A Disturbance Beside Him

by ghuune

Summary

It's summer. The Lanes are going hungry. To make matters worse, now they have a guest: Daria, fleeing the usual plot device at her house... and she's driving Trent batshit. (Daria's characterization based on S1-3).

(After browsing the tag, fair warning: this whole thing's smut. Top to bottom character-driven smut).

(Also I'm not nuts about the second chap. That's the way it goes sometimes).

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
I.
Sure seemed like Daria was around a lot.

Trent was poking the rubbery mountain of overcooked instant oatmeal in his bowl (he either hadn't used enough water or he'd pressed the wrong buttons on the microwave: it was that kind of hangover) when she wandered in.

“Oatmeal for lunch?” she asked.

“Is it lunch time?” He squinted at the digital readout on the microwave. A few crucial bars had long since burnt out, and the remaining ones... weren't helpful.

“About three-thirty in the afternoon. So, late lunch.” But she didn't sound judgmental. It was that whole monotone thing. Soothing.

“Show ran all night,” he said by way of explanation. Less of a show and more of a party, but whatever.

He stuck some oatmeal in his mouth. Chemically flavored peaches and cream: bummer. He'd hoped for maple and brown sugar.

Daria opened the fridge. Nothing in there but a scuffed pair of Mary Janes sitting on the top shelf.

“At least it's not empty,” she remarked.

“That's why Janie put them in there.” He chewed. “Look, don't take this the wrong way, but... weren't you here last night?”

“Yes.” She pulled out a chair and sat across from him.

“And the night before that.”

“Your powers of observation are astonishing.”

“So... what happened?” As he contemplated whether chewing another bite was worth the effort, Daria reached over and pinched off a lump, squishing it experimentally between her fingertips.

“Quinn has a steady boyfriend,” she said, studying the lump intently.

“Doesn't she have, like, five?”

“A preferable situation by far, as the competition ensured no one male achieved his goal,” Daria said tartly. “Much like the experience an individual spermatozoa must have as it travels towards the egg.”

Good image. Too bad he didn't have his notebook on him.

“Mom and Dad are on some marital retreat—you think she'd take the hint—but instead she has him over *all the time.* * * All over the house.*”

Daria blushed and broke eye contact.

It took Trent a moment to work through what she'd just implied. “Yeah,” he said at last.
“Awkward.”

Daria plucked another chunk of his oatmeal. When he got up, he nudged the bowl a little closer to her with his elbow, as if by accident. Hers if she wanted it. He knelt in front of the fridge and started loading the motley assortment of beers he'd brought back from the show, party, whatever, into it.

“Chips on the counter, if you want,” he said, peering around the open door to point with his chin. “Gotta love leftovers.”

“That's all you have to say?”

He sat back on his heels to look at her. “Does it need a big speech? It's just sex, Daria.”

She went right on blushing. “You don't think she's too young?”

Trent shrugged. “I think she's too immature,” he said. “There's a difference.” He stood up and shut the fridge door, even though the cool air had felt good. He leaned against it.

“You worried about her?” he asked, folding his arms. “Is the guy a prick?”

Daria sighed. “He's a normal teenage boy, whatever that means, so, no. I'm more worried about him than I am about her.”

“Then it happened too fast. She doesn't know his middle name.”

“That's your criterion?”

He shrugged as he scribbled what he'd said down on the phone notepad. It might make a good lyric. Lots of things rhymed with “name.”

“I have no idea whether she knows his middle name.” Daria glared. “Even if she does, what makes it okay for her to force me to choose between marinating in their hormones or fleeing my homeland?”

He wrote that down too and then set down the pen. “I'm sorry, Daria,” he said, because he couldn't join her in her outrage. “This might be a job for Janie...”

“So you think it's absolutely fine, totally all right, that my sixteen-year-old sister is interning for Hugh Hefner this summer?”

“Yeah, I do,” Trent said. “Look, Daria, if she's acting on an honest feeling, I got no complaints. And even if she weren't, it's none of my business. She doesn't have a lot of time left before she sells herself into trophy-wife slavery, so she might as well enjoy it. From where I'm standing, you're the only one with a problem.”

“Yes,” she glared, “*I'm* the one with the problem.” Still glaring, she stood up from the table and left him in the kitchen, alone.

III.

“Hey, Jane.”

Trent glanced around before he stepped fully into the garage, but it looked like Jane was alone, lounging on a lawn chair amidst all the boxes and piles of random crap.

“Trent! Come on out and sweat to the oldies with me.” The boombox beside her was pulsing
Alanis. He winced. She reached over and turned the screech to a whine.

“Radio...” he grumbled.

“Don't start, Trent. You busted the tape deck.”

“Monique did.”

“Okay, *fine.* *Monique* busted the tape deck. But she wouldn't've done it if you hadn't pissed her off, so it's still your fault. Now hand over that beer.”

He gave it to her before he opened the second-best lawn chair and sat down, balancing on only half of his skinny ass so he wouldn't fall victim to the hole in the webbing. He twisted the top off his beer and then opened Jane's when it became obvious she wasn't managing it.

“It always amazes me how we hardly ever have food, and yet we miraculously always have beer.”

“It's how I get paid.” Trent shrugged. Night now, still hot as hell. The beer bottle slicked with condensation in his hand.

A hard-shelled bug kamikazed the bank of lights and crashed to the concrete, legs twitching. Trent bent over and flipped it back on its belly.

“It's alive!” Jane aped Dr. Frankenstein and then laughed. “Just stunned, you big softie. Hey, strap some rocket launchers on that baby and it could take out Tokyo.”

He straightened back up. “Did Daria go back home?”

“Huh? No. She's around somewhere... reading, watching TV up in the room... why do you ask?”

“Has she moved in?”

“Is it a problem?” Jane eyed him, sipped her beer.

The bug scrawled a semi-circle in the drift of dust on the floor. “Might be tough. We got the one working shower and all.”

“Eh, she'll be gone as soon as the furniture in her head rearranges itself. We'll manage. Remember when Nick crashed here for a month?”

A better group came on the radio. Trent didn't know who they were, but anything beat Alanis. He toed the insect into a more life-saving trajectory, off the concrete and into the thickets of their totally ignored lawn.

As the bug disappeared, he said, “This thing with Quinn and her guy's got her really spun.”

“God, don't remind me. The last thing we need is for it to breed.” Jane tried to punctuate this statement by chugging her beer and clapped a hand over her mouth when she failed. Jane wasn't a real big drinker. She coughed and spluttered.

Trent grabbed her bottle before she spilled the rest. “She tried to talk to me about it and she seemed upset at how intensely I don't care.” He sipped the beer and glowered out at the impenetrable blackness, his night vision destroyed by the garage's fluorescent lighting.

“So you don't find it weird? At all? I mean, imagine if it were me and Tom, engaged in energetic horizontal calisthenics all over the house. How would you feel?”
“Careful, Janie. There's this whole big-brother instinct you're running into right now. It's primal. Plus,” he winced, “it's not an image I want in my head.”

“And therein lies half of Daria's problem. The other half is sheer, bloody-minded competitiveness,” Jane's eyebrow quirked.

She must've gotten a buzz from her attempt to shotgun that beer. He said, “I'm not following.”

Her grin grew wicked. “Once again, Quinn goes first, and it's pissing her off. Thus, meltdown and hiding out at her friendly local insane asylum, where she can rage and scream—silently—to her heart's content.”

“Oh.” Trent finished his beer. “All right. I guess I understand it better now. Thanks.”

“You're welcome. Any time you need Daria explained, you just call on me. I'll be here.”

IV.

Every time the shower ran, the pipes rumbled in the wall just behind Trent's bed and woke him up.

He stumbled into the bathroom to whizz. “Jane,” he grumbled as he leaned over the bowl, forearm pressed against the wall, “isn't there a rule or something about showers before noon?”

“Ummm... not that I'm aware of.”

“What's with your voice?” he muttered. “Open a window in here. Jesus. I can barely fucking see.”

“*Wow.* You and Jane really *aren't* big on mornings.”

He blinked a few times in surprise. Daria, not Jane, in the shower. Right. He opened the window to vent the steam, because the mildew situation was already out of hand. A man had to draw the line somewhere, and he drew his at creepy black molds.

He ran his toothbrush under the faucet and smeared paste on the bristles. “Just don't use all the hot water.”

“Um. Okay.”

The shower turned off. He kept brushing. His wisdom teeth were taking another stab at breaking through his gums and they were really sore. Shoulda had'm removed. Too late now.

Maybe he'd floss. Someone told him once to only floss the ones you wanted to keep. He checked the cabinet. No floss. A future of dentures... bummer.

In his head, music coiled like smoke and then vanished. Oh well. If it was worth anything, it'd come back to him.

Daria rattled the shower curtain. “You might want to replace this,” she muttered. “I mean, this is some real quality slime.”

He spit out the foam. “That's why I opened the window, Daria.”

“There's this spray stuff. We use it at my house. Really lets you take your aggression out on soap scum. I'll get a bottle.” Rattle, went the shower curtain.

“Sure. Whatever.” He swished a mouthful of water around in his mouth.
“Um, Trent? Any chance of you getting out of here before I, too, develop a thin layer of slime?”

He meant to spit out the rinse, but he gulped it instead as “slime” flashed to “slick” flashed to “Daria's skin, right this instant.” Stupid brain... Couldn't blame that train of thought on the big head, though.

“Yeah, uh, sorry. I get a little focused on... dental care.”

“And we can bond over that, as soon as I dry off.”

Clouds of steam rushed out the open window, carrying the scents of soap and shampoo. Trent's throat was so dry it clacked as he replaced the brush in its paste-spackled holder.

V.
Okay, let's face it: this cohabitation experiment wasn't going well.

He strummed his guitar and twiddled a tuning knob, which didn't need it, but he was interested to see how far he could bend the sound. He was, not to put too fine a point on it, super stoned.

The float of his body high and the distinct metallic quality of his aimless strumming blunted his thoughts, but the occasional well-aimed, pointy one still lanced his cloud.

Daria wore chapstick in the winter and her army jacket all year round. The most he'd ever seen of her skin was her belly when she'd gotten her navel pierced. She'd done that because he'd asked, and he'd asked because he'd wanted to see her. The circle-jerk of life.

Her eyes were long and narrow and coffee-dark, her face smooth and serene as a cameo portrait, but he only knew that because he'd looked at her closely. At a glance, you kind of ricocheted off those glasses and didn't take in the whole picture.

She bit both her lips and her nails. The nails, he hardly noticed, but her lips? They were beautifully shaped, and it seemed like she bit them a lot when she was around him. Sometimes blood glistened on the swollen lower curve and gave him the urge to kiss it clean.

Did that mean she'd be a biter? Maybe. Probably. Holy hell.

So he was attracted to her. Big joke, getting hot for Jane's best friend, out of all the women in the world to focus on. Legal or not, he couldn't navigate the complexity: if Jane stopped talking to him, if this house stopped welcoming him, he'd have nowhere to go.

And... fuck, it just wouldn't work. Daria thought he was some cool guy, but he was really just a rock dweeb who smoked too much and could stand to gain twenty pounds. As long as the bong stayed loaded, he knew he wasn't going anywhere. There'd be all the shit he'd already gone through with Monique, screaming fights about punctuality and money. He'd lose Daria for sure, and then he'd lose Jane. Couldn't risk it.

He stared blankly at the wall as that conclusion settled in his head. It was like stuffing an oversized couch through a doorway *at last* after cursing at it all afternoon, but at least it was in there now.

Couldn't risk it.

VI.
When he woke up again, night had fallen.

Jane's TV babbled through the walls. He went downstairs and checked on the Mary Janes in the fridge, but they hadn't bred any sandwiches.
He grabbed his pipe and film canister of bud and took these supplies with him to Jane's room. It was miserable getting the munchies without any munchies on hand to ease the pain, but it was also miserable sitting around hungry without anything to blame it on except being alive, so there was a cost-benefit analysis happening here.

Daria looked up when he walked in. The light from the television turned her lenses into blue discs.

“Oh. Hey, Daria. Where's Janie?”

“Emergency. Something about orphans, or maybe babysitting, with Tom.” She turned up the volume.

When Trent shut the door, the snick of the latch catching shot through his chest. The TV suddenly seemed very loud.

Holy shit, he was actually nervous about being alone with her.

He flopped down on the bed and took a drag off the bowl. “Want any?” he asked.

Daria let her head drop back as she peered at him upside down. “Just one puff,” she said. “More than that, and I'll start obsessing over all the people who are after me.”

She climbed up beside him as he packed fresh and settled in. The stuff she was wearing—an oversized old t-shirt and boxer shorts—looked she'd kited it out of a boy's laundry basket the morning after.

Whoa. Tsunami of hatred for that thought. *Tsunami of hatred flows through my brain...* He toyed with the lyric through vein/insane/mundane/propane and then abandoned it.

She relaxed on her side, calmly facing him, and it dawned on him she'd never done anything like this before. One time he'd lain on her bed to see what she'd do, like a dare, and she'd perched like a bird on the edge. She'd always left a hand's-span of space between them, and it was still closer than he'd ever seen her get to anyone.

There sure as hell wasn't a hand's-span of space between them now. Her fingers shook as she accepted the loaded pipe, and whoa. She was nervous, too.

Trent knew she had a crush on him. Janie knew it. Life on Mars probably knew it. And here she was, easy touching distance, in nothing but a thin t-shirt and boxers with no bra, and, maybe? Probably? No underwear. Fuck.

Worn old fabric draped over her small waist, rucked over the flare of her hips. Looked cozy. Looked hot.

He should get the hell off this bed.

She didn't hold her smoke long before she blew out and passed the pipe. He took another hit and held it out to her again, eyebrows raised questioningly, but she waved it off and rolled over on her back. Her nipples pushed at the fabric of her shirt like metal beads, and it wasn't cold in here at all.

Yeah, he should really get the hell off this bed.

Just what the hell was she was doing?

He tried to look at it from her perspective. Daria, laying on a bed with her crush, but her best friend's bed. Daria, in one layer of worn fabric, when she normally wore canvas like a suit of
armor: but slacker-wear, not lingerie.

So, no, she wasn't thinking about her effect on him. She just had a comfortable buzz as she killed some time waiting for Jane to come back.

Judge's ruling: she wasn't looking for him to make a move.

So he laced his fingers behind his head to keep them out of trouble and crossed his feet at the ankles. “Sick, Sad World” rattled ignorably away on the television.

He was wound as tight as a guitar string. Touch him and he'd twang. Someone's heartbeat jarred the bed. Someone was breathing too fast. If she wasn't looking for him to make a move, could she just relax already? Cos this was torture.

She sighed. She reached up—a disturbance beside him—and set her glasses down on top of the stereo with a click. Then she dropped like a shot; she curled into him.

So now he had Daria half-on, half-off him. He swallowed. Tits, man. Daria's tits. It should feel so wrong. Maybe it would have been, like, pod-person weird if Daria hadn't immediately started exploring the arch of his ribs, her touch as firm and clinical as a doctor's. She was curious, and all those anatomical skeletons scattered around her room? That's what bodies were, to her.

Damn it. Another good image, and still, no notebook.

“Daria?” He had to clear his throat to speak. “Are you... cuddling?”

“Am I doing it right?” Her voice was muffled against his chest.

“I don't think there is a right way...”

“But you don't want me to.” She tensed, the prelude to rolling away, and Trent couldn't get his fingers unlaced fast enough to get an arm around her and hold her there, against him.

They were silent awhile. Been a long time since he held someone like this, or was held like this. Weird. He hadn't even known he'd missed it.

This was better, less tense. He pet her shoulder, his string calluses snagging on the weave of her sleeve, and he played with “weave” and “sleeve” through “some kind of deve” and “pain to allieve,” until she mumbled, “Trent?”

“Mmm?”

Her cheek blazed hot, pressed against his chest. “Do you think you could kiss me?”

He jerked in surprise, and she resignedly, rejectedly, sat upright, careful not to touch him anymore.

His heart drummed. Shit, was he scared.

“Yeah, I want to, Daria,” he said, meeting her eyes; she only let him get away with it because she didn't have her glasses on. “It's just not a good idea.”

“What's bad about it?” He'd never heard the brattiness that was her birthright in her voice before, but just now, she'd sounded like a Morgendorffler. And if he wanted an out, all he had to do was tell her that.

He propped himself up on his elbows. She hadn't jumped off the bed and rushed away, which was good, cept now he was stuck explaining, and he sucked at explanations. Where was Jane when
He took a hit and used the exhale to center himself. He passed the pipe to her, but he kept his eyes on the TV as she toked. Daria with a glass dick between her lips, right now? He just wasn't pure enough, man, so sue him.

He muted the TV. Colored light flowed and burst in the black room, glittering neon off tangled strands of her hair. The way her skin glowed made him wonder how it would feel if he touched it.

Perhaps sick of the silence, Daria turned the stero on. Jane was still stuck on Radiohead's "Kid A." Ambient electronica throbbed from the speaker he was using to prop up his head.

"You said you want to," she said, as she settled back in. Damn. She wasn't letting this go. Her low contralto almost got lost in the music.

"Yeah, I did, Daria," he said, edgy. Alarmed by the way she scrunched up and shut down, he took a deep breath and fixed his tone. "But, like, have you ever watched those race-car crashes and thought, 'Fuck! *Why* is this a sport?' Can't help thinking like that'd be us."

"Mostly I think, *Explosions. Pretty.* But, umm.... Maybe I should explain."

"Yeah, maybe." After that failure, someone else explaining would be awesome.

"It's not like I'm not proposing marriage," she said, "but, um—and this shouldn't come as a shock, but... I like you."

Trent felt honored and panicked in about equal measures, because this was *Daria,* and she didn't give out confessions like candy from a pinata. No notebook. Damn. Getting back to the point though, if he mishandled this, if he got flip or weird on her, she'd never tell a guy her truth again.

"I like you too," he said honestly. "I'm just not the guy. You know it."

Her energy shifted. She was still embarrassed, but now she was arguing her case, like she always did. "No, you're right. I don't see you taking me on double-dates with Jane and Tom. You're not gonna be the one who packs me up to go to college, and I don't expect to ever see you on campus. But why the hell does one kiss have to topple all the dominos?"

"Let's go back to the race-car," he said. "Like, once you get started, there's this whole acceleration aspect."

"I'm okay with that."

She stared fixedly at the television and said, deceptively flat, "Better *now,* with someone who actually makes me *feel* something, than with some random guy in three years just because I'm bored."

He coughed.

"Let me make sure I got this straight. You want to make out with me, and whatever happens, happens. Which it might, because I want you." He got stuck on that, but he managed. His heartbeat felt like he was standing in the sound-cone of some foundation-rattling bass. "You think you won't feel like this again any time soon, and, no offense, but you seem to be in kind of a rush. That cover everything?"

"You—want me?" she squeaked. She must be blushing all over, because she radiated heat like a space heater.
“Thought we had that clear by now,” he said, a little thickly, distracted by her warmth.

“Behold the impact of changing one word in a line.”

He exhaled. He needed to center. “Yeah. Well. Uh. It's kind of embarrassing. For guys, I mean. We try to play it cool. Usually. But don't distract me, Daria, I had a point.”

“I'm listening.”

“The point is: what's the big rush?”

“Why would you try and talk me out of something you just said you want? Unless you're lying to me. Playing along to spare my feelings.”

Ouch. The fact that would even *occur* to her hurt him.

He said, “Hey, this is kind of a big deal. I don't want you to have any regrets.”

“This is typical,” she said. “I must be the only girl on Earth who has to win an argument to get a guy to kiss her.”

Aw, hell. He hurt her, and for what? He wanted to touch her. All of his counterarguments were starting to sound really lame.

He sat up and pulled her back against him. She stiffened at first, then sagged into the pressure. Her hair smelled of Suave shampoo when it tickled his nose; he turned his head and sneezed.

“Bless you,” she said when he was done. “Hope that doesn't mean you're allergic.”

He shifted her more onto his chest, handling her weight easily. Her breasts brushed the top of his forearm every time she inhaled. “Kid A” concluded and, in the silence left as it looped back to the beginning, he could hear the tiny pops when the contrast on the tube changed suddenly.

VII.

“Hey, Trent?”

He woke from his doze. Maybe she'd drifted off, too; she was soft and boneless all down his side, and that was good. The television was playing a music video countdown; must be late.

She muttered, “Just what is your middle name anyway?”

He grinned down at her, raising an eyebrow. “I don't think I'll tell you,” he said. “Might teach you some humility.”

“Humility is related to humiliation, and I can promise you I don't need any more of that,” she said, tensing up. “I can't believe everything I said tonight. It was the damn smoke. Just forget it, okay?”

If she really meant that, she'd've gotten up. Trent didn't move his arm, draped across her stomach.

“We can forget it if you want,” he said, “but I'm not sorry we talked. If you gotta bail, I understand.”

It took three videos, plus commercials, but finally, she relaxed again. He ran his fingers along her arm and learned something: the way her skin felt made his breath snag. It was beyond his abilities as a lyricist to describe: soft as down feathers, but apparently hairless.
For her part, she went absolutely still, except for her heart, its pounding visibly jarring the fabric of her shirt. He brushed her right nipple with the pad of his thumb. The thin cloth slipped over the hard little knot, and they both jolted.

Okay, then. All right. He consciously slowed his breathing and got his ass on-stage. That's what he called it, anyway. “On-stage” was a state of mind he used when he played live. He already knew he'd have a good time, so he could focus totally on the audience: on her reactions to him.

Her first kiss. Better be a good one, or he'd have to punch himself in the face. Gently he stroked her neck and jaw, urging her to angle her face toward his. He palmed the back of her head to support it, her thick hair still damp from her earlier shower.

The first taste of her was all smoky mint. On his second pass, she parted her lips for him and he got more of her flavor. *Slow, slow,* he chanted silently.

He spent a long time teaching her to kiss, first because she had no clue and then because it was fun. He parried her first clumsy tongue-thrusts, pulled back and showed her the slow glides he liked. He tried different things on her, learned how sharp-biting kisses made her grind and yank his hair, while slow, teasing thrusts had her sagging against him and moaning.

Great song. He tried to turn the volume up.

He palmed her bare stomach beneath her shirt to trace the lowermost curves of her tits as they brushed the side of his hand, but he didn't have the balls to move any higher. She twisted up and straddled him; he found himself with two handfuls, and he positioned a thigh for her to ride as he stroked the velvet softness of her nipples underneath her shirt and kept right on kissing her—

Oh, *shit.*

He broke to give them both a chance to regain control. He was rattled by how hot he found her—stoic Daria, all the time hiding this toy surprise. Guess she'd finally found something to be greedy for. Him. For some damn reason.

Smug as that made him, didn't change the fact that she didn't know how fast they were going, and he didn't know how to slow down.

While he was backstage trying to win this, she was sucking stinging open-mouthed kisses up his neck, scraping along the rough stubble on his jaw, until she reached his mouth. Her kiss was hesitant at first, but when he responded, helpless not to, she pressed him into the mattress. He traced her spine and she trembled.

Arousal almost flashed over into frustration. *He* was trying like hell to be a good guy, while *she* felt free to nip him, pull his hair, hump against him until the pressure made him shudder. He wouldn't, he *swore,* touch her til she asked, but he slid his palms up her damp thighs, teased himself with her.

She rolled away and hid her face in her hands. “Oh God. I'm sorry.”

“What for?”

“Oh my God. I'm a cocktease. It's not fair to you.” It was almost funny in Daria's monotone, but the volume let him know she was serious.

He moved her hair aside so he could nuzzle her neck. She wasn't just soft; she smelled incredible. Of course, he was used to girls reeking of smoke, so, you know, low bar.
“Is-so fair, because you feel the same way I do,” he rasped in her ear.

A long, rippling shiver ran all through her, and she gasped musically. Awesome riff. He grinned and sucked her ear lobe, gave her a little bite, wanting to hear that again.

She pressed him back again. It was her turn to touch his thighs, finger the trail of hair below his navel, trace his hipbones—darting, glancing touches, driving him nuts. She had to be able to feel the heat of his hard-on, straining against the worn corduroy, but she wouldn't touch it. *Don't you dare beg,* he warned himself. *Don't pressure her—*

He released her, reluctantly. “We should stop,” he said.

She hovered above him, frowning. “Why?”

“Because this is going too far,” he said. He gently urged her off him and sat up, rubbing his forehead. “Turns out I can't be the good guy here. Sorry.”

She curled up beside him, hugging her knees, shaking a little. “Am I going too fast?”

The innocence of her question broke him down laughing. He put a hand on her shoulder to reassure her while he coughed and then got himself back under control. When he could, he said, “This was just your first kiss, Daria, so yeah... a little fast.”

“I know how fast this is for me. I'm me,” she said firmly. “I'm asking if it's too fast for you.”

He blinked. “You're worried about me?”

She nodded. “Just because I asked for this doesn't obligate you to—”

“Christ, Daria. Stop right there.” He shook his head, laughing again. “None of this is for poor, outcast you. What's happening here? Isn't pity. I'm losing my mind because you, Daria, are exciting as hell.”

The TV blasted light in time for him to see her smile.

She said, “Look, Trent... I'm as surprised about this as you are, but... what you said in the kitchen, about an honest feeling... I didn't understand it, until tonight. It's like you've turned my brain off. Finally....”

He knew what she meant.

“So I don't want to stop. Unless you don't have a condom. Though the odds against *you* not having a condom are astronomical.”

Was that her way of asking if he had condoms? Holy shit. Daria's virginity was actually on the table. Under discussion. The way she talked, giving it to him was a foregone conclusion. *Him.* Jesus. Never happened to him before. That was way heavy, but life laid that shit on you sometimes.

He stood up.

“Where are you going?” Frustration made her edgy.

“Condoms,” he husked out. “In my room... and it'll keep Janie from interrupting us when she gets back. If she ever does.” He frowned.

“Should we be worried yet?”
“We’re bad people, Daria. It happens. Now c’mon.”

She took his hand.
Chapter 2

Trent’s door was weak on the latch, so she pulled it behind her until she heard and felt it snick into place. Otherwise, she'd obsess over it swinging open at the wrong moment, and she was already all topped up on panic.

*Here is Trent's room. I, Daria Morgendorffer, have entered it with the intention of being naked and penetrated within. Oh my God.*

Her heart banged inside her chest so hard it hurt her throat.

Trent turned on his weaksauce 30-watt table lamp and glanced at her. His eyebrows lowered. Something displeased him. She had time for five paranoid fantasies before he started lighting the wicks of the bank of candles atop his dresser.

He wanted to see her... better? What.

He set down the lighter with a too-loud snap. Someone needed to talk to God's sound technicians; the levels were all screwed up. The candle-light glowed on the line of his cheekbone, sent the shadows of his lashes spiking slantwise.

“Change your mind?” His voice was even huskier than usual. He looked away, his throat working as he swallowed, one hand rising in a pointless gesture he aborted halfway through. Vulnerable.

All she could do was gape at him. Though a guy's hard-on didn't immediately bestow a girl with Sex Goddess status—unless tile laminate flooring and history texts also qualified for the title—his hesitation meant this was about more than his dick. He really wanted this.

She picked the safest path to him through the crap strewn all over the floor. Thank God she'd grabbed her damn glasses; otherwise she might have killed herself in this room, though that possibility wasn't off the table just yet. Tonight could still result in suicide.

He bent and kissed her, and hey, presto, her shyness was gone, though her heart still banged painfully in her chest. The deep hollow of his collarbone beneath the sharp line of his Adam's Apple was like a little lair for her demons to curl in. When she skimmed across his stomach to the gapped waistband of his worn-out cords, he swayed and kissed her again.

That really wasn't fair, the kissing. The white noise it caused in her brain erased any attempt at thought, any anticipation of regret.

When she tugged on the hem of his t-shirt, he took the hint and whipped it off, expression uneasy as he watched her reaction to him.

And just what the hell did *he* have to worry about? He was beautiful, all bone and sinew. The flat muscles of his waist tightened like clenched fists beneath her palms. She was shaken by her awareness of him: the space his body took up, his ragged breathing, the way his pulse jarred his body. Like her, but separate from her. She wasn't the only one he'd ever kissed. He had scars she'd never know the reasons for. She'd never, ever understand him, but they could share this: their bodies, a messy room, an unreliable lock.

She kissed him, tasted him, all smoke and candy. It was a slow kiss—a *detailed* kiss, as though
he were tutoring her for the final exam on kissing. If only he could apply that amount of focus to anything else in life. If only there was a non-exploitative way to get paid for kissing. He'd be set.

The air was sweltering, but it felt cool on her sweaty skin as he pulled her big t-shirt off.

She took an unsteady step back as her heart slammed an irregular tattoo. Once he got a good look at her, any second now, he'd hand over her shirt and turn away. She anxiously flexed her toes inside her socks, plucking at the harsh nap of the dirty carpet.

“Looks good, Daria.” His voice was thick, like he needed to clear his throat. She glanced up at him. He half-smiled at her, his eyes heavy-lidded, gazing steadily into hers.

He reached up and took her glasses off, carefully folded the arms and set them down on the dresser where the candlewax wouldn't drip. “That's to level the playing field,” he said.

“How does that level anythi—” Because from where she stood, he could see her just fine and she couldn't see jack-shit, so how was that level? He interrupted her with a swift, biting kiss. Definitely a “shut up” kiss.

“Wanna lie down?” he asked.

“Assuming a lot, aren't you?” She could slap herself. Sarcasm was always her go-to, but it couldn't be more inappropriate—and wrong—than now. Panic, like the curved and crested wave in that Japanese print Jane had hanging in her room. She headed it off by grabbing him, kissing him, pulling him onto his bed. Hope that answered his question.

She got lost, and he did too, and that was the most astounding thing. Kissing, touching. His hands skidding up her torso to cup her breasts again, callused fingertips stinging on her nipples. His tongue in her mouth made her gasp. Her fingers on the back of his neck checked for chips or electrodes or... or scales, or something. Because this *was* Trent, right? Lackadaisical, half-asleep Trent? They were on their sides, facing each other, but his erection nudged her stomach and there was nothing lazy in his kisses.

Well, then. All right. She'd asked for it and she'd got it. This savage ache shot all through her, (through them both), this blindness to tomorrow, if that's what Quinn already knew and owned, if this was “normal” .... she'd go with it.

Sometimes, out with Jane after midnight, wandering the deserted streets of Lawndale, she felt a sense of wildness and freedom. As they strolled past all those closed doors and darkened windows, the people within sleeping, dreaming, and above all, not watching her, she slipped the leash of her own insecurity and became something dark, something powerful. That was when she danced. That was when she screamed.

That same sensation thrilled through her now, in Trent's dimly lit room, as she palmed his erection through the hot damp cloth of his worn old pants and he kicked his head back and groaned her name.

Yes. That was what she'd wanted. Her name in his mouth was as exciting as his tongue in her own.

And beneath her palm: hot, stiff flesh. The first cock she'd ever touched. She read the shaft through the cloth, her fingers rolling over the head, dipping beneath the waistband to pet the wet tip, surprisingly soft and velvety. His moan staggered out of him, rising, falling, with an edge of disbelief for her boldness. Too bad. He didn't really know her, after all, and that was fine; in fact, that was perfect. She wouldn't be able to stand the closeness if he knew her mind as well as he
was about to know her body.

She undid the button of his fly, and then his fingers were there, stumbling in their eagerness to pull down his zipper. His teeth scraped her neck as he gasped, shuddering; he muttered a curse and fought to get his pants off.

“You can touch me if you want,” she said in his ear, quoting Garbage, and she was rewarded by his choked chuckle, and then, his hand pressing between her legs. She spread for him.

The world went pink and orange, like dawn breaking. She couldn't think. He'd pulled down her boxers, and his fingers were on her, in her, long and agile and sensitive, but he moved wrong as often as he moved right, so that wasn't it. She shifted her hips, trying to educate him to her rhythm, primitive instinct taking over for her own lack of experience. It was just the fact of him stroking her, learning to play her, that make her choke for air. His total attention focused on her.

He pulled her boxers off. She heard them snap against the wall and thump to the floor. Then he was on top of her, and she lost what little breath remained to her as he lifted her thighs and positioned himself between them. Naked and defenseless, both of them.

“No going back.”

He spoke in her ear and she shivered.

“Better be sure.”

What a thing to say. If she thought hard enough, she could make herself doubt the existence of gravity. Of course she could make herself doubt this. She kissed him hard and arched against him, shifted her pelvis so he could press in if he wanted, silently insisting on her course of action.

He coughed.

“All right,” he said. She felt him stretch, his muscles tight as rubber bands, and then the sound of foil tearing and then an unfamiliar smell, medicinal, hospital, unwelcome. She crinkled her nose, but it was just the condom, bland rubber and water-based lube. He rolled it on, his hands working in the light which only grew dimmer as the candles guttered and died.

Another jolt of panic, this one unexpected, turned her to iron beneath him. No going back. Right. This was *Trent.* Did she mean this? What would happen tomorrow?

But she ached all over, like a fever, and she shook with excitement and the thrill of the unknown, and yeah, fear too; but all this upheaval was inevitable, just something to get past. If not Trent, then whom? And when? Some random guy in three years, because she was bored? No. This night was for herself.

She took a deep breath. “Trent... yes.”

It was all he needed. He positioned himself. Her thighs gripped his narrow hips; she tilted and arched her back, understanding the silent commands he gave with his touch. First pleasure, then pain. The books didn't talk about this. The pain was sharp and thin, like a skinned knee: the spoiled whine of a minor injury, commanding attention, but not concern. Her indrawn breath whistled between her teeth, and he froze at the most uncomfortable point, stretching her.

“Move,” she ordered, and rolled her hips in case he missed her point.

He grunted, grimacing. This didn't seem to be hitting him quite right, either, but she had nothing to
spare for him as she waited, poised and tense, for the cellophane inside her to tear.

He gathered her again and collected himself—she felt him tighten—and then drove in.

The pain spiked—serious now, and stabbing. He muttered apologies she didn't listen to, but just as she was about to cry out, give up, abandon this experiment, the pain disappeared—blew away like cobwebs, replaced by the aching awareness of him inside her, connected, hard and pulsing.

It was like a lot of things. The writer in her scribbled mad similes she didn't bother to remember. Mostly, satisfaction. Deep down she sighed, contented in a way that didn't bear looking at too closely, by having him inside her, both of them holding still, breathing together as they adjusted. His weight on her, his narrow body in her arms, his knobbly, hairy legs tangled with hers.

He struggled with himself. Long ripples shuddered down his spine. She pet him, tried to smooth whatever it was away; it was so weird, feeling him care enough to be troubled, especially since she didn't know what the hell his problem was.

His ragged voice snagged her like a fish-hook. “Sorry, Daria.”

“Shut up,” she said, but he shook his head and then kissed her again, the curved thorns of his spiky hair prickling rough on her palm. He started to move, breathing against her mouth, holding her hips against him so his full length stroked inside her. There was a beat there, primitive and drumming like a heartbeat. She realized she could match it, so she did, and his breath broke into a groan.

As they moved together, the last bit of stinging faded. His back flexed as he worked, sweat making his skin slippery. Daria felt split in two. Half of her observed this really was every bit as silly as she'd ever imagined it'd be. The other half was awash in every pastel emotion that had ever made her sneer: his casual strength as he adjusted the angle of her hips; his fragility as he trembled, waiting for her to adapt to the increased depth of his angle. All of it silent except for their broken breathing and half-voiced sighs.

So many romance novel cliches were being illustrated tonight, in the hot length of him inside her and the spiralling intensity of it all. A coil of wire wound tighter and tighter at the base of her spine, twanging through the network of nerves in her pelvis and thighs. Every bit of her attention there,* and she'd be embarrassed if she weren't so certain Trent were in the exact same senseless state.

She gulped for air between his kisses, which were growing increasingly disorganized and rough. He broke from her to press his forehead to her shoulder, gasping. It was so hot in this summer night. Their combined scent was animal and heavy and she was amazed to find she liked it—she, who couldn't stand the sight of bare feet, who winced when the gloves came out in science class, who couldn't even handle stuffing a turkey for Thanksgiving. She sucked a glowing kiss into his neck and shuddered like an electric shock when he groaned.

“I—can't—” he muttered.

“It's okay,” she said, not knowing what he meant, not caring. He shifted once again, and, like magic, it all became effortless, like flying in a dream—she rippled against him, liquid and frictionless, feeling nothing but her own spiral of need soaring upwards. Something she wanted. Something she wanted. She was about to have it. She, who so rarely allowed herself to want anything, drove for it, dove into it, permitted herself. This night was for her. A middle finger to her parents, who wanted her to date a quarterback. A spit in the eye to her sister, who maybe experienced something like this with her vanilla Wall Street boyfriend, but probably not. Because this? She couldn't imagine anyone else feeling anything like this. The romance novels didn't go
near it.

He drove into her, irregular, his motions crabbed and moth-eaten, his teeth on her shoulder as he bit down. She bowed up against him, the crown of her head hard against his pillow, silently screaming to the ceiling. The dying candlelight playing there turned into a giant glowing mushroom cloud.

II.
The Mary Janes still slumped on the top shelf of the fridge.

Daria stared at them a long time, the cold air making her sore nipples peak and sting. Behind her Trent did something involving clattering sounds and running water.

“Whoa, Trent! Were you wearing a seatbelt?”

Jane's voice snapped her back to reality, and she slammed the fridge and put her back to it, feeling guilty without knowing why.

Jane stood in the doorway to the kitchen, grinning. She was looking at Trent, who carried on making coffee without acknowledging his little sister. For the first time, Daria noticed his neck, almost black with hickies.

Oops.

Chapter End Notes

I should have just kept this in Trent's POV, but I couldn't face writing penetrative sex from the male gaze. Also, I did a binge-watch of My So-Called Life and had Angela Chase all up in my head. I dunno. Sorry, basically. That's that, folks.

End Notes

The result of a week's worth of bingeing 90's nostalgia (Kurt, Daria). Uploaded incomplete so I can read it at work, so, eh, there's a second chapter coming at some point.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!