Our Scars

by icandigfreckles

Summary

Stan, Kyle, Kenny, and Cartman are just four of the many other young witches and wizards attending Hogwarts. It's been years since the war and the fall of Voldemort. The school has lived without any fear of Dark Magic since then, but during their sixth year some creature seems to be lurking the school grounds and attacking other magical creatures. Faculty are concerned that it's only a matter of time before it strikes a student. Meanwhile; Stan seems to be too busy with Quidditch and girls, Kyle's head is constantly feuding with itself over his crush and his studies, Cartman is as feeble and arrogant as always, and most of the time Kenny is walking around the school like a ghost whenever he's not breaking someones nose. The boys' life is too much of a whirlwind for them to even think about the possibility of a creature breaking into one of the safest places in the Wizarding World. However, heads begin turning when it looks like the creature is targeting one of them. Or all of them.
Kyle waved to his teary eyed mother out the window of the train. His father had Ike sitting on his shoulders. His little brother had known for a while now that Kyle was going off to school far away, and wouldn't be back until winter break. But he was still only six. He had started crying the moment Kyle had gotten on the train, and was now wiping his snotty nose on the sleeve of his jacket.

Stan Marsh was next to Kyle on the train. He stood on his tiptoes and elbowed the other passengers out of the way so he could share a window with Kyle. His eyes lit up when he found his parents still standing in the crowd, his mom dabbing at her eyes with a cloth and his father looking proudly up at the window he and Kyle were at.

Kyle has known Stan since he was four years old. Kyle’s mother and Stan’s parents had been friends at Hogwarts, but had drifted apart after leaving school. When Kyle was four his family moved into a house across the street from the Marsh’s. With Shelia and Sharron it was like a day hadn’t gone by between them. Randy and Gerald seemed to click instantly, and their two little boys became inseparable. It’s been so long, and they had been so young that Kyle can’t remember now what happened the day he and Stan met. Stan had always just been apart of his life.

Sometimes Kyle wondered what would have happened if he hadn’t inherited his mother’s magic, and had to stay back while Stan--carrying on the Marsh legacy--would get to go to Hogwarts, leaving Kyle behind.

Kyle didn’t like thinking that way because it’d make him feel sick.

The whistle blew. The train jerked, and Kyle came out of his daydreams. The platform slowly began to move backwards.

“Goodbye, Stanley! Goodbye, Shelly!” Sharron called.

“Bye, Mom!” Stan flung his hand out the window.

“Don't forget to write, boys!” Said Gerald.

“Bye, Kyle!” cried Ike.

“Be good, bubbe!” His mother cried out. Even her own naturally loud voice was becoming harder to hear over the whistle and best wishes from parents.

The train was moving farther and farther away from the platform.

“I'll miss you!” Kyle shouted to them, hoping that his voice would carry over the thousands of others.

A swarm of his classmates rushed to the windows, wedging themselves through the smallest spaces to get a pinky-finger out to wave at their parents. Kyle was elbowed in the ribs, someone jammed their heel onto his toes, and eventually he was forced to be knocked out of his spot. He was now away from Stan, and the faces of his family. As soon as he fell back on his heels his tiny square window was taken up by the mass of others bidding their final goodbyes until winter. Kyle stumbled back behind the others to stare helplessly at the sea of eleven and twelve year old's clogging up the train. He swallowed his temper to keep from making a scene. There was a coldness in the pit of his stomach, forming a tornado with the heat of his frustration. The weeks leading up to his departure from 9 3/4, he and Stan had talked non-stop about what houses they
thought they could both get into. They talked about the freedom they’d have from being away from their parents. Kyle had been so excited to go on this adventure with Stan. But now that he was leaving; he was thinking about how he had never been away from his family for longer than a weekend. Even then they had always been just across the street.

He felt a warm hand wrap around his cold fingers. It startled him, but when he turned he saw the familiar pair of cool blue eyes staring back at him. Holding hands was something that Kyle and Stan have been doing ever since they met. They were slowly getting to that age where they’d be too old to be that affectionate with each other anymore, however; Stan would still stroke his thumb over Kyle's fingers from time to time. Even if it wasn’t as frequent as it used to be.

"You okay?" said Stan.

"Yeah," said Kyle. "You think...you think Ike will be okay?"

Stan took his hand out of Kyles grasp, using it to pat his shoulder instead.

"Ike'll be fine."

Stan was holding a grin, as well as his luggage. It made Kyle smile back at him.

The platform was now far behind them, and their classmates were making their way to claim the trains compartments.

“Ready, dude?” said Stan. “We gotta go find some seats.”

Kyle nodded, following him down the aisle, carting his owl cage with an Eastern Screech Owl named Elephant fluttering nosily inside it.

They found Shelly, who was entering her third year, making her way down the corridor with her own luggage.

Stan skipped up to her.

“Hey, Shelly,” Stan called, "can Kyle and I--?"

“No way, turd!” she growled, throwing a look at them over her shoulder. “My friends aren’t going to want to hang out with first years!”

Shelly then turned into a compartment where other third year girls were sitting. She slammed the compartment door shut, and closed the blinds. Girl-ish giggles could be heard from behind the glass.

Stan wandered on through the skinny hallway of the train. He peeked into compartment after compartment, looking for empty seats or willing upperclassmen to let two first years join them. Kyle was beginning to think they’d have to spend the train ride sitting on the floor.

Finally, they came across a compartment with only one other student sitting inside it.

Stan slid the the door open.

“Hey,” He poked his head into the compartment, showing off his all-star white teeth, “do you care if we join you?”

The boy returned a smile. His right buck tooth was chipped, and his teeth were slightly stained yellow. He was a first year also. His blond hair was wispy, and his hands were grubby. He was
still dressed in his muggle clothes, which were torn in some places or patched over with different fabric. Kyle saw small white scars scratched all over the boy’s exposed pale skin.

“Sure, you can,” He chirped.

Kyle and Stan wedged themselves through the compartment door with the owl cage and their luggage. When they were inside Kyle sat Elephant near the window seat, and they stored their luggage in the shelves up above, alongside their acquaintances. The other boys luggage was a faded brown, and torn at the edges. Written in a child's crude handwriting with a black marker was “MCCORMICK”.

When he sat down, Kyle glued himself to Stan’s side, putting little space between their legs. It was more of a habit than a comfort. He was always so close to Stan. The two couldn’t stand to be farther than across the street from one another. Kyle nervously thought that this boy might think they were strange, or that he simply wouldn’t understand the bond they shared.

Kyle slowly scooted a bit farther from Stan, but not too far.

“My names Kenny McCormick,” he said.

“I’m Stan Marsh.”

“Kyle Broflovski.”

“You've got an owl?” asked Kenny, looking at Elephant with fascination and curiosity.

“Yeah, her name’s Elephant. She’s still a baby, I just got her for my birthday.”

“I've gotta rat,” Kenny dipped a hand into the pocket of his jeans and pulled out a little brown rat. It squirmed and squeaked in his grasp, looking at Kyle and Stan with its round black eyes. “Her name is Marissa.”

Kyle squirmed slightly in his seat, wondering what diseases that rat was carrying, and where the nearest bathroom was on this train so he could wash his hands. Stan, however, leaned forward and scratched his fingernail against the rat's head.

“She’s cute,” he said with a smile. “I’ve gotta dog named Sparky at home. Too bad I can’t bring him to school with me. He’s the smartest dog in the world!”

“Marissa’s pretty smart too,” said Kenny, putting her back into his pocket, where her little rat face poked out to peer right at Kyle. “For a rat anyway.”

Kyle was about to nudge Stan and ask if he thought Marissa was staring at him, but they were interrupted by a knocking at the door.

The three turned to see a very large eleven year old boy squeezing himself through the compartment door.

“Everywhere else is full,” he muttered.

Kenny patted the open spot next to him for the boy to join them. Kenny introduced himself.

“I’m Eric Cartman.”

Kyle thought he had heard the name somewhere before. His mother used to work at the Ministry of Magic, and maybe Cartman was a name she had mentioned in a conversation once or twice.
“I’m Kyle Broflovski.”

“And I’m Stan Marsh.”

“Stan Marsh?” Cartman echoed, “Stanley Marsh?”

“Uh, Stan is fine.”

“I know the Marsh’s,” Cartman was becoming very excited. His tiny blue eyes sparkled, and his plump hands were balled into fists as he squirmed in his seat. “You’re one of the richest wizarding families in the world!”

Stan shifted in his seat, inching himself closer to Kyle. Stan never really liked to talk much about his family’s fortune. His great grandfather had been a very famous wizard back in the day, and he had left all his money for his grandson Randy. Stan’s mother worked at St. Mungo’s Hospital, and his father worked in the Ministry in the Department of Magical Games and Sports. He was head of the British and Irish Quidditch League Headquarters. This is where Stan gets his love of Quidditch from. The division is sort of looked down upon by the higher ups, but Stan says it’s because they’re jealous they have to work in a more stressful department than his dad does. Kyle has been in Randy’s office a few times. The walls are filled with posters of his favorite Quidditch teams and players, and he even had a Ginny Weasley bobble-head from the Holyhead Harpies sitting on his desk. To Kyle it seemed like a very laid back job, and he could understand why the higher-ups would look down on Randy for it.

Kyle’s family wasn’t as rich as the Marsh’s. They were an average middle-class, Jewish, wizarding family. His father gave up his Muggle lawyer job to fully commit to his wife’s magical life. There isn’t very many jobs for Muggles in the wizarding world, but Gerald managed to grab a spot in The Quibbler where he writes reviews from his perspective as a Muggle trying wizard food for the first time. The ones who run The Quibbler love it. Shelia used to work in the Improper Use of Magic office under the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, but once she had Kyle she thought the job was too time consuming, and decided to write a column in the Daily Prophet where she writes furiously about whatever it is she decided to protest that week. It usually has something to do with the media (both Muggle and Wizard) affecting her children. The latest column had been about what was on the Wizard Radio. “Why are they called the Weird Sisters if the band is entirely made up of men?” His parents are both so extremely supportive of each other you wouldn’t have guessed they were working for completely opposite newspapers. Kyle really thinks they both should have just stuck with law.

Stan’s red face looked down at his tennis shoes.

“Um…”

“And your family is one of the only longest surviving wizard bloodlines! You’re like--famous, dude! I’m Eric Cartman, I’m from a pureblooded family too. Wouldn’t you like to be friends?” He stuck out his hand across the aisle. His eyes were locked onto Stan, and his smile looked more like someone had put two hooks in the corner of his mouth and pulled back.

Thankfully, Stan kept his hand sitting in his lap.

“I don’t make friends by judging people by their name. Or their money.”

Cartman’s face fell, along with his arm. A low growl seemed to ripple from Cartman’s throat when he sat back against the seat.

"Well," he sputtered, "how else do you make friends?"
Kyle frowned at Cartman before swinging his look to Stan to mentally ask him: *Is this dude actually serious?*

Stan just gave him an identical look back.

“Um,” said Kenny softly, “what’s a pureblood?”

Cartman wiped his head around, glaring at Kenny like he had suddenly realized he had been sitting next to the most foul garbage can he’s ever seen.

“You’re a wizard and you don’t know what a pureblood is?” he hissed.

“I’m--uh,” said Kenny, “I’m the only wizard in my family...so, no. I don’t know what that is.”

Cartman’s mouth fell open. He turned back to Stan.

“You had me sitting next to a mudblood, Marsh?” He shouted. “You’re sitting in here with a mudblood?”

“Hey,” Stan hissed, “if you have a problem with any of us you can leave, Cartman.”

Leaving didn’t seem to be an option. Cartman huffed, pressing his back against the seat with his arms folded across his chest. He glared out the compartment door mindlessly, like Stan had just betrayed him.

“So,” said Kenny slowly, “anyone gonna tell me what that means?”

“Pureblood is a wizard family who is entirely made up of wizards,” said Stan, “like mine. The Marsh family tree in one-hundred per-cent made up of wizards and witches. A half blood would be like Kyle,” Stan jutted his thumb in Kyle’s direction. Kyle wanted to pinch his arm for saying that in front of Cartman. He didn’t want him to know he was half muggle after he clearly voiced his opinion on muggles and their offspring. “Kyle's mom's a witch, and his dad is a muggle--or uh--a non-magic person. And you’re a muggle-born wizard, because no one else in your family is magic, right?”

Kenny shook his head.

“My dad thought it was a joke, and threw my letter out the first time. But then the owls kept on comin’ and droppin’ more off.”

“Well, some people,” added Kyle, with a glare in Cartman’s direction, “think they’re better because they come from pureblooded magic families. And--mudblood--” he cringed slightly upon saying it--“it means dirty blood.”

“Oh,” said Kenny. He turned to Cartman, looking like he wanted to knock his lights out.

Before any more fighting could occur, Stan blurted out, “So, what house do you want to get in?”

“Slytherin,” said Cartman at once, which didn’t seem to come as a surprise to anyone else in the compartment. "My ancestors were all Slytherin you know. My mom says it's my birthright."

“I’ve read a little bit about them,” said Kenny, “but I think Gryffindor sounds like the best bet.”

“My dad was in Gryffindor,” said Stan, “he says it's the best house. He really wants me to be in it. My sister got in, so he thinks I can too.”

“My mom was Gryffindor too,” said Kyle. “Hey, maybe you'll get into Gryffindor with us,
“My mom was Gryffindor too,” said Kyle. “Hey, maybe you’ll get into Gryffindor with us, Kenny.”

“You think so?” said Kenny with a grin. “It’d be nice to know some friends right off the bat.”

"Who says we're getting into Gryffindor, dude?" Stan laughed lightly, almost sounding forced. "We still have the sorting hat to decide that."

"I know," said Kyle, rolling his shoulder, "I just...it seems like our best bet of all being together."

Stan’s eyes seemed to flick to a duller shade of blue, and his all-star smile faltered just slightly enough to make Kyle uneasy.

"Yeah," he said.

In the corner, they heard Cartman grumbling under his breath. “What a bunch of pussies.”

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Kyle hopped from one foot to the other as he stood with Stan, Kenny, and Cartman in the cluster of other first years in the Great Hall. Stan turned to him, prodding him in the ribs with his elbow.

“Dude,” he giggled, “just relax a bit.”

“I can’t,” Kyle whispered back.

Stan reached over and grasped Kyle’s hand in his.

“What’re you so nervous about?” he asked.

“I don’t know,” said Kyle, “It’s just...it’s not going to be like elementary school anymore.”

“I guess not,” said Stan, “not as many Muggles around.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

Stan frowned at him, black eyebrows knitting together across his forehead.

“What do you mean then?”

Before Kyle could say it, he was interrupted by Cartman yet again.

“Get a room before you start having sex in front of everybody, gaywads,” he spat.

Kyle’s face grew red, and he had never wanted to scream at somebody in a public place more than he wanted to at that very moment. He would have cursed Cartman out too, if he hadn’t become aware of the sudden drop of his hand when Stan released it.

He looked to his best friend, feeling a cold dip in his stomach at the realization that they had already approached the age where holding each other’s hands wasn’t cute or acceptable anymore.

It had been too soon for Kyle.

The rest of the hall went silent when Professor Garrison came up to the podium carrying a small wooden stool and a patchy old hat tucked under his arm.

“We will now begin the first year sorting hat ceremony,” he said to the students.
He set down the stool to pull out a scroll.

“Biggle, Bradley,” he called.

A nervous blond boy pushed his way through the crowd of first years and up to the stool. He sat down, gripping the edges of the stool.

The professor put the brown hat on him, the brim falling over his face so only his tiny, quivering mouth was visible.

A moment later, the hat spoke.

“GRYFFINDOR!”

The great hall exploded with the sounds of students clapping and cheering for Bradley. He came off the stool with a smile and a skip in his step.

“So, Gryffindor, right?” Asked Kyle, continuing the conversation they had had on the train. “I mean, for us both to end up in the same house do you think we both could be Gryffindor?”

“I don't know, dude,” said Stan softly, “I don't know if I'll be good in Gryffindor...you're more Ravenclaw anyway.”

Kyle's face fell.

The professor continued on down the list.

“Black, Token.”

“What do you mean?” Kyle whispered. "Don't you want to be in the same house?”

“I don’t know, dude,” said Stan, his gaze falling to his feet.

Kyle’s heart was pounding in the pit of his stomach. The excitement of getting sorted and living with his best friend was quickly fading. It was replaced with fear, and the anxiety of never seeing Stan after this moment. What if they were separated? Stan had been his crutch. His security. He was relying on Stan to be there for him. If they didn't get into the same house, Kyle would be alone and without Stan for the first time since he was four years old. He had already said goodbye to his family earlier that day. He couldn't picture living out a semester with complete strangers all around him.

This was happening too fast. Everything was happening too fast. Kyle needed everything to rewind back to when they were first getting on the train so he’d have more time to prepare himself.

“Why not?” He asked.

“I just don’t think—”

“RAVENCLAW,” the hat cut him off.

Before Stan could finish his thought the Professor held up the scroll and read out,

“Broflovski, Kyle.”

Kyle instantly looked to Stan.
Stan just gave his shoulder a slight push, whispering, “Good luck, dude.”

Kyle slowly shuffled up to the little stool without looking back.

When he sat down the Professor sat the hat down on top of his head. Over his bushy hair and covering his eyes. Kyle chewed on his bottom lip, nervously thinking about where Stan will end up.

Stan was pretty brave. He could be in Gryffindor, but then again he was also dedicated, fair, and loyal, so he could easily be a Hufflepuff. Kyle wasn’t sure if he could fit into Slytherin, but Stan has been known to be willing to bend the rules once or twice. Was that enough to get sorted into Slytherin? And what about Ravenclaw? A house that valued intelligence, wit, creativity, originality, individuality, and acceptance seemed more up Kyle's alley. But Stan could be in Ravenclaw if he just--

“Why are you so worried about what house your friend gets into?” The hat asked him, “shouldn’t you be worrying about your own house?”

_I am worrying, thought Kyle, I just... have a lot on my mind._

“I see,” said the hat, “but I think I’ve already made up my mind. Have you?”

_I don’t know, thought Kyle._

“Well, to me it sounds like you have your heart set on Ravenclaw. What do you think?”

_Yes, said Kyle, his heart jumping, yes, I want Ravenclaw._

“RAVENCLAW,” shouted the hat to the hall.

When the hat was lifted Kyle saw the Ravenclaw table cheering for him. He got up off the stool and walked towards them. The boy who had gone before him, Token, moved over on the bench and patted it for Kyle to join him. Though as soon as he sat down Kyle's eyes were back on Stan.

“Cartman, Eric.”

It was no surprise to Kyle when the hat was placed on top of Cartman's fat head and nearly two seconds later it cried out “SLYTHERIN.”

Cartman hopped off the stool with a grin on his face. His new housemates welcoming him with a thunderous applause.

Kyle cupped his cheek in his hand as he leaned against the table. He had a while to wait before they got to the letter M.

He waited through Cotswolds, Rebecca (Gryffindor), Darson, Sally (Slytherin), Donovan, Clyde (Hufflepuff), Harrison, Gary (Hufflepuff), and Knitts, Annie (Hufflepuff), before they finally got to Stan.

When the professor called out, “Marsh, Stan.” Kyle sat up straighter, watching the sorting hat flop over Stan's face. He held his breath, as though that would help him hear what they were saying to each other.

The hat was on Stan longer than it had been on Kyles. Nearly five minutes had passed, and by then Kyle was twisting his hands nervously in his lap. With every second ticking by he began thinking that there was a lesser and lesser possibility of Stan getting into Ravenclaw with him. He
knew in the bottom of his heart that Stan wouldn’t. Ravenclaw didn’t seem much like Stan's scene, but if he really, really, wanted to he could do it.

“HUFFLEPUFF,” the hat called.

Stan got off the stool, meeting Kyle's eyes sheepishly.

“McCormick, Kenny.”

Kenny swaggered up to the stool. Kyle gave out a little wish that Kenny would get into the house he wanted. Out of the three of them one of them had to make Gryffindor, and he knew in his heart that it just had to be Kenny.

The hat seemed to have made up its mind for Kenny just as quickly as it had for Cartman. “GRYFFINDOR,” it said.

The table cheered as the scruffy eleven year old ran over to them.

Kyle clapped along with them.

He listened to the professor call off the rest of his first year classmates. From Scott Malkinson to James Valmer, and when it was finally done they were able to dig into the feast presented in front of them all. Kyle couldn’t keep his eyes from wandering over to the Hufflepuff table, where Stan was sitting next to his fellow classmate Gary Harrison. Gary seemed to be talking his ear off, while Stan wasn’t giving him the time of day. He was staring glumly down at his full plate of food.

Finally, Stan picked up his head, and met Kyle's eyes across the room.

Kyle watched him mouth the words; “I'm sorry, Kyle.”
“Remember how pissed you were when I got sorted into Hufflepuff?”

Kyle looked over to Stan, who was wearing his movie-star grin over his dirty face.

The four of them had just gotten through with their tradition of sneaking out on their first night back to Hogwarts to play a nightly game of Quidditch. Two on two.

Kyle, Stan, Cartman, and Kenny started this tradition in their third year. Stan was the best Chaser Hufflepuff had, and because of his small and skinny frame, Kyle made an exceptional Seeker for Ravenclaw. Kenny was a Keeper for Gryffindor, and Cartman somehow talked his way into being a Beater for Slytherin.

On any train ride to or from Hogwarts, Quidditch was bound to come up in conversation. Third year was no different. It began with innocent teasing, which escalated to Cartman bragging about how much he had improved over the summer, and that Slytherin was bound to win the Quidditch cup this year due to his pure talent. Ravenclaw had won the previous year by the skin of their teeth. The final had been between them and Slytherin, and Kyle absolutely refused to live a life where he made his team lose to Eric Cartman.

And because they all knew Eric too well to believe anything that came out of his mouth, Kenny was the one who challenged him.

“Let’s see it then,” he said. “Tonight after the feast let’s all go down to the Quidditch pitch. I wanna see how much you’ve improved.”

“But, Kenny—” Kyle began, but then Cartman began mocking him in a whiny, baby voice.

“But Keeenneeyy,” he wailed, “I’m Kahl and I follow the rules like a good boy. We can’t sneak out after curfew Keeenneeyy…”

“Alright, Fatboy,” Kyle sneered, “let’s go two on two. I’ll take you on.”

“As long as I get Stan,” he said. Like taking Stan away from Kyle would have given him the upper hand.

“Take him,” said Kyle, “I’ll have Kenny.”

After that night they agreed that they should come back and have another game the next year. The year after that they all decided that it should happen every year. The first year Cartman really hadn’t improved. Stan was basically playing solo against one of the fastest thirteen year olds on a broomstick, and a daredevil. Needless to say, Kyle and Kenny won. The next year no one took count and they simply played for fun.

It was the night before they began their sixth year at Hogwarts now, and Kyle was sitting in the mud with his best friends.

It had rained on the train ride, which had the four of them going through a range of emotions. Quidditch was fun to play in the rain, but if it rained too hard you could end up with a Bludger to the face because you couldn’t see, and if it stormed their yearly tradition was simply out of the question. By the time the feast was over however, the rain had settled. It had left the pitch a
muddy mess, and once Cartman struck Kenny with the Bludger that sent him rolling off his broom into the mud, they all decided they should join him.

Stans perfect black hair was now matted with dirt. Kenny was laying flat on his back, and Kyle thought he saw him moving his arms through the mud to create angel wings. Cartman was sitting pressed back against the fifty foot goal post, panting hard with his eyes closed. Kyle could feel himself sinking deeper into the earth. He tried fight against the itchy sensation to get clean.

Kenny howled with laughter after Stan spoke, flopping his arms around in the mud with loud splats.

“You were seriously pissed about that?” he said. “That’s gay.”

“I was eleven,” said Kyle, “and I was petrified of being alone, okay?”

Cartman snorted. “Still gay.”

“And I wasn’t even that mad about it,” began Kyle.

“Dude,” said Stan, “you were pissed.”

This got Kenny cackling again.

“Shut up, Kenny,” said Kyle.

“I can’t believe you’d think a little thing like that would split us up,” said Stan. “Here we are, six years later.”

Kyle smirked. His face suddenly felt warmer, and he was thankful for the darkness surrounding them.

“Still best friends.”

“Super best friends, dude,” said Stan.

“Okay, seriously, you guys,” said Cartman, “if you’re going to start making out in front of me give me a warning so I can leave next time.”

They all threw heaps of mud at Cartman. He swore at them, huffingly getting to his feet and shouting, “Screw you, assholes! I hate you guys anyway.”

“Yeah, whatever,” said Kenny, “you always say that, donkey boner.”

“Fuck you, Kenny, I hate you the most.”

Kyle, Stan, and Kenny all watched as Cartman tossed his broom over his shoulder, and bitterly made his way out of the Quidditch pitch. It wasn’t long before they became sick of the mud, and followed him.

Stan walked with his eyes to the sky, and his broom lying across his shoulders.

“First day tomorrow,” he said quietly.

“Yeah,” said Kenny. He was pulling his gold and red scarf back up over his nose, and fidgeting with how it settled. Starting fourth year Kenny started coming to school with a scarf always covering his face. Kyle and Stan had known what Kenny’s life was like when he left school, and they would often invite him to stay at their houses for holidays. Though, Kenny still had to go
home some time. Every year he seemed to get progressively worse. He was always covered with cuts, dings, and bruises. After Kyle saw what he was hiding under the scarf, he considered asking his mother to adopt him. What was beneath the scarf was a long and jagged scar, tracing up from Kenny’s chin, through the corner of his mouth, and ending on his cheek inches under his eye. Sometimes you can see a bit of it peeking out, but Kenny doesn’t let just anyone see the entire thing. He doesn’t ever talk about it either. He’s never told Stan or Kyle how he got it. He’s mysterious like that. Kenny usually keeps the scar so tightly under wraps his voice is often muffled, and a lot of people have trouble understanding what he’s saying. Stan, Kyle, and Cartman are all used to it by now though, and have become sort of Kenny-translators for professors that can’t hear very well.

“You know,” Kenny continued, “I gotta good feeling about this year.”

“What do you mean?” said Kyle.

Kenny smiled, looking back and forth between Kyle and Stan as they stood outside the schools doors. He rolled a shoulder.

“I don’t know, I just have a good feeling about this one.”

Stan shook his head good naturedly.

“Whatever you say, Ken.”

Kyle pushed open the front door, finding a very furious looking Headmistress Victoria waiting for them in the entryway in her nightgown.

Kyle felt his heart turn cold and sink to his feet. He was waiting for her to reach out and pluck his Prefect pin from his chest to crumble it beneath her foot. If he showed up tomorrow morning with his Prefect pin removed from his chest Wendy Testaburger wouldn’t hesitate to rub it in his nose. “I told you to be careful, Kyle,” he heard her saying, “I told you to be more responsible. I told you so.”

Professor Victoria had her owl-eye glasses settled on the tip of her nose, as her forehead wrinkled from the hold her eyebrows were making.

Behind her, Eric Cartman stood scornfully with his arms folded across his chest.


Kyle elbowed him hard.

“Kenny McCormick,” she began, “I think it’s best if you refrain your mouth from getting yourself into anymore trouble than you already are.”

“You ratted us out?” Stan growled at Cartman.

“I did not!” said Cartman.

“You unloyal piece of shit,” said Stan. “He was out with us too, Headmistress!”

“Oh, I’m aware, Mr. Marsh,” she said, “believe me. I’ll be seeing all four of you in detention for a week, and I’ll be taking fifty points from each of your houses.”

Stan’s mouth fell open, but no noise came out.
Her blue eyes fell onto Kyle, staring daggers through his head.

“You’re lucky I don’t retract your Prefect position, Broflovski. I expect better behavior from you.”

Kyle swallowed hard, feeling his hand ghost over his chest where his pin rested.

“Off to your dorms,” said Victoria. “All of you. Now.”

Without another word, they began heading to their houses. Cartman sulked off towards the dungeons, and Stan went in the opposite direction with Kyle in tow. Kenny bounced off towards Gryffindor Tower. Getting points taken away and sentenced to detention was just another Sunday night for Kenny. Sometimes Kyle wondered if Kenny actually enjoyed getting into trouble. It was probably some weird kind of kink of his.

Kyle whispered this thought to Stan and they giggled together.

When they got to the kitchens Stan stopped and said,

“lt really sucks you’re not playing Quidditch this year, dude.”

Kyle looked at him, feeling a cavity form in his chest where the joy of playing Seeker used to sit. He decided to quit playing after last season, when he found he couldn’t balance his studies and Quidditch practice. Kyle doesn’t handle stress well, and he didn’t want a repeat of fifth year again. So, he had to pick one. If he wanted to work in the Ministry of Magic one day he needed to get his priorities straight.

“I wasn’t that great anyway,” said Kyle, more so for himself than for Stan. “I’m getting a bit heavy, I think. They’ll probably pick a first or second year to fill in.”

Stan frowned at him.

“Too heavy?” He said. “Dude, you were awesome out there just now. You’re as fast as you ever were on that broom.”

“You’re really not making this any easier, Stan.”

“Then try out for the team, dude,” he pleaded. “It’s not gonna be the same without you.”

“We weren’t even on the same team, dude.”

“I know, but...it was still fun when Hufflepuff played against Ravenclaw, wasn’t it?”

Kyle smiled, remembering all the times he and Stan would flip each other off from across the field, or shout obscenities as they flew by each other on their brooms. It always drove their teammates crazy whenever they played against each other. It started being less fun when Stan started dating Wendy, and he spent the majority of playing time watching her play Keeper instead of chasing.

“Yeah,” said Kyle, “it was fun. But, I just can’t do it anymore, dude. Quidditch is your thing. It always has been.”

Stan didn’t say anything. He simply played with the bristles of his broom to distract himself.

“I’ll still be at the games,” promised Kyle, “every single one of them.”

“Okay,” said Stan. But he didn’t sound satisfied with the answer.
“I’ll see you in Charms tomorrow morning.”

“Yeah, see you.”

They walked their separate ways. Stan down to the basement, and Kyle towards the tower.

When Kyle came to door at the top of the spiral staircase, the bronze eagle knocker asked him the semesters riddle.

“I can only live if there is light, but I die if the light shines on me. What am I?”

“A shadow,” said Kyle.

The door opened, and Kyle entered into the quiet common room. The painted stars on the domed ceiling always seemed to twinkle a bit brighter after curfew, and they lit the way for Kyle as he walked off towards his dormitory. Though, as he walked, he heard whispering coming from the foot of the staircase leading to the girls dorms.

Kyle stopped in the middle of the common room, listening hard.

“...He doesn’t need to know...” said the voice.

It sounded like Wendy.

Kyle slowly padded closer to the staircase, unable to suppress the grin creeping up his face due to the thought of catching Wendy--Ms. Perfect Ravenclaw Prefect--up after curfew, gossiping with one of her girl friends.

It wasn’t that Kyle didn’t like Wendy, he actually liked Wendy very much, and the two had become good friends over the years. It was just that the two were so alike they were constantly against each other, or trying to compete with each other. In assignments, Prefect duties, and even going after the same job. Wendy wanted to go into the Ministry as well, though she couldn’t seem to decide if she wanted be Minister of Magic or go into Law more. The competition between them was usually all in good fun, but every once in awhile Kyle would find himself hating how Wendy got a better grade than he did on an assignment.

“Yeah,” he heard her voice say. “At our spot. Like always.”

Kyle jumped out in front of the staircase, earning a scream from Wendy. She dropped something out of her hands, and it clattered on the marble.

“Kyle!” She yelped. “What the hell? You scared the shit out of me!”

Kyle placed his hands on his hips, still holding his grin as he cocked his head to the side.

“What’re you doing past curfew? And who are you talking to?”

Wendy huffed, picking up her object from the ground and inspecting it with her hands. Kyle saw that it was shiny, silver hand mirror.

“I’ll have you know I was practicing a speech!”

“A speech?” echoed Kyle. “Why are you practicing a speech already? School doesn’t start for another few hours.”

“Extra credit,” she blurted, stuffing the mirror in the pocket of her fluffy purple bathrobe. “Professor Garrison gave me the assignment to do over summer.”
“Of course,” said Kyle, unconvinced.

Wendy turned a bit pink in the face.

“Well, I should ask you the same thing, Broflovski,” she scolded. “What’re you doing out past curfew? And why are you so dirty?”

Her pale face scrunched up like a napkin, her tiny pink mouth forming a pout.

“You were playing Quidditch with Stan weren’t you? Oh, I knew it. I don’t know how many times I’ve told him—”

“Who said I was with Stan,” asked Kyle. “I could’ve been with Kenny.”

Wendy rolled her eyes. “I’m sure Kenny was right there with you two.”

“I’m going to take a shower,” said Kyle. “Tell Stan in the mirror I said hi.”

Wendy sputtered before turning on her heel and heading back up her staircase, shouting out a, “Good night, Broflovski!”

“Good night, Wendy,” he called back.

XXX

The next day after their final class, Kyle sat in the detention chamber with Stan, Kenny, and Cartman. They had also been joined by Craig Tucker, Cartman’s fellow Slytherin. The Headmistress had made it seem that she would be personally overseeing their detentions, which made Kyle a little surprised to see Professor Mackey sitting at the teacher’s desk.

Cartman kept grumbling about how lame it was to be sitting in the chamber on such a nice day. He kept raising his hand, and everytime Mackey called on him he asked if they could have detention outside today.

“Now, Eric,” Mackey droned for the twelve time in the last twenty minutes, “you know I can’t allow that. Detention is supposed to teach you a lesson about your wrong-doings, mmkay? If I let you go outside that’ll defeat the purpose of your punishment, mmkay?”

After the fifth time this happened Kyle wanted to hit his head against the desk. Hearing it a twelve time made him want to hit the desk until his ears bled.

Kenny seemed to be halfway there. He was forming a nice red mark in the middle of his forehead.

“Knock it off, Kenny,” said Stan. “You’re going to give yourself a concussion.”

“Better than listening to ‘mmmkay’ for two hours for a week,” he replied.

“You’re right,” said Kyle.

“Can we take a trip through the forbidden forest instead,” said Craig. “When did they stop giving that out as a form of punishment?”

After the first half hour of Cartman still complaining out the sunny September day going on outside without them, Kyle couldn’t take it anymore and brought out his homework. He didn’t have anyone to talk to after Kenny fell asleep, kicked back in his chair and his feet resting on the desk. Stan looked like he would go next any minute now. He was already drooling in the palm of
his hand, and Kyle swore he was just sleeping with his eyes open.

“Hey, Marsh,” Craig kicked the back of Stan’s chair, jolting Stan out of his dreamlike state with a snort. “How’d your Prefect girlfriend take it when you told her you had detention?”

Stan rubbed at his eyes. “None of your business, Craig.”

Cartman laughed with Craig, unable to resist joining in on making fun of Stan.

“You’re so fuckin’ whipped, dude,” said Cartman. “You can’t go to the bathroom without asking her first.”

“Shut your fat mouth, Cartman,” Stan spun around his chair. “You’re already in deep shit with me after last night.”

“What the fuck did I do?”

“You ratted us out to the Headmistress!” Kyle barked.

“I did not!” Cartman scoffed. “She already knew we were all out there!”

“It’s best if you just stop talking while you’re ahead, Eric,” Stan warned.

Cartman leaned forward against his desk, his horrible sly smile making a reappearance on his face.

“Why?” He said. “Are you going to sic your dog Wendy on me?”

Kyle heard the crack of Stan’s knuckles as he tightened his hand into a fist.

“Cartman, you better watch it,” said Kyle.

“Why? What’s he gonna do? We’re already in detention. If he gets into anymore trouble he’s going to get his precious Quidditch taken away from him.”

“Just ignore him, dude,” Stan grumbled to Kyle. “It’s fine.”

For the remaining hour neither of them spoke to Cartman, no matter how much Kyle wanted to retort to his bigoted insults and sexist comments. His temper was rising so bad he couldn’t even concentrate on his work, and the words in his book simply turned to inky blobs and spots. Kenny snored on in his chair.

“Dude,” Kyle sighed to Stan, “I can’t concentrate when he’s like this.”

“We’ll study outside,” said Stan. “At our spot.”

Kyle closed his book with another sigh. This one was more out of content than frustration. These days Kyle took whatever time he could get with Stan. Ever since Stan and Wendy began their on-again-off-again relationship the end of third year, Kyle could feel his time with Stan lessening. Now that he had given up Quidditch, he was worried his time with Stan was going to be cut even more.

Before making his final decision last year between studies or Quidditch, he went to Kenny with his fears.

“I hate being stressed out,” he had said, “so I know I can’t do both, because it’ll kill me if I try and do it again. But if I don’t pick Quidditch, I feel like Stan is going to hate me. I hardly see him enough as it is, if I cut Quidditch; what if I don’t see him at all?”
Kenny had flipped a page in the Muggle magazine he was reading. He was blowing a rather large bubble of Droobles Best Blowing Gum, and when the bubble finally popped he spoke. “You talk like you two are dating.”

Kyle grew red in the face.

“What?”

“It’s okay,” said Kenny, chewing loudly, “I’m not gonna tell anyone. If you’re in love with Stan you can tell me.”

“I’m--I’m not in love with Stan!” Kyle sputtered. “He’s my best friend!”

Kenny just shrugged, blowing another bubble with his gum.

Kyle settled back in his chair, pressing his palms against his eyes to block out the memory and Kenny’s words. He didn’t want to accept how right Kenny was back then. He was trying to ignore the patter of his heartbeat, and asking himself why he was so excited to get alone time with Stan. Though, he was sure he knew the answer quite well. He was a Ravenclaw after all.

Finally, the detention was over.

They woke up Kenny, and as they walked away from the detention chamber he complained about how he didn’t get enough sleep last night.

Stan advised he should see the nurse.

“Why?” Kenny forced a laugh. “I’m always tired.”

“That’s exactly why you should go see her,” said Kyle.

“You were banging your head against the table for half an hour,” said Stan. “I told you you’d give yourself a concussion.”

Kenny waved them off, hopping over the first few steps to the staircase that would take him to Gryffindor Tower.

“M’fine,” he said. “Just in a funk. I’ll catch you dudes at dinner.”

Stan and Kyle bid him goodbye as he walked up the staircase, and they headed for the doors that would take them out to the grounds.

“You ever notice something about Kenny?” asked Kyle.

“What?” said Stan. “That he can’t ever sleep?”

“Yeah,” said Kyle, “I mean, he’s not always falling asleep in class, but when he does it always seems like...like it’s at the same time every month.”

Stan paused, frowning slightly at Kyle, and then he busted out laughing.

“What’s so funny?” asked Kyle crossly. He thought that what he said had been a decent hypothesis. He had started to take note of it last year. Kenny was often bright eyed and bushy tailed when he was at Hogwarts, but almost once every month, around the same time, Kenny would be sleeping in classes and complaining about how he can’t seem to fall asleep in Gryffindor Tower.
“You think Kenny has a period?” said Stan.

Kyle sputtered, unable to hide the smile on his face.

“What--no! That’s not what I meant, Stan!”

Stan wiped the tears from his eyes, shaking his head.

“No, dude, I get you. Really, I do. I started to kind of notice it too.”

“So I’m not crazy!”

“Well, I didn’t say that.”

Kyle shoved into him. Stan shoved him back.

As they continued walking, something dawned on Kyle that he had forgotten to mention to Stan earlier that day.

“Oh, hey, I didn’t know you had a magic mirror, dude,” he said.

Stan looked at him like he was joking. “What?”

“A magic mirror,” Kyle repeated. “Why didn’t you tell me you had one? I saw Wendy talking into it last night. I told her to tell you hey.”

Stan frowned. “Wendy has a magic mirror? I wasn’t talking to her last night. I said goodnight to her before we went out to the Quidditch pitch, but after that I didn’t see her.”

“Oh...well then...who was she talking to?”

Stan’s face went an olive green, and Kyle was quick to clean up his mistake.

“I mean, she said she was practicing for a speech Garrison told her she could do for extra credit over summer. I didn’t believe her, but that was probably it. It was probably nothing, Stan.”

“Yeah, okay. Um...I’m gonna go find her. See you later, Kyle.”

Kyle grabbed his robes before he could get away from him, tugging him back. “Dude, wait,” he said. “I thought we were going to study together?”

“Later, okay, dude?”

Stan pulled away from Kyle’s grasp, and Kyle let the fabric slip through his fingers. He watched Stan hurry away to the library, where Wendy always went to spend her time after classes. He listened to scuffle of Stan’s trainers until the sounds of the staircase moving muffled it out.

Kyle stood alone in the hallway for a good while. His fingers felt cold, and his chest ached. He fantasized that on his way to the library, Stan would get his priorities straight, and turn back around, charging down the staircase and into Kyle’s arms. Stan would warm his fingers like he used to, like on their very first day on the Hogwarts Express.

Kyle thought that he still needed to his priorities straightened out. Cutting Quidditch wasn’t what the problem was.

Kyle swallowed, heading towards the West Wing to study peacefully in his common room.
Though he knew he wouldn’t get any studying done tonight. Not when Kenny’s words were still dancing around in his head. About how he felt about Stan, and about how wrong he had been last night.

He wondered what on earth Kenny could have been feeling to make him think this year was going to be any different from the past five.
Common Things

Kyle woke up in the Ravenclaw common room.

He had just had the strangest dream: Craig Tucker was trying to pull off Kenny’s scarf in front of everyone in the Great Hall. Kyle went to stop him, but for some reason he couldn’t seem to get there quick enough. Like the floor had suddenly turned into fast acting cement and had swallowed his shoes. He called for Stan to help Kenny instead, but when he turned he saw Stan chasing after Wendy as she ran out the Great Hall doors.

Craig pulled the end of Kenny’s scarf, but the more he pulled the longer the scarf became. It was like watching a clown pull a string of hankies out of his sleeve. The scarf was pooling behind Craig, and it didn’t seem like it would ever end. Craig gave a hard yank on the scarf, finally getting to the end of it. When Craig saw Kenny’s face he roared with laughter. The entire hall filled with shouts of laughter; all the students pointing fingers at Kenny.

Kenny turned to look at Kyle, who was still stuck between the Gryffindor and Ravenclaw tables. When Kyle saw Kenny’s face he didn’t feel much like laughing. His one scar had turned into three large gashes ripping the side of his face open, dripping all over his tattered robes, and staining the gray tile with giant blobs of dark blood.

“Kyle?” Kenny called to him.

He woke up just after that.

Kyle gingerly touched his own face, feeling for the sticky wetness of blood. His fingertips just grazed over his soft cheek. His took a shaky breath of relief, considering going down to the basement to crawl into Stan’s bed. It was childish, but it wasn’t unusual for them. It was more of an occurrence that happened at home rather than at Hogwarts, but every once in awhile he and Stan will crash in each other’s dorms. At first, their dorm-mates would give them odd looks when they saw the two sharing a bed or the couch, but after getting to know Stan and Kyle they didn’t think anything more of it. Cartman was really the only one to give them any shit about it.

But then Kyle remembered he was supposed to be mad at Stan.

The sad lonely feeling from being deserted by Stan had now been replaced by anger. It wasn’t the first time Stan had chosen Wendy over him, but it didn’t hurt any less.

He was frustrated with himself for even bringing up Wendy when it supposed to be his own personal time with Stan. He was usually careful to tiptoe around any subject that could possibly trigger her going through Stan’s mind while he was with him. Though sometimes it was inevitable that she would come up in conversation; Kyle still tried to avoid the subject at all costs.

He was still angry at Stan for ditching him. He was angry at Wendy for being Stan’s girlfriend, and for taking all of his time away from Kyle.

He glared into the fireplace, watching the ever-lasting magical flames lick the bricks. He thought about writing to Ike about it.

Ike was twelve now, and no matter how much the two of them hoped that by some miracle their parents managed to unknowingly adopt a Muggle born baby wizard, Ike never got his Hogwarts letter. He was crushed. Kyle was too. But Ike was one of the smartest Muggle kids in the world. He was already going to Muggle high school at twelve years old, and was constantly writing to
Kyle about his awards and achievements. Ike was dreaming of someday working in the wizarding world with Kyle, and often teased their parents he was going to become the groundskeeper at Hogwarts. Ike was hilarious like that.

He decided he should write to Ike and his parents just to let them know how his first day went (he wouldn’t mention detention of course). It would help him keep his mind off Stan, and the nightmare about Kenny.

He pulled out a piece of parchment, and his ink and quill from his bag that was leaning against the chair he was sitting in. Using his Potions book as a prop, he scrawled out in his careful handwriting about how much he missed them already, but reassured them he was enjoying being back at school. He knew Ike would read through this bullshit, and would send a letter back instantly; demanding he know how much trouble his big brother was in this time. But his parents ate this stuff up. They didn’t need to know about his petty drama.

After he signed, “Love you, --Kyle.” he folded up the piece of parchment and stuck it in an envelope. He wrote their address on the back of it, and then stuck it into the pocket of his robes to send it off with Elephant in the morning. He had let her out earlier when the sun was setting. She had needed to stretch out her wings after being cooped up in her cage for almost a whole day.

He felt a little better after writing the letter, but the anger was still festering inside him. Like he needed to vent out to somebody. He guessed there was always Kenny, but it would have to wait till morning. There was no way he was going to go to Gryffindor Tower in the middle of the night to wake up Kenny. He wasn’t at dinner in the Great Hall, and Kyle went up to Butters to ask where he was. Butters was usually tailing around Kenny because no one would pick on him if Kenny was around.

“He was sleeping in our dorm when I left,” he told Kyle. “Poor guy. He really seemed tuckered out. I didn’t wanna wake him.”

Kyle would have to find out what was making Kenny so tired every month.

He stood up off the chair and stretched. The full moon’s pale light shined in through the arched windows, casting Kyle’s shadow on the midnight blue carpet.

He grabbed his backpack and slung it over his shoulder, heading off towards the boys dormitory. Just as he was reaching the first marble step, a noise made him freeze with his foot in the air.

A horrible, gut twisting, howl.

Kyle snapped his attention towards the arched window that gave the Ravenclaws the perfect view of the Forbidden Forest. It was on his side of the common room, but he couldn’t see anything from where he was standing.

Slowly, as though the creature was in the room with him, he approached the window.

His green eyes scanned the grounds and the canopies of the Forbidden Forest, but he saw no movement or dark figure prowling in the grass. Still, his heart was thumping.

When they were just first years Cartman told his friends about the werewolves that lived in the Forbidden Forest. Kyle told him there was no way the teachers would let werewolves be anywhere near the school, but Cartman ignored him and told a story about when his mom went to Hogwarts, and a kid was killed from a werewolf attack when he went into the forest on a dare. Kyle never believed him, but he had always been wary about the creatures that lived inside the forest.
Kyle heard another howl coming from below. This one was more drawn out than the last, as though it knew Kyle was looking for it, and it was proving itself to him.

There was movement at the edge of the forest.

He pressed his palm up against the glass. He didn’t realize he was breathing heavily until the window started fogging.

A large and dark figure was walking—no, running out from between the trees on four long legs. Once out of the forest it stopped. It was huge; bigger than any dog Kyle has even encountered. He could only really see the outline of it from how far away, and for how dark out it was. But he didn’t have any doubt in his mind that this was a werewolf.

He sucked in a sharp, shaky breath.

It’s head snapped up like it had heard him, looking towards Ravenclaw Tower. Kyle watched it stand up on it’s hind legs. It’s ears were flattened against its head.

Kyle thought he heard growling coming from inside the common room.

He ran for his dorm.

XXX

Kyle didn’t sleep well. In fact, he didn’t sleep for the rest of the night. He laid awake in his bed with the blue curtains shut, and his blanket up to his chin. He went back and forth between staying in the safety of his room, or going to the Hufflepuff Basement to wake up Stan. He was afraid that if he left the dorm the werewolf would still be outside the window, watching him. What if it saw him running out of the Tower? What if it broke in through the schools doors and snatched him before he could even reach the basement?

Kyle ran a hand nervously through his curls all night. Cringing at every creak of a floorboard, or when the wind blew too loudly.

In the morning he groggily stumbled out of bed with the rest of his dorm-mates. Elephant was sitting in her cage with her head tucked under her wing. He ratted on the bars with his knuckle. She peeked an annoyed yellow eye up at him.

“I need you to deliver this letter to Mom and Dad,” he said, pulling the envelope out in front of her.

She ruffled her feathers, squawking at him.

“I know you’re tired,” he said, “but they’ll freak out if I don’t write to them soon. Just this one letter, Ellie.”

She snatched the letter out of his fingers, not caring that she clipped her beak on the side of his pointer finger.

“I deserved that,” said Kyle, mostly to himself now that Elephant had flown out the open window and into the morning sunlight.

He walked down to breakfast struggling to keep his eyes open. He hadn’t even noticed he had completely walked past Stan as he was emerging from the Hufflepuff Basement with a crowd of his housemates.
“Hey, Kyle,” Stan called, chasing after him.

Kyle swung back around like a zombie, blinking at him as a greeting.

“Whoa, dude,” said Stan, “you look like shit.”

“Thanks,” said Kyle.

“I mean—what’s up with your hair?” Stan pointed to the fro Kyle had been unknowingly teasing with his fingers all night long. In the crude September heat his curls had turned to frizz, and his iconic bushy afro looked more like he had just gotten struck by a Bang Bang Boggart Banger.

Kyle rubbed at his eyes. “Didn’t sleep well.”

“You turning into Kenny?” Stan teased, wrapping his arm around Kyle’s shoulder as they walked towards the doors of the Great Hall. Kyle could feel Stan’s warmth through his robes, and he wanted nothing more than to curl up beside him and sleep. He rested his head on Stan’s shoulder as they continued walking, his hair taking up most of the room.

He suddenly remembered that he was supposed to be mad at Stan right now, but he guessed he could finish being mad at him later. It was impossible to be mad at Stan when he felt so cozy.

“Your hair tickles,” said Stan.

“Has a mind of it’s own.”

Stan guided Kyle into the Great Hall, and then directed him to the Hufflepuff table. The hall was still slowly filling up with sleepy students, so the four tables were still decently bare. Stan snagged two seats, grabbing the coffee pot and two mugs. He filled them to the brim.

“You know me too good.” Kyle reached for the cup Stan was handing him, flicking his tongue over his lips before replacing it with the tip of the mug. Stan just laughed into his own mug, taking a large sip.

“Well, when you know someone for twelve years you kinda get to know the guy.”

Kyle didn’t speak. He was too busy waiting for the caffeine to hit his system.

“So why couldn’t you sleep?” asked Stan.

Kyle held up a finger, swallowed, and then set down the mug.

“Give me a minute,” he said, reaching for Stan’s mug.

Stan slid it over to him.

“Did you have a nightmare or something?”

“Or something.” Kyle rolled his shoulders.

Stan frowned puzzledly at him.

“You’re killing me here, Kyle, what is it?”

Kyle set the second cup down, rubbing his forehead into his palm as he closed his burning eyes.

“Can I sleep in your dorm tonight?” He asked quietly.
“Yeah, of course you can.”

“I, um, I saw something...weird last night.”

“Chicken lover weird, or our dads’ hot tub ‘incident’ weird.”

Kyle shuttered, but was unable to suppress a laugh. It helped him perk up a little.

“Why must you always bring that up just as soon as I’ve managed to repress it?”

“You didn’t answer.”

“Chicken lover,” said Kyle. “It’s chicken lover level weirdness.”

“Okay, spit.”

“I fell asleep in the common room last night, and when I woke up I heard something howling…”

“Okay,” said Stan slowly, “it was probably just the wind, dude. I’ve slept in your tower before, the wind makes it so easy to fall asleep up there, but sometimes it really does sound like it’s howling. Are you still letting those dumb stories that Cartman told you get to you?”

Kyle felt his ears start to burn.

“No,” he said, a little harshly. “I don’t let anything that fat douchebag says get to me. Let me finish my story; I went to check it out, because it sounded really close.”

“And because you let Cartman’s B.S. get to you.”

Kyle gave him a sharp look.

“Anyways; when I looked out the window I saw it coming out of the Forbidden Forest. It was huge, like, dude, it wasn’t just any old stray dog wandering around the grounds. This was a werewolf.”

Kyle watched Stan’s face go slightly pale.

“You saw a werewolf?”

“I swear I did, Stan,” said Kyle, “I mean--I couldn’t see that well because it was dark, but I saw well enough.”

“What did it do?”

Kyle felt the cold fear shrivel up his insides again when he thought about it. He swallowed.

“It, um, it looked right up at me. Right up at Ravenclaw Tower, through the window, and right at me. It knew I was up there somehow, and I felt like it didn’t want me to see it. What if it was a Death Eater, Stan?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” snapped Stan, “there aren’t any more Death Eaters around.”

“If there’s still people who think like Eric Cartman, I fully believe that there’s still Death Eaters.”

Kyle huffed, crossing his arms over his chest as he was beginning to remember he was supposed to be angry with Stan. “It’s only been eight years. Who knows what kinda sick people are still wandering about out there!”
“Okay, but that’s Cartman,” said Stan. “Why would Death Eaters come to Hogwarts anyway? You think anybody in this school could be the second “Chosen One”?”

Kyle looked around the Great Hall. He saw Tweek Tweak sitting not too far down from them, twitching as he was buttering his toast. He saw Clyde Donovan snorting Pumpkin Juice out of his nose, and then crying over the sting. Craig Tucker was laughing at him so hard he fell off his seat. Token patted Clyde’s back reassuringly.

“You have a point,” said Kyle. “But...what if it was someone dangerous? What if they’re out prowling the grounds again tonight?”

Stan wrapped his arm around Kyle’s shoulder, squeezing him tight and close. Kyle’s heart fluttered, and he thought about Stan holding him like this all night in his dorm. He fantasized about him and Stan climbing under the patchwork quilts of Stan’s four-poster bed, like they’ve done a million times before. He thought about Stan grabbing his arm, making promises of keeping that big bad wolf away.

Though Kyle was pulled out of this fantasy as soon as Stan's hand slipped off his shoulder.

“You can sleep in the Basement with me tonight,” Stan offered. He was unknowingly feeding into the hopeless possibility of Kyle's fantasy becoming reality.

“Okay,” said Kyle quietly. He felt dirty, suddenly getting the itching sensation of wanting to wash his hands.

Before he could excuse himself, a loud crack erupted from the Great Hall doors. Tweek screamed at the noise, tossing his buttered toast into the air, and having it land in his halo of blonde hair. He cringed, squawking, as the warm butter slid down his forehead.

Everyone in the hall turned to look at what could have caused such a noise. They should have known all along when they saw Eric Cartman standing in the middle of the doorway, arms outstretched, face pink, and chest heaving.

“You guys!” He bellowed from the doors, though no one was quite sure who he was calling.

His eyes scanned over the hall, before finally settling at the Hufflepuff table.

“Oh, no,” sighed Kyle. “He’s talking to us.”

“You guys!” Cartman ran towards them. “You guys, seriously, you’re not gonna--you’re gonna freak! Seriously!”

By the time he reached them he was leaning against the table, huffing and puffing so much he couldn’t even get out what he had really wanted to say.

“Hold on, you guys,” he panted, reaching across Kyle to grab a pumpkin pasty. “Hold on, seriously, it’s sweet.”

“Spit it out already, Cartman,” said Kyle, glaring at the pastry crumbs that were falling away from Cartman’s face.

“Where’s Kenny?”

“Not up yet,” said Stan. “He’s been sleeping ever since we left detention last night.”

Cartman crunched the pastry in his fist, shaking his head. “Dammit! He’s always missing
everything! The lazy piece of--"

Stan and Kyle both shouted, “Cartman!”

He raked his arm across his mouth, slammed the pastry back onto the table, and announced.

“Damien Thorn had the crap kicked out of him.”

Damien Thorn was another one of Cartman’s fellow Slytherin’s. He was a sixth year just like them, and was the quiet kid who sat in the back of the class; only to voice his strong opinion for the hatred of muggles whenever the conversation steered that way. He was like another Cartman, only somewhat quieter.

One time Kenny got fed up with his crap and threatened to punch him in the nose right in the middle of class if he didn’t shut up.

Damien just looked at him, his eyes glowing like he wanted to say something. But instead he settled back in his seat and class continued on.

Kyle still shivers when he remembers the look on Damien’s face when he stared at Kenny. He looked like he wanted to kill him.

As for Cartman; he didn’t like Thorn ever since they laid eyes on each other. Damien was another pureblood that Cartman was interested in befriending, but after he introduced himself Damien sneered; “I know who you are. It’s best if you stay away from me, scum.”

Kyle and Damian could have been friends after this incident, if Damien didn’t hate Muggles.

“Really?” said Stan. “Who did it?”

“No idea,” said Cartman, “I’m putting my money on Craig. They’ve been at each other’s throats since last May.”

“Craig?” Kyle snorted. “I would have thought Tweek.”

“Tweek Tweak?” Cartman echoed, causing a sharp yelp from down the table.

“Yeah,” said Stan, “Tweek totally has it out for Damien. He’s Muggleborn, you know.”

“Tweek couldn’t punch his way out of a cardboard box,” said Cartman. “That guy screams at garden gnomes for Christ sake!”

“Tweek’s badass, dude,” said Kyle. “Craig wouldn’t harm a pixie. He just puts on a tough-guy show, and gets sent to detention all the time for swearing at Professors. He’s harmless.”

Cartman sputtered, shaking his head. “Shut up, Kyle, who cares who did it! Damien Thorn is in the Hospital Wing right now!”

Stan hopped up from his seat, putting his hand over Kyle’s, and grinning.

“C’mon, Kyle,” he said. “We’ve gotta see this.”

It didn’t take much coaxing for Kyle to join them. He was just upset he hadn’t been there when Damien got what was coming to him. He wished the person would come forward; he’d like to shake their hand.

When they came to the Hospital Wing, Cartman hid himself behind the door. Kyle and Stan hid
behind the other one, peering out into the room to look at the empty cots. Nurse Gollum was at the other side of the room, pushing a cart with pumpkin pasties, and a bottle of cider on it.

And there was Damien, resting on a cot.

His face was paler than usual, but that could have just been the black eye he was sporting. His right hand was bandaged, and there were bruises going up his neck. Like something had strangled him.

Kyle put his hand over his mouth to hold in a gasp. A terrible chill went over him, when the thought crossed his mind. He grabbed onto Stan’s arm. Stan jumped, turning to him.

“Stan,” Kyle breathed, “what if--what if the werewolf got him?”

Stan’s eyes went wide, but before he could open his mouth to say anything, Cartman let out an: “Oh, shit!”

When they turned back towards the room, Nurse Gollum was giving the three of them a horrible glare. Damien had also spotted them, and was clutching his bedsheets with a tight fist.

Nurse Gollum rushed over to the doors, her eyes ablaze.

“And what are you three doing here? Spying on Mr. Thorn?”

“N-n-no, Madam,” said Cartman, “we just wanted to see how he was doing. He’s in my house, Nurse Gollum, and I was worried about him when I heard he was in the Hospital Wing.”

Damien barked out a laugh from his cot.

“He’s fine. Have a great day you three.” She reached around to pull the doors close.

“Wait! Wait, Nurse Gollum!” Kyle struggled in through the last crack in the door before Nurse Gollum could shut them out. He fell to his knees at her feet.

She gawked down at him in surprise. A Ravenclaw Prefect was trembling at the bottom of her skirt.

“What attacked him?” His voice shook when he spoke. “What attacked Damien?”

Gollum stared down at him “Excuse me?”

“Something attacked him,” Kyle blubbered. Panic was rising to his chest. What if it came after him next for telling?

“I think I saw it last night! There’s werewolves in the Forbidden Forest!”

“Broflovski,” said Gollum, “Mr. Thorn was apart of a cruel joke, and ended up getting jostled around by the Whomping Willow last night. He’s got no bite marks that I can see. There are no werewolves at Hogwarts. You have nothing to worry about. Damien will be just fine, but right now he needs to rest. Have a good day, boys.” She shut the doors on Kyle’s nose.

“Werewolves?” snorted Cartman. “Where did that shit come from?”

“Kyle says he saw a werewolf come out of the Forbidden Forest last night,” Stan explained. “He heard it howling, and saw it stand up on two legs.”

Cartman laughed. “Halfie’s are always trying to get in the spotlight. Just look at Harry Potter, he
was always making shit up so he’d be the center of attention.”

Kyle threw him a look over his shoulder, biting the inside of his cheek to keep himself from blowing up on Cartman.

“You’re so wrong on so many levels I don’t even know where to begin.”

“You’re the one who told us there were werewolves in the forest in the first place, Fatass.” Stan jabbed Cartman in the chest with his finger, making Cartman turn to him, acting flabbergasted.

“I’m not fat, Stan!” He barked. “And that was just a joke, Jesus Christ. That was like, a million years ago! It’s not my fault the halfie is so fuckin’ gullible.”

“Shut up, Cartman!” Kyle scrambled to his feet, and went to Stan’s side. “I know what I fucking saw last night.”

Kyle grabbed Stan by the elbow and tugged, saying, “Let’s just go to class already. We’re going to be late.”

“Whatever,” Cartman grumbled, shoving his hands into the pockets of his robes. He stood back and watched Kyle and Stan walk up the staircase together. He called after them. “See you homos in detention!”

“I swear to God, I can’t take him anymore,” Kyle muttered when he and Stan reached the second floor and were far away from Eric Cartman. “He always has to put in his two cents about everything. He always has to be right even when he’s so wrong. It makes him look like a complete asshat! One of these days, Stan, I swear I’m gonna break his nose.”

Stan was used to listening to Kyle’s rants about Cartman by now, and simply stayed silent and listening. Kyle went on for a few more minutes, tossing his hands up in the air, looking like he was fighting off some bumblebee that was pestering him. His face was growing red from his agitation, but he finally fell silent when he and Stan came across Kenny.

He was stumbling down one of the moving staircases, rubbing his eyes.

“Hey, dudes,” he said, “how’s it hanging?”

“To the left,” said Stan with a grin.

“Sick,” Kenny slugged him in the arm as Kyle faked a laugh. He hoped neither of them would notice his blushing ears as he pushed the thought of Stan’s dick out of his head.

“Feeling any better sleepy-head?” Stan asked Kenny. He slung his arm around him like he had done with Kyle earlier that morning. Kyle chewed on the inside of his lip, reminding himself he was sleeping over in the Basement tonight.

“Oh, yeah, loads,” said Kenny. “I feel like a new man.”

“Well, you’ve been sleeping for almost seventeen hours, dude,” said Kyle. “That’s intense.”

Kenny clapped his hand to his forehead. “Shit, really?”

Stan and Kyle laughed at him.

“Yeah, dude,” said Stan, “and you missed Cartman freaking out about Damien Thorn.”

“Thorn?” repeated Kenny. “What’s up with him?”
“Thorn?” repeated Kenny. “What’s up with him?”

“He’s in the Hospital Wing,” said Kyle, “he was beaten up by the Whomping Willow I guess.”

“Really?” said Kenny.

“Somebody pulled a prank on him.” Stan shrugged. “Kyle thought it was werewolves.”

Kenny whipped his head around to Kyle, his brown eyes round and dark. “Werewolves?”

“Yeah,” Kyle replied, an uneasiness squirming around in his guts. “I thought I saw one last night. I thought maybe it attacked Damien.”

Kyle watched the corners of Kenny’s eyes wrinkle as he smiled under his layers of scarf. “There’s no werewolves out there, dude,” he said. “No matter what Cartman’s lead you to believe.”

Kyle clenched his fists so tightly he thought his fingernails were going to draw blood from his palms. He could feel the heat from his belly rising up to his face, and his brain was rattling with a million curse words he’d like to throw out at Kenny.

Stan noticed this, and thankfully he steered the conversation in a different direction.

“Hey, Kenny,” he said, “so who do you think would beat up Damien first? Craig Tucker or Tweek Tweak?”

XXX

After classes Kyle found himself sitting next to Stan in detention again.

He laid his head down on his arms, folded on top of the desk, and fluttered his eyes shut as Stan mindlessly played with a curl of his hair. It was something Kyle’s mother used to do when he was having trouble sleeping at night, and while he’s never told Stan this, Stan does it from time to time too. It was nice, and was making him fall asleep.

Throughout the day there were murmurs about Damien Thorn being in the Hospital Wing. Cartman had bragged about being the one to discover him there, and proudly announced that Thorn had been beaten up by the Whomping Willow. Who had pulled the trick on him; no one was sure of that yet. Damien was a clever kid. Almost enough to be considered Ravenclaw. No one was really sure who could have tricked him like that.

It was just the four of them in the chamber today.

“Craig Tucker must have found his get out of jail free card,” Kenny had announced. Cartman, who was the only one to not understand the reference, asked if they knew where he could get one of those.

“From the Monopoly Man,” said Kyle. “He wears a tophat and monocle.”


“Try Park Place,” said Stan with a smirk.

Kenny was hooting with laughter by then, sputtering out, “Dumbass…” Which got them in trouble with Mackey.

“If you boys don’t keep it down I’ll be extending this detention by another hour, mmkay?”

The three of them let it go, but Cartman kicked Kenny’s chair for another five minutes, asking.
“Where the fuck is Park Place? What’s so funny? Kenny, goddamnit!”

Now they had all quieted down. Kenny was drawing in his notebook, and Cartman was half-asleep, slumped back in his chair with a bit of drool trickling out of the corner of his mouth.

Kyle was ready to sleep too. He hummed dreamily as Stan continued to thread his fingers through his curls. Kyle had forgotten all about how he was supposed to be mad at Stan. He guessed he should forgive him, because it wasn’t Stan’s fault that Kyle had feelings for him that went farther than platonic. Stan was in love with Wendy, so she’d have to come first and that was that.

Kyle’s knuckles cracked when he tightened his fist at the thought.

It wasn’t fair, though. Wendy was always beating him at something.

But then he remembered the mirror, and the reason Stan and run off for her in the first place. What if they had a fight? Who had she been talking to in the mirror?

“You and Wendy, okay?” Kyle whispered.

“Yeah,” Stan whispered back, “we’re fine.”

“What was with the magic mirror?”

“She was talking to Bebe I guess.” Kyle heard the rustle of Stan’s cloak as he shrugged. “She said the mirror was a gift from Bebe that she got over the summer, but it was supposed to be a secret. I dunno. I guess they don’t make them anymore.”

“Did you fight?”

“No, really. It’s fine, Kyle, we’re still together.”

Kyle’s tongue felt like he had just eaten something sour. Stan’s hand in his hair no longer felt like a comforting brush, but instead felt like thorns ripping at his curls.

“You okay, dude?” said Stan.

“Fine,” said Kyle, “just tired.”

When Professor Mackey announced their freedom; Cartman woke up with a jerk, and when Stan heard him grumbling out his sleepiness he ripped his hand away from Kyle’s hair. It made him feel he was eleven years old again.

He tried not to be mad at him for it.

The four of them walked out of the chamber together and went out to the grounds to sit under the tree that overlooked the Black Lake. Butters was already sitting there by himself, reading his Muggle Studies textbook.

When he saw them coming he perked up with a smile, calling, “Hey, fellas!”

Kenny plopped down next to him. Butters was one out of five people Kenny would let see his scar. Kyle doesn’t really know why, but he guessed it was because Butters had a scar too, due to Kenny’s mistake. Butters had a scar that went right down his left eye. It happened in Potions in their first year. Butters and Kenny were always partners, and Kenny messed up something in his cauldron. It caused an explosion that shattered any nearby vials, bottles, and beakers. A shard of glass went straight for Butters. They somehow have remained friends ever since then.
“I’m glad you guys showed up,” he went on. “You think you can help me with my homework, Kenny? I just don’t understand Muggles.”

“Me either.” Cartman settled back against the tree, looking like he was planning on going back to his nap.

Both Kenny and Kyle glared at him before going back to Butters.

“Sure, Butters,” said Kenny, “I’ll help you.”

“We don’t want you to turn into an ignorant fatass like Cartman,” said Kyle.

Cartman pulled his wand out of his pocket, flicking it through the air threateningly.

“Not afraid to curse you, Kahl. I’ll do it with my eyes closed.”

“Careful, Cartman,” warned Stan, “someone might trick you into getting into a fight with the Whomping Willow.”

Kyle looked over to see Stan flashing his warm smile. Something tickled in his chest, and he went back to pulling his books out of his backpack.

“Such a pretty night out, isn’t it?” said Butters.

“Yeah,” said Kyle, watching Stan out of the corner of his eyes. “It sure is.”

XXX

In the Hufflepuff common room Kyle sat on the floor, the book he had been reading was sitting on the coffee table in front of him. Stan was shifting through the Quibbler on the couch behind him.

“Your dad is funny,” he said.

Kyle snorted. “Don’t ever let him know that.”

“No, really,” Stan flipped over on his stomach, his voice in Kyle’s ear, “I think his reviews are hilarious. I still can’t believe he was a lawyer once.”

Kyle just hummed, concentrating on his book.

“What do you want to be when you grow up, dude?” asked Stan.

“Something in the Ministry,” said Kyle. “Haven’t decided yet. What about you?”

“Professional Quidditch Player,” Stan said at once.

Kyle rolled his eyes. “I should have guessed that one.”

“Or...maybe something with magical creatures. I don’t know I guess.”

Kyle turned away from his book. “Really? You could work in the Ministry with me if you do that.”

“Yeah, or like, I could be out in the field with ‘em. I could move to Romania and work with dragons!”
Kyle’s heart sank. The thought of Stan covered with burns and scars made him feel cold all over. He couldn’t live with himself if he knew Stan was that far away from him, dealing with dragons, risking his life every day by working with those beasts.

“My mom wouldn’t like that, though,” Stan tacked on, eyes still on the magazine. “Working with you would probably be cool.”

“What do you mean probably?” said Kyle. “We’ll be, like, the coolest dudes there.”

Stan laughed. The lighting in the Hufflepuff common room always made Stan look like he was glowing. Like he was radiating with warmth, and happiness. It made Kyle’s heart swell, and he wished he could tell Stan he thought he was beautiful.

“What do you think Kenny will do?” Stan asked.

Kyle thought for a moment. His heart sank slightly when he tried to picture Kenny doing any kind of job, but came up empty handed. He didn’t know what Kenny would be good at besides Quidditch or Muggle Studies.

“I don’t know…”

“Cartman told me he wants to be Minister of Magic.”

Kyle barked a laugh, holding onto the arm of the couch to keep himself from falling to the floor.

“Yeah right!” He cackled. “With his grades? He’s lucky if he ends up as a broomstick maker.”

They laughed together in the nearly empty common room. Some of Stan’s housemates looked over at them in annoyance, announcing loudly to their friends that it was nearing curfew anyway.

“I guess that’s our cue,” said Stan, wiping tears from his eyes. “We should go to bed.”

“Okay.”

Kyle followed Stan through the round, barrel-like door that would lead to the boys’ dormitories, and into Stan’s dorm where Clyde, Tweek, Gary, and Pip were already sleeping by the glow of the copper lamp still on by Stan’s four-poster bed.

Stan got out of his clothes and pulled out his pajamas, giving Kyle a pair to sleep in as well. The shirt was a bit bigger on him, but it was just fine. They let their clothes rest in a heap on the wood floor.

Just like in Kyle’s fantasy, and just like a million times before, he and Stan climbed under the patchwork quilts together. Kyle always liked Stan’s dorm because it always smelled like flowers. The Ravenclaw Tower didn’t ever smell like anything nice.

Stan flicked off the light.

“If Cartman ever becomes Minister of Magic I’m moving to Canada,” said Stan.

“I’ll come with you,” said Kyle.

“No shit,” said Stan, “I could never leave you behind to deal with that shitstorm.”

They giggled. But Kyle’s heart was swelling like a balloon, threatening to burst right out of his chest.
Stan won’t leave you behind, he told himself, you’ll live in Canada together.

Kyle held onto that thought, tucked it away in the corner of his mind behind a glass that read: IN CASE CARTMAN EVER BECOMES MINISTER OF MAGIC.

Kyle faced Stan’s back. His hands were tucked under his head, but they desired to reach out and touch; to hold Stan tightly.

“G’night, Kyle,” said Stan.

“Night, dude,” Kyle turned away from him to face Clyde’s bed.

With a deep sigh, he closed his eyes, ignoring the painful reps of his heartbeat.

Kyle awoke a few hours later, sitting up straight in the bed. Cold beads of sweat dripped down the back of his neck. Stan’s tshirt was sticking to his skin, and it suddenly felt too tight and too hot.

He scanned the dorm with wide eyes, looking for a misshapen figure to be hiding in the corner, or under someone’s bed.

He thought he had heard growling coming from inside the bedroom.

Brushing it off as a dream; Kyle settled back down on his pillow. Stan had turned over in his sleep, and his sweet face was now visible to Kyle. He was holding a pillow in a tight hug, with his cheek smushed against it. His jet black hair was slipping over his forehead and his eyes. Kyle nervously, slowly, reached a hand over to touch Stan’s bangs. He threaded his fingers through them, brushing them back to tuck them behind Stan’s ear. He let his hand fall back down in the space on the mattress between the two of them.

He closed his eyes again.

That was when the howling started.
Stan woke up to the sounds of Kyle screaming.

He sat up; his hand stumbled around in the dark to turn on the copper lamp next to the bed. Kyle had woken up everyone else in the room too.

Clyde swore, falling out of his bed and holding his wand up at the ready. Tweek screamed right along with Kyle. Gary and Pip were yelling out into the darkness: “What is it? What’s going on? Who’s there?”

Stan turned on the lamp, turning back to his best friend.

“Kyle, what’s wrong?” he asked at once.

Kyle was hugging his knees to his chest, trembling, and staring wide-eyed at the barrel door at the other side of the dorm. He had stopped screaming, but had gone a pale yellow color. Like he was going to throw up.

“What the hell are you screaming at, Broflovski?” Clyde threw one of his pillows at Kyle, but it missed and hit Pip instead.

“It’s back,” Kyle stuttered. “It’s back for me, I know it is.”

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“Wha-wha-what's back?” Said Tweek, his eyes darted to all the dark corners of the room. “There’s something in here?”

“He just had a bad dream,” Stan explained. “It's okay, it was just a--”

“I heard it!” Kyle shouted. “I heard the werewolf howling again!”

Pip squeaked. “Werewolf!”

“Where's a werewolf?” Said Gary.

“There's no werewolves here, dumbass.” Clyde was climbing back into bed, throwing a glare over his shoulder at Stan and Kyle. “You can deal with those three crying all night. I'm going to bed.”

A howl broke out, making the six them yelp.

Clyde grabbed for his covers, pulling them just under his chin. He whispered, “What the fuck was that?”

“Stan,” Kyle stuttered, grabbing for his arm, “Stan, it's back for me.”

“No it's not,” said Stan. “It can't get in here. You're safe, dude. I'm not going to let it get you.”
Though Stan hardly believed his own words. The howls were so loud they sounded like they were coming from inside the castle. He’d be surprised if anyone said they slept through this. Maybe Kenny will. He sleeps through everything.

Stan wrapped a protective arm around Kyle’s thin shoulder as another howl echoed through the hallways of their school. His dormitory had gone chillingly silent.

“It’s a Death Eater…” Kyle murmured, his fingernails pinching into Stan’s other arm. “It’s a Death Eater…”

Kyle was one of the smartest people Stan has ever known, and he wasn't one to jump to outrageous conclusions like that. But they remember the war. They were only eight years old when it was going on, and Stan remembers how much fear he saw in Mrs. Broflovski’s eyes when they would announce the deaths of muggles, muggle-borns, and half-blood’s over the wizard radio. Kyle was living in a house that was constantly telling him to watch out for Death Eaters. He was eight years old, and living everyday with caution because they didn’t know if or when one of Voldemort’s followers would be knocking on their front door. It was a very scary year.

It was understandable that Kyle’s anxiety would return with something like this happening at Hogwarts. It had been one of the safest places for the past eight years, and now Kyle was living 1997 all over again. Stan didn’t want to see Kyle that scared again.

But it just couldn’t be a Death Eater, Stan thought, It can’t be. They’re all gone.

Still, he fumbled to grab his wand out from inside his mattress. When he had it in his hand he pointed it towards the dormitory door, and squeezed Kyle tighter towards his chest. “He can’t get in here,” Stan said through gritted teeth.

They lay awake for hours. The five of them hardly shared whispers amongst each other. They tried to go back to sleep, and ignore the beast. But it seemed like every time they were halfway to dreaming, another howl or growl would rouse them back awake.

It was torture.

Until, finally, it was dawn. And the howling settled.

Clyde was asleep at the foot of his four-poster, wand clenched in his hand, and pointed at the door. Tweek was in a mess of blankets, looking like a caterpillar in mid-metamorphosis. Gary and Pip were sleeping with their copper lamps on, and with their wands poking out from under their pillows.

Kyle had finally fallen asleep against Stan’s chest. His skinny fingers were splayed over Stan’s heart, with his other hand nestled under his cheek. It was like watching a puppy sleep. Stan thought Kyle looked so soft, and warm. He patted Kyle’s hair, smiling softly at the little noises he made while sleeping. He really was like a puppy.

Stan was glad Kyle was sleeping. If he had been awake he was sure Kyle would be able to hear the hard pounding of his heartbeat.

He wondered what the faculty will have to say about this in the morning. How could they allow a werewolf to get into the school? How would it have even gotten through the front doors? Unless it had been hiding out all day during classes. His heart twitched at the scary thought. They could have been walking around with a werewolf all day, and they hadn’t known it. What if they were stalking Kyle? If Kyle wasn’t sitting in Stan’s bed tonight, what would have happened to him?
Stan knocked his head back against the wall. He didn’t want to think about it. He didn’t want to think about the owl’s he’ll be getting from his mother when she hears the news. She’ll be telling him he needed to come home at once, while his dad will be writing a separate letter to tell him why he hadn’t been going after the werewolf himself. Randy has never really accepted the idea of his only son being a Hufflepuff.

He let his heavy eyelids droop slowly over his eyes.

But he held his grip on his wand.

X

In the morning, Kyle was far away from Stan’s arms.

Stan woke up groggy and cold. Kyle had moved to the other side of the bed at some point between dawn and sunrise. Stan watched the rise and fall of his bedsheets, as Kyle’s hair glowed like Maple leaves in the sunlight streaming from the porthole-like window above. If Stan had the choice he would have loved to sit in his four-poster and watch Kyle sleep like this. To secretly admire him without worrying if someone will see, or if Cartman will shout out something homophobic. Here it was safe. Especially when his roommates’ beds were empty.

But Kyle didn’t like being rushed, and they’d have to start getting ready for school.

Stan reached over, shaking Kyle’s shoulder lightly, half-hoping he’d stay sleeping. “Dude,” he said, “it’s time for school.”

Kyle groaned, turning over in the bed. His sleepy green eyes blinked up at Stan. He had dark circles under them.

“Was that all a dream?” He asked.

Stan shook his head.

Kyle sighed and got out of bed to get his robes on.

The Hufflepuff common room was buzzing with students silently whispering about the howling last night. As Stan walked with Kyle towards the common room door, he heard snippets of conversations.

“...sounded like it was in the school.”

“...what do you think it was?”

“...you think it's a student?”

“What if they were bitten?”

“You think they bit someone?”

“...you think it's...it's you-know-who?”

“Don't be such a pussy, Pip, he's as good as dead.”

Stan could see the tension in Kyle’s shoulders as they walked side by side like always.

“Hey, Dude,” Stan said softly before they walked through the barrel doorway. “You wanna skip today? We can hang out by the Quidditch Pitch, and no one will know we’re there.”
Kyle shook his head slowly, his red curls waving sadly.

They walked out and up the basement steps to join the sea of black cloaks. Stan was right when he thought that everyone in the castle had been awakened by the werewolf last night. There were still hushed whispers, and nervous glances being thrown at any dark spaces they passed.

“I wonder what Victoria will say,” said Kyle.

“Yeah,” said Stan, “you think we’ll be sent home for the year?”

Kyle snorted, finally looking up at Stan with amusement in his eyes. Stan liked being the purpose for that glow. Especially when Kyle was having days like this one.

“They didn't send anyone home when the Chamber of Secrets was open,” said Kyle, “they're not going to anything now.”

Stan nodded, a smirk playing on his lips. “Very true, dude.”

They were almost to the doors of the Great Hall, and Stan could smell the pumpkin pasties. They made his stomach rumble.

Though as everyone else was heading to breakfast, there was a gray and green figure coming down from staircase that was heading right for Stan and Kyle.

“Uh oh, dude,” said Stan when he spotted Cartman. He was running with his arms flailing in the air, his blue eyes wide, and his lips were mouthing out “Guys! Guys!”

Kyle followed Stans line of vision. His eyebrows furrowing when he saw Cartman. “Jesus Christ help me,” he said. “I don't have the energy for him today, Stan.”

“Quick, maybe if we play dead he'll leave.”

“It's worth a shot.”

But Cartman was already in front of them.

“Gryffindor Tower,” he said at once. “Fat Lady! The Fat Lady! It's--you gotta see it!”

Stan furrowed his eyebrows, thinking that Cartman might as well be speaking in tongues. He looked to Kyle in hopes he could decode this Cartman speak. No such luck.

“Cartman,” Kyle snapped, “I can't even understand you.”

Finally, Cartman choked out. “Something tried to get into Gryffindor Tower last night!”

The hallway of students went quiet, with all eyes locked on the three of them in the middle.

Stan’s stomach went cold, as he thought about the werewolf trying to get into a common room. He immediately looked to Kyle, seeing his face going that funny mustard yellow color again.

“You guys gotta see,” said Cartman. “C’mon, you gotta see!”

Stan followed Cartman blindly up the staircase with Kyle loyally behind him. They had a few other stragglers joining them too.

As they trotted up the marble steps Stan worried about Kenny. If there was a Gryffindor who'd do
anything to protect his friends it was Kenny McCormick.

As they neared the tower he saw the Gryffindor house standing outside their portrait hole, gaping up at the Fat Lady.

As they drew closer, he understood why.

Not only had the Fat Lady been ripped to shreds, but the corners of her frame had been chewed, and chipped apart. Pieces of the canvas were littered on the ground, and dangling in strands off of the picture. All the surrounding portraits were empty. Their tenets had all fled their homes for the safety of the other portraits on the other side of the school.

It wasn't an outburst of anger, like back in 1993, when Sirius Black tore the portrait. Something had wanted to get inside. Something wanted to rip the Fat Lady off the wall in order to get to the Gryffindor Common room behind it.

Stan couldn't breathe. He couldn't stop thinking about Kenny and the rest of the Gryffindors in the tower last night. They must have been petrified.

But, he also couldn't help thinking: why Gryffindor Tower? Sure, the moving staircases would be confusing to someone who had never attended Hogwarts before, and they could end up in a completely different hall than they had set out to go to. But this werewolf had desperately wanted inside the Gryffindor Tower.

Stan looked to Kyle, his eyes were a pretty bright green, but only due to his white face.

Stan watched those pretty green eyes roll to the back of his head. It was like he watching it happen in slow motion; Kyle's knees buckled, and his head lolled back like a doll’s.

Stan thought he shouted something, maybe it was Kyle’s name, but he wasn't sure. It would explain why everyone was staring at them, as Stan ran to catch Kyle before his head cracked against the marble. It felt more like he was swimming through water, or tar. He slid down on his knees, just being able to catch Kyle’s curls in his fingers. He still hit his head pretty hard on the marble, and the smack it had made had Stan's stomach turning.

Stan looked up at the open mouths and blank stares of his classmates around him. Through the crowd he saw Kenny, his brown eyes wide.

“Nurse Gollum…” Stan felt his lips mouth out.

He watched Kenny’s scarf whip in the air as he ran down the staircase.

X

If Stan was given the choice he would have sat in the hospital wing all day with Kyle. But Nurse Gollum wouldn't let him, especially since he had already missed breakfast. She sent him off with a cup of cider and a piece of toast, telling him he would see Kyle later. Kenny offered to sneak him out of classes, but Stan knew Nurse Gollum would kick him out of the room anyway.

Headmistress Victoria talked to the entire school during their lunch period.

“It is not yet known, but is very likely, that there was a werewolf in our school last night.”

“No shit,” Clyde Donovan grumbled next to Stan.

“What we do know is that something attacked our Fat Lady. While her portrait is being fixed the
Gryffindor Tower will be guarded by another portrait. The faulty will be investigating what went on last night, and we advise you all to continue on throughout your day as normal. Hogwarts is a perfectly safe place, and us teachers would never put you in harm's way.”

She gave them all a gummy smile that showed the wrinkles in her face, before sitting down with the other teachers.

Stan couldn't help but think if Kyle had been there he would have been standing on top of the Ravenclaw table to give a speech about how much bullshit just spewed out of their headmasters mouth.

During his free period he went back to the hospital wing to check on Kyle. He had a mass amount of homework already weighing in his bag, but he figured he could always do it later. There were much more important matters.

Kyle was sleeping soundly right where Stan had left him that morning. Nurse Gollum had said that Kyle was sleep deprived, over-stressed, over-anxious, and had a nasty knot on the back of his head. She said the cure for this was sleep, tea, and ice.

Stan sat down in the chair next to Kyle’s cot. The white sheets made his hair look like blood, and it made Stan's stomach churn at the thought.

“Hey, dude,” he said quietly, so his voice wouldn't echo around the empty hospital wing, “we had Care of Magical Creatures today, and everyone was asking where you were. I didn't tell them because I figured you didn't want everyone to know you fainted. Cartman’s probably telling the entire Slytherin house right now though. He thought it was really funny.”

Stan's fingers twitched.

He was about to tell Kyle how he should have punched Cartman when he had the chance, but he heard another pair of footsteps coming into the hospital wing. Preparing himself to tell the nurse it was his free period, he turned towards the doors.

It wasn't Nurse Gollum though; it was Wendy Testaburger.

His heart sprang painfully when he saw her narrowed dark eyes, and the tense hold she had around her textbooks. He had unpurposely been ignoring her all day.

“Uh,” he said. “Hi, Wendy.”

“How did I know I'd find you here,” she began.

He frowned, staring at her shoulder because he was too afraid to meet her eyes.

“My best friend fainted this morning,” he said, “I think it's normal that I'd want to come visit him to make sure he's okay.”

He could hear her teeth grinding together as she clenched her jaw.

“You've been treating me like a ghost all day, Stan.”

“I didn't mean to,” he said softly. “I was...I was worried.”

“It's not just today, Stan,” she bit. “This has been going on for a while now. I know you and Kyle are close, but you're always putting him before me.”
“That’s not true,” he said, though Wendy was usually always right. “I care about both of you the same.”

“I’m your girlfriend. You shouldn’t think of Kyle and I as the same. That’s not how relationships work, Stan.”

Stan just twisted his hands in his lap. He had always been afraid of saying the wrong things to Wendy. Even after all this time of dating her, he still felt a little intimidated by her. He didn’t want to screw up. So most of the time he held his tongue.

Wendy sighed after she realized the conversation was over. “How is he anyway?”

Stan looked at Kyle's cot.

“Nurse Gollum said he’ll be alright. He just needs sleep.”

“What made him pass out like that? Was he just…overwhelmed? Scared?”

Stan shook his head. “He hasn't slept well the last two nights.”

“Well, I don't see how anyone got any sleep last night.”

“Yeah...I think that's what made him anxious. Gollum said that could've triggered his fainting spell too. He thinks the werewolf is after him.”

Her eyebrows shot up her forehead in mild amusement.

“After Kyle? What would it want with Kyle?”

Stan shrugged.

“Well, Kyle needs to stop being so silly, I think. It's only the first week of school and he's already in the hospital wing, and in detention. He's never going to make Head Boy next year if he keeps acting like this.”

Stan wanted to glare at her, but caught himself. He didn't understand why she was acting so snotty towards Kyle all of a sudden. He would've expected her to be worried about him.

“I'll make sure to tell him that,” he said bitterly.

She rolled her eyes.

“I didn't mean it like that, Stan.”

Stan held his tongue again, to keep from saying anything he'd regret later.

There was a sputtering cough at the end of the wing, and both of them turned. It was Cartman, leaned up beside the doors with his fist near his mouth as though he had actually had a coughing fit.

“I'm not sorry,” he said casually, “am I interrupting something?”

Wendy tossed her hair over her shoulder, tossing Cartman’s existence along with it, as she turned back to Stan.

“Look,” she said, “I'm just gonna put this past us, because neither of us got enough sleep last night and we’re both cranky. We can talk about this tomorrow, Stanley.”
“Okay.”

He listened to the clicks of her shoes on the tile. They were soon replaced with Cartman’s spongy footsteps as he walked his bowlegs towards Kyle’s cot.

“Trouble in paradise, Stan?” He asked. His hands were tucked behind his back, and he had that fake-nice smile painted on his face like the Joker.

Stan just rubbed his face with his hand.

“It's really none of your business, Cartman. It's between Wendy--”

“Oh, I didn't mean that,” he said. “I meant between you and Kyle. It's been tense between you guys since Kyle quit Quidditch, hasn't it?”

Stan just stared at him, blank faced and wordless. Stan blamed it on the lack of sleep.

“Hasn't it?” Said Cartman.

Stan sputtered. “It hasn't been--Kyle and I are fine!”

Cartman raised an eyebrow.

“Look, if Kyle doesn't want to play Quidditch that's fine by me. It's his choice, I don't control his life.”

Cartman hummed. “If you say so, Stanley.”

Stan frowned. “Why? Has Kyle said something to you?”

“Oh, no, not to me,” Cartman shook his head. “Word just travels fast around here.”

“What have you heard?”

“Oh, just that Kyle feels like you’re not gonna have time for him anymore.”

“He…” Stan looked at Kyle’s sleeping form, furrowing his eyebrows with concern. “He said that?”

“That’s just what I’ve heard through the grapevine, Stan. He thinks you’ll leave him for Wendy and Quidditch.”

“Kyle...Kyle wouldn’t say that,” he said, mostly for himself. “He’s the one who quit Quidditch. I didn’t make him.”

Cartman just shrugged, looking at Stan and Kyle as though he was already bored with them. “Have you tried kissing the princess yet?” he asked. “That might wake her up.”

“You’re just here to start shit, aren’t you?” Stan snapped. “Kyle never said any of that stuff did he? You’re just an asshole.”

“I’m going back to class,” he announced, turning on his heel. “I don’t wanna be around when the princess wakes up, and you start confessing your love; after a scare like this you would want him to know before he died, wouldn't you?”

“Fuck you, Cartman.”
Cartman was already out of the hospital wing, however. It wasn’t until Stan was left alone that what Cartman said was really getting to him.

He wouldn’t leave Kyle. He wouldn’t ever leave Kyle behind for all the chocolate frogs and Quidditch teams in the entire world. They had just been...distracted lately. Kyle had big dreams to work in the Ministry one day, so it only made sense that he would want to focus on his studies this year. Even though Stan thought it was a mistake for Kyle to give up playing Seeker, it was what Kyle wanted. Kyle had plans to work towards. While Stan...Stan had Quidditch.

He glared at the wall behind Kyle’s head, scolding himself for even thinking for a second that Cartman would be telling him the truth.

Kyle stirred, making him jump slightly.

“Kyle?” Stan said softly.

Kyle blinked his eyes open, and sat up on his elbows for a moment before grabbing the back of his head and wincing.

“Stan?” he said.

“Hey,” said Stan. “Feeling okay?”

“Yeah, I’m okay...why am I in the hospital wing? What’s with this bump on my head?”

“You fainted,” said Stan. “Gollum says it's because you haven't been sleeping well, and that you should eat something. She says you could have been really anxious and stressed out too, and that's why you passed out.”

Kyle fell back on his pillow, pressing his hands into his eyes.

“Shit,” he mumbled. “Did Cartman see?”

Stan nodded. “Yeah, he saw.”

“God dammit...what did Victoria have to say about the werewolf?”

“You would have loved it, Kyle.” Stan grinned, inching a little closer to Kyle's cot. “She said they'll be investigating it, and that,” he cleared his throat to imitate his Headmistress’ voice. “Hogwarts is a perfectly safe place, and we will not be sending anyone home as of now.”

Kyle snorted. “Told you.”

Stan just smiled at him. He was glad to see that Kyle was already back to normal.

“Cartman came in just a minute ago.”

Kyle groaned. “Uh, why? To smother me in my sleep, I’m guessing.”

“No,” said Stan, “he just came to try and start a tif. He was trying to tell me that there was some stupid rumor going around about you.”

“Oh, yeah?” Kyle let out a bark-ish laugh. “Am I the heir of Slytherin now, or what?”

Stan shook his head, still smiling. “He was saying that you thought I wouldn’t have time for you anymore. Isn’t that weird? Why would you ever think that, huh?”
Kyle’s face fell. It looked slightly paler than it had just a moment ago.

“Cartman said that?”

“Yeah...” said Stan, losing his smile also. “It’s crazy...right? I mean...we’re super best friends. I’ll always have time for you, dude.”

Kyle cleared his throat, looking off at the window at the end of the hall.


Stan said nothing else. He was too busy watching Kyle’s face.

There came a rap on the door. Kyle and Stan both whipped their heads around to see who it was.

Stan was surprised to say at the least; to see Damien Thorn standing there.

Damien had fresh white bandages covering his hand to his wrist. The black eye was still a decent shiner, but the swelling had gone down. It made his face look horribly white.

“Hello,” he said, holding onto a tight smile that made him look awkward and uncomfortable. “I don’t mean to intrude on you.”

“No, you’re fine,” Stan told him. He was happy to have an interruption. “How are you feeling, Damien?”

“Fine, thank you,” he said. His shiny black shoes clicked against the tile floors as he walked closer to them. “I decided to stop by after I heard what happened this morning.”

Stan turned back to Kyle to see his face turn red. Kyle mumbled. “Thank you.”

“I thought it was only right of me,” said Damien, “since you wanted to visit me after that stupid prank went wrong.” Damien laughed at himself lightly, rolling his eyes at the memory. “Anyway; I thought we could try to be friends?”

Stan and Kyle shared a glance, as well as a few silent words between them.

“Oh,” said Stan. “Well...sure, Damien...why--?”

“All of the sudden?” smirked Damien. He rolled his shoulder. “Change of heart I suppose. All that bickering...it’s sort of childish now isn’t it? We’re not eleven anymore, I think we can put that all behind us.”

“Well...um, sure, Damien,” said Kyle. He was twisting the sheets on his cot around in his hands.

Damien clapped his hands together. “Oh, good! I’m glad we made up.”

“Right,” said Stan. “Us too.”

“I really should be getting back to class, boys, but do you mind if I ask why you fainted this morning, Kyle?”

Kyle turned red.

“Didn’t get enough sleep,” he grumbled.

“Ah,” said Damien, dipping his head. “Everyone’s walking around like zombies today. Well, I
hope the teachers figure out this werewolf problem soon. If you ask me, I think it’s one of our own.”

Stan and Kyle shared another look, this time with wide eyes.

“Who?” they said at once.

“It’s just a theory,” he said, tossing his hand away in the air like he was throwing away a wrapper. “What do I know?”

“You just think it’s someone in the school?” asked Kyle.

Damien grinned, baring all his teeth and gums. “I have a few...ideas who it might be.”

“Why?” said Stan.

Damien shrugged. “I’m perceptive. I enjoy people watching.”

“Okay, well, spit,” said Stan. “Who’s in this theory?”

Damien held up three fingers, bending them down with each name he listed off his tongue.

Down went his middle finger. “Professor Mephesto.” He was the teacher for Care of Magical Creatures. “Eric Cartman.” Down went his index finger. “Kenny McCormick.” His thumb sealed over his fist, and he dropped his hand to his side.

“Kenny?” repeated Stan, feeling hollow inside at the thought of that possibility actually sounding reasonable. He felt horrible for thinking it, but...something seemed to just click together.

“Cartman can’t be,” said Kyle. “If he was a werewolf he’d be bragging about it. He’d think it was the coolest shit ever. I wouldn’t believe it. And I feel like the teachers would already be aware if Mephesto was the werewolf...don’t you?”

Damien just flashed the two of them another smile. He shrugged again. “I have my reasons.”

Stan was dumbstruck. He had hardly heard anything Kyle and Damien had just said. He was too busy thinking about Kenny. It was crazy, but it sort of made sense. He was going to have to bring it up to Kyle, in case Kyle wasn’t already thinking the same thing.

“I really should be going now,” announced Damien, “I’ll see you later.”

Stan noticed that he seemed to walk with a slight bounce as he made his way back out to the corridor. Stan had never seen Damien Thorn act so chipper before.

He turned back to Kyle.

Kyle had just been glaring at Damien's back as he had walked away. When Damien’s robes whooshed away from the doorway, he shook his head.

“You know,” said Kyle with a frown, “I’ve never really liked him.”
Hi! Sorry it's been so long since my last update! I decided to dedicate the month of July to work on the sci-fy novel I'm writing in hopes of finishing it (I didn’t). I got frustrated with that though, and decided that August would be a nice break from it. Plus, I missed working on this story! Thank you to everyone for being so patient. I hope I did okay with Damien in this chapter, and with Stan's perspective. :)

Kyle was released from the hospital wing at dinnertime.

It had been a very long and boring day spent on the cot. Nurse Gollum had scolded him for a good hour after Stan returned to classes.

“You really need to take better care of yourself, Broflovski,” she had said. “What will your mother think? Skipping meals like that, and staying up all night. Did you even eat the lunch I gave you?”

Kyle wasn’t that hungry though. He picked at his food, and he only went back to sleep to escape from Gollum’s nagging. He wished Stan would have stayed a little longer. He missed his company.

When he woke back up it was nearly six, and Gollum ushered him off the cot to go and eat dinner. He was happy to finally go off and stretch his legs, though when he stood up he felt slightly dizzy again. He didn’t say anything to Gollum.

When he walked through the white doors into the Great Hall, his eyes immediately went to the Hufflepuff table. Stan was playing around with the food on his plate with a zonked out expression on his face. He hadn’t even noticed Kyle until he had already sat down in the open seat.

“Dude.” Kyle tapped Stan’s shoulder, making him jump. “What’s with you?”

Stan’s eyes went owl-wide, like Kyle had just walked in on him reading one of Kenny’s magazines. “Oh, Kyle,” he said. “You’re out of the hospital wing!”

“Yeah, Gollum finally let me go. Did Mackey say anything about detention?”

Stan shook his head. “I think he already knew you weren’t gonna be there. Everyone’s been talking about you all day, Kyle.”

Kyle rolled his eyes. “Great.”

“Did Kenny come by to see you? I haven’t really talked to him since this morning.”

“I don’t know if he did,” said Kyle. “I fell back asleep after you left.”

“Oh.” The word seemed cold and hard, the way it fell out of Stan’s watery eyes.

Kyle frowned at him. “Why? Did something happen?”

“It’s…” Stan looked around them, eyeing his fellow Hufflepuff’s before inching himself closer to Kyle’s face. He was so close Kyle could smell the peppermint imps on his breath. “It’s just what Damien said earlier...about Kenny being a werewolf.”

Kyle almost had to laugh at him, but the concerned look in Stan’s watery eyes held him back.

“Really, Stan,” he said, “you think Kenny’s a werewolf?”

Stan shrugged sheepishly, turning back to his dinner plate. “I don’t know. Maybe. I mean, I’ve been thinking a lot about it, and it--it just makes sense, you know? He’s always tired, and he’s got
that scar on his face that he never talks about.”

“Stan,” said Kyle coldly, “we’re his best friends. Don’t you think if Kenny was a werewolf, he would have told us?”

“I guess…”

“Why should we believe anything Damien says anyway.” Kyle looked up towards the Slytherin table, watching him cut into a piece of meat. “You know the way he thinks, Stan. He hates Muggles and Muggle-borns like Kenny. I bet he’s planning something.”

“Yeah…” but Stan didn’t sound so sure. “You’re probably right.”

Kyle looked out over the teachers’ heads at the Head Table. The sun was setting over the Black Lake, making Kyle’s stomach flip.

“Can we have another sleepover?” he asked Stan.

Stan looked at him, smiling his movie star smile. “Don’t call it that, dude. But, yeah, we can.”

It was little things like that that made Kyle hate Stan a little. He knew Stan would never hurt him intentionally, and if he knew maybe he’d be more careful about his words like he was when he was around Wendy. But there was also the possibility that Stan would never want to talk to him again.

Kyle reached for a poppyseed muffin and a goblet of cider, reminding himself this was the last night of the full moon for a month.

X

As October came, so did Quidditch.

Kyle spent after school days at the Quidditch pitch with Kenny and Butters. They’d study together while Stan played Quidditch with the Hufflepuff team, and some days Stan would hold them back to watch Wendy practice with the Ravenclaws. Their new Seeker was a second year named Jenny, and with practice Kyle saw potential for her to be a very good player. Watching someone else play his spot however, made him miss being on the team.

Kenny nudged him in the ribs.

“It was your idea to quit,” he said behind his scarf.

He and Kenny were sitting on the bleachers while Kyle had notes laid in his lap and a dry quill in his hand. Butters and Stan were a ways away from them, leaning against the stands like this was an actual game and cheering on the players. Sometimes Wendy would smile down at them.

“I know,” said Kyle, watching Stan’s face light up as Wendy blocked yet another Quaffle from entering the rings. “I just wish I didn’t have to play Quidditch for him to look at me like that.”

Kenny scoffed.

“What?” Kyle turned to him, unpurposely chopping his “t” at the end.

Kenny’s brown eyes had gone a darker shade of brown thanks to the autumn skies. They looked like warm black tea sitting inside a white mug, and as he looked back at Kyle they squinted in a smile.
“Nothin’,” he said. “Nothin’ at all, dude.”

Kyle just frowned at him, his fingers growing tight around his quill.

“I’m not telling him,” he told Kenny. “You know I can’t do that.”

Kenny shook his head out at the players on the Quidditch field. “I didn’t say nothin’.”

Wendy blew her team captain whistle, calling the rest of the players back down to the ground for the end of practice meeting. Kyle suspected Stan wanted to wander off with her to make out behind in the locker rooms, because that was about as romantic as he could be. Still, Kyle would be lying if he said he had never thought about kissing Stan in the Quidditch locker rooms before.

“I know what you’re thinking, Kenny,” said Kyle, waving his quill at him like he was a mother scolding her toddler with a wooden spoon. “You want me to tell Stan everything, but you know as well as I do that he’s obsessed with Wendy. I can’t do that. I won’t put him into something like that.”

Butters was waving Kenny and Kyle over to where he and Stan were.

Kenny threw his bag strap over his shoulder as he got up. He gave another look to Kyle.

“You know, if you want Stan to look at you the way he looks at Wendy he never will.”

Kyle felt his heart sink. He knew it was true. He’s always known that, but hearing Kenny say it out loud felt worse than thinking it, and he really wanted to deck Kenny in the mouth. He managed to hold back his temper though, because it was Kenny.

“You never see the way he looks at you, Kyle,” Kenny added, making Kyle’s fingers loosen. “You’re special to him.”

Kyle almost believed Kenny. For just a split second he wanted to believe that maybe Stan was hiding complex feelings. But when he turned to look at Stan, all he caught was the tail end of his clothes as he thundered down the bleacher steps to meet Wendy at the bottom.

Kyle snapped his notebook shut and threw it into his bag, along with the quill.

“I’m not special to him,” he muttered. “I’m not anything. I’m his best friend; otherwise known as the kid with bad hair and an unpronounceable name. That’s all I’ll ever be to him.”

Kyle went to stalk off towards the school, already settling on holeing up in Ravenclaw Tower with a book and tea.

Kenny grabbed him by the elbow. Butters was watching them with wide, worried eyes.

“That’s not true, dude, and you know it.”

Kyle bit hard on his bottom lip, forcing himself to look away from Kenny and Butters.

“That’s not true, dude, and you know it.”

Kyle bit hard on his bottom lip, forcing himself to look away from Kenny and Butters.

“If he wasn’t dating Wendy, I know he’d--”

“Yeah, but he is dating Wendy,” Kyle snapped. He jerked away from Kenny’s grip. From where he was standing now he could see out at the bottom of the Quidditch pitch. The Ravenclaw team were walking off towards the locker rooms with their brooms slung across their shoulders, all save for Wendy; who was fussing with Stan’s hair as he babbled on about the plays she made.
“And even if he wasn’t it wouldn’t change anything between us,” Kyle said. “You know how well he deals with change.”

“This is different,” Kenny promised, reaching for the arm of Kyle’s sweater again, but Kyle moved away before he could.

Kyle couldn’t see how it could be any different. He didn’t know what Kenny meant by saying he was special to Stan, and that Stan looked at him differently than he did at Wendy. Was that a good thing, or a bad thing? And what did he mean by “If he wasn’t dating Wendy--”?

Whatever, it didn’t matter. Kyle knew Stan Marsh better than anyone else in this school, and he wasn’t about to be told any different by Kenny.

Stan likes Quidditch, chocolate frogs, that Muggle guitar game, magical creatures, and girls. Most importantly; he likes Wendy Testaburger.

Kyle stalked off down the stairs without another word to Kenny. He blew past Stan and Wendy, hoping that Stan would shout out and ask what was wrong. Hoping he’d chase after him after Kyle didn’t answer.

He just continued praising Wendy about her dives.

The castle was quieter than it had been. Most of the students had gone to Hogsmeade for the day, and the younger students typically stayed up in their dorms to mope about not being old enough to go to the village. Kyle was just thankful that Eric Cartman went every weekend to blow his mother’s money on butterbeer and Honeydukes candy.

The Ravenclaw common room was quiet, like it always was. It never seemed to be bright and happy like the Hufflepuff Basement, or teeming with life and loud color like Gryffindor Tower. But the Ravenclaw common room was peaceful and elegant. That’s just how Kyle liked it.

He settled in his favorite chair by the fireplace.

Elephant was perched on the mantel, as though she had been expecting him. Though she gave no acknowledgment of his arrival, she was too busy chewing on her right wing. Kyle spotted a pale yellow envelope sitting on the coffee table labeled with his name in his brothers thin, neat handwriting.

Kyle tore into it at once, desperate to read something to keep his mind off Stan.

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Hey, Kyle,

Mom’s been on edge ever since she got that letter about the werewolf. She’s said at least ten times that she was going to head up to Hogwarts herself to go get you, but I think Dad has calmed her down a bit. But, just a fair warning in case she comes busting into the Great Hall one day. Anyway, I hope you’re getting enough sleep. Don’t study too hard, okay? And don’t stress yourself out over nothing, I know how you are.

How are things with Stan? Does Quidditch start soon? Learn any cool spells lately? Let me know when you ace that patronus charm!

Write back soon, bro.

Your coolest brother,
Kyle folded the letter back up and put it in his bag. He remembered the letter he got from his parents a month ago after the werewolf incident. He was half-surprised it hadn’t been a Howler, but was insanely grateful it wasn’t. His mother had demanded he come home until it all blew over, and had threatened to write an angry letter to the Hogwarts staff for not sending their students home over something like this. But then Elephant gave Kyle another letter from his father. He wrote; “Disregard your mother’s letter.”

Kyle assumed this meant his parents had talked something out with Victoria, and now he was going to be stuck at Hogwarts until this werewolf kills him.

Kyle reminded himself to check his calendar later. They were due for a full moon anytime now.

He wasn’t really worrying much about the werewolf at that moment, though. He couldn’t help and think over and over again about what Ike wrote: “How are things with Stan?”

What the hell was that supposed to mean? Why did it seem like everyone in the world had suddenly come up with the idea that something happened between the two of them?

Well-- he thought quickly, something kind of happened...but it's mostly a one-sided deal.

Stan had made it pretty obvious in the hospital wing that he thought everything was alright between them--which, it was. Mostly. As soon as Kyle got a handle of his feelings, maybe they will be. Maybe.

But, everyone just assumes it’s something huge just because Kyle quit Quidditch. He didn’t understand what the big deal was.

He pushed Ike’s letter away from his mind and pulled out his homework and quill. It seemed like no matter what he did, his brain was always racing with Stan Marsh.

He was able to get a few quiet moments of studying in before the Ravenclaw Quidditch team came into the common room.

“Hey Kyle,” said Wendy. Her hair was still up, and Kyle saw round red-ish spots on the back of her neck. They could have easily been concealed by her scarf, or her hair, but Wendy acted like they were a mindless accessory.

Kyle looked back at his homework, which had suddenly transformed into black blobs and trembling paper.

“Hi, Wendy,” he said. “Practice was good.”

“Thanks!” She plopped down on the couch next to him. He could see her playing with her hair out of the corner of his eye, shifting it all to the opposite side of her neck like she wanted Kyle to see the hickies. Like she was showing them off.

“I really think Jenny will make a good Seeker, don’t you? She did really well today.”

“Yeah,” said Kyle. “She was good.”
Wendy stared at him for a moment, her eyebrows furrowing, but her mouth holding a light smile.

“What’s wrong? Are you jealous?”

“No.” He turned the page of his History of Magic textbook a little too roughly. He bit down on his tongue to keep himself from saying, “*Not with Jenny.*”

Wendy huffed. “I tried to convince you to stay on the team, you know,” she said. “Nobody wanted you to quit.”

He flipped to another page in his book. He couldn’t concentrate on the words anymore, and didn’t know where to hold his eyes. “I know.”

“Okay, I get it,” she said harshly. “You don’t want to talk about Quidditch. That’s fine...Stan’s birthday is coming up. What’d you get him? I promise I won’t tell.”

Kyle had had Stan’s birthday present picked out for months; a dragon tooth necklace from a Welsh Green Dragon. Stan had been hinting about wanting one since last April, and Kyle had been saving up all his sickles and knuts to get one.

But he really didn’t feel like explaining all that to Wendy.

He shrugged.

“I don’t know yet.”

He saw Wendy glaring at him intently out of his peripherals, like she was trying to read his mind. Sometimes when Wendy got that look on her face he swore she really was; ruffling through his thoughts and memories like they were files in a cabinet.

He found himself staring back into her dark, narrow, eyes, too afraid to even blink.

“You two really did have a falling out,” she said without losing her hold on Kyle, “didn’t you?”

Kyle sputtered. “What?”

“Is that why you quit the team? Because you had a fight with Stan? He won’t tell me anything.”

“Stan and I didn’t have a fight,” he bit. “I’m-- *we’re* fine. Everything’s fine. Cartman’s just spreading rumors again.” Kyle turned back to his books, but had lost all desire to study. His head hurt.

Wendy tapped her fingers on the arm of the sofa, humming in thought. After a few moments she got up, placing her hands on her hips like a scolding mother.

“You two are too much alike,” she said, “it’s a mystery how you ended up in completely different houses.”

Kyle shrugged again, feeling like a turtle trying to shrug into his shell.

Wendy threw up her hands. “I give up. Communicating with either one of you is no different than talking to a loaf of bread!”

If it had been any other day Kyle would have shot something clever back at her, but he had no more energy left in him.

Wendy left for the girls dormitory.
Kyle eventually gave up on homework, and couldn’t think of anything else to do besides go to bed.

It wasn’t very late, but it was late enough.

He sat on his mattress to take off his shoes. He was half scared to look over at the calendar on his bedside table. He almost didn’t want to, as if maybe not looking at it would just make the full moon less real.

He slowly moved his eyes to it, staring like it would bite him.

Tomorrow was circled with red marker. It would be the first night of the autumn solstice.

His heart pounded painfully in his chest. He had gotten so preoccupied with his studies and Stan’s Quidditch that he hadn’t really had time to worry about the next phase. It had passed through his head a few times throughout the month, but he hadn’t really expected it to be so close.

The teachers haven’t even touched the subject with the nine foot pole since last month. Cartman had been whining about how the teachers never did shit here, and how his mom is gonna sue everyone if a werewolf even breathes on him. While Cartman was whining, Kyle had been keeping a close eye on their Care of Magical Creatures Professor. Professor Alphonse Mephesto has always been the sort of loose screw around Hogwarts, so Kyle could see why Damien would peg him as a suspect. His arms, which were usually covered by his robes, were covered with scars, and students have said to catch him talking to himself on various occasions. He was head of Slytherin House.

While Kyle has been stalking the Professor, Stan had been shooting whispers into his ear about Kenny. If Kenny even simply yawned strangely, Stan would be giving Kyle a wide eyed look across the classroom. Kyle thought it was a ridiculous idea at the start, and nothing Stan told him was going to convince him otherwise.

This werewolf thing didn’t seem to have any effect on Kenny whatsoever. Besides the fact that he was constantly reassuring Butters that nothing bad would happen while they were at Hogwarts.

Kyle flopped down on his four poster, gazing up at the midnight blue canopy before pressing his palms into his eye sockets. He really wished the teachers would figure the whole ordeal out soon.

X

Kyle was walking through the Hogwarts grounds in the fog. Kenny was next to him, fidgeting with his scarf as Butters skipped along beside the two of them.

It wasn’t out of the ordinary for them to have Care of Magical Creatures class near the Forbidden Forest. They have even been known to have class inside the forest, so Kyle didn’t think much of following his friends down the beaten path. He was, however, suddenly very aware of the time.

He looked towards the sky.

“It’s a little late for class, isn’t it?”

Butters and Kenny looked at him, their faces oddly blank.

“We better catch up.” Was all Kenny said.

The farther they walked through the Forbidden Forest the taller the trees became. Kyle was
marveling at the dark canopies above him, searching the skies for a bit of light.

“We’re really out far today,” he said.

Butters and Kenny said nothing. The leaves under their shoes were Kyle’s only way of knowing they were still beside him.

Eventually, the trees blocked out any light, and they were all wandering through the darkness.

Kyle was beginning to get nervous. The forest felt colder than it had just been, and he thought they must have been farther than he had ever been in the forest.

“Lumos,” he muttered, flicking his wand.

He turned to ask Kenny and Butters if they had accidently taken a wrong turn, but his friends were no longer beside him.

Kyle was alone.

“Kenny?” He squeaked out, whirling around on the spot, but only finding more and more trees. “B-Butters? C-C’mon, guys, this isn’t funny!”

Something howled behind him, signaling a terrible shiver down his spine.

He dared himself to turn back around, his wand trembling in his hand so fiercely that the light glowing at the tip bobbed all around the large shadow behind him, instead of settling on the creature itself.

Kyle swallowed, taking a step backwards as a growl vibrated throughout the forest. He could feel the deadly hum in his bones and in his molars.

He felt something underneath his foot. It didn’t feel like dirt, or dead leaves. His eyes and wand quickly looked down to it, just for a moment.

It was Kenny’s scarf. Golden, red, and drenched with blood.

Kyle looked back up, his stomach clenched and he wanted to scream. But he didn’t have any time to even gasp, because all he saw were pearly white canines and a bloodied snout coming for his face.

X

Kyle awoke.

His room was black, and his mouth was dry. He looked around the dorm cautiously, as he shifted in his four-poster to sit up right.

The sounds of his sleeping room mates came as a slight comfort to him. For a moment he swore that he had woken up on the forest floor.

He grabbed his wand from under his pillow, and flicked it to ignite the tip. The glow only reached a little past the foot of his bed, but the light made him feel safer. He felt like he could breathe easier now.

“Just a dream, Kyle…” he muttered to himself. He settled back against the pillows, waiting for sleep to take over him again. He kept his wand settled across his chest.
He tossed and turned under the covers, trying to settle himself back to sleep. But what had just been the comforting sounds of his roommates’ sleeping, were now noisy snores and gurgles that were keeping him awake.

Kyle peeked his eyes open to glare at the midnight blue curtains that covered Kevin Stoley’s four poster. He growled under his breath, swinging his legs over the side of the bed to shuffle down to the common room. Elephant fluttered off her spot on the top of the four-poster to perch on Kyle’s shoulder. She hooted lightly.

“Shh,” he said, “I’m just getting a drink of water.”

He pushed the door open slowly, careful not to wake anyone else, before tip-toeing down the staircase towards the boys bathrooms.

He washed his face over the basin as Elephant quietly watched from one over, her large yellow eyes blinking curiously.

He ran a wet hand through his curls, looking blearily into the mirror in front of him. He hated how pale he looked. How weak he must seem compared to Stan and Kenny. Those two were fighters. And what did Kyle have? Books, cleverness, and his speed on a broomstick. If the werewolf ever did come after him, he’d never have a chance against it.

He thought back to his dream. That was twice now that he had had a strange dream about Kenny and his scarf. He shuddered. He wondered what it could mean. Probably nothing, but maybe not. He thought back to how the werewolf had torn into the Fat Lady’s portrait, and his stomach bottomed out as he thought intrusively, what if it’s really after Kenny?

Kyle shook his head, turning off the water. He looked back at Elephant, who had her head swiveled around her body in attention towards the door.

He frowned at her, listening hard to find what she might be hearing.

It was then that he started to hear whispers. They were soft, and unintelligible, but someone was definitely talking.

Kyle extended his finger out for Elephant to hop on. Without removing her gaze from the door, she did so.

Kyle slowly walked towards the common room, holding his breath in fear of making the slightest noise that could startle his classmate--or whoever it was.

He peered out from behind the doorway into the desolate common room. He could hear soft murmurs coming from the couch near the fireplace. The top of someone’s black hair peeked over the cushions.

Elephant cooed.

Kyle shushed her.

Wendy Testaburger stopped talking, and turned towards the sudden noise.

Kyle pressed himself flat against the wall, sucking in his guts, hoping to become suddenly smaller and invisible.

“I thought I heard something,” Wendy said quietly. “Sorry, what were you saying?”
Who is Miss Perfect Prefect talking to at this time of night? Kyle thought, bending back to look out into the common room. Wendy was holding a shiny object in her hands; the mirror.

“I don’t know, Wendy,” said the voice in the mirror. It sounded like she was talking to Bebe. “Don’t you think it’s too soon?”

“The sooner the better, Bebe,” said Wendy.

“Don’t you think someone might see? What if Kyle--”

“Don’t worry about him. Kyle doesn’t know anything.” Kyle could sense her intense eye roll from the back of her head. He wanted to scoff, but bit his tongue. “I’m great at keeping secrets, you know that.”


Wendy gasped, “Oh no! Whatever will we do? With the teachers running around the school in search of that werewolf?”

Bebe started laughing, and then Wendy joined her.

Kyle’s stomach was turning cold, and he returned his back against the wall. He looked at Elephant, who was looking back at him expectantly, like she had completely understood the conversation.

“I’m gonna go to bed, Wendy,” said Bebe. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Okay, goodnight, Bebe. Don’t let the werewolves bite.”

The last thing Kyle heard was Bebe giggling, until Wendy’s soft footsteps started scuffling across the floor towards the girls dorms.

Kyle tip toed back towards his own room, feeling hazy and confused.

Was Wendy implying…? Was she…? What is she is…?

X

“This isn’t funny, Kenny!” Kyle hissed, tapping his fist down on the Gryffindor table in the Great Hall. He didn’t want to cause any unwanted attention to them, but Kenny wasn’t taking him seriously.

Kenny was just laughing at him, wiping away a few stray tears that had dribbled from his eyes.

“I’m sorry, Kyle,” he said, shaking his head. “But, like, Wendy? Wendy Testaburger; a werewolf?” He started laughing again.

“Kenny!”

“Sorry, dude, sorry,” he said again. “I’m just--I don’t understand how the smartest kid in Hogwarts could come up with Wendy Testaburger being a werewolf.”

Kyle fought back a blush.

“I’m not the smartest kid in Hogwarts,” he muttered, “but thanks. But, dude, just think about it, okay? I was up all night thinking about it--and, like, why couldn’t she be?”
“Because it’s Wendy.”

Kyle folded his arms across his chest, frowning. “That’s not a good enough reason.”

“Just because you heard a snippet of a strange conversation--out of context might I add--doesn’t mean Wendy is the werewolf that’s been stalking you. You’re too wound up, man. Take a bath or something, fuck.”

“There’s other reasons too!”

Kenny’s eyes glinted dangerously. “Oh, yeah? Like what? The fact that she’s Stan’s girlfriend?”

“I--what? What’s the supposed to mean?”

“You know what I think?” Kenny leaned forward across the table, the fibers of his scarf tickling Kyle’s nose. “I think you’re subconsciously trying to sabotage Stan and Wendy’s relationship.”

Kyle sputtered. “I am not!”

“Are too,” said Kenny with a hidden smirk. “You’re pissed, and a jealous little gay nutball who wants Stan all to himself, so you’re looking for any little thing to make Wendy out to be the bad guy.”

“I would never--I don’t--Kenny, I’m not--”

“Hey, man,” Kenny said, sitting back into his seat as he waved off Kyle’s incoherent blubbering, “it’s cool. I won’t tell Stan.”

“There’s nothing to not tell him!” Kyle fumed. “Besides maybe that his girlfriend is a werewolf!”

“Or that you have a big fucking homo crush on him,” Kenny snickered.

“I--shut the fuck up, Kenny.”

Kenny started laughing again, slapping his knee under the table obnoxiously, just as Butters came skipping over to the table. He slid in next to Kenny.

“Hey, fellas!” He chirped. “What’re you talking about?”

“We’re just guessing who the werewolf is,” said Kenny, placing his chin in his hand as he propped his elbow on the table. “All bets are on you.”

“Me?” Butters squeaked. “Well, geez, what if I am a werewolf? What if I don’t know it? Kenny, you’d tell me if I was a werewolf, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, Butters,” Kenny rolled his eyes, but it was with an air of tenderness. “If you were a werewolf I’d tell you.”

“He’s just teasing you,” Kyle told him. “No one thinks you’re a werewolf.”

“Oh,” Butters sighed. “Well, that’s a relief. My parents wouldn’t be very happy if they found out I was a werewolf, and didn’t even know it! Geez. This whole thing sure is scary, though, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” Kenny was looking back at his breakfast. He took a fork and poked at his eggs and toast, something different shone in his eyes. “It is scary.”
Kyle didn’t say anything else. He felt Stan slide in next to him on the bench.

“There you guys are,” he said, swiping a muffin off the rack as he took his seat. “Are you hiding from me or something?”

Kyle went to shoot Kenny a look, but he was still busy playing with his food.

“Actually,” said Kyle, “you smell like Cartman’s farts and no one wanted to tell you. Sorry.”

Stan punched him in the arm, laughing playfully. “Don’t ever insult me like that.”

Kyle shrugged, turning back to his breakfast as well. His heartstrings were tugging on him to tell Stan what he had heard Wendy saying last night, but he already knew how the conversation would go.

Stan wouldn’t believe him.

Kyle needed more proof.

“Mind if I join you?”

The sudden voice startled Kyle, and he whipped his head up to see Damien Thorn hovering above Stan. He was wearing a wide, uneasy smile, with his hands tucked behind his back.

“Um,” Stan looked to Kyle.

“I mean,” Kyle swallowed, “I guess.”

As soon as Damien sat down Kenny shot up. “I gotta go,” he said quickly.

“Ken,” Butters reached for him, but Kenny was already stalking out of the Great Hall. Butters looked torn, looking at Stan and Kyle and then back at the doors of the Great Hall. “I should go check on him. I’ll see you later.”

He gave them a little wave before dashing out of the hall and into the corridors outside.

Damien gave a little huff of laughter. “Those two sure are odd.”

“Yeah…” said Stan quietly.

“So,” Damien clapped his hands together, gazing at Stan and Kyle with his dark eyes brightening, “All ready for that Hunters Moon tonight?”


“Think we’ll see it again, hm?” said Damien.

“Hopefully not,” said Stan. “Maybe whoever it was got bored and left. Or got help. Or something.”

Damien tapped his fingers on the table rhythmically, humming to himself.

“Hmmm...but I’m fairly certain our werewolf is still running amok around here.” Damien’s eyes shot towards the Great Hall doors, and leered there.

“You can’t still think it’s Kenny,” Kyle blurted. “That’s just...it’s not him!”
Damien turned back to him, slowly, and smiling. He rolled his shoulder dismissively. “I didn’t say anything.”

“I think you might be right about him,” said Stan quietly, like he was ashamed of himself for saying it. Kyle’s heart jumped into his throat.

He looked at Stan, his eyes wide. “You can’t be serious.”

Damiens grin broadened, sending a chill down Kyle’s spine. “Been thinking about it a lot, haven’t you?”

“Yeah,” said Stan. “But...I dunno. It’s just...it’s Kenny.”


He suddenly felt a pang in his stomach when the words left his mouth. He had a slight deja vu moment as he thought back to a few moments before when he was arguing with Kenny about Wendy.

He shook off the feeling.

“McCormick has that kicked puppy look, I’ll give him that,” Damien tutted. “It’s playing in his favor. Makes people not want to suspect him.”

“You’re insane,” Kyle bit. “Kenny isn’t a werewolf. He would have told us!”

“Would he have?” Damien asked smoothly. “How well do you truly know him?”

Kyle glared at him. “We’ve been friends since first year. I feel like we know him well enough.”

“Just think Kyle,” said Damien, “has McCormick ever told you about that scar on his face? How did he get that?”

“He’s had that since fourth year,” Kyle huffed. “If it was from a werewolf attack he would have been shifting every full moon since then, and be running around the castle. The teachers would have already found out about him. What does that have to do with anything?”

Damien shrugged again, turning back towards the doors. “I still don’t feel right about him.”

Stan nodded slowly, and Kyle shot a deadly glare at the side of his head.

Kyle gathered up his things and slung his bag over his shoulder, biting down on his tongue to keep himself from asking Stan if he knew that his girlfriend stayed up until three in the morning to have strange conversations with Bebe over her magic mirror.

“I’ll see you later, Stan,” he said hurriedly.

“Where are you going?”

Kyle spun back around, his eyes narrowing dangerously. “Oh,” the word fell out of his mouth with some sting to it. “You suddenly care now?”

Stan frowned at him. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing.”

Kyle spun back on his heel in a whirl of robes, storming away from the Gryffindor table and out
of the Great Hall. He was dreaming about his nook in the library. A quiet place between the shelves, and away from anyone who might see him crying from frustration.

He made a note to check out a book about werewolves.

Chapter End Notes

send me some writing vibes as I am entering my second year of college ahhhh
Kyle ran his finger along the spines of books sitting like soldiers on the book shelves of the Magical Creature section of the library. He had of course purchased *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, by Newt Scamander, and the *Monster Book of Monsters*, by Edwardus Lima, for Care of Magical Creatures class, but those books involved millions of creatures of all shapes and sizes, and while they did talk about werewolves, he felt that those books were only scratching the surface for mere classwork purposes.

After what happened at breakfast Kyle had decided that he would never believe a word of what Damien Thorn ever says to him ever again. He pushed the idea of Professor Mephesto being a werewolf out of his head, and decided to solely focus on finding out what in the Hell Wendy Testaburger was up to.

*Damien Thorn is a spoiled pureblood liar who hates Muggles and anybody who has ties with them*, he thought bitterly to himself. *He’s up to something. I just know he has something out for Kenny.*

To even *think* about the fact that he told Damien he could join them at breakfast! It made Kyle’s skin crawl, and he gritted his teeth the more he thought about Stan’s stupid face and his stupid ideas about Kenny being a—about Kenny not telling them the truth! If Kenny knew what Stan was saying about him behind his back he’d be heartbroken, and Kyle knew Stan would feel guilty when he realized this.

Kyle shook his head. He knew it was probably just the whole ordeal. It was putting everyone on edge; making everyone suspect everybody. Once this thing is all figured out Stan will know how stupid he was to even *think for a second* that Kenny could be hiding a secret like that from them.

His eyes traced the title of a book with a moss green cover and yellow letters. It was called: *Lupine Lawlessness: Why Lycanthropes Don’t Deserve to Live*, by Emerett Picardy.

Kyle snatched it from the shelf, frowning at the cover illustration of a boney looking creature with flattened ears and a tufted tail, snarling back at him.

He tucked the book under his armpit, searching the shelves for more books on the subject.

Out of his peripherals he saw a halo of wispy blonde hair round the corner of bookcases and come down his aisle. It was Tweek, and he was holding a stack of books higher than his head.

Kyle turned towards him, expecting disaster any minute.

“Uh, Tweek?”

Tweek gasped, jumping about a foot in the air, and almost sending the pile falling ontop of him. A green eye peered out from behind the books.

“Oh,” he breathed, “h-hey, Kyle. What’s up?”

Kyle ignored him, feeling embarrassed to admit he was reading up on werewolves. “What are you carrying all those books for?” He asked instead.
“O-Oh, these?” said Tweek. “It’s for Herbology. I’ve got a big essay to write.” Tweek’s eye flickered to the book Kyle was holding under his arm, and he pointed to it with a shaky finger. “What’re you getting?”

“Oh--um,” Kyle took the book out and held it in his hands, looking down at it like he wasn’t sure how it had gotten there. “It’s just...doing some...magical creatures reading.”

“Oh,” said Tweek. “Werewolves?”

Kyle looked back up at him. “Yeah.”

Tweek slowly bent down, aiming to carefully set his books down on the floor, but something slipped and they all ended up clattering to the floor. Tweek shrieked, wincing at the noise.

A librarian shushed them from across the room.

“Sorry,” he muttered, then he began searching the shelves.

“What’re you looking for?” Kyle frowned. “I don’t think I saw any Herbology books down this way.”

“No,” said Tweek, “there’s a good book about werewolves somewhere. Professor Mephesto wrote it.”

Kyle’s eyes went wide. “Professor Mephesto?”

“Yeah, he doesn’t talk about it much, but Craig told me about it. I guess it didn’t do well. Here it is!” Tweek took a thick book with solid black binding off the shelf and extended it out to Kyle’s hands.


“No problem.” Tweek bent back down to collect his Herbology books. “C-can I ask why the sudden interest?”

Just, um, doing some research. Personal reasons.”

Tweek looked up at him, his green eyes bright and curious. He stood up straight, though he still had a handful of his books scattered on the floor.

“Do you think it’s still after you?”

Kyle crouched down to the ground to help Tweek with his books.

“I just want it to be over with,” he muttered. “I don’t want to be scared anymore.”

“I know what you mean.”

Kyle flickered his eyes back to Tweek for a moment, remembering that he was Muggleborn.

Tweek continued talking, softer. His fingers twitched slightly under his hold on his books.

“I-I was still too young to know I was a wizard when it--the w-war an’ all--when it was happening. But w-when we study it in History of Magic...it--it’s just…”

Kyle placed the rest of Tweek’s books into his arms.
“I really hope it’s not a Death Eater,” Tweek muttered.

“Me too…” but as soon as Kyle said it, he wasn’t sure if he really meant it. What was worse: a Death Eater being a werewolf, or one of their classmates?

“Well, um, see you later, Kyle,” Tweek gave him a wave as he started to finish his walk through the aisle. “I sh-should start my essay.”

“See you, Tweek,” said Kyle. “Good luck with your essay.”

Tweek gave him a thumbs up before rounding the corner.

Kyle turned back to the two books in his hands, tracing his thumb over the cover of Professor Mephesto’s novel.

He hated to think so, but maybe Damien was onto something after all.

Kyle found his knook by the window, settling down in a seat and flipping open to the first page of Professor Mephesto’s book. He scanned over the index.

Chapter One: Werewolf History

Chapter Two: The Werewolf Code of Conduct

Chapter Three: Werewolf Support Services (Admitting You Are a Wolf)

Chapter Four: The Bite, Scars, and Scratches

Chapter Five: Muggle Myths, Truths, and If They Taste Bad

Chapter Six: The Transformation

Chapter Seven: Wolfsbane Potion

Chapter Eight: How to Know One of Your Loved Ones is a Lycanthrope

Chapter Nine: Werewolf Reproduction


Kyle skipped to chapter eight, but promised himself he’d read the entire book later.

Chapter Eight: How to Know One of Your Loved Ones is a Lycanthrope

Do you have the feeling your sister is keeping something from you? That your best friend has been acting strange? Or that your brother has suddenly gotten the craving for raw meat? They may have been infected with lycanthropy!

Some beings may be very well at hiding their illness, but there are still certain symptoms that
could give them away, if one pays close enough attention.

As explained in chapter seven; the werewolf transformation is a very painful process, which is why the Wolfsbane Potion comes in handy. The werewolf transformation is then preceded and succeeded by a few days of fatigue and ill health. You may notice that you family member or friend tends to loaf around around the full moon, or that their stomach isn’t as strong as it usually is.

You may also notice tattered clothes, or scars that seem to keep appearing. When a werewolf transforms (untreated) they have a strong desire to bite, scratch, and kill. A werewolf has lost all human thought after it transforms, and will even attack their best friend. When a werewolf has nothing to attack, they will attack themselves. Werewolf bites and scratches leave everlasting scars, though a fresh wound can be healed by a mixture of powdered silver and dittany (see Chapter Five: Muggle Myths, Truths, and if They Taste Bad, for more).

Another way to spot a werewolf is by seeing what they eat. Some beings acquire a taste for raw meat while in their human form, or even begin having strong cravings for it around the full moon.

While human, there is no certain way to point out a werewolf. While human, a werewolf could be as good and gentle as anyone else. Though, there has been werewolves who used this for evil. Fenrir Grayback was one. If your friend or family member suddenly starts sharpening their fingernails into claws, or attempts to bite and maim as a man, then I advise you turn them into the Wizard Police immediately--

The sudden touch of a hand pressing onto Kyle’s shoulder made him squeak out in alarm. He slammed the book shut, spinning around in his chair to see Stan standing there behind him, suppressing a smile.

“Um...sorry,” he said.

“Don’t you know not to sneak up on someone when their reading,” Kyle scolded, taking his books and pressing them against his chest so Stan wouldn’t see.

“Look...did I say--or do something to make you pissed at me?” Stan took the open seat next to Kyle, cocking his head to the side to try and meet his eyes.

The fact that Stan had to ask was infuriating. Kyle gritted his teeth, casting his gaze farther away from Stan.

Stan sighed. “If it’s because of Damien, I’m sorry, okay?”

Kyle barked a laugh and rolled his eyes.

“Kyle!” He exclaimed, earning a sharp hiss from the librarian. Kyle could see Stan glaring at him out of the corners of his eye. “Don’t be like that,” Stan whispered. “What’s up with you lately? Is it Qui--”

Kyle rounded on him. “If you ask me if I’m upset about not being on the Quidditch team so help me God, Stanley Marsh.”

Stan smirked slightly. “Hey, I got you to speak.”

Kyle gave him a painfully sharp glare. He didn’t want to admit that he was still angry with him from yesterday. He couldn’t think of a way for the words to come out so they wouldn’t sound
so...gay. And pathetic. So he blurted out the most recent issue.

“What you said about Kenny--”

“Dude,” Stan tossed his eyes around in their sockets, “you can’t tell me you haven’t noticed the signs! I know you’re reading werewolf books. I see them in your arms.”

Kyle pressed the books tighter to his chest, as if he’d open up and tuck them inside so Stan wouldn’t see.

“You can tell me you don’t believe me, but don’t sit there and tell me you haven’t noticed his behavior.”

“Okay,” said Kyle slowly. “So he might show some of the symptoms. But it’s a full moon tonight and he isn’t acting off.”

“Okay,” said Stan. “I’m not saying he’s the werewolf, Kyle. I’m just saying...he could be a candidate. Right now he seems to be the only thing we’ve got.”

Kyle couldn’t stop the trembling grin inching up his face. “Until now.” He slapped the Professor’s book down on the table. Stan squinted down at it, until shooting his head back up to look at Kyle with round eyes.

“Professor Mephesto?”

Kyle nodded. “He wrote a book all about werewolves. It’s not a very good book, but still.”

Stan leaned back in his chair, folding his arms across his chest. “That doesn’t necessarily mean he’s a werewolf, though.”

“No,” said Kyle, “but neither does falling asleep in classes.”

Stan’s mouth split into a grin. “Touche.”

“I’m just saying there’s other possibilities,” said Kyle. “You shouldn’t blame Kenny for everything.”

“I’m not blaming him. I’m just...suspicious. Maybe he hasn’t told us everything, Kyle. I mean, he’s never even talked about his scar with us before. Who knows how he got it! I’m not saying he’s guilty, but I’m not saying he’s completely innocent either.” He scratched the back of his head, looking sheepishly down at the table. “But, um, are we cool now, or what?”

Kyle looked at him out of corner of his eyes. Kenny’s voice was nagging at him in his ear, telling him to stop being pissed at Stan for stupid shit.

“Nothing about Kenny is innocent,” he said with a the whisper of a smile.

Stan seemed to perk up, his eyes brightening.

Kyle flashed him his palm, waiting for him to slap it with his own.

“We’re cool, dude,” he said.

Stan slid his skin across Kyle’s, his movie star smile making his face glow.

“You know, it’s just this...this situation--this whole werewolf thing--it’s got everyone on edge.”
“Yeah, I know,” said Kyle. “It’s just...Damien is such a prick.”

“Yeah,” said Stan, “he’s a prick, but you know, he’s smarter than he comes off.”

Kyle grumbled under his breath, not wanting to admit that he thought Damien might be on the right track to this werewolf thing.

“You think he could be right about Mephesto?” he asked Stan lowly, half hoping this would get him off poor Kenny’s case.

Stan hummed, taking the book out of Kyle’s arms and studying it, like there was some kind of secret message inside that would give Mephesto away.

“I mean, he could be,” he said. “Honestly it wouldn’t surprise me if he was a werewolf. He’s kinda weird.”

Kyle snorted. “Kinda? Dude, I’m pretty sure I saw him trying to seduce a goat once.”

Stan covered his mouth with his palm in an attempt to muffle his laughter in the silent library. Kyle could still feel the daggers being drilled into their heads by the librarian, however. He didn’t really care. He was drowning in Stan’s sweet giggles, swallowing against the tickle in his chest.

A sharp, “Shhhhhh!” echoed throughout the library, and Stan stopped abruptly. After a moment passed he brought his eyes back up to meet Kyle’s.

“To be honest Kyle, I’m kind of getting sick of talking about werewolves today.”

Kyle sighed, resting his cheek on his knuckles. “Me too,” he said. “I feel like it’s all anyone talks about anymore.”

“Well, hey,” said Stan. “Let’s go to Hogsmeade. That’ll take your mind off the full moon tonight.”

Kyle rolled his eyes. “Thanks for reminding me.”

“C’mon,” Stan smirked, “It’s not too late. It’s only noon, we should go!”

“I don’t know, Stan.”

“C’mon,” Stan begged, wrapping his hands around Kyle’s arm and giving him a hard shake. “We should go! Maybe Roberta will finally slip me some Firewhiskey at the Hogs Head, huh?”

Kyle shook his head at him. “You still have another week until you can buy it legally, you can’t wait?”

“A week is too long, dude.”

Kyle rolled his eyes, standing up from the chair and sighing. “I have to get Ike Bertie Botts anyway. Let me check out my books first.”

“You’re checking those out?”

“Well, yeah, I think there’d be some useful information in here. I wanna know what we’re dealing with, and if it really is inside Hogwarts I want to be able to spot whoever it is.”

“Well, one things for sure,” said Stan, “we’d be able to know if it was Cartman.”

Kyle threw him a look, a ghost of a smile playing at his lips. “Why?”
“‘Cause it’d have a big fat ass.”

X

They brought Kenny and Butters along to Hogsmeade. Kenny’s mood didn’t seem to have improved much since that morning. Butters had been the one to convince him to come along with them, but Kenny looked like he’d much rather be back in the Gryffindor common room, sleeping the day away.

He had a ratty orange Muggle sweatshirt on, with the hood thrown over his head, and his scarf wrapped tightly around his face. His hands were shoved into his pockets, and his eyes didn’t drift away from the path ahead of them. He hardly even made any acknowledgment that the others were there; only giving the faintest of glances when someone said his name.

Kyle wasn’t sure if he was still angry about this morning, or if he was just crabby that Butters had woken him up from his nap to take him to a place that he couldn’t even afford.

They went to Honeydukes first to save Stan from his desperate chocolate frog cravings. Kyle grabbed a box of Bertie Botts for Ike, and was then considering getting some licorice wands for himself while Kenny was gazing at the Ice Mice, and Cockroach Clusters.

Butters saw this, and grabbed a tin of Ice Mice, heading up to the counter to pay.

Kenny frowned at the back of his head, shoving his hands into his sweatshirt pockets without a word.

Kyle watched Stan walk up to Kenny’s side, picking up a box of Cockroach Clusters and rolling it around in his hands.

“Are these any good?” he asked Kenny, waving the box up for him to see.

Kenny eyed him suspiciously. “Yeah, they’re good.”

Stan looked back at the box, nodding. “I’ve been meaning to try them. If I don’t like them will you eat them?”

“Stan--”

“I’m gonna buy these,” Stan interrupted. He turned on his heel and joined Butters up at the register counter before Kenny could stop him.

Kenny’s eyes were narrowed, but Kyle had a feeling that the expression was soft under the wraps of his scarf. Kenny would never ask his friends for handouts. He was sensitive about his pride like that, but Kyle and Stan were always trying to find ways around it so they could do little things for Kenny like what Stan just did.

Kyle watched Stan pay for the candy at the register, hiding his smile behind the Sugar Quills and Licorice Wands so Kenny wouldn’t see. It was little moments like this where he would remember why he loved Stan so much in the first place. He was so kind, and cared so much about his friends…

You’re his friend.

Kyle’s heart stopped, and he stopped smiling. The warm bubbly feeling in his gut dropped dead cold to his feet, as he remembered again that that’s all they could ever be to each other.
Kyle went up to the counter to buy Ike the Bertie Botts.

Butters and Stan had already bought their candy, and were standing off to the side to wait for Kyle. Stan broke into one of his chocolate frogs, reading the back of his Ron Weasley trading card. Kenny sauntered away from his “moping” spot to join them.

“Anyone up for Butterbeer?” Butters asked hopefully.

“I’m game,” said Stan. “Hey, did you know Ron Weasley’s patronus is a terrier?”

Kyle walked over to his group, half smirking at Stan’s comment. “I didn’t know that. What’s this about Butterbeer?”

“We’ll head over to the Three Broomsticks,” announced Stan. “But did you know Hermione Granger’s patronus is an otter?”

Kenny and Kyle looked at each other, sharing equally puzzled expressions.

Stan began leading them out of Honeydukes, but Kyle shuffled to his side.

“What’s the sudden obsession with patronus’? Besides that we’re trying to learn them ourselves.”

Stan looked at Kyle, laughing lightly. “You know, Kyle, sometimes I forget you’re in Ravenclaw.”

Kyle frowned.

“Oh!” Butters squeaked. “I know! Terriers are hunting dogs, and they used to chase otters. Just like James Potter’s patronus was a stag, and Lily’s was a doe. It’s like they were meant to be!”

Butters then giggled, latching himself to Kenny’s side to give him the Ice Mice tin. Kyle could see the faintest color of pink rising in Kenny’s cheeks as he pocketed the tin, looking away from Butters. “I can’t believe I didn’t realize that until now.”

When Kyle looked back at Stan, Stan was already looking at him. His heart leapt a little when he caught the expression on his face. His watery eyes were warm, and his smile was thin, but loving. For a moment, Kyle thought he was catching that look Kenny was telling him about.

“Pretty romantic, right?” he asked.

Kyle felt a sharp burst of red rush to his ears. He looked away from Stan and out towards the sea of villagers and students walking the path of Hogsmeade.

“Yeah,” he muttered, “pretty romantic, alright.”

X

The four of them were sitting at a table in the Three Broomsticks. Kyle was cupping his mug between his hands to warm his fingers from the crip wind outside.

They had been sitting in silence ever since they had sat down.

“Kenny,” said Kyle softly, earning a glance from his brown eyes. “Are you upset about this morning; with Damien?”

There was a slightly tense moment shared between them, where Butters looked up from his drink
to gape at Kenny with an open mouth and foam coating his upper lip.

Kenny looked back to his Butterbeer.

“Damien’s a prick,” he uttered.

“I know--”

“Why’d you even tell him he could sit with us?” Kenny bit. “You hate Damien Thorn.”

“I know,” said Kyle. “I just...I don’t know why I said it, it just sort of slipped--”

“We think Damien knows who the werewolf is,” Stan blurted out. Everyone's heads snapped in his direction.

“Stan,” Kyle hissed between his teeth.

“Oh, yeah?” Kenny huffed. “Why’s that? Did he tell you something?”

“Yeah,” said Stan. “He said he has some ideas.”

“Why should you believe anything that comes out of that fucking blood belching vagina. He’s never given any of us a reason to trust him.”

Stan and Kyle looked at each other awkwardly.

Kenny sighed.

“Who does he think it is?”

“Cartman for one,” said Kyle, earning a sharp laugh from Kenny.

“If Cartman was a werewolf we’d all be dead,” he said. “His fatass would eat us all.”

“Professor Mephesto is another one,” said Stan.

“Mephesto?” said Butters. “Really?”

“Yeah,” said Kyle, feeling the weight of the werewolf books in his bag. “I found a book he wrote about lycanthropy. It’s not much...but it’s something, right?”

Kenny didn’t seem convinced.

“Anyone else?”

Kyle looked at Stan nervously, waiting for him to spit it out. Stan scratched the back of his head, looking off towards the fireplace in the restaurant.

“Well, um--”

Kyle kicked his shin under the table, cutting him off.

Kenny’s eyebrows furrowed, his dark eyes flicking between the two of them.

“It’s me, isn’t it?”

“Kenny,” said Kyle at once, “I don’t believe Damien for a second.”
Kenny ran a hand over his face. “That son of a…”

“It’s stupid right?” said Kyle, but he was looking at Stan. “It’s rubbish. Damien is an asshat, and we never should have listened to him. I mean, you couldn’t be a werewolf, Kenny. Werewolves are barbarians, and--and I’m pretty sure it’s a Death Eater trying to--”

“What makes you think werewolves are barbarians?” Kenny snapped. “Werewolves aren’t inherently evil, Kyle. They’re subjects to an illness they have no control over. Did you forget about Remus Lupin?”

“I–I’m sorry, Kenny. I guess I did forget about him,” said Kyle sheepishly. “It’s just…with everything going on I just…”

“’S’fine.” Kenny threw his glance towards the fireplace in order to look away from his group. His thumb ran up and down his bubbling Butterbeer, the foam remaining untouched by his lips.

Butters patted Kenny lightly on the arm, looking at Stan and Kyle while adapting his sick, puppy-like expression.

"Everyone's just scared," said Butters.

Kenny huffed. "Not me."

"We know werewolves aren't all evil," said Butters gently, "but whoever is breaking into the castle--we don't know their intentions."

Kenny mumbled something.

Butters looked back to Stan and Kyle, raising his hand to block the side of his mouth Kenny was on. He whispered to them, "He's just worried. Big ol' worry wart."

Kenny jerked his arm away from Butters' pats, grumbling again.

Butters just smiled, standing up from his stool.

“I think I’m going to head to the bathroom," he announced. "Try to play nice, fellas."

Kyle sighed out of his nose as Butters left the table. He took another slurp of his Butterbeer to fill the silence.

“Kenny, we know you’d tell us if you were a werewolf,” said Stan. Kyle looked at him out of the corners of his eyes, holding back his surprise. Kenny flickered his eyes to Stan for a brief moment, but just as soon flicked them away. “We didn’t mean...we’re sorry about letting Damien sit at the Gryffindor table. It was wrong on, like, so many levels. But...I think Damien might be onto something, and if the teachers aren’t doing anything about this werewolf, than I think we should. It tried breaking into the Gryffindor Tower. What if it came after you? Or Butters?”

Kenny’s eyes shot daggers into Stan. He remained silent.

“Everybody’s scared. It’s a full moon tonight, and if this thing is Cartman, or Mephesto, or a Death Eater, or anybody else, than we gotta find out who it is, and why they’re in Hogwarts.”

Kenny turned back toward the table, shaking his head slowly. “You’re fucking insane, Stan. I want in.”

“Wh-what?”
Kenny’s eyes brightened, just a bit. “I want in,” he repeated. “I want to help you figure out who
this is— but enough of this werewolf prejudice crap. That’s just bullshit.”

Kyle opened his mouth to add to the conversation, but at that moment his eyes managed to glance
up towards the window by the door of The Three Broomsticks. Cartman’s face was peering
inside, eyes locked onto their table.

“Fuck,” Kyle sighed out. Stan and Kenny followed his line of vision to the door.

Cartman thundered into The Three Broomsticks, arms laden with bags upon bags of sweets from
Honeydukes, and toys from Zonko’s.

“Hey, guys,” he said, plopping himself down in Butters seat without waiting for permission.
Kenny shot him a deadly glare.

“That’s Butters seat,” he hissed.

Cartman turned towards him, frowning. “Who the fuck cares? Butters is a jackass.”

Kyle saw Kenny close his eyes as his eyebrows furrowed, a common expression he used when he
was clenching his jaw. Something like a growl was vibrating around the table.

Cartman looked at him, his face twisting into a smile. “What the fuck is in your vagina, Kenny?”
He then turned back to Stan and Kyle. “You guys bring extra tampons? Kenny’s on his period.”

“What do you want, Cartman?” said Stan.

“Some Butterbeer,” he snorted. “Why else would I be sitting with you assholes?”

Cartman took a swig of Butters drink.

“What the fuck,” said Kenny. “That’s Butters’!”

Cartman sputtered sarcastically. “Shit, now I’m gonna have gay little jackass germs!” He wiped
his mouth with the back of his hand, but when he turned back to Kenny he was grinning. He took
another swig of the Butterbeer. “Are you in love with Butters or something? Jesus Christ.”

“He’s just not an insufferable fatass, like you,” said Kyle.

Cartman’s eyes glazed over to him. “What’s up with you, werewolf boy? Afraid the Death Eaters
are coming for you tonight?”


Cartman brought Butters’ mug up to his mouth. “I think it’s goddamn hilarious. There’s a
werewolf running around Hogwarts, and your self-entitled ass immediately thinks it’s after you.
Hilarious.”

Kenny slapped his hand against the bottom of the glass, splashing Butterbeer all over the front of
him.

“Kenny!” Cartman shouted. “You fucking dildo!”

He slammed the mug back down on the table, just as Butters was trotting back up to their table.
His eyes brightened when he saw that Cartman had joined them.

“Oh, hey, Eric!” He chirped. “Um, that’s—um...my seat. That’s okay. I’ll pull up another—”
Cartman looked to Butters, smirking.

“Oh, I’m sorry, Butters, I had no idea! But you know what, I think a better place for you would be on Kenny’s lap.”

Butters face flushed pink, his mouth falling into a tiny “o”, as he stood there wordlessly.

In a matter of seconds Kenny took his Butterbeer, and dumped it all over Cartman’s head. As Cartman sat there, sputtering and swearing, Kenny got up from his stool and brought his hand up to wave his middle finger up in his face.

“Fuck you.”

He grabbed Butters by the arm and dragged him out of The Three Broomsticks.

“I fucking hate Kenny,” Cartman muttered, “that fucking asshole.”

Kyle wanted to clock him. His temper was fighting against himself, to blow up in Cartman’s face and dump the rest of his Butterbeer on his stupid fat head too. But before he could even get a word out, Stan was leaning across the table.

“Oh-huh,” he said, “he sure is an asshole. Say, Cartman, what’re your thoughts about Damien Thorn?”

Cartman paused, squinting at Stan suspiciously. “Damien Thorn? He’s a prick, you know that.”

“Right, right,” Stan dipped his head in a nod, “but, you know...he’s been pretty interested in werewolves recently...do you know why?”

Cartman snorted. “Hell if I know. He’s one of those creepy kids who’s into death and sad poems and shit like that. He’s not in my dorm. I try not to pay attention to that weirdo.”

Kyle frowned at Stan, hoping Stan would catch his look out of the corner of his eye.

What’re you doing? He wanted to say.

Stan just continued talking.

“Yeah, but has he like...I dunno, called you a werewolf or anything?”

Cartman laughed. “Me? That dick thinks I’m a werewolf? Yeah, right! Like I’d be stupid enough to spoil my pure blood by letting some half-breed turn me into one of them. I’m the prophecy you know.”

Starting third year Cartman started telling everyone that he was Slytherin prophecy. No one knew what he was talking about. He made up some story about how his mother told him the truth about his dad over the summer, and he was actually the heir to the Greengrass family, though his mother had to keep him a secret. She told him that he was destined for greatness. Cartman took this as being a prophecy. For what, Kyle didn’t even want to know, not like Cartman would tell him anyway. He thought it aggravated Kyle to keep things from him, but Kyle really couldn’t give a shit. It was most likely a lie anyway.

“Right, prophecy, right,” said Stan. “How stupid of me, I forgot.”

“If anyone’s a werewolf it’s that guy,” said Cartman. “He eats the weirdest shit. Craig thinks he’s a vampire, he says he’s pale enough to be one.”
“Weird how?” asked Kyle, thinking back to his library books again.

“I dunno,” Cartman muttered. “I try not to sit by him, but the guys say he only eats the rarest meats. Like right off the cow, bloody, meat. I swear he makes the house elves give him special orders, what a dick.”

Kyle felt a tickle in the back of his throat. “Sick!”

“Yeah,” said Cartman. “But I doubt he’s the guy who’s been fucking up Hogwarts. I’d feel sorry for anyone who turns a pureblood into a werewolf, I’d fuck that guy up if they infected me with that sick disease.”

Stan and Kyle looked at each other, eyes wide.

“Why--why don’t you think it’s Damien?” asked Stan. “It could be. It could be anyone.”

Cartman snorted again, waving him off like a pestering fly. “Damien’s a pussy. Besides, if anyone bit him, we’d be able to see that shit. He’d go crying home to mommy about his blood being tainted and that shit, and his parents would probably be looking for a cure. Pussy.”

Kyle’s eyes flickered back towards the window of the restaurant, spotting a swirl of green and silver spinning away. Damien had just been at the window. The fog of his breath was still there, clouding the glass.

Kyle sucked in his breath, something twisting in his stomach.

“Werewolf or not,” said Kyle softly, still watching the window, “he’s still a creep.”

“Yeah,” said Cartman. “But so are you, Kahl, and Stan still makes me hang out with you.”

“Shut the fuck up,” said Stan. “I don't make you hang out with anyone.”

Kyle was too busy watching Damien scurry along the darkening street towards the Shrieking Shack. His stomach twisted for a second time when he noticed how late it actually was, and where the day had gone.

It was going to be dark soon.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry you have to deal with my editing skills. I could read a chapter over a hundred times and find five errors in my writing each time.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Kenny was about to climb through the portrait hole, but something tugged inside his chest, making him look back to Butters. They hadn’t really said much on the walk back to the castle. Knowing Butters; this wasn’t a good sign. Kenny had done his best to ignore it, but he had always had a soft spot for Butters.

Butters was looking back at him, but his eyes looked different. Far away. Sad even.

He blinked at him. “Forget somethin’, Ken?”

Kenny paused for a moment, debating on bringing up what happened at Hogsmeade, then shook his head.

He also happened to be an extreme pussy when it came to Butters.

He finished climbing through the portrait, stepping out into the Gryffindor common room. There were some pods of the younger students sitting scattered around with their cliques, but other than that the tower seemed dead. They had looked up to see who had come into their tower, but after seeing it was Butters and Kenny they went back to what they were doing.

Kenny plopped himself down on the couch, looking off into the fire. Butters followed suit, silently.

After another painful minute of sitting in silence--and with a clearly pouting Butters beside him--Kenny couldn’t take it anymore.

With an eyeroll he sighed.

“What’s wrong, Butters?”

Butters was picking at the seams on the chair arm, looking down at it with a moody expression. “Nothin’,” he said simply.

“*Butters,*” he hadn’t meant it to come out so harsh, but damn, he was fuckin’ tired. He needed to take a nap. “Butters, I know something is bothering you. Is it Cartman? You know I’ll kick him in the balls if you--”

“No, Kenny, it’s not that,” said Butters, his eyes still locked on the loose seam in the couch. “Well...it is, but it’s other things too.”

Kenny frowned. “Like what?”

Butters sucked in a breath, like he was going to admit to something big. But before the words could reach out of his mouth, his teeth tugged back on his lip, and Kenny watched him nibble on the skin.

“You just...weren’t very nice today is all,” he muttered to his knees. “You weren’t very nice to Stan and Kyle...or me.”

Kenny frowned at him. “I told you I didn’t want to come to Hogsmeade.”
“You didn’t even try,” Butters bit back, still refusing to look at Kenny. “You didn’t even try to have a good time.”

“Tch,” Kenny said, rolling his eyes again. “Hogsmeade sucks anyway.”

He could feel Butters’ cold glare boring into the side of his head.

Kenny felt a sharp chill run through him, and suddenly his scar felt cold, like too much outside air was brushing it. He buried his face farther into his hood and scarf.

“It’s just--” Butters fumbled over his words, searching for the right things to say. “…sometimes you don’t--you don’t act like you! And it’s...it’s scary, Kenny.”

Kenny frowned back at him now, feeling the chill he had felt moments ago melt into a bubbling anger.

“What are you trying to say? Are you scared of me?” It was more out of hurt than anger really, but the bite was still there.

“Kenny--”

“I was just trying to help you,” he snapped. “You don’t deserve to be talked to like that, Butters.”

“You know,” Butters huffed, getting to his feet. “I didn’t want to leave The Three Broomsticks. I can handle Eric Cartman. I’ve been pretty much doing it all my life, Kenny.”

Kenny put his cheek in his hand, glaring off at a corner in the room. It was beginning to grow unnaturally warm.

“You don’t have to be everyone’s superhero, you know,” Butters continued. “You might think you’re being nice, but sometimes... sometimes you’re just being a jackass!” Butters turned on his heel, and in a whir of robes he left the common room to head to the dorms upstairs. Kenny could hear the slam of their dorm room door, and he could feel it in his chest.

He hoped the younger kids didn’t see him wince.

He glared at the wall, desperately keeping his eyes away from the staircase leading up to the dorms. Half of him was already drawn towards their dormitory, and he was afraid if he so much as looked over he’d find himself standing outside their dorm. His heart clenched.

He hadn’t meant to be so moody during the trip to Hogsmeade, and now he felt worse than ever. He almost wished he could talk to his friends about it all, but he knew he couldn’t. Especially now, with everything that’s going on at school.

He gritted his teeth, thinking back to The Three Broomsticks, and how Cartman had stumbled into the place like he owned everything.

Really, he thought, clenching his hand into a fist, this is all Cartman’s fault.

He knew Butters could handle Eric, but sometimes Kenny couldn’t just stand there and do nothing. How could Butters let Cartman talk to him like that? How could he not expect Kenny to do something about it?

The more he thought about it the more he saw red blurring his vision. His fingernails cut crescent moons into his palms, hard enough to draw beads of blood.
“You’re a jackass!” Butters’ voice shouted at him. “You’re scary!”

Before he could explode, Kenny got up from his spot on the couch and started heading for the portrait hole. He didn’t even think about checking what time it was. He had completely forgotten about the buzz over the full moon.

He really needed to punch something. Or fuck somebody. Really, he felt like doing more of the former. Something needed to crumble, fall apart, shatter in his hands, until his blood soaked through his raggedy mittens.

He left through the portrait hole.

X

Kyle’s eyes couldn’t stop flicking up to the darkening sky above them. They were close enough that he could see the castle now, but it didn’t do anything to lessen his anxiety about the autumn night approaching.

“So,” said Kyle, his words coming out in white balloons in front of him. “You think it could be Damien, or what?”

Stan shrugged. “I want to think it could be,” he said. “But what Cartman said--about how we’d know if he was--I think he’s right about that. If Damien Thorn got attacked by a werewolf, the entire Wizarding World would know about it. Don’t you think so?”

Kyle hummed, shoving his numb fingers into the pockets of his jacket. He quicked his pace just a bit, as they finally reached the school grounds.

“Yeah, I guess,” he said quietly. “Do you still think it’s Kenny?”

Stan let out a long sigh, keeping his eyes averted from Kyle. “I don’t know, dude.”

Kyle stopped in front of the castle doors, frowning at him. “How could you still think it’s him? Even after what he said at The Three Broomsticks--”

“Kyle, I don’t know,” Stan rounded on him. “I don’t know who it could be. There’s, like,” he threw his hands into the air, gesturing wildly to the space around them, “a million and ten people is can be! I don’t know who it is, okay, honestly, it could be anyone.”

Kyle just turned to shove open the doors to the school.

“Okay,” he said slowly. “But, seriously... Kenny? Out of everyone in the school, and you think it’s Kenny. ”

Stan rolled his eyes, guiding Kyle towards the Great Hall. “Let’s talk about something else...” His eyes brightened a bit, like he had an idea. “Like my birthday. What’d you get me for my birthday?”

Kyle tried to hold back a smile, but when he couldn’t he simply looked away from Stan before he could catch it. “Oh,” he said, “your birthday? That’s coming up?”

Stan slugged him in the arm. “It better be bottles of Firewhisky and Dragon Barrel Brandy.”

Kyle snorted. “What’s your sudden obsession with Firewhiskey? And no, I didn’t get you any of that. Even if I did, I wouldn’t tell you.”
“Hm,” said Stan. “You’re right. I’ll ask Kenny.”

“You will not,” Kyle scolded. “I’ve sworn Kenny to secrecy!”

“Pft,” said Stan. “Kenny’ll do anything for ten Sickles.”

Kyle swatted at him playfully, laughing. “Don’t be a Cartman.”

Just as they were walking in front of the four statues of the Hogwarts founders, an orange figure was stamping down the staircase. Kyle instantly recognized the scarf as Kenny’s, and put out an arm to stop Stan from walking any further.

“Speak of the devil,” said Kyle, pointing.

Kenny was coming towards them, but by the look on his face he didn’t seem in the mood for talking. Stan raised a hand anyway, calling to him.

“Hey, Kenny!”

Kenny casted an annoyed glance their way, before blowing them off. He continued walking towards the doors that would take him back out to the grounds.

“Kenny,” Kyle called, but it came out sounding like a question.

“Hey,” Stan barked, “Buttlicker, where are you going?”

And in typical teenager fashion, Kenny paused as he held the door open, throwing a final look over his shoulder at them, growling: “Out.”

He slammed the door, leaving a perplexed Stan and Kyle behind.

Stan frowned at the door. “Hmp. What crawled up his ass?”

“I’ll give you three guesses,” said Kyle.

“Eric Cartman?”

“Most likely.”

They continued their walk into the Great Hall, the smells of a warm dinner welcoming them.

“He did seem pretty pissed off earlier,” Stan noted, taking a seat at the Ravenclaw table.

“Yeah,” said Kyle, routinely taking the open seat next to Stan. “He’s seemed pretty pissed off all day.”

“I’m telling you, Kyle,” said Stan, taking a stab at the chicken in front of him with his fork, “it’s the full moon.”

Kyle resisted a glare at him, choosing to ignore the comment completely. He scooped some of his own food on his plate to busy himself.

“Um,” A tiny voice had Stan and Kyle look up across the table. It was Butters, and he looked extremely guilty about something. “H-hey, fellas.”

“Hey, Butters,” Stan chirped.
“What’s the matter?” asked Kyle.

Butters wouldn’t meet their eyes. His baby blues were looking everywhere besides Stan and Kyle.

“Have, um, have you guys seen Kenny?” Butters asked them, his hands twisting nervously. Kyle shot his eyes back to Butters’ pale face, his stomach slowly sinking to his feet. “He’s kinda...I haven’t seen him in a while. I kinda yelled at him, and I just feel horrible. I was just wonderin’ if he was hangin’ out with you guys, so I could, you know, apologize.”

“Oh,” said Stan. He looked at Kyle, his eyes seemed scared. “We just saw him, yeah. We were just coming back from Hogsmeade and he stormed out the front door.”

Butters’ eyes widened, finally looking at Stan and Kyle. “Did he say anything to you?”

“No really,” said Kyle. “Sorry. He seemed really...mad about something.”

Butters brought a hand up to scratch his hair, throwing his gaze back at his shoes woefully. “Okay,” he said. “Well, if you see him again, tell him I’m sorry, and that I’m lookin’ for him.”

“We will, Butters,” Kyle promised.

Butters turned back around, about to head back to the Gryffindor table, when Stan called out. “Hey, Butters,” making him turn back around. “Why don’t you sit here today?”

It seemed to perk Butters up, though Kyle could still see the guilt in his eyes. He sat down across from him and Stan, scooping food onto his plate. “Thanks, fellas,” he said softly, “I really feel bad about yelling at Kenny like that. I just...sometimes I lose my darn temper, ya know?”

“I didn’t know you had a temper, Butters,” said Stan with a smirk.

“What were you two fighting about?” Asked Kyle.

“Aww,” Butters waved the question away with his fork, wrinkling his nose up at his plate. “It was stupid. About how he didn’t wanna come to Hogsmeade, and I know he hates goin’. But he just seems to sad lately, I thought it’d cheer him up. I dunno.”

Kyle reached across the table to give a soft pat to Butters hand. “I’m sure Kenny will forgive you,” he told him. “He’s not one to hold grudges.”

Butters flicked his eyes up to Kyle, holding a thin smile. “Thanks, Kyle.”

“What do you mean he’s been sad lately?” asked Stan. “He seems fine.”

“Well,” Butters clicked his tongue, as though debating on what he should say. “He doesn’t really say anything, but sometimes I see him get really sad at night. He gets quieter, and some nights all he does is look out at the sky from the window in our dorm. I think he gets homesick.”

Kyle snorted at the idea. He couldn’t imagine Kenny getting homesick over the place he lived.

“You think it’s something with his sister?” Stan asked quietly, looking to Kyle like it was a secret. Kyle’s heart panged slightly; he had forgotten Kenny has a little sister. He talked about her more than anyone else in his family, and Kyle has seen her a few times at Kings Cross to drop Kenny off at 9 ¾. The McCormicks have never gone through the barrier with Kenny, but Kyle has managed to cross paths just outside it as a scruffy brown haired girl was squeezing Kenny goodbye.
“Oh, shit,” said Kyle. “You think she’s sick or something?”

Butters shrugged. “Maybe. He doesn’t talk about home very often. I know it’s bad, but he never says how bad.” Butters sighed, pushing his food around on his plate. “I just feel awful, fellas. I should ground myself.”

“You don’t need to ground yourself, Butters,” said Kyle, resisting an eyeroll. “I’m sure Kenny knows he wasn’t in the right either. He just needs to blow off some steam, and he’ll be back and everything will be okay.”

This seemed to make Butters relax, and he took a bite of food. Every so often his eyes would flicker to the doors of the Great Hall. At first Kyle thought Butters was being a little ridiculous to be so worked up over a little spat. But as time went on Kyle was getting nervous too. It was getting late, and there hadn’t been a sign of Kenny yet.

Stan elbowed him, making Kyle whip his head back around.

“He’s fine,” he said. “He usually skips dinner, you know.”

Kyle nodded, feeling more like a worried mother.

Would that make Stan the--

Kyle sputtered into his pumpkin juice, pushing the thought as far away as possible. He busied himself with brushing crumbs off his shirt, to keep from thinking anything like that again.

They waited with Butters until the teachers called for lights out. Butters looked miserable as they walked out of the Great Hall together; his shoulders drooping, and his bottom lip quivering.

Kyle couldn’t leave him looking like that.

“Hey, Butters,” he said, putting a gentle hand on his arm. “Stan and I can walk you up to the Tower if you want. I bet Kenny is up there.”

“And if he isn’t?”

Kyle’s stomach bottomed out, looking up to Stan for assistance.

Stan grabbed Butters arm, taking him up the staircase. “C’mon, Butters,” he said. “Let’s go find Kenny.”

Somehow, Butters ended up convincing the two of them to stay the night in the Gryffindor Tower. Kyle didn’t really mind it, he supposed, he just would have liked to be sleeping in Stan’s four-poster instead.

They didn’t really do much. They stayed awake in the common room by busying themselves with homework, and playing Exploding Snap. Butters was determined to stay awake until Kenny came back to the tower, but he wasn’t much of a fighter against sleep.

Butters fell asleep curled up on the couch. He was curled in a tight ball, with his hands bundled near his soft face, and his wand clenched in one hand. Sometimes he’d twitch, or make a little noise that startled Kyle, but he didn’t wake back up.

“He even sleeps like a puppy,” said Kyle, watching him.

Stan chuckled. “Yeah.”
Everyone else in Gryffindor Tower had gone to bed, and the only light in the common room was coming from the fireplace. It wasn’t that late yet, but it was late enough. Kyle couldn’t stop worrying about Kenny, and no amount of Exploding Snap was going to distract him from the fact that his friend was out there, wondering around, on a full moon.

“Where do you think Kenny is?” Kyle asked softly, looking off into the fire.

Stan sighed in response. Kyle knew what he was thinking, and it sent off an angry bubble in his stomach. He didn’t press it anymore.

After a few moments, Stan said, “I’m surprised we haven’t heard anything yet.”

“Huh?”

“From the werewolf,” he said, finally meeting Kyle’s face. Stan’s cheeks were glowing red, like he was blushing, but it was just from the shadows of the fire. It contrasted well with his eyes. “It’s usually keeping us up with it’s howling by now.”

Kyle hummed, leaning back against the couch. Butters twitched his foot.

“Maybe it left,” he said.

“Go to sleep, Kyle,” Stan told him.

Kyle frowned at him. “I’m not tired.”

“Bullshit,” said Stan. He was smirking softly.

Kyle snuggled up on the arm of the couch, scowling at Stan in mock-annoyance. “I want to wait for Kenny. I can stay up.”

“I’ll wait up for Kenny,” promised Stan, “you go to sleep.”

“I’m not a baby,” said Kyle, but he couldn’t ignore the burning desire in his eyes for some rest. Stan knew Kyle was always the one to fall asleep first at sleepovers, no matter how hard he would try to stay awake and finish a movie with Stan, he always managed to drift off before the credits.

“Wake me up when Kenny comes back.”

“I will,” said Stan.

Kyle closed his eyes. But he faded in and out of sleep, making it feel like he hadn’t slept at all. He couldn’t stand not knowing where Kenny was on the night of a full moon. Just because they couldn’t hear it didn’t mean it wasn’t around. Kenny could be out there somewhere, trapped with that thing.

X

Kenny climbed out of the hole from the Whomping Willow, doing a quick sweep of the school grounds before walking out into the night. His right hand was covered in splinters from bashing one of the walls in the Shrieking Shack, but he at least felt better about the whole Butters thing. As he was breaking off sides of the four-poster bed inside the shack, he decided he should really apologize to him once he got back to the dorm. Butters was sweet, kind, and yeah, sometimes he was a jackass too, but so is everyone else in this school. But mostly, Butters was just well intentioned, and all he had wanted to do for Kenny was show him a good time today.

Kenny shoved his throbbing hands into the pockets of his jacket, stomping on some fall leaves so
the crunch would fill the empty school yard.

“God, Butters…” he muttered to himself, trying to swallow the tickle rising in his chest. Kenny couldn’t help but be a pussy when it came to Butters. He reminded him of Karen, and maybe that had to do with his soft spot for the kid. *No*, not maybe, it did. It had a lot to do with it. But it wasn’t everything.

Butters had confessed to Kenny last year about his feelings for him, but Kenny had turned him down. He still had a sour taste in his mouth when he thought about it.

“*I’m sorry, Butters.*” They had been sitting by the Black Lake, and it was a week before school got out for summer. Butters had looked so hopeful and innocent, with the sun shining on his yellow hair. It was poofed up around him like cigarette smoke, and Kenny wanted to know if it was as soft as it looked. “*I just…I don’t like guys. I’m so sorry.*”

*Liar,* he mentally hissed at himself, becoming worked up all over again. *You lied to him, you fucking pussy.*

He’ll never forget the way Butter’s eyes had clouded over, threatening rain to pour down his cheeks. The way his pink round lips had collapsed into a trembling mess. “*Oh,*” he’d said. “*Okay. That’s okay, Ken. I understand.*”

*But it’s not okay, Butters,* he thought bitterly. He wished Butters would have yelled at him. He wished he would have kicked him in the nuts, shoved him into the lake, cursed him to barf up slugs, anything! Something!

But Butters had done something worse than any of that. He had turned away from the lake to look at Kenny with tears in his eyes, and actually force a smile. “*I hope we can still be friends.*”

Kenny had been speechless.

“*Of course,*” he’d said.

*Of course,* Kenny snorted at it now, wishing he could have taken those words back. *Of course.* What was he thinking?

Then, stupidly, he had told him, “*I won’t tell anyone, Butters.*”

Like that was supposed to make anything much better.

It had taken everything inside Kenny to keep him from spilling the truth to Butters that day, and everyday after that. He wishes he would have acted revolted, or made a huge scene about it so Butters would hate him, and then maybe Kenny could get over him. But he guesses it just would have made things worse. Besides, he wasn’t sure if Butters could ever find it in him to hate anyone.

The truth was that he shared the same feelings for Butters. He hadn’t told anyone about it, because he knew Butters deserved better. He turned Butters down that day in hopes of him realizing this.

Kenny tightened his scarf around his face, feeling melancholy when dipping his head back to look up at the night sky. Gray clouds filled up the night, cloaking any stars that would have been twinkling down at him. He couldn’t remember the last time he had been out--

A horrible, nauseating chill crawled up from his stomach and into his bones as the clouds parted like an eyelid opening up to stare at him with its milk-white eyeball. He stood, frozen, as he felt his body begin to shake.
He had forgotten again.

He had forgotten all about the full moon.

X

Kyle was fading in and out of sleep. He wasn’t sure when he was dreaming and when he was awake. It had all seemed so real and hazy at the same time.

One moment he was holding Kenny’s scarf, walking around Hogsmeade and running up to villagers to ask if they’d seen him. They all ignored him. He saw Damien running through the crowd, his silver and green scarf whipping behind him like a flag. Kyle’s chest filled with rage, and he knew that Damien had to be the blame for all this. He chased after him, not even realizing he was following him out of Hogsmeade. When he finally caught up to Damien, he realized they had come into the Forbidden Forest. Kyle raised Kenny’s scarf up to show to Damien; to ask him what he had done to his friend, but the scarf had vanished, and Kyle’s hands were dripping with blood. He gaped down at his palms, and when he looked back up Damien was staring at him with evil mustard-yellow eyes. His pupils had turned into slits, and his face was being covered with his scarf, like how Kenny wore it.

Kyle would jolt awake, or at least he’d think he would. He couldn’t tell if he just entered another dream, or if he was really looking into the Gryffindor common room.

But Stan would be there every time.

“Stan?” Kyle whispered for him, reaching blindly for the blurry blue object sitting on the floor in front of him.

“You’re okay,” he said every time. “Just a dream.”

Kyle wondered what he meant. Was this a dream? Or is he talking about the dream before?

Kyle was too tired to ask. He nuzzled into the couch cushion, wishing they would have had a sleepover in Ravenclaw Tower instead, so he could listen to the wind rock them to sleep.

Kyle could feel Stan’s fingertips tracing along his jaw, brushing away the red curls that strayed too close to his face. “Go back to sleep.”

When his fingers would slide away, Kyle would groan for the touch to return. He wanted Stan to touch him. To hold his face in his calloused hands and tell him Kenny would be okay.

“What's wrong?” Stan’s voice sounded farther away at this point, and his hand would shoot away from Kyle’s hair.


He thought he heard Stan’s laugh, but he wasn’t sure if his hands went back to brush through Kyle’s mass of hair. He wasn’t sure if it happened once, three times, or not at all. His memories of waking up and falling asleep had all blended together in a tornado of fog by the time he woke up the next morning.

He felt the morning sun blanketing him from the large window at the far end of the common room. Stan was sleeping in the arm chair, far away from him. Butters had left his spot on the couch, and Kyle wondered if Kenny had come back yet. If he was, he was going to be mad at Stan for either sleeping on the job, or not waking Kyle up like he promised. If Kenny turned up
safe and sound, Kyle would want to have an interrogation with that kid.

He walked up to Stan, unable to ignore the tickle in his chest at the sight of him tucked into the chair. He had swung his legs over one arm, and was sleeping with a hand combing through his raven hair. His other hand was splayed across his stomach, pushing up his shirt to flash the tiniest amount of toned stomach. Kyle had gone over to wake him up, but now that he was looking at him he found he didn’t really want to. He’d much rather sit on the ottoman and watch Stan sleep forever.

“Oh,” came Butters’ voice, “you’re awake. Good morning, Kyle!”

Kyle turned, seeing Butters trot towards him from the staircase. Kenny didn’t appear.

“Yeah, good morning,” said Kyle, eyes still trained on the staircase. “Did, um, did Kenny show up?”

Butters shook his head slowly. “If he did I didn’t see him. He wasn’t in our dorm, and I couldn’t tell if he had been there or not. Maybe Stan saw him.”

Kyle almost swatted Butters’ hands away to keep him from waking the sleeping beauty that was Stanley Marsh. How could Butters even think of startling this sweet, ethereal, being? When Stan was sleeping; his mouth couldn’t mess anything up.

But Butters lightly tapped Stan on the shoulder, cooing in a sickly sweet voice, “Stan, Stan, wake up.”

Stan stirred, blinking his eyes blearily up at them.

“Good mornin’, sleepy!” Butters cheered.

Stan yawned and stretched, flashing Kyle more of that dark, toned tummy. “Morning,” he mumbled.

“When did you fall asleep?” Kyle asked, looking off at the Gryffindor bookcases to keep his eyes occupied.


“Did you see Kenny?” Butters chirped hopefully, almost desperate sounding.

“No,” said Stan, and the tone in his voice made Kyle feel sick. “I didn’t see him come in.”

Out of his peripherals Kyle saw the defeated look fall upon Butters’ face, and he sighed. “I just feel horrible. I should have never yelled at him.”

It pissed him off a little. Maybe it was just the lack of sleep, or maybe it was Stan flashing his stupid toned stomach around like some harlot, or maybe it was how careless Kenny was being, and the worry of someone finding him dead in the Forbidden Forest, but he didn’t understand why Butters was getting so worked up over a little argument. That spat between them should be the least of his worries.

They went down for breakfast, with Butters glumly watching his feet travel down the staircase steps.

The closer they were coming to the first floor of the castle, the louder the castle became. Whatever was happening down there, the students were raving about it. Kyle’s sick feeling in his stomach turned to bile in the back of his throat as he remembered his dreams from the night before.
An image quickly flitted through his mind: Kenny’s scarf, his orange hoodie, his body, lying limp at the foot of the stairs. Claw marks and bite marks coating his body, and his wand sitting broken at his feet.

He quickened his pace, weaving between other students, and Stan and Butters following in step behind him.

“Who in the fuck?” Cried Cartmans voice. This sent Kyle running down the staircase, pushing past students in his way to get to the cluster of Slytherins clustering outside the dungeons. His mind was racing with millions of things that could have happened last night. “Who in the fuck--what dickwad--”

Kyle shoved his way to the front of the crowd, ignoring the sneers and glares from the Slytherin students, until he came up next to Cartman. He was staring up at the statue of Salazar Slytherin, which was emitting a horrible smell. Cartman's cheeks were turning pink, and Kyle thought his head was going to implode. Somebody had charmed the statue to turn up its hand to flick everyone off, and in it’s other hand was a pink dildo. A stain, like someone had pissed on it, was at it’s feet.

Kyle couldn’t help but let out a sharp laugh, immediately slapping his hand over his mouth after realizing he wasn’t in the right company to do so. “Holy shit,” he muttered.

Cartman spun around to yell at the group, pointing at the piss-smelling statue. “Who the fuck did this?”

There was complete and utter silence throughout the entire castle.

After a moment, a low, yet bright giggle erupted from the crowd, and the students parted like the red sea to show where that giggle was coming from. By the time the black cloaks had shown who the culprit was, the giggle had turned into full blown laughter.

Standing in the middle of them was Kenny. He was still wearing his orange hoodie from yesterday, but it seemed to fit differently on him. Like he had shrunk over night. When he looked up his eyes seemed far away and sunken in, like he hadn’t slept a wink.

“Kenny?” Kyle said softly, wanting to reach out for him. Wanting to run up to his side and ask him where he’d been. He had forgotten all about being mad at him, and now he just wanted to know if he was okay. Where did he sleep? Where did he go?

“Kenny!” Cartman spat. “Kenny you dick!”

“What?” He sputtered out between laughter.

Cartman huffed like an angry boar with each step he took across the tile. Kenny was laughing, seeming completely naive to the human cannonball hurdling towards him.

Cartman's hand shot up for Kenny's scarf, instantly cutting off the laughter.

“What the fuck, dude?” Kenny snapped, wrapping a tight hand around Cartman’s fat wrist.

“It was you,” Cartman growled. “You fuckin’ did this, you poor piece of shit.”

“Fuck off, Eric,” Kenny pulled Cartman off him. He fussed with his scarf. “I didn’t do anything.”

“Asshole!” said Cartman. “I know you did it, Kenny!”
Kenny, with his brown eyes sparking with an amber fire, glared right back at Cartman. His knuckles were turning white at his sides, and for a split second Kyle had that deep sinking feeling in his gut that Kenny was about to kick the shit out of Cartman in front of everyone.

“I didn’t fucking do it, you fucking human hemorrhoid.”

Cartman’s jaw clenched, watching Kenny with cold, narrowed eyes as Kenny made his way out of the circle of students and back towards the staircase.


Kenny froze for a moment, as though considering wheeling back with his wand to start a duel. But he seemed to think better of it, and left.

“What the fuck is up with Kenny?” Craig muttered to Kyle's left.

“Yeah,” said Clyde, “he sure is acting weird.”

A voice cooed over the silent crowd, loud enough for it to echo around the castle, and Kyle was certain Kenny would hear it from his spot on the staircase.

“Don’t you know? McCormick’s the werewolf that’s been hunting us all at Hogwarts.”

Kyle turned in the direction of the voice, seeing Damien standing amongst the crowd with a sickening smile on his face. His eyes were locked onto Kyle, and he gave a little wave to him as the students surrounding them began to whisper about Kenny McCormick.

X

The next two nights of the full moon were uneventful. There was no howling, no strange bumps in the night, or any more founders of Hogwarts being discriminated. The teachers held an assembly, telling the students that they’re assuming whoever this werewolf was had ran off last month and didn’t want to bother us anymore. The students took a breath of relief, and school went on as normal. Still, Kyle couldn’t help but watch Damien at the Slytherin table.

Stan, Kyle, and Butters had all approached Kenny once they thought the time was right, and asked him about where he had been that night. He told them he just went out to blow off some steam, and visited Cartman in the dungeons. He crashed out there, and that was why Cartman thought Kenny pulled the prank.

Butters and Kenny made up, just like Kyle knew they would.

No one had yet found the culprit of the Salazar Slytherin statue, but some people were pointing fingers at Clyde Donovan, while Cartman was still set on Kenny.

Throughout that week and into the next, Damien Thorn made it his own personal agenda to make Kenny’s life a living Hell. Where ever Kenny was, Damien wasn’t far behind him. Throwing dungbombs at Kenny’s feet, and stealing his wand when he wasn’t looking to swap it for a trick wand. When Kenny waved it it started clubbing him on the head, and after the second time it happened Kyle thought Kenny would rip Damien’s head off.

The worst part of it was the whispers Damien was speaking behind Kenny’s back. Literally. He would spread rumors about Kenny to anyone who would listen, as long as they were right behind Kenny at the time. Most of the time Kenny didn’t react, but Kyle knew it was only a matter of time before the bomb went off.
Kyle hoped Stan’s birthday would help take the edge off Kenny.

He was walking back to the castle with him and Butters after the Gryffindor Quidditch Practice. Wendy had stolen Stan away for the day, and Kyle was trying to occupying his mind to keep himself from getting upset about it. Wendy was his girlfriend after all. It made sense that she would want to do something nice for him on his birthday.

Stans present from Kyle had been carefully wrapped and placed inside Kyle’s bag, and it sent his heart fluttering every time he pictured Stan’s face when he opened it. He hoped he’d open it in front of Wendy. He hoped she’d be pissed she didn’t think of it herself.

“You promise you didn’t tell him what I got him?” Kyle asked Kenny for the tenth time that day. Butters pushed open the doors to the castle as Kenny rolled his eyes.

“Kyle, I promise. I’m better at keeping secrets than you give me credit for.”

“It’s true,” chirped Butters, “he is.”

“I know, I know,” said Kyle, “I trust you, I’m just...I’m really excited to give it to him.”

Kenny looked back at him, a knowing glint in his eyes. “He’ll love it,” he said. But the way he said it made Kyle’s stomach turn. He knew Kenny was well aware of Kyle’s feelings for Stan, but he hated how Kenny was always putting the idea in Kyle’s head that it could happen one day, when Kyle fully knows it won’t. Kenny was such a romantic, which is funny, because he’s always seen as a slut by everyone else who doesn’t know him like Kyle does.

They walked down the steps to the Hufflepuff Basement, Kenny walked carefully to keep the bottles in his bag from clacking together; the last thing they needed was to get busted by a passing teacher two seconds before they walk into the party.

“I’ve never drank before,” said Kyle, looking down at the tops of the bottles poking out of the bag. “I mean I’ve had Butterbeer, but that’s harmless.”

Kenny raised his bag, his eyes sparkling. “This shit is going to be a lot more fun than fucking Butterbeer.”

Butters frowned up at Kenny. “When do you drink?”

Kenny shrugged. “Here and there. Mostly at home. How do you think I got all this booze?”

“How did you get all that booze?” asked Kyle.

They were now standing in front of the stack of barrels in the knook near the kitchen.

Kenny’s grin made his eyes squint. “I have my sources,” he said, raising up a hand to rap on the barrel in the middle of the second row. The top of it swung open.

They crawled through the portrait hole and emerged into the bright and warm Hufflepuff common room. It seemed like everyone else who was invited had already arrived, and were eating all the snacks set up on tables. Kyle looked around, noting that there was already a lot of bottles of whiskey and sherry scattered around the room.

Kenny tapped his bag fondly. “Stan’s gonna be so happy when he see’s this.”

Kyle would have agreed with him, if it hadn’t been for the sudden voice of Eric Cartman interupting them.
“About time you fags showed up,” he had called loudly, making the entire room turn towards the portrait hole to see who had just arrived.

Cartman smiled, proud of the attention he was giving Kyle, as Kyle’s ears grew hot. Cartman brushed Cauldron Cake crumbs off his face.

“What’s he doing here,” Kyle grumbled to Kenny, who just shrugged.

“Don’t look at me, I didn’t know he was going to be here.”

“Hi, Eric!” Butters waved. “Are those Cauldron Cakes?”

Cartman hugged the one he was eating closer to his chest, narrowing his eyes at Butters. “Get your own.”

Kyle was sweeping the room in search of Stan, his temper flaring.

His eyes landed on him. He was hiding in the corner like a puppy who’d just chewed up all the toilet paper, and when his eyes locked onto Kyle’s he shriveled into himself, hiding behind Wendy.

Kyle growled under his breath as he stalked towards them.

“Stan,” he said lowly, ignoring the surprised jump from Wendy at his sudden arrival, “what is he doing here?”

“Don’t act pissed, okay?” said Stan, his eyes flicking back and forth from Wendy and Kyle. “I had to invite him.”

“Why didn’t you at least warn me?”

“Because I didn’t want you to act like this!”

Kyle folded his arms across his chest, looking at Stan with his eyes half-lidded. “I would have acted like this regardless. It’s Cartman. Why’d you have to invite him anyway? Did he threaten to throw you in Azkaban when he’s Minster of Magic?”

“Worse,” Stan mumbled. “He told my mom on me.”

Kyle groaned, rolling his eyes. “Pussy.”

“Hey,” Wendy snapped, but there was a slight smile on her lips, “watch it, Broflovski.”

“Who you calling pussy?” said Stan. “My mom was gonna take away my allowance if I didn’t let him come!”

“No, Cartman,” said Kyle. “He thinks his mommy is always gonna save him.”

Stan sighed, glaring over Kyle’s shoulder and at Cartman sitting on the couch. “I know. It sucks our moms work together. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, Kyle, but, like...he’s not that bad.”

“*Not that bad?*” Wendy and Kyle retorted in unison.

“Well…” said Stan in a defeated tone.”Yeah. He’s not...so bad. I mean--compared to how he used to be.”

“He hasn’t changed!” said Kyle.
Wendy put her hands on her hips, cocking one to the side and staring at Stan with a frown. “Don’t tell me you’re actually sympathizing with him.”

“I’m not!” said Stan. “I just--I mean--I just want everyone to have a good time. Don’t let Cartman ruin it, okay?”

Kyle huffed, turning to look over his shoulder at the couch to see Kenny nicking cauldron cakes from Cartman’s stack as Butters was distracting him.

“Just as long as he doesn’t fart,” he said.

“I can’t really keep him from farting, dude,” said Stan. “But for you, I’ll do my best.”

Kyle turned back to him, catching a soft smile just before Wendy took Stan by the wrist and lead him away from their corner. “C’mon,” she said, her sheet of black hair waving in Kyle’s face. “Everyone’s here now, let’s get open presents.”

“Okay, okay,” Stan laughed, stumbling after her. She pushed Stan into the arm chair by the fire, pushing the chair around so it’d face their party, then, she flicked her wand to pull a party hat out of the air, and snapped it on Stan’s head. She pecked him on the cheek.

Kyle slowly walked over to join them.

“We’re doing presents, guys,” Wendy called to the rest of the party, and the cluster of students that had been mingling in the Hufflepuff common room came to huddle around Stan.

“Here, Stan,” Kenny held out a large bag with the sounds of clacking bottles inside. “Happy birthday.”

Stan took it, his movie-star smile brightening the room, and Kyle’s heart.

Kenny gave Stan what he a truly wanted. Booze. Firewhiskey, Dragon’s Barrel, and even little bottles of sherry. “Sick, dude!” Stan held up the bottles in victory, his grin widening. “Thanks, Kenny!”

“Just as long as you share,” said Kenny.

“No shit,” said Stan. “Kyle, you’re drinking with me tonight.”

Kyle felt a blush rising to his ears, and he tried to laugh it off as Cartman announced; “Gay!”

Stan went through the line of gifts, receiving numerous goodies, tricks, games, and bottles of booze (“You guys know me so well!” Stan had laughed after opening the ump-tenth bottle). Kyle held onto his own present, waiting to be one of the last ones. When the table of gifts had cleared, he tore his small box out of his messenger bag, practically throwing it into Stan’s lap before anyone else could place a surprise gift there.

“My turn,” said Kyle.

Stan lifted of the box, shaking it lightly. “It’s a puppy, isn’t it?” He smirked.

“Dude, how’d you know?”

Stan just grinned, hurriedly ripping off the wrappings of the box. Kyle knew he’d recognize the label on the top of box, and when he read it he looked back up to Kyle with wide eyes.
“You’re kidding,” he said.

Kyle just rolled his shoulders, pretending like he didn’t know what Stan was talking about.

Stan lifted the top off the box, his mouth falling open into a little O.

“Kyle,” he said, almost breathlessly. He picked up the necklace, flashing the long, sharp canine of a Welsh Green Dragon to everyone else in the room. Once he was able to tear his eyes away from the necklace, he looked at Kyle, his eyes soft. “How did you…?”

“You’ve only been talking about it for a year,” said Kyle with a sharp laugh.

Stan grinned, pulling the necklace over his head, and then grazing it over with his fingers once it was over his chest. “I just can’t believe you got it for me. Thank you, Kyle.”

Kyle thought of kissing Stan then, like how Wendy did. He thought of covering that smile with his lips, and feeling it against them as they kissed in front of everybody. Cartman would gag, and maybe Wendy would scream, but Kyle likes to think that they wouldn’t care. He likes to think it’d all be okay.

“Okay, best for last!” Wendy announced, making Kyle’s heart jump at the sound of her voice. She placed a medium-sized pink box into Stan’s lap.

Kyle sucked in a breath, trying not to glare, as Stan removed the lid of the box.

*It can’t be as good as yours,* he said. *Wendy’s usually terrible at gifts. Remember last year?*

“No way!” said Stan, and at first Kyle thought he could be faking the surprise. How could anything beat a dragon tooth necklace? Besides a puppy. Stan was always asking for a puppy.

*Shit,* he thought suddenly. *Would she actually get him a puppy?*

Kyle was trying not to lean too far over to see what it was, looking for a wagging tail and floppy ears. But Stan lifted it out of the box. A purple little puffball was squeaking in his palm. A Pygmy Puff.

“It’s so cute!” Butters cooed. “I’m so jealous, Stan.”

“I knew you’d like it,” said Wendy. “Happy birthday, Stan.”

*Oh for fucks sake,* Kyle thought, his fists were clenched at his sides.

X

“So what’re you going to name it?”

“Huh?” said Stan, removing his lips from around the bottle of Firewhiskey he had claimed as his own.

“The puffball,” said Cartman. “What’re you going to name it?”

“Oh,” he said. “I’m gonna call her Elway.”

“Elway?” snorted Cartman.

“Yeah, you know, John Elway.” Stan looked around at their blank faces, forgetting for a moment that not everyone in the room was obsessed with Muggle sports. Not even Kenny knew much
about Muggle sports. “He’s an American football player,” he told them, “he’s the best!”

“Oh, is that that Muggle sport you like? Foot-ball?” said Wendy, pronouncing it slowly, like she was afraid of saying it wrong.

“Yeah,” said Stan. Elway was fast asleep on his knee, her head tucked in so she looked like a fluffy purple tennis ball. He scratched her back and she purred happily.


A loud burp suddenly cut through the room, stopping all conversation, and drawing all attention to Clyde Donovan who stood in the middle of room, raising an empty bottle of white wine in the air. It was like he had just blown a whistle to get everyone's attention, and once he had it he announced, “Who wants to play truth or daaare?”

A bunch of the girls squealed, taking their friends by the wrists and dragging them over to where Clyde was standing in the common room. Butters hopped to his feet, and Kenny was quick to join him without being asked. Stan saw him trying to convince Kyle to join.

Stan’s heart clenched when he realized how lonely Kyle looked, sitting by himself in the arm chair, with the neck of a half empty bottle of Beetle Berry Whiskey clutched in his hand. Stan took another swig of Firewhiskey to wash out the feelings in his chest.

Bebe ran over, latching onto Wendy’s arm and tugging her off the couch where her and Stan had been sitting together. “C’mon, Wendy!”

Wendy giggled, getting to her feet and reaching out a hand for Stan. He rolled his eyes, took another long drink of the Firewhiskey, and took her offer.

A lot of people were playing, but Bebe made room for the three of them by making Clyde shove over. Stan looked around the circle to see Cartman sitting between Tweek and Butters. Kenny was also in the circle, and he had also finally convinced Kyle.

Stan took another swig of whiskey.

“I’ll go first,” Clyde announced, reaching for the bottle sitting in the middle. With every roll it got slower and slower, and every time it passed Stan his heart jumped a little farther.

He took another drink of whiskey.

It landed on Cartman.

“Ooooo,” teased the circle.

Cartman just smirked. “Truth,” he told Clyde, with all the confidence he could push out his tongue.

Clyde tapped his finger against his mouth in thought. “Is it true that the Slytherin House has an orgy ritual with snakes in honor of Salazar Slytherin?”

Cartman’s face turned red as the entire circle blew up with laughter.

“Fuck you, Clyde,” he spat. “That’s not fucking true! What the hell is wrong with you? Tell him it’s not true, Craig.”

Craig turned to Clyde.
“It’s true,” he said seriously, making Kenny fall over with laughter. “Cartman’s the best one. The snakes love him.”

“You motherfucker!” Cartman shouted over the screams of laughter. “I fucking hate you assholes!”

“Just take your turn, Cartman,” Craig said, a devious smirk on his face.

Cartman grumbled, but he reached over to spin the bottle anyway. It landed on Stan.

“Truth or dare, Stan?” Bebe slurred, knocking her shoulder into his. Her breath reeked of sherry.

Stan swallowed another gulp of whiskey. “Da--, no, truth. Truth.”

“Stan,” said Cartman slowly, “is it true thaat …”

Stan felt a spike of white hot realization shoot through his stomach. This was fucking Eric Cartman, and he had just given him an open window to ask him anything he wanted. Fuck. *Fucking fuck fuck.*

He poured another flood of Firewhiskey down his throat.

“Is it true that Kenny is the one who fucked up our Slytherin statue?”

Stan couldn’t help but laugh, mostly out of relief. “Fuck if I know,” he blurted, causing Kenny to look over at him in alarm, but something couldn’t register in Stan’s brain for him to know he’d said something iffy. ‘My turn!’ He said before anyone else could comment. He was almost giddy as he spun the bottle, and it landed on Kenny.

“You know you’re not getting paid for dares, right, Kenny?” said Cartman.

“Fuck off,” said Kenny. “Truth.” Then he added quickly, “but that’s not the reason why I’m picking truth, asshole.”

“Kenny, is it true, that…”

“*That he defaced the Slytherin statue,*” whispered Cartman loudly, “*he defaced the Slytherin Statue!*”

“Shut the fuck up, Cartman,” Stan snapped, “I’m trying to think. Kenny, is it true that Tammy Warner gave you a blowjob in third year?”

Kenny groaned, rolling his eyes, but his eyes showed that he was smirking. “Dudes, you suck at truth or dare.”

“Is it true or not?” Jimmy pressed.

“Yeah, it’s true.”

All the guys in the circle cheered, and Clyde just whispered a soft, “*Nice.*”

Kenny waved his hands in the air to shoo them all away, shaking his head as his eyes squinted a smile. “It was a long time ago, okay? Let me have my turn now.”

The bottle spun around again, clacking on the wood floor, pointing its neck out at all the vulnerable contestants, until it finally settled on Kyle.
The crowd cooed.

“Whatcha gonna do, Kyle?”

“Do a truth! I wanna know his secrets!”

“I wanna see the tight-ass do a dare!”

“Let him pick, alright? Geez.”

Kyle downed the rest of his drink. “Dare,” he said, a sly smile crawling up his mouth.

The circle cheered him on, shooting their ideas at Kenny.

“Make him lick my shoe!” said Clyde.

“Make him strip!” hooted Bebe.

“Make him curse the Headmistress!” said Token.

“Make him suck my balls, Kenny,” said Cartman.

Kenny held up his hand, silencing them all.

“I dare you,” he began slowly, “to kiss the hottest person in this room.” Then he tacked on, “Besides me, of course. Because, let’s face it, I’ve got all you beat.”

“Shit,” Kyle muttered, and Stan watched as his eyes flickered all around the circle, almost searching frantically. His eyes stopped on Stan, and for the briefest of seconds his heart jumped into his throat, but then Kyle looked on to the next person. “Fuck!” Kyle’s hands pulled at the curls of his hair. He was still looking, and the crowd was getting impatient. Kyle’s eyes kept coming back to Stan, and every time Stan felt that tickle in his stomach that made him want to throw up. When Kyle-- Dude, no! Not when, he scolded himself, his heart hammering at the mere thought. Kyle wouldn’t kiss me. He’d never...We’re not...He’s not...

But Kyle’s eyes kept locking with Stan’s, and as Stan’s fingers flew up to tenderly touch the dragon’s tooth dangling from his neck, he thought: Well...maybe...

“Pick already!” said Kenny.

“You better not kiss me,” said Clyde, waving a warning finger at Kyle.

“I wouldn’t mind seeing that,” Bebe chirped.

“Me either,” giggled Heidi.

Clyde turned, wide eyed. “What the hell, Bebe?”

Bebe just shrugged, giggling into her cup of sherry.

“Kyle,” Kenny barked, “pick someone, or I’m picking for you!”

Kyle turned to Rebecca Cotswolds next to him and clamped both hands on either side of her face, tugging her towards his lips.

Stan could feel the nausea slowly fading away, but he was also feeling his heart crumble into pieces.
In second year Kyle had a crush on Rebecca, and Stan still remembers that lost puppy-dog look Kyle would get whenever she was within eyesight of him. They had barely dated two weeks, and Kyle still says they broke up just because there wasn’t anything there. They wanted to be friends and that was that.

But now Kyle was kissing her like he had been holding back from kissing her for years. His hands were in her brown curly hair, and she was tenderly wrapping her fingers around his neck, grasping for those curly Q’s at the nape of his neck.

Their circle of friends, including Cartman, all just stared with open mouths and blank expressions, unable to look away from the scene.

Stan took another swig of his bottle.

They pulled away, with Rebecca now seemingly dizzy.

Kyle wiped his mouth on the back of his hand. His ears were red, and now it seemed he wouldn’t look in Stan’s direction at all.

“My turn,” he said, reaching for the bottle.

With a flick of the wrist the bottle went spinning again, this seemed to wake everybody up, and the circle of kids squealed and giggled the closer it came to landing on one of them. Until it finally pointed at Wendy.

She raised her bottle in the air, dipping her shoulder. “Have at me. Truth.”

“Pussy!” Bebe quipped.

Wendy stuck her tongue out at her.

“What do you and Bebe talk about,” said Kyle seriously. His eyes were glassy, but they remained locked onto Wendy.

Her and Bebe laughed together.

“Ask a better question than that, Kyle,” said Wendy. “C’mon, I know you have it in you!”

“Le’me finish,” he said. “What do you and Bebe talk about through the mirror? At night. In the common room.”

Wendy’s face turned ashen, and she looked at Bebe again.

“We don’t--I don’t know what you’re talking about, Kyle.”

The room was weighing down with silence, everyone’s eyes flicking from Wendy to Kyle like two Beaters hitting Bludgers to each other at Quidditch practice.

Stan took another shaky sip of his whiskey, finding it empty.

After a moment Kyle rolled his shoulders, looking boredly down at his naked bottle. “Must’ve been someone else I heard, then.”

“Yeah,” said Wendy in a flat tone, her eyes hard coals. “It must have been.”

She spun the bottle. It landed on Butters.
Butters squeaked, suddenly giddy although the tone in the room was still thick from the exchange. “Oh, I wanna do a dare!”

“I dare you to eat ten Bertie Botts without spitting them out,” Wendy said without missing a beat.

“Oh, geez,” said Butters, as Red went to go grab the bowl from the table.

Wendy stood up from the circle, grabbing Stan by the back of his shirt as an indication for him to follow her.

“Oh, a cherry!” Butters announced, resulting in the group going; “Aww,” Wendy took him to the corner of the common room, hiding behind a potted plant so no one could see them. Stan rolled the empty bottle over in hands, knowing he was in trouble. He didn’t want to meet her eyes, but like a scared puppy, he did anyway.

“You told him?” She whispered lowly, her eyebrows furrowing over her hurt eyes.

“No, I--I didn’t, Wendy!” Though that was a lie. At the beginning of the school year Stan had told Kyle about her magic mirror Wendy shared with Bebe, but Kyle hadn’t seemed all that interested in it. He hasn’t even mentioned it since then. Stan didn’t think it was a big deal.

“You knew about your present didn’t you?” She hissed. “He told you what it was!”

“What?”

“Oh, marshmallow!” said Butters. “And lemon!”

“You’re always doing this, Stan,” Wendy huffed, crossing her arms over her chest and spinning away from him to glare at the corner of the wall.

Stan sputtered. “Doing what? I don’t even know what you’re upset about!”

Wendy’s shoulders turned rigid. She didn’t speak for a good minute; letting Stan’s words hang in the air for him to digest and regret what he had just said.

“Okay, this one has to be booger,” said Craig.

“Nope,” Butters chirped, “green apple.”

Wendy turned back to face Stan, but her eyes were elsewhere. She was looking over his shoulder, and back at their circle of friends. Stan followed her line of vision to Kyle.

“I know you love both of us,” she said gravely, “but I love you, Stan, and you can’t keep treating me like your second. I’m your girlfriend, and we’re supposed to be a team. I don’t want to have to ask you to chose, because that isn’t fair to you.”

Stan looked back to her, her eyes watering up. A pit was forming in his stomach.

“I’m sorry, I just can’t do it anymore.”

“Wendy, I’m sorry,” Stan reached for her, the numbness spreading throughout his body, tugging at his heart when she flinched away from him.

“Don’t,” she hissed.

Stan dropped his arms to his sides. He could feel the pinpricks of tears forming in the corners of
his sockets, but he refused to start crying at his own birthday party. He turned away from Wendy, her presence burning him cold.

“So,” he said to the floor, “that’s it, then? We’re done? Over a stupid mirror?”

“It’s more than just the mirror, Stanley,” she said. He watched her shoes shuffle towards him, and felt her lips press against his cheek. It hadn’t felt like anything. No sparks. No butterflies in Stan’s stomach. No vomit. It was all gone, and it wasn’t until then that he realized that that had all been gone for a long time now. He felt empty.

“Happy birthday, Stan.”

He waited until he was sure she had left out of the portrait hole before walking back to the party.

“Oh, no,” Butters clapped his hands over his mouth, struggling to keep his stomach down. “I got vomit.”

The circle cheered as Butters turned away, searching for the nearest trash bin to throw up into.

Stan walked over to sit in the chair closest to the fireplace, scooping up Elway in one hand, and stroking her gently with his fingers.

He listened to his friends enjoy the party from behind the couch, all of them laughing and making fun of Butters before continuing truth or dare. Stan gazed at all the untouched bottles of whiskey that were still set up across the coffee table.

A sudden craving for more Firewhiskey shot through him.

X

Butters was the first one to fall asleep. His head was in Kenny’s lap, but Kenny didn’t seem to mind. He was drinking out of a bottle of White Rat Whisky, looking about as natural as he could be. Though he wasn’t drunk enough to take his scarf completely off his face. He would part an opening between the scarf for his mouth to meet the bottle, but Kyle didn’t know why he didn’t just take it off because everyone else was mostly asleep.

“Hey,” said Cartman, “who wants to make Butters piss his pants?”

When Kenny drew the bottle out of his mouth it made a popping sound. He shot a glare at Cartman. “Do it, and I’ll eat you, fatboy.”

“Not if I eat you first,” Cartman shot back, making Kyle and Kenny immediately break out in laughter. Kenny’s shaking woke up Butters, making him sit up and rub his eyes like a little kid.

“Wa’s goin’ on?” He asked.

“Go back to sleep, Butters,” said Kenny, patting Butters’ head. Butters obeyed, nestling back into Kenny’s lap.

A lot of the party was gone by then, with only a few stragglers left who had either fallen asleep or were too drunk to stumble back to their Houses. Craig Tucker was passed out on the carpet, his blue chullo hat pulled over his eyes, and a bit of drool leaking out of the side of his mouth. Clyde had drawn a penis on cheek earlier, and in turn, Cartman drew a vagina on Clyde’s face when he fell asleep moments later.

Their group; Cartman, Kenny, Stan, and Kyle (plus Butters, but he was sleeping), were settled
around the fireplace, fighting between sleep or vomiting.

Kyle wanted to sleep, he kept nodding off every so often, but he didn’t want Cartman to draw on his face, or something worse. Butters had finally stopped puking long enough to fall asleep on Kenny, and Kyle suspected Cartman or Kenny to fall asleep next. For Butters sake he hoped it’d be Cartman first.

Stan had been sitting in the arm chair with Elway ever since—well, Kyle wasn’t really sure since when. All he can remember is Wendy taking Stan away from the circle, and he couldn’t really remember what happened after that. Clyde kept giving him something to drink, and Kyle just drank every last one. But now he felt kinda sick, and tired, and sober. Not that sober. But he wasn’t drunk either.

But now that the party was basically over, and Kyle was a little less drunk, he felt bad for not noticing Stan earlier. How long has he been sitting there by himself? That was no way to spend your birthday.

Kyle stood up, shuffling over to Stan, and smiling when Stan looked up at him. Stan smirked. He looked tired too.

“Hey, dude,” he said.

“Heeeeyyy.” Kyle snorted with laughter at himself, leaning against the back of Stan’s chair. Maybe he was more buzzed than he thought.

“What’s up?”

“Nothin’,” said Kyle. “Came over to see you. Why’re you here by yourself? Lookat this party!” Kyle threw his hands up in the air. Cartman was dozing off now, rolling his head towards his shoulder, and then jerking back when someone farted in their sleep. Kenny raised his bottle of whiskey, waving it over his head and sang.

“Stan! Stan the man. Stan the birthday man. Happy birthday, man!”

Stan huffed a laugh at him, rolling his eyes. “Some party.”

“It’s only,” Kyle glared at his watch, struggling to understand the numbers and the arrows inside it. “...two o’three.”

“Woo!” Kenny cheered. “Two more hours to party!”

Butters grumbled below him, swatting at the air in an attempt to hit Kenny, but completely missing.

Stan laughed again, but this time it sounded more genuine, and Kyle was glad to hear it. “I don’t think that’s how it works, Kenny.”

Kenny just shrugged, popping the bottle back into his mouth.

A snort drew their attention to Cartman, who had finally fallen asleep. He was slumped against the coffee table with a pillow behind him, and a cup of water slowly tipping towards the rug in one hand. The three of them waited in silence, listening for the soft snores to signify Cartman was passed out. Once they started, Kenny was shifting Butters off his lap.

He whispered to Butters, “Don’t wake up, don’t wake up.” Before placing a pillow under his head where Kenny’s leg used to be.
“Where are you going?” asked Stan.

Kenny pulled out a black marker, his eyes glinting with mischief.

“Time for payback.”

“Make the balls extra hairy for me, please,” said Kyle with a muffled giggle.

Kenny shot him a thumbs up before getting to work.

Kyle and Stan watched Kenny draw dicks on Cartman’s cheeks, and Stan told him to color in the eyebrows to make Cartman look permanently angry. Kenny then added a flower to one side of Cartman’s face just for the hell of it.

“My work here is done!” he announced proudly, tossing the marker into the air. It landed on Pip’s head, and he squeaked in his sleep.

“It’s fitting,” said Kyle.

“I love the metaphor,” said Stan. He then slowly drew an arch through the air with his palm, saying, “Eric Cartman; he’s a dick.”

Kenny bowed. “Thank you, thank you.” Then, he plopped himself down on the ground to stretch out on the yellow rug. He sighed sleepily, looking up at the low ceiling with his hands settled on his stomach. “A hero's work is never done,” he said.

“Hey, um,” said Stan, his eyes watching Kenny. “Did you do it? The Salazar Slytherin Statue, I mean. Did you actually do it?”

“No,” he said with a yawn. “I wish I would’ve.” He looked at Stan and Kyle, his scarf was coming undone, and just a hint of his mouth was visible through the gap he had made to drink his whiskey. Kyle could see his missing tooth as he smiled at them. “It really pissed Cartman off. I’m jealous I didn’t think of it.”

“Yeah,” said Stan.

Kenny yawned again, bringing an arm up to sling over his eyes. “Maybe next year,” he mumbled.

Kenny didn’t speak again, and in seconds he was asleep too.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen him do that,” said Stan suddenly, making Kyle turn back to him.

He frowned. “Do what?”

“Sleep.”

Kyle couldn’t stop the giggle escaping, feeling bubbly and warm from the night. He decided it was a mix of exhaustion and the booze, but he found he really didn’t care. As long as Stan was here.

Stan smirked at him. “You think I’m funny.”

“‘Cause you are,” said Kyle, his eyelids feeling heavier and heavier the longer he gazed at Stan. He suddenly remembered why he had come over to see Stan in the first place. Stan had been sad. Why was he so sad? It was his birthday after all, and he had looked so happy when he opened Kyle’s present. He looked even happier when he opened Wendy’s-- Wendy!
“Wendy!” Kyle suddenly gasped, making Stan jump. Kyle spun around on the spot, the room blurring around him and his stomach tossing. “Where is she? Where’s Wendy?”

Stan was shushing him, which Kyle thought was absurd, because he didn’t think he was being that loud.

“She left a while ago, Kyle,” he said, and suddenly Stan was on his feet and pushing Kyle towards the couch Butters was sleeping on. “You don’t look so good, dude, I don’t want you puking on me.”

“She left?” Kyle repeated, giving into being pushed back against the couch. “Why? Was she mad? She’s always mad.”

Stan smirked. “So are you.”

Kyle flicked him off, but he didn’t see because Stan was walking around the common room, looking for something, or maybe he was just pretending to be so he wouldn’t have to talk to Kyle.

“What’re you doing?” Kyle asked.

“Looking for a blanket.”


Stan looked up at him just as he found a quilt splayed across the floor by Tweek and Craig. “Because you’re going to sleep, dummy.”

Kyle waved him off. “I’m not even tired.”

Stan threw the quilt at his head. “Bullcrap.”

“Did you guys have a fight?” Kyle asked. When he pulled the blanket off his head Stan was playing with the dragon tooth necklace between his fingers.

“We, um, we broke up, Kyle.”

“Oh,” he said, looking at the ground to pretend to be sad about it, but in all honesty he stopped feeling remorse after the fourth time they broke up. “That sucks, dude. But, hey, you’ll be back together next month.” This earned him a hard punch to the arm. “Ow!”

“You’re a dick,” Stan bit.

“Sorry,” said Kyle. “I think I’m drunk.”

X

“Don’t let Cartman draw on me,” Kyle told him after Stan finally convinced him to go to sleep.

“I won’t,” he promised.

Stan sat criss-cross on the floor next to the couch, watching Kyle struggle to stay awake. Stan was still a little buzzed, maybe even more than buzzed, but he wasn’t as drunk as Kyle was.

Kyle grew a lazy smile on his face, pressing the ankles of his wrists to his face like a toddler. It was cute.

Stan smiled back at him. “What?”
"Why’re you lookin’ at me like that?"

Stan giggled, the warmth from the booze was making him feel so good all over, and Kyle looked so nice lying there like that. Like a little fox. Stan couldn’t remember the last time he had watched Wendy fall asleep. The first time he did, he remembered how her hair spilled out over the pillows like ink, and her hands were curled near her mouth like a baby would to suck their thumb. He remembered wondering if Wendy ever sucked her thumb, but he couldn’t remember her looking as pretty as Kyle did right in this moment.

Stan shook his head, shying his eyes away from Kyle’s face.

“You look so pretty right now, dude.”

Kyle snorted, turning over on the couch, and Stan was grateful for that. His heart was hammering at his own words, and he hadn’t really known why he had said that at all. His ears were burning hotter than the alcohol in his stomach.

Stan swallowed, looking at Kyle’s back.

“Why’d you kiss Rebecca?” he asked.

“Dunno.”

“Do you still like her?”

“No way, dude. I jus’ didn’t want Kenny to pick someone for me to kiss. She was the closest I guess.”

“Oh.” Stan turned to look at his kneecaps, feeling that stomach churning feeling in his guts again. Then he tried to laugh about it, but it came out sounding a little forced. “He probably would have made you kiss Cartman.”

Kyle made a vomiting noise. “Motherfucker,” he mumbled drowsily, and that got Stan laughing again.

“Yeah,” he said. “Or you coulda kissed me…”

He swallowed against the sudden bile trying to launch itself out of his mouth. He burped into his hand to cover it up, shivering at the horrible taste in the back of his throat. He blamed it on the drinks.

Kyle shifted under the blanket, not saying anything.

“Hey, Kyle,” said Stan.

“Yeah?”

“Um...thanks. You know...for being my friend all these years. You’re awesome, you know?”

Kyle turned back over, slowly. His eyelids were drooping over his far away eyes.

“Stan,” he whispered, his eyes closing.

“Yeah, dude.”

“I love you.”
The lump in Stan’s throat was thick, and even though they’ve said it to each other before about a million times, there was something different about the way Kyle said it this time.

Stan combed his fingers through Kyle’s hair, his numb fingers shooting sparks up his arm and into his chest.

“I love you too, Kyle,” Stan whispered. “Go to sleep.”

But Kyle’s breathing was already turning heavy, and Stan knew he was fast asleep. He considered for the briefest of moments to press his lips against Kyle’s freckled forehead. It’d be a quick one, and no one was around to see it, and Kyle is too drunk and too asleep to even know it’d happened.

The bile at the back of his throat, however, was crawling its way back up to his mouth, and he wasn’t sure if he could stand to keep it down long enough. Feeling shaky, he laid down on the ground in front of the fireplace. He listened to the crackling wood, and the sounds of his friends sleeping.

He kept on replaying Kyle’s “Stan, I love you,” over and over until he fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, this chapter took extra long because I decided that last chapter was too short, and I had the brilliant idea of changing the way I write chapters (seven chapters in and I’m changing things...YAY) lol, also I took a vacation, checked out a University, AND one of my best friends got married and I was a bridesmaid. Hopefully things start calming down a bit…Let me know if you enjoyed this chapter! :) (anyone check out that Harvest moon eclipse the other night tho haha)
“You almost got it, dude!” Kenny cheered next to him.

“I see something, I see something!” said Stan, bouncing on his heels.

Kyle tried to hold his wand steady, focusing hard on the memory he had of holding his little brother for the first time. He felt that same happiness rising in his chest when he saw his parents coming up the driveway with Ike in a car seat, and wearing a little blue beanie over his thin dark hair. Kyle had been so excited to share all his toys with his new little brother, but after he saw how little he actually was, all Kyle wanted to do was protect him.

The memory wasn’t happy enough, though. All that burst out of Kyle’s wand was a sad, misshapen, blob of blue light. He panted, lowering his wand.

“Shit,” he muttered.

“Hey, it was a good try, dude,” said Stan, clapping him on the back. “You really almost had it that time.”

Kyle just groaned, plopping down at the base of the oak tree they were sitting under.

It was November, but the ground was bare of any snow just yet. The trees were empty, the grass was dead, and the harsh wind bit at Kyle’s face as they practiced their patronus charms by the Black Lake.

“I’m never going to get this,” he said to his knees. “I can’t believe Cartman formed a fucking patronus before me.”

“Hey,” said Kenny over his shoulder, raising his wand in the air to perform the charm, “you’re not the only one!”

“I know,” said Kyle, “it’s just...I feel like I’ve been working on this forever.”

“You’ll get it, dude,” Stan promised, looking to him with a crooked smile.

It’s been a few weeks since Stan’s birthday party, and Kyle has been avoiding the subject like the plague. The night is mostly a blur, but he knows he had something to do with Stan and Wendy breaking up. And he remembers bits and pieces from the conversation on the couch. He tries not to think too much about it. He’s afraid of what he’ll remember. He wonders about how much Stan remembers from that night, but then decides he doesn’t want to know.

The morning after the party everyone was hungover, and Kyle felt like if he twitched just a finger he’d puke. Kenny had sat up, his eyes glazed and his scarf tangled around him like a noose. “What happened last night?” was the first thing he said. All Kyle could do was groan miserably. Stan was sitting up on his elbows, watching Kyle, but when Kyle turned back to him, expecting a play-by-play of last night, all Stan did was grab the nearest bin to throw up in.

Kyle rubbed at his temples as Kenny recited the patronus charm in front of him.

Ever since they told Kenny Stan and Wendy had broken up again, he had been giving Kyle this
knowing look any time Stan so much as breathed in Kyle’s general direction. Kyle hated him for it. He decided that the next time he did it, he’d have to bring up how he saw Butters sleeping in his lap the night of Stan’s party.

“What’s Cartman’s patronus again?” asked Stan.

“A cat,” said Butters. “We were in class with him when he did it.”

Kyle wrapped his arms around his legs, hugging his knees to his chest. “I hope it’s those ugly cats,” he muttered. “The fat ones with the squished faces.”

“They aren’t ugly!” Butters gasped. “They’re so cute!”

Kenny suddenly whooped, clicking his heels together as a tiny ball of light came bouncing around the pond. “Did I do it?” he asked, squinting out at what had just bursted out of his wand. “I think-- is it? What is it?”

“Good job, Kenny!” said Stan, as Kyle leaned around his legs to see what kind of animal Kenny produced.

As it came closer, Kyle saw the round, silver ears, and delicate whiskers poking from it’s face. It looked up at Kenny with glowing blue eyes.

“A mouse?” said Kenny, almost sounding disappointed.

Butters crouched down, extending a finger to pet the little wispy rodent. “I love it!” he said, and then looked up at Kenny, almost as an echo of the patronus. Kyle suspected Kenny was thinking this too, because his ears were blushing red. “It’s just like you, Ken.”

“Tch,” said Kenny, crouching down beside Butters. “A dirty pathetic little mouse. That’s me.”

“No way!”

“How’d you describe it, then?”

“I’d use mischievous,” said Stan. “Think about it; mice are pretty crafty.”

Kenny looked back at him, his eyes shining. “Yeah,” he said. “Okay.”

“And quiet,” added Butters.

“Mice used to symbolize something more than just death and destruction, you know,” said Kyle. “That was all thanks to the black plague.”

Kenny’s eyes flickered to him, asking him to say more without even speaking.

“Mice were thought to be akin to the Greek God Apollo.”

“Apollo?” repeated Kenny. “Isn’t that the God of, like...archery or some shit?”

Kyle rolled his shoulder. “Yeah, he is. But he’s also the God of light and art. Like the sun. Anyway, mice are symbols for, like, groundedness, determination, innocence, and resourcefulness.” He looked around at their faces, a spike of embarrassment pierced his chest, and he scolded himself for letting his mouth run like that. It was why he had given up making speeches two years ago. He made sure to add a shrug of his shoulders and tack on, ”or some shit like that, I dunno, dude.”
But Kenny’s eyes were sparkling now, and he looked back down at his patronus with more admiration. “Sorry, pal,” he said. “But I ain’t fuckin’ innocent.”

Butters giggled, playfully shoving Kenny’s arm. “I think it’s perfect. C’mon, I wanna try doing mine again!”

Stan nudged at Kyle’s shoe with his toe. “Wanna try again?”

“In a minute,” he mumbled, watching Kenny’s patronus scurry around his feet in a sort of whimsical, bouncing dance.

“Are you afraid of getting a cat like Cartman?”

Kyle glared up at him, fighting between shooting back a response or giving the silent treatment. Stan just smiled back at him, throwing sunshine into Kyle’s gloomy face.

“Then you guys would be soulmates.”

“Stan, if you ever say that to me again I can’t be friends with you, I’m sorry.”

Stan just laughed at him, leaning back against the tree as they watched Butters try the charm yet again.

Stan hadn’t really talked much about Wendy after they broke up. He was sad when he wasn’t drinking, and Kyle worried about him because of that. But he seemed okay now, and Kyle couldn’t smell any liquor on his breath.

Kyle hadn’t seen much of Wendy either. She was usually walking with a heard of her girl friends, keeping her eyes ducked away so she wouldn’t have to look at Stan as he and Kyle passed them in the corridor.

“Are you excited for the Quidditch game?” Stan asked. He was playing Ravenclaw tomorrow.

Kyle shrugged. “Yeah, I guess.” Then Kyle thought about how he’d have to be playing against Wendy, and he wondered if Stan was thinking about throwing the game for her. Anger bubbled in his stomach at the thought. If Stan purposely lost the game in an attempt to win Wendy back Kyle will beat the shit out of him. “Are you?”

Stan was fiddling with his wand in his hands, concentrating on making it balance on one finger. “Yeah,” he said, “I guess.”

Kyle turned back to watch Butters. He hadn’t been able to perform the charm.

“How’d you do it, Kenny?” Butters pouted.

“Just thought of somethin’ happy.”

“What was it?” asked Kyle. “What was your happy thought?”

“Probably boobs,” said Stan, making Kyle and Butters laugh.

Kenny flashed a smile, kicking a rock into the lake. “Karen,” he said simply. And no one asked him anything more about it.

“I’m surprised Butters hasn’t gotten it yet,” said Kyle. “You’re always happy.”

Butters scratched the back of his head sheepishly, flashing a weak smile back at him. “Eh, yeah. I
guess I haven’t thought of anything happy enough yet.”

“Yeah,” said Kyle, nuzzling his cheek into his arms as he turned to look at Stan next to him. He was wearing that dirty red and blue pom hat that he’s had for years, and his cheeks were rosy from the air. “Me either.”

X

Cartman’s nose twitched as he felt something brush against it. He thought it might be Craig. He swatted at the air blindly, muttering a “fuck you, bitch,” before turning over in his bed to go back to sleep. But then he heard a soft purr, making his eyes pop open. A soft head bumped against his back, and he sat up on his elbows to see Damien’s black cat kneading his quilt.

“Mew,” it chirped.

“Jesus fucking Christ,” he growled. “Not you again.”

“Mew.”

“Where’s Mrs. Kitty?” He whipped his head around the empty dormitory, his heart suddenly jumping in his throat when he saw that it was vacant of any gray cats. “Kitty?”

Damien’s cat, Bell, crawled into Cartman’s lap, curling up into a black ball to fall asleep.

“Oh, fuck no,” he lifted her up, pulling harder when her claws dug into the quilt, begging to stay. “Go back to your own room, kitty!”

He tossed the cat down on the floor as he stood up from his four poster. Mrs. Kitty was still nowhere to be found. It made him a little nervous, because usually Mrs. Kitty didn’t leave this room. Not like Damien’s cat, who was always seen stalking around the Slytherin common room.

Normally, Cartman didn’t so much mind the company of cats. He wasn’t some pussy hippie like Stan, who showed a love for all animals. That was just stupid. Most of those animals Stan likes sucks, and they’re smelly. Cats are cool, though. Mrs. Kitty wasn’t so bad, and Craig’s sister had a cat too, and he was okay. He wouldn’t have minded Bell, if Damien wasn’t the owner. Plus, she was always following Cartman around. Even more than Mrs. Kitty did.

Cartman got dressed, trying not to trip over the black cat weaving between his legs, mewling for his attention. He didn’t even share a dormitory with Damien, and yet this cat always found a way to get into Cartman’s room. Which was bad, because her and Mrs. Kitty usually fight, and now he couldn’t find Mrs. Kitty.

Cartman buttoned his pants, huffing his way to his door and shouting, “Damien!”

Damien’s head poked around from his dorm next door, making Cartman jump. Damien was a fucking creep. “Yes?” He said in that fake, sickly sweet voice of his.

“Take your cat,” Cartman grumbled, gesturing to Bell who was nuzzling his calf.

Damien scooped the cat up in his arms, cradling her like a baby. “Sorry about that. She just likes you.”

“Yeah,” said Cartman, “just keep her in your dorm, okay? I don’t want Mrs. Kitty getting into any fights or anything.”

“Oh, that’s right,” said Damien, peering past Cartman’s shoulder to look into his dorm. Cartman
shifted to block his view, but this meant having to look into Damien’s eyes. Not only was this faggy, but Damien’s eyes were fucking creepy. “I forgot you had a cat.”

Cartman swallowed, trying to hold his glare. He could tell Damien was lying. He knew something Cartman didn’t. “Yeah.”

“You like your cat?”

“Kitty?” Chirped Cartman. His heart was beating pretty fast now, and he looked back to Damien, slowly shutting the door behind him. He wondered if Damien could have taken her. Probably to do some kind of sick gay devil worship on her. “Yeah, she’s okay.”

“I just adore cats,” Damien cooed, and Cartman got a sick feeling in his gut.

“Y-yeah…” he muttered. “They’re pretty sweet. Listen, I didn’t see Mrs. Kitty in my room today, you don’t happen to know where she is? Do you?”

Damien hummed, rolling his eyes towards the sky as though he’d find the right answer there. “Can’t say I have, Eric.”

“Okay,” said Cartman. “Just...um, let me know if you see her.”

Cartman made to walk past Damien, but Damien didn’t seem to realize this conversation was over.

“Are you going to the Quidditch game today, Eric?”

“I might. Why?”

“I thought maybe we could sit together.”

Cartman glared at him again, but this time it was more out of confusion than anything else. *What. The. Fuck.* This kid had to be on crack. Two months ago Damien Thorn wouldn’t even sneeze in his general direction, and now he wanted to fucking sit next to each other like a couple of homos at the Quidditch game? Yeah the fuck right. Knowing this psycho, he was probably going to light the Quidditch Pitch on fire during the game, and he just wanted Cartman to be with the rest of the school when it went down. Yeah right, bitch.

“Actually, I don’t think I’ll go,” said Cartman. “I should really find Mrs. Kitty.”

“Hmm...okay.” Damien looked lovingly down at his cat in his arms. She was purring loudly, nudging her head against his fingers for more pets. “McCormick has a rat, doesn’t he?”

Cartman furrowed his eyebrows suspiciously.


Damien’s troubling, twisted smile made a reappearance on his face as he stoked Bell’s fur. “No reason,” he said. “Just wondering.”

Cartman frowned at him. “You’re a fag, Damien.”

Damien just cackled like an old witch. It made Cartman’s skin crawl, and he hurried towards the common room just to get away from him. He found Craig sitting with Mrs. Kitty there. While he was thankful she wasn’t caught up in some cultist shit, he didn’t understand why Craig of all people had her sitting on his lap.
“Craig, what the fuck?”

X

Kyle was sitting at the Hufflepuff table with Kenny and Butters. His bag was taking up the seat next to him in place of Stan. He was due to come into the Great Hall for breakfast any minute now with his Quidditch gear on, and a game day smile on his face.

Kenny leaned across the table, his eyes trained on the Gryffindor table over Kyle’s shoulder. “Hey, Rebecca’s looking at you again,” he said.

Kyle shot a frown at Kenny, feeling his ears turn red. “Didn’t you tell her I’m not interested?”

Ever since Stan’s birthday party Rebecca has been making goo-goo eyes at Kyle like he was her favorite member of the Weird Sisters. “That must have been some kiss,” Kenny had told him one day when Rebecca had quickly walked by them, blushing furiously. After about a month of her tailing after him, Kyle was getting a little annoyed by it. He didn’t want to hurt her feelings, so he had told Kenny to tell her that Kyle liked someone else (which was true, but she didn’t need to know who).

“I told her,” said Kenny, shoveling cereal through the gap in his scarf.

“And?”

“She’s totally in love with you, dude.”

Kyle groaned, thunking his head down on the table.

“You’re gonna have to tell her, Kyle,” said Kenny. “Tell her it didn’t mean anything. You were drunk. It was a dare.”

Kyle looked up at him, eyes widening. “It’ll break her heart!”

He looked shyly over his shoulder at Rebecca, who was watching him with her chin in her hands and a dreamy smile on her face. She twiddled her fingers at him in a wave. He winced, looking back to Kenny and Butters.

“It’ll be worse if you keep letting her do this,” said Butters softly. “If you don’t say anything she’ll keep thinking she’ll have a chance.”

Kenny’s eyes flickered to Butters for a moment, and something like guilt flashed in them. “Yeah,” he said. “It’ll suck, but she’ll get over it.”

Kyle sighed, running his fingers through the knots in his hair. “This sucks. Why did you make me do that stupid dare in the first place, Kenny? This is all your fault.”

Kenny shrugged. “Seemed like a good idea at the time.”

“You weren’t even that drunk.”

“Didn’t say I was. It just seemed like a good idea.”

Stan was walking up to the table now, and Kyle felt the room grow a little brighter upon seeing him.

Kyle moved his stuff off the seat next to him so Stan could join them.
“Hey, guys,” he said.

“Feeling nervous yet?” asked Butters.

“I’m always nervous before a game,” said Stan, his smile faltering a little.

“I got you breakfast.” Kyle slid a plate of pancakes in front of him, his heart sparkling at the way Stan’s eyes glinted.

“Thanks, dude,” he said.

Kyle turned away, feeling uncomfortably warm under Kenny’s gaze.

“You’re welcome,” he muttered.

“Did you hear Kyle has a girlfriend?”

Kyle shot him a deadly glare, kicking his shin under the table.

Stan turned to him, eyebrows raised and syrup dribbling out of the corner of his mouth. “What?”

“He’s talking about Rebecca.” Kyle rolled his eyes. “But she’s not my girlfriend.”

“She thinks she is,” Butters giggled.

“He’s too afraid to talk to her, though.” Kyle went to kick at Kenny again, but something Stan said distracted him.

“Well, you know Kyle,” he laughed lightly, looking down at his breakfast. “Girls aren’t exactly his forte.”

Kenny started choking on his cereal, and Butters was the only one who managed to fake a laugh. All Kyle could do was stare blankly up at Stan, heat rising to the back of his neck.

Kenny balled up a fist, pounding it against his chest. “Sorry,” he gasped, “went down the wrong tube.”

Kyle pretended to be interested in his glass of orange juice, ignoring the burning awareness of Stan’s shoulder being close enough to touch his. There was a time when Kyle wouldn’t think twice about scooting closer to close that gap between their bodies, but now all he wanted to do was get as far away from Stan as possible. He was embarrassed, and felt like he wanted to throw up a little.

Kyle has never talked about his sexuality with Stan. In fact, it was the only thing he never shared with him. He’s always wondered if Stan knew about him, especially since they’re getting older, and Kyle hasn’t had a girlfriend since second year.

*If you knew all this time why didn’t you say something, dammit.*

Butters took up whistling nonchalantly, and Kenny became preoccupied with something in his pockets while Stan ate his breakfast quietly.

Honestly, Kyle didn’t care if Stan knew. He just wished he would have brought it up sooner, or at least asked him. It felt a little insulting that he had just assumed without even asking.

“Here you go, Marissa,” Kenny suddenly spoke up, making Kyle look up to see Kenny holding his old brown rat in his fist, offering her a piece of toast.
Now Kyle was sure he was going to throw up. “Kenny! Don’t bring your rat to the breakfast table! We eat here!”

Kenny looked at him like he had never realized that before. “I always bring her on Quidditch days,” he said. “She’s a good luck charm.”

“Marsh!” Clyde was calling to Stan at the head of the table. The rest of the Hufflepuff Quidditch team was flanking him. “C’mon, let’s get going!”

“Gotta go, guys,” he said, standing up from the table.

“Good luck, Stan!” Butters shouted after him, and Stan shot them all one last smile before leaving with his team.

When the Quidditch team left the Great Hall, Kyle thunked his head back on the table. Kenny laughed, but it was weak and sounded forced.

“He knows,” Kyle groaned. “God, I’m so embarrassed.”

“Why?” said Butters. “He didn’t seem upset about it.”

Kyle just groaned, tugging on his curls hard enough to rip them out of his skull. “You wouldn’t understand, Butters,” he said.

“How do you know I don’t?” When Kyle looked back up Butters looked pissed. His jaw was screwed tight, and his eyes had gone dark.

Kyle blinked. Butters has always been a bit fruity. He’s always been an easy target for Cartman and a few others who were hateful judgmental pricks. They were mostly the reason Kyle was only comfortable confiding in Kenny and Butters. Kyle used to think Butters was gay too, he just never said anything until last year. Kenny was closer to Butters than anyone else, and he was genuinely curious. He was hoping there was at least someone in this school he could relate with. But Kenny had just said no, so Kyle never assumed it again.

“Wait,” he said, “what?”

Kenny whipped his head around at Butters, his eyes wide. “Butters, you don’t have to—”

“I’m gay, Kyle.”

Kyle whipped his head around at Butters, his eyes wide. “Butters, you don’t have to—”

“I’m gay, Kyle.”

Kyle raised his eyebrows. “Oh,” he said. “I’m...sorry, Butters. I didn’t know.”

Butters just seemed to slump into himself a little, putting his hands on his elbows and pouting down at the table. “S’okay,” he said quietly. “Nobody does.”

“You can’t tell anyone,” Kenny said instantly, almost protectively. “His parents will kill him.”

“I won’t,” said Kyle, looking at Kenny with a frown. He wanted to ask how long he’s known about Butters, and why he had lied to him. Kyle thought they told each other everything.

Kenny settled back in his seat, looking at Butters like he was waiting for him to say something.

“You shouldn’t be embarrassed that Stan knows,” said Butters, poking at the food on his plate. “That’s all I was trying to say. He seems okay with it. It could be worse, Kyle.”

Kyle thought of Butters’ parents; he’s only met them a few times, but his mother talks about them
a lot, and about how happy she is he made friends with a Stotch. Butters is from a very long line of famous pureblooded wizards. Sort of like the Marsh’s, but the Stotch’s are practically royalty. He’s the only one in his family to carry on that family name, and something scratched holes in the pit of Kyle’s stomach at the thought of Butters having to tell his parents he won’t be keeping the Stotch bloodline alive any longer.

Kyle kept his mouth shut.

X

Kyle stood in the stands, sandwiched between Butters and Kenny.

“It’s too damn cold,” Kyle muttered, rubbing his hands together for warmth. He always hated playing Quidditch in the cold. The wind bit at his face when he flew, and when it snowed he could barely see two feet in front of him. It made the snitch easier to find, though. The bright gold stood out against the white, and it was always a neck and neck fight for the ball between the Seekers.

The game had already started, and Stan was doing terrible. He had let the Quaffle fly by him at least twice now, and had let the Ravenclaw team score on them three times. If he didn’t get his head in the game soon Kyle was going to punch him.

“Stan looks confused out there.” noted Kenny.

“He’s doing it for Wendy,” said Kyle. “He thinks if he lets Ravenclaw win it’ll get her to talk to him again.”

Kenny snorted. “Jesus, Stan.”

Kyle frowned up at him. “You’re surprised?” This wasn’t exactly out of character for Stan. He was always doing ridiculous things for Wendy’s attention after they broke up.

“A little,” said Kenny, his eyes trained on the Quidditch players. “I mean, I know he’s always been a little fucked up when it came to Wendy, but I...I don’t know. I really thought he’d be over it this time.”

“Nope,” sid Kyle, letting his lips pop on the “p”. Kyle knew this back and forth shit between Wendy and Stan was going to keep going for the rest of their lives, and Kyle was going to end up miserable and alone, because he couldn’t ever picture himself quitting Stan. Even now.

Kenny just hummed, his eyebrows furrowing.

“What are you thinking?” asked Kyle.

“If I tell you, it’ll just piss you off.”

Kyle rolled his eyes, remembering Stan’s voice from a faraway place, telling him. “You’re always pissed off.”

“Tell me anyway,” he said.

“I think Stan’s lost out there because you’re not playing Seeker.”

Kyle glared at him, his cheeks feeling warm despite the chilly weather.

“No, I’m serious,” said Kenny, pointing out to where Stan was flying on his broom. “Look at him
Kyle put his hands on his elbows, frowning out at the Quidditch field, watching Stan look around helplessly as another Quaffle was tossed over his head by one of the Ravenclaw Chasers.

“We weren’t even on the same team,” said Kyle. “Why would he be looking for me? We’d be playing against each other.”

“Yeah,” said Kenny, “but you guys always made it a good game. I don’t know. I think he’s just waiting to see you fly by on your broom. I think it’s a comfort to him.”

Kyle’s heart fluttered painfully.

“Stupid,” he muttered.

Kenny knocked his arm with his elbow. “I was thinking more like love.”

Kyle shoved him, only making Kenny bang into the bannister and laugh, pushing Kyle back into Butters.

“I think he just needs some encouragement,” said Butters. He then turned back to the field, throwing his fist into the air while cheering. “Go Stan!”

Kenny joined in, though you couldn’t really hear his voice from behind his scarf. Kyle eventually joined too. He cupped his hands around his mouth, and shouted Stan’s name across the field, cheering and whooping with Butters and Kenny.

Stan actually looked over his shoulder like he heard them, but Kyle was sure he wouldn’t be able to spot them out in the crowd of students all cheering and screaming for their classmates.

Still, Kyle felt a little better after Stan flashed a warm smile, before he turned around and caught the Quaffle.

Stan played better after that, and Kyle actually felt a smile growing on his lips.

Butters swung on the railing, bumping into Kyle’s shoulder and giggling. “I told you!” He said. “I told you, all he needed was some support!”

“Yeah,” said Kyle, clapping his freezing hands together as Sally Bands caught the Snitch, waving it in the air as the Hufflepuff team all swarmed towards her to congratulate her.

“Told you Marissa was good luck!” Kenny said, hopping down the steps of the stands. “She’s a lucky rat, I’m tellin’ ya.”

X

The Hufflepuff team was cheering in victory as they all landed on the ground, clapping each other on the back.

“Great game!” Clyde whooped, coming over to playfully punch Stan in the arm. “That was awesome!”

“Yeah,” said Stan. “It was.”

“Celebration in the common room tonight!”

The team all gave another howl of victory before filing into the locker room. Stan strayed back,
his eyes trained on the sky for Wendy to come down from her Keeper post. When she finally did, she almost looked surprised to see him waiting for her. She gave a little smile.

“Good game, Stan,” she said. “At the beginning there, I almost thought you were…”

“That I was what?”

“That you were going to throw the game for me.”

“Oh.” He bit down on his lip because it was true. Or it had been. It hadn’t been on purpose though! When he had first seen Wendy at her Keeper’s post he felt like his heart was weighing him down on his broom, and he couldn’t seem to get to the Quaffle fast enough. But then he thought he heard Kyle cheering him on from the stands. He instinctively turned to look for him, half expecting to see him flying by on his Cleansweep Twelve, joking that he won’t let Stan win if he won’t even try.

Stan saw a blur of red somewhere in the stands. Maybe it was Kyle and maybe it wasn’t, but all the same; it was enough to make him start thinking straight again. He hadn’t really realized how much he had missed playing Quidditch with Kyle, even if they were on the opposite teams. He doesn’t really know what came over him. All he knows is that he stopped losing the game for Wendy, and started winning it for Kyle.

“Stan, I’m worried about you…”

He looked back up at her, eyebrows raised.

“Do you...you know if you ever need someone to talk to, you always have me, right? I’m still your friend, Stan. I always will be.”

Stan shook his head, his heart clenching in his chest as the wind blew her hair into her face, making the smell of sweat and plums twang his nose. He tried to remember the last time that scent made his heart skip a beat, but all he can think about is Kyle’s shampoo and toothpaste.

“I’m fine, Wendy,” he said to the ground.

“Stan--”

“Why are you doing this?” He snapped. “You broke up with me, remember?”

Wendy was quiet for a moment as her cheeks turned red.

“I thought it’d be better for the both of us,” she snipped. “I thought you’d understand.”

Stan huffed, his breath coming out in white balloons in front of his nose. “Understand what, exactly?”

“That we’re not in love anymore, Stan.”

Stan turned away from her, his heart turning cold, and feeling solid in his chest, like a rock. He thought about warming it with Firewhiskey. About re-experiencing that dizzy, happy warmth all over so he wouldn’t have to think about Kyle-- Wendy. So I don’t have to think about Wendy.

“You love somebody else,” she said gently, “and it’s okay.”

Stan could feel the pinpricks of tears forming at his eyes, and this time he didn’t fight back against them.
He shook his head at his shoes. “I’m sorry, Wendy,” he muttered.

“Stan, it’s okay. I’m not mad.”

“I know,” he said. “But still.”

“Stan, it’s okay. I know how much you love Kyle--”

“Stop.”

“Stan, listen to me.”

“I don’t love Kyle.”

“If you keep telling yourself that you’re going to end up miserable, Stanley Marsh, now dammit listen to me!” He heard her stomp her foot on the ground, huffing loudly. It made him think about how cute he thought she was the first time he saw her in Transfiguration class. She had gotten into some debate with the Professor, and had gotten so worked up her cheeks had turned pink. His heart twitched from the nostalgia. When did they get this old?

Even if I did, Stan thought, hurriedly wiping the tears from his face before he turned back to Wendy. Even if I did love Kyle in that...in that way...there’s no way in Hell he’s gonna love me back.

This morning had been accident. He didn’t know what he was thinking, letting those words slip out of his mouth like they were meaningless. He didn’t know what was wrong with him. As soon as he said them he wished he hadn’t. Kyle wouldn’t even look at him.

Stan has known. For a while now he’s had a feeling Kyle was gay, but he just didn’t know how to bring up the subject. He was constantly wishing for Kyle to come to him, to finally open up and tell him this secret he’s been keeping for God knows how long. It almost killed Stan to think that Kyle wouldn’t come to him because he didn’t trust him.

Stan didn’t really blame him though.

He thought about standing in the Great Hall, eleven years old, and still holding hands with his best friend. The look on Kyle’s face when he was the first to let go just about killed him.

Wendy’s face had fallen.

It started to snow. It stuck to her hair, looking like spilled salt on a black counter top. She looked so pretty, standing there in the middle of the Quidditch field. That post-game glow about her, and her Nimbus 2005 still at her side. He thought he could see the part in the handle where they carved their initials. This look about her used to drive him crazy. He used to sit in the stands, drooling next to Kenny as he watched Wendy play Keeper during matches. He used to daydream about kissing her in the locker room. But that tickle in his chest was long gone.

“I fucked up, Wendy.”

“Stan...”

Stan shook his head, heading towards the locker room. He knew he still had some bottles of booze from Kenny he had hidden under his bed. He felt cold, and sick. He wanted to take a few gulps of Firewhiskey to make him feel better for the party Clyde was throwing. Just a few. Nothing too crazy. He’d just take a few sips of it, and once he starts feeling better he’ll head out to the party.
He paused, his fingers reaching for the door handle.

“Wendy?”

“Yeah?”

“Did you get the patronus charm yet?”

“Yeah, why?”

“What was it?”

“A swan.”

“Don’t tell Kyle you got it, okay?”

“I won’t.”

X

“I wonder where Stan is,” Kyle said at dinner. “It isn’t like him to skip meals.”

Kenny shrugged. “Celebrating with his house, probably. How often is it that Hufflepuff wins?”

Kyle put his cheek in his hand, rolling his eyes. If Stan had heard that he’d be telling Kenny off. “We’ll win the Quidditch cup this year, Kenny! We’ve got just as good a chance as Gryffindor does!”

But Hufflepuff hasn’t won the cup since their third year. Coincidently this was the same year Stan and Wendy started having a thing for each other. It’s been bouncing around between the other three houses since then. Currently Gryffindor has it.

On the other side of Kenny was Butters, swishing his wand around in the air while muttering the patronous charm under his breath.

“Give it a rest, Butters,” Kenny told him.

“I think I’m gonna get it this time, though!” Butters’ pink tongue was poking out of the side of his mouth as he tried the charm yet again. Kyle had lost count over how many tries he has given it.

Kenny and Kyle watched as something blue exploded from Butters’ wand, flying across the Gryffindor table and landing somewhere at the Slytherin table. They had now caught the attention of everyone in the Great Hall.

Butters wasn’t looking at the sour faces of Slytherin’s though, he was watching a silvery hare hop across their heads and back towards him.

“A bunny!” he said softly.

“A hare,” Kyle corrected. He hadn’t meant it to come out sounding irritated, but he had at least expected to have gotten the charm before Butters did.

While the Gryffindor table gushed over Butters for achieving the charm, Kyle snuck out of the Great Hall. He was listing off all the names of his classmates who have gotten the charm so far; there was Cartman, Token, Kenny, Butters, Tweek, Craig, Bebe, and even Scott Malkinson where all the ones he knew of who had gotten the charm before he could. He glared at the statue of Helga Hufflepuff as he approached it, feeling stupid.
Even after quitting Quidditch, he thought, you haven’t gotten any smarter.

Then his heart panged, because he truly did miss playing Seeker, but now he was wondering if he had made the right choice.

With a heavy sigh, he headed towards the Hufflepuff Basement. As he crawled through the portrait hole the sounds of celebration vibrated through his bones. He rolled his eyes at himself, thinking that Stan must be halfway done with a second bottle of Firewhiskey by now. And he had been doing so well lately, too.

But when Kyle came out into the common room he didn’t see any sign of Stan. He swept the room three times, looking into the happy crowd of the Quidditch team the best he could. But Stan wasn’t with them.

Kyle found Clyde, hanging on to one of the girls in his house. She was giggling as he whispered something in her ear.

“Clyde,” Kyle called him, earning a confused and drunken look from him.

“Kyle?” he slurred. “Kyle! Hey! Wanta drink?”

“No thanks, I’m just looking for Stan. Is he down here with you?”

“Wha? Oh, nah, he’s a party pooper.” Clyde burped, causing the girl next to him to giggle louder. “He’s in our dorm.”

“Okay, thanks.”

Kyle left Clyde and the girl, heading for the boys dormitory. The party practically disappeared when he shut the door, and he was thankful for that.

He walked into Stan’s dorm, finding him sitting on the floor with bottles of empty Firewhiskey surrounding him. Kyle’s heart sunk.

“Ohmygod, dude,” he said.

Stan looked up, his eyes faraway and glassy. He smiled crookedly. “Kyle!”

“Stan, how much of this did you drink?” Kyle kneeled to the ground, picking up the bottles of Firewhiskey like they were going to tell him how they had convinced Stan to drink them. “Jesus Christ, dude.”

“Kyle, Kyle, Kyle--” Stan hiccuped, crawling towards Kyle on the floor. “Kyyyllee, I think I’m okay now. I can go down to the party now, I’m okay.”

“What?” Kyle looked up at him, frowning at the goofy smile looking back at him. “You’re ridiculous, and you need to go to bed.”


Kyle wrapped Stan’s arm around his shoulder, lifting him up off the floor. He struggled a bit under Stan’s weight, forgetting about the muscle advantage he had on Kyle.


Stan threw his head back dramatically, almost making Kyle fall backwards.
“You don’t get it!”

“Sorry,” said Kyle, placing Stan on his bed.

Stan shook his head, “No, I’m sorry.”

“Do you want me to sleepover?” asked Kyle, he was already taking off his shoes. He was planning out the rest of the night in his head: if he throws up I’ll need to be ready to get him to the bathroom. Maybe in the morning I can sneak into the kitchens and get the house elves to give me some bread and coffee.

Stan stood back up off the bed, turning to Kyle with a trembling bottom lip.

He was a goddamn mess. Kyle has seen him like this a few times in the past, maybe twice. Both happened after him and Wendy had broken up. But this case seemed like the worst.

“Stan,” Kyle said with a sigh. He stood up too, putting his hands on Stan’s arm, trying to guide him back to his bed. “It’s okay, Stan. Let’s just go to bed.”

“No!” Like an angry toddler refusing bedtime, Stan shoved Kyle away from him, raking his arm across his eyes to hide the tears.

Kyle was shocked at the sudden outburst, fear striking his heart as he thought he had almost heard a twinge of Randy in Stan’s voice.

“Stan,”

“No, no, I’m sorry,” Stan blubbered. “I’m sorrrrry, Kyle. I’m sorry.”

Kyle held up his hands slowly, shushing Stan. He was didn’t want anyone coming up here to see him like this. “It’s okay, Stan. I forgive you.”

“No, no, no.” Stan shook his head. “I’m sorry...I’m sorry I’m just a giant douche, Kyle. God, damnit! I’m sorry I let--I let go…”

Kyle frowned. “Let...let go?”

“Yeah!” Stan sniffled. His eyes were red and looking blearily at Kyle.

Jesus, thought Kyle, he’s totally shitfaced right now.

“Ya’know,” Stan slurred, “in the Great Hall! I let go!”

“Stan, let’s go to bed,” Kyle said gently. “We can talk about it tomorrow.”

“Not tomorrow!” Stan slapped his hands to his head, combing his fingers through his hair. “Tonight! I let go of you, Kyle! I’m so, so, sorry!”

Kyle pressed his hands against Stan’s chest to push him back on the mattress, but Stan caught him by the wrist, pulling him flush against his chest.

“Stan!”

Kyle’s breath was caught in his throat as he looked up at him. Stan’s cheeks rosy red, and his eyes teeming with tears. He bent down, aiming for Kyle’s mouth.
Kyle had fantasized about this a million times. He has had dreams about it, and nightmares. The one’s where he’d kiss Stan under their tree by the Black Lake when they were studying, and Stan would kiss him back like it was the most natural thing in the world. Or the ones where Stan would spontaneously kiss him in the middle of the Great Hall. The ones where Stan would push him away, or their classmates would laugh, where some of tamer nightmares.

But looking up at Stan now, reeking of Firewhiskey and his face leaking with tears, Kyle thinks this would be the worst case scenario. He didn’t want Stan. Not when he was like this. It wasn’t fair.

It took all of Kyle’s strength to turn away from Stan as he leaned in to kiss him. He squeezed his eyes shut so he wouldn’t be tempted to look at the hurt on Stan’s face. He grinded his molars to dust, Stan’s grip on his wrist loosening.

“I’m too late,” said Stan miserably. He fell back onto his four poster mattress, and that was when Kyle finally turned back to look at him. “I told her. I told her I’m too late.”

Kyle didn’t have any energy to find out who Stan was talking about.

He sat on the edge of Stan’s bed, his heart heavy.

“He won’t remember this, he told himself. He won’t. He won’t remember tomorrow. Just go to bed. He won’t even remember this…

For the first time in a long time, maybe even for the first time ever, Kyle didn’t stay the night with Stan. He shut off the copper lamp next to his bed, and left the dormitory for the common room. The rest of the Quidditch team was still partying like nobody was missing. Like everything was okay, and it made Kyle even sadder. He weaved between the crowd, doing his best to keep from making eye contact with anyone as he made his way for the portrait hole.

He didn’t let himself cry until he was in the comfort of his own dorm.

He listened to the wind blowing around the Ravenclaw Tower, almost feeling it move like his mother would when she would rock him.

X

The snow had continued falling for three days. These three days also happened to be the phases of the full moon, but the days had passed without anyone giving a thought to the werewolf. Two months now and the castle had been quite. Kyle was getting too comfortable.
Damien stared out the window of his dormitory at the frozen Black Lake, still teeming with life. Beelzebub was sitting next to him, purring happily. He twisted her tail between his fingers, watching the fish swim by.

Kyle wasn’t the only one getting comfortable. Everyone else was too. They were all thinking the werewolf had left. They were thinking they were safe in Hogwarts again.

He sat back against the green plush pillow pressed against his back, smiling as a tentacle came out from the depths of the lake, swiping away a fish too stupid to swim away with his friends.

“Are you hungry, Bell?”

X

Kyle shivered against the cold air, tugging his green hat farther down against his ears. He was out with Kenny, Butters, Stan, and Cartman at the Black Lake. Stan was practicing the patronus charm, and Kyle had tried getting it again too, but he had given up already.

Butters was building a snowman, and Kenny was beside him, pretending to be packing snow onto the snowman, but was really just making snowballs to attack Cartman with. Cartman was propped up against the oak tree, sipping on hot chocolate.

“I think you and Kahl are the only two in sixth year who haven’t gotten this charm yet, Stan.”

“Shut up,” said Kyle. He had started packing the snow into little balls too. “We’re not the only ones.”

“Are too,” said Cartman. “I’m pretty sure all the kids in Dumbledore’s Army had the patronus charm mastered by now, and you fags don’t have shit.”

“You hate Dumbledore’s Army,” said Kenny. He was tossing a snowball lightly in his mitten, as though testing it.


“Try it again, Kyle,” said Stan, turning to look at him over his shoulder, his eyes bright. “C’mon, just one more time?”

Kyle had to look someplace else. Ever since that night he hasn’t been able to look Stan in the eyes. He hasn’t brought it up, and he doesn’t even know if Stan knew he was ever there. He probably didn’t. But Kyle wasn’t sure what was worse: if Stan didn’t remember--that seemed easy enough. Kyle could just forget the whole thing happened too. But if Stan did remember, and he just wasn’t talking about it-- well, then that was a whole other story.

“I dunno, Stan.”

“C’mon, please? Just once! Then we’ll take a break.”

Cartman gagged. “I don’t wanna listen to your guys’ pillowtalk.”

Just to spite Cartman Kyle huffed as got to his feet, walking to Stan’s side. They rose their wands together, and Kyle took a deep breath.

Something happy….something happy….
Stan’s smiling face always came up first when Kyle would start searching for happy memories. Usually he pushed this thought away, instantly coming up with another happy memory. This time though, he held onto it.

He thought of Stan laughing, drinking Butterbeer and Firewhiskey, and watching his cheeks turn pink under the glow of the Hufflepuff common room. But suddenly that laughing, happy face distorted into the one from a few nights ago. The one with tears staining his face, still dirty from playing Quidditch. The one with snot dripping out his nose, and begging Kyle to let him kiss him. Blubbering that he was sorry, and holding Kyle by his wrist. Kyle thought of this, and he no longer felt happy.

A burst of light came from Stan’s wand, and Kyle almost jumped at it. Stan seemed just as surprised, staring at the silvery blue light trotting around his head, wagging an otter-like tail.

“I got it,” he said, his eyes round and bright. He looked to Kyle next to him, grinning. “I got it! I got a dog! A hound!”

“Awesome, Stan!” Butters cheered.

But Stan’s smile fell, just ever so slightly.

“Oh,” he said softly. “Kyle, it’s okay. Just try it--”

But Kyle wasn’t mad Stan had gotten it before him. At this point he had almost expected it, really. Kyle just tried to smile back, trying to ignore the pinpricks of tears stinging the corners of his eyes. He told himself it was because he was disappointed in himself, and not because of the memory he was thinking of.

“What did you think of?” he asked.

“Quidditch,” Stan said at once, almost hurriedly. “Just, uh, Quidditch.”

Kyle looked up at the hound dog galloping around the school grounds, smirking at the playful goofiness and floppy ears. “It’s very...you.”

Cartman coughed loudly into the fist of his mitten. “Gaywads.”

Kenny threw the snowball at Cartman’s face, earning a: “Ay! Kenny, you sonofabitch!”

Kenny just laughed, already packing up more ammo as Cartman struggled to form snowballs of his own. Butters threw another one, accidently hitting Kenny in the back of the head.

“Oops!” He gasped, but then he giggled. “I’m sorry, Kenny!”

Kenny, his eyes squinted from smiling, threw a snowball back at him.

Stan elbowed Kyle’s arm, his grin returning. “I’m not missing out on this. You?”

Kyle, his heart still tender, looked at Stan’s glowing face. He smiled back, shaking his head. Stan bent down to start scooping up snow in his blue mittens, making a pile for both of them. Kyle crouched to the ground to join him, feeling the sadness leave him slowly, and then all at once as Cartman nailed him in the side of the face with snow. He roared with laughter.

His laughing, open mouth made it an easy target for Kyle to throw one right at his tonsils.

Cartman sputtered, gagging into the snow as Kenny nearly toppled into Butters from laughing so
“Dude, I think that had pee in it!” Cartman squealed.

Stan clapped Kyle’s shoulder, overcome with joy and laughter. His dark eyelashes were holding snowflakes, and Kyle couldn’t stop falling for him. Even when he was hurting. Even when he was mad at him. He couldn’t stop loving him.

He was doomed.

Chapter End Notes

so this feels like a big fat filler chapter and I'm sorry
Kyle shuffled quickly out of potions class with the Gryffindor class, blushing furiously as Rebecca tailed after him.

“Sorry, Rebecca,” he said quickly, “I’m really busy tonight.”

“Oh,” she said. “Well, we can make it a study date!”

Kyle choked on his spit, refusing to even look at her out of his peripherals.

“Um, I’m sorry, but um...I can’t Rebecca, not today.

There was a crowd of students at the top of the stairs. They had him trapped. With Rebecca.

“How about tomorrow?” She chirped, and it killed Kyle to hear that hopefulness in her voice. It was in the back of his mind to tell her the truth, but he really hated having to confront someone like this. When they had first dated it had been more of mutual agreement to break up. Rebecca had brought it up first, which Kyle was thankful for. He had been mulling it over for weeks on how he’d bring it up that he didn’t like her that way anymore. He was doing the exact same thing right now.

He took a deep breath, cursing at Kenny for the hundredth thousandth time for ever making him play that stupid game of truth or dare.

He turned to her. A shot of guilt cutting through his lungs when he saw her warm smile and bright eyes.

He swallowed.

“Rebecca, I have something--”

“*I’m going to fucking kill you!*”

Kenny’s voice sent a chill down Kyle’s spine, making him whip his head back towards the dungeons he had just left out of.

“Is that a threat, McCormick?” Damien’s voice echoed, like he was making sure it was loud enough for everyone to hear.

“Yes.”

Some girls squealed as something brown and furry scampered over their shoes. A few others leapt into the air, dancing on their feet and making noises of disgust. Kyle squinted down at it as it ran past him and Rebecca.

“*Marissa?*” he said.

A yowl attracted Kyle’s attention back towards the stairs again. This time, it was a skinny black cat, pouncing up the staircase and nearly tripping students as they tried to escape whatever scene was happening down there.

“What is going on?” said Rebecca, frowning as the cat went to chase after Marissa.
Next came Kenny; racing up the stairs with his eyes wild and angry.

“Get your stupid fucking cat away from my rat!” He spat.

“Get your filthy rat away from my Bell!” Damien was at his heels, pushing their classmates out of his way as they ran after their pets.

And after him, was Butters, running on his toes like he always does. His face pale, and calling, “Kenny! Kenny! Kenny, wait!”

Kenny whipped past Kyle, not even glancing at him.

Kyle went after him, deserting Rebecca and pushing through the crowd in a blind sort of fear. Butters was at his side, panting. “Oh, Jesus.”

Kyle saw a brown little speck jumping through the hall. Marissa had made it pretty far, but the cat wasn’t far behind her.

Kenny was fumbling for his wand, nearly tearing out the seams of his pockets as he drew it out, pointing it at Damien’s cat.

“ No!” Damien crashed into him, knocking Kenny’s chin to the tile floor.

Damien fell ontop of him. Kenny’s wand went sliding across the floor. The cat was steps away from Marissa. Damien picked up his head to watch his cat pounce into the air.

There was a squeak.

The entire castle was holding a breath.

Butters fingers ghosted his open mouth, his eyes welling up with tears.

“Oh no…”

“Now that’s a bad kitty!” Damien scolded, but it sounded fake. It made Kyle’s stomach twist. “You come here, Belzebub!”

Kyle couldn’t see Kenny’s face, but he watched him pick up his head. The cat was holding Marissa’s limp body between its teeth, a proud glint in it’s yellow eyes. Something seemed to snap in him.

“You sonofabitch!” He whirled around on his back, clocking Damien in the jaw. Damien fell to the other side of Kenny, and Kenny immediately straddled him. The students roared, rushing forward to swell around them, chanting, “ fight, fight, fight, fight!”

Kyle and Butters ran with them, but they had to fight to get to the center of the circle to break it up.

Kenny was able to deliver some damage to Damien, but Damien was tougher than he looked. He kneed Kenny in the nuts before swiping him across the nose. Kenny’s blood spurted across the tile floors. Kyle finally broke through the crowd, scooping his arms under Kenny’s armpits, pulling him off as he squirmed.

“Let me go, Kyle! ” He shouted. “Fucking--let me go!”

He wished Stan would have been there. He was usually better at containing Kenny when he was thrashing around like this. Kyle’s skinny arms were more like sticks compared to Kenny’s tall
stature and strong chest. But Kyle did his best, gathering Kenny’s cloak in his fists to keep him from getting away.

Butters stood in front of him, holding out his hands like he was settling a startled horse. “It’s okay, Kenny,” he said softly.

“No, it’s not okay, Butters!” He finally managed to pull free from Kyle, knocking him on his ass. “That motherfucker just killed my pet!”

Kyle spotted Damien, sitting on the floor, with a smile on his face. He had his hand on something, but it was already too late when Kyle noticed it.

With one swift motion Damien had Kenny’s scarf pooling to his feet in a curtain of red and gold.

Kyle almost brought his hands up to his eyes, the blood and yellow eyes from his nightmares flashed before them, and he for a moment he thought this could be another dream.

But it wasn’t.

Butters’ eyes went wide at the appearance of Kenny’s scar, but Kenny didn’t even seem to notice.

“I’m going to rip your head off, Thorn,” Kenny hissed, “and then I’m going to eat your cat for breakfast.”

Kenny didn’t seem to realize what was going on until the crowd around them gasped. He spun his head around, as though only noticing them now.

It’s been awhile since Kyle had last seen Kenny without his scarf. He had almost forgotten the look of his chapped lips, and missing tooth. The scar started at the top of his lip on the right side, arching up in a sweeping motion towards his ear. Two smaller scars were paired with it, just inches below his eye socket. Kyle’s stomach turned, unable to look away. Unable to think about how those could very likely be scars from a werewolf.

Everyone else seemed to be thinking this too.

“I’m going to fucking rip your head off, Thorn.” Kenny’s growl echoed around the corridor, making everyone gasp in shock at the sudden murderous gleam in Kenny’s eyes.

Red Tucker turned to Kevin, tugging him by the sleeve and whispering, “Is it a full moon tonight?”

Kyle’s heart jumped into the hollow of his throat. He hadn’t even bothered to look at his calendar all month. His eyes had surely glanced over it once or twice, but he hadn’t even thought twice about it. October had been quiet, but Kyle was wondering now if he had gotten too comfortable.

Blood leaked from Kenny’s nose like a flood. It dribbled down his mouth and chin, only adding to his crazy, blood thirsty look.

His mouth had gone dry. His stomach was nothing but a pit, as he thought to himself that Stan just might be right. Damien could be right.

What if Kyle had been wrong this whole time?

Kenny’s hands ghosted over his face. Kyle watched his eyes move over the faces of everyone watching him, and Kyle knew what he must be thinking.
They’re scared of him.

“They’re scared of him,” said Butters, but it was weak and insecure. He reached out his hands to touch Kenny’s chest, but Kenny swiped them away with his arm.

Kyle stood up, trying to think of something to do make them all go away. To take Kenny away from them, and figure out how to sort it all out. Even if Kenny was a werewolf. Even if he had lied to them. He was still their friend. He was still Kenny.

But Kenny turned and ran, leaving his scarf in Damien's pale boney fingers. Butters outstretched his hand towards the disappearing figure in a patched up cloak, as though he was going to pluck him up and bring him back to them. But once Kenny was out of view, Butters dropped his arm back.

He turned to Kyle.

“This isn’t good,” he said quietly.

Kyle wanted to tell him he was thinking the same thing, but his throat had closed up, and he couldn’t seem to speak.

Damien’s cat landed in his lap, purring happily. Somewhere in this corridor was Marissa’s dead body, and the thought of that made Kyle want to puke.

Damien stood up, his face holding a ridiculous horrified expression, clutching his cat in his arms.

“Did you all hear that?” he said, squeaking. “Tell me you heard him!”

The crowd all nodded, save for Butters and Kyle.

“Your cat killed his pet rat,” Butters hissed under his breath, but it was loud enough to draw the crowds attention. “I’d be pissed too.” Kyle was half surprised at his outburst.

Damien merely blinked at him. “Yes, well, I can’t help it,” he said. “She’s a cat. What am I supposed to do?”

“Keep her in your dorm,” said Butters. “Like you’re supposed to keep cats.”

Damien scoffed, bundling the cat tighter in his arms. “Not the point, Stotch. The point is: McCormick is dangerous, and I think he should be removed from this school at once.”

“For what?” Kyle found his voice, feeling his temper rising in his stomach. “He’s never done anything to you.”

“For being a werewolf, of course!”

“You don’t have any proof,” said Butters.

“I think that outburst was proof enough.” Damien then looked knowingly out at the other students, his eyes sparkling. “Don’t you all agree?”

There were scattered murmurs amongst the sea of cloaks, but no one spoke up. Still, it was enough of a reaction to make Damien smile proudly, looking back at Butters and Kyle like he had just won something.

Kyle looked around at them all again, fear quickly overcoming him at the sight of the pale, scared faces surrounding him. Damien had them all wrapped around his finger now. Who knows what he
was going to do to Kenny.

Butters started stomping out of the hall, taking the same path Kenny had out of the corridor. With one last brief look around at his classmates, wondering what would become of their school now, Kyle followed him.

X

It was snowing again. For the past week that’s all that seemed to be going on at Hogwarts.

Kenny was sitting underneath the giant oak tree, holding Marissa’s limp body in his bloody hands. The blood on his face had dried, and was cracking in flakes as he stifled sobs. He smoothed her fur over with his thumb, brushing away the white snowflakes that fell into it.

He couldn’t believe Damien. He was ruining his life, and now everyone in the school was going to hate him.

“Fuck,” he muttered under his breath, the word coming out in a puff of white air.

“Ken?” the voice curled around his aching heart like a blanket. He turned, not caring that Butters and Kyle saw him like this. Tears streaking down his bloody face, cradling his dead pet in his numb fingers.

Butters walked through the snow, sitting down next to him. “Are you okay?”

Kenny shook his head down at Marissa. “I’ve had her since I was eight. She was really old, that’s why she couldn’t outrun that stupid cat.”

Butters placed a gentle hand on Kenny’s shoulder, lighting a fire in his chest at the tender touch. He tried to ignore it. The more warmth and love he felt, the more guilt ate at him.

“I’m sorry this happened, Kenny.”

Kenny just sniffed. His boogers felt like tiny ice cicles inside his nose.

He heard Kyle walking through the snow, slowly, like he didn’t want to interrupt. For a split second Kenny was annoyed that he had come along. If Kyle wasn’t around he wouldn’t have felt any shame for curling up into Butters’ shoulder. He wouldn’t have to explain himself.

“Everyone’s afraid of me,” he muttered.

“I’m not,” said Butters sweetly, making Kenny’s heart melt. He jerked away from Butters’ touch, refusing to look at him.

“They’re a bunch of assholes if they choose to believe Damien,” said Kyle. Kenny wished he would just shut up. “Just cause you have that scar doesn’t mean you’re a monster.”

The word stuck a chord in Kenny, making him flinch. He squeezed his eyes shut tight until he saw stars, and screwed his jaw tight. He really needed to hit something. He wanted to hit Kyle.

“Fuck off,” he growled.

“What?” Kyle said it like a dementor had just taken his breath away.

“Kenny, we just wanna help,” said Butters, and Kenny could feel the warmth of his hand radiating to his shoulder as Butters raised it to be placed back on his arm. Kenny jerked away
again so he wouldn’t touch him.

“You can’t help me,” he said. “Damien will keep doing this until you hate me. Might as well get it over with.”

He could feel Butters frown at the back of his head. “But why? Why is he doing this to you?”

“Because,” said Kenny, “I pissed him off.”

“Oh, Jesus,” said Kyle, “what did you do?”

Kenny gritted his molars. The burning awareness of Butters sitting next to him made him want to curl up into the snow and die rather than admit to what he was about to. But it would be a thousand times worse if they ended up hearing it from Damien. He couldn’t hide it anymore. They had to hear it from him.

“I broke up with him.”

X

“Shut up,” Stan looked over at Kyle from behind his Charms book, his eyes wide.

“Dude, I’m not kidding,” said Kyle, almost laughing. He was still in disbelief from it too. “I didn’t even know Kenny was gay.”

“Yeah,” said Stan, his eyes quickly lowering back down to his book at the appearance of a teacher. “I mean...Kenny...he’s been chasing girls ever since he could toddle.”

Kyle nodded, agreeing that this was weird. He had almost laughed out loud when Kenny had told them. But Butters’ had seemed downright shocked. Almost betrayed. His face had gone as pale as the snow, and he didn’t talk. Kyle had asked all the questions, until Kenny started shivering violently. They went inside before any of them could get frostbite.

“So, okay,” said Stan, “what exactly did he say? Did he tell you how it all started? Between him and Damien, I mean.”

“He said it just started last March,” said Kyle. “He didn’t really go into the details. He just said they started hooking up in the Shrieking Shack every once in awhile. They were pretty much like, hate fucking, is what he described it as.”

“Sick,” said Stan, wrinkling his nose. “I can’t believe he fucked Damien.”

“I know,” said Kyle. “But at least he said something. Kenny said he broke it off because him and Damien got into a fight, like, the second day of school I guess.”

“You think that’s why Damien was in the hospital wing?”

“Shit, yeah! I forgot about that, dude. Kenny probably beat the shit out of him.”

Stan snickered. “Dude, I can’t believe Kenny was keeping this double life from us. That bitch.”

“I know, but at least Damien can’t hold that against him anymore. That’s why he’s spreading that rumor, dude. He’s trying to make everyone hate him just to get back at Kenny.”

Stan shook his head. “That’s fucked up. Plus the thing about Marissa. Is he okay?”

“Yeah, I think he’ll be okay. He said he wants to have a funeral before dinner. He told me to tell
“Poor Kenny,” Stan sighed, “poor Marissa. Maybe we should get him another rat for Christmas.”

Kyle smiled faintly. Stan was so caring, sometimes it hurt. “I don’t think he wants to have another pet for a while, Stan.”

Another teacher walked by them slowly, making them both shut up. Her narrow eyes watched them suspiciously, as though daring one of them to make a peep. When she walked away to the next table Kyle lifted his eyes away from his textbook, meeting Stan’s.

They muffled their laughter together, snickering behind their books. Kyle’s heart felt light.

“Rebecca tried asking me out,” he whispered to Stan. “It’s like the third time this week, and it’s only Tuesday.”

“Geez,” said Stan. “She really likes you.”

“Yeah,” the word felt hollow in his mouth. “I guess so.”

“Why don’t you want to date her?”

Kyle shrugged, feeling the conflicting desire to tell Stan the truth or keep on hiding. Stan was the only person in Kyle’s life that mattered, yet it felt like he was the only one who didn’t know.

“I’m not interested in dating, really.” He took his eyes away from Stan, trying to make sense of the inky blobs that had appeared in his textbook. He thought back to that night after the Quidditch game. The smell of firewhiskey on Stan’s breath, and the feverish warmth of his body pressed against his. He thought of Stan’s pink cheeks, and his parted lips.

Not interested in dating anyone but you, he thought, tightening his grip on his quill in his hand.

“Oh.”

When Kyle looked back up at Stan his nose was buried back in his book, scribbling notes down on the piece of parchment next to him.

Kyle sighed hard out of his nose, ignoring the painful urge to let the honest truth come up like vomit and spill out all over the library.

“I’m gay, Stan, don’t you know that? You’re not this dense, I know you better. I’m gay. I’m gay, and I love you dammit! Don’t you know that?! You tried to kiss me when you were drunk, don’t tell me you have no clue on what’s going on here--”

“You okay, Kyle?”

Stan’s blue eyes had peeked back up over his Charms textbook. Dark eyebrows raised in concern. Kyle hadn’t noticed he had been grinding his teeth and glaring over the top of Stan’s head at Pip, sitting the next table over. He relaxed his grip on his quill, which had indented a red mark into his palm.

“I’m fine,” he said, turning back to his textbook. “I just zoned out for a minute.”

X

After dinner Kyle walked back out to the school grounds with Kenny and Stan. Kenny had a small box with him, and his scarf was tied back around his face.
“Where’s Butters?” asked Stan. “Isn’t he coming?”

“No,” said Kenny gravely. “He’s got stuff to do.”

Kyle and Stan shared a troubled look. Butters wasn’t one to ditch his friends for just anything. Especially if it was something like this.

Kyle was standing on the other side of Stan, farthest from Kenny. He craned his neck to look at Kenny, trying to meet his eyes. “Is everything okay, Kenny?”

“Don’t wanna talk about it,” he mumbled.

Hard footfalls chased after them as they neared the entrance to the castle. Kyle didn’t have to turn around to know who was following them.

“Hey, where are you guys going?” Cartman walked up to the other side of Kenny, a smile on his face. “To the Quidditch Pitch?”

“No,” said Kenny. “I’m burying Marissa.”

Cartman’s smile vanished to a confused frown. He stared at the box, his eyebrows slowly acknowledging the situation. “Oh, shit,” he said. “What happened?”

“Damien’s cat,” said Kenny. “It killed her.”

Cartman turned silent, and Kyle was glad he had the sense to do that much.

Kenny lead them to the Black Lake. Kyle, Stan, and Kenny dug a small hole through the frozen ground as the snow fell, and Cartman watched, commenting on how quickly the whole thing would go if they would just use magic. But Kenny didn’t want to use magic. He said it felt more personal to do it this way.

Kenny put the box into the ground, giving it one last few taps with his fingers. He stood up straight, rubbing his eyes and sniffing. “Should we say something?”

“Um,” Kyle shifted awkwardly on his feet, trying to think of anything nice he had to say about a rat that lived in Kenny’s pocket.

She wasn’t the worst rat I’ve ever met? She was kinda cute...sometimes? Maybe?

“Marissa,” Stan spoke, his hands folded neatly in front of his waist like a preacher, “you were a good rat. You were a smart rat, too. I’ll always remember the time you bit Scott Tenorman’s ass after he called Kyle a pussy.” Kyle snorted at the memory. It was their second year and Cartman had overheard Scott say it to a few of his classmates after Ravenclaws first Quidditch game that season. Kenny was pissed and sent Marissa after him. “You were probably the best rat I’ve ever known, and we’ll all miss you. Rest in peace.” He looked up. “Anyone want to add anything else?”

Kenny was trying to not cry while Cartman slung an arm around him. No one spoke for a while. Stan and Kyle started filling the hole back up.

“You think rats go to heaven?” asked Cartman.

“Dude,” Kyle snapped. The snow was falling over the freshly piled dirt they had just packed over Marissa’s grave.
“I’m just asking!” said Cartman. “I mean, people always talk about dogs going to heaven, but what about the rest of the animals? Are they all up there, or what?”

Kenny craned his neck towards the sky, the snow falling into his golden halo of hair.

“I think so,” said Stan.

Kyle stood next to Stan, looking down at the tiny grave they had dug themselves. His fingers were numb, and he wished he would have listened to Stan earlier when he told him he better pack his mittens in his robes.

He looked to Stan’s blue mittens now, thinking about the warmth he’d feel if he could only reach out and grab them.

The sun was going down, and Kyle’s hair was getting wet with snow. He didn’t want to be the one to ask if they could go inside, but he was certain his appendages were going to turn blue if they didn’t go in soon.

The four of them stood, watching silently as Marissa’s grave slowly piled up with snow.

“I heard you beat up Damien,” said Cartman suddenly, making Kenny look up at him.

“Yeah,” he said. “I fuckin’ kicked his ass, dude.”

Cartman smirked. “Sweet. Will you beat up Craig next?”

Kenny turned back away from him, his eyebrows knitting together. Kyle knew he was thinking about how everyone would look at him now. Just because of his scar. Just because of what Damien was making him out to be.

Kenny didn’t say anything until Stan finally prompted them all to go back inside.

“He did this on purpose,” he said, looking down at his boots. “He wanted her dead.”

Kyle had already figured this out, but he assumed Kenny was just saying this because he wanted to hear it out loud.

“Yeah, he totally hates you, Kenny,” said Cartman, making them all turn to look at him. Cartman didn’t seem to notice. “I mean, he’s like obsessed with you or something. All he ever talks about it you.”

Kenny stopped in the middle of a snowbank, his eyebrows narrowed at the back of Cartman’s head.

“What does he say?”

“ Pbbt.” Cartman swatted his hand in the air. “I don’t fuckin’ know, dude. I try to tune him out whenever he talks to me. He’s such a creepy jackass, I don’t know why he keeps trying to be friends.”

“What does he say to you, Eric?” Kenny repeated. This made Cartman turn around, his eyebrows knitting together.

“Dude, I don’t fucking know, Jesus Christ. I just told you I don’t pay attention when he talks to me!”
Kenny stared at Cartman for a moment, squinting at him through the wind and snow blowing in his face. Finally, he continued walking into the castle.

“What the hell was that about?” Cartman mumbled to Stan and Kyle.

Stan turned to Kyle, his eyes wide. “Do you think Damien knows something about Kenny that we don’t?”

“Dude, what?” Kyle sputtered. “No way! Kenny tells us everything! What would Damien know?”

“I can still hear you guys, you know,” Kenny called from up ahead.

“Damien’s not holding any secrets for you, right, Kenny?” said Kyle pointedly.

Kenny didn’t answer. He just kept shuffling his feet against the snow until he got to the doors.

“Right, Kenny?” Kyle repeated it, softer.

Kenny opened the door. “I gotta go find Butters.” Then he walked inside, and shut it behind him.

Cartman snorted. “What could Damien know that we don’t?”

Kyle ducked behind Stan, pulling the flaps of his green hat down his red face as they walked down High Street in Hogsmeade.

“Jesus, dude, I swear she’s stalking me!” he squeaked.

Rebecca was across the street with a cluster of other girls. Heidi, Bebe, and Annie were with her. Stan’s eyes glazed over them, half wondering if Wendy had stayed home to study, and half wondering why he still cared.

“She’s just a girl, Kyle,” he told him. “It’s not like she’s a werewolf or something.”

He saw Kyle’s face turn red. He muttered under his breath, the words coming out in a fog in front of him. “Tell me when she’s gone.”

“You’re such a pussy, Kahl,” Cartman crowed from up ahead. He had his pockets full of Honeydukes candy that he had no intention of sharing. He popped another Droobles into his mouth, letting the wrapper fall to the ground.

“Dude!” Stan glared at the back of his fat head. He grabbed the wrapper, sticking it into his pocket with all the others.

Kenny stood on his toes, craning his neck towards the girls. “They’re gone.”

Kyle stood back up, looking at the back of Rebecca’s green coat as she and the girls disappeared into Zonko’s Joke Shop.

“I’m telling you, dude,” said Kenny, rubbing his tattered mittens together for warmth. “Just tell her the truth and she’ll leave you alone.”

“Why doesn’t she just give up already?” said Kyle, looking solemnly down at the snow. Stan felt a knot in his throat, and picked up his pace. The next thing he knew Kyle was kicking snow at Kenny. “Shut up, asshole!” He told him.
Kenny joined up with Stan, leaving Kyle to trail behind them.

Stan was actually surprised when Kenny agreed to go to Hogsmeade with them today. It was a polite habit that Stan’s mother had trained into him since he was little; to make sure everyone knows they’re invited. He’s always made Kenny known he was welcome to join Stan and Kyle on anything, but that doesn’t mean he’d always accept the offer. Especially when it came to going to Hogsmeade for the day. But ever since Marissa died and Kenny told them about that whole thing he had with Damien, Kenny and Butters have been weird around each other. Stan hasn’t even seen Butters sitting next to Kenny at dinner. So, he thinks that’s why Kenny agreed to go out today; to get away from Butters’ cold shoulder.

“Is everything okay with you?” Stan asked him.

Kenny gave him a funny look, like he was wondering why on earth Stan would ever wonder everything was not okay in his life. Which was almost kind of funny, because something always seems to be not okay in Kenny’s life.

“Yeah,” he said. “Why?”

Stan shrugged. “You haven’t been hanging out with Butters lately.”

Kenny’s eyes lost their twinkle. He snapped his head around to look at the shops across the street, digging his chin into his scarf.

“Just haven’t felt like it.”

“Did you guys get into a fight?” The idea seemed almost impossible. Butters wasn’t the bickering type, and Kenny was pretty easy going.

“Something like that.”

“What about?”

“Probably about how Kenny’s in love with him,” said Cartman. He blew a large pink bubble, and then popped it with his teeth. “Butters is pureblood. He won’t want to make out with poor white trash like you, Kenny.”

A snowball hit the back of Cartman’s head, making him spin around on his heel. “Hey!”

Kenny had another one in his hand, though, and he chucked it right at Cartman’s nose.

“Fuck you, dude,” said Kenny, flipping him off as Cartman wailed about how he was sure his nose was broken.

“You’re fine, Cartman,” Stan told him, leaving him to flail in the snow as he followed Kenny into The Three Broomsticks. Kyle trotted behind them.

“Seriously, though,” said Stan when they sat down at a table. Kenny had picked a spot by the window. “What’s up with you and Butters?”

“Nothing,” Kenny muttered. “It’s stupid.”

Stan held his breath, hoping that Kenny would say something else to add to the conversation. When he didn’t, he was thankful Kyle changed the subject.

“How’s Karen doing?”
“Karen who?” said Kenny.

“You sister, dumbass.”

Kenny looked up at Kyle, narrowing his eyebrows. “She’s fine. Why?”

“Butters said he thought she was sick or something,” said Stan.

“Yeah, with the flu, like, a month ago. She’s fine now.”

“Oh,” said Kyle. “He said he thought that might’ve been why you were acting weird. He thought you were worried about her.”

Kenny snorted, shaking his head. “No, she’s fine. Why are you guys all up in my panties all of the sudden? Jesus Christ. Get off my dick.”

Stan and Kyle shut up after that, and the three of them sat in a heavy silence until Cartman thundered in, dripping snow onto the wooden floors of the restaurant. He plopped down in the chair next to Kenny. “I hate you, Kenny.”

“I really don’t give a shit,” he retorted.

Stan just sighed, resting his cheek in his hand as he looked out the window of Three Broomsticks. He saw Rebecca and the girls come out Zonko’s, but he didn’t think anything of it. He didn’t even think about Wendy this time. He thought more about Kyle, and about how he had kicked snow at Kenny after he said something to him. He hadn’t really heard, but it sounded like he told him, “You should know, you can’t give up on the pan.”

He glared out at the snow slick streets. What pan? Was it something that belonged to Kyle’s mother? Maybe he heard it wrong, but he didn’t know what would have made Kyle so mad.

Bebe walked in front of the window, her face lighting up when she saw him. She waved, smiling. He instinctively waved back.

“Dude!” Kyle shouted, making him jump.

“What happened?”

“You can’t draw them in here!” Kyle’s eyes had gone wide, and his eyes were turning as red as his hear. “They’re gonna bring Rebecca!”

“Oh, shit,” Stan, his eyes going wide as Kyle’s. “Shit, I’m sorry, Kyle.”

But it was too late. The bell to The Three Broomsticks went off at the front of the restaurant, and the girls scuttled over to their table, hiding their giggles behind their mittens.

“Hi, guys,” said Bebe. “What’s up?”

“We were having a good time until you bitches showed up,” said Cartman, making her turn an evil gaze towards him.

“I wasn’t talking to you,” she quipped.

“Hi, Kyle,” Rebecca cooed. She was uncomfortably close to his arm, fussing with her curly hair while staring dreamily at him.
Stan noticed Kyle scooting closer to him.

“Hi, Rebecca,” he mumbled, refusing to look in her general direction.

Stan felt a strong urge to take Kyle under his arm and lead him out of The Three Broomsticks; away from Rebecca, away from Kenny and Cartman. It’d just be the two of them in the December snow. Like when they were younger, and this stuff didn’t seem so complicated.

But he didn’t act on this urge. He just looked at his hands, trying to list off all the times Cartman told him he didn’t have the balls to do anything because he was a pussy Hufflepuff.

“Clyde’s taking Bebe ice skating later,” Rebecca told Kyle. He nodded his head at the table. “And, um, Nichole is going with Token. So, um, I was just wondering if you’d want to go too?”

Stan let his eyes flick over to his best friend, watching his pale face glow red under the hopeful eyes of Rebecca, and the glares of the other girls. They were standing there with their arms crossed over their chests, daring Kyle to say no to their sweet Rebecca.

Kyle clenched his fists under the table. Stan saw his knuckles turning white.

“Rebecca,” he said slowly, like this was the most painful thing he’s ever had to say, “I can’t go out with you.”

Rebecca’s face fell, but she quickly recaptured it to hold a fake, neutral expression.

“Oh,” she said thinly, “okay.”

Bebe, of course, did not take it so lightly.

“What’s your issue, Kyle?” She moved in front of Rebecca like a mother bear protecting her cub, her eyes igniting like wildfire. “You’d be lucky to go out with a girl like Rebecca!”

“Yeah!” Heidi and Annie chimed behind her, scowling at Kyle like he was the foulest human being they’ve ever laid eyes on.

“I just--” Kyle sputtered, green eyes wide.

“You’re just a jerk, Kyle Broflovski,” said Bebe, jutting a finger in his direction with every word hissing between her teeth. “Give me one good reason you can’t give Rebecca a chance? Huh?”

“Bebe--”

“Just one, Kyle. One reason!”

“Bebe, cut it out,” said Stan.

“Put out, Stan,” she snapped. “I want to know what’s so terrible about Rebecca.”

“Tell us, Kyle,” Annie snarled.

“Yeah, tell us!”

“Because I’m gay!”

The Three Broomsticks was silent, except for the clatter of Cartman’s stool as he leapt up from it, an evil grin lighting up his face. He pointed a gloved finger at Kyle and shouted, “I knew it!”
Nobody could even breathe. Bebe blinked, her eyes flashing from shocked, to comprehension, and then finally guilt.

Stan’s heart wouldn’t stop beating against his ear drums.

Then there was the scrape of Kyle’s stool as he got up from his seat. The clicks of his shoes against the tile floor of the restaurant. The tinkling bell that went off above his head as he walked out into the snowy afternoon, and the crack of the door when he slammed it behind him. Stan just stared blankly after him.

The girls looked at each other, their faces void of any actual expression, really. Bebe started leading them out of the restaurant too, but Rebecca turned to give Stan one last look, like she was waiting for him to say something. Like she expected him to come out to everyone next.

Heidi grabbed her by the sleeve of her coat, taking her out of the Three Broomsticks.

Kenny stood up from his stool too, walking over to Stan and clapping him on the back like he had just lost a Quidditch match, but Kenny didn’t want him to feel bad.

“Kyle’s gay. Huh. I think this might becoming an epidemic, don’t you?”

Stan just stared at the door Kyle had just walked out of, imagining him racing back inside, getting up on his soapbox and unyielding a long speech about being gay and homophobia, and it would be so stupid that Stan would have to kiss him to shut him up.

Stan stared at the door to the Three Broomsticks, wondering if he should go after him.

Cartman sat down in Kyle’s stool, getting uncomfortably close to Stan’s face.

“So,” he drawled, “have anything to add to that, Stanley?”

Stan looked into Cartman’s beady eyes, and then up at Kenny, who had now casually slung his arm across Stan’s shoulder, a knowing twinkle in his brown eyes.

Stan got up from the table and left The Three Broomsticks.

X

Kyle was standing in front of the gate keeping him from getting to the Shrieking Shack. His hands were on his elbows as he stared at the snow covered roof of the shack. He didn’t know if he wanted to cry or disappear.

He heard the snow crunch behind him. He turned over his shoulder, seeing Stan walking up the hill with his hands in his pockets. When he walked, the little red puffball on his blue hat swayed like a bobblehead.

He turned back to the shack before Stan could see his red face.

“Hey,” said Stan.

“Hi.”

Stan shuffled up next to him, his hands still shoved into the pockets of his coat. Kyle was wearing his mittens today, but his fingers still felt cold even under their protective warmth. He longed for Stan’s hand to wrap around his, but he didn’t know if that would ever happen again.

“Are you okay, dude?” said Stan.
Kyle shook his head, feeling his bottom lip wobble. He hadn’t wanted to tell Stan this way. He had always imagined telling him in the safety of the Hufflepuff Basement. Maybe in Stan’s dorm, under the glow of the copper lamps, and the soft breathing of Stan’s room mates. Kyle would whisper, “Stan, I’m gay,” and Stan would play with the curls of his hair, smiling his movie-star smile, saying, “I love you. No matter what, dude.”

He didn’t really know why he had let it out. He just couldn’t stand it anymore. Bebe wasn’t going to let it go unless he said something, and he wasn’t about to say something nasty about Rebecca, because there wasn’t anything bad to say about her. She was a nice girl. Kyle just had his eyes on someone else.

Stan reached his arm around Kyle’s back, settling his hand on his shoulder, and pulling him closer. Kyle’s heart burst with the memory of that drunken night in Stan’s dorm, but Kyle didn’t smell any liquor on his breath. He could only smell Stan. The sweet, sunshine smell that often lingered in the Hufflepuff Basement. The smell of pumpkin, and cocoa. Kyle wanted to roll around in this scent and sleep in it like a blanket. He pressed himself into Stan’s chest, nuzzling against his coat and hearing the crinkles of Cartman’s candy wrappers in the pockets.

Kyle, Ravenclaw Prefect, and one of the top students in his house (not to mention the entire school), considered words to be pretty important. Choosing specific words for essays and spells and potions could mean the rise or fall of your grade. So, when Kyle would think about admitting to Stan in the Hufflepuff Basement, his heart would often soar at the thought of Stan telling him those words, “I love you no matter what.” He thought he’d cry if he ever got to hear Stan’s voice say them, or to watch his mouth move around every syllable. But in this moment, there was no need for words.

Kyle could feel them in Stan’s arms, his heartbeat, and the hold Stan had on him. He hugged him so tightly Kyle could feel it in his soul. It was like Stan didn’t want to ever let him go, and Kyle never wanted to go.

Stan wasn’t much for words. Kyle doesn’t know if he’s ever really appreciated that until now.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Stan whispered.

“I don’t know,” said Kyle. “I’m sorry.”

Stan laughed, but it came out in a short breathy bark. He just squeezed Kyle tighter, pressing his nose into the top of his hat.

There was a selfish part of Kyle that wished this would be the moment Stan would tell him. That Stan would have enough balls to let it out in the open; that they were far more than just platonic friends. He squeezed his eyes shut, wishing that Stan would tell him without having to be drunk.

But they didn’t say anything else. They stood like that for what felt like hours and hours. Until they heard the voices of some students coming up to visit the haunted house.

When they walked back to High Street they walked shoulder to shoulder, but Stan still had his hands in his pockets.
it really makes me happy to see the reviews on this, truly. Especially since I've been struggling with my novel recently, and I've been starting to get insecure about bleeding into my characters too much. So, yeah, thank you so much. Anyway, enough about my personal life, you just wanna read the dang fic, lol. Enjoy it! :)

Kenny walked along the empty hallways of the castle. It seemed like everyone had gone home for the holidays except for him. Karen sent him a letter a week ago telling him that his family didn’t have enough money to make the trip to Kings Cross for Christmas. She wrote about how much she was going to miss him over the holiday, and Kenny’s heart nearly gave out on him. He wanted to curl up a cry. For the first time in his entire life he was actually thinking of home as a place to get away from Hogwarts. This school had been his safe haven for the past six years, but now he’d rather be any place but here. Even home.

The sounds of his shoes clicking against the floor was like an annoying buzz in his ear, constantly reminding him that he was all alone here.

Stan had asked if he wanted to go on home with him and Kyle, but Kenny’s pride wouldn’t let him agree to that, and now he was sort of regretting it.

He passed a window while walking up to Gryffindor Tower, and felt a shiver when he saw the blizzard outside. The school grounds were a complete blur of white. He couldn’t see anything else besides snow.

Kenny walked through the portrait hole, having to do a double take when he saw someone sitting on the couch in the common room.

Their head perked up at the sound of someone joining them. Kenny felt heart drop when he saw it was Butters.

A long, tense moment of silence was shared between them.

Kenny cleared his throat.

“I thought you were going home for holiday.”

Butters shook his head. “Something came up. They’re going to Romania.”

“Without you?”

It wouldn’t have been the first time Butters’ parents had gone off on a vacation without bringing him along, but it always seemed to come as a surprise to Kenny whenever they did it. He supposed it was because he could never fathom anyone intentionally leaving Butters behind.

Butters looked away from him, playing with the loose thread of the throw blanket he was cuddled
“Well,” said Kenny, “I’m glad you’re here. I thought I’d go crazy being here all alone.”

“We’re not the only ones here,” said Butters, still not looking at him. His voice had lost the fruity, happy go lucky tone, and had been exchanged for something cold and flat. “Pip is here. So is Damien.”

Kenny shuddered.

There was a dead silence shared between them after that. In which Kenny took the time to shuffle his feet towards the couch Butters was sitting at. He swallowed against the lump that had formed in his throat.

“Butters, how long are you going to be mad at me for?”

“I don’t know,” he quipped, “how long did you fuck Damien for again?”

“Don’t Butter me, okay?” Butters sprang up from the couch, looking around at Kenny wildly. “You lied to me, Kenny. I feel like such an idiot! It’s not even the fact that you lied either, it’s the fact that it was Damien Thorn! Of all people? You could have just told me you weren’t into me!”

“But I am into you!” Kenny shouted, feeling as though his heart would explode.

Butters’ eyes were watering. He swallowed against a sob, and shook his head.

It punched a hole right through Kenny’s chest to see him like this. He thought that time at the Black Lake was the worst thing he could have ever done to Butters, but he was wrong. This was a thousand times worse.

Butters raked an arm across his eyes, staring at Kenny with his red rimmed eyes that made his iris’ look like the ice outside. “Then why didn’t you say something when I told you? Why Damien?”

Kenny looked down at his hands. They were shaking as bad as his voice when he spoke again.

“Butters, I’m crazy about you,” he said. “But...I’m not good enough for people like you. I didn’t want to tie you down when there’s somebody else out there who’s better than me. Damien was easy because we didn’t actually have feelings for each other, we just needed...someone. Damien happened before you even said anything though--”

“But you knew,” Butters hissed. He was inches away from Kenny now. His eyes were still angry, but they had turned softer. “Don’t pretend you didn’t know.”

“I did,” Kenny muttered. He drew his fingers in towards his palms, holding them tight until his knuckles blossomed white. “I knew, and I’m sorry. I’m really, really, sorry. I understand if you never want to talk to me ever again, Leo. You deserve the best, and I never understood why you wanted to be friends with me in the first place.”

The next thing Kenny realized was Butters placing his hands over his. He looked up, perplexed, watching Butters smile through his teary eyes.

“I was going to tell you sooner,” said Kenny.

Butters slowly and softly unfurled Kenny’s fingers away from a fist, replacing the gaps between
Kenny’s fingers with his own.

“You’re an idiot, Kenny McCormick,” said Butters, standing up on his tiptoes. Kenny couldn’t breathe, all he could do was stare at Butters soft-looking pink mouth as it drew closer to him. “You’re good enough for me.”

Kenny flinched when he saw Butters reaching for his scarf, but when Butters recoiled, Kenny it pulled it down himself. The scarf fall to the floor in a heap of red and gold. He wrapped his arms around Butters, pulling him towards his chest, dipping down to press their lips together in a sort of blinding want. Kenny hadn’t even realized what he was doing until he was already kissing him.

X

Kyle finally felt like he could breathe easy.

He flopped back into the snow in his front yard, laying spread eagle as he heard the crunch of snow under boots.

His little brother’s face blocked out the sun when he stood over him. Ike’s blue ear muffs were ridiculously fluffy, and Kyle thought they made him look like an elephant.

“What’re you doing?”

Kyle sighed out of his nose. Not because he was annoyed at Ike, but just because even the air felt like home.

“Just happy to be home,” he told Ike.

“Oh.”

Ike straightened up, spun around on his boot, and crashed into the snow next to Kyle. They laid like that in silence together. The Wizard Radio was playing in the kitchen as their mother made fruitcake in preparation for Stan’s mom’s Christmas Eve party.

Kyle was glad he was with Ike.

He didn’t have to worry about Cartman, Damien, schoolwork, Stan, Kenny, or any werewolf nonsense while he was laying here in the snow with his brother. He could simply just exist, and that was just fine with Ike.

Kyle closed his eyes as he heard another pair of boots walking up his driveway. He didn’t even have to look to know who it was, the familiar footfalls had already sent a flutter to his heart.

“What’re you doing?” said Stan.

“Kyle’s happy to be home,” Ike told him. “What’s been going on at Hogwarts, Stan? I think it broke my brother.”

Kyle huffed out a laugh, flicking snow at Ike with a wave of his hand.

He listened to Stan walk over to the other side of him, and then crash into the snow like Ike had. Kyle sighed contentedly, opening his eyes and looking at Stan, who was watching him.

Stans hand was inches away from Kyle’s green mitten. The fibers were reaching out for each other, begging Kyle to just move an inch closer, because maybe this time Stan won’t let go.

But Kyle drew his hand towards the pocket of his orange jacket instead.
“Seriously,” said Ike. “What’s going on with you guys?”

Kyle doesn’t say anything. He just glares at the gray clouds above them, wondering if things will ever be different.

X

On Christmas Eve morning Kenny pressed his cold nose against Butters’ neck, making him stir from sleep, but he doesn’t wake up. Kenny nuzzles against him, kissing his bare chest and warm face. He thinks Butters smells like gingerbread.

“You smell good,” said Kenny.

“Oh, yeah?” said Butters, finally peeking an eye open. “Like what?”

“Gingerbread,” said Kenny. He sits up on his elbows, watching Butters rub his eyes. “I could eat you up.”

Butters giggled.

Kenny pounced, making Butters yelp with glee. He sat back on Butters’ hips, Kenny’s hands blocking his head. He bent down towards Butters ear, whispering, “I’m the big bad wolf, remember?”

He felt Butters shiver beneath him, and he kicked his feet under the covers to buck Kenny off of him. Kenny didn’t put up a fight. He rolled back to his side of the four-poster, looking at Butters dreamily.

“Do you want breakfast today?” Butters asked him.

“Sure,” said Kenny.

Butters got out of bed and went to his dresser. He looked out the window, his face glowing in the morning sunlight.

“It’s gorgeous out,” he said. “Want to go for a walk later.”

“Sounds wonderful, Leo.”

Butters’ ears blushed, and he started digging through his dresser as if to distract himself. Kenny had taken to calling him Leo ever since they started...doing whatever this was (it made Butters blush everytime, and Kenny couldn’t stand how endearing it was). Kenny wasn’t really sure if they were dating. Nobody had really asked anybody if they wanted to date, or be boyfriends, or be fuck buddies. He assumed Butters was his boyfriend, but what were they going to tell everyone when they got back home? His heart sunk at the thought. Could they tell anybody? What if they had to be a secret because of Butters’ parents?

As Butters was getting dressed he started singing under his breath, which was a common thing to hear in their dorm room. What struck Kenny was the song he was singing, he tried not to let it bother him, but the more he listened to the words the more he wanted Butters to shut up.

“Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf…”

He headed to his own dresser, picking something out quick so they could go down to breakfast. By then Butters would have picked a new song. Jingle Bells, or something.
He slammed the dresser door shut, gritting his teeth and scolding himself for not having better control. It wasn’t Butters’ fault. Kenny had started it. Butters didn’t mean anything by it. It was just Butters. He needed to get a grip.

“Ready?” Butters was behind him already. He was wearing a bright blue turtleneck, something that brought out his eyes.

Kenny tightened his scarf around his face, forcing himself to smile because, hell, this was Christmas, and he didn’t need Butters to worry about him on Christmas.

“Ready,” said Kenny, offering out his arm.

Butters wrapped his hand around Kenny’s elbow, looking up at him lovingly. They walked out of the dorm room together, and through the common room to the portrait hole. Kenny hummed Jingle Bells under his breath while Butters kept twittering;

“Who’s afraid of the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf, the big bad wolf...who’s afraid of the big bad wolf...”

X

Randy’s voice was loud and booming through the walls of Stan’s house as the Christmas Eve party went on downstairs. Kyle was laying on the floor across Stan on the floor, a Wizard’s Chess board was set out between them. Ike was laying on Stan’s bed, playing on some handheld Muggle device he had just gotten for Hanukkah.

Stan sighed, rubbing his temples with his fingers.

“God, my dad is such a dumbass.”

One of Kyle’s bishop’s took another of Stan’s pawns. His cheek was resting on his knuckles, supported up by his elbow.

“Your move, dude,” said Kyle.

Stan moved another pawn. He was barely paying attention to the game anymore. He was sitting Indian style, and his eyes were trained on his bedroom door.

“Hufflepuff is for fags!” Randy was slurring, and Stan could hear his mother’s voice shushing him as Gerald exploded with drunken laughter. “I spent the best years of life as a Gryffindor, right Sharron? Gryffindor is where the fuckin’ winners are at! Ravenclaw is full of fuckin’ nerds, and Slytherin is a bunch of douchebags, and Hufflepuff is a bunch of FAGS!”

“Randy!” Sharron’s shrill yell made Stan wince slightly. He buried his face into his hands as Kyle stole his king.

“Well, you should see Kyle,” said Gerald. “That kid needs to lighten up. He’s such a pussy!”

“Dude,” said Kyle, “let’s do something else.”

Stan peeked through the cracks in his fingers. Kyle was already putting the chess set away.

“Like what?” said Stan.
“I don’t know,” said Kyle, “as long as it’s not in this house. No offence.”

“None taken.”

“You coming, Ike?” Kyle asked him.

“Nah,” said Ike. The blinks and beeps on his device showed up in red and blue lights in his eyes. “I’m good.”

Stan tugged on his jacket, and Kyle put on his green hat.

Kyle and Stan snuck downstairs. The sounds of the Christmas party were loud, and the adults were too distracted by Randy’s rant to notice them sneak out the back door of the kitchen.

Stan trotted alongside Kyle in the snow, shoving his hands into his pockets. “Thanks, dude,” he said quietly.

It was dark and cold, but it was a beautiful night anyways.

“Did you tell the sorting hat you wanted Hufflepuff, because you didn’t want to be like your dad?” said Kyle suddenly, making Stan whip his head around in surprise.

“Dude, what?”

“When we were first years,” said Kyle, looking at the stars. “We had it all figured out that we were gonna go into Gryffindor together, but then on the train ride you seemed to have doubts. I was just wondering what made you go into Hufflepuff is all.”

“I went into Hufflepuff because that’s where I belong,” said Stan. “The sorting hat knew that. I didn’t have to tell it anything.”

Kyle rolled his shoulders, looking back at Stan. “I told it I wanted Ravenclaw,” he said. “It took my word. I was just wondering if it did the same for you.”

Stan worried on his bottom lip. He has never talked much about the details about the sorting, even with Kyle. He had always kept it to himself because if his dad had ever found out he had the chance of being a Gryffindor and didn’t take it...well, it’d just be a thousand times worse than him believing Stan got into Hufflepuff just because.

“I…it told me I could’ve been a Gryffindor if I really wanted to,” he said finally. “But I was scared.….and my dad always said Gryffindors are never scared, so I chickened out and told the hat I wanted Hufflepuff.” Stan then looked over at Kyle, feeling the air bite at his eyes for watering. “Don’t tell anybody, okay?”

“Dude, never,” said Kyle.

They were walking farther and farther away from their houses. Stan nuzzled his face into his coat to keep the wind from beating on his raw cheeks.

“Do you think you made the right choice?” said Kyle.

“Now I do, yeah,” said Stan. “I love being a Hufflepuff. Sometimes I just forget how much I love it when my dad starts talking like that. What about you?”

Kyle nodded. “I love being a Ravenclaw, too. You were right.”

Stan frowned, almost laughing. “What do you mean?”
“Before we got sorted you told me I was more of a Ravenclaw.” Kyle looked up at him, and his smile could have lit a million Christmas trees. “I didn’t want to believe you, but you were right, Stan.”

Stan smiled back at him, feeling warmer than ever. “It all turned out okay.”

“Yeah,” said Kyle.

The lanterns on the street guided their way towards the park, where they used to go ice skating on Stark’s Pond as kids. When they got there, Kyle swept off the snow that had piled on the bench, and then they sat down.

Under the glow of the street lamps, Stan’s heart twitched. The snow that landed on Kyle’s hat and his eyelashes, the rosey pink dusting his nose and face, the way his eyes seemed to glow green in the iridescent Muggle lighting; it made Stan want to melt into him and hold him forever.

“Hey,” said Stan. He wasn’t sure of what he wanted to say. He just wanted to say something. This shared silence between them was starting to feel heavy and uncomfortable. Kyle looked at him, waiting for the rest of his thought.

“Um...you should practice the patronus charm again,” said Stan quickly.

Kyle frowned at him. His plush lips looked frozen, and Stan wanted nothing more than to warm them himself.

He needed to stop thinking like that. He needed to think of something to distract himself.

“I can’t do magic outside of school, Stan,” said Kyle.

“The--the Ministry won’t know,” said Stan. “They’ll just think it’s my dad fucking around again. C’mon, just practice it one more time? I’m sure you’ll get it this time.”

Kyle sighed, rolling his eyes. His breath had come out in a white balloon, hovering above his nose. “Okay, fine. Once. But if i don’t get it this time I’m never trying it again.”

X

Damien clacked his fingers on the Slytherin table during Christmas Eve dinner. Pip sat across from him, babbling on and on about something. Damien hadn’t been listening to him for the past ten minutes. Not since McCormick had come into the Great Hall with Butters Stotch.

There was something different between the two of them. Damien had noticed it the other day when the rest of the school had already gone on holiday. Stotch had always been rather touchy, especially with McCormick. But there was something different about the way he was doing it now.

They were sitting hip to hip at the Gryffindor table, talking to each other like every word was a secret. There seemed to be some kind of special glow about Butters when he laughed. Something that hadn’t been there before.

Damien’s eyes popped wide as he watched McCormick snake his arm around Butters’ shoulder, pulling him even closer. Butters looked up at McCormick lovingly, a slight blush rising to his ears. So, Damien thought, his eyes now narrowing, that’s it...
“...and then I said, ‘I’m not french, you fat--’”

“Phillip,” said Damien, casting a soft gaze back to Pip, whose blue eyes brightened gleefully at the sound of his real name. “Would you like to meet me later? After dinner?”

Pip’s face fell slightly. “But...that would be breaking curfew.”

Damien smiled, reaching across the table to take Pip’s hand in his own. It was like watching ice cream melt down the cone on a hot day. Damien had him clasped between his fingers, and there was no going back after this. This wasn’t going to be like last time.

He made a quick glance back to the Gryffindor table to see if McCormick was watching this, and an angry spark bursted in his chest when he saw that he wasn’t.

That prick...

“I’ll protect you, Philip,” said Damien. “I promise.”

X

“Where are you going, Ken?”

It’s getting late, and Kenny doesn’t know how much longer he can stay here. He had been waiting for Butters to fall asleep for what felt like ages, and now that he had crept out of the four-poster, Butters’ hand was reaching for him, grasping the tail end of his Gryffindor scarf lightly.

“My leg fell asleep.” Is what he always tells Karen back home. “I’ll be right back. Go to sleep, Leo.”

“Mmmkay.” Butters’ hand fell like a curtain, dangling off the edge of his bed. Kenny pulled down his scarf, pressing a kiss against Butters’ forehead before leaving Gryffindor Tower.

As he walked down the staircase, it started to move. It jolted him, and he had to hold onto the bannister to keep himself upright.

When the staircase stopped, joining up with another, Damien was at the top of it. His dark eyes widened in surprise, but his mouth twisted into a pleasant smile.

“Hello, McCormick,” he cooed. “Merry Christmas.”

“Fuck you,” said Kenny. He made to go past him, hardly even brushing his shoulder as he continued back down the staircase.


“Shove it up your ass,” Kenny quipped.

He heard Damien trotting after him. Kenny pressed his fingernails into his palms, cutting crescent moons into his skin.

“C’mon, McCormick,” Damien cooed. He was shorter than Kenny by a few inches, and had to walk on his toes to whisper in his ear. His breath made Kenny break out in hives. “Let’s head to the shrieking shack, for old times sake?”

Kenny turned to glare at him, feeling like he should do everyone a favor and throw him over the staircase.
“Thinking about it, aren’t you?” said Damien. His hand went to Kenny’s elbow, and Kenny jerked away like he had just burned him. Damien smiled. “I have. I’ve been thinking about it a lot. I miss you, Kenny.”

Kenny shoved him in the chest, feeling a growl ripple through his chest. “Fuck. Off.”

Kenny walked down the staircase as fast as he could, fighting off the surge of adrenaline and anger that rushed through him. Damien was following him, so he took off running for the castle doors, hoping to lose him outside.

The cold air bit at his face, and the snow crunched under his boots. The full moon casted him in a spotlight on the castle grounds, and Kenny groaned.

X

Pip scurried along the corridor, his wand shaking slightly in his hand. It had just been last week that Damien Thorn had taken a sudden interest in him, and while Pip wasn’t sure why, he enjoyed the attention. He had never noticed before how handsome Damien was, and how charming. While nothing has been official yet, Pip and Damien have been spending some time together. That night at dinner, Damien had even asked him to meet him after lights out by the front of the castle.

In his six years of attending Hogwarts, Pip has never broken a rule. But he found himself enjoying that funny tickle in his chest at the thought of getting caught snogging Damien Thorn in the hallway after curfew.

He walked through the silver shadow of the full moon hovering behind the window. The portraits hanging on the walls were all snoozing. When he reached the front of the castle he played with his wand nervously. His eyes searched the darkness for some kind of sign of Damien coming to meet him. The tickle of excitement in his chest was now starting to morph into painful throbs of doubt. Every beat in his chest was like a punch in the ribs.

What was he doing out here? Waiting for some silly boy? A Slytherin, nonetheless! This had to be some kind of trick he was pulling so all his friends would laugh at Pip when they come back from Holiday.

Pip huffed, starting to march back to the Hufflepuff Basement.

“No one makes a fool of Philip Pirrup!” He muttered to himself. It was only a disguise for his disappointment.

But just as he was reaching the window again, something stirred behind him. He spun around, expecting a teacher to pop out of the shadows. But there was nothing.

“Hello?” Pip’s voice came out small, hardly even casting an echo in the empty corridor.

Someone was walking towards him. Their silhouette was distorted in the dark, and the light on the end of his wand wouldn’t be able to reach them. For one hopeful moment, Pip believed Damien had showed up after all.

“Damien?” He said. “What’re you doing? Hello? Damie--”

There was a howl heard throughout the castle.

X
Kyle thought of Stan laughing. He thought of Stan drinking Butterbeer, and Firewhiskey, and watching his cheeks turn pink under the glow of the Hufflepuff common room. He thought of all those fantasies of kissing Stan, and how his heart had clenched up in his throat when he had kissed Rebecca. He thought of Stan, sitting there on the floor next to the couch, talking to Kyle as he was drifting off to sleep. He remembered Stan telling him: “You coulda kissed me,” and Kyle had wanted to say that he had wanted to. More than anything in the world he had wanted to, but he had resorted to Rebecca because that was easier to explain. It was easier for someone to understand. He had kissed Rebecca, but he had been thinking of Stan the whole time. It wasn’t until a few days later that he had remembered the conversation he had with Stan that night on the couch. He thought of being pressed against Stan’s chest, and how Stan had held him so tightly, but so gently, by the wrist.

He thought about Stan, and something bursted out of his wand.

A silvery fox was dancing above the snow covered ground. A blue glow warmed Kyle’s face as he watched it move with a gracefulness he could only dream of. He couldn’t believe he could ever create something so beautiful.

“Whoa, dude,” said Stan next to him, making Kyle jump. He had almost forgotten Stan was even there. He felt a deep blush rise to his face. “That’s awesome…hey, mine was a…”

“Hound…” Kyle finished.

“Yeah,” said Stan softly. His lips were red and chapped, and the patronus made his eyes glow an ethereal blue. It made Kyle’s heart throb with want. “Kinda like Hermione and Ron, huh?”

Kyle hated him for saying that.

“Soul mates…” Kyle hated himself more for muttering it aloud.

Stan barked a laugh. “Yeah…’cept we’re…you know,” he coughed. “Friends.”

“Yeah,” said Kyle, looking back at his patronus. “Of course.”

He thought maybe he hated that exchange most of all.

It started to snow. A fresh Christmas snow.

Something about the night was making Kyle feel brave, and out of his peripherals he saw Stan’s hand laying limply at his side.

A surge of bravery was all Kyle needed, and now he knew for sure that Stan would never get this kind of bravery to do it himself.

Kyle took Stan’s hand in his own, feeling the warmth climb up his fingertips, up his arm, and swell into his heart. Stan looked at him for just a moment, but then he looked back out at the fox, and the snow.

Kyle smiled to himself.

They go back inside not long after that, still holding hands and talking about what they think Kenny and Butters are doing back at school.

“I hope Kenny and Butters make up,” said Kyle. “Kenny hasn’t really been himself lately.”

“Yeah,” said Stan. “It’s weird. I asked him to come home with us, but I’m glad he stayed behind.”
Maybe it'll be good for them.”

“Yeah…”

“I think Damien stayed back too,” said Stan.

“Damien?” repeated Kyle, feeling his heart drop a little for Kenny’s well-being. “That can’t be good.”

“I know,” said Stan. “I’m afraid what we might come back to.”

And it was probably just his imagination, but Kyle thinks that he can hear something howling in the distance.

X

It’s Christmas morning.

Kenny woke up in the shivering in Shrieking Shack. His head was foggy, and when he sat up the room started spinning so much he thought he’d throw up. He raised a trembling hand to his hair, sucking in deep, clean breathes of the cold air. His clothes were in a ragged heap on the floor, and although they were torn to shreds he reached for them anyway. His scarf was the only thing that was still in one long piece. He wrapped it around his face. He pulled on his orange sweater, thinking about asking Butters to sew it together with patches later. He looks at his jeans, and knew there was no possible way he can wear them. He left them on the floor and walked out of the Shrieking Shack through the tunnel. The wind blew wildly when he steppe outside in his underwear and holely sweater. He hugged himself, running through the snow towards the warm lights of the castle.

For the life of him he can’t remember what had happened the night before. All he remembers is seeing the full moon outside, and after that everything is a fog. He can’t shake the feeling that he did something bad. But he shakes his hair, refusing to believe that. He was just being paranoid.

He shoved the front doors open, nearly toppling over Pip’s still body.
When the letter from the Headmistress comes two days after Christmas, Kyle thinks this is it. He’s never going to go back to Hogwarts.

The first thing Stan does is write a letter to Kenny and Butters to ask if they’re okay. He sent Elephant with the letter, but Kyle was doubtful they’d hear back from them.

They were sitting in Stan’s bedroom, on the mattress, and Kyle was hugging his knees to his chest.

“You think they’re okay?” Stan asked. He was sitting by the window, looking out of it, and waiting for Elephant to return. “You think they’ll have school again?”

“My mom won’t let me go,” said Kyle. He felt cold all over. Cold and empty. “She’s gonna keep me here, Stan. She’ll make me go to Muggle school.”

Stan turned. “She can’t do that.”

“She will,” said Kyle miserably. “She’s going insane at home, dude. I really think she means it this time.”

Stan grabbed Kyle by the elbows, gripping them tightly, almost forcibly. His eyes were watering slightly, but Kyle thought it might’ve been a trick of the light.

“I won’t let her do that,” he said. “I’ll sneak you on the train with an invisibility cloak, I don’t care! She can’t keep you here! You’re a wizard, Kyle, you belong at Hogwarts--with me!”

Kyle thought he saw Stan’s eyes watering up, and it made him want to cry too. Stan threw his arms around Kyle’s neck, squeezing him so tight it made Kyle loose his breath. Stan nestled his face into the crook of Kyle’s shoulder, muttering something that sounded like, “You can’t leave…”

Kyle tucked his arms under Stan’s, patting the upper part of his back rhythmically. “It’ll be okay, Stan,” said Kyle, but he wasn’t sure if it would be. What would he do without Stan and Kenny? How could he go back to Muggle school after being surrounded by magic the past six years? How could everything be breaking apart again, just as he was starting to believe him and Stan would be okay.

He hoped to God his mother would change her mind.

“Hogwarts isn’t Hogwarts without you, Kyle,” said Stan miserably.

“Maybe she’ll change her mind,” said Kyle quietly, though he was seriously doubting it. “Maybe they’ll catch whoever did it to Pip before the semester stars. There’s still time.”

Stan didn’t say anything. He just squeezed Kyle tighter, like this was going to be the last time they ever got to see each other. Kyle squeezed back.

X

Kenny sat on the edge of his four-poster, looking down at his shaking hands. Butters had asked him if he wanted to visit Pip in the hospital wing, but Kenny refused. Victoria said he’d be shipped off to St. Mungo’s the next day, after that all they could do for Pip was hope and pray.
He played Christmas Eve night over and over and his head, no matter how many times he hated to. He had to figure out what happened to Pip, but nothing was matching up, and it was scaring him.

He brought his trembling hands up to his eyes, choking on a sob.

The bedroom door creaked open. Kenny threw himself onto the bed.

“Ken?” said Butters. “Are you okay?”

Kenny sniffed into his pillow. “I’m fine,” but his voice betrayed him. It was all wobbly and weak.

Butters seemed to tip-toe over to him. The mattress moaned under the weight when Butters sat down next to him. His hand went to Kenny’s hip.

“You’re awful worried about Pip, aren’t you?”

Kenny didn’t respond. He rubbed at his eyes instead.

“I’m worried about him too, Kenny,” said Butters. “The teachers don’t know if he’s gonna be okay and I’m...I’m scared.”

That pierced an ice pick through Kenny’s heart. He even flinched at the word. He turned to face Butters, cupping Butters’ hands in his own.

“I’m scared about what's gonna happen to Hogwarts, Ken,” said Butters, eyes welling up with tears.

“You don’t have to be scared,” said Kenny. He was whispering, but he didn’t really know why. Maybe he was afraid someone would hear them. Like Damien. He wouldn’t be surprised to find out Damien had eyes and ears on him at all times. “I’ll protect you.”

X

Damien made sure to throw himself onto his knees when Madam Gollum and Headmistress Victoria towed Pip out of the Hospital Wing on his gurney, and off to Saint Mungo's.

His voice even managed to crack when he wailed, “*No! No, Pip! Oh, Pip!*”

He buried his face into his hands, sliding his fingers just a crack to make sure McCormick and Stotch were watching. McCormick hadn’t come down to see Pip that morning, but Butters had seemed to be able to talk him into seeing Pip off before they took him to the Wizard hospital.

Pip had been comatose since Christmas Day, when McCormick literally ran into his still form on the tile floor.

Madam Gollum said it was shock.

Pip had scratches down his chest, and bruises everywhere, but no bites that she could see. There was still a debate on whether he’ll ever wake up or not. The few residences that had stayed in Hogwarts over holiday had heard a wolf’s cry that night of Pip’s attack, and the groundskeeper was searching the Forbidden Forest for any werewolf tracks, but there was nothing so far.

Damien knew, though, that it was only a matter of time now.

“Oh, Phillip,” said Damien miserably. He pretended to choke on a sob, and when he lifted up his
head he was actually a bit surprised to find that his face was slightly wet. He had to pause for a moment at this, and take a finger up to scoop a tear off his eye. He stared at the salty droplet, wondering how that had happened.

He felt a hand on his shoulder, and he looked up to see Stotch standing there, an apologetic smile on his face. “I'm awful sorry about Pip,” he said sweetly. “I had no idea you were that close.”

_We weren't, thought Damien, we weren’t that close...so why am I crying?_

“He was a friend,” he sniffed, looking down at his hands. “I'm just...shocked this happened to him.”

Damien drew his fingers into his palms, feeling hot tears building up behind his eyes. He stood to his feet, throwing Butters’ hand away from him. “Excuse me, I have to go,” he said quickly, running out of the Hospital Wing.

He chased Gollum and Victoria out of the school, trolloping through the snow drifts to get to the carriage that would take Pip off to Saint Mungo's. He pushed between the two of them just as they were about to shut the carriage door.

“Mister Thorn!” Victoria gasped.

Damien splayed his hands over Pip’s still body, pawing at the blankets. He latched onto his cold hand, wishing he could warm it.

“Pip,” said Damien, desperately. The cold air bit at the warm tears leaking down his cheeks. “Pip, I'm so sorry...I promise, if-- when you come back to Hogwarts, whoever or whatever did this to you, they'll be dead! I swear it! I'll kill them myself!”

His heart was thumping hard against his ribs, and he thought maybe it was because he had just sprinted across the entire castle, but then he realized it was because he wasn’t acting. Not this time.

“Mister Thorn, that is quite enough!” Victoria pinned his arms to his sides as she tore him off of Pip and out of the carriage. They slammed the door shut, and Pip was taken away down the path. She didn’t release him until the carriage was well out of sight.

Damien surprised himself that day. He really didn’t know what had gotten over him.

With a combing of his fingers through his hair, he was back to his calm and collected self. He took a deep breath of icy air, and strutted back into the castle.

X

Stan sat on his bed, looking out the window and still waiting for Elephant to come back with a response from Kenny or Butters. He wasn’t sure how long he had been sitting there, but he was there long enough to watch Kyle walk out of his house across the street. He could hear the slam of the Broflovski’s front door. Kyle took his ushanka and put it over his face, screaming into it. He plopped down on the front steps, sitting like that with his hat over his mouth until his face was red.

Stan’s thoughts moved away from the sky, and towards his friend. He even found himself, moments later, standing in a snow drift that covered the path to Kyle’s house. Kyle still had his hat over his face, and Stan was standing in front of him with his hands in the pockets of his brown coat.

He had been thinking a lot about Kyle not coming back to school with him, Kenny, and Butters. He had been thinking a lot about Kyle’s patronus, and Christmas Eve; when Kyle had reached for
his hand.

Stan sat down on the step, scooting closer to Kyle and knocking their hips together. Kyle finally looked up, his eyes red.

“My mom isn’t going to change her mind, dude,” said Kyle.

The cold stone steps ate at Stan’s ass through his jeans, and he shivered.

Kyle rubbed at his eyes with his green mittens. “Unless a miracle happens.”

Stan just stared at Kyle’s orange curls, trying to get the detail down to the very curl of hair. He might not see Kyle again until June. They hadn’t been away from each other since...since ever.

Stan considers kissing him. There might not be another time like this one. He reaches out a hand to take Kyle’s.

But I’m just a Hufflepuff, he thinks. He dropped his hand on top of Kyle’s knee, making Kyle look back at him, startled.

Stan forced a smile, though he really felt like crying. “It’ll be okay,” he said.

Stan thinks that maybe if he were a Gryffindor, he would have kissed Kyle. Maybe he would have felt enough bravery to do so. But he’s not. He’s just a Hufflepuff.

There was the softest flutter of wings. Stan looked up, seeing Elephant perched on the snowy windowsill. She ruffled her feathers, clapping her beak against the letter in her mouth impatiently.

“Look,” said Stan, already on his feet, “they’ve written back, finally.”

Kyle just watched as Stan took the letter from the owl. He ripped the envelope into pieces, but was careful to not leave any scraps on the ground.

Stan knew Butters had written the letter the moment he opened the parchment. The words had been written out in loopy, twirly, blue ink, and Butters had made little doodles around the letter, including caricatures of Stan and Kyle’s heads, and hearts around their names.

He read the letter to himself.

Dear Stan and Kyle,

It’s your friend, Butters here! Kenny and I are okay over here at Hogwarts, just a little shaken up.

Kenny’s real upset about what happened to Pip. Don’t tell him I told you that, but he really is. I’m kind of worried about him. He hasn’t been himself ever since he found Pip like that. Did I tell you he was the one who found him? It was horrible. He said he went down to get breakfast for us early on Christmas morning, and he saw Pip just laying in the hallway. I think everyone in the whole castle heard him scream. When I ran down there to see what all the commotion was, Kenny was dang near hysterics! I took him up to our room and got him some hot cocoa, though. Poor guy. :( 

I don’t think the teachers have a clue who did it. I think Kenny’s worried it might be a Death Eater. I just hope this is all over with soon, and that Pip can come back to school.

Hope you fellas had a good holiday! Kenny and I miss you, and can’t wait for you to come back to Hogwarts in the new year!
Toodles!

Butters Stotch.

Under Butters’ name was a drawing of Kenny and Butters holding hands, and waving up at Stan with big grins on their faces. Christmas lights and blue stars surrounded them, but Stan didn’t feel very cheerful. He wondered how Butters could still be radiating positivity when something like this was going on at their school.

He stared down at the letter, clasped in his gloves. A cold and hollow feeling was filling his stomach. He kept staring at Kenny’s name on the paper, glaring at it even. Like it would make Kenny pop out of the letter and apparate here to Kyle’s front yard.

What’re you keeping from us, Kenny? He thought.

“So?” Came Kyle’s voice, inpatient and cold. “What’d they say?”

Stan just handed the letter over. He was too fixated on his thoughts to respond to Kyle. He just thought it was way too much of a coincidence that Kenny was the one who found Pip that morning.

“At least Butters and Kenny are talking again,” said Kyle.

Stan’s gaze sharpened, turning to him.

“What?” said Kyle.

“That’s all you have to say?”

“I mean, Kenny must be pretty traumatized.”

“Kyle,” said Stan, a growl tickling the back of his throat, “you don’t think that it’s a little funny that Kenny was the one who found Pip?”

Kyle’s eyebrows narrowed dangerously. “I don’t think it’s funny at all, Stan.”

“You know what I mean.”

“Yeah, I do.” Kyle stood up off the step, and Stan thought he looked like he was going to cry again. But Kyle looked more angry than sad. “I know what you’re thinking, Stan, and I think it’s really shitty of you to still think that way about our friend.”

“You say it like I want him dead,” Stan bit. “I want to help him!”

“If you want to help him, you should be defending him,” said Kyle. “Do you know what everyone is going to say when you go back to school? They’re all going to think he’s some kind of monster, and it’s all because of Damien. Damien has you looking at the wrong guy, and I can’t believe you actually fell for it.”

“When we go back to school,” said Stan quietly. It was the only thing he could think of saying.

“What?” said Kyle, chopping his ‘t’.

“I said, when we go back to school. You said...you said it like I was just going back.”

They stared at each other for what felt like hours. Stan was waiting for Kyle to assure him that he was right, that he had just made a mistake. That they were still going to go back to school together
in January. Even if Kyle’s mom didn’t want him to, they’d figure out a way, because Ravenclaws always figure out a way.

Kyle stuck out his arm, whistling for Elephant. She was perched on him in an instant.

“See you later, dude.”

Kyle marched up the steps with heavy feet. Every stomp was a kick in Stan’s heart, busting against his ribs, and his lungs.

Kyle slammed the door shut behind him, leaving Stan out in the cold.

He shoved his hands into the pockets of his coat, storming away from the Broflovski’s, and across the street. He kicked at the snowdrifts in his yard, grinding his molars into dust.

_He thinks he’s so smart just because he’s a Ravenclaw. I’ll show him, he thought, when we go back to school, I’m going to show him I’m right about Kenny. And I’ll get him to go back to Hogwarts with me._

X

Kenny was sitting out by the Black Lake all alone. It was frozen solid, and a thin layer of snow covered the ice. Every so often he could spot a grindylow or merperson coming towards the surface, but they would quickly disappear back into the deep dark waters. It was early, and Kenny was exhausted, but sleep hadn’t come to him in days. Not since he found Pip in the corridor. The sun hadn’t even come up, yet.

Tomorrow students would be riding back on the Hogwarts Express. At least, the ones who’s parents trusted the staff enough to send their children back to school will be coming back. He knew Butters wrote a letter back with Elephant to Stan and Kyle, but they’re hadn’t been a response yet. Kenny wondered if they would be returning. He could see Stan coming back, but he would be surprised if Kyle’s mother let him go back to school after what happened to Pip. He wondered if Stan would even want to come back if Kyle wasn’t coming back, but he couldn’t see Randy Marsh letting his son attend a Muggle school, or letting him miss an opportunity to become a savior of Hogwarts. Randy probably expected Stan to take down whatever was hunting the school all by himself.

Kenny packed a snowball tightly into his bare hand, letting the cold burn his pale skin, before chucking it across the lake. He heard it fall with a _plop._

“Ken?” a small, almost nervous voice came from behind him.

Kenny turned to see Butters there, standing in the ankle deep snow with his pajama pants tucked into his boots. He was wearing a puffy blue coat, and a hat to match. His hands were tucked into his pockets. His blonde wisps of hair that poked out from under his hat blew in the wind, and his cheeks were rubbed raw. Kenny couldn’t think of seeing anyone who could look more perfect or adorable.

“Hi,” said Kenny, wrapping his arms around his knees and hugging them to his chest. “I couldn’t sleep.”

Butters walked over to him, and Kenny scooted over on the rock he was sitting on to make room. Butters sat down.

“Are you okay?”
Kenny tried to laugh, but it came out more as a wet huff of air. He looked down at his hands, pink and frozen. “Everyone is gonna think I did it.”

Butters didn’t say anything, because they both knew it was true. Butters put his mittened hand over Kenny’s, and squeezed tightly.

“I know you didn’t,” said Butters softly. He gave Kenny a swift kiss on the cheek, and then nuzzled his forehead against Kenny’s shoulder. “It doesn’t matter what they all think. They’re all wrong.”

Kenny put his cheek on top of Butters’ head, feeling the warmth of company and touch melt his freezing bones. His heart still hammered in his chest, but not for Butters. It was out of fear. It was out of fear that Butters could be wrong, and everyone else could be right.

They watched the sun come up together. The snow sparkled like diamonds, and Butters picked up his head to whisper into Kenny’s ear.

“I love you, Kenny McCormick.”

Kenny threw his arms around Butters, holding him tightly, and feeling like crying.

“Ken?” said Butters.

“I love you too, Butters,” said Kenny. And he meant it with every fiber of his being.

Kenny had never felt such warmth like this. He adored his sister, Karen, but this was a different kind of love. He couldn't believe that someone like Butters would love him like this. He couldn't believe Butters would fall in love with a monster like him.

X

Kyle stood next to Stan’s parents on the platform of 9 ¾ while Stan said his goodbyes. Kyle was still a little mad at Stan for what he said about Kenny, but he didn’t think he could live with himself if he didn’t say goodbye at Kings Cross. It was enough trouble getting his mother to agree to let him come to the station, the least he could do was put aside their spat for a few moments.

Stan said his goodbyes to his parents, and when he got to Kyle he seemed to freeze.

“Will you walk with me to the door?” he asked quietly, like it was a secret. Kyle lustfully wondered if Stan wanted to sneak a goodbye kiss. It could be the last time they would be able to. What if Stan never came back from Hogwarts?

Kyle nodded, pushing that dark thought to very back of his mind as he walked with Stan along the side of the train.

“You’ll write to me, won’t you?” said Stan.

“Of course, dude,” said Kyle. “Every day.”

Stan nodded at his feet, unable to look Kyle in the eyes. “I just...I can’t believe this is the first time we won’t be riding back to school together. It’s weird.”

“Yeah,” said Kyle softly. “It is.”

They were silent the rest of the way to the door. Stan hopped up onto the train, turning around and clasping onto the golden handle next to the door. He held out his hand, offering it to Kyle.
“Last chance, dude,” he said, hopefulness dripping in his voice. “Hop on, and your mom won’t even know until we’re already halfway there.”

Kyle snorted, smirking slightly, and shaking his head. It was sort of out of good nature, but it was mostly out of misery. “You know I can’t, Stan. She’ll be waiting for me at the gates when we arrive.”

Stans arm went slack to his side, downcasting his eyes. “Yeah, you’re right.”

“You didn’t seem to care we weren’t going to be together when we got sorted. Why do you care now?” Kyle didn’t say it to start another fight, he genuinely wanted to know. Stan hadn’t seemed all that upset when they were first years and being separated. Why was he dying to get Kyle to come with him to Hogwarts, now? When it could be the most dangerous place to be at the moment.

“This is different,” said Stan, a bit of bitterness in his voice. “You’re going to be miles away now, and not just a staircase away.”

Kyle sighed. “I’m sorry, Stan.”

“No, I’m sorry,” he said at once.

“What for?”

“I don’t know. Everything.”

They laughed together, and it felt good, but sad all at the same time.

“You can stay here,” said Kyle. He knew it was a crazy shot in the dark, and it was stupid to even ask, but it was at least putting the idea into Stan’s head. If he stayed, at least Kyle would know he was a bit safer.

“You know I can’t,” said Stan.

Kyle smirked, pretending that he was just joking before. Even though his heart was stinging painfully. “I know.”

The train jerked, jolting Stan to the side of the door. His eyes went wide, and wishful, sticking out his hand one last time.

“Last chance, Kyle.”

Kyle knew that Stan meant it in a half-joking manner, and that he was talking about a last chance to sneak away to school. But Kyle felt that same surge of bravery he felt on Christmas Eve, and when Stan said, “last chance,” he took it in a different way.

Just as the Hogwarts Express was chugging slowly forward, Kyle leapt onto the train, taking Stan’s hand in his. The look on Stan’s face was priceless. His blue eyes were wide, and his mouth was parted just slightly. A flush broke to his ears, as he muttered out a soft, “Kyle?”

Kyle’s heart was hammering wildly in his throat, but he closed his eyes tight, in hopes of feeling just a smidge more braver. He stood on his toes, tilting his head up, and met Stan’s lips with his. There were students who crowded the train who saw, and Kyle could hear them gasping and cooing at him and Stan. It brought a blush to the back of his neck, but at that moment he didn’t care.
He felt Stan’s arms wrap around his hips, pulling him flush against his chest, and Stan was kissing back.

But Kyle had to end this exhilarating experience much too early. The train was picking up pace, and if he defied his mother, the next time Stan saw him he would be in a casket.

Kyle parted away from Stan, looking at his puckered lips and closed eyes, still reaching for Kyle’s touch. Stan fluttered his eyes open, just as Kyle was jumping off the train and back to the platform.

Stan poked his dumbstruck face out of the moving train, and Kyle chased after it, grinning stupidly.

“At least I don’t have to be drunk to kiss you, Stan Marsh!” Kyle shouted, making Stan’s face glow red.

“Kyle--” was all Stan could sputter out. But then he seemed to come to his senses. “Kyle, I promise I’ll get whatever got Pip, I promise! So you can come back to school!”

Kyle could feel pinpricks in his eyes. He ran faster after the train.

“Okay!”

“And I’ll--I’ll look after Kenny and Butters! And I’ll send you all your homework, so you don’t fall behind!”

Kyle slowed as he started nearing the wall of the tunnel the train was going to pass through. He was crying now, but he made sure to brush the tears away so Stan wouldn’t see.

He cupped his hands around his mouth, shouting with all the breath he had left. “Goodbye, Stan.”

The train crossed through the tunnel before Kyle could hear Stan’s response. He felt tingly, yet melancholy all over, as he made his way back to Mr. and Mrs. Marsh. He touched his lips gingerly in disbelief, wondering what in the hell came over him, but overjoyed they had finally gotten that over with.
Boyfriends and Owls

Stan was staring blankly out of the train compartment window, looking out at the frost covered glass, and the snowy open fields.

He kept replaying that moment over and over in his head, getting that same burst in his chest every time he came to the moment Kyle kissed him. He was awfully perplexed at Kyle’s actions. The confidence and bravery of his friend--or, boyfriend...were they boyfriends now? Stan wasn’t sure what to call Kyle now. He supposed he could write a letter, and send it off with Tweeks owl when he got back to Hogwarts. He didn’t think he could stand to wait for Kyle to send Elephant. The winds were harsh this time of year, and Elephant was just a little owl. It could take her weeks to just fly to Hogwarts with one letter.

“What’re you staring at?”

Stan spun around, pointing the butt end of his wand out at Eric Cartman, who had snuck into the compartment without Stan hearing the click of the door.

“Jesus Christ, Cartman,” said Stan, “don’t sneak up on me like that. I could’ve cursed you.”

Cartman arched an eyebrow down at Stan’s wand. “Careful where you’re pointing that thing, killer. You could have offed yourself.”

Stan glared as Cartman snicked, throwing himself into the seat across from Stan. Stan stuffed his wand back into the pocket of his hoodie.

“You seem pretty distracted, Chosen One,” said Cartman.

“I was just thinking,” said Stan.

“Unfamiliar territory, huh?”

“Shut up, Cartman.”

Stan watched Cartman’s eyes scan all around the compartment. They narrowed in confusion. “Where’s your boyfriend?”

Stan didn’t have the energy to bicker with Cartman. Besides, he couldn’t really tell Cartman he was wrong anymore, could he?

He looked back out the window. “His mom didn’t want him coming back to school this semester. At least until this whole thing is figured out.”

Cartman snorted. “Wow. What a fucking pussy. My mom didn’t want me coming back either, but I told her. I said ‘listen here, bitch, now, I’m goin’ back to school whether you like it or not!’”

Stan just rolled his eyes. He was sure that the roles in Cartman’s story were most likely reversed in reality. But he really didn’t want this train ride to last a million years, so he kept his mouth shut, and continued thinking about Kyle.

“Can you believe Pip fucking got himself killed? What an idiot.”

“He’s not dead, Cartman,” said Stan. “They’ve got him at Saint Mungo’s. My mom is taking care of him.”
Cartman just snorted. “Yeah, whatever. Everyone says he’s not gonna make it though. Did your mom say they know what happened yet? Who did it?”

“No, she doesn’t know any of that stuff. I don’t think she’d tell me anyway.”

“Who do you think it was?”

Stan worried on his bottom lip. He had a really good idea on who could have done it, but saying it out loud felt like betraying Kyle. So he kept it to himself. Nobody needed to know. He could solve this all by himself. He’d get Kyle back by himself, and help Kenny. Maybe he could be the Chosen One after all.

“I have no idea, Cartman.”

“Well, you know who I think it was?”

“No.”

“It was probably that prat Damien Thorn. You know, he stayed home over Holiday too, which is really fucking weird, because his family always travels. They’re mega rich, dude. But I wouldn’t put it past him to straight up kill somebody. He’s a weirdo…”

X

At dinner that night, Stan sat across from Butters and Kenny at the Gryffindor table. He was watching Butters talk animatedly about their winter holiday, complete with hand motions, wide eyes, and facial expressions. But Stan couldn’t help but notice Butters was only using one hand.

His other hand was trapped by Kenny’s. It sat on the table, partially hidden by a bread basket, but Stan could still tell that Kenny’s hand was on top of Butters’, and he had his fingers looped through the gaps of his fingers.

Stan couldn’t stop staring at them.

“We didn’t really have any trouble with Damien, did we, Ken?” said Butters, turning to him. Kenny was shoveling his face with fried chicken. That was another thing; Kenny had his scarf down on his neck. And he was actually at dinner on time.

“Nah,” he responded thickly.

Butters looked back to Stan, his eyes going gloomy. He leaned slightly forward, whispering. “He seemed real upset when they took Pip away. I’ve never seen Damien like that before. Have you, Kenny?”

Kenny shook his head.

“Oh, Ken,” said Butters, grabbing a napkin and then taking it to the corner of Kenny’s mouth. “You’re such a pig when you eat.”

Stan felt his legs go weak, and if he had been standing, he surely would have fallen over.

“Are you guys dating now?” he exclaimed, a little too loudly. He felt his face flush, and it seemed like the entire Great Hall had gone silent. But maybe that was just because the buzzing in his ears was ridiculously loud.

Butters and Kenny looked back at him with blank faces, almost like time had frozen.
“I didn’t tell you in the letter?” said Butters, innocently blinking.

“Hell, no!”

“Oh...whoops.”

Kenny shrugged, smirking. “Told you it was becoming an epidemic, Stan.”

“Are ya mad?” Butters asked, his eyes round and nervous.

Stan looked back him, almost confused. Of course he wasn’t mad. He was happy for them. So why was there such an intense pit burning in his abdomen at the thought of Kenny and Butters getting to hold hands around school, and about them possibly sneaking off the Hogsmeade together, or sleeping in the same bed with their legs intertwined under the covers.

Stan realized he was jealous. Jealous that Butters and Kenny were going to be able to do all of these things together, while Stan would be alone in his four poster, because Kyle was all the way back home.

“I’m happy for you guys,” he said, but it felt like he was spitting nails out of his throat.

“Why are you acting all weird, dude?” Kenny frowned at him. “Did something happen back home? You didn’t really say much in your letter.”

Stan considered telling them. Maybe he’d feel loads better if he did, and people had already seen him and Kyle on the train, so the rumors would get to Kenny and Butters eventually, if not by tomorrow afternoon. But Stan really wasn’t in the mood to go into an entire spiel on his feelings for Kyle, and about what happened over holiday. He was tired from his train ride back. It had taken up a lot of his energy to tolerate Cartman, especially without Kyle there at his hip.

Stan rubbed his hand over his face. “Just tired,” he said. He pushed his dinner plate away from him, crossing his arms over the table top to sit and stare off past Kenny’s head at the Ravenclaw table. It was filled to the brim with Ravenclaw students, but even so, Stan could still tell there was an empty seat that was leaving the table feel entirely vacant.

“Missing Kyle?” Butters chirped.

Stan just grunted, refusing to meet their eyes.

“Do you think anyone else’s parents made them stay home?” Butters asked, craning his neck to look out and around the Great Hall. “It seems like everybody is here, to me.”

“Guess we’ll find out tomorrow,” said Kenny. He was poking at his food now, instead of devouring it like before.

“Hey!” Stan snapped his head around to see Clyde, Craig, and Tweek hovering at his side. Clyde had a stupid look to him, while Craig was standing there with his arms folded across his chest, smirking wickedly. Tweek was huddled behind Craig, but peering out at Stan carefully, twitching slightly as usual.

“What?” said Stan.

“Tweek says he saw you and Kyle before the train took off,” said Craig.

Stan tried to keep his cool, but his throat had gone tight. When he tightened his hand into a fist his knuckles cracked.
“He says he saw you and Kyle kissing.”

There was a rattle of dishes as Kenny slammed his hands on the table, staring at Stan with wide, dumbstruck eyes.

“Care to elaborate, Marsh?” said Craig.

“Yeah, Marsh,” said Kenny. “Elaborate.”

But Stan just shook his head and got to his feet. “I’ll talk about it tomorrow.”

Clyde pointed a finger at him, practically breathless as he said. “Are you admitting it?!”

Stan just gave him a hard look. “I’m not in the mood, guys.”

“Dude! You can’t just leave us hanging like that!” Kenny got to his feet, too, his mouth open and stained with hot sauce. For a moment, Stan swears it almost looked like blood. He looked away from Kenny quickly, slapping his hand to his head.

“Listen, I’ll tell you about it tomorrow, I promise. I just...need some time by myself right now, okay? I don’t have the energy to get into it.”

Stan was grateful when none of them said anything more. He sulked out of the Great Hall and to the quiet Hufflepuff Basement. When he got to his dorm room, he jumped at the sight of Elephant, sitting at the end of his four poster, fast asleep in her wing.

“Elephant?” he said at once, startling her just as much.

His eyes trailed to his bed, where a letter sat waiting on his pillow. He dove for it and had the envelope ripped into shreds in seconds.

The sight of Kyle’s neat, cursive handwriting sent a comforting warmth through Stan's chest. It wasn’t a very long letter, but it was enough.

Dear Stan,

I hope you’re still willing to talk to me after what I did. To be honest, I’ve been wanting to do that for a while...maybe even longer. Ha. Anyway, I just thought I’d send a quick letter to make sure everything was...okay between us, I guess. I know I’m just being paranoid.

I hope the guys don’t give you too much shit for me kissing you.

Hope to hear from you soon,

Kyle B.

Stan read the letter over so many times he had it memorized. He could almost hear Kyle reading it to him nervously, and laughing awkwardly at all the right parts. If he closed his eyes and recited the letter to himself, it was almost like Kyle was in the dorm with him. If he was, all Stan could picture doing was kissing him again, and again, and again. Kyle was silly to think that Stan wouldn’t want to talk to him again. He was silly to be paranoid, too, but Stan understood why. It was pretty reckless of him to do what he did, especially for someone like Kyle.

Stan reopened his eyes to an empty dorm room, staring at Pip’s four poster bed, set exactly the way Pip had left it. The curtains were drawn, and the bed was made, albeit, a little haphazardly, and a pillow had a Pip-sized dent in it, like he had just gotten up. It was eerily still, and Stan felt
cold just by looking at it and knowing that a body wouldn’t be occupying it for a while. Maybe not ever again.

He thought about hopelessly wishing for Kyle to be here with him, but then decided that wasn’t going to do anything. He needed to figure out who hurt Pip. Even if it means stalking Kenny around the castle until he has proof he’s a werewolf. Stan knew Kyle wouldn’t like that if he told him, so he’d make sure to pop in on Damien every once in awhile too. He couldn’t be completely out of the picture just yet.

Stan sighed, holding the letter up to his face again. He thought about writing a letter back right away, but decided he’d have to do it tomorrow. He suck the letter inside his bedside table, next to his wand and an emergency stash of chocolate frogs.

He looked back over at Elephant; she was sitting on a post with Elway nuzzled between her feet like he was an egg she was protecting. He gave them both a pat on the head before turning over in his bed.

He was facing Pip’s empty bed. It was like a punch to the throat every time he saw it.

He turned back over to face Clyde’s bed, drawing the blinds, and went to sleep.

X

“...and then he jumped off the train and waved goodbye. I was so shocked, I didn’t know what to say. I don’t think I even really knew what happened till I sat down in the compartment.”

Butters was sniffling and dabbing at his eyes with a napkin. Kenny was patting his hand lightly, while Craig and the others just stared blankly back at Stan, anticipating more to the story.

When Stan walked into the Great Hall that morning it was like the paparazzi had been waiting for him all night. He barely had time to butter a scone before Kenny and Butters had rushed over from the Gryffindor table to interrogate him. Clyde, Token, Craig and Tweek had also made their way over to Stan in a matter of seconds.

“That was a beautiful story, Stan,” Butters said thickly. “I’ve always pictured you guys together.” He blew his nose into the napkin loudly, brushing away the remaining tears with a finger. “And now that you’re together you have’ta be apart--oh, Stan,” Butters wailed, bursting into tears before burying his face into his hands. “It’s just horrible! I’m so sorry!”

“Hee,” said Stan, looking at Kenny for assistance. Kenny gave him a wide eyed look, jutting his chin towards Butters and mouthing: “Tell him it’s going to be okay!”

“It’s gonna be okay, Butters,” said Stan. “Kyle and I will figure it out.”

Butters looked back up at him, red eyed and dribbling. “R-really? You will?”

“Yeah.” And Stan’s heart jumped lightly. Kenny hadn’t told him to say that purely for Butters’ sake; he told him to say it for his own sake too. Stan looked back at Kenny, the clever asshole.

Clyde gave a hard slap in between Stan’s shoulder blades. “I always had a feeling with you two.”

“Er, thanks, Clyde,” said Stan. “I think.”

“Y-you’re really gonna try to find out who hurt Pip?” said Tweek. He was fiddling with his tie in his shaking hands. The gold and black fabric was now a wrinkled mess on his shirt front.
Stan nodded, taking note of Tweek's nervous green eyes. They were always twitchy, sure, but something seemed different about them this time.

“Kyle’s been trying to figure out the werewolf problems for months. It kind of died down, and I was kind of shitty for not helping him out more. Now it got Pip, and Kyle can’t come back to Hogwarts with the rest of us until I figure out who keeps fucking with our school.”

Craig snorted loudly. “Well, it’s not like it’s a fucking mystery.”

They all turned to look at him. Stan had to pretend to not know what he was talking about, but in all honesty he could read Craig Tucker's mind at that moment just as well as his Charms textbook.

Craig skimmed over their faces, his gaze growing sharper at their blank, puzzled, stares.

Craig rolled his eyes and pointed a long, skinny finger at Kenny’s freckled nose. “McCormick fucking did it.”

Stan watched Kenny shift in his seat, and pull his scarf a little tighter around his face. All while under the stoney glare of Craig Tucker. Stan knew what Craig was thinking, and while he was thinking the same thing, he didn’t have enough nerve to put Kenny in a position like that.

Surprisingly, Butters was the one who wheeled on Craig. “And what proof do you have?” He snapped, cheeks already turning pink. “Just because someone looks a little different than you, doesn’t mean they’re a criminal, Craig!”

Craig’s ears blushed, but he held his jaw tight. “It only makes sense,” said Craig, “he’s got that gnarly scar, and you guys were the only ones at Hogwarts over break! Open your eyes! You’re sitting next to a monster!”

“Craig!” Token scolded, his dark eyes narrowing.

“Don’t pretend that you’re not thinking it too, Token,” Craig snapped. “Everyone is!”

There was a horribly miserable look in Kenny’s eyes, but Stan didn’t have much time to feel bad for him because Butters latched onto Kenny’s wrist and pulled him up from his seat in Firebolt speed.

“Butters don’t--” Token started to call after them, but they were soon walking out of the Great Hall, hand in hand. Token wheeled back on Craig. “Why did you say that?”

“Because it’s the truth,” Craig shot back. “He shouldn’t get to walk around like that. He needs to be locked up.”

“You don’t know that it’s true, Craig,” said Token.

“Craig,” said Tweek, tugging on the sleeve of Craig’s sweater lightly. “It might not be Kenny…”

Craig’s ears turned redder, but his jaw remained tight. “C’mon, Tweek,” he said, quickly spinning on his heel. “We’re going to be late to Divination.”

Tweek’s expression was torn when he turned to give one last glance at the remaining three at the Hufflepuff table. He looked back at Craig, who had already crossed the entire hall with out him. This caused Tweek to gasp, and to scurry quickly after him.

“C-Craig! Wait up!”

Stan frowned at the back of Craig’s blue hat until it disappeared behind the doors. “What’s up with
Those guys?"
Token sighed, looking at Clyde.

"Craig’s just worried,” said Clyde. “Tweeks scared, and Craig just wants him to feel safe.”
Stan narrowed his eyebrows. “So what? Tweeks always scared about something.”

“It’s different,” said Clyde.

“How?”
Clyde shared a glance with Token.

“Dude, Pip was muggleborn,” said Token. “And so is Tweek.”

“He’s freaked out to the max, dude,” said Clyde. “And that just stresses Craig out.”

“Shit,” Stan ran a hand through his hair. “I didn’t even put that together.

“Let’s just hope there’s not another attack,” said Token, “Craig just might lose his shit on Kenny.”

“And Kenny’ll lose his shit on Craig,” Stan muttered at the table.

“Not if Butters kills him first,” Clyde snorted. “Jesus, what’s gotten into that kid recently, huh?”
Token huffed a laugh. “C’mon, we should get heading to class. Coming, Stan?”

“I’ll catch up,” he said, still to the table.

“Okay. See you later, lover boy!” Clyde gave him another slap on the back before walking off with Token.

Stan, out of habit, looked back to the Ravenclaw table in search of Kyle, but he was reminded painfully that he wouldn’t be there.

He got up from the Hufflepuff table and walked to Divination. Alone.

X

“Don’t listen to him, baby,” Butters cooed to Kenny as they walked through the sea of cloaks rushing off to classes. He really didn’t want to see Kenny go back into holeing up in Gryffindor Tower again. He had seemed so happy when everyone came back from Holiday, Butters was really starting to believe he’d be okay, and maybe Pip would come back to school soon, and he’d tell everyone who really attacked him. Then, hopefully this whole thing about Kenny being a werewolf would blow over.

It really seemed to be bothering him.

Butters put a hand on Kenny’s arm, tugging his sleeve. “Ken?” He said. “Ken, talk to me.”

Kenny had been awful quiet ever since he found Pip, too. At first, Butters assumed it was shock. But now...well, he didn’t really allow himself to think of what else it could be, because that just seemed impossible. Kenny wouldn’t keep that big of a secret to himself...would he?

“I don’t know what to do, Butters,” said Kenny, almost too soft to hear. “I feel like Damien’s ruined my life...”
“Just--just don’t listen to them, okay? Pip is going to come back to school, and his word is gonna prove everyone wrong! And they’re gonna feel so stupid and guilty for even thinking for a second--” Butters had to cut himself off. Kenny had stopped walking abruptly to take Butters’ face in his hands. The way Kenny was looking at him took Butters’ breath away. Butters was watching Kenny’s brown eyes trace over every feature of Butters’ face. Like he was trying to get everything down to last detail. Like they weren’t going to see each other again.

“K-Kenny?” Butters brought his own hands up to place over Kennys. When Kenny didn’t respond, Butters let the words come tumbling out of his mouth like vomit. “You shouldn’t listen to Craig, okay, Ken? He doesn’t matter. None of them do. We got each other, right? We know you had nothing to do with what happened to Pip.”

Kenny’s eyes darkened. They trailed away from Butters’ face and furtively glanced at the tile.

“...Right, Kenny?”

Butters’ heart was hammering so hard against his ribs it hurt. His whole body felt cold, but a sweat was beading at the back of his neck. He thought if Kenny let go of him he’d fall over, or throw up.

Kenny’s hands fell away from Butters’ cheeks, but they thankfully floated down to his hand. Kenny laced his fingers with Butters’.

“We should get going to class, Leo,” said Kenny.

That was all it took for Butters to take a clean breath of air. He let himself relax, and to squeeze back against Kenny’s grasp on his hand. They continued their walk to their class.

Butters told himself everything was going to be just fine. He was being silly before; worrying about nothing. Kenny was okay. He was just feeling self-conscious because of what Damien did to him. Pip will come back to school soon, and they’ll find out who did it. Kyle will come back to school, and Stan’ll be happy again. It’ll be okay.

Butters sighed, leaning against Kenny’s shoulder and smelling the musky, earthy smell that always seemed to stick to his scarf. He breathed it in and let it warm his heart.

It was all going to be okay.

X

Cartman was slouched in his chair, staring blankly at the chalkboard as his Potions professor droned on about monkshood and werewolf cures and other things he really didn’t care about.

Cartman was only slightly disappointed that Kyle hadn’t come back to school this semester. Maybe he was a little more than slightly, but only because Hogwarts seemed far less more fun without an angry redheaded Jew to pick on. Stan seemed so depressed now, and Cartman couldn’t even make fun of him and Kyle secretly being lovers anymore, because it turns out they are. And if anyone tried to so much look at Kenny funny, Butters would bite their head off. Hogwarts just wasn’t fun anymore.

Cartman sighed heavily, tilting back in his chair so it rested on two legs. He saw a dark figure walking through the classroom doorway; Damien Thorn.

“Ah,” chirped their professor. “Glad you could join us, Mr. Thorn. Hope you can find any empty seat.”
Wordlessly, and almost soundlessly, Damien went to take a seat. But not just any seat. He had to pick the open seat that was next to Eric Cartman.

Cartman wasn’t afraid to audibly groan when Damien plopped himself down in the seat. Damien didn’t look at him.

The class continued on, but Cartman sat glaring at his new lab mate.

“Excuse me,” Cartman snorted. “What the fuck do you think you’re doing? This seat is reserved.”

Damien finally turned to look back at him, his eyes a shade darker than before.

“From my understanding this used to be Pip’s seat, and we both know that Pip won’t be coming back. I’m free to take it.”

Cartman clenched his fists. “Fine. Whatever.”

“Cartman,” said Damien, “I’ve heard Broflovski won’t be returning this semester. Is that true?”

Cartman’s glare sharpened. “He’s not, but why the hell do you care?”

“You know how I love rumors, Eric,” said Damien coyly. His eyes flashed as he shifted his body to face Cartman, cupping his cheek in his hand. “Speaking of rumors; do you think McCormick is the one who hurt Pip?”

Cartman looked back to the blackboard, pretending to understand the white marks that were written there. He crossed his arms over his chest, huffing. “Kenny’s harmless, dude. I don’t get your deal with him. And since when do you give a fuck about Pip? He’s just a stupid Hufflepuff frenchie.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Cartman watched Damien’s jaw lock.

“I give a fuck because the safety of our school is at stake, Eric.”

Cartman snorted. “Let me tell you something about Kenny; he’s my best friend, and I’ve known him since I was eleven, alright? If he was a werewolf I would know about it. I’m not dumb.”

Damien scribbled something down. “Hmmmm. Everyone has secrets, Eric. Even those closest to you.”

Cartman just frowned, daring to look back him for just a moment, but only to catch a glimpse of whatever it was he had written down. His handwriting was small, but Cartman could see that it was only a simplistic version of whatever their Professor had written on the board. More shit about werewolves. This whole thing was giving Cartman a headache. If he had to hear one more thing about werewolves he was going to explode.

“Let’s get one thing straight here, Thorn,” said Cartman coldly, “you don’t know anything about me, or my friends. Everybody hates you, especially me, so stop talking to me like we’re friends, alright?”

Damien just smiled. That horrible, stomach twisting smile that made Cartman only slightly regret everything he had just said. If he was going to be honest, Damien scared the shit out of him. But that would be the last thing he ever told anybody.

“Is that so?” said Damien.
“Yeah,” said Cartman, forcing confidence. “You should really cut it out with the werewolf crap. It’s getting on my nerves. If anyones a werewolf, it’s probably you.”

Out of his peripherals, Cartman saw Stan whip his head around at their table. He had probably been eavesdropping the entire time so he could write back to his butt buddy, Kyle, and tell him all about the stupid shit Cartman had said. Stan is such a douche.

“You really think so?” Damien’s face actually seemed to light up, and his smile only grew. Cartman had to look back to the black board. He was afraid fangs would sprout out of Damien’s mouth.

“Oh, I’m going to keep picking on Kenny. Everyone thinks he’s just an innocent puppy, but just because the puppy’s been kicked around, doesn’t mean the dog won’t bite.”

Cartman found himself glaring at the side of Damien’s head again. “What are you talking about?”

Damien looked up from his journal, looking at Cartman through half-lidded eyes. “I’m going to show everyone that McCormick is dangerous. Just wait. I’m going to ruin his life.”

X

“Quit looking at me like that, Kyle,” his mother snapped. Her beady green eyes sneering at him through the rearview mirror of their Prius.

Kyle shifted his gaze off her and to the icy sidewalks of their town. When he huffed out of his nose, a white shadow fogged the window of the car door he was leaning against. Ike was sitting next to him, enveloped in his Nintendo to avoid being a part of the awkward family drama.

“It’s only going to continue to be miserable for you if you let it,” said Sheila.

Kyle just rolled his eyes. He was missing the feel of having his wand in his back pocket, and falling asleep to the rocking winds in Ravenclaw Tower. At Muggle school he was a complete outcast. Nobody knew him there, and he had ruined any possibility of making any relationships on his first day when he had accidently let it slip that he had a pet owl named Elephant. Instead of finding it incredibly awesome, everyone seemed to find that hilarious. It’s been a week of eating cold lunches alone in the cafeteria. The first couple of days Ike had sat with him, but Kyle made him stop doing it.

Kyle missed having three warm meals a day, and constantly being surrounded by magic, and funny creatures. Most of all he missed his friends. He missed Stan; the smell of the Hufflepuff Basement, and the after-Quidditch parties. He missed waking up to Stan’s bedhead, and he even missed listening to Kenny’s constant ramblings about how he and Stan would inevitably wind up together.

Kyle couldn’t help but smirk at the thought of Kenny’s reaction when he heard that he was right.

They pulled in their driveway and Kyle lept out of the car. He abandoned his backpack at the front door like he had been doing every day that week, while his mother’s voice chased him up the stairs, “Do you have any homework, Kyle?”

“No,” he deadpanned.

He had already decided that, in a form of protest, he would not be doing any school work for the
Muggles. Kenny would probably be so proud of him for this rebellious act. He wished he could
tell him in person.

Kyle ran to his bedroom in the hopes of finding a letter on his desk from Stan. He had been
hopelessly daydreaming all week long of what Stans response would be, and every day he was
becoming more and more doubtful. What if Stan wanted nothing to do with him now?

But today was finally the moment of truth.

Elephant was back!

“Elephant!” Kyle cheered, rushing towards her. She was waiting for him on the windowsill,
picking at her feathers with her beak until the sound of his voice caught her attention. She chirped
in greeting, instantly swooping over to perch on his shoulder. She nuzzled her beak to his cheek.
“Travel okay, girl?”

She hooted, and he supposed that meant it was okay.

He scanned the room for a letter, and found it on his desk. His hands were shaking so bad from
excitement and nerves he could barely open the envelope.

The piece of parchment was smudged and splattered with ink spots, which was one of the many
signs of knowing that Stan had written this note. Looking at Stans sloppy and ridiculous
handwriting was a comfort, and Kyle felt himself relax at his desk chair the moment he read
“Dear Kyle,” on the parchment.

DEAR KYLE,

This is Gonna Sound super Corny, but...I like, Haven’t stOpped ThinKING about you, Dude. I
miss you So Much. It acTually like, suPer hurts. It Hurts so bad, tHere’s a hole in mY chest, Like
wheN me and Wendy woulD break up, bUt, I duNno, I think It’s worse this time because We’re
not really broKen up, We’re just...really Far AWay from each Other, you know? Sorry It took me
so long to write back, I was Just Too BUSy thinking of What to say. Hope The waIt didn’t Kill ya.
How’s Muggle school? Kenny and Butters miss you like crazy too. I think Cartman does too
(Please Don’t Hate Me For Saying That), buT He won’t SaY anyTHing...NothinG NicE anyway.

But...UM...we’re Boyfriends now...right?

I Told the Guys AbOut us, Which I figured was OK, because you Kissed me in front of like, a
miLlion people. HAha.

By the way, I’ve Been wanting To do That for a whiLe too.

Your Buddy,

STAN MARSH

Kyle felt himself swoon as he pressed the letter against his chest. Hearing from Stan felt like a
boulder being lifted off his shoulders, but something tight was still being tethered to his heart. He
missed Hogwarts. He missed being with Stan.

Kyle took out a fresh piece of parchment and a quill and began writing back immediately. The
longer he waited to respond, the longer Stan’s own response would be, and he didn’t want to wait
a second more.
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