### Finding the Words

by cephalopod_groupie

#### Summary

A fic about Tristan Farnon and Richard Carmody because they have so much chemistry. Started as a drabble but now it's a multi-chapter story. Set after the events of the episode Bulldog Breed.

#### Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Tristan Farnon had just taken his vest off, trying to remember the last time he hadn't had a long day when there was a knock at his door. He called out in answer and "It's Carmody," came the reply. The latter entered at the friendly command of "come in," and pressed the door shut behind him so as not to disturb Siegfried, as it was his night off.

"I just came to say goodbye," Richard said with a little more ease than he did when he first arrived at Skeldale House. Although at present he was trying to avoid looking at Tristan's bare chest.

"I thought you weren't going until tomorrow?"

"I start very early - didn't want to disturb you."

"How will you get to the station?"

"Siegfried's driving me there."

"Oh, right," Tristan said, scratching the back of his head awkwardly, having nothing else to talk about. "When are your exams?" he blurted out even though he already knew the answer.

"A few months away."

"I'm sure you'll do better than I usually do."

"I thought you said you did pretty well," Richard said with a good-natured smirk as he leaned against the door.

"Well, I'm pretty bloody hopeless actually." Tristan wanted to add, 'I was trying to impress you,' but thought better of it.

"I might not do all that well myself."

"Rubbish, you'd probably do better than James and he's qualified."

"Well," sighed Richard, "In theory." Tristan looked at the brilliant young veterinary student and thought how they had all been so threatened by him, how his knowledge of contagious bovine pleuropneumonia had made Tristan feel about an inch tall, and how he had tried to challenge him and failed spectacularly. He almost felt guilty for suggesting Richard do the rough and muddy work in dealing with Dent's piglets and sow. Yet Carmody did say in the pub afterwards that he had 'asked for it.'

"How's your bruise?" Tristan asked sheepishly, pointing to Carmody's face.

"It's alright. Can't say it hurts at all." The shiner still loomed below his right eye, but a yellow tinge was beginning to take the place of the red, black and blue.

"Your girlfriend will think someone's punched you in the face."

"I have been, in a manner of speaking." They both laughed. Tristan regaled him with the story of how he had dealt with the same sow in a similar manner and had come home just as filthy, his glad-rags caked with pig slop. Carmody smiled.

"Must be a rite of passage," Tristan added.
"Perhaps I should put it to the examiner that it be part of the exam."

"Not a bad idea." They stood in silence. It was difficult to talk as friends after getting used to each other only just before Carmody was to leave Yorkshire.

"We'll all miss you, you know."

"That is nice to hear, especially as I was rather conceited to begin with."

"No, that's alright. Besides, I'm the pompous cuss around here; you just leave that sort of thing to me." Carmody smiled again and Tristan added in an unfeigned manner, "I'm sure your girlfriend will be happy to have you back."

"I shan't think Virginia noticed I've been gone."

"I'm sure she noticed; we certainly wi--." The phone cut him off and Tristan made for the door but after two rings he heard James answer it. Suddenly he was in close proximity to Richard and as the door softly clicked back into place they were practically nose to nose. Richard moved forward. Tristan was damn near paralyzed; only his lungs seemed to work. He only just managed to close his eyes as their lips met. 'Oh damn and blast,' Tristan thought, 'What on earth am I going to do about this?' But he didn't have the heart to push him away and Richard certainly wasn't going to. In fact, to his surprise, Carmody was thoroughly kissing him and what surprised him more was that he was thoroughly kissing him back. He dare not break away. What in God's name would he say after this? His mind hadn't been this blank since his oral parasitology exam. Siegfried might as well have been yelling at him. Skeldale might as well have been ablaze and he wouldn't have noticed. To think, all of his feelings of jealousy and having to prove himself superior to Carmody might have been another feeling entirely.

Slam! went the front door. It instantly made them jump as if it were a gunshot. They couldn't possibly look at one another and for a minute or so they just stood there breathing. The pounding of their hearts was practically audible in the quiet house.

"Sorry," Carmody said.

"No, no," Tristan said in a total stupor.

"I'd better go." Richard went for the door. Tristan stopped him by standing near the door, blocking his path and looking at the floor. Richard faced the door and stared at the doorknob.

"You will write to us, won't you?" Tristan held out his hand though still didn't dare to look up. Carmody took his hand, shook it once firmly and broke away.

"Certainly," he said quickly and quietly but with great sincerity. And then he was gone. Tristan heard his footfalls on the stairs and exhaled. He hadn't been so lost for words in all his life.
Tristan bounced down the stairs as soon as he heard the post arrive. His impending exam results had been swept clean out of his mind by his recent encounter with Richard Carmody. He opened the one envelope addressed to him. As he read his heart sunk to the floor. He had failed both his exams. All pleasant thoughts of Richard deserted him and were replaced with feelings of inadequacy. Where his contemporary was retentive of memory, he, Tristan was forgetful when it counted, even of the facts he knew. Feelings of distrust for Richard’s superior intellect and coolness of temper seeped back in him like cold water, but then he recalled the warm mouth that had kissed him. James had to repeat "good morning" to jolt Tristan into cognizance. Only just. He skipped breakfast, snapped at James, and pushed past Siegfried. After spending nearly an hour brooding in his room he resolved to confide in James. Heading to The Drovers steadied his nerves a bit.

"I'm in a ghastly fix, James," he had said frankly. He wanted desperately to tell him about Richard, but he was sure James would be disgusted, and so he chickened out and handed his friend the letter. James was very supportive, as always, regardless if he deserved it or not. When James told him he "absorbed theory like a sponge," Tristan suddenly had the image of Siegfried squeezing a sponge dry. If he couldn't tell his brother about failing exams there was no way he could tell him about Richard. But James' idea to impress his tyrannical sibling with hard work seemed to solve everything. Almost.

Tristan's fanaticism became palpable and he ran himself so ragged that Connie, mad with rage that he had forgotten their date, found him sprawled out on his bed, naked but for a towel, fast asleep. That was the end of that, then. He had been thinking about Richard, not Connie.

"What's wrong with me?" he moaned as he touched himself, cursing himself for feeling the way he did about Richard. He continued to think about him even after Connie had screamed and gone. But Tristan forced himself to cease his dirty thoughts and think rationally. There was nothing for it but to take the exams again. He dressed and came downstairs. No one was in the sitting room. He was just about to flop down on the sofa when a thought struck him – Helen's filing system! When she took over after Harbottle had fled, Helen's organization had been so perfect Siegfried had never been so pleased. Tristan frantically thumbed through the firm's contacts and found Carmody, Richard – exactly where it ought to be. He copied down the address as fast as he could and sat back down, shoving the paper into his pocket, feeling very pleased with himself indeed. He felt like good old cocksure Tristan again.

Although Siegfried's wrath after finding out the truth of the exam results and the insistence of his abstaining from nicotine and booze had jarred him, it was not long before his thoughts became agreeable once again. With his brother's fury out of the way, he was free to contemplate his other dilemma. Once more at ease, he pleased himself again that evening. He debated to post Richard a letter and checked the post every morning, just in case, by some miracle, he had already written to him. About a week later, as he was getting dressed he heard the post arrive. He flew down the stairs, practically tripped over one of the dogs and nearly knocked over Mrs. Hall in the process. There, at the bottom of the pile was a letter addressed to him, postmarked Berkshire. He sighed with relief and slapped the rest of the post on the telephone stand and plummeted back upstairs as he tore open the envelope. He only dared to read it after he had slammed the door.

"Dear Tristan," it read, "I really must apologize for my actions the day I left Skeldale. I didn't mean to offend you in any way. To a certain extent I was just as shocked as you were by my impulse. In retrospect, I am surprised I didn't receive another black eye. What I mean to say is that I was very happy that not only did you not push me away, you reciprocated my action. I could not
have asked for a more pleasurable experience. And I hope that, now, after many days have passed that you don’t regret the thing or perhaps find me disgusting or depraved. I was in no way trying to corrupt you. The occurrence was wholly unpremeditated. I acted on a genuine feeling I didn't quite realise I had. I hope that we can put this behind us and part as friends, as I know it is impossible for us to pursue any kind of impulse. I wish you the best of luck on your exam results and all of your future pursuits. Sincerely yours, Carmody."

Tristan stood, poised to sit on his bed but so transfixed that he had forgot to do so. Eventually, he dropped to the mattress, eyes staring at nothing in particular. He must write back. He made for his desk and got out his pen and paper that he rarely used.

"Tristaaaaaaaaan!" came the familiar call of his elder brother.

"Oh no," he said under his breath. He clunked downstairs by way of protest.

"Tristan," Siegfried said upon seeing the bedraggled youngster, "I will need your help today." The former followed him, his shoulders drooping slightly. They sat down to breakfast and Siegfried went into his usual run through of the day's worth of hard work ahead, laced with criticism of Tristan's living habits.

"Did I see you tearing up the stairs earlier this morning, baby brother?"

"Oh yes," Tristan said, tearing himself away from his deep thoughts.

"Letter from Miss McTavish?"

"No, a chum from Edinborough," he lied. After bolting the rest of his eggs and bacon he dashed back upstairs to compose a letter of reply.

"Don't be long I'm leaving in a quarter of an hour!"

Tristan closed the door, closing his eyes for a moment and taking a deep breath.

"Dear Richard," Tristan began tentatively, "I was very glad to receive your letter. Please don't apologize. I have been trying to wrap my head around what happened. You certainly didn't offend me, though I must admit I was shocked. I nearly told James about it but chickened out. I think even he would disapprove. And as for Siegfried, I don't even want to think of it. Now that you've sent me this letter I don't feel the need to confide in anyone. I don't think you're disgusting or depraved. And there isn't much you could do to corrupt me. I admit I was intimidated by your intelligence when you arrived. I suppose I didn't want someone else pushing me farther down the ranks at Skeldale. Siegfried makes me feel bad enough about being a parasite on the firm. Speaking of me being a dead-weight, I've failed both my exams, as I'm sure won't surprise you. I'll put a wager on you having passed with flying colours. I'd better close. Siegfried will start yelling up the stairs for me.

"I've been going over things in my mind. I didn't know I had these feelings either. And the thing is, I don't want to put this behind us. I'm putting this all rather badly. I'll keep an eye our for your letter in the post so no one starts asking questions. Tristan."

He folded the letter up, addressed the envelope and put them in his desk to post as soon as he got a chance. Off he went for a hard slog, not as daunted as usual.
Tristan managed to post the letter with no eyes prying. When he came back inside he closed the door and sighed heavily, shutting his eyes tight. If it was a letter to a girl he wouldn't care so much. And apart from his brother's criticism he could do as he pleased without fear, but this was so terribly different. It was hardly real to him that he'd snogged another man. Or was that been snogged? Anyway, it didn't matter. It was glorious. This thing he'd never even considered. The strength of Richard's mouth on his was heart-stopping. No woman had done that to him and he wondered if that was because he was stronger physically, as a man, or because Richard was just a different kind of person. And kissing someone who was equally dominant and yet rather tender was...he couldn't even think of a word to describe it.

Now was the worst of it. Waiting for a letter from Richard. Having to monitor the post was a full time job which was terrible timing considering the Bob Rigby crisis. It was all hands on deck and Tristan's mind was totally elsewhere. He so wanted to feel that exact pleasure again and it was not something he could achieve on his own. Relaxing in the gentleman's way simply didn't cut it. He needed him. The pretentious git that made him feel an inch tall. The same young man who proved to be humble after all. The same young man who enflamed him in the best possible way. At long last, the letter arrived in the post. Tristan tried to remain as calm as possible even though he was sure someone could hear his heart pounding. He slipped away and went to his room as discretely and unhurried as possible.

"Dear Tristan, I was very glad to receive your letter as I was convinced I wouldn't get one at all. And I certainly wouldn't blame you if you chose not to respond. I'm sure it gave you as much to think about as it did for me. I don't see a way to continue our mutual interest other than conducting ourselves in a clandestine manner. I certainly don't want to live in that way, but for now I suppose we must. Not that I am making any assumptions regarding any kind of future meeting. If you wanted to avoid any intrusive questions from your brother or Doctor Herriot, you could perhaps call me. (My telephone number is written down the bottom of the letter.) - Carmody"

Tristan could hardly contain himself and a look of manic glee flooded his face. He immediately started to pen a letter. After two failed attempts and several crumpled sheets of paper later he was successful.

"Dear Richard, We've had a hell of a time with the foot and mouth scare which seems to be under control now. And the charming Mrs. Flaxton, a beautiful lady (upper-crust, you'd like her), brought in her long-suffering poodle which, thanks to James, was cured. You might want to talk to him about that once the article comes out. I'm sure the details would interest you. (You could say that you read it, rather than heard about it from me.)

I'm keeping this letter short for obvious reasons. I'm not one for words, at least on paper. And I'll try to ring you in a few days. Hopefully when everyone's out of the house. Or I might just use a call box. - Tristan"

He couldn't get it in the post box quick enough. Every minute he couldn't phone Richard was hell. He was going to write his number on his wrist but that might get noticed. He memorized it...which was ironic seeing as he couldn't seem to remember vital information about the pathology of domesticated pigs when standing in front of a stern Scottish examiner. Two days after he received the letter and sent his reply, he got to a phone box. Not the nearest one, mind. He was practically shaking with anticipation and his fingers twitched as he dialed.

Ring. Ring. Ring.
"Hello?" Tristan's heart nearly skipped a beat. His voice. He could feel it.

"Richard? It's Tristan."

"I'm so glad to hear your voice." They were both tentative.

"Are you alone?" Richard added.

"Yes. I'm in a phone box...You?"

"Yes, I am alone too."

"I hardly know what to say." Richard could hear that Tristan was smiling and he smiled himself.

"Neither do I."

"That's out of character."

"Very amusing. I, um." Richard swallowed. "I'm sorry about all this."

"No, no, don't be sorry. Honestly." Tristan wanted to jump in with both feet but fought it as long as he could.

"Really?" Richard asked quietly.

"Richard...I."

"Yes?"

"I want to see you." Tristan gulped. Richard must have heard that.

"I want to see you too."

"But I don't see how."

"Why don't you come down to Berkshire."

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course," Richard said, trying not to betray his emotions. "You could stay with my family. I'm sure it wouldn't be too much trouble to put you up." Both knew Richard was being businesslike to hide his excitement.

"That sounds perfect," Tristan said softly, a hint of lustfulness seeping through. "When did you have in mind?"

"Perhaps next month?"

"Don't know if I can wait that long."

"Neither can I." Tristan was sure Richard heard his sharp intake of breath. He put his hand on the cool glass of the phone box for support. "Can you get away next week?" Richard added.

"I'll try my damnedest."

"We'd better hang up now. You're wasting your change."
"No, I'm not."

"Tristan, I know it was a bit hedonistic of me to behave the way I did, but I did it because I felt something...a pull."

"Yes, I know."

"Well."

"Goodbye for now. I'll ring you tomorrow."

"Alright." A few more soft goodbyes and they were disconnected. Tristan jingled the remaining change in his pocket.

"I shall have to economize," he thought to himself as he walked down the road.
It surprised all at Skeldale when Tristan announced he was traveling to Berkshire to see Richard Carmody, the young man whom he had once been so rabidly jealous of.

"Well, I must buckle down and conquer these exams, Siegfried," he began at the breakfast table a few days before he would travel south, "And I did mention to Carmody before he left that I needed to buckle down somehow and he did offer to help. And I did sort of need a holiday, especially after all this hoof and mouth scare." He had been rambling and stuffed a fork-full of bacon in his mouth. To his relief, a wave of satisfaction and, dare he say, pride washed over Siegfried's face.

"What a thumping good idea," he said. Tristan swallowed forcibly. "It'd do you good! Perhaps you can get some experience on their farm as well. I'm really glad you've made this decision, Tristan. I must say I'm rather proud of you." Siegfried patted him on the back as he got up from the table and headed off to a long days work.

Tristan was nearly put off his breakfast. He would try not to disappoint him this time. He had disappointed him so many times before. At first it didn't bother him in the least. Siegfried was always yelling at him for something, but since failing his exams for the second time, his feelings of guilt and shame had deepened that much more. And now, his feelings for Richard made him even more complicated. If it were ever to come out... no that was silly, of course it never would. But he did need to set this one thing right; his credentials. And Richard would be happy to help. But perhaps he wouldn't be. He mustn't give him the impression he was using him. He certainly was not. He wanted him in two ways and they were not connected...at least in his eyes. Maybe that is what he was telling himself.

When the time came for Tristan to leave and he was deliciously excited but also full of worry. His long journey south was wonderful but it gave him far too much time to ruminate on the entire situation in life. He wasn't seeing Connie anymore, he'd been kissed by a young man, and he was struggling to pass his exams. He got off the train and stood on the platform.

"Perhaps he chickened out?" Tristan thought to himself, "What if I'm stranded here all alone in Berkshire and there's nothing for me to do here. I'll have to study here for a fortnight, alone...and no one to carouse with." He looked around the platform, trying not to look desperate, scared, frantic...all the things he felt. And there was Richard, looking dapper as usual. Their eyes met. In the light of day, not in Tristan's room in the dark early hours of the morning.

Richard approached him, pretending to be simply a chum, here to pick up his friend from the station. As if he wasn't coming to pick up someone he had somewhat illegally touched his lips to. They shook hands as their eyes remained locked, their fears and the thrill of meeting again hovered in the air between them.

"Did you have a good journey?" Richard asked, smooth and sophisticated as always.

"Fine thanks," Tristan said, grinning but, nearly scared out of his mind.

"I've got the car waiting. I drove here myself so that we could talk." They moved through the crowd and Tristan was in a haze, following Richard who had picked up one of his cases. He found himself in the luxurious car, the wind in his hair before he even had a chance to think.

"Richard..."
"Yes, I know what you're thinking." They drove on for a few minutes until they passed a copse of trees. Richard did a u-turn and drove the car between them. Without saying a word he leaned over, took Tristan's face in his hands and kissed him. The sensuousness of it startled Tristan, but he threw himself into it wholeheartedly. Richard was less tentative in his approach than the first time. Shaded by the hood of the car and the canopy of trees, the world nearly ceased to exist. Richard grasped the back of his neck, not letting either of them falter. "Perhaps this was the determination that allowed him to pass his exams," Tristan mused to himself as he opened his mouth a little wider to meet Richard's tongue. His mind was a whirlwind of thoughts, like cold air that rushes into a warm house and swirls around, pleasant and threatening. He moaned softly as he wrapped his arms around Richard's trim waist. After several minutes of their shared not-so-awkward bliss, they parted, reluctantly. Tristan hung on his lips, breathing in deeply as he opened his eyes. Richard looked at him for a moment and then turned away.

"I suppose we'd better get a move on," Carmody said as he started the car once again.

"Richard," Tristan said, gripping the young man's arm, "We will have time to talk, won't we?"

"Of course. Plenty of time." They smiled at one another faintly before they drove out onto the Berkshire roads to the Carmody estate.
Tristan couldn’t help but emit a low whistle upon seeing the “Royal Estates in Berkshire” as he had once called Carmody’s family home. Richard smiled, this time much more out of an endearing feeling toward Tristan than superiority. The country mansion was beautiful but a little more understated than Tristan had imagined, though still quite grand. They pulled up, gravel crunching under the tires. They both got out and Richard took his bags.

“Do go in,” Carmody encouraged. Tristan, usually brimming over with confidence, slowly stepped over the threshold into the surprisingly stark, yet sophisticated entry hall. Carmody set his cases next to him on the Persian runner. Richard looked at his guest with fondness; the latter didn’t notice. An old corgi suddenly trotted out from a room off the hall and around Tristan’s feet, sniffed the baggage and trotted off again. Carmody laughed.

“That was Finty.” Tristan poked his chin in the air and mumbled something in acknowledgment.

“Nothing to be nervous about,” Richard said gently, patting Tristan’s arm.

“I’m not!” Tristan protested, his voice rising in pitch. But his protest was interrupted by an older gentleman, striding towards them. He had an air of confidence similar to Carmody’s but with a more cheerful air.

“Hello Father, may I introduce Tristan Farnon. I had the good fortune to study under his brother at Skeldale.” The older man took a pipe out of his mouth and extended a hand.

“Ah yes! Good to meet you, young man,” the senior Carmody said. Tristan smiled. He didn’t expect such a calm and warm welcome. He replied that it was good to meet him as well but he was too busy assessing the situation to listen to his own words. Richard hadn’t mentioned his parents at all when he was in Yorkshire. “Your mother should be in soon,” Mr. Carmody added to his son. “I’m just off to town before supper. I’ll be back soon. Did you have a pleasant journey?” He was out the door before Richard had said ‘yes father’ with a smile.

“I’ll just put your bags at the foot of the stairs for Deverille to take up,” Richard said. “Come on, let’s go into the sitting room.”

Tristan so wanted Richard to take his arm as they went into the next room, but they must be discreet (although he was aware that that sort of thing was acceptable with the upper classes and any of the old boys for that matter). The room was large and open, full of sunlight and floral patterns of the most understated fashion. Several tables with lace cloths and numerous pictures graced the room, and Tristan was struck by the cheerfulness he was not expecting. Presently, a refined looking lady came in through the French windows, removed her gardening hat, shook it out, and rested her flower basket on a table.
“Hello Mother,” Richard said. They kissed one another on the cheek.

“Hello my dear. Ah! this must be your friend,” Mrs. Carmody said, shaking hands with Tristan. “Richard’s told me about you.” She was a strong looking woman, slim and stern but with an inner happiness that shone through.

“Not all bad, I hope,” Tristan joked, his usual over-confident air diminished slightly. Mrs. Carmody smiled with her eyes and picked up her flower basket. “I’m going to tend to these. Perhaps you can show Mr. Farnon the garden.”

Richard led him outside through the French windows. It was a beautiful evening; slight breeze, the sun still warm to the skin, the sent of flowers wafting around them. When they rounded a bend between the flower beds, Richard took Tristan’s arm. Tristan inhaled, somewhat startled by the contact.

“How do you like them?”

“Your parents?”

“Yes.”

“They’re...not how I expected.”

“Oh? How do you mean?”

“I think I expect all relations to be like Siegfried; a little frightening.” Tristan chuckled nervously.

“I like them already.”

“I’m glad.” They walked together for several minutes and then headed back in order to have time to freshen up before supper. Richard asked Deverille, (a gentle figure who gave one the impression of a large, soft brick that just happened to have legs and arms) where Tristan’s was to be sleeping, and they both went up to their respective rooms, just across the hall from one another.

Supper was a glamorous affair in comparison with Skeldale, but not as daunting as Tristan had imagined. Although they were all in semi formal evening attire, they didn’t act like it. The Carmodys were relaxed and refined, full of good humor and gentle manners. “Makes a change from Siegfried’s outbursts,” Tristan remarked later.

“I thought after supper that Tristan and I would go down to the gatehouse,” Richard said as dessert was brought in. “I promised to help him with his exams.”

“A splendid idea.” Mr. and Mrs. Carmody turned in for the night while Richard and Tristan changed into plain clothes. Both wore sweaters as the night air was chilly. Tristan hardly knew what to say as walked down the lawn, torches in hand. The gatehouse was small and ornate, as if all the extra trimming of the main house were stuck onto it like icing on a birthday cake. Inside it was pitch black until Richard lit the lamps. The furniture was somewhat squashed into the small room, but it was no less inviting than the main house. Tristan noticed the curtains were drawn. As they sat down, Richard began to talk about the exams and studying. Now that his pervious jealousy was being replaced with fondness for Richard, Tristan found it a little easier to face the subject of education. He should have been paying attention to Richard’s introductory dissertation on veterinary parasitology, but was distracted by the man’s youthful, handsome face.

“Tristan,” Carmody said with an amused smile. “Are you listening?”

“Hmm...what? Yes of course,” Tristan replied. “Boophilus annulatus, do go on.” Richard continued his enthusiastic list of important discoveries in the field. He had gotten to the subject of
Trypanosoma Brucei when he noticed Tristan was becoming distracted yet again.

“Tristan, perhaps we should study this tomorrow.”

“I’m sorry, Richard, it’s been a long day and I had been rather worried about what would happen once I arrived.”

“I understand. I was apprehensive too.” Carmody got up and sat next to him on the sofa. He kissed him tenderly.

“I wish this was more of a lark like it is with all the nurses I knock about with,” Tristan confessed. “But then, I suppose it couldn’t be, could it.” Richard leaned in. Soon, their arms were wrapped around each other. Tristan pulled away. “Perhaps we should put the lights out.”

“A sensible idea.” When Richard sat down again, Tristan tried to see the man’s face. In the faint moonlight, he could just make out his perfectly groomed wavy hair. Richard began to kiss his neck. Tristan’s mind was spinning in more ways than one. He breathed the man’s name. He had imagined this, but the sensation itself was too divine for words. He felt warm lips on his neck, strong, slim arms around his waist, holding him close. Lost in these feelings, he suddenly felt Richard’s hand between his thighs, touching him. He gasped softly, pressing himself to Richard just a little more.

“You were always one to give me hands on experience,” Richard quipped. He began to rub Tristan, feeling him. Tristan let himself melt, the front of his trousers becoming a little snug. Suddenly a shot rang out somewhere in the distance. They both jumped.

“Oh God, what was that?!” Tristan whispered loudly.

“Poacher no doubt. The gamekeeper isn’t as vigilant as he ought to be.”

“Christ,” Tristan sighed, leaning back on the sofa. Carmody came with him, resting his head on the former’s chest.

“It isn’t the only illegal exploit taking place tonight,” Richard said, sadly.

“No,” Tristan said, stroking Richard’s hair. They breathed together softly, both thinking, though somewhat content in their shared worries.

“What about Virginia?”

“Oh, she won’t know. It will be alright.”

“I mean, will you marry her?”

“Perhaps. Let’s not talk about it.”

“Yes, let’s stick to pigs.” They both laughed. The dawn was breaking.

“Perhaps we should return to the house.”

Chapter End Notes

SO sorry this took so long!
End Notes

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