A Tale Of The Darnays' And Their Sydney

by personalized_radio

Summary

Charles and Lucie met in the scene and, despite both being predominantly doms, fall in love and get married. Years later and they still haven't quite figured out how to work around both of their dominant tendencies, or more accurately, their sadistic tendencies with neither of them being masochistic. It's begun to affect their marriage outside of the bedroom and trusted friend and BDSM club owner Mr. Lorry suggests they find another partner to balance them out. Enter Mr. Sydney Carton.

Notes

third time trying to upload ;0;

No one will actually see this probably since the ATOTC fandom doesn't seem to have a huge ficcer population (I think we need a movie. Possibly a musical one.) But I really wanted to write this so~

They ate breakfast the morning after in semi-silence, both still a little sore from the night before
and the fight that had followed. Lucie’s blonde hair had been tossed up into a rough bun and she hadn’t bothered to change out of her favorite pink yoga pants or the white tank top she liked to sleep in when she wasn’t just sleeping naked since she didn’t have to go into work for another two hours. Charles was combed and proper, dressed in his Sunday Best for his parent-teacher conference with his student’s parents.

“‘I’ll be home late,’” He reminded her, standing to put his empty plate in the dishwasher and flip his tie back from over his shoulder. She stepped into his space to straighten it for him and even they were fighting (or as close to fighting as he and his wife ever really got), their closeness took his breath away for a few seconds.

“‘I’ll be here,’” She told him, “‘And we’ll fix this.’

“Lucie…” he sighed, “I’m not sure how we can-”

“We’ll figure it out.” She said firmly, in that voice she used when she said things like ‘Bend over’ or ‘We’re replacing the carpet’, so he knew it was going to go her way, like it or not.

“Yeah, okay,” He tried a grin and found it wasn't quite as uncomfortable as it had been when he tried it earlier. She sent him off with a sweet kiss and a playful slap to his ass and he shut the front door after him with that same grin still on his lips.

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Charles Darnay was a teacher, or a private tutor would be a more accurate description. He was from old money, a product of a Monsieur St. Evrémonde and a Madame D'Aulnais, though he had taken his mother’s maiden name at eighteen and had gone a step further and changed it to the English equivalent of Darnay to distance himself even more from the corrupt lifestyle his family lived. Both his mother and father were dead, one of cancer and one by assassination, leaving he and his father’s twin brother the last of his father’s bloodline and himself the last of his mother’s, who had been an only child of an only child. He had his mother’s fortune saved away, drawing only from it during emergencies and donating large chunks of it to different organizations every month or so. When his uncle finally kicked the bucket he’d be doing the same to his father’s fortune, given that no illegitimate children showed up (otherwise, he’d leave it all to that imaginary child, no questions asked other than for proper birth certification).

He’d attended school at a British university, located a few miles out of London, where he’d acquired his teaching degree a number of years later, alongside his degree in French Literature, of which he had majored. At first, he’d planned to work in the school system, as a public school teacher in low income neighborhoods, but it had become apparent that he just didn’t have the head for working with bureaucratic bullshit and had eventually opened his own practice, a personal tutor at an affordable price for kids who did didn't mesh with the educational system. He had an office, though he also met students at home if that was easier for them and their parents, and he usually saw three students (or however many children were in the household who needed tutoring) for two hours a day, four days a week.

He’d been working for almost two years, still in Britain where he’d thought he was going to spend the rest of his life, when he’d met Lucie.

University had introduced him to many things, things like hard work and not so much sleep and how amazing coffee was. It had also introduced him to Tellson’s Bank, and her scene.

Tellson’s Bank, his first and favorite club, had been a small hole in the wall on the outskirts of London. It had been pretty dirty on the outside but had required an invitation to get into, which his friend had given to him for his birthday as a gag gift.

The inside had been dimly lit but comfortable and split into roughly two sides. On one side was a bar and what looked like a lounge. On the other side had been padded benches. Couples littered the room, sometimes joined by a third or even another couple, and depending on which side of the room they were on, in different levels of undress. One woman was completely naked, a thin collar around her neck attached to a leash held by a more moderately dressed women. The same women held another leash which attached to a much thicker collar wrapped around a naked man’s neck. Both leashed people looked content, and the same could be said for the women. Later, Charles had been told by the bartender that it was pretty common for their clientele to give out invites as a joke, especially the rich college idiots, but it was just as common that those jokes turned into
favors. Charles felt like, after he was allowed to carefully touch the shaking thigh of a moaning women just before she shook off into orgasm, he knew which of the two he’d be.

He came back almost a month later, much more informed and ready to learn. It was in that same club, Tellson’s Bank, almost ten months later, that he met Lucie. Charles had learned early on that, though he could enjoy a little power play and even less occasionally he could enjoy playing the submissive role, he much preferred dominating. Lucie, he’d found on their fourth date, after a late night movie and greasy dinner, was similar in her desires. They’d married a year after meeting, deeply and passionately in love and still not settling in the bedroom. Their wedding night had had a strict ‘no kink’ rule attached, because they didn't want the ongoing feud to affect that night of all of them.

But it was three years into the marriage, and the ‘no kink’ rule had turned into a ‘take turns’ rule, which they were coming to agree was not working much either. Lucie was an amazing dom, loving and careful and methodical, while Charles was similarly slow and careful, but focused more on sensation play while Lucie liked a structured descent into madness. That wasn't the problem though, because Charles could get into being carefully torn apart and put back together twice a week-sake of their marriage or not, and Lucie felt in the same direction about his more ‘going by ear’ habit.

The problem was, Charles thought as he rubbed his eyes and tried to focus on the terribly done English homework in front of him, that both of them were sadists and neither of them were masochists. Lucie bore it better than he, because Lucie was better at most things then he was which was one of the many reasons as to why he married her, but she enjoyed sharp objects and the thought of them going near his own skin simply hadn’t appealed at all. In the same fashion, one of his favorite plays (restraints of any sort) had been immediately blacklisted as one of her hard limits. Personality wise, they were nearly perfect together, but kink-wise they were nearly opposite. It posed quite the conundrum, but it hadn’t been until recently that it had been quite as large a problem as to effect their nearly overly-healthy sex lives.

He thought on it all day, all the way to the front door, which was locked. Lucie was likely not home yet, probably caught up at work a little later than usual. She had gotten the promotion that had sent them back to France four months ago, though they'd been planning the movie almost since their marriage. Lucie’s father, a French native, had originally moved with her to Britain but had moved back to France after she had settled. Lucie had been going to the same school as Charles, though nearly four years his junior. They'd met first in the student lounge, and then again at Tellson’s Bank, which had kickstarted their fast friendship. Before she had even graduated, she had gotten a job on an international magazine and through intense struggles had secured herself a high position in the business. Her promotion had allowed for her to keep her job as well as for the two of them to officiate their move and though it had been part to say goodbye to Tellson’s Bank, they knew that her sister club was located not to far from their preferred Parisian area as well. Run by Mr. Lorry, a friend of Lucie’s father, Dr. Manette, and Lucie herself (which Charles had come to learn was how she had not only gotten into the scene but how she had found out about Tellson’s Bank’s London branch), Tellson’s was similar to it’s Londoner sister and Charles loved it just as much.

“Charles?” Lucie said, walking into the house nearly an hour after Charles had. Charles was in the kitchen, making a small dinner for them to share while they watched their usual Wednesday programs.

“Kitchen,” He called back to her. He'd stripped out of his work clothes already and had switched them for a pair of sweatpants and what might have been Lucie’s shirt once upon a time.

“Hi, honey, I'm home.” She laughed, voice sweet as bells to his ears, and walked into the tiled kitchen, her heels click-clacking against the tanned tile powerfully. It nearly made him want to drop to his knees for her. Instead, he leaned down to kiss her, because even in heel’s she was shorter than him, and tried not to smile when she pushed into it.

“How was work?” He asked, going back to cutting up the cucumber for the salad. She shrugged, pulling her bright red jacket off (and somehow the shade matched her lipstick and heels perfectly.) to reveal the sleeveless, short black dress she was wearing. Next went the overly
large brimmed black hat and her sunglasses, and she left to put all of them away in their rightful
place. When she came back, she was in one of his shirts and a pair of boxer shorts and her hair
had been pulled from its artful bun into a crazed, knotted mess. Her lipstick was gone but her eye
make up had stayed in place.

“It was okay,” She said, moving to start tossing the salad a little, just to see if she could in the too-
small bowl Charles had accidentally grabbed instead of it’s nearly identical partner bowl, “Just a
lot of common mistakes. The writer hadn’t been paying much attention so I sent it back with a few
tedious edits.” She smirked a little, her teeth bright against the natural red of her lips, and he
couldn’t hold back the laugh.

“Evil,” He laughed at her expression, tossing the last of the sliced veggies into the salad bowl and
tossing it all around.

“What about you?” She asked him, two plates, two wine glasses and some of the good, cheap
wine they’d stumbled across already laid out on the table while his back was turned.

“It was okay, too.” He shrugged back, “Terms coming up so parents are getting hectic and
stressing the kids out more than they are me.”

“Oh,” She frowned at him, “That’s gotta suck. It’ll be over, soon though, right?”

“Yeah,” He nodded again, “Just another month or so, and then it’s winter break.”

Lucie smiled again at the thought, “Miss Pross, Mr. Lorry and father are all coming for
Christmas.” She reminded, “Don’t you forget again.”

“It was one time!” Charles laughed, surprised, “And it was four years ago!”

“No excuses!” She laughed back, face crinkled with amusement, “You’ve been warned and
reminded. It might be fall but don’t you forget.”

“I promise,” He said, mock-solemn, “to not forget our family is coming for Christmas.”

“That’s right,” she said, mock-stern, back at him.

“Now,” Lucie dropped the smile a little, her face becoming a little less cheerful but a lot more
intimate, “speaking of Mr. Lorry, there’s something I wanted to talk to you about.”

Something must have shown on his face but she just shook her head and laughed a little, “Come
on, let’s go to the living room.”

The living room was their neutral area, where they went when they discussed scenes and
negotiations. They had both learned that it was best to avoid the play areas when they negotiated,
because being in those rooms usually sent them both into domspace a little bit and it was rarely a
good idea to negotiate in domspace.

When they were cuddled together on the couch, Charles leaning against the side arm with his legs
on the couch and his arms around her in his lap and leaning against his chest, he asked, “So
what’s this about?”

“Well,” She said, pulling her phone out of the shirt pocket and opening the Notes app, “I was
talking to Mr. Lorry about our problem.”

Had it been anyone else, Charles probably would have been a little angry that she had spoken to
them about their bedroom life, but to tell the truth, there wasn't really anything about that particular
part of their lives that Mr. Lorry didn’t know.

Lucie’s father had been falsely accused at a young age and had spent a number of years in jail
after a rigged trial. While he’d been fighting for his freedom, Mr. Lorry had taken Lucie in after
her mother passed. Mr. Lorry had been a banker at the time, and the most trusted person Madame
Manette had known, which was why he’d been granted custody of her until her father’s return.

He’d placed her in his home, with his live-in partner Miss Pross, a women a number of years
younger than him but who seemed to share his mind in every way about the Manette family. Lucie
had grown up with them, until her fifteenth birthday, on which her beloved father had finally been
released when new evidence to his innocence had surfaced along with the death of the Head
Detective on his case. The four of them had lived together from then on, Mr. Lorry and Dr.
Manette quickly become the best of friends while Miss Pross cared for Lucie. Dr. Manette opened
a small, free clinic with some of the money given to him by the French government for his false
imprisonment and she’d grown up loved, cherished, and surrounded by happiness even if two of
her three guardians lived an alternative lifestyle, something the media had no trouble demonizing.
Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross were both Lucie and Charles’ most trusted secret holders and if they ever had problems in their kink life, they always went to one or both of them.

“What did he say?” Charles asked her, combing his fingers through her wild hair slowly to untangle it.

“Well…” Lucie trailed off, then showed the screen to him. There was name, Mr. Stryver, a space, and then a number, a date and a time, with another name in parentheses, (S. Carton).

“Who’s Stryver? A therapist?”

“No, he’s a patron of Tellson’s Bank,” She shrugged a little, closing the app down and locking her phone back up to save the battery, “Mr. Lorry thinks that if we can’t find a way to compromise our own desires in the bedroom, that we should think about maybe finding another person who we can act those desires out upon.”

“He wants us to have an open relationship?” He asked a little worriedly. He didn’t want that at all, he didn’t want to sleep with other people, he’d rather just give up kink and have a semi-satisfactory sex life.

“No,” She laughed, hitting his chest lightly, “He thinks we should find a submissive to share, don’t be an idiot.”

“A submissive?” Charles grinned a little, kissing her forehead, “Well, what do you think? Do you think we’d be okay with another person?”

“It doesn’t have to be a relationship, I don’t think.” She said after a few moments of silence, “I mean, we could probably try it out once or twice, see if we like it. If we do, we can find someone to call when we feel we need someone else with us and if we don’t, no harm no foul, right?”

“Right,” He agreed, “But where does Mr. Stryver come in?”

“Stryver is new to the scene,” Lucie said, in that way that meant he’d read Fifty Shades of Gray and had gone in thinking it was gonna be poorly executed dubious consent and whips on pretty girls and wasn’t liking the actual scene so much, “and he was dating a boy, but they broke up a month or two ago after Stryver realized what being a dom actually entailed…Mr. Lorry said if we were looking, that the boy would be a nice first candidate. I didn’t want to call yet but I texted him a little, to see if he was interested. He was, he’s a maso-sub and his name is Sydney Carton.”

“Can we…date first? Or is it more acceptable to just fall into bed with a stranger when you’re having an illicit kinky threesome?”

“I know as much as you do,” She laughed again, pulling her phone back out, “But let’s research.”

“In the bedroom.” He said firmly.

“In the bedroom.” She agreed, mock-serious.

They went to the bedroom and shut the door behind them.

Tellson’s Bank was small, though not crowded. The lighting was a little flawed, but the bar was well stocked, the couches and chairs were comfortable and there were a number of nicely decorated and stocked rooms for rent in the back.

Lucie and Charles walked in at a quarter to nine, early for most but they hoped to be leaving Tellson’s soon for possibly a nice dinner or just a walk around Paris.

“Mr and Mrs. Darnay, I presume?” A large man at the bar said with a smile and an almost heinously English accent laid over his French. There was a man at the bar next to him, handsome (looking quite similar to Charles, in fact) and pale under the lights. His hair was straightened out, but roughly so with a number of curls still laying in his dark hair. He looked nervous, and a little uncomfortable.

Charles figured this was Sydney and he nodded at him, smiling.

The man smiled back and Charles hoped that this really was Sydney because he’d love to keep that smile on his face for the rest of the night.

He tuned back into his wife though, because the sharp edge of her words were drawing his attention back to her conversation with Stryver, “Well, it was very kind of you, sir.” She was saying, though she mocked without sounding so.

Stryver was much older than them both, but handsome in his own way. He obviously had money, was quite arrogant and extremely dismissive of Lucie and talked only directly to Charles after he
had joined the conversation. Neither were sad when he had to leave, and they shared an irritated look behind his back as he left. He was finally out the door and they were both turning to look at the stranger, who Stryver had indeed introduced as Mr. Sydney Carton, though had not given any of them the chance to say even a polite hello.

“It’s so nice to meet you in person,” Lucie said, sitting in the stool next to Sydney, “I hope we haven’t given off a bad impression.”

“Not at all,” Sydney said immediately, a light blush at the tops of his cheeks. It made Charles want to touch, but he knew better, “Just, do you think it would be possible for us to move to a table?”

He was English, it was quite obvious to tell, his French had that English accent to it, not overly prevalent but obvious, though otherwise flawless.

“Hm? Oh yes, of course.” Charles said, stepping away from them so they could both slip out of their stools. He looked around for a few seconds and finally spotted an empty table, which he led them to with a nod of his head. They were soon seated, Lucie and Charles side by side and Sydney across from them.

“Is this better?” Lucie asked, “We really do want to apologize, I’m sure Mr. Stryver is a nice man.”

“Oh, no,” Sydney shook his head, “He is quite the asshole.”

It startled a laugh out of Charles, which made Lucie giggle into her hand, then clear her throat, though she couldn’t hide her amusement, “Oh, well, then I suppose I should retract our apology.”

“Apology retracted,” Sydney smiled back, lifting a hand to roughly swipe some fallen hair from his face and behind his ear. His eyes were a soft brown, close in color to Charles’ but much lighter. Lucie laughed again and offered her hand, “Lucie Darnay, and this is my husband, Charles.”

Charles waved awkwardly because he’d never been very good at meeting new people, especially new people he was meeting with so he could use them as a buffer between his and his wife’s domination tendencies.

“Sydney Carton, it’s a pleasure to meet you,” Sydney offered his hand and first Lucie and then Charles shook it. His skin was smooth, but the tips of his fingers were calloused, like he played an instrument.

“Likewise,” Charles said softly, unable to stop his own smile at the blush that covered Sydney’s cheek for a few seconds again.

Lucie tapped his hand under the table, a reminder that they hadn’t even asked yet and it was rude to try to seduce the poor man.

“We spoke over text,” Lucie said, voice steady and still amused, “about a certain proposition we wished to extend towards you?”

“Extend away, please,” Sydney nodded, “I would be happy to consider any proposition the likes of which we discussed.”

Lucie laughed again, and Charles had to stifle his own smile because Lucie was already nodding, “Yes, well, be that as it might.”

She pulled her purse open and pulled out a piece of paper, typed up the night before with signature lines on the bottom, “This is, of course, a mock up of a contract we quite possibly won’t need but Mr. Lorry said that you preferred everything in writing. Don’t feel as if we’re pressuring you, but even if you say no, we’d still like your input on the matter. Neither Charles nor I play submissively for the most part, and it has been quite awhile since we’ve done anything with anyone other than each other so your opinion would prove to be invaluable nonetheless.”

Sydney nodded and slid the paper closer to his side of the table. It was a little difficult to read under the dim lighting so Charles pulled his phone out and opened his torch app, shining it on the paper to make it easier for Sydney to read. The smile it got him made him squeeze Lucie’s hand. She squeezed back, so it must have been a mutual thing between them, to like his smile.

“It’s...a little formal, I suppose.” Sydney said once he’d run through it a few times, “This part here…” he pointed at a four sentence paragraph towards the end, “It’s rather inflexible, I think. Otherwise...this part here, too.” He pointed at the beginning, “Makes it sound a little too much like
a business deal and not a…not business deal.” He flushed again and shrugged, “It’s fine by me.”
“Wonderful,” Lucie smiled, making a note of the changes on her phone after reading over the spots he’d pointed out and then sliding the paper back into her purse, “speaking of it not being a business deal, Charles and I were wondering if you’d like to go to dinner with us.”
Sydney blinked, looking a little confused and a little bit charmed, “A date?”
“We have a three date rule.” Charles explained, feeling a little old fashioned but not minding much, “And while we aren't expecting a complete relationship from you, or if you’d rather not, someone else, we'd still like to get to know them before we fall into bed with them.”
“Completely reasonable.” Sydney nodded, a careful smile making its way not his lips, “I'd love to go to dinner with you.”
“Is tonight good for you?” Lucie asked, a big smile stealing across her face.
“I’m completely free tonight.” Sydney nodded again, looking between them shyly, a little nervous.
Charles couldn’t wait for the third date, or more accurately, afterwards. But he’d enjoy the first two, judging by this conversation.
They went to a nice restaurant, not nice enough to require a dress code, but nice enough to serve wine with their meal, though Sydney turns the offer of alcohol of any kind down. Lucie and Charles demanded that Sydney let them pay, hours and hours later when they'd finally gotten enough annoyed looks by the staff that they knew it’s time to go. Charles didn’t want to leave Sydney’s company though, thought his dry wit and darker humor were fun and interesting. And he didn't mind looking at him either, at the careful curve of his nose and the strong jaw, the light brown of his irises and the way his hair had finally won against the straightener and had started to curl up just everywhere. The sun might have been coming up in an hour or two but they were both willing to call in sick for just a little more time with Mr. Carton.
“I really need to go,” Sydney sighed out, sounding exhausted but happily so. His face was still flushed from his last laughing fit, clothes a little mussed from their night out.
“Oh, my apologizes, we're keeping you,” Charles smiled, feeling a giddiness in his stomach that he hadn't felt in quite some time.
“No, no,” Sydney shook his head, “I really would prefer to spend the rest of the night with you two,” he blushed a little, “but I have work later today and Stryver won’t shut up about it if I'm late again.”
“You work with him?” Lucie asked curiously, playing with the fingers she'd been holding for the last hour as they'd walked around a park near the restaurant, “We were under the impression he was an exe.”
“He is,” Sydney sighed, looking almost a little put out, “I hope you'll excuse my…feelings on the matter. My ill-thought out relationship with my business partner is a sore subject. He got it into his head that he’d make a great dominant, though he had no idea as to what it actually entailed. I agreed to be his submissive because,” he cleared his throat a little, “This is probably something I should get out now, but I have a habit of making rather poor decisions for myself. Stryver was one of a few, uh...less than exemplary lovers I've taken on.”
Charles frowned, feeling concerned, “He didn’t hurt you, did he, Sydney?”
“No, no,” Sydney shook his head, “Nothing like that. He just...was never quite fast enough when I safe worded, coming out of subspace was a nightmare when I could even-” He stopped talking abruptly and bit his lip, looking anxious, “And I'm being terribly forward and maybe that was a little heavy for a first date. I’m sorry.” He tried to take his hand back, looking embarrassed and distraught, but Lucie just squeezed his fingers reassuringly.
“Darling,” She smiled at him, “We're going on a date to decide if the three of us are compatible enough to have a vaguely romantic relationship consisting of kinky, dom/sub threesome sex. I don't think a little information on your last dom is too heavy for us right now.”
Charles nodded, touching Sydney’s other hand and kissing his knuckles carefully, “I agree completely, Sydney. It was very brave of you to talk about it, especially to people you’ve not known for very long. Not many can talk about relationships that went wrong like that, and even fewer speak so openly about it.”
Sydney just blushed again but he looked a little less upset, “I'm sorry. I'm ruining it. I'm definitely
ruining it. I should go.”
“You aren’t ruining anything,” Lucie said firmly, taking his hand in both of her’s, “And Charles and I would love to see you again tomorrow night, if that isn’t too forward or too short notice.”
“Oh,” Sydney said faintly. Charles wanted to kiss him, but that was definitely too fast for a first date. He still needed to talk to Lucie about what exactly the boundaries would be for Sydney, because it was looking more and more likely that he was the one for them, at least for now.
“Uh, I can't really meet tomorrow,” Sydney bit his lip a little bit and Charles made sure to stay looking at his eyes instead of being distracted, “But I can do Friday? Would that be okay?”
“Friday,” Charles said with feeling, “would be lovely. We'll meet you at Tellson's? Say, around eight?”
“I-oh, yes, okay.” Sydney nodded a few times, another of those small, pretty smiles taking over his lips. And then he was disappearing into the street to hail a taxi and disappear from their sight.
“Oh dear,” Lucie said faintly, “Oh dear, I was not expecting him. Not at all.”
“I must agree, my love,” Charles took her hand in his and squeezed, almost imagining that he could still feel the faint warmth of Sydney’s hand from where it had been resting in her’s for so long, “Mr. Carton was quite the surprise.”
“We'll need to negotiate this,” She said simply, “I'm not sure how long I could hold back from kissing him.”
“My thoughts exactly, dearest. My thoughts exactly.” he agreed, their thoughts in perfect alignment about a certain man sitting quietly in a taxi with the two of them on his mind as well.

They did go on that date, and then another, and then one more. Sydney was funny, though his humor was darker than either Lucie’s or Charles’ and he had a pretty low self esteem as it appeared to Charles.
They’d seen a movie on the fourth date and then caught some dinner at a nearby diner. Where usually they’d split up though, Sydney going to his own apartment and Lucie and Charles heading home, Lucie instead squeezed Sydney’s hand tighter.
“Syd,” She smiled, looking up at him through her lashes in that way Charles knew was nearly unbearable to say no to, “Would you like to come home with us tonight?”
Sydney’s eyes went wide and then went dark, and he looked at Charles, as if asking for his permission as well.
Charles nodded and almost as soon as his head had stilled, Sydney’s was nodding, “Yes, I’d enjoy that very much.”
Charles smirked, slid an arm around Sydney’s waist and rested his hand almost possessively over his hip. Lucie hugged his arm to her chest on his other side and together, they walked down the street until they'd reached Lucie’s car. She drove, Charles set in the back with Sydney and it wasn’t long before he was kissing along Sydney’s neck with careful, damp kisses and Sydney was breathing shallowly, a hand clenched in Charles’ pants material.
She got them home a little faster than normal, but Charles didn’t complain at her speed as he usually did. Instead, he got out after squeezing Sydney’s thigh lightly in his palm and then waited for Sydney to crawl out of the seat awkwardly before he shut the door. Lucie locked the car up with a press of the button on her key ring and then they were walking into the house, Sydney stumbling after Charles with Lucie leading them. They made it to the living room and then Lucie was shoving Sydney against the wall next to the door and kissing him hard. He melted, kissing back with enthusiasm, until it was almost too much and his face was bright pink. Charles watched them hungrily, one hand moving to run through Lucie’s silky smooth hair (how she managed to keep it so perfect all day was beyond him) gently. He kissed Sydney’s exposed neck, up to his ear, bit him lightly. Sydney moaned into Lucie’s mouth and Charles literally felt her breath hitch from where his hand had rested against her back.
“Lucie, darling,” He smirked, “Might we take this to the bedroom?”
“Yes,” She said immediately, “Sydney?”
“Yes,” He said back, sounding a little awed.
Charles grinned, gripped his hand in one of his while Lucie took the other one and they, together,
led him into the bedroom, shutting the door behind them.

Charles woke up feeling refreshed and fucked out. His limbs ached a little but he really didn't mind, Lucie was curled into his side, bare bodied and beautiful and he kissed her forehead carefully. Sydney lay on his other side, similarly bare and Charles thought back to the night before, a definite success. They hadn't taken Sydney down, had keep most of the kink out of the bedroom on their first night, but he was so responsive and sensitive that it had been hard to keep from pushing too far. Lucie had felt the same, he could practically see it under her skin, holding herself back from touching him in just the right way. But the contract hadn't been signed yet. They would probably address that later today or tomorrow, or at least, he hoped they did. He'd love to do a scene with Sydney and Lucie.

“Mmm…” Lucie hummed, voice rough and beautiful and perfect, like the rest of the world in that moment, “Charles?”

“Shh,” He hushed her softly, kissing her head, “Syd’s still sleeping.”

She made a pleased noise, deep and comfortable and happy, and Charles wanted to smile forever. Sydney moved a little, pressed closer to Charles and pressed his face to the pillow, making an unhappy noise as he was dragged into the world of the aware.

“Coffee?” He asked, voice muffled and needy. Charles wondered if he could get him to sound like that over Charles.

“It'll be ready in ten,” Lucie answered, sounding even more pleased than before. Charles could share her feelings on the matter. The arm under Sydney’s head was asleep but he'd rather lose the arm then make him move. Instead, when Lucie stood to pad to the kitchen sans clothes, he turned onto his side and pressed slow kisses to Sydney’s neck, his free hand tracing over Sydney’s hip, making him shudder.

“Charles,” Sydney nearly whined, hips twitching a little bit under his fingers, voice still sleep-dumb and muffled into the pillow, “Coffee, first.”

Charles tried not to laugh but he couldn't hold back the chuckle and he pressed his smiling lips to Sydney’s shoulder, nodding, “Okay, sweetheart. Coffee, first.”

They got up eventually, when the smell of coffee was too much for them to just smell without tasting, and joined Lucie in the kitchen. Charles had opted to wear some boxer shorts and Sydney had borrowed a pair, though they were just a little too large for him. Charles brought Sydney’s shirt for Lucie to sleep on so she wouldn't get uncomfortably hurt in the kitchen while he cooked up some vegan bacon for breakfast.

They ate through comfortable conversation, Sydney fucked loose and relaxed out of his usual timid exterior. He smiled a lot more after he got laid, laughed a little easier. Charles adored it.

“So,” Lucie said with a small smile after they'd all finished their food and the plates and glasses had gone into the dishwasher. She was always the brave one, bringing necessary items of conversation up even when he simply did not know how to begin broaching, “Last night...it was quite enchanting.”

“And we’d be very pleased to do it again,” she continued, winking at Charles, who nodded his head a little too rapidly, if their smiles were anything to go by.

“I’d be pleased to make that possible,” Sydney said, looking a little pleased.

“Would you like to introduce a little more of our...extracurriculars?” She took a sip of her coffee cup, the steaming black liquid going down smoothly. If Charles had tried that, he would have burnt himself tip of tongue to esophagus, if he’d even been able to drink his coffee black.

Sydney didn't say anything for a few moments, but Charles wasn't nervous. He'd had a great time, a third person had brought dimensions to his and his wife’s relationship that he hadn't even noticed before, and he really very much enjoyed Sydney’s company, had grown very fond of him in the weeks that they'd known each other. Even without the kink, though that had been the whole point of the experiment of finding a third person, Charles would be interested in continuing their relationship with him.
“Well...yes.” Sydney said eventually, which made both Lucie and Charles smile, “Yes, I do believe that adding those extracurriculars would indeed make the dynamic of the bedroom all the more enjoyable.”

“Excellent!” Charles grinned and drank the last of his lukewarm, nearly white coffee, “Do you feel the contract is needed?”

“I feel,” Sydney nodded a little, looking apologetic, “I feel better when things are on paper, written out for all parties involved to see. Is that okay?”

“More than,” Lucie said immediately, squeezing his hand in hers, “You are completely entitled to the contract. That’s why we asked.”

Charles nodded and left the kitchen to procure the Sydney-specific contract and bring it back with a pen.

“The overarching rules,” Lucie explained unneededly, just so all of them were on the same page, “are simple. One; this contract can be terminated by any party directly involved in it at any times with no demanded explanation, though one would be greatly appreciated, at any point in time. Two; other than rule one, these guidelines are negotiable and a new contract can be drawn up to fit those negotiations.”

Sydney initialled the initial guidelines when she was done speaking, nodding.

“Part two,” Lucie hummed into her mug again, taking another smooth sip like she wasn't drinking bitterness and hellfire in the same mouthful, “Sydney Carton had veto power at all time, in or out of scene, on what happens in a current or upcoming scene if he so chooses. Mr. Carton is not to be unfairly surprised in scene by Mr. or Mrs. Darnay without negotiated warning beforehand. No other party is to be invited into any scene without prior consent from both Mr. Carton and Mr. and Mrs. Darnay. While in this contract, none of the parties involved with have sexual or dominant/submissive relations with a non-mentioned party, be it in a long term relationship or casual relationship. Mr. and Mrs. Darnay agree that one or the other may be intimate with Mr. Carton without the presence of the other.” Lucie coughed pointedly at Charles, who couldn't stop a large grin from spreading on his face. Their hours didn’t often match up together as well as with Sydney’s, and they had decided that sharing Sydney meant solo time as well.

Sydney initialed again, smiling a little as well.

“This contract will be in effect for four months, starting the day it is signed by all parties involved,” Lucie intoned, voice mock serious, making Charles and Sydney both laugh, “This contract states that, once signed, the submissive agrees to give his body and mind to his dominants. He will agree to follow command given by both dominant parties, though neither have superiority over the other. By signing this contract, he agrees to accept punishment by both dominant parties, earned or not. By signing this contract, both dominant parties agree to adhere to the safeword of the submissive party at any point in time, without delay. Both dominant parties agree to treat the submissive with respect and care, in or out of scene unless previously negotiated. This contract is confidential and upon completion will be destroyed. At any point in time, this contract can be lengthened at the agreement of all parties. The terms may be altered at the agreement of all parties and a new contract will be formed and signed and this contract will be destroyed. If this contract fails to remain secret or at any time the terms are violated, the wronged party is within rights to terminate this contract.”

Sydney signed his name at the bottom.

Lucie signed her own and then Charles carefully penned his name next to theirs and the contract was signed.

When Charles looked up, Lucie’s eyes had set into their ‘I’m going to eat you alive’ phase, right before she pounced. He felt his own body prickle, and the look on Sydney’s face made it obvious that neither he nor Lucie were being incredibly subtle about their fast approaching intentions.

“Sydney,” Lucie said, her voice an appealing growl. Sydney quelled under it. Charles wanted to lick him, pin him to the wall or table or a bed and lick his whole body until he was a quaking mess.

Instead Lucie smiled, slow and careful, and pointed at the dishwasher, “Darling, I want you to wash those dishes. Four times counterclockwise, three times counterclockwise on both sides, until
they are spotless. You may wash the cups as you see fit, but know that if either if either I or Charles find a single speck on them, you will be punished. Do you understand, love?”

“Y-yes, Ma’am. Lucie?” Sydney shuddered hard, but he looked a little uncertain at her title, which made her smile.

“You may refer to me as Ma’am, Madam, or Mistress.”

“Sir, Monsieur, or Master,” Charles said firmly, to clear up the confusion before it had a chance to manifest, “Now, dishes, love.”

Sydney stood and finished his own coffee quickly, which they both allowed because even under orders, good coffee should never go to waste, and moved to do as instructed, repeating his instructions to himself under his breathe. He was a little out of practice, Charles could see, but it wouldn't be long before he was whipped back into shape. Lucie’s dark smile showed that no matter how hard or long Sydney scrubbed those dishes, there would be at least one speck to be found.

It’s very cold, very early that year. Snow had fallen deep by early December, and Charles has taken the week off with a slight cold he feared would grow too large if he left the house too often. He woke up on Wednesday, sans Lucie, who had work, but plus Sydney, who didn't work until later that day. Stryver might even close shop again because he hated walking in the snow for any amount of time, even from his car to the doors of their offices, let alone walking in the snow at night, but equally hated getting up early to open sooner. Sometimes, Charles wondered how Stryver made it as a successful small time lawyer. Then he remembered that Stryver had Sydney, and then the success made much more sense, though not Stryver’s involvement with it. Charles had to admit that neither he nor his wife were terribly fond of Mr. Stryver.

Sydney still wore Lucie’s scarf around his neck. It was a simple affair, lacy red layered on top of a silk black. It was patterned with roses and quite pretty. It looked even prettier wrapped around Sydney’s neck as a makeshift collar. They weren't quite ready, after only two months, to find a real collar but they all loved how it looked and they treated it as sort of a promise-leaning-towards-engagement-ring collar. A way to say that they weren't at the place where any of them were comfortable talking about buying such an important symbol yet, but they were only a couple of months away from that possible step and wanted to show that, even if just to each other. The scarf had originally been a present from Miss Pross to her ladybird after their marriage, but she wouldn't much object to it’s new use either.

“Syd,” Charles hummed softly, not truly wanting to wake him, but at the same time, wanting to see those pretty eyes on him.

Sydney made a grumpy noise and turned his face away to continue sleeping and Charles took the hint with a wide grin, kissing his shoulder before getting out of bed. He brushed his teeth, noticing Sydney’s purple next to the place where his red brush usually set and Lucie’s leopard print brush already set. It sent a shock of warmth through him, like it always did, to see Sydney’s things twined with their own. He'd been doing laundry and found a pair of Sydney’s pants and he and Lucie had cried about it happily for almost an hour, though they never told that to anyone else. Sydney was actually sleeping in the middle of the bed, his usual spot when he stayed over, right between Charles and Lucie, wanting to be the center of their attention for as long as he could. Charles loved that about him, how he wanted their eyes on him and wouldn't let anything else distract them from him, not even each other. It was endearing to them both, how hot it made Sydney to have their attention focused on him. He’d been around for about three days so he’d be leaving soon, back to the apartment he shared with Stryver (who had, color both he and Lucie surprised, left the scene quite awhile back) for a few days before he returned. Lucie and Charles were trying to slowly trick him into staying longer each time. Their record was about two weeks, before Sydney noticed that they’d been doing his laundry every night so he’d forget that he had to leave instead of having to go home because he’d run out of clean clothes.

Sydney had opened up to them on their third date, having coffee in a small, otherwise empty coffee shop hidden from the city by thick trees and a blanket of disinterest in the brown, wooden door with only a small wooden sign titled ‘Café Musain’. There had been a student group upstairs,
but they were quiet other than a speech giver, muffled by the thick floor between them so none of them had minded much. It had been a...difficult conversation for Sydney, opening up to them no matter how understanding they were. He showed them his ‘One Year Sober!’ chip, and haltingly talked about his childhood, how both his parents had been alcoholics with a drug addiction on the side and how he’d been predispositioned from very young to be the same way. He’d gotten into the wrong crowd as a teen and had not only fell into his parents addictions himself but had apparently gotten his mother’s crippling depression. He’d tried pills for it but had quickly grown addicted and when he’d gotten sober he’d put them under a strict regiment, paying the landlady of his and Stryver’s apartment to give him a single, and only a single, pill a day.

It hadn't been long before one of his dark times came over him, only a few days after they’d signed their contract. He’d tried to leave, telling them that he wouldn't be around for awhile but Lucie had immediately noticed that something was wrong and Charles had asked for him to stay, share with them his problems.

Sometimes he couldn't get out of bed, was scared or too sad, or just didn't have the will, so Lucie would call in and stay with him, curled up in bed watching movies or just around the house if he wanted to be alone for awhile and she’d go into work when Charles got home from his sessions. Then he and Sydney would hang out or just curl up on the couch and Charles would kiss him to help him forget for just a little bit. It wasn’t much, and it wasn't some magical cure, but it was as much as Charles and Lucie could do for their sub and they didn’t mind spending so much time with him.

“Syd?” Charles called from the kitchen when he’d come back to himself to find that he’d automatically started the coffee machine and started some toast for he and Sydney.

“Hmgh?” Sydney made some inhuman noise back, making Charles laugh.

“I’m making breakfast. I want you out here in ten minutes.”

Sydney made an assenting noise and there was a couple minutes of stumbling around before the bathroom door shut and the shower started.

Charles just tried not to smile too big and risk his face freezing embarrassingly.

Charles dug his nails into the livid flesh of Sydney’s freshly slapped red thighs, drug his fingers down over the skin and watching the welts rise almost immediately, blood-flaked scratches following the descent of his nails. He was hard, but in that way that he barely noticed his own arousal, focused completely on Sydney’s body and the different sensations he was drowning him in.

Lucie set with Sydney’s head by her thigh, running her fingers through his hair, tugging randomly (but she wasn’t, Charles had picked out the pattern long ago and was just watching the hidden pleased look on her otherwise blank face, the something that looked just beyond physical pleasure on Sydney’s face) and humming under her breathe.

Sydney bit off a sob, fingers curling in Lucie’s dress, knees drawing up and then relaxing and spreading again while Charles pinched and twisted at the bruising skin.

He wasn't too far down, barely lost in the ocean of sensations he had described his ‘subspace’ as, his eyes hazed over but mostly conscious. Charles wanted to take him deeper, could feel his own endorphins swelling through his brain and focusing him completely on Sydney.

“That’s it,” Lucie purred, long fingers trailing across his forehead. She leaned down, kissed him between his brows and Charles felt his heart skip, “You're being such a good boy for us, love.”

Sydney made a desperate sound and Charles looked down at the worked over skin, trailing his fingers lightly over what he knew to be burning like fire.

“J-Jaques,” Sydney coughed out quietly. Charles froze the second the word registered and then he was taking a step back, untying the loose knots around Sydney’s ankles while Lucie undid the ties around his wrists, leaving him completely untethered.

They were through in a matter of seconds and, doing as Sydney had suggested when the subject of safe wording had been broached, stepped far enough away that they weren't touching him but they were within reach if he wanted them back.

Sydney made a deep sound of mourning, curling up on his side. He wasn't crying but he looked
deeply upset and his eyes weren't focusing back, weren't unhazing so Lucie said in her smoothest, most controlled voice, the voice Charles had seen her use at the club the second time they'd met there, “Sydney? Syd, darling, listen to my voice.”

She cupped his face very carefully, ready to pull back at any second, but Sydney just pressed closer to her, taking comfort in her touch. Charles stepped closer and carefully ran his hand up Sydney’s arm, resting it on the junction of his shoulder and neck. Sydney leaned into his head, supporting his head on Charles and Lucie’s hands. He reached out and clutched them both closer, until they had surrounded him and Charles fought off his panic. Instead, he wrapped his other arm around his chest loosely, just so he could press his back to Sydney’s and help him slow his breathing back to normal. The whole time, Lucie spoke gently to him, leading him out of his subspace with her gentle, commanding tone. Finally, Sydney slumped into Charles’ arms, squeezing his arms tight before slowly loosening his grip as his eyes cleared and grew tired. He looked a little confused for a moment and then he got the most crushing look of sadness on his face before it went blank and he tried to move away from them. Both of them let him go, Charles checking on him before looking at Lucie’s worried face. She wasn't panicking so Charles couldn’t either. Safe wording wasn't as strange and terrible as media made it out to be and he just had to remember that. It had been only Lucie for so long that he’d forgotten that at first. He and Lucie had never needed to use their safeword, their scenes never got involved enough for it, but something here at gone wrong. It didn't make he nor Lucie bad doms and it didn’t mean Sydney was going to walk out forever and never talk to them again either.

So Charles didn’t run from the room in terror like he’d originally wanted to. Instead, he and Lucie took a step back again, away but in reach and waited for Sydney to shudder himself back into control of his emotions. None of them said anything for awhile, but Sydney looked okay, like he was back in his head and ready to talk, if not deal with what had just happened less than ten minutes ago.

“So,” Charles said carefully, not sure just where to step in the new space. What they’d been doing had been pretty light, barely foreplay in their usual antics, and he didn't quite see what had gone wrong. Something must have though, for Sydney to look so upset and sorry. Maybe Charles had, for want of a better word, fucked it up somehow? Maybe pet names were too much at the moment? He had no idea, didn't quite know how to proceed yet because this was the first time Sydney had used his safeword and he’d acted like he probably wouldn't even need it enough to go into detail about what they were to do in the case of his using it, “Sydney,” maybe nicknames were out too?, “Can you tell us what happened?”

“What?” Sydney asked, still shaking just a little bit. He looked like he wanted them to come back, but neither Charles nor Lucie were going to assume anything at all until he said it out loud or explained what they, or Charles by himself, had done wrong.

He seemed to abandon the ‘pretend it didn't happen’ approach pretty quickly though and instead shook his head a few times.

“Please, dear,” Lucie said, looking worried and a little upset, “We just want to know so we can not do it again, okay? We just want you to feel safe with us, and something bad happened that we don’t know how to fix or how to avoid without you telling us.”

Sydney looked unsure for a few seconds, and then carefully shrugged, “Can we...can we talk about it tomorrow?” He finally asked instead of answering.

“Yeah,” Charles nodded a few times too many, a little thrown, but willing to go along with whatever Sydney wanted. “Yes, of course.”

He moved to pull the blankets down on the bed, then thought better of it because what if Sydney didn’t even want to stay in the room with them?

“Would you like to sleep with us, sweetheart? Or should I take you home? The guest room?”

“Here,” Sydney said immediately.

“Of course, my dear,” Lucie smiled, all soft and pretty. Sydney looked at her, eyes wide and wondering. Charles understood, remembered seeing Lucie for the first time and feeling that expression on his face. Feeling it on his own face now, watching her.

Sydney crawled into the bed, in the middle where he usually slept right between them. Charles
liked that best, wrapping his arms around Sydney and letting his hands rest all over Lucie when
she'd let him, rubbing her thigh or side, her shoulders, resting his fingers on the knotting of the
lingerie she sometimes wore to bed. Charles pressed in right against his back, wrapped his arm
around Sydney’s waist and kissed his neck carefully. He still had his shorts on, and Sydney had
pulled his up all the way before he’d gotten into bed. Lucie stripped out of her dress but left her
panties and undershirt on and crawled onto Sydney’s other side. She pressed her full front against
him, Sydney trapped between the hard planes of Charles and the soft curves of Lucie. Charles
leaned over to kiss her slowly and then she kissed Sydney, who turned and kissed Charles, and
then they slept.

Except Charles didn’t sleep. He dozed off for a few hours, but he was awake again before the sun
had even come out, just able to be thankful that it was a weekend and none of them had to leave
for work anytime soon. Lucie watched him from across Sydney’s head, her eyes just as wide and
worried as his. Neither of them felt right, not talking about what had happened before they slept.
Sydney was knocked out, pressed to Charles’ chest, legs tangled with Lucie’s and snoring softly,
looking relaxed but not rested. He looked like he was going to have a bad day soon, a day where
they needed to call his therapist rather than just be nearby if they were needed. That had only
happened twice before, and each time Sydney had apologized but like every other time he’d
apologized for something they could never blame him for, Charles and Lucie both just shook their
heads at him. Maybe something had happened with his anxiety while in the scene? Sydney had
told them that it was usually better when he went under, calmer and like he could breath, but
maybe it had just gone wrong this time?

Lucie ran her fingers through Sydney’s dark, curly hair slowly, a tender look on her face as she
looked at him. Charles loved her, never forgot it but sometimes it fell out of focus, how deeply he
loved her. Sydney had only shown him that Charles could love her better, possibly even more
than he already did. And he was growing to love Sydney, enough to not mind a single bit working
around his problems, doing what he could to help Sydney feel wanted and cherished by them. The
look in Lucie’s eyes when she looked at Sydney told him that she felt close to him. He didn’t think
they’d ever been so insync about a subject as they were about him before.

“What do you think we did?” Charles asked, voice soft and near silent in the quiet of their dark
bedroom. He knew his voice came out worried, a little scared, but if there was one person on
Earth he could be vulnerable with, it was his wife.

“I’m not sure,” She replied, voice just as soft, sad in a way that made Charles sad too, “that it was
us, dear.”

Sydney just moved closer to Charles, snuggled into him in sleep and curled just a little. Lucie
moved closer, kissed Charles over Sydney’s head and they both settled down, surrounding
Sydney, to try to get some real sleep to fortify themselves for the conversation they would have to
have tomorrow.

Charles woke up again when the sun was out, peaking through the barely drawn curtains. Sydney
and Lucie were both still sleeping, Lucie laying on Sydney’s gently rising chest, both looking
sleep rumpled and too adorable to wake, so he carefully slipped out of bed and into the coldness
of the room. Though Christmas had been last month, January was still chilly and it didn’t look to
be warming up anytime soon. Charles slipped his robe on and his slippers, brushed his teeth and
used the restroom and then went to make breakfast. Brunch, actually, since they’d managed to
sleep in until almost eleven. He fried some eggs, tomatoes in one for Lucie and cheese melted on
the top of another for Sydney and set them aside to cool while he started on the toast. He could
hear them beginning to move, Lucie’s high pitched yawn and Sydney’s usual morning mumblings
as he assessed himself and his surroundings before completely waking up.

“You’re awake,” Charles said unnecessarily from the doorway. His voice was unexpected and it
make Sydney startle in the bed. Charles bit back a laugh, because a startled Sydney Carton looked
like a particularly fierce kitten, though Lucie bit back no such thing, just giggled in the crisp air.
She stood, slipping a shirt on while leaving her long, tanned legs bare as she padded over to Charles
to kiss him. She'd always preferred the cold to warmth, though Charles would never understand why.

“We’re awake,” She agreed. They turned to Sydney as once and Charles felt his smile grow careful, still unsure.

“I made breakfast,” He offered, like a peace offering. Sydney looked a little upset before the look melted and was replaced with a small smile, weak but there and just as fond as normal. He and Lucie left the room, giving Sydney a few moments to himself, and returned to the kitchen to cut up some fruit for a fruit salad along with their eggs and toast. They set the table and were just sitting down with a bottle of apple juice to share when Sydney came out to join them. He was wearing one of Charles’ shirts, a little too big on him, so it nearly swallowed Sydney, who was closer to Lucie’s height than Charles’. He wore his boxer briefs, but the shirt nearly covered them and ran all the way down to mid finger on his hands until he shoved them up so they wouldn’t trail in his food. Around his left wrist, he’s laced up Lucie’s scarf along his arm, from wrist to elbow. It was pleasing to see, Charles had to admit, and it set his mind and heart at ease.

The image made him smile, as did anything that had to do with Sydney making his space in their home, eating their food in their kitchen or using their shower or just relaxing and reading one of their books or watching the tv. Lucie just winked at him when he looked at her for her reaction, so he cracked another smile and served everyone their food. He hadn’t burnt anything, because if there was one thing Charles Darnay could cook, it was a good old fashioned, English breakfast or any variation thereof, and they enjoyed it with idle chit-chat, Lucie talking about an email she’s gotten from work and Sydney almost timidly giving her a little legal advice on a problem one of her publishers had found with a copyright claim that had been submitted years ago.

Charles would have loved to keep the light atmosphere, but even he could feel that things unsaid were beginning to cloud to air between them and he knew that they couldn't let it fester much longer. There was business to discuss, but it was a little closer to home than a small copyright claim problem.

Instead of instantly demanding to talk about it once breakfast was over, Charles gently ordered, assuming their scarf was a sign that Sydney would feel more comfortable with the familiar routine, Sydney to clean the dishes. He usually left him to his own devices when he was doing the chores Lucie and Charles had made his responsibility, but today he felt it would help Sydney if he had a more complex order to follow. He gave him the strict instructions, similar to the first task they’d ever ordered of him, to wash the dish in a specific way until every speck was gone and then clean the table off in an even more complex fashion. It would take him at least an hour, if he rushed through, so it would give them at least an hour and a half if Sydney could keep his patience. It was something they were working on, or had been before, Sydney’s patience. The doms he’d had before them had not been quite as strict on certain behaviors and they’d taken steps to help Sydney achieve those behaviors to their standards. Already, Charles could see the way Sydney’s shoulders relaxed as he lost himself in the mindless, tedious work.

While he did that, Charles and Lucie dispersed to take care of anything they felt was pressing enough while they waited. Charles left to make the bed (usually Sydney’s job but they wanted to have the conversation beforehand and Charles simply couldn’t stand a messy bed for so long) and Lucie left to shower.

By the time Sydney had completed his task to Charles’ standard, both of them were comfortable in the living room, sitting on the couch and sharing a familiar and well read book between them. He joined them, sitting on the coffee table across from them, still looking nervous but much calmer than before.

“Would it be easier if we were touching you?” Lucie asked, moving to make space for him between she and Charles. Charles shut the book and set it aside. Sydney shook his head and moved to sit in the recliner usually reserved for Dr. Manette when he came to visit, and Charles wanted to feel upset but he understood that distance helped Sydney to concentrate so he didn’t push.

“Okay, dear,” Lucie nodded, smiling reassuringly. Charles smiled as well, because he didn't want Sydney to think he was mad or upset. He didn’t react well when he felt he’d disappointed them.
“That’s okay, and we’re not upset.” She clarified, making sure he knew, “But can you tell us what happened last night?”
Sydney didn’t say anything at first, but it was more because he was trying to find what to say, Charles thought. He looked uncomfortable and upset, but not like he wanted to bolt from the house anymore, so they settled down and gave him as much time as he needed.
“I…” Sydney said carefully, like he was choosing each word before he spoke and I had been the only one to pass inspection.
“I don’t quite…” He took a breath, and seemed to deflate, “You both know I suffer from depression,” he finally said, “And you know that it involves...self esteem, or my lackthereof.”
They both nodded but said nothing, not wanting to break his resolve with words of their own. It was time to listen.
“I have been,” he said haltingly, “For quite some time now, I’ve come to find that my...feelings towards the two of you have grown increasingly stronger. And it’s...scared me.”
“Oh Sydney,” Lucie said, breathed out sadly, obviously wanting to say more, but Sydney shook his head.
“No, no, I really must get this out now or I never will.”
Lucie nodded and leaned back, into Charles arm and comfort so they could listen.
“As you know, I was with Mr. Stryver for...not long. But it was an extremely fast relationship and many, many mistakes were made on both our parts. I’ve told you that I’ve always had a habit of picking people who are unhealthy and pair that with my...more sexual preferences for partners who can dominate and inflict pain, it had rarely if ever worked out for me. My relationship history has been a long list of mistakes and abuses that I put up with until my partner eventually left for a better thing. Stryver was, quite possibly, the last straw. He ignored my safeword often, or more accurately, it took him a few minutes to react correctly.”
Lucie tensed in Charles’ arms, but Charles was already furious, wanted to go out and find Stryver and make him pay. But Sydney was still talking so he forced himself to remain calm and continue to listen.
“He was not a good partner, was an even worse dom but I stayed until he eventually ended our...relationship when he left the scene.” Sydney smiled a little self deprecatingly, “And in case you have not picked up on it, I have a small phobia of abandonment. After that relationship ended, I entered a severe depression. I made it quite clear to Stryver that I was not pining after his lost affections,” he pulled a face, “But I don’t think he quite believed me, the egotistical ass, and he called Mr. Lorry, who mentioned that he’d recently had a conversation with a young women about finding someone who would be interested in a proposition. And that was how I met you two.” He cleared his throat.
“Sydney,” Charles asked, voice pained, “Why didn't you tell us, sweetheart?”
“Tell you what?” Sydney rubbed his face, sounding tired and upset, “My crippling emotional anxiety and depression makes it hard for me to let you tell me I'm being a good boy?” Lucie inhaled sharply, “Oh and also, I'm in love with the both of you and want you to love me back and keep me even after the contract is over, and by doing so you’d be destroying your marriage because I’m a good for nothing drug addict and alcoholic with the emotional range of a bumblebee?”
By the time he was done, tears had appeared to everyone’s horror, and his voice had gone choked and harsh with held back emotion.
“Can I hug you?” Lucie asked tearfully, obviously trying hard to keep her own tears at bay. She looked stricken, and her arms were already held out. Sydney didn’t hesitate to nod and she was on his lap in seconds, holding him tight to her chest and kissing his forehead, his cheeks, his lips with soft, salty, teary kisses.
“Oh, darling, we love you,” She said, her own voice shaky.
“What,” Sydney tried to say, but Charles was already by his side too, taking his hand and kissing the bared knuckles, his stumble scraping against Sydney’s skin.
“We love you, Sydney,” Charles said firmly, just as Lucie started kissing him again, “We love you so much, we try to trick you into spending days and days at our home. Of course we want you to
stay after the contract ends. Fuck the contract. We just want you, paperwork or not. We want you in our bed every night and in our kitchen every morning and with us every moment in between.” He couldn't keep the smile off his lips so he pressed them to Sydney’s gaping mouth, teasing him into a warm kiss, “We want you in our shower and in our backyard helping Lucie clear away the caterpillars and helping me fight Lucie off and away from the home decor mags. We want you here when Lucie needs you to team up with her to get me away from grading. We need you with us, darling. Of course we do. You make us whole.”

Sydney started crying, those threatening tears finally breaking free from his eyes, and then Lucie was crying and when Lucie cried, Charles cried and soon they were just a big pile of salt and tears in the recliner, huddled together and laughing weakly.

“I love you,” Lucie said firmly, to both of them, “Now take me back to the bedroom so we can have our wicked way with each other.”

Charles stood up and lifted her up, making her squeal loudly and they were both laughing for real. Sydney just looked up at them, a little awed, a little scared, and a lot in love. Lucie offered a hand and he didn't hesitate to take it.

- They didn't really leave the bedroom for three days, and when they did it was usually a bathroom and food break. Finally, the three of them emerged covered in bruises and scratches and all perfectly satisfied. Lucie had to go back to work to catch up and Charles could do nothing but be thankful for being his own boss and emailing parents that he’d had a family emergency and had to cancel all sessions for that week.

Instead, while Lucie was away, Charles and Sydney took Charles' car and drove to Sydney’s apartment to collect his few belongings.

Stryver was dismayed that he’d have to find a new apartment mate, but as long as Sydney showed up for work Monday through Thursday, ten to six, he didn't much mind. Charles was a pacifist but Sydney just barely stopped him from punching his boss in his large jaw.

They packed up fast, emptying his room with five medium boxes mostly full of clothes, small trinkets, and a few personal items Sydney hadn't wanted to part with when he moved to France from England.

When Lucie returned home, they unpacked Sydney’s things and his clothes were moved to the walk in guest room closet with Charles’ clothes. His few items were placed around the house where they fit best, and his personal trinkets were put in the shelved that had been donated to his comfortable living in the Darnay household weeks ago. It was with the placement of his things so easily into their lives that the last of his unease about their relationship status was straightened out (it had even been made Facebook Official on Tellson’s Bank’s Facebook page). It would, of course, take a while for Sydney to truly sink into the fact that he’d finally found where he belonged, but for the moment, his doubts had been laid to rest and he was happy and comfortable and safe.

Lucie made dinner and together, she and Charles fed Sydney, who set on the floor on his knees. After dinner, she pulled a shined wooden box from her purse and set it in front of Sydney.

“While you and Charles were busy today, I was doing a few things of my own.” She said, a soft smile on her face at the look of awe on his face. Charles had helped her pick it out and they'd ordered it almost a week earlier, when it had finally sunk it how much Sydney meant to them.

It was a thin, black strap of leather, tight around his neck with a golden heart in the middle instead of a dog tag, engraved with ‘Property of Mr. and Mrs. Darnay.’

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