in Till’s room to decide what they would do with their night off. Paul had suggested they go back to a bar further down the road from the hotel, with maybe a club after. Till and Ollie were both up for it, whereas Flake wanted to go for one of his solo walks.

“I think I’m going to turn in early - I’ve got a headache from the pipsqueak yammering in my ear all afternoon, so going to a bar will only make it worse. I’ll see you guys in the morning.” Richard said, rising from his seat. “Try not to make a racket when you come back!”

He grabbed his jacket and headed off in the direction of his room.

“Are you joining us Doom?” Paul asked, as they all started filing out of Till’s room.

“Maybe later. I was talking to the owner of that bike parked out front earlier – I’ve been thinking about getting a new set of wheels, and apparently there’s a bike meet not far from here tonight, so I was going to check it out after we’d eaten. I’ll call you if I need to find you. You’re welcome to join me though…”

The others declined, as Schneider was sure they would. He’d not lied about the motorbikes, and would actually go out for a brief look, snapping a few pics on his phone as an alibi, before returning to the hotel for a romantic dinner and evening with Richard, that he’d planned out that afternoon. His trips into the various shops earlier were to gather a few things to make sure he delivered the ‘very special’ night he apparently owed his boyfriend. Schneider smiled to himself as he parted ways with the others outside the hotel. That was the first time he’d thought of Richard as being his ‘boyfriend’, he’d not really put a label on their relationship before now. He decided that he would need to have a chat with Richard about when - and what - they should tell their friends, not to mention their families, but as there were only two more gigs left on the current leg of the tour, it could wait until the break. Pulling his woolly hat down over his ears a bit more, he headed off following the directions he’d been given earlier.

Subterfuge successfully completed, Schneider returned to the hotel to get the room ready for Richard’s arrival. Room service arrived on schedule with dinner, which he set on the table near the window overlooking the bay. He sent Richard a text letting him know everything was ready and hoped that he’d not fallen asleep while waiting. He needn’t have worried, no sooner had he sent the text than there was a knocking at his door. Apparently Richard had been waiting by the door for the message for the past half-hour or so, nervous as a girl on prom-night.

Schneider opened his door to let Richard through, guiding him over to the candlelit dinner, holding out the chair for Richard to take his seat, before lifting the lids from the plates.

“Steak in peppercorn sauce? One of my favourites!”

“I know, I wanted to make sure everything was perfect for my beautiful boyfriend…”
Richard blushed at the compliment, pleased.

They both tucked in, hungry thanks to only having a light lunch, exchanging ideas of what to do during the upcoming break. Meal finished, Schneider put the empty dishes back on the tray they’d been delivered on, before placing the tray outside in the hallway, ready to be collected by hotel staff. Taking Richard by the hand, he led him into the bathroom, where a hot bubble bath was prepared, with scented candles placed around the tub.

Kissing each other slowly, they gradually undressed and climbed into the bath together, Schneider sitting behind Richard, providing him with a back rest, while they finished off the bottle of wine delivered with their dinner. The warm water relaxed tense muscles, while the lighting and scent of the candles soothed their moods further.

“This has been a lovely evening, Christoph, thank you!”

“It’s not over yet, love. I still have more in store for you…”

Richard turned his head to look back at Schneider in surprise, “Really?”

“Well, you did say that tonight had to be very special. I wasn’t about to let you down.”

He nudged Richard forward a bit so that he could clamber out of the tub, before helping his lover up and into a large bath towel, so that he could dry off. He led Richard over to the bed, before resuming kissing him.

Outside, in the hallway, Flake had returned from his walk. The tray was still awaiting collection, and the keyboardist noted the two sets of plates and utensils, eyebrow raised. Both Schneider and Richard’s rooms had their ‘Do Not Disturb’ signs on their respective door handles, so he continued the short distance down the corridor to his own room, adjacent to Schneider’s, ready to settle in for the night himself.
Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Notes

Even by my standards, this is a short chapter. But I hope it’s one you enjoy. We’re almost at the point where this story leads on to ‘Box of Delights’, in fact, I think the remaining text will probably only make up one chapter, which means I can work on getting the other story that’s jostling for attention in my head down on paper, then edited on to here.

Thank you again to everyone who’s read this story, and for leaving comments and/or kudos. Your feedback helps me feel confident to write more. :)

Schneider uncapped a bottle he’d placed on the nightstand earlier and made Richard lie down on his back on the bed.

“Close your eyes and relax, babe, and let me take care of you.”

Schneider started with his lover’s neck and shoulders, and gradually made his way down Richard’s body, massaging the sensual oil into every available square inch of Richard’s skin, save for one area, which was going to get a different kind of attention. Richard had been making appreciative noises while Schneider had been working his muscles, noises which heightened in volume and frequency when Schneider wrapped his arms around each of Richard’s thighs, pushing his legs back, before wrapping his mouth around the guitarist’s semi-hard member.

What followed was the best blowjob Richard had ever been on the receiving end of, Schneider proving he was very skilled when it came to pleasuring others. He spent a few minutes sucking, licking, swirling and blowing Richard, bringing the younger man to orgasm with ease, swallowing everything Richard had to give, before gently rolling him over so that he could massage his back and buttocks.

The sight of his lover lying prostate before him was almost enough to make him consider ending the massage early and to fuck Richard’s brains out. Richard noticed the pause, and cracked an eye open.

“Something wrong, Chris?”

“I’m just admiring the gorgeous view!”

Richard laughed. “The ‘gorgeous view’ is waiting for the rest of his massage!”

Schneider grabbed the bottle of sandalwood scented lotion, and got back to work, spending conspicuously longer rubbing it into Richard’s ass cheeks than any other part of his anatomy. Happy that he’d done a good job relaxing his boyfriend, Schneider wiped the excess oil from his hands before reaching for the other bottle on the nightstand. With Richard already in a very relaxed state, he didn’t need much in the way of preparation.

Schneider moved Richard so that he was lying on one side, then pulled Richard’s upper leg up towards his chest so that Schneider could enter him with greater ease. Lying behind Richard, he lined up his erect penis with Richard’s entrance then slid himself in with relative ease, Richard’s
hand gripping his own more tightly as the only outward sign of any pain caused by being penetrated.

“Are you ready for me, baby?” Schneider asked, making sure Richard was comfortable enough before starting to make love to him.

Richard took a steadying breath. “I’m always ready for you… don’t make me wait any longer!”

Schneider chuckled softly, “Such a demanding, needy baby boy! Don’t worry, I’m going to give you what you need!”

Starting off in their spooned position, upper hands clasped together, Schneider started rolling his hips against Richard’s ass, pushing in as deep as possible. Hitting Richard’s prostate with regular accuracy, making him moan ever louder, Schneider made his lover orgasm several times, his hot sweet ring clenching tight around his cock as each climax hit, driving Schneider closer to the edge each time, until he couldn’t hold off any longer, his seed coating Richard’s slick hole, as Richard called out ‘Oh god, Christoph…” into the night.

They lay together in the dim candlelight, bodies still entwined as they fought for control of their breathing, both hearts pounding out a furious beat. Schneider carefully withdrew from Richard, and utterly spent, the pair fell asleep almost immediately.

Some time later, Richard woke to a dark room, the candles having finally burnt themselves out while he and Schneider slept. Trying not to wake Schneider, he reached out for his phone to check the time, and to see if he had any missed messages. The loss of Richard’s body warmth was enough to wake Schneider.

“Are you okay, love?” he asked, tracing a love heart on Richard’s back with one finger.

Richard turned to face him and smiled. “I’m more than ok, thanks to you. I was just checking what time it is.”

Schneider yawned and rubbed his eyes before looking at his watch. “Shit – the others will probably be back soon.”

“That’s what I was thinking too. If we want to avoid another close shave like this morning, I better make my way to my own bed soon.”

“You’re right, but I’m going to miss you.”

“Me too, but at least after tomorrow’s show we’re on the bus back home.”

“Mmm, I enjoy our tour bus snuggles!” Schneider said as he pulled Richard to him for a passionate kiss.

Richard’s eyes remained closed for so long after they’d finished kissing that Schneider thought he’d fallen asleep again. “Reesh?”

“Hmm?”

“You need to get up, love.”

Richard pulled a face and groaned, showing no inclination to move, so Schneider resorted to dirty tactics.
“Hey! Stop tickling – that’s not fair!”

“I know sweetheart, but it’s for your own good!”

Schneider got a very dubious look in return, as Richard gathered up his clothes and got dressed. Once again, when Richard had his keycard at the ready, Schneider checked the coast was clear for Richard to make the short dash across the corridor and into his room. As it turned out, they only just timed it right, as minutes after they each got into their respective beds and turned off their room lights, there was a rabble in the corridor outside. Their band mates had finally returned from their night out, and were conversing in the loud whispers that drunk people talk in when they’re trying to be quiet.

The noise subsided after the three of them said their ‘good night’s’ to each other before stumbling through their doors in search of their beds.

A few moments later Schneider’s phone buzzed as a text landed.

“I love you xoxo”

He quickly sent a reply. “I love you more xxxx”
Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Summary

And so we reach the point where this story leads into "Box of Delights".

Despite the relatively late night for half the band, they were all up early for breakfast, needing to check out quickly and head off to sound check in the next city where they were due to play that night. It was a few hours’ drive away, and they would arrive around lunchtime, assuming they didn’t hit heavy traffic.

Their road crew had gone on ahead to the venue the day before, so ‘load in’ and preliminary checks should already have been completed. All the band needed to do was check their instruments were all set up to their liking, and that the mix in their individual monitors was at the level they each preferred.

As they were all eager to get home after months on the road, they had pre-arranged for that night’s after show party to take place at the stadium, rather than a hotel, and that they would drive back to Berlin overnight immediately after the party.

Suitcases stowed on their respective bunks, the six of them settled into their regular routines of reading, watching TV, or writing, as the driver started the engine and set them off on their way.

Copious amounts of coffee were drunk by the previous night’s revellers, in an effort to ward off hangovers, to varying degrees of success.

When the driver pulled over at a designated viewpoint mid-morning for his regulatory break, Richard and Schneider both jumped off in order to stretch their legs and have a smoke, leaving the other four band members on the bus.

“So, how long have Doom and Reesh been fucking each other?” Flake enquired, nonchalantly.

“Huh? I thought you all said…”

Till cut Paul off with a wave of his hand. “Do I take it you’ve seen something, Flake?”

“Yes and no. When I got back from my walk there was a room service tray outside Schneider’s door, with two sets of dinnerware. I might have thought he’d brought someone back from that bike meet he’d been to, if it weren’t for the fact that not too much later I could hear them shagging through the wall. Either that or Richard’s found a religion worshipping the ‘Oh-God Schneider.’”

Till grunted. “I wasn’t going to say anything in case it was a one-off, but when I knocked on Schneider’s door after breakfast yesterday, when he stepped away from the door I saw Richard naked and asleep in Schneider’s bed reflected in the dressing table mirror. I’ve not seen any hint of anything before then.”

“I’m pretty sure they started almost at the beginning of the tour.” Oliver spoke up from the corner where he’d been sitting, reading quietly. The other three turned as one.

“What? You’ve known that all this time and said nothing?” Paul asked, amazed.
“Well, until Flake and Till mentioned what they’d observed just now, I had dismissed what I heard as the figment of my drunk imagination, fuelled by the antics the two of them had done earlier that day in response to Paul’s suggestion that they were shagging. I’d gone for a piss during the night and heard what sounded like them fucking.”

“Okay, so what do we think we should do about it?” Till asked.

“Has anyone noticed that Richard’s not been anywhere near as moody or argumentative as normal? If that’s down to him being with Schneider, then I say we do nothing.” Flake said. The others agreed, on reflection, that Flake was right about Richard’s behaviour.

“What if they get in a fight, or split up?”

“Aren’t you happy for them, Till?”

“Of course I am, Paul, but we can’t ignore the fact that relationships can and do go wrong, and in this instance it could have a negative impact not just on them, but on the band as a whole. So we need to agree on what to do under those circumstances.”

“The band can’t go on forever, we’re all getting older, much as I hate to admit it. Perhaps if they do have a massive row that they can’t reconcile, we might be at a natural stopping point anyway. But I think if there’s hope they can get over whatever, we do our best to help them make it work.”

“I never pegged you as a romantic, Paulchen.” Flake replied. “So, what do we do in the meantime? Do we confront them now about it?”

Till thought for a moment before answering.

“I’m guessing that they’ve not told us yet because they probably wanted to see if they could work as a couple, and whether it would impact on their performances.”

“That and the added thrill of sneaking around behind our backs…” Ollie suggested.

Till conceded that point. “If Ollie’s estimate of when they first hooked up is accurate, then I think they will have been together for approximately six months come Valentines’ Day. I suggest that if they’ve still not come clean to us by then, assuming they’re still together by then, that we do something to let them know that we know. We’ll be playing in Paris the night before, let’s give them a Valentines’ Day to remember! Agreed?”

Getting a unanimous response, he suggested they meet up during their down time to plan their surprise. The two missing band members returned to the bus at that point, shivering slightly from the cold air outside.

“Have we missed anything?” Richard asked, blowing on his hands to warm them up, as Schneider brushed past him to get to the kettle in order to rustle up some drinks.

“Nope, just discussing what we’re all doing over Christmas. Which reminds me, I need to phone Nele. How long are you and Khira Li joining us for…?”

Conversations turned to the mundane for the rest of the journey, and the final concert went off without a hitch. The four co-conspirators congratulated themselves on managing to keep their knowledge a secret from the two lovers, and met up as agreed to hatch their plan…
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