

black hole sun

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/10876371) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/10876371>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	American Psycho - All Media Types
Relationship:	Patrick Bateman/Luis Carruthers
Character:	Luis Carruthers , Patrick Bateman , Jean (American Psycho)
Additional Tags:	Derealization , Dissociation , Internalized Homophobia , Slow Build , Developing Relationship , Denial of Feelings , Update 1 13 20 removed the noncon warning because it is only in chapter 4 and skippable , the consent is just dubious but not glaringly so
Stats:	Published: 2017-05-11 Completed: 2017-07-21 Chapters: 10/10 Words: 49485

black hole sun

by [sade12](#)

Summary

patrick bateman and his providential view of the world, romance, and luis carruthers.

update 10/6/17: updated a lot of chapters, sought some spelling errors, added ~jucier~ dialouge and added more paragraphs *-*

Notes

Note from 2020...

This is a note, and a bit of a rectification, that I am writing three years after I first uploaded this. I believe that, often, once you show a work to other people it no longer is fully your own - and that, then, I am slow to ever fully delete works as a result. There are many people who have expressed their love for this particular fict, and I am grateful; knowing what I did well and flimsily here has shaped my writing now to the point where, as always happens, I look back on how I wrote this with something coming close to disdain. I have wanted to delete this many, many times. I have wanted to update this many, many times and rewrite entire swathes (*I began to do so in Chapter Four...*) and have usually stopped midway.

I dislike Bret Easton Ellis now, I am highly critical of American Psycho's messaging in its' book. If I could pull a pin that would effortlessly change so many sections for clarity, for better wording, and for not playing into Ellis' racist and stereotypical ghostvoices that linger on his pages, do believe me when I say I would. As of writing this I am going through the chapters and relieving this fict of what I would like to call its' baser matter. I wish to take responsibility for this work and all of its' flaws and *dubious* moments - I do not share

Patrick's views as expressed here, I do not share Ellis' reactionary views as a whole, and so it is that I was so eager to bin this. I will leave it up for those who have enjoyed it, and I thank all of those who have said it is one of their favorites. The amount of traction it has gained astounds me as I look back to the first handful of months of no views at all.

That is all — I thank you dearly.

But keep this in mind, as I wrote in the original note here in 2017;

I should mention this was completely improvised and I'm mainly [sic] making it up as I go along. i really hope you like this.

Horribly Long Call with Luis

I spent a total of five hundred dollars on skincare products today. Some to relieve me of blackheads I do not suffer from, some as pore cleansers, some to tighten the skin and maintain it healthily though it only lasts a few days and I feel mildly cheated out of my money. I crumple and unfold the receipt in my pocket, mentally preparing myself to later in the week give a lengthy infuriated call to the suppliers, then to the company just to ruin the day of someone I don't know since that seems to be one of my primary interests.

I've been feeling myself slip lately. I do not remember basic things- it's not like I ever did, but I'm beginning to forget my own name, address and CVV number. Other such irrelevancies of my daily interactions. At a restaurant some time ago I identified myself, with so much confidence in my voice, as 'Baterick Patman'.

I have an example on hand of my recurring uncertainty of self. Just yesterday I was loitering oddly outside of a small French bistro biding my time because I really had nothing better to do when a woman stepped out- round face, perky tits, waitress or Maitre'd; I'm certain she was the latter. I'm still not sure how I feel about females occupying that position, but I have digressed- and approached me. She exhaled as if my presence was revolting. Her breath made a whitish cloud and I was mildly frightened because at times I forget people have the ability to extend that far. She asked me for my name, thinking I had a reservation, and being mentally lost upon hearing that word as usual I said, excruciatingly slowly, 'Mc...Derrrrmott. No. Prrrrrr...ice.' I paused. 'Court...ney? Carru-'

'Carruthers?' she asked, and I felt my heart dive twelve million miles beneath the Earth, through the core, landing upon the table of some impoverished family in a third world country, and they stared at it gratefully and prepared themselves to cannibalize it. 'Oh, are you a relative of...?'

I look into the bistro and I see Luis, of course it's Luis and I started trying to hurry myself out of there because no, God no, but not before telling the Maitre'd not to invest in NASDAQ if she knows what's good for her and to call me if she ever has a car accident-based injury. NASDAQ is much too unreliable but I suppose I understand why those who reach out to it do- it, sometimes, pays off. And sometimes it doesn't. I outstretched my hand, preparing to give her my card which I'm so proud of as it's professionally embossed with thick, rich lettering on a subtle off-white that resembles eggshell but I remembered I'm not a law firm, and I slid it back into my gazelleskin wallet. I didn't apologize, and I knew if I didn't leave then I would be destroyed so I ran as fast as I could, hailing a cab.

Looking back on that, actually, that woman had no business singling me out as she did because I was minding my own business. I wasn't even facing the bistro, I was looking across the street at the remnants of a car accident that happened earlier that day. I heard about it and wanted to have a look for myself, and as expected, it was very underwhelming. I'm not sure what I was hoping to see. Major bodily carnage. Anyway, that was evil of her and I'm certain she was personally solicited by Luis so he could play dumb when he came out to greet me. Luckily, when it comes to evasion I am a *savant*.

Anyway. I've got money now. Me and my co-workers, we can't tell each other apart. It's just now beginning to become more of a just-me problem with Owen and more of an everybody problem; which is funny to me, because someone, the name of whom I can't remember called Courtney Evelyn and I started laughing so hard I began to tear up.

The rest of my day was a haze of mergers; pretending to fool around with numbers, holding up

pairs of calculators and contrasting them, juxtaposing gray and beige, mumbling loudly enough so that Jean would peer inside and smile at me. If I got a call I would wait about four rings before answering. Jean is such an interesting person. Her glassy eyes, how soft her teeth often look.

I'm going to do one of these face masks now. I feel largely unconscious but despite this feeling, I need to maintain my vessel by taking good care of it and stay entirely physically normal; not raise suspicions, entirely be who the modern world views as Patrick Bateman. I have been doing it for years and I've no reason to switch face yet. I hope to impress someone with his appearance even though I know nobody is looking at him, nobody sees him, he is more of a mirage drifting through some abyss than an actual human being whose decisions have consequences. Every parallel he's created in his mind is false. He knows this, he is making small but definite progress in reforming it. When my sense of mobility begins to sink I'll next to definitely be forced to try something new, but until then, I'm going to happily be swathed in what is mine right now. Next year is going to be my year.

The mask smells rancid but it fits my face like a glove; its essence melding with my skin. It feels moist and soft. There is something subtle and strange about it and as I traverse my home I feel more and more disoriented. I slip into my closet and trip ungracefully on a pair of women's shoes I did not leave there, and I look blankly around my living room. There is some dust accumulating in a corner. I look past the dull gray of my kitchen and I see my door, which looks so much wider and larger than me. Turning slowly by one hundred and eighty degrees I peer through my venetian blinds and am greeted with the darkness of Manhattan. I somewhat enjoy these moments, the ones in which my home feels like a liminal space. I spend some odd amount of time scrutinizing what little of my face I can see in my mirrors after I appreciate that, and as it often does, my face looks drawn on. But whereas some people's faces are drawn on with pencils, mine is with a fine quill.

I wait for something to happen, and nothing does, so I retrieve the faulty mask and my receipt and scan it for a number.

The woman who picked up had a thick Chinese accent and didn't seem to register the blitz of words I threw at her and I hung up, actually angry, remembering my run-in with the Chinese dry-cleaners. I feel a kind of desperate terror growing within me, and I feel so fragmented I go through my voicemails and listen to the most recent one. I'm hoping Jean would have something to tell me, but it occurs to me too late she isn't a voicemail type of girl anymore and if she has something to say she'd want to hear my voice contrasting hers. A wise choice. I appreciate that. I do.

Admittedly, I kind of like having directives. I like it when she reminds me of appointments, faxes, dinners. I like knowing that someone's paying attention so I don't particularly have to; which isn't to say I'm too incompetent to do that myself. I'm busy. I like knowing what I have to do because in that scenario there's such a small margin of a chance of failure. When I know what to do I preform most optimally in achieving it. I get it done. So here and now, wherein I've no directive, anything can happen, and failure and self-destruction is imminent.

There's a few messages but only one from today. One message, fourteen hours ago, and it reads out Luis' number.

"Hi, Patrick."

It starts like that. Hearing my first name is so bizarrely comforting but also ostracizing that all I can do is paw at my mask and absently wonder how much time has passed. I feel empty thinking about how much I have. My face is already so clean yet I have this, and this isn't a necessity, it's a convenience. I wonder if, in my entire life, I've ever really needed anything. I tune back in to the world.

"I saw you just yesterday at Le Colibri! Well, I was going to say hello, but you seemed to be in a bit of a hurry. Doing something important as usual, I'd think? Up to your business life?"

My God, did he fuck up the pronunciation on that. My business life. My *business life*. My "business life". Luis invested that in such a way that I'm lead to believe he has no idea what it actually is that I do, but I remember the man wears *bowties* on the regular and that belief doesn't seem as farfetched. I don't think he really knows anything, anyway. I'm formless, listening to him.

"So consider this my 'hello', I suppose!" He stops for a moment and his happy-go-lucky demeanor melts. I hear a voice- definitively female, Courtney? Who is he engaged to, again?- saying something muddy in the background and in seconds he's tripping on his own tongue. "Ah, so, yes... I was... Patrick, if you have the time, I'd like to actually talk to you sometime. Alone. Not over the phone. I've- I've been leaving you lots of messages and" I think a plate hits the floor. Something smashes and it's heavy. "I I I Patrick if you're still listening call me sometime okay call me sometime I really have to go right now"

That was interesting and I sit there feeling incredibly dense with no idea how to proceed. My hand steers over to the call button and Luis is autodialed. A pang of regret hits me instantly, but it is in... the nature... of intelligent life... to... destroy itself.

It's a single ring before Luis picks up, sounding vaguely out of breath and somewhat stupefied, panting heavily and I sit there listening to him breathe because the last time I heard someone panting like this I was chasing some hardbody nearby Stuyvesant with a knife because she attempted to make off with my wallet. Now he's wheezing and I consider putting on some music in the background simply for noise because the silence is buzzing. "Patrick," he says, just as I stand up. He sounds somewhat like he's seen an angel. He corrects himself and adds a bit more enthusiasm, screaming into my ear almost causing me to drop a CD, "PATRICK!"

"I heard your voicemail," I say, blankly peeling off my mask and holding my phone in place with my shoulder. The rectangular shape of it cuts into my arm. There's music playing, creeping around my apartment. I pat the remaining fluids from the mask into my face gently. Luis says nothing, waiting for me to continue and I'm taken aback by that. He wants to hear... what I have to say. That's new. "Carruthers?" I say.

"Patrick?"

"Are you... listening to me?"

"Why, of course! Patrick..." he says, and I can tell he's genuine because seldom have I ever seen or heard this man lie, "You know you're important to me, and so is what you say. You know how I feel about you. What were you saying?"

He sounds almost motherly. I have a deep impulse to watch myself because, for the first time in years I'm worried someone is actually hearing what I have to say and I can no longer suppress my desire to maim by slipping little hints of my daily life into speech nobody hears. My hands quiver, I can feel myself spreading physically throughout the universe. I feel the need to bite something and my teeth dig into my wrist a little as I think of what to say next.

"Just checking." I mumble that. I'm surprised he even caught it.

"Mm," he says.

"Um. When you left that voicemail, what was happening in the background?"

At first he's entirely silent, as if heavily debating what next he should say and I'm very much convinced this might be something worth waiting for. I'm overcome with a deep kind of curiosity that surpasses all other emotions. Aside from the fact that he's- at least, with me- openly homosexual, I know absolutely nothing about Luis' personal life; mostly because I didn't care enough to find out and I had no reason to. I'm not even sure I could provide a definitive answer for how old he is, when his birthday is, or where he works. If he suffers in his personal life I want to know every last bit of it. I can feign enough compassion for him to sing to me as long as I'd like.

He swallows. "Nothing, I just- *we* just," he says, harshly correcting himself, "had a little bit of an argument. That's all."

"What's wrong with your personal life?"

My voice feels so foreign as I say this I could most likely convince myself that I'm speaking French. Hah, French. I rub my face and it feels so smooth now, yet also worn. I found a single strand of white hair when I took a shower recently and I plucked it out and stared at it for an hour. When I came out my skin felt like leather.

Once again, silence. Luis starts to stutter and his voice sounds feeble, almost like that of a child who's been denied a toy he'd like. "Patrick, please don't ask me things like that."

"You aren't happy," I begin quoting my analyst for some reason, pretending I know how his brain operates and which buttons are ideal to push. All people are the same to me. "You have problems but don't tell anyone because you're scared nobody is listening." I feel a vague sense of accomplishment saying this, though I know I was not put on this Earth to help anybody.

There's a longer silence now and I consider getting some alcohol or staring at one of the heads in my fridge when Paul- *Luis*, I meant Luis- speaks up out of nowhere. "Are you playing Sade?"

Sade. *Promise*. 1985. "Yes, actually." I murmur, though I didn't even realize I was until he pointed it out to me. This CD was a gift I was given by someone I can't remember because 'the lyrics reminded me of you', whatever that meant. I like her vocals but I'm always too distracted to listen as soul does not interest me in the slightest. It's over before I can register I was ever playing it, normally.

"I like Sade," Luis says quietly. Another minute or so passes before he adds, sounding somewhat choked up, "I'm so lonely, Patrick."

"Interesting. You only love me out of... desperation."

"That's not true!" he says, and from the tonal whiplash of his voice I can tell I'm sending him on an emotional rollercoaster right now, and something about that makes me so insatiably happy; the idea of him being sad but forcing himself to be happy for me. It's intriguing. I want to... humiliate... him. "Patrick, I'm being serious. I know I have no chance with you, I guess, and I'm... I'm lonely."

"How many times have we had this conversation, Luis?"

"*What?*" he says, in *that* voice. Now he's brusque. How does he code switch so quickly? I would be impressed if he was anyone else, or if he was a woman. "Every time I try to have this conversation with you, you change the topic."

"Okay."

I do some things and he's quiet again. "Sorry."

"Good. Be sorry. Feel sorry. I'm incredibly insulted and my disgust is immeasurable."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I didn't mean it that way."

"Prove you love me," I say, emphasizing the word 'prove' so much that I spit and it lands on my coffee table.

I know exactly where this relationship would go if it actually started- a horrifying thought- he would sweep me up into the fag culture and turn me into one of him. One of them, and I'm so angered by that I rise heavily off balance and knock over an end table. I fix that as soon as it's in my convenience to. I hear Sade crooning, asking me, *me*, if it's a crime that she still loves me and she wants me to love her too. I liken the lyrics to my situation with Luis and I can feel a headache coming on. I get the impulse to yell that love isn't fucking real and everyone is wasting time and scream about how much I'm in touch with reality, how I know time isn't after me, how I *get it*.

I never was much for love. Thinking about it puts an odd taste in my mouth; something like overly chlorinated water. The entire feeling I get from seeing happily wed couples is something similar to everyone around you experiencing the fullness of the third dimension, and you're stuck in the second; only getting the third by sanctioned piece at a time. I'm missing out on something, is what society wants me to assume.

"Wh- what do you want me to do?" Luis sounds like he's mobile now, pacing around like I've seen him do maybe once or twice before. "I'll do anything you ask, you know that. What do you want me to do?" He sounds small again, frightened. "Pat?"

I'm sighing heavily, tumbling over everything, falling from left to right. I need movement, rigor mortis has set in, I can't feel my right leg. I hate this. I hate all of this, and I should hang up. I don't like talking about love, as I've established. "Carruthers," I say hopelessly, "If I told you... to... eat... dirt... would... you do it?"

He's quiet. He starts the word 'no' but cancels it, rather asking if I would tell him to do such a thing. Instead of answering, I ask, "We're at... an expensive dinner. Everyone is there. I tell you to stand up and to strip naked. Would you do it?"

"You would ask me t-"

"Answer me."

It's like an investment. Clearly there is some form of opportunity here. Can I make a pet of him?

"Yes," he says, but his voice curves as if he was asking a question and it's so immensely strained. It then sounds like "Yes?" and this, of course... It's not good enough for me. If I'm ever arrested someday I figure I can use Luis as a sort of cohort and I can pull out a recording of this conversation. Promptly thinking of this I frantically feel around for my tape recorder, but I seem to have misplaced it. I give up on that.

"Say it louder," I say.

"Yes," he says.

"I- No..." I trail off. I'm now in my bathroom though I don't remember walking in. I'm not satisfied. I feel waves of something coming in and they crash into me. "Say... 'Yes, I would, Patrick.'"

He swallows again. "Yes... I... would, Pat...rick."

“Say it like you mean it.”

“Yes, I would, Patrick?”

"Did you not hear me?"

"Yes I would, Patrick."

“Better.”

“Thanks...” He sighs.

“Would you get on the floor and lick my shoes?”

I’m not so much interested in being loved as I am being worshiped. It's different, regardless of what anyone may tell you. An avid moviegoer doesn't love their favorite director, they worship them. An estranged widow doesn't worship her ex-spouse, she loves him. There's something more exciting about having people kneel for you than having people want to go on dates with you. Don't buy me things, I can buy myself anything I want and you probably don't know me well enough to comprehend what kind of objects I'd ideally like to be gifted. You can, however, admire me gratefully as if I'm the greatest thing you've ever seen. Because I am. Most people I know haven't come to terms with that yet and everyone who did was lying about it.

“Yes I would, Patrick.”

The problem is that Luis is much too innocent, too much of a pushover. His heart is so big, *too* big. I'm entirely uninspired. I can only push Jean so far, but Luis would probably actually kill himself for me if I told him to, the thought of that satisfies me in a way I don't have words for. While I'm in the bathroom, I throw away the mask I wore but keep its tube so I'll remember which one it was, and throw away the receipt because I'm never dealing with that again.

All at once this becomes much less enjoyable upon the realization this is actually happening and is not just another murky scenario my mind has created; no, he is saying these things and he means them. My next conscious choice in the moment is to say, “How much, exactly, would you do for me?”

“Anything, Pat...rick...” He's crying now. It's very subtle, but I can hear it, like a car crash across the country, like a grisly homicide in a foreign city you can't pronounce the name of, like a house on fire three continents over. It's inaudible but someone's life is not the same.

“Would you die for me?”

“I'd rather live so I could be with you.”

"That isn't an answer. You know that's not an answer. Answer the question."

"Okay, okay! Yes?"

"What did I tell you about sounding like you mean it?"

"Yes!"

“Would you kill for me?”

Imagining Luis Carruthers being convicted of first-degree murder is a confusing image in my mind, but nevertheless he sniffs deep and says “Yes I would, Patrick.”

“Better. We're getting better. How often do you think of me?”

“Every single day.”

“When?”

“All the time, Patrick.”

"I want hours."

"Um... I usually wake up at six, so usually throughout the day until... Eleven, when I go to bed?"

"Better."

He sounds relieved, relaxed. He sounds as if he's trying to be polite, as if he *is* calm, around *me*, like he's trying to make me feel nice or he's just playing along. I can hear a smile growing through his tears. I'm disconnected from this entire... thing. What is this? "Thank you."

I then ask him if he does something to himself to the thought of me, but it's out of my mouth before I realize I don't want the answer because I don't want to know, I really don't want to know. I try to correct myself, stuttering, saying things like 'wait' repetitively, but he says yes. It's a quiet yet bold 'yes.'

"You've thought about this entire scenario before, haven't you," I say.

"Maybe," he says.

He's something like a lamb to the slaughter. He probably thinks he's learning about me by answering these questions or possibly vice versa; that something is becoming of our relationship, that I ask him these because I want to understand him more intimately, that I'd do these things to him if we were together. The fact that he'd allow them, or so he claims, repulses me. And I get a thought that, maybe, Luis is either too stupid or too pure, and he doesn't... deserve anything I could ever do to him. He... loves... me. Or maybe he worships me, because it's starting to look like this grotesque amalgam of both.

“Actually...” I say. “I’m not a very good person, Carruthers. I think... maybe... we should... stop talking.” How do I get out of this? How do I work this? He starts crying harder at that, it turning into a fully-fledged sob. I hear him rubbing his eyes, I hear him taking shallow breaths, I hear his fingers perusing a tissue box.

“No no no please,” he says. Once again, his mood inverts and I can't help finding it immensely entertaining. “Let me love you. Please, Patrick.”

If this is love, it's terrifying, no? I feel my insides shift and adjust. My lungs move somewhere else and I think my stomach vacates completely. I peek through my blinds, staring at nothing in particular. “Do you love me, or do you love the idea of me?” I say this without putting much thought into it and I hear him say ‘oh, God’ before diving into another deep set of wails.

“What are you talking about, Patrick? Why don't you make any *sense*? I want to understand you.”

“What do you mean? That makes perfect sense. I’m not Patrick Bateman,” I say. I’m now making a pot of coffee even though I don't want it and I’m not going to drink it. “He doesn't exist. I’m sorry. It's unfortunate, isn't it? He’s more of a... Persona, a mask.”

“Then who are you? God, Patrick, what?”

"Not him. Somebody. I don't know."

"Then... who's he?"

"Your co-worker."

"I'll tell you who he is. He—" his voice cracks so hard here I feel a raspiness in my own throat almost, "is the man of my dreams and I'd give anything to spend the rest of my life with him. He's a little weird but I don't care, and I want to learn why and learn how to live with it. I love him so much."

Too much. That's too much. I'm not gay. I'm not a homosexual. I'm not a fag. That instilled genuine fear inside of me for a moment but I was able to compromise myself by thinking about how interesting apartheid was conceptually. "Patrick," I say, on the brink of mental collapse, "isn't here."

"Where is he?"

"Why do you keep asking such stupid questions? Can you shut your fucking mouth?"

He's quiet again. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. love you, whoever you are."

That's not how I wanted him to respond. That's not how he was *supposed* to respond. I stop, singing my hand awfully on the pot but I'm much too stunned to remove it. Instead, I sit there, phone to my ear, Sade *still playing* and I'm beginning to lose my perspective on everything because by saying that he's unknowingly opened up a new layer of depth and self confusion within my mind and I'm horribly steeped up with paranoia and my control over the situation is fading.

The idea of a divide between self and self picks me up and throws me around. I walked into it, though, with all of my flagrance and disregard for actual conversation structure. He was *bound* to have asked that. I walked *right into it*. I walked into it. It's not his fault. I know I'm not Patrick but I don't like the *reassurance* that that's *correct*. No. No, no.

"Stop it," I say, meaning to to come off as powerful as I swear I elevated my voice but it ends up cracking severely and I just sound weak.

"I don't care about Patrick anymore," he's saying through sobs. "I love you, I love you."

"*Stop it*," I try to say again. At breakneck speed I hang up the call, confused, whirling around with a red hand and I bump into a wall.

In seconds Luis has called me back and without a second's thought I pick up, say '*NO*' and hang up again before running into my bedroom, falling onto my bed, covering myself and trying to sleep this off, because I need to sleep this off, because my mental stability is ruined and I don't know how else to fix it but my drugs come to mind and I fucking sprint to my bathroom to take a Xanax but *the phone starts ringing again* and I feel as if I'm about to scream my lungs out, running, pills in hand, phone in the other. I'm doing circles in my living room and for I don't know how long because *I have no directive*, no reference protocol on how to tackle this, when I get a voicemail that's only about ten seconds long. I crush the receiver with my palm and I hear Luis crying, much, much harder now begging me to pick up the phone. There is a distinct void in my chest. He calls me again and I listen to him this time.

"If you want me gone, just say it," he says... he sounds like he's choking on his own spit. "Or kill me...?" His voice dis-aligns and curves again as he falls into more tears.

"I'm not" I'm dumping pills into my mouth but more than half of them fall out onto the floor, "going" my nerves inside my retinas are spiking, "to kill you, Luis." The sun comes down, the Earth gets hotter. This world is cyclic. When I listen to Pentecostal sermons it feels as if they are fragmented, told from someone else's perspective, disjointed, missing information. People die all over the world and there's really nothing anyone can do about it. Someone somewhere has been seriously injured and will never recover.

He's screaming now, "Why not?"

"You need to listen to me. The problem is that you're not listening. I hurt everyone. I can't put it more simply than that."

"Who? Who's going to hurt me? You or Patrick?" I really wish he'd stop that, stop differentiating me and... me because it's throwing me off. Me and Patrick? Patrick and I? What?

I've told him too much, much too much. I feel a momentary surge of sympathy, taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture of my actual effects on this man. He goes on. "Who are you? Patrick's a gentleman, you're a..."

"Luis," My voice sounds as gentle as I can make it. I'm quietly slipping my pills back into their bottle. "I don't know how to say this in a way that won't hurt you, but we're incompatible-" he wails 'stop using excuses' over me, which briefly cuts me off, "...you're too... Naive to love me. Understand? Niiiiiiee-eeeeeeve. I can't control my impulses and I'm going to hurt you. The sooner you realize that-"

"Do you like to... hurt?"

"Yes, Luis, I do."

"Oh, just do it then. Hurt me."

'My love is wider than Victoria Lake, taller than the Empire State. It dives, it jumps, and it ripples like the deepened ocean'. Sometimes I question the validity of love songs, because most of them are made with an extremely tiresome, repetitive theme of how everyone finds love and it never goes wrong, yet, I have to admit, Sade's descriptions of what love is seem to be much more realistic. In *Is It A Crime* she begs someone back who's clearly lost interest, and though the amount of saxophones are slightly distracting from the core message, I suppose I can find artistic merit inside of it. Most art is made to distract from the monotony of daily life, anyhow. Some of it doesn't have to have depth and its exactly as it appears on the surface. Some artists might have made mistakes and done this in passing, purely expressing something that's only relevant to themselves with no regard to life as it functions around them. Life imitates art.

My stomach dives. I don't think Luis understands the magnitude of what he's doing here, allowing me to freely impose on him. I do imagine hurting him, though his comprehension of the word 'hurt' probably equates to a firm slap on the cheek and nothing beyond that, but I can't. My imagination fizzles out and dies like a cheap firework. He's giving me permission, something that I've never had before, and now that I have it, I don't want it.

"Luis, you're testing me."

"Come over here and, and, just, just, beat me up if that's what you want. Do it, since you want to so badly. Do it," Luis says. He takes a long drink of something, maybe water, maybe alcohol. "If... that's what it takes. I don't care as long as you love me."

"I don't *want* to, but I'm going to because I can't stop myself. It's different."

What?

I'm on autopilot at this point. I somewhat feel the Xanax now and, as expected, I don't feel happy, rather, I feel tranquil and unresponsive. Emotionless. I'm sipping tentatively from a mug of dark coffee; entirely black. I hear myself say, "It makes me feel good. I need things to make me feel good. I like feeling good, and therefore I need things to make me feel good. Understand? Like-" I don't finish this sentence. There's so many ways I could end it, and it's not so much I didn't for Luis' listening discretion because he has no need to hear that, but more so because I didn't want to hear it.

Aside from wiping his nose, he goes quiet for a very long time after this. "I could try to make you feel good?"

"No. No. Luis, no."

My skin is distorted; my tan, which was praised by many random women I don't know as being even and rich has now faded; beneath it is blanched white skin. I see a rainbow of veins pulsing through my hands, which shake relentlessly, I can hear blood rushing to my head, it's as if the fabric of who I am as a human being slips through my fingers like smoke.

I have been, for who knows how long, spinning my ideal self with manufactured, faux stories. Everything I've come to know about myself is artificial; immaterial. I'm really not sure if I exist. I spread falsified stories of myself to everyone I know, painting the picture of a life that's truly not suited for anyone. Patrick Bateman. Arrogant, overblown, and extremely difficult to back up with reason who he is, what he does at home, his romantic life because supposedly people are interested in those things. Everything I've ever done, from the mundane to the gruesome has entered the eternal fabric of my memory as it happened so fast but left even quicker. I try to think of what I did last year and nothing comes to me. I want perfection but when I attempt to create it, innocent women die, population numbers drop, I break up houses needlessly, my social life floors. Nothing I do will ever impact anyone in the future. I will never get results, I will never learn, I will never change. Next year is going to be my year.

"Patrick?"

My mouth won't move. I try, and it doesn't work. I spend a lot of time thinking.

"Are you crying?"

"No. That's you."

"I think it's both of us."

"Do you really love me, Luis."

I am given a countless number of affirmations as a response. I swallow dryly, clicking my tongue to make a sound to remind myself I'm alive. "Then... I'll call you tomorrow."

It *is* tomorrow. I hang up before he can say anything more because I'm not certain I could deal with that. The sun is coming up. I throw myself over my couch. Before I drift off completely my vision aligns with the hinges of my front door and I look at it, appreciating geometricity, the human heart, basic economics. I could always leave if I'd like to. I never will.

Office

Chapter Summary

I think I made a mistake today.

Chapter Notes

i'm back babys!! been brainstorming some ideas for this and i thiiiiink this might end up being mature... hoohoo. i don't really know yet. thanks for reading and thanks for kudos, you're all super sweet, lots of love
etc notes: this chapter is inspired by [this song](#). i might link my insp music for every chapter so you can get a feel for the vibe every time!

Water is symbolic of life. I think this as I steadily slip Evian down my throat while taking a brief walk up and down Fifth after some light shopping, wondering about the density of it, how it will affect me internally, how fast it will be absorbed into my bloodstream. What it will do once it enters. How people like I have constant access to things like this, but in areas where jobs are sparse and there is no water, death runs rampant. I don't see why those people, supposedly, matter more than I do, or anyone else who lives here, because death is rampant everywhere. It's not a question of who you are or where you live, it's a question of when you let your guard down for long enough to someone to come in.

I bought *Promise* on cassette to spend more time carefully analyzing the lyrics. I tend to lean towards songs that don't discuss love or harshly criticize it when I browse music shops, but however, I was feeling a magnetic sort of attraction to Sade when I woke up this morning and listened to my CD copy of it as I did my morning routine. *Tar Baby* is, in terms of composition, interesting. I found myself even humming it, which was bizarre.

Everything about this morning was different; I felt off-balance, strange. I tend to avoid looking at myself that early in the morning but the first thing I did was stray aimlessly into my bathroom and get a long, hard look at myself. I looked content, but I had a thought that perhaps my actual appearance is just a façade, and I don't really actually look like that. I tried to picture what I'd like to look like and the image in my mind is just a man in his twenties with even skin, a gorgeous suit, undoubtedly Bill Blass, pinstriped, double-breasted with unusually large pockets yet strongly defined shoulders and a slightly oversized cotton dress shirt and an eye-catching Armani tie which appears to be pure silk to wrap it all together but he has no head. He has no head and when I think harder and try to generate one, I get a migraine which is stagnant for two hours.

I wonder what passive attraction is, if it's truly real. Liking something but not enough to make a move to claim it. Is that how Jean felt about me the first couple of times we talked when I first employed her, or even, and my tongue stings when I think about this, the first time I met Luis? I should have known from the beginning. We met at a business party and the way he shook my hand, holding it for slightly longer than the socially accepted allotted amount of time paired with his 'what a strong grasp you have' comment. I first thought that was some off-hand, unorthodox

compliment as I also thought he was Jewish, aside from his lack of a yarmulke. Now he strikes me as Mormon or something, but that's neither here nor there. At this point, I have no one to blame but myself.

What does Luis feel towards me? It could be physical, it seems to be social. I saw him wearing a peacoat around once; which was interesting as it was in the summer and peacoats are made of wool far too coarse for a lighter season like that. It was houndstooth, which looked better than I ever would have imagined on him.

My walk is over. I reroute myself back to my office, giving empty greetings to people I see, nodding at Jean, and becoming a recluse as I pretend to examine documents someone must have Xeroxed for me. None of it matters and I put them down. When I'm in a quiet room I can hear the softest sounds, I can focus the strongest, so I had my walls soundproofed. It was much too easy, all I had to do was ask Jean and she called a few people- I watched her do so- and that same week I had large, loud metal plates surrounding me that were painted over the color my walls originally were. Getting what I want makes me sick. Jean is not looking, so I walk over to a wall and press myself against it. I feel it up and down and hit it a few times waiting to hear a metallic echo, but hear none. I'm convinced my walls actually aren't soundproofed and never were, so out loud I yell "Help!" but no one seems to hear me and I don't see anyone coming. I spend the next few minutes very confused.

I look at my phone.

I wish people would realize people like me are too busy for love; I have been stating the obvious as long as I can remember, love more often than not incapacitates otherwise competent people. I'm too busy for that. I'm not willing to distract myself from my work which I am so devoutly dedicated to for human companionship, not even for a minute. I would think my acquaintances would be sated enough meeting me at dinners from time to time, but of course, everyone wants more out of me. I use enough brevity and clarity in my speech to come off as charismatic, attractive. I feel as if I leverage my friends; I don't *need* them, I would be fine without them, I'm not sure if they would care if I ever got convicted for my hobbies. I wish people would only call me when they didn't need anything.

I keep looking at my phone.

People refuse to comprehend the danger they're in whenever they directly speak to me. Those in the most danger- Luis, for example- are dangling a lit match above me on a pendulum string. These moving bodies unbeknownst to themselves are actively fucking with dynamite.

Something is strange. My bloodstream feels excessively cold and I'm wondering how much protein I've had thus far today, perhaps not enough, if I've somehow contracted stomach cancer, if the mask I did yesterday was laced with ricin and I'm dying. I think about bad combinations. Tweed, satin. Nylon, corduroy. Silk, fleece. Alcohol, Benadryl. Blood thinner, Viagra. My core is freezing and I have no appointments today so I might as well walk out and go home. I have nothing to do with my life. Every day is the same. Some time ago I had a sudden fit of hysterical strength and threw someone out of my window where they made a satisfying, meaty splatter on the street below. I could see bones protruding in very invasive ways where they should not have been, limbs twisted. The strange thing is nobody noticed, or they didn't care.

This is almost over. It's not.

The world is in slow motion and I see everything doubled up as if I'm drunk as I walk over to my chair; which normally makes me feel so powerful, so executive, so superior when I sit in it. Today, I feel as if certain death is just around the corner and my demise is inevitable. I remember the scene

from *The Great Gatsby*; the 1974 film adaptation in which the party outside is rained out but the guests, entirely blissfully unaware, just run inside the mansion and continue dancing. All people are like that... and they don't even know it. I remember when I was fifteen and I ate broken glass, shoveling it into my mouth, nearly cutting off my tongue. I'm calling Luis Carruthers because I know that, since I made the mistake of telling him I'd instigate and call him, he's most likely at home, waiting by the phone.

My mouth tastes like tarmac as I put a hand on the receiver. I make circles on it with my fingers, I bite my tongue, I cup the phone but don't raise it. I look for any voicemails; I find a few. One from McDermott in which he described a dinner for Thursday, a telemarketer, calls redirected to me by Jean- I feel empty thinking about how everything goes to her and I never have any human connection, but I'm not sure I care- and multiple missed calls by Luis. Tens of them. I think about what I've gotten myself into, reconnecting myself to Luis even though I was doing such a good job avoiding him for the past few months, although the few occasions where he found me and I'd have to pry his pathetic, crying body off one of my legs. Jean looks in at me and I signal with my hand that I'm having a call. She must interpret it as a professional business call and she grins and gives me a thumbs-up. A part of me sinks into the floor and never returns.

More rings than I would have expected pass; two. This call does not do me justice. Following that, I'm greeted with the overly-enthusiastic, high infantile excessively pleased voice that belongs to Luis. "Patrick! Good morning! Hi!" He says, audibly swooning. His voice is quieter than it was last night, more mellow, more docile sounding. I can't help but notice these things, and I blink twice.

I try to say something, but my voice doesn't form the words sensibly so I use a different approach. "Carruthers."

"How are you today?" I hear fabric rustling, bedsheets possibly. "I'm sorry about the things I said last night. I was so... down in the dumps. I didn't mean it, please don't be mad..."

"Carruthers?"

"Yes, Patrick?"

"Do you think we're friends?"

This silences him, as I was expecting. He's lost in thought somewhere. Luis is incredibly predictable in nature; most of, if not all the things he says stay within his mental bubble and seldom does he venture out of it. There's a vague thought inside my head that this could all just be a character of his per se; that he's not really like this, this is all an elaborate act meant to... do something to me. People like him usually don't make it very far in life.

"How could I not? I really think we have a connection, Pat." He sighs. "I wish you could see that like I do."

"Carruthers, I need to establish some things with you." I almost have nothing to say, but I'm motivated to make Luis uncomfortable now. I figure, since he's so loyal, I can just get something out of testing his loyalty until something gives and he realizes I'm a psychopath and he attempts to get away from me, at which point, I will kill him. I liken him to a mosquito that's caught in a Venus Flytrap; by the time it realizes what it's done it's already made it's final mistake. And that reflects the bitter reality of life; it tried to get something sweet and succulent and killed itself in the process. The Flytrap will get no karma as they simply prey upon the stupidity of the stupid. Everything Luis has ever done has lead up to him finding me, falling in love with me, and instead of realizing his demise he's biding his time happily upon the Flytrap's sticky surface. Today a

couple who lives below my apartment complained about a pungent stench; rotting, maggot-infested flesh that I've been trying to make time to move to Paul's apartment. I was thinking about a quick solution and I looked at the girl's face; entirely charcoal black, contrasting with pale white skin and blonde hair. I don't remember what I did. All parties are more interesting after you leave.

There's something that tugs me as sad about this situation, and I pity Luis, because he genuinely has no idea how much danger he's putting himself in. So much that it's not fun, thinking of killing him, because there's no weight to it. I didn't enjoy killing Paul because he was oblivious to what was happening; the last look I saw on his face was nice enough to keep me together for a few days but I don't get anything out of it when they're incapacitated anymore. I like seeing the melding of facial expressions; how the bones shift, the second when you can see it in their eyes and as you stare into their soul you know that they know something is wrong, the pure manifestation of true *fear* and lack of control of the situation and panic because of the unknown. Later they gain a blowtorch to the body, rotisserie style while impaled on a spit. Luis would be mortified but he would pretend to be okay with it, and as intrigued as I am I'm also not sated by this...

What can I get out of this? What does Luis have to offer me? Servant, perhaps. As far as my knowledge goes, he isn't talented at anything particular enough to help me. He could cook bodies for me and serve me breakfast in bed; he could clean up after me. I don't think I'd be able to get very far with that; if I told him what I do, there's no way he'd take me seriously. Still, though, I'm not even sure if his loyalty would last if he ever looked in my closet. I wonder what it would be like to chase someone around a burning house; trying to hurt them, trying to watch yourself all at once. This thought makes me think of the song *Burning Down The House* by Talking Heads; the first song on *Speaking In Tongues* which is a decent album. It has that pop and hiss that most youths of today admire, although it's just not throbbing with social issues like some of their earlier releases and is much too new wave-esque for comfort. The song talks about a man up to his eyes in debt so he ends up burning his house down and the lyrics are so hand-dipped in disjointedness and bipolarity I can almost see myself in them, as if the band wrote the song for me and me only.

"Yes, Patrick?"

"Whenever you speak to me, I want you to look at the ground."

"The ground? Why?"

"Will you do it, or not?"

"I mean... Yes I will, Patrick...?" His voice curves again. I see a mosquito flying around Jean's head, I examine the case of *Promise*. The tape is white and the case is shades of blue. "Your eyes are so pretty, though, Patrick. I'm not sure I can do that."

I like empty compliments that are purely facial or appearance-wise because they are soothing; no thought is put into them, they are spontaneous and unplanned. They make me feel at peace because I know nobody is scrutinizing me deeply, they are only looking at my surface and not beyond it. Luis, though, is looking, and he is listening, and he has started to grasp my mental understanding of myself. He actually likes the way my eyes look. Being understood terrifies me; my life has pieces missing, and Luis has openly admitted to wanting to fill them up himself. No. No thank you.

"If I want you to look at me, I'll tell you to look at me. Don't complain about it." He starts the word 'but' and I speak over him, "If you do it well you might be given better."

"Why?"

"I don't want you to interfere with my personal life, Carruthers, unless I say so." As I say this Luis

draws in a sharp gasp, he sounds surprised. “You interfere with... my lifestyle, and it gives me a headache.”

“Patrick, I... well, in that case, I’m sorry. I just want to mean a lot to you.”

“You often disrupt my work. I’m very well-rounded, I’d like to think, and because of this I try to dedicate as much time as possible into my work life.”

“Yes,” Luis sounds moderately transfixed. “You’re a very good Vice President, Patrick. I hear so much good stuff about you from everyone.”

He could just be flattering me, but the thought that people talk about me while I’m not present jumpstarts my heart and I become unknowingly more interested in the conversation. My stomach spikes negatively. “People talk about me?”

“Everyone does! It’s almost like you’re famous, Pat.” For what? “I know I can’t stop talking about you, at least. I know I’d have it good if we ever-”

I feel egregious. For some reason I keep expecting Paul to walk through the door, because half of me is still convinced I’ll see him around and one day he’ll just turn up in my life again, but I remember he’s dead and *not* in Europe and I calm down. “That’s interesting. Keep stroking my ego.”

“I don’t have to, it strokes itself!” Luis pauses at that note and he laughs to himself, which resonates around my mind. Something about that entire statement disgusts me, to be frank. “There was that time you donated a million to charity and funded that one organization to clean up some parts of Queens, remember that?”

I don’t remember... either... of those things. That must have been someone else. Or perhaps it was me and I was under some influence, because I would never do things like that sober. I want to dig a large hole, crawl into it, and never emerge. When people try to persuade me to come out of it I will scream obscenities at them. I put a pencil behind my ear, Dixon Ticonderoga, to feel like I’m doing something productive. That doesn’t do it for me so I replace it with a fountain pen. A career is a long-running tunnel that’s entirely black and once you’re in it you can’t leave. Sometimes when I think about myself all I see is Malevich’s *Black Square*.

What a fantastic painting that is. It makes me laugh, because it's nothing at all except a solid black square and people look into it and see philosophical or existential concepts- the meaning of life, death, love, reincarnation. It's a black fucking square. It's. A. Black. Square. It's even *called* 'Black Square'. How over-analytical will humanity get before we come to the steady epiphany that sometimes some things really don't have a deeper interpretation and is just made because it could've been? I'm called back to the amount of avant-garde types of 'phallic installations'- there's a sculpture of a dick and you can rock it back and forth- and I am reminded of why I hate these pretentious art types. They make bullshit and are given the world. I should just buy acrylics and start painting portraits of my cock all over my office and soon I'll be featured in hundreds of art galleries across Paris, Prague and Hamburg. The art world is going backwards. Jesus Christ, the world in general is going backwards. We're losing our grip on what the word garbage even means.

“You need to be better at speaking up for yourself, Carruthers.” I say these words absently and I feel as if I’m reading spoken word poetry. I fidget with my wallet.

“What makes you say that?”

“You have no say in anything.”

“Yes I do,” He’s quiet and I hear him sip from a glass. “But also... what if I don’t want to?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, when it comes to you, maybe I don’t want to...” Again, he laughs, “wear the pants around here.”

Jean must be looking, and she must see my face, because she hurries herself in, heels clicking underneath a pencil skirt that’s short enough to reveal her if she doesn’t very carefully cross her legs but long enough to be respectable in the workplace. I like the way high heels sound on floors. They sound powerful. “Patrick? Is something wrong?”

“Most things are wrong,” I say, mumbling, my brain piloting itself. My head sounds something like loud freeform jazz; chaotic, noisy, unrestrained, overwhelming. Usually, I am able to sound compassionate but my voice sounds as rigid as steel. My entire life, I’ve felt as if I am standing in a room full of fine vases and jars of a prehistoric nature, possibly Greek, holding a sledgehammer and it’s my choice if I’d like to admire or destroy.

“What?” Luis says, because I forgot to move the phone from my ear. “What happened?” Jean says, as I’ve confused her. I move my phone and tell Jean I’m fine but thank her for her concern, she nods and gives a weak smile, I watch her leave and stare at her ass. It looks flatter than usual today and I make a note to tell her not to wear this skirt again. I put Luis back on and say, “Are you insinuating you want me to be the dominant person in our relationship?”

I say that extremely fast, so fast that when I try to repeat it to myself in my mind the room starts swaying. Luis catches every word, though, and he’s squealing with glee like some kind of captive barn animal that’s been given more than it’s fair share of scrap food. “Yes! Yes, I do!” He cuts himself off, breathless. “Wait, wait. Wait, Patrick... Patrick?”

“Yes?” This comes out very aggressive. I’m still thinking about art and artists that I hate and I suppose this feeds the embers.

“Are we, you know... aha, something?”

“Are you giving me permission?”

“Huh? Permission for what?”

“To do whatever I want.”

“Mmm...” He makes a sound like he’s thinking but it sounds more like he’s digging for any sexual merit in what I just said. I figure now that Luis is a very hypersexual person who, most likely, for as long as I’ve known him, has been bending my words in his head to make it sound like I want to fuck him. “You don’t even have to ask, you know that.”

“So I own you?”

“Yes!” I have buyer’s remorse. “But do I own you, too?”

“No.”

I think I’ve shot him down but he says, “What are we going to do, then?” I’m fueling his perverted mind.

My fingernails comb the buttons of my receiver and I feel vaguely omnipresent, like I’m here but

nowhere yet also everywhere but here. There's thunder outside but the forecast never mentioned rain, not once. I put *Promise* into my cassette player, leaving my Walkman alone, and listen to side A. I've been listening to side A my entire life. "I'm going to do nothing. You're going to do what I tell you to."

I can't get off to killing him, I know I can't. He's too easy. I like it when *women* are easy, easy to persuade to get into your car. Easy to convince two straight girls to be lesbians for the night. Easy as in 'if I wave a hundred dollar bill in front of your face you'll do anything I tell you to'. Some are doubtful of my ways as they're used to receiving twenties by the hour, but it's not like my money is going anywhere after I give it to them. Luis, and I cannot by any means stress this enough, is following me like a lamb to a fucking shepherd and I wish, I wish so hard, that he had even the smallest grain of self-awareness. I don't know how to get him off of me and I'm not sure where I stand. If I don't want to kill him because he hasn't really done anything to earn it, or because it would be... boring, or if I like having a blind follower. Love truly is blind.

"Of course," he says admiringly.

I sit there for a moment. "Carruthers."

"Yes?"

"Would you happen to know a painting..." I stare outside and I see Jean stand up and for a fraction of a moment one side of her skirt is elevated higher than the other and I am rewarded with burgundy pantyhose. 'A little higher next time,' I almost say aloud. I laugh though nothing's particularly funny. "By the name of Black Square?"

"Black Square?"

"Yes."

"By who?"

"Malevich. Russian, known mostly for abstract art and" - I have to prevent myself from saying 'random bullshit shapes', and I worry for a second because I can't seem to prevent myself from saying what's on my mind as easily as I normally am able to - "works that almost paralleled De Stijl and other geometric movements. Black Square is one of his most notable works."

"Hmm... What's it look like?"

I have to suck in my disbelief. "It's... It's a black square."

"*Just* a black square?"

I almost say 'no fucking shit' and I play mental tennis on whether or not this would be a good idea. At the end of that, I do not and instead just say 'mmm'.

"Sounds interesting... But I can't say I've seen it myself, though."

"I can't even, you know, give him credit for doing something new and innovative. He did predate De Stijl by about a year or two if I remember right, but that doesn't make it better. Contrast, I don't know, Renaissance high art with a black fucking square. It's so underwhelming. In of itself, though, it's somehow his most famous painting and you're left wondering how the *fuck* that was possible. Like, okay, imagine you're a painter, right. Imagine that being your legacy. A big fucking black square you painted one day for some reason. It's so depressing. People are... so stupid..."

"He wouldn't have painted it if there wasn't a reason to, though, right?"

"That's the thing. I doubt there was."

"I don't know about that," Luis says, thoughtfully. "You get out of art what you put into it. If I saw a big black square"- he mimics me as he says this. It's very faint but it's definite- "it would reflect whatever emotions I put into it, right? You know what I mean, Pat?"

Good fucking God he's one of those people.

I don't respond and so he says "That's a good idea, though. I had no idea you were interested in the arts like that. I'm sure even a black square can be pretty. Just like you," he says flirtatiously.

I stare at my shoes.

"Oh, and, that actually reminds me. Speaking of pretty things..."

I reach behind myself and slowly scoop all of my CDs on the floor. After I hear one of them crack I can speak again. "My name is... Patrick Bateman. Vice President at..."

"What?"

"Huh?"

"I know who you are, Patrick," he says. He laughs. Was that funny?

"No. Call me... Mr. Bateman." There is no weight in my voice as I say this, my words have no gravity. They manifest themselves and mean nothing. I did not say that, it dragged itself out of me.

"Ooooooh. I didn't know you liked that kind of thing," he laughs for a bit. "Do you wanna hear what I'm thinking, Mr. Bateman?"

"Sure." But I drag it out so it sounds more like '*surrrrrrrrrre*'. I can tell by the way he says it he doesn't take it seriously at all, and it wouldn't, because it really makes no sense and came from nowhere. I finish my Evian.

"I took a small nap earlier today and I had a dream and you were in it," He says, jovially. I look through my desk for any Desyrel. "I remembered you had a limo, and you do, don't you? So, tonight, why don't we... Get ready for this... Go on a drive together? Just you and me, hm?"

"I-"

"And we can have the sunroof down. You know why?"

"No."

He sighs blissfully and I hear more fabric rustling. "All I've ever wanted to do is stargaze with you."

I want to shut this down with my veto power immediately because the smog is too thick and the buildings are too tall in this city to see any stars at night. You might see sneakers hanging from power lines, plastic bags in trees, discarded balloons and the crying of a child, clothing hanging between buildings, but no stars at all. Teeth grit to the breaking point I relay these points to him, and he says, "Not in Manhattan, silly! I was thinking we could drive up near Long Island? I'd pay for gas if we needed it..."

“Why?”

“I haven’t seen you in person in weeks, Mr. Bateman.” He sounds somewhat despondent as he says this, I can hear his fingers on the phone cord and I’m wondering why he hasn’t gotten a cordless phone yet like everyone else. “Why don’t we listen to Sade, too, since you like her?”

“Stop, trying, to make, this, roman, tic,” I say incredibly slowly. I’m sweating, the air tastes fake, recycled. My mousse smells sour and the once rose-like distinct scent is tainted just like everything else in the world.

“But I think you’d love Smooth Operator,” he croons. “The lyrics remind me of you;” Why does everyone liken me to Sade? Is my life so repetitive that it’s painful to notice the similarities between people? “there’s a really nice part in it. ‘His eyes are like angels, but his heart is...’ Oh, never mind.”

“His heart is?”

“Cold. But, I don’t say that in a bad way...”

“Whoever gave me *Promise* said the same thing,” I mumble. “The ‘remind me of you’ thing.”

“On CD?” he asks.

“Yes.”

“Um, Yuletide party last year?”

“I suppose.” Just say Christmas you piece of shit.

“I... gave you that.” he says. He sounds hurt. “That was me, Mr. Bateman.”

Now, I have out my planner and I’m doing circles in it with my fountain pen. I try to draw Luis but I end up drawing a giant pile of meat. It’s large and takes up too much space on the page. He ruined this page. He is ruining everything. I hate Luis Carruthers. I fucking hate Luis Carruthers. I hate fucking Luis Carruthers. I fucking hate fucking Luis Carruthers. I fucking hate him. Fucking hate him. Hate him. Hate him. Fucking hate him. Fucking Luis Carruthers.

I don’t know how to proceed so I tap my pen on the table and pretend to look for reservations, for appointments, for clients, for anything, something to *do*, but nothing shows up. It’s all dismembered women and methods of handling gastric acid. It’s stronger than you’d expect and, if released, the stomach can digest itself and eat through most surfaces. Previously I’ve redirected intestines so that said acid would come out of the vagina because I really wanted to see something like that but I wasn’t in the mood for watersports but looking back on it I guess it’s pretty much all the same thing. I need to find a way to do that to someone who’s awake. It would be grand.

“When... is... ideal for you?”

“Oh, what for?”

“The... stargazing.”

His mood inverts, he becomes exuberant and he begins to babble and his mood is so malleable; so conformable, so interchangeable with whatever I dictate. I can make him do whatever I want, say whatever I want, and it’s horrifying yet also comforting having this much control over a human being. It’s like a part of his brain turns off whenever he talks to me- or perhaps he never had that

piece of his brain- and he loses all reason, he finds me dependable. I have a newfound captivation with his reception of me, the same kind of affection a scientist has for the primordial slop inside of his petri dish. He prods it, he gives it life, but in totality he doesn't care about it unless it can get him recognition in the industry or an award.

The foreseeable future is fear. The past is fear, the future is fear. All things are together in a unity I cannot replicate, not mentally nor physically, Luis does not know this, and he never will.

"How about tonight, Mr. Bateman?" Luis' voice is so soft yet self-assured. "Um, let me see... It's three PM now, so how does seven or eight sound to you?"

My mouth operates itself and refuses to abide to me. "I'm busy then, but I can... move some things around."

"So does that mean...?"

"It's going to be difficult because I have a very, very important conference that hour but I'm sure something can be done." I click my tongue and scribble with my ballpoint pen so it sounds like I'm making plans. "You should thank me. Look at how much I do for you. You would be nothing without me. This could compromise my status." I call Jean- she doesn't hear me, of course, and I put down the phone to mumble but make sure he can hear me.

When I put the phone back to my ear I hear Luis practically panting, awaiting me with bated breath. "Can we do it?"

I sigh. "Yes, but I can't stay long." Realistically I have all the time in the world and my chauffeur doesn't care as long as I pay him handsomely by the end of the evening. Wait, hold on. What am I doing? Am I agreeing to a date with Luis in my own limousine? Wait, wait, wait. Wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait.

"I have to get ready, then! Oh, goodness, is this exciting! I'm so happy! I'll, um, your house, right? Seven? Oh, oh my..."

"Luis, wait. Wait, Luis."

"This is going to be so much fun. I've had so many dreams about something like this!"

"Luis, Luis, Luis. Luis."

"Thank you so much... I'm going to bring you something nice, just you wait! Oh, and... Mr. Bateman?"

"LUIS"

"I love you so much, okay? Bye byeeeee."

I keep saying his name but he runs off, blowing a kiss before hanging up the line. I feel flesh touch my face; at first it feels like multiple tendons caressing me until I register them as my own fingers, at which point I massage my cheeks lightly, finding so much solace in the silky texture of my complexion. I do this for I don't even know how long, listening blankly to *Promise* and staring at my Rolex until Jean walks in when she returns from wherever with lunch to check on me, and I tell her to remind me to leave at six-thirty. She's gone before I can revoke the request.

Jean

Chapter Summary

Waiting.

Chapter Notes

hi hi it's me again, i'm trying to include shorter chapters to move the story along a lil more smoothly and have the transitions be better! also trying to be more descriptive... as usual thank you for reading and for kudos if you give them, so much loooooove etc notes: inspired by this [song](#)

I don't know what to do with myself, so I do circles around Central Park clockwise then counterclockwise. I ask random people for directions to places I have no intention of going to, I stare at grown women and little girls alike and wave benignly, I even took this one child with me when she strayed too far from the family picnic. I used the promise of candy as a bribe. The whole time I'm walking nowhere, this child's hand in mine, her asking me things and talking about this huge stuffed bear she's carrying, I'm just wondering how many people on Earth are this gullible. I thought it was only a trait in children, but multiple times I have been proven wrong. I have no candy. I have no candy for anyone. I look normal, with this child. Her hair is the same color as mine and I look old and tall enough to be her father, but it's five minutes before I hate the commitment of walking around with her. When I get bored of the child, I step onto an M5 bus with her and then get off by myself a stop later.

My Rolex now says that it's five, so I stop by a Japanese deli to get some water because I feel oddly faint. I do circles around a block and have a cigar in an alleyway. Someone somewhere is playing *Walk On By* by Dionne Warwick which makes me happy because the Isaac Hayes version is terrible but more people play it, and I hum it as I hover outside Pierce & Pierce, watching people do things. Warwick's rendition is short, concise and gets the point across well and romantically whereas Hayes' overstates it's welcome for *twelve entire minutes*. Psychedelic bands of the late sixties popularized needlessly lengthened songs, I'm well aware, but this outstays its welcome. At least those were good. This *isn't*. You can tell when you listen to Hayes' that it's very inspired by Pink Floyd, and though I don't particularly have an opinion on them it's an insult to the entire genre they represented in their earlier work. I suppose if you were coming down from a high and your grips on reality were weakened it would sound good, but to me, someone sober, I would rather digest razors than listen to it. And believe me, I understand, it's subjective. Music is interpretive and before the turn of the century all people did at all was cover each other. My argument is that's a terrible fucking iteration of a good song and it needs to be purged immediately. In addition he simply doesn't have the voice for it. It's too black for me. Some songs are only good because of the gender of the main vocalist. For example, if Whitney Houston was male, most people just wouldn't care.

I get into a phone booth and pretend to call a loved one. I consider calling a sex line or hiring a girl for the night, but I don't think I would have enough time to to do that, because my plans would

overlap. I would be in the middle of having sex with a woman and then *he* would arrive and ring my bell religiously, and when I don't answer he'll find a phone somewhere- probably calling from the lobby- and blow up my receiver, and I don't want to be forced into answering it because I have someone over. No.

I could, though, have a long, rejuvenating lemon soak if I go home right now. Normally when I take baths, or showers, or anything, I get distracted staring at myself in the set of long wall-length mirrors I've had installed in my bathroom. I admire my tan, run a hand up and down my pectorals. Feel up my abdomen, appreciate myself because I know there's no one else who would as thoroughly as I would. I have angles, I have certain light directions, I have room temperatures I perform best in. My eyes are so smoky, so dark. I have no idea how I have to hire women and they don't come to me, and usually when people come to me, they're not... my... preferred... gender. My mind floats to how astoundingly low the age of consent is in some Asian countries. I think about how the Axis Powers undoubtedly would have won if Hitler hadn't had such a big ego and listened to the people around him, or if Mussolini was anything but a communist, or the Japanese weren't so full of themselves, or if the United States chose not to get involved. I wonder how it would affect me if they had won, what the world would be like, where I would live, who I would be.

I'm back in my office now. For a long time, I prostrate on the floor. I take off my shoes, take off my socks, then put my shoes on, and repeat the process in reverse. I then return to my prostration. I thought that, by now, by my adulthood, the vacant feeling in my chest would have evaporated and I'd be able to make do with what I have. I thought that when I made my own money, and would be able to describe myself confidently as self-made, I'd be able to cope, but that idea was destroyed seeing that I have everything at my fingertips but nothing is worth my while. Jean recommends expensive vacations, cruises, getaways, all while subtly hinting to bring her with me, but nothing can relax me. I don't bother. As the thought of that feels like an eclipse over my mind I force it out brutally and rather spend a few hours thinking about stocks; how most stock brokers are making bad investments lately and how deeply flawed speculation actually is. It's five-fifty now and I spend the remaining ten minutes of the hour gussying myself up and picking dried blood out from under my nails. I tried to be like Elizabeth Bathory two years ago; killing virgins and bathing in their blood, but it's too hard to pick out virgins. When you bring them home, the first thing they want to do- as most of them are sixteen through eighteen- is grab your dick and try to do something with it, much like they've seen in gaudy shops. But mine, with it's impressive length, girth, and the slight curve that even I can't hold myself back from staring at, they don't know what to do with it. They get scared, they want to call their parents, they're pulling out, they're calling you a pedophile even though they instigated. This thought makes me angry and I carve my name into the bottom of my desk with an exacto knife.

I have a passing thought that I'm self-absorbed. A male analyst I had some time ago heavily criticized my life- I didn't even tell him about my urges, just how I see basic people. Everyone is the same, people are swines, human relationships aren't worth it, my distinct lack of compassion, et cetera. Selfishness is one of the most basic motivations in the world and I know for a fact I'm not the only person like this. If I am selfish, good. I hate asparagus but most of the time I find myself eating it anyhow.

Six. For the first quarter of one painful hour I think of Luis, and nearly nothing but Luis and I pace around aimlessly, half of my mind on wrapping my hands around Luis' throat and rocking him back and forth, smashing his head onto the tinted glass window of my limousine, the other half wondering how that would end if I failed to kill him. What he would say. He'd either be very lenient and off-put but still forgive me, or he might try to run. My impulse here is to say 'and I'd chase him', but a part of me knows I wouldn't. He would get away, and it doesn't matter, because he wouldn't tell anyone. I could break every bone in his body and dump him, weighted, into a river and he'd still say he tripped and fell down the stairs. Thirty minutes of this departs and I find

myself seated in my chair, looking emptily at the door, and Jean peeks her head in... just like it's orchestrated.

"Patrick? Your appointment is just about now, isn't it?"

I remain perfectly stagnant. I don't move. I feel like a blunt object that hasn't been used in some time; still as lethal, but out of work. I've always enjoyed the pain of ripping off bandages slowly and seeing scabs peel away, licking the pus off if there was any. Saliva breaks down most things. My thoughts are so obscene, and I'm happier the less I think about that fact. Kadinsky was a far superior artist in comparison to Malevich because he actually did something visually interesting whereas Malevich just liked showing off his fucking cubes. If Kadinsky's works had less color I would buy one. I'm so angry today. "Yes, Jean, it is."

"Shouldn't you be going, then?"

Her hair is so amazingly flaxen. I sigh as I look at her. It looks like it has good traction and I want to pull it sometimes, but it would hurt her, so I don't. Jean is the only person I think I'm conscious of hurting, it affects me. "Yes, Jean, I should."

"You don't really sound like you want to," she says. She walks over slowly and pulls out a chair and that startles me because I swear there was nothing but empty space there; she situates herself calmly and tries to read my eyes. I know the expression she makes when she's trying to read people; it sits somewhere between inquisitiveness and suspicion. "What's wrong?"

"Today is bad." I say that slowly and deliberately, checking my receiver for nothing and there's... one new message. Ten minutes ago.

"Well, why's it bad? What's wrong with the appointment?" She's talking to herself. She pauses. "Who's it with...?"

Silence comes and goes as it always does. With tentative hands she reaches over for my phone, gazes up at me, and then turns it around slowly to look. I'm too powerless emotionally and physically to stop her. She notices the call number and I can tell from her void of speech she recognizes it. And of course she would, seeing as she always notifies me when I get a new call from Luis. Even though I always say no.

She repositions herself and I see it from my peripherals. She presses the play message button before I can swat her hand away. "No don't do that" I say quickly.

"Hieeee! Hi, Patr- Oh, I'm sorry. Hi, Mr. Bateman. You haven't picked up, so I just thought I'd let you know I'm leaving right now..." I don't blink. I don't move, I don't breathe. "I'm bringing *quite* a few things with me, as well... Some *mood music*, if you catch my drift? Hehe. You like Chardonnay, don't you? You do seem like a Chardonnay sort of man... How about Merlooooooot? Pinot *Noir*? Oh, I'll just bring them all! I'll be at yours in, mm... I'd say... twenty, thirty? See you then, handsome. Mmmmmuah."

Five minutes of nothing happens. I hear the phone ring outside once or twice, but to be frank, Jean looks too stupefied to notice. She looks horrified. It's at this point I remember she's in love with me and my chest sinks, my hands quiver, my pupils dilate. And I sit there, with what must be a very dumb expression on my face; ambiguous, emotionless, everything phases out ten million years and my next actions feel ritual; I make a confusing series of hand gestures and trip over my tongue trying to explain why I have a message like that. "He loves me Jean I don't know what to do and he loves me."

“Patrick? Are you gay?”

A drop of sweat rolling down my forehead descends my brow, then across my eyelash, and down into my eye. Jean’s face becomes disfigured; her features become bigger and less proportionate, more masculine, less like anything, until she looks like a carbon copy of me. I think of the Book of Revelation. I lick my lips so vulgarly because they’re so unbearably dry, making a disgusting slurping sound, and every 1970s Soul/R&B song sung by a powerful black female vocalist who sounds like she belongs to every church across the country runs through my mind. Patti Labelle. Minnie Riperton. Phyllis Hyman. Barbara Lewis. Anita Ward. Aretha Franklin. There’s more but I can’t list them because my eardrums have blown out and the ringing won’t stop. New species are discovered, new breeds of plants are cultivated, a cure for AIDS is found, eons pass me by, I see myself aging at glacial speed that quickly upgrades into a crescendo; my eyes turn into squints, my irises grow beadier, my lips become thinner and wider, my forehead is pronounced, my hair becomes weaker and thinner. My arms lose dexterity and all my muscle turns to flab; my clothes become baggier, I grow large rings of crows feet. I look malnourished. I’m not. I’m *not*. How could you accuse me of that. I used to like you so much. The sun explodes in a blast of heat from outside my office and everything burns up in a conflagration on a scale unknown to man; I hear screaming, shouting, yells for help, gasps, moans of pleasure. A new star is formed just as quickly and replaces the old one, but it doesn’t matter because all is lost. I meet a group of raggy survivors of the blast who look like they’re on death’s doorstep; they cut my head off with makeshift machetes and gaze at it with admiration, love, and lust, though I do them no justice. They pick it up, scoop out my brain and such and use it to store food and pretty gems inside of. They take my suit-pronouncing Bill Blass as ‘Bell Blath’, and use it to bandage their wounds. I am floating in space.

I breathe out hard. “No.”

“Then what was that?”

“He thinks, we, have, a date tonight.”

“And you do?”

“No.”

“Then what did you tell me to remind you to leave for?” She sounds accusatory, looking daggers into me while also looking equally distraught. She looks somewhat close to tears. This look wills me out of existence and I feel so small in the world, so insignificant. “What are you lying to me for?”

“I’m going to kill him.”

“Oh, Lord, Patrick,” Jean cries, exasperated, pushing herself out of my chair which her form remains embedded in for a while. “Can you tell me the truth? Listen, I’m just... disappointed, I guess. I’m okay. I won’t tell anyone. It’s fine.”

“You’re not listening to me,” I say and I don’t know what to do with my hands anymore so I cover them with my eyes- I mean, I cover my eyes with them and I try to do everything to not look at her and the distance between us now. I’m losing my one acolyte in the world. A grenade goes off in my stomach and I feel rattled so deeply, so moved to action I slam my fist down on the receiver, trying to break it, but it’s so weak it just looks like I’m trying to play another message. “You can’t do this to me, Jean.”

“Do *what* to you? What am I doing to you?” She’s faltering, stepping backwards, her footsteps and movements are out of coordination, her ankle twists in a way that looks painful and she hisses for a

second. "Have fun."

"Jjjjjjean." I start singing *Walk On By* by Dionne Warwick to her because someone was playing it on a boombox today, walking around, and I heard it so now it's on my mind. If they had been playing the Issac Hayes version I would have argued with them about it because that version is mediocre and Warwick's is superior in every way. I'm telling you this now because I can't remember if I did earlier.

"I should have known, I really should have..."

I need to say something but when I try to I start drooling a little and I yell "*Don't* wear that *skirt* again."

She pulls herself out of my office and runs down the hallway. She goes somewhere and she goes there fast. The last recession was so severe I know all the stocks are going to crash soon and I'm going to lose so much money, the thought of this makes me weep. How I'm going to lose everything and yet somehow because God shines his fortune on the ignorant Luis will remain affluent, more so than me, and I might lose my apartment and though I'd stay at Paul's he might try to send me money I'd never want as it's contaminated and I start shaking, I start shaking so hard I flip around my Rolex so I won't have to look at the time. The room's temperature drops like a stone and I hide under the desk, shying into my suit for warmth in this world. I'm so cold and something weird is twisting around in my chest. I chew hard on the inside of my cheek until I taste blood. I'm going to walk home alone. If I kill someone on the way I'll tell you.

Home

Chapter Summary

Something weird happens to me.

Chapter Notes

hi babys!!! posting this quick because i got to run but warning: contains heavy drug use, vague noncon(?), wasn't written intentionally but can be interpreted that way), selfcest and heavy dissociation. if you don't want to read this, do ctrl+f and search "I expect him to just" to skip it. putting this here because i don't want anyone to read something that might make them uncomfortable. things are gonna get weird from here on out if they haven't already, so strap yourselves in lol?! and as always, thank you so much for reading and giving kudos if you decide to, it really motivates me!

I've never noticed how bland my apartment has looked in terms of appearance until now. It's aesthetically pleasing to me. I went for the minimalist trajectory when I started interior decorating and I remember running through hundreds of catalogs for everything white or black. I wanted a thick contrast between the two. The result, which I am very proud of, is simplistic but conveys more than clashing colors and conflicting themes ever could. I tend to think forward in my goals for how I want to present. In terms of psychological effect on the unsuspecting layman who finds himself in here, he will immediately be forced to think of me that I'm a methodical, organized person. I've made careful handle all of this as to not suggest of a lack of control over the space.

White walls. The white is the hardest thing to maintain as if I don't repaint every three months the oxidization will turn it off-yellow and this is a very labor-intensive process for me specifically because no rentable, hireable, whichever, painter within any of the five boroughs is capable of using a paint roller without getting lumps on the second way up. The accountability has reached *zero* with every ordinance of teamsters. Thus, I do it myself, and I find that it's worth it just to keep the feeling of low stimulation. Too many colors makes the brain work much harder to digest its surroundings and since I'm always in a hellish state of overstimulation the last thing I'd like is my brain to get any hotter. My brain overheats problematically often. I can get hyperthermia in the middle of the winter easily by thinking too much or being probed with too many things at once. I wonder what would happen if I took Nyquil and Dayquil at the same time. I imagine a rift in the space-time continuum and I also imagine my head bursting into antimatter.

I'm high up but from the streets below I can hear someone playing what must be a trumpet in a very disorganized, freeform way. The time is a quarter to seven and I'm blankly walking about my apartment, touching things, feeling the walls, licking the floor, prostrating and crawling around. I haven't rented *Body Double* since I returned it a few days ago and I think about running to go pick it up again, but I stay rooted to the spot and instead glue myself to the fabric of old recordings of horror films with blood that looks realistic enough: I'm not sure I'd have time to run outside, so. The videos I record, since I'm on the topic, I never watch, and I don't sell out of fear of compromising myself. I could ruin my reputation; *'Did you know Patrick Bateman shoots porno?'*

and then all it takes is one bright mind to think '*Yeah, isn't it funny how the women he shoots with just keep going missing?*' Not like there's much accountability for call girls, but I've digressed—so I keep them to myself as my personal trophies but I never touch them and often they accumulate so much dust. I try watching *Pieces* and I think I'm being turned on but I glance at my Rolex, which says it's now seven, and I can feel myself wilt. I don't get soft, I *wilt* out of my own hand and feeling so discouraged after that I try to do some exercise but the energy is all pent up and I think of Luis for a fraction of a second and end up punching a hole through the wall by mistake. I cover it up with a poster of Madonna that I have for some reason- her hair looks so unhealthily stringy- and don't remember buying, and on the other side, I nail a pillow to the wall. I call for limousine services.

Since most large crowds are persuaded into happiness by merely listening to happy music- this is how the masses are pacified and controlled- I listen to *I Wanna Dance With Somebody* by Whitney Houston. I sit there on one of my seats, staring deeply into my CD player and maybe start tapping my foot a little. It's fine. There's nothing great about it yet nothing disappointing about it. The arrangement is there, I guess. Her vocals are there, I guess. It sounds impressive, but it's not complete. I look around my apartment and I become very scared because I'm waiting for something to happen, I'm waiting for instructions on what to do next but I am given none.

For five minutes I bash my head against the wall because I started thinking of Jean and I don't know how else to forcibly stop thinking of things.

Something about the face of despondence and sadness that appears on Luis' face in my mind when I, hypothetically, tell him '*Guess what, Luis? You killed my hard-on earlier. I thought about you and I went soft immediately*' fills me with a sense of unjustified courage which flies out as quickly as it comes in. This bird kept flying into my window a few weeks ago and it was making itself grotesque; it was so determined, the more it failed to enter the harder it flew into it and by the time I opened my window to shoot it the thing couldn't even fly straight. I ate it for dinner and it was so gamey. I've just taken a lot of Xanax and two Percocets because the world is inverting and I don't know what else to do about it. I also take a little Benadryl hoping all of these things combined will kill me or shut down the part of my brain that's causing my depression for good.

I soak in the bath for a little while, listening to *Speaking In Tongues* and humming *Girlfriend is Better*, but it reminds me of Jean and I grimace horribly- which I see in my huge mirrors- and my face looks so grotesque my brain retaliates by cursing at me with a various range of screechingly loud construction noises and random sounds with maximized gain pointed directly at a microphone which is connected to a megaphone which is connected to ten other microphones (this setup multiplies about three times) and what's produced is played through eight hundred speakers in a bowl stadium. I try to drown myself but only put my face into the water because I can't afford to ruin my hair because it's so soft and perfect. I'm lonely. I want love. I don't drown myself but I do get a decent amount of water in my lungs and end up coughing it out and severely rasping my throat. In the darkness I saw for a moment I was reminded of *Black Square* and I bashed my head against something hard.

Once again, I need movement so I extract myself from the tub, dry off and clean myself very well, combing carefully through my hair. I run over to one of my gigantic mirrors to make sure my face isn't frozen like I saw it, and I keep leaning in, leaning closer. I was originally going to sit on the couch and debate whether I should kill myself or have a cup of coffee and go with Luis but I end up admiring myself for a long time because there is no beauty higher than myself. Not material, not spiritual. My jawline is sharp as a stake, my features are maintained so well, my eyelashes are short enough to be masculine yet long enough to be feminine. I keep leaning in closer until my nose hits the reflection, and this isn't close enough for me to really see myself so I turn my head a little and eventually start kissing it, at first chastely with my lips doing not much aside from just grazing it

and I get into it and start kissing more passionately, smearing saliva all over it with my tongue and fogging up the thing with my breath, feeling my reflection up and down. It feels fleshy, graspable, warm, and he is *very* well put together, more so than I am. He starts doing different things than me, which scares me at first, and he sees the look on my face. “What’s the matter?”

“It’s just that- you’re perfect,” I say.

“Thank you,” he says.

Capillaries leaking blood. Decades of heartbreak and political upheaval. His voice is... better than mine. It's smoother, less coarse, more consistent. He wraps his hand around the back of my nape and pulls me closer, putting his tongue into my mouth which results in a spit-infested mess where I’m drooling all over myself and this does not end, will not end until the next great collapse of civilization, and he moves downward, laughing when I shudder. I stand, lump of vertical concrete, unmoving, fretting with his hair. This conditioner is unquestionably better than mine. More expensive. Though his lips are all over my neck I ask him what brand he uses and he doesn’t respond so I figure I can ask later. My skin is shifting and the ripples I feel are as useless as they are serene and I’m not sure if this is happening or not, I’m really not. I suddenly feel like a virgin, because no matter how hard I try to think of things I can do or say to become dominant I don’t come up with anything. I don’t know what to do. Hyperthermia.

“That’s- it’s- the— so distracting,” I mumble out loud.

“Want me to turn it off?” he says.

I sit there, waiting for something, such as for him to say something else. I feel dumb. He has something I don’t and I get mildly angry, somewhat unnerved, very anxious. “Yes, please.”

“Whatever you want.” I watch him *emerge from the mirror*, and he holding a very large sledgehammer, walks into my living room and I follow him slowly. I feel like a child following an adult I don’t know because I was told to. He smashes my record player into pieces and breaks the record with his hands. “Is this better?”

I say nothing.

“Good,” He says. “Stop being scared. You’re okay.” He stands up, walks over to me and I feel my stomach sink as he does so, taking my hand and leading me to my bedroom where he lays me down excruciatingly gently and climbs over. I am effectively crushed by this. His hands are all over my torso and I feel powerless to stop him, and weakness is something I’ve never had in this kind of scenario. I lead everything. It’s almost like a scripted play and I’d have women ad-lib their performances but I’d be entirely scripted; sometimes I was the director, sometimes I was just an actor. I’m called back to the legions of social experiments where they have people do things on camera unbeknownst to them; I’m waiting for everyone I know to jump out, including Paul Owen, and they’ll all yell ‘*Surprise!*’ like it’s a party, or just a bad, subhuman experience of sleep paralysis.

No. I cover myself with my hands because I’m comparing myself to him very heavily and he grabs my wrists, pries them away and holds them down on both sides of my head. He’s in my mouth again and I feel his tongue rub the hole I bit in my inner cheek earlier and I squirm. Blood through capillaries. I survey the death throes. I don’t want to move because I’ll feel it between my legs. His forehead breaks my nose.

“Don’t cover up. You’re gorgeous.”

"Don't do that," I beg this. Red spit oozes out of the orifice his tongue champions. "Don't do that."

"I'd thought we both liked the way it tastes. Change of opinion, Patrick? Change of stance?" His mouth is covered in blood as he says this. He kisses my cheek as an apology and it gets everywhere but blood contains iron which is bad for the skin and I start trying to get out from under him but he pins me down again, harder, worse, knee into my side: "Why do you want to leave?"

"Date with Luis. Limo. Need to get dressed, get off."

"No." I shut up. The air feels thicker, heavier. My lungs are wearing down. I stare blankly at the ceiling and feel him rubbing himself on my leg. Knee bruising into my side, shattering the femur.

"He's coming here soon."

"That's great. I don't like him. You don't like him. We don't like him. Why don't you call it off? You're thinking about it."

"Not... true. Not- not true."

"You don't like him, you like his company. It's different. You know that it is. You understand that. You don't need him. You need me."

"No."

"Yes," says he, and with no effort whatsoever he flips me with one well-placed kick. On my stomach, unwrapped like a carcass left for roasting, and the staccato sound of drawers being felt through. The bed shifts underneath me as his weight is added and removed and added, added, added, added while he now undertakes doing to me something I don't like. The video camera beeps in agreement to signal, unheard, that the battery is dying. There's skin between his teeth until I register what's happening and start violently wringing, which makes him ask why I'm doing it and like clockwork I just stop. This goes on until it stops hurting and starts to feel like nothing. I turn my head and look at the elaborate dives and ripples in the bedsheets and listen to the rhythmic squeaking. He reaches around my torso and jerks me off which makes me come astonishingly quickly and leads me to beget a series of weird guttural sounds from the very bottom of my stomach. A few minutes later, a few hours later, a few years later he sighs for a long time. He gets off the bed and disappears himself. "Thank you," he says.

I say something like "UhhhhhhhhHHhhhhhhhhhhh"

"Will you be okay without me?"

"HuuhhuuhhmmmmnhHmnn"

"Then I'll stick around."

I feel so incapacitated, so frail, and all my limbs feel so airy that turning my neck takes all my strength and blinking in of itself feels as taxing as a hard, five-hour long cardio and aerobic workout at the gym lead by some well-defined hardbody wearing colorful spandex. I watch him go into my closet... Halston... Dior... and I try to protest but I end up mumbling incomprehensible garbage and he tells me to quiet down. I concur. He emerges in a gray Armani suit which cost me north of a thousand dollars and it's also an older line so replacing it with another authentic version would be next to impossible and I imagine myself buying one and wearing it around but later finding out it's a Chinese reproduction and so I try to scream at him.

"I'm just borrowing it for a little while. I'll give it back. I'll give everything back."

“I NEED THAT”

“You’re so... materialistic,” he says softly, walking around, putting on a pair of cufflinks and doing himself up in one of my mirrors. He uses my products on my- his face, trying out a facial cleanser and posing. “You’re very needy. That’s not very good. Has nobody told you that yet? What, you haven’t thought of it? No introspection? It can help.”

I try to get out of bed- I hold onto my nightstand and end up pulling down my lamp trying to support my own body weight, but my legs refuse to obey and I end up falling off and hitting the cold floor. I wince in pain and wheeze hard: this causes him to notice me and he walks over and stoops down, rubbing my face with a gloved hand. Those are my most expensive gloves and they have real, genuine mink fur in them which is hard to find in today’s fashion climate and I think I start crying aloud, something that produces runoff. He wipes my tears with the same hand and I know that’s going to weaken the fur so I start yelling, at which point he picks me up and carries me bridal style back to the bed. I am laid down.

“Why did you do that? Look, you hurt yourself.”

I make a weird sound and try to crawl somewhere, off the bed, the opposite direction, I don’t know. He pulls me back by my ankles.

“You’re so scared. Calm down.” He returns, stupidly licking me where he must think it necessary.

He throws some covers over me and repositions my arms so they won’t cramp and he goes off somewhere else. I feel incurably sluggish like I’m experiencing withdrawal and when he comes back in, takes off my sheets and begins to dress me in what I’d normally go to sleep in. I let him wholeheartedly. He rubs my forehead.

“I have to go.”

In response I make visceral grunting sounds and try to flip over so he won’t touch me.

“I have to *go*, Patrick,” he repeats, much louder. “I have to go to work. So I’m going to go to work. Are you going to be okay on your own?”

“You’re not real.”

“No, no. Did you think otherwise?”

Pause. “How—”

“You can start by thinking about how you took a lot of drugs. Perspective, hmm?” The way he says this makes me feel pathetic and I choke on my own spit and I swear I’m crying too fucking much this week because I start crying again here. When I cry I don’t feel it until it’s halfway over and the sky has left. He strokes my hair. “I don’t know what else to tell you. I’m a figment. A temporary figment.”

“Why are. Why. Why did you-”

“Because you needed it, don’t you?”

“I never wanted-”

“You said you wanted to be appreciated.”

“I never said that out loud.”

“And yet, I still heard it.” He pauses, and then says, thoughtfully, “I don’t think you’re okay.” Maybe he doesn’t mean to sound like a conceited asshole as he says this but something about his tone of voice makes me very angry and I do realize I have the exact same voice but that doesn’t matter to me, nor anyone, right now.

“Go.”

“Okay, then,” he says. He gets my briefcase, he wears my shoes. He comes back to me. He pulls me up by the shoulder slowly so I’ll be leaning against him. I look up at him. I’m comforted in the most surreal of ways. He looks older than me, but not by much. He’s maybe an inch or two taller which should make no difference but he fills it out better than I ever could. His hair is more professionally done up than mine is. His face is completely smooth, just by appearance. I wait for him to say something, and he does, which is “Take care.” I bury my face into something, probably a pillow. The camera is beeping frantically because its’ work is done and I hear him moving around. I know the clack my shoes make on my floors. He calls from the doorway, “I love you.”

I expect him to just be me and go with Luis, which is a calming thought, and I lay there inactive for a few minutes and I hear the front door open and close, which scares me, so I stand up too fast, swaying around trying to get there before leaning over the couch and gagging. My record player is fine and *Speaking In Tongues* isn’t playing anymore because the needle reached the end of the side. I stare at it until the doorbell starts ringing, which also scares me so much I’m temporarily paralyzed. I hear a car skid out from the street below and I’m sure someone is dead. I wait. I get the door.

“How late am I? Not that much, I’d hope.”

Luis has a large bag. It’s a tote. He crushes my spine and eradicates my already aching body in a hug and I groan in pain. He stares up into my eyes before making an ‘oops’ sound under his breath and stares at the floor. I’m dissolving, goodbye forever Luis. “Did I just get you out of the shower or something? I’m sorry, let me, um- just wait while you get ready. How’s that?” The hug still hasn’t ended and his head is pressed far too deep into my chest and I remember the scene from *Videodrome* where Max reaches into his stomach and pulls his internal organs out. Debbie Harry’s performance in that film was so wholesome.

“Great,” I say. My voice is absent of personality, of character.

He skips inside, sliding off his shoes and leaving them at the door and I drunkenly stumble, very slowly, watching the ground and my footsteps because I’m so fucking certain I’m going to trip as I make my way to the closet. My... Armani is still here. I hear Luis circle around, observing things, putting down his bag. “I— ohhhhh. You never told me how big this place is. Look at the- wow. Wow! And what’s that?”

I close the door and try to replicate what I did earlier with the wall-length mirror because none of this makes any sense, but nothing comes out of it. I return to my bedroom and I don’t see any evidence of what just took place; the lamp is fine, my lubricant is where it always is, untouched. My cufflinks are also present. Putting them on, I chalk this up as a very vivid hallucination though I still feel so extremely disoriented I gag into the toilet because evidently I can even drive myself away. I’m amazing. Half a Xanax bar floats in the toilet bowl and I think this summarizes my current bodily health very well.

“Kind of ran the better half of the way here, so... You don’t mind if I get some water, do you, Mr. Bateman? Where are the cups?” I really couldn’t care less. Go for it. “I saw this amazing street

performer and it was- well, fill in the blanks. Am I excitable, do you think? I see something shiny and I'm left staring at it for ages." I hear my tap running.

That story is bullshit. Decoding it reveals the following: '*I had another fight with my fiancée when I tried to leave*'. Which leads me to think, maybe, just maybe, Luis isn't as apt at cheating as other people usually are which makes me scrunch up my face because he's *too innocent* to do it, and yet, he has to. Why are none of us happy? Why do we bother dating each other? Are romantic relationships ever equal? You get engaged and you never get married, you just stay in that gray area forever. If he told me he was elected as president of Sri Lanka and had to fly out for his inauguration and because of that he took thirty minutes more than expected I'd believe it faster.

"I'm not going to say I got lost around Lexington but I sort of— wh-? Patrick, why's there... there a *pillow* on the wall? Is that a pillow? What?"

Please open the fridge. Please say, '*you don't mind if I get a snack, too, do you?*' Look in the cupboards, Luis. Look in the fridge. Look in the fridge, scream, and give me a reason to kill you. Do it, Luis. This one thing. For me, for us, for Sri Lanka (previously just 'Lanka', previously Ceylon).

I button up my irrelevant dress shirt and wear my irrelevant suit and put on an irrelevant tie and irrelevant socks and irrelevant shoes by someone irrelevant and wipe the bile off my lips and stretch to get rid of my cramps because that didn't happen, this didn't happen but my body says it did so I guess I have to act like it. I take two Advil- because since I'm chewing on my cheek again and nothing is actually getting sent to my stomach it's releasing acids which are most likely eroding my stomach away- and pace around before meeting Luis outside, sitting patiently with a smile and a hand on his lap with the other holding his glass. "There you are! I love your CD collection, I took a look! I didn't know you liked New Wave," he says. He's examining *Power, Corruption, and Lies* by New Order (what a *providential* fucking title). Which isn't New Wave. He puts his glass down on my now not-broken coffee table, and with the way his fingers curl around it I know that he's going to fall and never know who pushed him.

"Let's go, Luis." I gesture towards the door.

"Do you need to dress so formally, though?" He, instead of going to the door like I wanted, walks up to me and touches my tie with both hands. "I mean, you look great. But it's just the two of us, you don't need to dress up for anyone. Might get uncomfy." He's dressed very simplistically in just a light pink button up; cotton, not silk, which screams faggot and brown corduroy pants. I catch him staring at my hands but I can't be bothered to inquire further so I don't.

"Why? Should I want to be cold?" I slide off my jacket and make a 'turn-around' motion. I should make... his last day alive... worthwhile. "But, I suppose..."

My hands shake so hard that I feel like I've contracted arthritis, carpal tunnel, tendonitis in all fingers and all ligaments (and et cetera, which is to say that I've also contracted a very strong and bad *something* that is located in my left foot) as I put it over his back, and the colors, the *colors*, clash in a way that makes me want to bite my fingernails down to stubs. When he feels me do it I hear him gasp slowly, mouth expanding as those features sometimes *do* and my eyesight clouds with tears, I can't swallow right.

He locks me in another bone-obliterating hug but it feels more tender, less forced by the typical American welcoming tradition and more genuine. He reaches upwards and rubs at my shoulders for a while, kneading into them which is vaguely comforting. "We should go," he says. What? He glances up at my eyes every so often. He reaches for one of my hands, which is gloved though I don't remember putting my gloves on, and holds it up to his chin. He rubs his cheek against it,

purring, and I'm too confused to comment. What? Luis. Hyperthermia. I can feel parts of my brain shutting down and this is always such a distinct feeling I let it happen to observe it. Observe it at a reasonable distance.

I watch him put the glass in the sink, wash it out, and then enthusiastically go to the door patting his bag. Then, I stall. I tell him to give me a minute and I do a range of things: parade around in circles, turn off three rows of lights, turn them back on, flicker them, I do a handstand, I do another handstand but for much longer this time, I pretend I'm doing acupuncture and stick pushpins into my arms and pull them out and I try to see how fast I can lick the blood off when it appears. This all takes me three minutes and I exit, locking my front door behind me, unlocking it, locking it again to make sure. "Limo. Downstairs."

We stand together in the elevator. He tries to start up small talk by mentioning my philosophy about *Black Square* and I swear to God if I ever hear about that painting again my head will fucking combust. After I don't respond, Luis, slowly, inches over closer to me, and tries to slide his fingers into mine. My stomach is flipping, and I feel the urge to vomit come on *again* but I let him. Observe it at a reasonable distance. I end up spitting a little and he does not see this. He quivers, he laughs shakily, he tears up over something. I try to tell him about what happened when I watched *Pieces* but I choke and all I say is "Guess what, Luis? I thought, about, you, earlier" and it's so unbearably spaced out— Luis, sounding nigh in tears, says, "I thought about you, too." He squeezes my hand harder. I really can't feel anything. The plot of my own life doesn't even make sense anymore. Observe it at a reasonable distance.

"Oh. What was that?"

"What."

"The little noise I just heard," he says, his voice is so playful it makes me want to slit a child's throat. "You didn't hear it? It was coming from doooooown... here! Huh?" He prods my stomach with his index finger.

I've thrown up maybe three to five times in the last hour. "Right."

"You're not hungry, are you? 'Haven't eaten?"

"No. Yes. Maybe."

He reaches into his bag and pulls out a granola bar, a *granola bar*, honey and fucking *oats*, the *crunchy* kind, and he *peels* back the wrapper, and as he does that I think of many things: the drawback before a golfer swings his club, parallel parking and crashing, peeling the skin off someone's face, pulling back your foreskin before you're circumcised, rewinding a VHS tape. He hands it to me. I eat it. I pat my pocket. Cigars, wallet, lighter, keys, fiberwire, folded knife.

Car Ride with Luis

Chapter Summary

I'm not sure if I really like slow jams. He has a lot of them.

Chapter Notes

five thousand words what the hell. this is probably gonna be the longest chapter in this thing ack... i'm so sorry this is this f'in long fml i just got excessively interested!! as usual thank you if you decide to give kudos bookmarks or leave feedback, they're all super appreciated and they keep me going, thanks for reading bubbly
etc notes: [inspired by this song](#)

I wish the back windows of my limousine weren't tinted darker because, normally when I'm driven around the city I like to be taken in by what I see. Manhattan at night, though, is deliberately evasive as the most you see is couples going home, late grocery shoppers, homeless people galore. Trash bags. I may have been taken in by Luis' naivety because I'm genuinely convinced there's something to see out there, and I roll my window down and am greeted with the stale melancholic monotony I see every day, just darker. I have a fundamental antipathy to this city; the people who live here, the commute, the buildings, the 'art', the music, the sounds, the shapes, the smells, the tastes. I don't want any reconciliation.

The receptionist in my lobby is useless. I plan to kill him now sometime this week because, as I emerged from the elevator, Luis holding my arm with both of his hands, I gave him a stare unparalleled by actual death and mouthed 'please help me', but he just gave me an exhausted, mildly provoked expression and went back to his book. I was hoping my driver wouldn't be here but of course, there's my stark black limousine sitting there, fully fleshed out and recently waxed and Luis squealed at the sight of it. I was making one of his dreams come true and I'm so deeply paranoid of the unknown and I'm so, so, so certain I'm going to die tonight, or he's going to die tonight, or we're both going to die tonight, I might pay the driver to crash. Money makes people do anything. My nerves are pushed to the combustion point, I can feel my heart palpitations speeding up then slowing down and I feel like I have high blood pressure. I may have stomach cancer. I have tuberculosis. My pancreas stopped functioning. I'm dying.

The seats have warmers built into them, the temperature is raised here. I think of cold colors, I think of warm colors, I turn to face Luis who I gave permission to look at me as much as he'd like and he's slightly leaning into me while digging through his tote. He claps his hands together, and brings out a series of CDs. I smell perfume that somewhat smells like sandalwood incense, and I don't know how I know that scent, but Luis is wearing it and it's so strong. "So! What do you want to listen to?" He smiles and I dig my fingers into the armrests. "I think we should listen to... something sweet."

Luis is so absolutely clueless and I feel like I'm on the verge of a panic attack; that feeling of internal lockdown where everything sputters out and fries and you kind of just explode and

everything sets you off like you've bathed in gasoline and dropped your lighter on yourself while trying to light a cigar. I think cigarettes are more detrimental to health than cigars are; you have cigarettes coursing tar through your bloodstream and though nicotine is very relieving once you're addicted- so I've heard- that's addict theory. That's something every addict lowlife says; it feels good, every one is the last one, just one more time and then I'm done forever. If some people want to spend their lives in iron lungs it's entirely their choice; I can't predict everything, I'm no god, and being omnipotent would be exhausting at best. Difficult, taxing, because you have to live... forever... surrounded by awful people who don't improve at all. These things overwhelm and kill the senses. As does having any kind of responsibility, but being around people at night is as lethal as overdosing on a medication by mistake, or, running a knife up your arm by accident, or taking a bath and throwing a toaster in because you feel like it, or like diving off the roof to prove a point, jumping in front of a car to make a statement.

I wonder how the news would receive it if I did kill myself somehow; my acquaintances, my co-workers, my family, Evelyn, Jean, everyone. Local highly privileged, rich, completely not marginalized, prestigious Vice President at Pierce & Pierce found dead after jumping out of his office window. First my house would be ransacked and they'd look for evidence as to why I'd do something like that, they'd find my dismembered body parts, go to Paul Owen's, piece everything together, and I'd be embedded in history as nothing but a serial killer. My family name would be ruined. My brother would write a book and say things like 'We all knew something was wrong with him, he was just kind of... Off, you know? All the time.' Thinking of this makes me feel obscenely choked up and I clench my hands together to dull their shaking.

I watch him play Deniece Williams; *Free*, and he sighs happily. The first minute of this song does sound very delicate though I never found it of much interest, and he slips back over to me and tries to get as close as possible. I feel stiff as a board and I force a smile at him. He reaches for two champagne flutes and he passes me his Chardonnay. When I sit idle, he nudges me. "Go ahead, Mr. Bateman."

I regret nothing more than the 'Mr. Bateman' thing I've started because it sounds so quasi-formal, like something a person below you would call you, out of respect, but the way he says it makes it sound childlike and nubile and I'm internally destroyed. But I'm also so... Jaded. I pop the bottle gingerly and the cork doesn't hit him; it hits the floor with a thud. I'm analyzing the trajectory of that fall because I aimed it so that it would hit him in the eye, but then I reason there must not be enough pressure and he's trying to poison me with dead wine but when I pour it out, it tastes... exuberant. Excellent. It has a light, crisp flavor and doesn't overstay it's welcome with the grapes. I'm coming to dead ends all night long. Whenever I think I know what's going on, I'm wrong. I roll my window down and we're on the Brooklyn Bridge. I wonder if I'd survive if I jumped off. It's such a long way down.

We drink together in silence for a minute or so, when Luis' smile fades. I look up for stars and see a void. I enter it, it empties me. "I think we need to talk," he says. "Seriously."

"You don't have to call me Mr. Bateman," I say. This is a non sequitur but I need to get it out and I don't care enough to wait for the conversation to get there. He looks mildly surprised, but his expression solidifies quickly.

"Ah... I just... have to tell you some things." He checks the partition is up, which it is, and he looks at me. I reach around for my glasses and become very confused when I don't find them.

"Then do it."

"Patrick. I know you don't like me. I know it, I do." He pauses here and his voice gives out. "But

I... I really want this to work, and I need to know if you're willing to view this... view us seriously. You- You're so important to me. I just want to love you. Keep you... satisfied."

Don't mind me. Just... drinking my drink.

He picks up my free hand and holds it. I'm trying to drown myself with my Chardonnay by letting it linger in my throat and not breathing but it just makes my mouth feel bitter and my sore burns. "Oh, God, *look at me*, Patrick. I've never loved anybody like I love you. Do you understand that? Can you? Will you... love me?"

I look at him, I look at the CDs, his bag. Tonight is a day. I am so very here, I am so very now.

"Why won't you answer me? And don't say yes if you don't mean it. I want to make you happy, Patrick, even if you hurt, even if you do... bad things." Bad things? Is he catching on to something? I know he can't see the full picture here but that scares me enough to make me slightly choke. I finally swallow. "I don't want you tonight if I can't have you tomorrow and forever." I have a mild yet strong ache coursing through me and my Advil is failing to ward it off. Today is so confusing. I lost my potential wife, possibly had anal sex with myself and most likely am being converted into being gay. My face feels frozen like when you apply a peel-off mask, leave it on for too long and your mouth feels stuck in place and moving your features hurts.

He hasn't got me figured out. Luis fits into a very simple binary. Gay, says he's not gay, acts gay, everybody knows he's gay, young urban professional, Yale. There it is. Me, he'll never understand no matter how hard he tries and half of me is happy about that and the other half is dejected. I wonder about past interruptions of the stock market. I'm so worried I'm losing money right under my feet.

He puts a hand on mine. I don't know what love is, I just know what sex is. I wish he would understand that. Everything I know about human relationships I mimic from movies, magazines, books, television, real instances I've experienced in my life. I've been lying my entire life and I have the choice now; to lie to Luis, to start a relationship with him, or to not. If I don't it'll essentially be like I am because he'll never truly leave me alone. There really isn't a choice for me, and I see that now. There never has been for anything and I close my eyes. I lean back. I look up and there actually... are... stars.

"Aren't they pretty?" Luis' voice is so small, so silent.

He tries to lean in again and I put a hand on his chest and push him away firmly but nothing close to a shove. Instead of being upset or angry, he leans into my touch and exhales. He holds onto my wrist again and kisses the back of my hand, which gives me horrible flashbacks. I'm so tired. When Luis tugs me closer I don't retaliate, I don't do anything. Inactivity shoots up and down my legs and I don't think I'll ever walk again. I drank two flutes' worth of Chardonnay and now I'm trying to intoxicate myself so I won't have to deal with this.

"Did you know in French, 'la petit mort', which means 'little death', is an euphemism for an orgasm?"

He overlooks the part about death and dying and ceasing to exist and goes directly to the orgasm. Everyone is going to fucking die. His face flushes in salmon. "Are you... trying to say something?" No, Luis. I've never said anything.

"Just a fact."

"...Patrick?"

“Yes?”

He has a look on his face that’s so understanding yet also so alarming. I hear repressed excitement under his breath. “What are you saying?”

“Luis, I really don’t care anymore.”

“Huh?”

“Nothing really matters. I see that now.” Everything, every wall I’ve built for myself comes down at once and I feel uncharacteristically calm, at ease. Half of my mind has melted and dribbled out of my head. *Just To Keep You Satisfied* is playing and I actually like this song despite my contempt for Marvin Gaye. It’s so underwhelming. “I’m okay. Let’s do whatever you want.” I slide my gloves off because I really had no reason to bring them out with me. I slide them into my pocket and my finger grazes the fiberwire, and it stings but I’m not cut. Politicians die all the time when they have ideas that are bad and too contagious. Animals die when they’re too dangerous to be tamed. Humans die when they’re both or neither.

“Are you feeling okay?”

“I’m great.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“So... do you love me?”

Normally I would be angered by this question but, understanding the full extent of the hole I’m in, I’m not. The sky is so black, the road is so smooth, everything’s Earth, everything’s crystalline, everything’s pure. “I don’t know.” I get queasy and I tell myself, ‘okay, easy does it’ and I stop sipping my Chardonnay. The black space between eleven fifty-nine and twelve expands with every year, and one day it’ll be too big and we’ll create a thirteenth hour and everyone will have to under government command destroy their clocks and be issued new, correct ones.

I’ve seen Luis cry so many times that I know the face he makes pre-tearing up, everything scrunches up, his lip trembles, things like that. He’s making that face now and I don’t want to deal with a scene so I try to cover my ass by saying “I need to think about it.”

“You’ve had so long to think about it,” he whines.

“What would you do if I said no?”

“Are you going to?” There it goes. First tear. Right down his face.

“I never said that.” I’m becoming very impatient and I quickly take another drink. “It’s a hypothetical question, note how I emphasized the *if*, Luis. You’re a smart boy, you’ve been to college, you’ve been to school. *If* I were to say no, what would you do? Any reactions?”

“I mean, I’d... cry, I think.”

“No, after tonight, when you go home. What would you do?”

He catches on to what I’m putting forward and he tries to look angry, but it comes off as pathetic because his eyebrow keeps twitching and he’s inches away from falling apart into sobs again. His

voice is doing that crackly thing. "I'd go to sleep."

"No you wouldn't."

"Yes I would."

I sink into my seat. I hope he can't hear the undertones to my voice because there is clearly defined stutter here and there and I, once again, am receding into becoming the definition of brokenness. I take another sip to compensate for this. "I don't think I'm ready for the kind of commitment you want, Luis."

"Patrick?"

"Mm?"

"Are you... scared of... being gay?"

I make a sound. I can't think of any onomatopoeia to describe to you what it was like without it being practically illegible and perhaps being a rude word in some foreign language. It sounded very... defeated, like the sound an animal would make after you backed it into a corner and beat it with a spiked bat. An animal under submission, an animal at wit's end. I make this sound as I go for a drink and my hand shakes so much that I accidentally spill some. Marvin Gaye continues crooning to the both of us and I try to actually relax, turning up the temperature on my seat. I think of *New Wave Hookers* and how much I'd like some beer right about now. Beer, to me, is a seldom pleasure as it really makes my stomach turn but I still prefer the taste over something like vodka or hard booze. I mean, vodka is fine, it's just extremely hit and miss. Green lipstick has never looked good, people are getting stupider, humanity is being timed but the stopwatch is broken and keeps underflowing. Technology will make or break us and from the looks of it it's not helping us any as the more convenient life is, the less people will work, and we'll all become parasites and nobody will use their hands. The primal fundamentals of society are long gone and we're being taken away from them but most people would rather stay inside with a Sony product than live in a handmade shack in the Serengeti eating whatever a lion forgot about. Laziness is a byproduct of having an easy upbringing. Nothing in life should be easy, Pol Pot was right, everything should be grueling and taxing and if you don't bleed from doing it it's ultimately not worth your time. Can I define incontinence? Can I describe it's function? I... am trying to distract myself.

"That has nothing to do with it."

"I don't think so," he says, and he sounds about as accusatory as someone like him can while still being nice. "I know you've... called me... a fag before, Patrick. I know that. And I think it's because you're scared."

"No."

"You don't have to just be gay," He adds. Why is his voice so brusque all of a sudden? "You can be bi or something or just say you're straight. That's what I do."

"And that doesn't *work*, Luis. You don't *hide* it very well." I try to mimic his tone of speech but I just can't hit the pitches he can. We're built differently, inside and out. I'm a structure, he's a vibration. I'm an ice sculpture that took years of dedication to carve and he's clay pottery made by two people. I doubt our compatibility the longer I think about it. "Everybody knows you're gay. Everyone. All of them. I knew you were gay before you told me. Why do you think Courtney-?"

I cut myself off. Bad touch. Not good.

“Courtney?”

“Nothing.” Part of me wants to rip the bandage off and give him a harsh dose of reality but I know he wouldn’t be able to handle it. I know he wouldn’t, and since Luis is so bipolar with his emotions and so unpredictable at times I really have no clue what he’d do. I need movement so I put down my flute and dig for a random CD to switch the song and I’ve grabbed *Change Me If You Can* by Barbara Mason. I guess Luis has... slightly redeemable tastes.

“Why do I think Courtney what?”

His voice is shaking again and I don’t know how to proceed so I try different sentence starters. How do I tell him somebody fucked her without telling *him* I fucked her? I know myself enough to know halfway through I’m going to start boasting my work and talking about how ‘yeah, she moans good, but she’s suspiciously loose and falls asleep half of the time’. And then I would say something like ‘can you get her off the drugs already, Jesus’. I know they don’t have sex. I can tell she’s bored. I know how hard it is for women these days to stick to their men, and if you aren’t very careful, she’ll be all over the place and one night she’ll come home with chlamydia because you weren’t good enough. There is a lesson in this. If you don’t keep people in their place actively they will never be yours. People like being dominated, actually. You can handle everything and, with a strictly controlled prime directive, your subaltern will feel safer because there is a minimum chance of putting themselves in danger due to their own stupidity. The truth of the matter is some people want to be lead by the nose, which is fine and understandable. Some just weren’t born apt to rule themselves and some were and that’s why anarchists exist. After all of this, though, I admit that I’d like to control someone but it’d also be incredibly boring. I’m so fucking *bored*.

“She has” no, too typical. If I go that way it sounds like an intervention. “Something about you” That’s even worse. “Different tastes” No, not quite... “It might just be that you, and I, and her, and we, and he, have got problems.”

“Patrick, *what?*”

“She told me she...” I take a lengthy sip of my flute and keep it there even after it’s empty. I pretend to wipe a tear so I’ll seem emotionally invested in the conversation. “She feels a little different now.”

Luis is unhealthily in the dark about everything ever. The problem is nobody really wants to talk to him, so nobody tells him anything about what’s going on, but that’s not even it. If they fight like I’ve heard there’s no reason for Luis not to cheat. What happened, did she find out he was gay or something? Did he try to come out but got shoved back in? I can’t see anyone loving Luis Carruthers, I can only see people tolerating him. I wonder what it’s like to have so much love to give and be shut out anytime. The law of averages always comes to fruition.

I look at Luis from a different angle by tilting my head and I’m surprised to see he’s actually fairly... cute. Not in the ‘fuck it, fuck it vulgarly, shove your cock inside it’ way, the prepubescent child way. It might be because I’m mildly calmer now because he’s crying, and Luis is practically incapacitated whenever he cries. I make a note to myself. Seventy-five degree temperature, eighty percent tinted sunset-colored lights and his face from a forty-five degree angle at fifteen points of elevation. Luis Carruthers is cute that way.

I, carefully maintaining the angle, slide over to him and wrap my arm around him as a gesture of moral support. I wouldn’t touch him otherwise. I don’t know how to console anyone so I say, “You’re okay. Don’t worry. Nothing is wrong. She just wants time away. From you.”

“Is there something wrong with me, Patrick?” Now he’s in what seems to be a very manic state.

“Why doesn’t anybody like me? What did I do? Did I do something?” God, today feels like every other day of my life. Like it’s the first day I’ve ever been alive, like I’m being reprimanded by some higher being for the things I’ve done. Someone up there has decided I’m not of sound character and this is my punishment, in a car, my limousine, with a crying Luis Carruthers who’s now asking me why he’s unlikable, and I’m supposed to be nice and say there’s nothing wrong with him when I could go on the longest tangent. He is the *weakest* link. This would be hilarious if it wasn’t happening to me. I imagine Paul in my position right now and I guess I feel better but I really don’t so please take that with a grain of sand. The entire world revolves around me. I like taking long walks at night, walking briskly, especially during summer because I don’t have to worry about feeling bad or getting second-hand embarrassment from the homeless. I saw a discarded scarf on the ground once and I could tell someone somewhere wasn’t going to be happy when they got home and realized its absence.

“I don’t know, Luis.”

“You always say that. I’m starting to think it’s not true. Patrick, why can’t you just be honest with me?”

“I am.”

“No... you just say the same things over and over and keep trying to drive me away from you. It hurts, Patrick.”

Of all people, why does Luis have to go around saying my first name so religiously? What does he get out of it? Does he feel he’s deepening our relationship this way? Every time we talk he makes a habit out of referring to me as that but I’m so much more comforted with Bateman or even just Pat for Christ’s sake; ‘Patrick’ has such negative connotations in my mind. That name alone puts such a bad taste in my mouth and makes my eyes burn. Once I destroyed a hotel room with nothing more than a lamp and a handrail I ripped from a staircase.

“I say the same things because they’re true, Luis.”

For a while he wipes his face with a handkerchief and blankly looks at me. “Is that why you don’t love me?”

“Do you want me to?”

At this, he starts sobbing, but manages to stay mostly distilled. My emotional impact on Luis is as scary as it is fascinating and I wait for him to perk up, to throw something else on, an enthusiastic ‘yes’, him yelling about his love to me, him reminding me he’d do whatever I said, but I don’t get this. He sits there with his head on his knees and he cries, for a *long time* as suggested by my Rolex and we’re still driving. I should mention this, we haven’t gone anywhere interesting yet. I want a hotel in The Hamptons. For a minute I look at him with sympathy, thinking, somewhere deep down, ‘well, that was a dick move’.

I’m thinking about things. I’m thinking about how, at the end of this, no matter how it goes, I’ll be home and sleeping in my bed, alone or not, tuning into more long hours of staring at the ceiling and wondering where I went wrong. This feeling tears me apart, limb from limb, breaking me down until I’m left on my knees and all I can do is distract myself with dinner, sex, and drugs. My life is so repetitive. I should take less Xanax and more Oxycodone because I actually feel something with those. Xanax just make me feel numb and more lethargic. I really don’t think I’m suited for love, but if Luis thinks we can make something work, he’s more than welcome to try to fill my voids and make me forget about the things that keep me up at night. I think about Charles Manson’s whole ‘Helter Skelter’ scenario.

I look at Luis; he's trembling, shifting his weight around. He's very lithe. My brain inverts and something inside of me decides that he's going to become a part of my life now. I grab his shirt collar and pull him closer, and since I might as well since I've dug myself too deep into this hole, I give him a firm slap across the face. One, two, both sides. Another and I don't know why. One more to make it even because I hate odd numbers. He grunts with each slap but they kind of sound like moans, he makes a very ginger smile when I'm done. A long time ago I discovered this Japanese band called Melon and heard one of their releases; *Do You Like Japan?* It was essentially Talking Heads but with thick Japanese accents I could hardly understand. It was so dismal I guess I found myself... captivated. There's red hand-shaped marks on his face now. I may have hit him too hard.

"Why can't you tell me how you really, genuinely feel about me?" This is a whisper.

"Luis, I'm too indecisive to love you."

He sniffs, sucks something up. The look on his face tells me he's as lost as I am if not more. "Patrick?"

"Yes?"

"I don't want to go back to the city." He says this and I'm mildly frightened because I've never heard this type of tone on him; this isn't sad, this isn't rejected, this sounds more of all-around depressed. For the first time there's no hint of optimism anywhere in his voice and a part of my brain lights up with regret because I've finally stolen Luis' light. "Can you tell the driver to find me a hotel? Please? I just want to sleep."

"The Hamptons?"

"Anywhere. I don't want to go home."

"We can go back to the city and I can find you a hotel there?" I'm treading carefully.

"No, not with you. Just drop me off somewhere. I can get a cab in the morning."

What? What the fuck?

"This would... be better for you, don't you agree?" This is the first time Luis hasn't wanted to do something with me. I'm mildly... floored.

For a few seconds Luis looks at me, and then at the floor, and his expression is grating. "Do whatever you want. You always do." I watch him get out his Merlot, and for at least twenty minutes- I check my Rolex consistently- he drinks himself into another dimension. He says nothing, his facial expression doesn't change, and I'm mildly amused as well as horrified. What's left of the Chardonnay goes the same way; no pacing, he doesn't stop for air and when he grabs it I have to forcefully pry the Pinot Noir out of his hands. Here he gives up completely and leans into me and I let him. At some point I tell my chauffeur to go to The Hamptons because we're just circling around Freeport aimlessly and I have to hold onto Luis when we do a U-turn. In the turn Luis slid forward into my arms and started crying into the crook of my neck. I get a brief glance of my own face in the window as we pass a streetlight; my eyes are like coals.

I guess I instigate. I'm scared I've lost the one person who likes me still, or at least actually has cared, and here's what I do. Once he stops crying, he turns away- or tries to, I should say because another jolt turn makes him smash his mouth against mine by mistake. I just keep him there. His lips are softer than I imagined them to be, and when I shrug off my initial disgust I attempt to slide

my tongue in and he makes a surprised kind of sound and squirms a little. I hold him in place and French kiss him and things get sloppy very quickly. He doesn't kiss with much panache, and that may just be because he's drunk but I'm not so sure. His tongue is soft and warm and that's nice enough for me to forget this is a man. I hold his chin in place so that saliva won't get everywhere and as I pull back to do so he looks at me with a forlorn kind of gaze in his eyes. His hair is in his face, his eyes are distinctly half-lid and I'm wondering to myself what the point of this was before I realize: there was none. None at all. I kiss him again. He kisses me back. I kiss him. He kisses me back. I can feel a weird knot of something in my chest untangle itself and I decide to actually kiss him properly instead of just throwing my tongue around everywhere and actually using the damn thing how it should be used when you do it French, which gains me a satisfying sigh. *Is It A Crime* is playing and I don't remember him putting it in.

Hamptons... Right, right. Maybe an inn would do me justice because there's tons up there if this is going to turn into a one night stand, but if I'd like to impress I'd have to go to Montauk. My face is dug deep into Luis' neck and I have to push through his perfume because it's so potent, so ridiculously potent and I realize there's no way Luis actually moans like *this*, because this is too calm, this is too restrained; they're these suppressed little grunts that sound like nothing at all. I bite down, hard, and I'm rewarded with nothing but a shaky kind of exhale. This is underwhelming so I tell him to be louder, much louder.

"But *Pahhhhh*trick, the- the drivur?" His voice gets very quiet as he says 'the driver', like he's whispering. He corrects himself and attempts to say chauffeur but he says 'shoefur'.

Something about the idea of my chauffeur hearing us makes me feel empowered. I want someone to... hear my work. See it. I do so much but nobody sees it because ninety-nine point nine percent of the people I fuck end up dying. I'm good at it. I want people to know that. When we're back in the city, whenever that happens, I want to drive him back to his apartment, I want to watch him get out, and I want to see his walking be fucked up as he tries to stumble back into his lobby. I want to have that effect on him. I know he wouldn't stop me. I reason that when I get collect my bearings and fix things with Jean I can have Luis as something like a side-project; I don't know, someone to invite over if I'm excessively alone. I can talk with him about things, we can drink, do... whatever we're doing now, or we can do what normal people do. I really don't know what normal people do but I suppose I can keep my doors open to him. I feel so weird. I feel bad for what I've done.

"Don't worry. I'll pay him to forget about it. Be loud."

At first Luis looks unsure about this, as would anyone, but he nods at me. I reach down and get the bottle of Pinot Noir, still sitting in my ice bucket though I don't remember which one of us put it there or even getting the bucket for that's sake. I hold it, give it a decent shake, and then pop it. The cork flies somewhere irrelevant and the wine spills everywhere; I carefully maneuver it so only a minuscule amount hits me but the brunt of it lands on Luis. He squeals after a few seconds, delayed reaction time I'm guessing, and I'm thinking of these teenage girls I saw once at a wet shirt contest when I traveled to Albany on business since he sounds just like they did, being hosed down like that. Hmm. I start trying to clean up the mess I've made with my mouth, running my tongue all over Luis' neck which gains me some fairly deeper moans but nothing special.. I continue this, moving downwards with this before I push him over completely and bring him into the missionary position. I pretend to fuck him, and I suppose he's more drunk than I thought because he starts moaning very, very loudly and the driver turns back for a moment to give me- us, a look of bemusement.

"Can I help you? Eyes on the road." I reach into my pocket and wave a fifty or something at him, "Oh, right. Montauk Blue Hotel, please?"

Montauk Blue Hotel with Luis for Some Reason at Three in the Morning

Chapter Summary

My head hurts. My head hurts a lot. Migraine. Did you know headaches aren't actually inside your head, they're just faulty nerve receptors being overactive in the surrounding vicinity?

Chapter Notes

hi guys, sorry this chapter took so long... i wasn't sure what direction to make this go and i had to keep brainstorming ideas and i started writing down my thoughts when i dissociated for inspiration (as fucked up as that sounds) and i am now proud to say IT IS DONE!! whew. this one is more unfocused and dissociative than the last few chapters. more chapters to come as usual; thanks for reading, thanks for feedbacksies and kudos, have a great day, stay safe. take care!
etc notes: [inspired by this song](#)

It's official, the stocks are unsalvageable. Nothing can be done as of now and I blame myself for investing in the wrong departments and I also blame my broker for suggesting I invest in small businesses, *small businesses*, who pay for everything out of their own pockets and get shoplifted the most due to low-fidelity security cameras. I wish I could have *thought* when I put my money into these people, chastised them, suggested they all go work for big brands instead of trying to sell handmade soap or start up bakeries but the looks of gratitude when I saw them in person and shook hands with them made me, in a way, pick myself up off the ground. I suppose I had some kind of epiphany, or maybe a change of heart, and I felt like my mind was in the right place, and I'd be able to do those things. It was like I was digging my own grave but put it off for a while to meld into society, to fit in, to look like I know how to handle my money, to seem like a respectable businessman, give back to the people, whatever, who cares. Money clouds people's perspectives. This one family, all Jewish from the looks of it, had started this small confectionery in Brooklyn and I'd been flirting with their daughter right in front of them but they were too busy talking about the sixty-thousand or so I gave them to stop me. I'm sitting there asking her about her bra size and whether or not she's shaved her pubic hair recently or not and she answers me, and her parents don't notice. That went absolutely nowhere because I was disturbed too deeply to act on my lust and I had to run to some alleyway to gag because she made a 'call me' sign with her hand. I realize that having money makes me too powerful, but it also means nothing to me; I don't care about it at all. I'd use bills as newspaper for my floors. Am I full of hubris? Possibly.

There is a private ocean I've been carving for myself ever since I've been born and with every passing day I immerse myself into it by about ten feet.

My entire body fucking *aches* with a slow, steady vibration but I manage to sit up, I push myself upwards and I make a vulgar groaning sound, so vulgar I make myself squeamish for a moment. I sink deeply into the mattress which creaks beneath my weight, but not just my weight, our *combined* weight, and I have the thickest most impenetrable headache. The world is unbearably

foggy and all I can do is curse myself for being addicted to that Chardonnay because, for fuck's sake it was actually really good. And then that other bullshit I did with the Pinot Noir, my God, how drunk was I? Why didn't anyone stop me, why didn't the driver stop me?

I feel numb. It's not as if I ever had a really strong heart to begin with but I can feel it palpitating harder and harder the more I wake up and digest where I am; Montauk. I can tell I'm in Montauk because I hate everything about The Hamptons and I've been conditioned to remember this area by heart; the smells, the sights, the sounds, the people. To balance myself I reach blindly towards my right-hand side, expecting my flesh to collide with a bedside table or maybe my lamp but I feel something warm, something material. Fear courses through me because I'm certain I must have killed someone last night- or I killed Luis, and when I feel more carefully it's the soft, tender skin of someone's neck. I know what that feels like. My reasoning goes faster than me; 'so who is this?' although I'm too paralyzed to look because I already know. If I don't look around the room at all I may be able to convince myself I'm in my apartment. If I don't look at him, there's a small chance none of this will be real; it'll all be canceled out, I still have a chance to leave. I can go anywhere I'd like. There's a door in a far-off corner of the room, past that is a world of meaningless existence where everything is the same. I can leave if I want to.

"Luis," I say.

"Luis," I say, louder, because I get no response.

"Luis," I say, shaking his back vigorously. It's bad to sleep face-down on your stomach because your air circulation is cut off and the curve of the spine is naturally disrupted and can have long-term detrimental effects. I say this aloud because he is sleeping that way but he doesn't seem to hear me because he's too busy sleeping and most likely dreaming of something having to do with me like frolicking through a field of flowers and bright green grass underneath a blue sky or possibly a war-torn country while we manage to somehow evade every single homing missile pointed at us.

"Luis," I say. I'm screaming. I need to tell him about the impending fall of the stock market and we can discuss ways to cover ourselves when Black Tuesday strikes again. I walk around with apprehension because I'm sure I'll be homeless and on the street if people keep spending instead of saving or vice versa; it doesn't matter, it's all fucked and we're all going to be in extreme poverty. However, I am preparing myself. I'm investing in land and guns while most are at the mall. I sit in waiting, I sit in planning. When it's all over I will come out triumphant.

"Luis," I say. My voice peaks and cracks. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world and that's very fascinating to me. For the longest time Christianity had that going for it, at least, in the older world. However, two of the same materials can exist as their own; uniquely different while sharing traits. I somewhat wish that I could be at Luis' house right now, so that if he got robbed, I could display my ordinary acts of aggression and show him what I'm really capable of. I have good offense but my defense is slightly lackluster because I'm not able to coordinate my body in ways I would need to if I was being threatened by an attacker; however, if I'm being violent on my own call, I can be very primal. After I've dismembered the attacker I would huddle over a crying Luis and tell him all his belongings are voided now as if you can't defend something yourself, you don't deserve to have it. I would then burn his most prized possessions in a fire and he'd thank me gratefully for both protecting his life and enriching his mind with my thoughts. He would then kiss my feet and I'd construct a kingdom out of his burned furniture and rule over his entire direct family and convert them all into my sex slaves. Or just normal slaves. Do normal slaves turn into sex slaves if you fuck them? I don't know. I'll know when I get there.

I'm sick and tired of waiting. I openly embrace my nothingness and throw the covers off Luis;

we're both dressed in what we were, which leads me to wretch because sleeping in anything Armani is blasphemous and I, all at once, feel a wave of self-disgust rush over me. I get up. I slide off the jacket and get off my tie, neatly folding them. During my scrambling I hear a soft yawn, the sound of a body adjusting. I turn so painfully slowly on my heel since I'm facing the door and I see Luis stirring. His eyes, leaden with sleep. His hair, terrible.

"Pa...trick?"

There is a faint feeling inside of me, something of gravitational depth, yet something subtle, that I know that somewhere I've gone wrong but I continue. In order to make room for this feeling everything moves, everything changes, my heart shrinks, my lungs expand elsewhere. This feeling has never really left me alone, but it fluctuates in strength and whether or not it occupies me on varying days. There are forces aligning, trying to warn me things are not going to go the way I'd like, while somehow also being the ones to cause it.

I somewhat remember from the party I met Luis at that he was going around asking people about me because, of course, I spread vague or falsified information about myself to be nothing but a blur in people's minds. Maybe he sensed I was lying when I told him something like I had four children and owned three houses in The Hamptons and a few international mansions and I owned very high-fidelity stocks in Bangalore. My brain was just... going. I don't know. Fucking Bangalore. Anyway, he came back up to me later and was asking me to dance and be alone and I'm thinking, the whole time, that I want to go to bed. Just sleep on the floor. The L train wasn't running that day.

Terror manifests inside of me and slides down until it hits my pelvis. It stays there. "Luis."

"Oh, my head," he moans, feeling his forehead. He makes a pained expression and digs his head into the pillow. "How much did I drink? What happened?"

I merely observe him, receding myself into a corner. I feel like a combustible material. "Do you remember anything?"

"No," he says, and then he pauses. His eyes open and he sits up carefully, wincing as his joints must be under stress. "Oh, I- Did we...?"

I don't know if we did, so I don't say anything. Instead I start buttoning and unbuttoning my dress shirt in a cyclic fashion.

"Oh my God, Patrick." He pushes himself upward fully and sucks in a groan; his face is radiant with curiosity despite the distinct look of a hangover in his eyes. "Did we do something?"

It's in my self interest to be silent when I have something to say. I never start conversations because I can't have conversations; rather, I fall into them and then I can't finish them. I'm immaculate, inadequate. I touch my tie and then hold it with both hands, I feel like a child. "No..."

"We didn't?"

"I don't know. I have a hangover."

"Me too." he looks at me expectantly, waiting for something that's not going to happen. He has a look on his face that states worry as much as interest, but thoughtfully so; someone lost in thoughts they're not smart enough to conceptualize. Silence is dry. He looks at me in an odd way. "Are you okay?"

"Hit me."

“What?”

“Hit me,” I repeat.

“Huh?”

“Hit... me.”

“What do you mean?” he says.

“Hit me.”

“Hit... you?”

"Yes."

"I think you should, um... lay down."

He sounds motherly. Like a mother. Fragile, careful, delicate, cold, otherworldly, embalmed in their own self-righteousness and how they know all that is right and have the veto power to shut down all that is wrong. I look past the bed. The sliding glass window is open, the curtains are fluttering, everything looks blue. I can see the sea beyond Luis and his blue face on a similarly blue bed and violet lace curtains.

“I don’t need that.”

“What do you need?”

“You to come over here and hit me.”

He is very confused. He doesn’t get it, but unlike me, he doesn’t realize there is nothing to get. There never has been.

“What’s the matter..?”

“I want... sex,” I say, blankly. I mumble this. “I don’t like love. Love isn’t...”

Next thing I can register is that he’s stood up and he’s approached me, swaying because he drank much more than I did, and he holds onto my sides. I realize he’s not swaying, I am.

I’m emotionless. My thoughts are all becoming real and I’m certain my analysts are all wrong. If Luis looked into my fridge and told me he saw nothing I’d lose my mind. There might be something wrong with me. There is. I don’t know who I think I’m kidding at this point. I don’t look at him, I look at something. I’m looking into the distance, away from him. I’m not thinking much of anything but I’m still pondering very important thoughts, things he can’t quite grasp. He shows hope that he can someday understand, but it’s unlikely.

“Come here and lay down,” he says, guiding me over to the bed. I put up no struggle and soon comfort myself on the cool bedspread which is so warm yet also ice cold. Once I’m down and feeling distinctly weightless he presses a hand down onto my chest, which is firm but soft enough to be almost caring. “Patrick?”

I mumble something. I’d tell you what but I didn’t understand it. Sorry.

“Why won’t you tell me why you’re so...?”

“So what.”

He sighs. “Weird sometimes. Tell me how you feel.”

“I don’t feel anything.” I put an excessive amount of emphasis on ‘feel’ and I’m not sure why. I mildly choked on my own words. The thought of telling Luis how I feel is so hostile, so unforgiving, so terrifying. I can’t do it even if I wanted to.

“You can talk to me.” His voice is quiet. He’s not blinking a lot, his skin color is what I’d describe as an off-white cream, but he looks blue, of course. I observe everything. The way the light hits his face is interesting. I’m mildly confused at his words; I thought we just established that. “What’s on your mind?”

“I’m not capable... of rational thought... when sex is on the table.”

Sex is that thing for me. The only way to endure anything is to shut down my emotional, physical, and tactile awareness of the pain and become numb to any and all external stimulation. The only thing that can pierce this armor, often, is sexual contact. Seeing it, talking about it, having it, it doesn't matter.

Something Luis will never understand about me is that I have shifted my entire personality, should it even exist at this point, due to this massive emotional shutdown I've thrown myself through and you can tell I'm internally dead because it takes so much more to titillate me than the normal person. Horror movies for me have to be gorier, sports- though I don't care for them at all- have to be more violent and blunt, my pornography has to be steadily more and more hardcore or else it can't touch me. This concerns me because I'm running out of things to fuel my arousal quicker than I can actually let myself be aroused. After I cannot relieve myself and my urges become too powerful for even myself to keep in check I will resort to brute force and ruin everything, including myself. This is why I try to live my life to the lowest impulse. This is why Luis is such an issue. He, somehow, reminds me that I'm slipping.

I'm more violent and more sexual than I was years ago. My thoughts are obscure, flagrant, indecent. They have *become* my entire reality. Luis has discovered me at a strange time, a providential time- right before my doors shut for good, he turned up out of nowhere with a set of keys that may work. The problem is I won't let him try any of them.

I say that like I'd let him try. I don't particularly... want to.

“Is that all?”

My voice sounds like my voice again as I say “Sex, yeah. Can't live without it. Gratuitous violence, schadenfreude. Good. Sadism? Oh, I like that.” I stretch out the word ‘sadism’ so it sounds like ‘*sadismmmmm*?’.

He makes a facial expression that tells me he’s pieced something together. That, or it's bewilderment. “Patrick, I...”

"Mmm?"

"You... like that stuff?"

“I’m a really bad person, Luis.”

He makes a nervous kind of laugh. “You’re a good person to me. I don’t care about what you’re into, I like you.”

“Nooooo.” I say. Something like that, anyhow.

“Patrick, I love you. You’re not a bad person. You’re not a bad person, and I really think so.”

Nothing is more grating than the sound of my own name. The sensation has started long ago; I feel so steeped in paranoia whenever my name is spoken but there’s really nothing I can do. I want to starve my flesh, shave all my bodily hair off, tear my own bones out, saw through muscle, clarify my head, define my will, restrain my impulses, leave my family, bide my time, expectorate my brain, forgo my self-love, disregard my acquaintances, distance myself from material goods, forget the truth, deride reproductions and accept my own death.

“You do?”

“I’ve been saying that forever.”

“You have.”

“You’re observant,” he says. He leans down closer to me and I’m under the assumption he’s going in for a kiss but he doesn’t do that; rather, his chest touches mine and we’re locked in a very hard gaze. He’s just laying on me. This very nearly sinks me because he weighs surprisingly more than I’d have thought. His body type, though, isn’t very thin at all so I’m not sure how I didn’t notice. I wouldn’t describe him as overweight, rather... plump. Like a young child’s body, maybe. His touch is priceless. He most likely eats consistently and has a very well-balanced diet. He’s very articulate for someone going through a hangover; I’m vibrating into another dimension, he’s grounded and can form coherent sentences with more than two words.

“Thanks.”

“But you’re not very gentlemanly.” His lips curve into a smile as he says this. “You can’t get your date drunk and not do something to them, that’s just inhumane.”

I was never humane to begin with. I clear my throat hard which hurts because it’s so dry and I’m sure I tore my vocal chords. It takes me a very pronounced amount of time to say “Luis, your tunnel vision is showing.”

“My *tunnel vision*? You winned me, Patrick.”

“Bullshit.” I radiate disinterest. Apathy.

“Maybe I did...” He looks somewhere, thinking. He turns back to me, he looks annoyed. “Oh, give me a break. I really want... to date you. Aside from our, hah, professional differences, what’s holding you back? I just want to give it a try.”

“Do I have a choice?”

“You always have. Always.” His eyes slip closed. He rests his head on my chest. “So hard...”

“You said I do and get whatever I want.”

“You do, don't you? You have money, you're handsome, you're...”

"Conventionally attractive."

Saying that hurts me. It hurts, but it's the truth. I may treat everyone like they're below me, but there's no one I'm more militant towards than myself. I take a moment to breathe and admire how

gone I sound.

"No, just attractive. You're very pretty. Don't put yourself down like that, huh?"

Luis makes circles with his fingers on my chest as he says that. My hands are superglued to either side of my torso. His hands move from my chest to the sides of my abdomen. I don't know what to say so I tell him that I don't know. He must realize he keeps asking questions I'm unable to answer and he stops.

"Ah."

"Sex," I say.

Luis moves his head and looks at me. "What about it?"

"That's all you ever wanted from me."

"No... I believe in love at first sight. I knew from when I first saw you I loved you. I didn't want... that... until..."

"Sex," I say again.

"That one time, I just thought... I thought you made a move on me..."

"Sex." I take a hard breath. "What is it with you and..."

"No, I..." he says. He sounds uncomfortable.

"Sex."

"That's not- Patrick, stop it."

"I thought it was just me. I really did."

"What?"

"Sex."

"Can you stop that?"

I pause, as requested.

"I thought you were..." Pause. This is somewhat sad because his voice sounds so breathy. It's like touching satin on a display rack that says 'do not touch'. "Trying to start something with me at... you know. In the bathroom."

"Let's not talk about the club."

"Then what do we talk about? Isn't that where this started?"

"It didn't start there. You said you liked my grasp."

"I mean... I guess."

"You got yourself piss drunk in my limousine." I say this because I just remembered it. I'm thinking out loud. "I did something. Not sure what. You cried for a long time. You brought slow jams. A lot of slow jams. Dear *God* you had Marvin Gaye. What were you thinking."

"How much did I..."

"Bottle and a half."

"I've never... drank that much..."

"What happened to your optimism?"

"Headache," he murmurs.

"Do you still want me or not."

He laughs awkwardly. "You're going too fast for me right now, Patrick. You're so... intense." He blinks. "Does it even matter if I do?"

"Immensely."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"So why did you-"

"You said I owned you."

"Yeah, well... I'd let you do whatever you wanted to me. We've talked about that before." He looks at me for a few seconds, forlorn. He lays his head back down on my chest. "It's sad that I'd let you kill me if you did that sort of thing, but I'm happy that you haven't."

The word 'no' escapes my mouth faster than I think it. It's loud. I lack sensory input. I can't feel his hands anymore. He raises his head, he whispers. "Huh?"

"Don't say that."

"Oh... why?"

"Just don't."

Why. Why is he more composed when he's depressed or hungover. Why is he only sensible and rational when he's in these altered states. Why is he now so uncharacteristically relaxed; flirtatious, but not in the standard over-the-top Luis way. I'm scared because normally people aren't able to change themselves like this; I understand code-switching but I'm horrified. My hands are shaking, my forehead feels hotter than normal. I'm going to assume I just made that up and he didn't actually say it, but he's... Done it before.

I'm paranoid. I think he's onto me. No one just *says* things like that to people they love; no one just says 'hey, I'd let you kill me'. This isn't even a *Luis* thing. I don't know what that was. I start feeling like I'm going to die somehow, and I wonder if this is how I'm actually going to die; in the hands of Luis Carruthers, at three or four AM in a Montauk hotel. I've never wanted my death to be painful, I just wanted it to happen. Take instant-acting poison and drift off. There's a part of me that tells me dying isn't worth it but I have no future. I tell Luis this.

"What?"

"I don't."

"You absolutely do. You're good at so many things." He holds both sides of my face. "Everybody likes you. You know what? You need a good night's sleep, eight hours' worth. How about we talk about this in the morning? We can have some food, and... Try to make it to work on time."

Luis rolls off me. My chest hurts. He's heavy. I watch him slide off his shoes; he grunts trying to get his pants off. He goes back to his side of the bed, says things that are inaudible to me, covers up, and says goodnight.

Maybe he's right. Maybe legitimately good sleep can lull me into a gentle sanity long enough for my head to not spontaneously combust. And if he's right, that wouldn't be the first thing he's been right about thus far- which makes me nervous. There are certain components of myself that I've been working very, very hard to keep under wraps from the public eye and even one person knowing about these things about me is too many. Nobody who's ever known me knows me as much as they'd like to believe. This disconnect from people hasn't ever been of concern to me until now. Everything starts anew from now. I become a new person now. I am no longer layered. I am flat, laminated. I am one-dimensional as opposed to four-dimensional as I once was. This is my identity. This is whoever I am, because as I've- we've established- I am not Patrick Bateman. From now on, I'm someone else. Someone nicer. Someone better.

I don't know what the fuck is happening in my life anymore. I go to sleep.

I have a dream that I wake up in my bed and it feels so realistic I can actually touch things. I look around the room and like myself, it's in a state of disarray; things have fallen out of place, furniture is moved, broken. My belongings are strewn, everything is cluttered, I have to climb over piles of things to exit.

My living room is full of dead bodies and the smell makes me tear up. My white walls are stained red, maroon, pink. The limbs collide with the mess in my room and I'm stuck in the middle; I can't put any of it straight, and I don't want to. I see myself, he is dressed immaculately. He's standing on the coffee table, and he asks me, "How do I work this? How do I clean this up?" I don't respond because I don't know how. He then looks directly into my eyes, which horrifies me: "I asked you a question, Patrick."

"I don't know."

He then quotes Jenny Holzer which frightens me. He approaches me with a knife and he says "It takes a while before you can step over inert bodies and go ahead with what you were trying to do."

I wake up, I splash cold water on my face, pace around until I'm tired enough to sleep again. I've never been so scared in my entire life. I have a dream in which I eat Luis alive. I wake up in a cold sweat. He holds me and shushes me until I fall asleep again. His hands are warm and mine are cold. My life will be like this forever.

Home

Chapter Summary

Hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm

Chapter Notes

_

sorry for the wait, everyone, but i'm proud to present the next chapter. this one has five grand words again (haha there goes my word limit right?) and i like how it came out! probably second to last chapter.. trust me itd be longer if my writing program didnt give out on me halfway through gee focuswriter that was cool of you

AHEM anyway welcome back to the next iteration of Patrick Bateman Dies Live On Camera And Falls Over A Lot: The Story

thanks for reading still. it means so much to me you've stuck along for the ride i can't even express it man. thanks for kudos and feedback as well, i'd love your thoughts on how i'm progressing with this... lots of love!!! take care, have a good week, drink responsibly, idk all that good stuff..

inspired by this song and this one, too.

I remember when I first got situated at Pierce & Pierce. My first thoughts upon stepping into my office were that this- well, that, was the worst vocational error of my entire life up until then and things couldn't sink any lower than that.

I got shown my original desk, mahogany, I shook hands, I laughed loudly and smiled brightly and kept both of my eyes fixated on the exit sign. I walked around as a viceroy with a power in my step I didn't even slightly deserve to have. But I had it, and I loosely wanted it, because I wanted more. Humans always want more regardless of their reason; be it egotistical, sexual, emotional, tactile. 'Greed' doesn't even cover the half of it for me; my desire is deeper than material, it's insatiable, I can or can't exploit it, I haven't decided which yet. This lifestyle is so much more simple, living a 'by the book' sort of life, withdrawing into being more mature and having a fuller existence at home as an adult. Society dictates who you are, not you, and after years of mindless soul-searching that went nowhere I really feel as if this is what I need. I can provide anyone with whatever they'd like to see, whoever the ideal Bateman chalks up as. Maybe I should just quit my job and live in the forest somewhere. Go primal. Nobody would miss me past the initial 'Aww, Patrick, don't go'. I know they wouldn't.

I am a member of a society that literally makes people sick. I'm emotionally subhuman.

I might be six feet tall. I really don't know. I'm taller than Luis. He's short, pudgy, pitiable. I've said this before. I don't remember when, but I have said this before. I told him sometime this morning when we were driving back to Manhattan that he's plump to me and he laughed. He wiggled around, trying to test his 'plumpness' and I watched in silence. Luis is too inoffensive appearance-wise for anyone to despise him without speaking with him first. His problem is that

he's annoying. A confused fruit fly buzzing around your head. It lands on your nose sometimes and you swat it off but after a while you let it stay because it's not doing anything, really. And then you start to like its presence. You like it a lot. Too much for comfort because it's going to die long before you do, and you come to terms with this, and the feeling of love becomes bitter.

Luis listens, learns, and adjusts, and it really does scare me. He... has begun to comprehend... that I have something wrong. Instead of being disgusted by my tics he's silent, he watches, he... reacts appropriately. The way I've... always wanted someone to. When I stutter he knows what I'm trying to say. When I stop mid-sentence he waits. Those are minor, but he listens and that's all I care about. Underneath all of these revelations, I'm paranoid because someone who's not dead yet knows I have- issues- and I'm not ready for this. I say I've always wanted this but I've never been ready for it. I can't talk to him right now. I'm not good for him. I don't want this. I don't deserve this. My own relations between form and subject often leave me confused, scared, and as they unfold further I discover nothing but endless repetition. It is self-reflexive. It is a building with a constantly changing density wave; it can't decide what it wants to be, and therefore, continuously changes. I'm constantly overstimulated. I'm touch-starved, clingy. I always have been. I like the feeling of skin against mine. It's the only way I can remind myself I have a physical form and that I take up space in reality. It's strange to describe myself as clingy because I'm also irrevocably indifferent and distant. If I had any less dignity, I'd ask Luis to touch me. If I cut myself it never heals because I have the tendency to pick off my scabs and eat them.

The phone. It rings. You know my phone? It's ringing right now. I'm staring at it. I'm holding a hammer for some reason, so I put it down to pick the phone up because if I held the hammer in one hand and the phone in the other it would be barbaric. "Hi, Luis."

"Hey, Patrick," he says. His voice is soft because I told him I hate when people are too loud. "Did you get home safe?"

I look around my apartment at things I've bought, the proof of purchase. If you laid face down in the Dead Sea you'd drown because you wouldn't be able to get yourself out; much like quicksand. That's most of life in general.

"I did," I say.

I turn around in a slow circle. I register that I'm in my bathroom and I get mildly confused because my phone is in here now. Elvis Costello really isn't as good as people make him out to be. He's fine and all and his music is passable, but it reminds me of Whitney's in the sense that while it's listenable there's nothing special about it. I listened to *This Year's Model* and before I knew it the whole thirty minutes' worth just passed me by.

"So," I say, still rotating because it makes my soles feel good, "What are you up to? You're a busy little bee, aren't you?"

The fuck am I saying?

"Glad to see some good sleep really did fix you up a little bit." He giggles. "Not reeeaaally. Got faxed some things, but I'm too tired tonight. It turns out I'm flying out in a few weeks, but aside from that... Same old, same old. But I've been thinking about... Well, I remembered... You remember what I asked you?"

He has plans. I'm mildly jealous. Is he aware of his femininity? Does he wake up, and look in the mirror, as he probably puts on a honey or silk facial mask- I touched his face a lot when he was sleeping and I'd know that consistency anywhere, or maybe he goes to spas which I wouldn't chalk up as unbelievable- and think to himself 'when did I become such a woman?'.

He waits. He waits, silently, expecting that I'm going to talk again after he stops talking because he's dripping wet for turn-based conversation. So I give him that.

"I'm just taking up space, as usual." I force a laugh. "Keeping things quiet. You're not doing anything right now, though, are you?"

"Taking up space?"

Oh, right. He actually listens to me. I forget that a lot.

"Yep!"

"What's that mean?"

"Just... taking up space!" He starts saying something and I cut him off. "So, anyway, if you're not busy, would you like to come over? You know." I swallow really hard and I lock eyes with my reflection in one of my huge mirrors. I don't like his face. "Get that cute little ass of yours over here."

"Patrick, is something wrong again? You said you were okay..."

"I have some *great* horror movies over here. I have a whole collection. I don't know if you saw them but I've got all the classics. Come on. Let's watch something *bloody*. Let's get bloody, Luis."

"Patrick, don't change the subject. What's the matter?"

"Wanna watch The Mutilator? Hmm. Maybe even Psycho? Haha. How about Pieces? You'd like Pieces."

"Don't try to distract me! What's wrong?" He cares so much. It's touching, almost.

"The fact that you're not here enjoying some microwave popcorn and Bordeaux with me as we watch Rosemary's Baby and contemplate the moonlight. Let's get real fuckin' bloody tonight." I try to impersonate Jack Torrance. Unsurprisingly my voice cannot do that.

He pauses for a really long time. "If I come over, can you tell me what's wrong?"

"I just said what's wrong, Luis."

"Nuh-uh. You said you take up space. What was that about?"

"I do, don't I? I have a physical form within reality?" Suddenly I doubt myself and I touch the counter top to make sure.

"Yeah, but-" Pause. I know what he's trying to say, but thankfully, he can't articulate it in a way that makes sense. This is probably for the best. He sighs. He gives in. "I'm too squeamish for horror movies."

I turn and I look back at my mirror. Some strands of my hair stand up like cowlicks as if I've been electrified. The face... on this body... tends to go quite far when I'm not watching, when I don't look at it. Whenever I look into a mirror I see an unstable combination of components swirling around on a canvas; no coherence, no melody. I wash my phone and hold my hands against my ear with my shoulder. Wait. I mean- never mind, it doesn't matter. "Come on. Pieces isn't even scary. If anything, it's hot. You like hot stuff, don't you, hot stuff?"

"But..."

“It’s not scary at all.”

“It is to me...”

“Possibly one of the most anemically repetitive, tiring, lowest common denominator kind of films out there. Profiting solely off of relevant movie trends; this being, of course, slashers with unreadable, disposable characters who are all written soullessly because the same writer creates all of them. They make characters that the audience enjoys seeing dying because they’re all too redundant, vapid and throwaway to be liked. It’s also cheaper than getting, I don’t know, a *good writer*. On that note, naked women. I know you can’t relate to this seeing as you’re homosexual but huge tits and round, firm asses sell very well and so does the slasher genre, so of course, most studios profit off these things combined. Some people like seeing women with built, *nice* fucking bodies being decapitated. Some people like that, Luis. Did you know that? Anyway, I haven’t seen a horror film, or anything for that matter, with a glimpse of what it means to be original or innovative in *years*. This comes unsurprising as nobody’s looking for innovation so nobody tries it. The consumers are jaded entirely. The few who want to deviate are condemned or simply marginalized. Deviation from the norm, especially in the arts, is always disenfranchised unless, it, is, *exploitable*.”

He doesn’t say anything.

“Wait. Wait. Texas... Chainsaw... Massacre.” He still says nothing though I give him a lengthy amount of time to respond. “One of my favorites. Let’s watch that.”

“What are you talking about, Patrick...”

“You’ve watched it, then?”

“No, and I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“You get scared of slashers, I assume?”

“Mm-hmm.”

“Why?”

“Blood makes me nauseous, Patrick. I can’t look at a lot of it.”

“What happens?”

“I’ve thrown up before.”

I don’t say anything for a long time. “That’s cute.”

“Huh?”

“Are you coming over or not? My wine’s getting warm.”

“Patrick,” he says, he laughs. “You’re kind of scaring me right now.”

“How about I come over there?”

“Nnnnnno.” This is a compressed shout. He’s probably not supposed to be on the phone right now, wherever he is. “I’ll come, I’ll come! Just...”

“What’s wrong? Are you renovating? Someone at home? Hm? What is it?” This question stays in

the air for longer than it should. He exceeds the socially allowed amount of time to be silent in a conversation. I could jump to Courtney any time I'd like, and I'm sure he's aware of this because his lips remain sealed. Conflict of interest. "Why not stay over for a while? A few days?"

"I can stop by," he says. "I just want to make sure you're okay."

"No need. I just want you here. I can take care of myself."

"Patrick...?"

"Yes?"

"No you can't."

Oh.

At least he's honest. He's not obsessed with me anymore, I can tell, and this makes me upset. There is an affection still but it is weakened, no longer as intense as it once was. "Yeah."

"Mm... So, well, get ready for me." I hear him climb off his bed. "I'll be there in a few. Just to check up and spend a few hours together, okay? No scary movies." He laughs for a little, though it's probably forced. "I love you." I plan to shoot him down but I remember the first time I almost lost him and I go, not thinking, 'Yeaaaaaaah' because I can't say I love you too genuinely but I have to verbalize something. I'm sorry, Luis.

Is that a real conversation I just had? Did that just happen to me?

Things are much too surreal so I take my phone out of the bathroom and return it to wherever it usually is. I run over to my CD player and pick up *Promise* and since I now have a cassette of it I don't need it anymore so I go to throw it out of one of my windows. I open the window, retrace my steps backward about two feet and I wind my arm up like I'm going to pitch. He gave me this CD and the more I think about him the more motivated I am to change but I can't and I know I never will and the futility of trying drives me up and down the wall. I'm a terrible person; self-centered, egotistic. Should I write a will, just in case something happens to me? I'm scared now and I feel small. Jean and Luis can have all of my belongings. So can Evelyn. Courtney can have some things, too. Price can have anything he'd like. McDermott, too. All of them. If Paul is actually alive so can he just as an apology for wasting his time. I put the CD back.

People cared about me once, but I was very young. If I knew I'd lose that I would have appreciated the attention more. My situation worsened, and then stagnated, and then once again would decline rapidly, and then everyone stopped caring. Their lives strolled on and on and on as I just grew older and my existence, devoid of anyone in my life, grew more meaningless and vapid as the days slid past me. I would watch cars crash in the street and then an hour later it was like nothing had happened. Nothing happened at all. I'm surrounded by insolence, the very essence of heedlessness; absolute nothing. If Christ had actually died and rose on the same day nobody would have been paying enough attention to see it. I have been pounding at the door for years and nobody has ever come to answer me.

I realize the way I feel doesn't matter because regardless of what I want, or how I feel, or anything else, today is happening. The world will continue to move ahead, progress in the spaces between hours clockwise and counter, that the globe will continue to spin. I end up retching for a while, hands on my knees because I feel like crying. I cannot escape, fight back, or seek help. I need to coalesce myself and... Patrick. Into one person. This is too hard and there's a voice in the back of my head that tells me I'm most likely not going to exceed the age of thirty and this is enough to

make my knees give out. I fall to the floor, bundling myself up because I'm very cold. I stare at the ceiling in the dark. The silence reverberates deeply and fully and penetrates my skull so much I start screaming, kicking at nothing in particular because it devours me. Twenty minutes of this passes in what seems like two. I look at the clock and the hour is over.

I become very self-conscious because Luis is the last chance I have and I can't fuck it up this time so I stand up. I sway and fall over. I stand up again and power walk to my bathroom where I try to tidy up because I need to look flawless because it's the last wall of defense I have and I wash my face with hot water to open my pores and use cold water to close them before applying a normal toner; one of the things I bought. It's infused with rose water, lavender and sage so I end up smelling very good by the time I've fully applied it. I run a thin Aloe Vera gel through my hair to make it look thicker than it is. I brush my teeth until my gums bleed and try to cover it up with mouthwash afterward which makes the hole in my cheek burn. My lips are cracked and dry so I smear Vaseline all over them. I look down and my hands look disfigured which scares me so I wash them but they still look wrong so I scrub them raw until they bleed too and as this hurts me I turn off the tap, smearing blood everywhere and I dry them off with a towel. I find some cocaine from a week or whatever ago inside a cupboard and I smear some of it across my gums for some reason because I guess I thought it'd be a good idea. My body jerks unusually violently as I try to pull away from the mirror. I see something very disfigured when I look at it and I become very scared. My body starts shaking hard so so hard. I feel a presence over my shoulder. I turn around and try to see but there's nothing anywhere. Somebody kill me. Somebody please kill me.

I sit on the floor. I find a patch of dry skin on my leg. I pick at it until I form a hang and start peeling it. Everything I have ever done was purely out of self-interest. I've never had any consideration for the people around me. When I French kissed Luis it was because I was drunk and I felt like it, I wanted to keep him in his place. I wanted to prove to myself I could do it. Women in Manhattan aren't safe as long as I live here so I go to the kitchen and retrieve a hunting knife and kneel on the floor, trying to remember methods of self-castration when the doorbell rings.

My hands are rived and I'm holding a knife so I put it down and stand up, swinging around and hitting a wall in my confusion. I fall over again. I stand up. Frank Sinatra- he- he made good music and it was good. Most people make music and that music is good. 77 is my... favorite Talking Heads album because I can emphasize with the lyrics. *First Week/Last Week... Carefree* represents the... monotony of the workplace. Can we run that again. Is that a woman's voice I hear. Every sentence I use. Refers to women and their names. Jean. FUCK.

"Patrick?"

"Mmmmmmmhnnnnnm?"

"Are you okay in there?" He jiggles the doorknob.

"I fell!"

"Oh, goodness, are you alright?"

"No!"

"Can I come in?"

I make gurgling sounds and crawl on my knees over to the door, whereat I stand and fiddle with the lock for two minutes until I figure out how to unlock it and swing it open ferociously, hitting myself with it. I fall, which is annoying, against the wall and muttering until Luis comes in and pulls me up. "What happened, Patrick? Come on, come over here."

He guides me to my couch, or at least, tries to. He tries to move me but my legs lose all weight and I sink into him. I hug him, because that's the deepest affection I can express. Nothing else I could do would be more gravitative than this. This is all I have in the world and I make a weird sound and I crush him in my arms. He returns the hug after what must be surprise and he rubs circles into my back with his palm and when he asks me what happened again I can't say anything and therefore I don't. I cough viscerally for a few minutes and he pats me. I look at him and I start crying because I'm always changing my mind and my existence is fundamentally worthless. I'm unlovable. No one will ever care about me. I start wailing some incomprehensible things about my death and since my legs don't work again I start sliding down him until I end up in a heap on the floor, a convulsing mess. I am having a panic attack. He looks down at me for a moment with pity in his eyes before kneeling down and carrying me over to my bed instead where he lays me down. It's like our roles are reversed.

What if he thinks this isn't real? What if he thinks that this is some bizarre character I've created and I display around him in hopes of scaring him away and finally getting him off me? What if it's actually not real? If I willed this away would it go away?

"Patrick," Luis says. "If there's ever been a good time for you to tell me how you feel, it's now."

I stare at him and he looks mildly put off. Saliva is spilling out of my mouth and it's getting all over my shirt. Which is irrelevant seeing as it's just a standard cotton white T-shirt and there's billions like it but since it's made of billions of atoms it must have some grander scale in the scheme of things.

"Just... let it all go. Tell me everything you want to."

"Well," and I say this extremely loud for no particular reason, "I just want to hurt a few people lately."

"Why?"

"I don't have much... self... awareness."

"Tell me more?"

"I'm imagining everything, I think."

"Well, I'm here. Imagining... what, though?"

"I hate everybody but I want to be loved, and." I choke very hard here. "I." I want to say it, but I can't. I had no idea it was this bad. When I try to say it I trip over my tongue, my vision is filled with static. I don't want to just say it, I want to mean it, which I'm incapable of. I've been like this for my whole fucking life.

"And what? It's okay, I won't judge you."

"I'm trying to" I'm stuttering.

"Trying to?"

"I'm"

He holds my hands and leans into me. "It's okay. Breathe, Patrick. You're okay." He has his bag and he pulls out a tissue and wipes my tears for me which really does nothing because it makes me cry more as it's the most sentimental thing anyone's done for me in years. I try to hug him but I

feel too incapacitated to move. My impulses don't act on that thought either and I just sit here staring hopelessly at him. Great. That was the only thing that was interesting about me. 'Oh, look, Patrick did a strange thing because he can't tell himself not to'. I'm a shell now, a husk of something that never was. Everything is over. The sun is a black hole.

"I'm sorry. I can't say it."

"I want you to get it off your chest." He presses my hands harder. "This isn't about me, Patrick, it's about you. I want you to be open about your feelings."

"I can't be."

"Why?"

"Because I can't."

"What's going to happen?"

"I don't know."

"Just..." He pauses, staring into my eyes. "What are you afraid of telling me?"

"Don't don't don't don't let's not talk about that," I say this very quickly. "I'm fine."

"What were you going to say earlier?"

"I can't say it."

"But why? Why can't you?"

"It won't let me."

"What won't?"

I stare at him. I don't know what to do so I start picking at my nails with my teeth. I feel dumb. "My mouth."

This feeling eats me, it's inhuman. I feel frightened but Luis hasn't been saying anything frightening. I feel myself expanding, much like there's some kind of gravitational shift happening within me. I become solar, yet no-one orbits me. I hover through life constantly on the brink of sensory overload. No matter where I climb and no matter where I walk I'll never be able to find my own sense of direction. Women menstruate all around me and some men are turned on by that. I used condemn that sort of activity but seeing as the things I get off to are hundreds of times worse and I'd be a hypocrite to. I think of the time Jean kissed me outside her apartment. I don't... work like that. I found a severed foot in the subway and I tried to eat it but an old woman was looking at me strangely so I had to stop. I look at Luis and I can tell this will be the grandest of all days. He wants to enter me, find me where I am most destroyed, and love me from there. I look at him and I'm glad I can see.

"You can't say it?"

"Yes." I stutter.

"Is there something wrong with your mouth?"

"I don't know," I say. But I say it like "I, I, Ddd, ddd, don't- don't k-k-know." I bite my fingernails.

He takes my hand and moves it so I'll stop. He touches my cheek and tells me to calm down and breathe, putting his hand on my chest to push me back into the pillow. This is comforting but has the opposite effect on me as I become very restless, I don't know why. He firms his touch to still me which works to my surprise and the room becomes soft again. I don't know what to say, so I say nothing. He touches my hair and swirls a strand with his fingers. I breathe out, I relax. Everything is still and silent and he leans in to kiss me on the lips, which I don't resist. When he tries to pull back I say 'no' and hold onto his shoulders.

"IIII," I say.

"Tell me," he whispers.

"I, don't, want, you," I take a very hard breath, "To," I... I pat the back of his head, "Leave."

He kisses my forehead and everywhere within his reach which causes me to physically and emotionally fall apart. Everything else becomes irrelevant. I cave into something immaterial. It's too much for me to process at once and I tell I just want mouth kisses because that's the only thing I have associated with love and I get this. We lay there in the dark for a long time and since I can't help myself from it I involve my tongue. I kiss him the right way, slowly, not the messy lesbian tape sort of doing it, which elicits good sounding responses from him. He is very vocal sober. He sighs, he rubs his hands against mine. He tells me I'm gorgeous. I wouldn't care normally but he sounds so infatuated something inside my core calms down and I feel soothed. My hands are bolted to his waist and I'm not sure where I'm going with this until I get a long blissful sigh out of him and I become aware of the direction this is going in.

"This isn't okay."

"I want you to be happy."

"I don't want to just." I mumble. I don't know what to say.

"It's about love, isn't it?"

I say nothing.

"I can only imagine how you'd like to be loved..."

I say nothing.

"If you can't... love me back, I love you anyway."

"Sex isn't enough."

"We don't have to if you don't want to." He pulls away, he brushes a strand of hair out of my face. "I'm not going anywhere. I'll stay the night. I want to stay here with you."

I want him to stay and I express this, but I'm too mute to vocalize anything else. We sit still before he kisses my nose. He goes rigid when I touch his chest but he lets me. I find the marks I made. Things progress steadily but everything's slow until I'm sitting against the headboard of the bed and hoisting him up and down on my lap. Missionary would be better for this but I want to see his face because it's the only thing keeping me concreted to the fact he loves me. I'm moved not to look at him at the same time because over-analyzing love or beauty destroys it and I assume that's where I've gone wrong my entire life.

"I can't say it."

“Say what,” he says. His voice sounds so cute. He’s leaning into my chest.

“You say it all the time.” I say. “Ask, ask me again.”

“Ask what-” And then he stops. It’s a moment of revelation captured in time forever. I don’t think I’ll ever forget it. His mouth shuts, his eyes widen, his eyebrows elevate. He looks like he’s discovered something new and wonderful. He parses, gauging things. “Do you love me?”

I answer and I immediately feel his tongue against mine. They slide together and it feels primal, tender. I can almost feel his throat constrict as he swallows hard, adjusting himself on my lap to hold onto my shoulders. This feels strange but I like it. His movements are slow but keep my pace, and his voice is velvety and soft and it distracts me. I’ve never felt any consideration for my partners but a blinding burst of something in my mind causes me to feel differently; I relax. My limbs seem to loosen and I guess I groan because he kind of laughs but I can barely call it a laugh because he coughed when it required breath he didn’t have available. I hold him up higher then bring him down slower because I need that which coaxes out a long, deep sound from him I wasn’t even aware he was capable of making; it didn’t even really sound like his voice. It’s emboldening, though. His body type is better for this than I’d have thought.

He kisses me. His fingers run through my hair and rub my scalp. It’s gentle, it feels authentic. His hands splay and he rubs the back of my neck. They eventually press harder and become more insistent to the point at which it kind of hurts and I’m moved to speak. I ask him what’s wrong.

“Patrick,” he says. “Patrick oh God Patrick slow down slow down please please slow down I don’t want to yet I don’t want to slow down”

I ask him what he means but my voice falters and sinks into the floor. I say nothing, and by the time I try to it’s too late. He makes a sound longer and worse than all the rest and digs his nails into me so deeply I’m sure he’s drawn blood and I feel warm jets run along my abdomen. This does something to me and I go weak again but I have to hold him tighter lest he fall off due to aftershock. For the first time I hear him curse. It’s just ‘fuck’ which is nothing special but it’s extremely drawn out and so glassy sounding I kind of take myself by surprise.

We both sink this time. I’m slicked with sweat which is disgusting but I really don’t care and it causes me to slide down the pillows, Luis keeling over on top of me. It would be better to just let him recuperate but I have to look at his face so I hold his head up, hair sticking to his forehead and obfuscating his eyes in every direction and look at him.

I do this until he suggests some things I can do. He says he can’t feel anything waist down but clarifies it’s ‘in a good way’ when I panic. I pull us back to the pillows, I throw the sheets over us like he says. And then we talk. We talk for a long time and I’m silently discouraged because he’s much more experienced than I am at aftercare. We just... have banter about buildings, food and music until he falls asleep mid-sentence. I owe him it so I hold him. I manage to say that thing he likes but he’s asleep and doesn’t hear. He’s warm, and for the first time in my memory so is my bed. I dream I’m floating freely through space.

Office

Chapter Summary

All criminals want to be caught at a subconscious level.

Chapter Notes

remember when i said this would be the last chapter? bitch me too welcome back!!!!!!
or welcome!!!!

i love writing this too much, oh my god, it's like... vaguely therapeutic to me...
whenever i get down i just go "time to write a little more black hole sun" and then my
day is better. ugh. thank you all for reading this much of it i really feel like i'm talking
to myself here but just knowing one hundred people have laid eyes on it?! oh jesus!!
lord!! haha. things get a lil softer this time around.

thank you for still reading i can't believe you cared this much, omfg. i am so humbled.
i really appreciate you all uasnakjd. it's one thing to write something and another to
know people like it and that's why kudos make me get all giddy. i'm like 4 years old
sometimes i swear. maybe the next chapter will be last i can really make no promises.
etc notes: [inspired by this song](#)

I'm still in a depressive helix but I still feel so much more focused today despite the fact that my
mind is going all sorts of places but nowhere at all. There is nothing after me, nothing to evade, so I
carefully sit in my heavily body-centric office chair and tap my chin with my ballpoint pen,
swiveling in circles. I walked to work today slowly and evenly.

I reposition myself, I cough aloud, I sip my coffee which is purely black with no sugar, no cream,
no anything. Normally this would hurt me or at least feel indecent and give me a stomachache but
I've actually had a decent breakfast this morning so it rests in my stomach alongside an entire apple
pie, three hard boiled eggs, a banana, and trail mix. I didn't know Luis could cook but he does it
very well. I told him I haven't really eaten in about a week and he yelled for a long time about it. I
had to walk with him to the grocery store because he still kind of sways and loses his footing when
he walks which I was very proud of, and having no food at home I guess something had to be done.
I moved everything in there to the very back drawers in my closet while he helped me stock it with
actual food products. It was fulfilling just having them there. My own productivity somewhat
unnerves me and I reason the fact that I now have someone quasi-consistently in my life- I guess-
must have something to do with it.

I should also mention I feel uncharacteristically productive and the passage of time no longer
sedates me so I push to get work done; I file a few things, I call people I should've called ages ago
on business, I do a crossword puzzle and actually complete it. I haven't run out of social energy yet
so I call older colleagues and then I call Price, who sounds very drunk and I lecture him about how
technology and materialism can establish a literal rather than figurative imprisonment wherein our
proclivity towards our fundamental roots within nature is diminished and capitalism covers
everything like a huge tarp used to conceal furniture and the floor when you paint your walls, paint

your floors. How the human health will decline the less we work and the more we surround ourselves with conveniences or people to do menial tasks for us. How money will eventually lose all value with the rise of inflation as family businesses keep falling and big corporations keep rising. I hang up abruptly because he starts stuttering, seeming very confused and I do some research on some Patois from the Caribbean from a book.

Halfway through this I look at the door to see Jean peering in at me, but she doesn't look away when I look at her like she normally would. Instead we engage in an apparent staring contest and she comes in after a little while, hovering around the door. I wave at her before looking back down at my... stuff. Papers, I should say. It's all stuff, it's all material, it's all flesh. What I call it really doesn't matter in the larger scheme of things. This book really isn't interesting. I had to help Luis into the shower this morning which became awkward because he undressed in front of me and I kept staring at him for no reason and when he asked if I wanted to come in I stood there for a long time because I didn't know what to say.

"Hi, Patrick," she says.

"Oh, right," I begin, grabbing the papers I've looked at and I hand them to her to have them copied. I explain this to her and instead of taking up any movement she stands stagnant, staring at me. "What?"

"Where were you yesterday?"

"Business," I say, flipping open my planner.

"Really?"

"Yes."

"I just wanted to..." she pauses, full stop, "see what you've been up to."

There is a subtle vitriol to her voice as she says this and I worry for a minute that I've been possibly compromised, because she's right when she says an entire day passed of me not being here and the same thing naturally would also apply to... Luis. Anyway, seldom do I even come into my office anyway, and I relay that to her.

"I know, but what were you doing? What kind of business?"

I break my eye contact and look for more crossword puzzles. I don't feel good anymore for some reason. I haven't officially started anything up with him, he hasn't moved in yet, so in the eyes of society we aren't anything. But as I say this, he's still... he cares about me so much so I suppose I feel very indebted. We watched a classic movie marathon and when he found me eating food on the kitchen floor after I told him I was going to the bathroom he joined me. I feel accepted.

"Business, Jean. Do I have any appointments today?"

Did I say 'yet' just then? He hasn't moved in yet? Yet? What does that mean? What does that mean, Patrick? What are you saying with that? Huh? Yet? What exactly *do* you mean, saying he hasn't moved in 'yet'? Do you want that? Do I want that? Have you planned that out for him?

What is my life going to become? I used to worry about getting all my ego-validation primarily from Jean but as she's so wary of me now I believe I've subconsciously, or maybe even by force of will, turned to Luis for that. It may be best for me to let go now but I am holding on out of commitment, something deep inside of me. I hate that *face* he makes, the one before he's about to cry, seconds away from it. It makes me feel strange, I stop feeling good about whatever I'm doing,

and there is nothing I can do about it. He is going to carry me away, but unlike everyone else, he is not going to replace me. I can't see the bigger picture. He may have a future planned for us but I'm incapable of seeing that far. I exist by the second. And my mind goes fast, thinking things like 'would we date, would we get engaged' and I don't know about that. I'm too busy to get married or something, too busy living a modern life. I'm saturating myself. And I say to myself I would never marry Luis Carruthers but I often do things I don't want to do because I'd like to prove to myself I could do it if I wanted to as a test, and once I've done it it's too late. And then I get accustomed. This is the most emotional I have ever been for a sycophant.

I realize my own preconceptions about him and my sexuality cease to matter because my ship is actively sinking and he's had a helicopter and has been dangling a ladder down to me for years and I'm just now considering using it and I'm up to my eyes in water. I'm not going to find anyone better for me than him. He enables me. This is a blessing and a curse. Part of me says 'if you hurt him, it's his fault for not listening when you warned him' and I kick myself under the table because I deserve it. My sole digs into my ankle. In the shower, he- In the shower, I started talking about the Civil War and how it... all the factors leading up to it were hoaxes... and then I talked about this one king from France, or something. I think.

I wanted to be more intimate, because it might be the only way to save this hopeless relationship that I'm tearing apart with my own hands, so I thought 'yes, we can shower together' and when I got in it became so tense. I don't have any fitting way to describe it, no words can do it in a way I think is apt. It was just incredibly tense. I stared at the door and I think I mentioned something about Charles VI of France, a king who forgot his entire identity due to mental illness and thought he was made of glass. I'm not sure why. When I got in I didn't know what to do. My entire brain was saying SEX because that's all people do when they shower together, but I was wrong. No, he just washed me. I couldn't reciprocate, so I didn't. Instead, I just...

"Okay, okay... Listen." She pulls her hair back. I love it when she does that. "I'm sorry for how I acted, what I said. I didn't mean to be so harsh, I just... I shouldn't judge your life...style like that."

My what?

"Lifestyle?"

"What I mean is... if you're with Luis, it's none of my concern. I shouldn't have pried. I guess I was disappointed. I'm sorry."

"Lifestyle," I echo.

I stare deeply into my coffee cup. All black. Luis likes cappuccinos with designs in the milk, something artisan. I talked about cheeses; Gouda, Brie. He said he liked those peelable mozzarella cheese sticks and once again I was shocked about how humble he is. He likes seedless grapes, graham crackers, protein packs. I think of other people I know and I think back to Luis like I'm doing a mental about face. Maybe that's why they don't like him? He's bridging the gap between us and the middle class? Maybe I was the only person who thought he was annoying and everything I've come to think was a lie again. He doesn't pretend to be anything and I think that's the main thing that separates the both of us.

I introduced him to *Speaking In Tongues* and I realized he is a much better dancer than I am, much more dynamic. When I listen to a song with rhythm I don't dance because it's embarrassing. At most I will hit my thigh in accordance to the melody or nod along. And then Luis is there pretending he's on the Soul Train. He liked *Making Flippy Floppy*, *Girlfriend Is Better* and *Moon Rocks*, unsurprisingly. *Pull Up The Roots* is his favorite. He's so conversational. He asked me to see about concert dates and I just looked at him and said I'd see what I could do. He gave me a

hug. I can fulfill myself for another two or three hours thinking about him if I keep my expectations low.

Apparently, a new model of Walkman is coming out in a few months, and it's going to be the next thing. The definitive next thing. *THE* next thing. The end all be all of mobile musical formats. And I anticipate it. It's definitely going to be overpriced, though.

"Please forgive me, Pat," she says. She outstretches her hand to me. She looks into my eyes, doing that thing where she tries to tell what I'm thinking based on my facial movements and structures. I wonder if all people can do that; maybe first impressions often are correct because of it.

I shake her hand very cautiously. It's a very weak shake and I try to strengthen it to seem more resolute but I can't. "I do." I don't, really, for using a term like 'lifestyle', but it's easier to lie than tell the truth. "How about those appointments, huh?"

I love money. I love everything about it. I can buy so many things, having it in my possession makes me feel powerful, important. I can buy things I need, things I do not need. I'm very high-functioning and I have a solid set of aesthetics so I know what I want to buy before I go out to buy it. Having physical money in my wallet makes me feel richer than having money on my card. It's a very good card although it's mildly eroded at the bottom edges. It feels nice, slapping it down on a checkbook. Human beings need guidance. Superabundance is a byproduct of pure greed and I realize most people side with capitalism because they're afraid of losing their piles. Their huge, massive, piles of things they don't really need but like keeping around. Proliferation of greed. I bought a three hundred dollar pair of socks. I didn't need those socks. This is the worship of being destroyed.

My mind feels empty. Not in the depressive way like I'm accustomed to, more in the post-three glasses of alcohol type of way where everything feels murky and thinking requires extra effort. Like a slate wiped clean to the most pristine it can be, scrubbed deeply until rectified. It's a neutral feeling but it's benign, it leans towards being positive. When I think of Luis, my brain funnels out and empties. My negativity, my pessimism, my depression, it all flies away somewhere and I'm left feeling neutral. I realize I'm mildly incapable of being 'happy'; I'm either in a rut or I'm not.

"I'll take these," she says, scooping them up carefully. She shifts her weight onto her other leg. She's wearing a different skirt today; it's not patterned, gray, and she is wearing heels. I can hear them, I estimate four or so inches based on the click alone. "You have something next Friday; something about" I zone out here and miss that completely, "and on Thursday you have to go to the--"

"Carne Asada," I mutter.

"Huh?"

"Carne... Asada."

"What about it?"

"Human beings need... Um, guidance. We all think we know what's happening, but," I choke strangely, "we're all... clueless. Just when I thought I found..."

Jean is looking at me with an odd expression. "Found what?"

"I had a moment," I say, standing, putting on my eyeglasses because it makes me feel like I'm giving a lecture at a university, "last night, where I thought I was in love. Sometime late, I had just

done something and while reflecting on it I think I was in love. But there's no way for me to know."

"What did you do?"

I put my hands in my pockets, then take them out of my pockets, then put them back into my pockets. "I can't say. I remember a lot of... things. My brain wasn't really... Anyway, I thought I was in love, but I couldn't really..." I guess I get bored of whatever point I was trying to make, because I trail off and go onto something new. "It was sort of like... love." I make another hand gesture, waving my hand in a circle. "You know, kind of like, love?"

"Like... 'love'?" She says, mimicking my gesture.

"Yeah, just, like, love."

"What do you mean?"

"Yeah..."

"What you're trying to say is you're indecisive about Luis, right?"

"Who said," I say, but I take another long break to let my brain rest. "...That... anything about Luis?"

"You did," she says.

Part of me says 'no I didn't' instantaneously; my more defensive side, but I realize, like most people, Jean is smarter than I chalk her up to be. She wouldn't be here if she wasn't. Why was I surprised when Luis caught on to my instability, actually? He probably shares an IQ with her. She's adaptable, self-aware and so is he. I put my hands in my pockets. "Nothing about Luis. I didn't say anything about him."

"You said it out loud, Patrick."

"I could've told you that," I say. "If you wanted to-" I make a hand gesture- "know, I would've just said, 'Hey, okay, Jean, here you go'. And then you'd know."

"What?"

"No, it's-" I take my hands out of my pockets. "It's something about the air density. The humidity. It's bad for my hair," I say, sighing.

Jean starts asking me things and I look down into my coffee cup. I have a 'what the fuck is happening' sort of moment. I rub my fingers together in my pockets, I think of all the times people have demanded things of me. I think of the things I've demanded of other people. I misplaced my driver's license a long time ago and lost it. I'm not sure I remember how to drive. I don't remember how old I was when I first learned. I don't trust myself with that anymore, anyway, because all I have to do is think of my quality of life and then my arms will wing out and then I as well as an entire crowd's worth of pedestrians will be dead. Something is crushing the life out of me. I don't understand. I was fine ten minutes ago but as usual things are caving down.

She stops talking and stares at me but I don't look up. My coffee sits still and I expect it to start swirling but it doesn't, but I wait, because I know it will, as nothing on this Earth is absolute. Things come and go, everything changes, moves, reforms itself and themselves...

I look at her and I smile. "I have to get back to work. If you'll excuse me."

I start humming *The Sweetest Taboo* and sit back down, huffing as she raises one eyebrow and the other dives. I sip my cold coffee and wait for her to leave. When she does, I stare at the door. She didn't say goodbye, she didn't say anything. She wanted away, and she got it.

Just before I finish my coffee I stare down into it and I see Patrick. He stares at himself hopelessly, most likely realizing what he's done to himself, and he says, "You did this to yourself. You did this to yourself." And then I finish my coffee like everybody else does.

Waking up with Luis was nice. His romanticism, naive as it is, is somewhat touching. We did strange things. We had a philosophical conversation, we did a slow waltz-type dance to *The Sweetest Taboo* and we wrote and read poetry to each other. Mine wasn't very interesting. We stared at each other for a long time. I'd make no expression, he kept smiling and giggling and looking away. He'd play with his hands, try to sober his face up but then burst out laughing again. I don't understand what was so funny. Once or twice, my lip trembled. He'd, at intervals, make a scene and ask me about how I felt and I'd answer to the best of my ability. He kept checking if I was happy or not with what happened last night, he asked me about if I felt okay in general. I reached out and touched him occasionally, he was real and everything became beautiful.

"How're you feeling, Patrick?"

"I'm fine," I said.

"Only 'fine' again?" he said.

"Yes."

"Not good? Not even a little bit?"

I shrugged.

"Hey, hey. Come here for a second."

He stood up and walked over to my balcony. I say he walked, but it's more like he hobbled. The blinds are pulled, the blinds are closed. I stood up and followed him. I asked him what I was supposed to be seeing and he pulled the blinds and I saw my own reflection.

"Do you see it?"

"Manhattan?"

"That's what you see," he said. He walked behind me and gave me a hug. His arms kind of encapsulated my stomach. "But I see something else. I see someone... tender with a few imperfections. But those," he held both of my hands from back there which was and still is new and odd to me, "are what make him special. And he doesn't realize that, but that's why I love him now more than I did." I'm sitting there and my heart is pounding and I'm motionless. He hugged me again. "That's why he's special to me. The fact that he's not perfect is what makes him perfect."

I told him I felt fatigued and he sat me back down on the couch. I looked at him, the lights were off, everything was equal then. And I wanted to replicate what I'd seen because I felt bad. I wanted to kiss him, or love him or something like that, the way he's idealized, something that I'd seen in pictures, in movies, or read in books, because it felt natural for where we were and I suppose there was some kind of therapy within him being with me because he fed me and with him was the first

time I'd had sex with the lights off. I hate thinking about it as much as I can't stop thinking about it. I did that. I can't believe I did that. But I liked that. My ribcage constricted my chest and I had to breathe through my mouth. Something shifted inside of me.

"How do you feel now?" he said.

I made a hitched sounding breath and poorly cleared my throat. I exhaled hard, I inhaled softly. I swallowed my saliva. I blinked more than I had to. My leg bounced uncontrollably and he touched it, trying to stop it. "I'm okay."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Please don't cry again. Please," he said. He held my hand and that's when I made one of those vulgar sounds you do when you're almost there but not quite there. "Breathe, okay? In, out. In, out. Let's go slow. Let's take this slow."

I tried to say something but it didn't work and sounded like 'hh-hmm?' And there I found myself on the brink of mental combustion because my fear of love overcomes my rationality; my association with sex as a coping mechanism, as a performance, as a carefully scripted act, as a hobby, as my biggest delusion, as an indirect form of self harm. And how love is somewhat more dangerous than that in of itself. If he hadn't told me he didn't want me to cry, I wouldn't have cried. I felt somewhat comatose.

"Does it make you uncomfortable when I say things like that?"

I inhaled unnecessarily hard.

"Things like... how I love you?"

I turned my head like a dog or something and made another weird noise. I could feel my facial tics in the moment, spastic, convulsive, and I worried about how awful I must have looked.

"I just want you to feel better. I didn't mean to make you upset, I really didn't... I just wanted you to..." He held my hand harder. "I want you to see yourself the way I see you."

Pause. "Why," I said.

And he answered, and everything became beautiful again. He is good and kind and he loves me. There was nothing after me. I ate good food. I took a rewarding shower. He was there when I got out, hovering around the door, playing with his hands again, and I wasn't angry. He admired me gratefully. He didn't do anything sexual, he just gave me a massage-type touching session. It felt liberating. He was humming the chorus of *Video Killed The Radio Star* and since I recognized it I guess I started to hum too. And then he started singing it, and I listened. I could sleep in that moment peacefully, so I did.

I don't wait for Jean to get the papers back to me. I stand up, gather my things and go home. When I'm walking out Jean is not there. I stare at her seat for a moment. Her ass has been there. I rest my head there for a moment before getting up and leaving.

Home, Home, Home

Chapter Summary

I

Chapter Notes

welcome back ladies gentlemen and all friends in between, you already know the deal. this might be my favorite chapter, holy cow. chapter four is good but ohh my. i spent a lot of time deciding ways to start this, and this one, all the while being very messy and disorganized in terms of plot it's definitely followable so don't worry... important note though: the way this chapter is written is a little confusing , patrick refers to luis with both 'you' and 'he' pronouns and i wanted you all to know that was intentional before anyone got confused about it. the first half of this is fucking nuts as well i don't even know. you'll know what i mean when you get there and i'm totally stalling you right now, so without further ado!!!!

take care my darlings. feedback warms my heart and always motivates me to keep going, you're all so sweet aieeeeeee! like i said last time take very good care of yourselves, thanks for reading, bless u...

etc notes: [inspired by this song](#)

I stumbled home like I was drunk, I bumped into so many people, so many things, tripped on flat surfaces. There was an unevenness in the concrete and I fell, scraping my palm. I hit my head really hard against the asphalt. I wanted to take the train, but I was overheating... Leaving my office felt like it didn't happen; like it was more of a murky visage in the back of my mind rather than an actual event that had taken place. I sunk into the seat, wiping sweat from my forehead and staring into the eyes of a small child that kept glancing at me. I should stop wearing my glasses, because they improve my vision, and when my vision is improved I see people looking at me better and that makes me anxious. My vision is already fucking perfect. I don't need anything. Direct eye contact with no dialogue is a silent killer. You can't tell what they're thinking and when their mouths are not open you can't audibly decipher them. Everything is up for interpretation. I missed calls, I took time off, I got very mad when a car swerved around me when I threw myself at it. I chased it, I had a hammer, I broke open one of the back windows, a group of anti-capitalists applauded my effort from somewhere, but I soon told them I was against their cause...

My eyes started to burn, so I had to turn back, and run. I blink in any and all pictures, everyone is stagnant and I am blurry. I've always had slight movement, electromagnetic... manifestation of some sort, so I can never be fully *still*, something is always moving, something is never constant. I'm very powerful. I criticize myself for being egotistical but I realize nobody truly egotistical would criticize themselves for that so what I am, I don't know...

There's a mess on the corner of 42nd if you'd like to see it, Luis. It's right outside the subway. I have a few station maps in case you get lost on the way. But I don't want you to come because I know you're squeamish, so don't come. A Chinese take out boy was riding his bike when he got

hit by a swinging piece of plywood that was precariously secured to a truck. The wood was longer than any wood from a tree regional to New York. It looked like they glued two pieces together. It nearly decapitated him, slicing the better half of his skull off. His right leg is also noticeably bent backwards and a couple of cops are scratching their heads wondering what happened there. There's five egg rolls smeared on the ground, lo mein noodles stretching out which looks odd because in their placement they sort of look like intestines. People are staring with me as if there's something to see, a woman covers her child's eyes and they hurry off. All of these people are scared by the thought they might die the same way, a meaningless, immoral death caused by someone else's carelessness. Disposed of in public, left to rot, an entire family is shattered. Passerby can identify with victims of whatever happened while peacefully staring from their bubbles and being relatively unharmed- maybe psychologically, if that... Nobody will remember this in five minutes, five months, five years... A man to my left scratches his chin, analyzing the width of the swing and the force of the turn for this to even be possible, or maybe he's wondering about why his ex-wife's pussy smelled different that last time. A teenage girl to my right has a distinctly green face, she's black. She's wondering what position her legs will be in when she inevitably dies the same way, whether or not her face would be done up with makeup... And she turns to me, and we stare at each other for a while, before she asks me 'isn't that sad?' and I nod. I say 'sad for the logging company, nobody's going to invest in them now'.

Fires are starting in unlikely places. While I was walking up and down Fifth, a trash can was on fire from inside. I walked up the block, it wasn't. I walked down, it wasn't. I walked back up, it was. My forehead was white-hot when I tried to wipe sweat off my forehead, getting some sidewalk dirt all over my hair, but it didn't burn me. A mirror smashed from a gunshot across the street and I was convinced I'd been caught in a shootout so I'd have to pick a side- I fell into Brooklyn somehow, I suppose, so I started looking for that Jewish bakery- you know, the one with the whore of a daughter who's still expecting calls from me. I couldn't do that even if I wanted to, it'd make you upset. You'd look at me the same way you did when you found my coke. That face is ingrained in the back of my mind. I start firing at nothing until a cop sees me and, upon closer inspection, realizes I'm a lost businessman and he shoos me in another direction and tells me to leave. I watch three kids go down. They're all black, everybody is screaming, mothers are running out, a car crashes, two girls bump into me and I start trying to molest one of them, a man smokes a hookah pipe from on top of a car that's clearly not his and he has an expression on his face that says he's seen it all before. An entire family runs out of a building to assess the damages and people, unrelated, run inside and take off with the TV, food, the *entire kitchen table*...

...And the cement is warm, it reminds me of your body, so I lay down on it. It smells like sunscreen. I thrust my hips into it. Someone thinks I'm dead and they flip me over, and tries to administer CPR on me. They attempt mouth to mouth and I'm disgusted by this so I bring my teeth down hard, I bite off an entire piece of their tongue, they scream and fall backwards, shots ring out. I eat the piece and it tastes like overcooked salmon. Someone hovering over me tries to take off with my Rolex and I stab him in the eye with a dagger. Death is instantaneous, he falls over...

I walk into the house everyone is stealing from and, to quote one of the thieves, 'these bitches gasum fresh-ass shit'. I realize the fall of one is the upbringing of many and I decide to browse, take what I can while I can, people are brushing past me, shoving me, saying excuse me and pushing me. The mother, in hysterics, bleeding violently from both wrists turns on the stove and she's cooking something with pepper which fills the air and blinds all of us. I realize I look the most out of place, nobody else is dressed as finely as I am. People are staring at me... My mother didn't want me, she never denied me when I asked about if I was adopted or not. I doubt I was but the affirmation would have been nice... I get confused, I rotate in a circle, someone starts choking and dying because of all the pepper. I have a silenced pistol I guess and I shoot them to put them out of their misery, everybody claps for me as I've done humanity a great service. I have carnal

urges coming on so I grab a teenager, unsurprisingly black and take her to what must be her bedroom and I try to fuck her there...

Our conversation goes like this:

“Um, well, do you have rubber?”

I start eating her out. I don't know how to describe it, but it's obvious someone else was here today. “No.”

“You don't?”

I give her a ‘what did I just say?’ kind of look.

“Then get off,” she pushes me off. “Asshole...”

I pull out a switchblade and she mutely panics. I don't plan on doing anything with it, I just like power objects. I look behind her head and she has a Diana Ross poster. I think of you, I wipe my face very hastily. I'm a hypocrite. I stare at that and ask her if she likes *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*, and she responds by saying it's actually her favorite. She, entirely naked, stands up and walks over to her boombox and places a disc in the player. It begins to play. Things become sentimental. She sings it. “Why'd you ask?” she says. “This is my boyfriend's favorite song,” I say, and I ask if I can have the poster. It's your favorite song, and I'm thinking about you. In some pictures, Ross looks like Debbie Harry. This bedroom is cluttered but artistically so, it's so homey, it feels like somebody actually lives here. It's comforting, I touch a wall, I feel stilled. She gives me the poster, she gives me a hug. I leave the room, your new poster rolled under my arm...

And then I'm lost. Half of the block is on fire, smoke clogs up the air, police cars are everywhere and multiple people are being questioned, I witness a few deaths, I'm doing well, I know I am. I stab a police officer because he was hurting me with his presence. He keels over forward, slumping over his car. The other two he was talking with look blankly at me before saying they didn't like him anyway and turn back to this Latina woman they were questioning... Someone, thrilled on the ecstasy of violence and aggression, hits me in the back of my head with a flashlight and I make light shine in all directions. People are amazed, they gasp and look at me, I am hit by a car, I fall over the roof, they all attack the car with poles for ruining the lightshow. One man grabs a child from inside the car and smashes it against the windows repetitively, turning her head into mush. People cheer him on... I have no accountability for the next thirty minutes after this...

I wonder what your childhood was like. I doubt you were raised in New York, none of us were. I wonder when you realized you were gay, I wonder who did that to you. That's not too personal of a thing to ask, is it? Surely it wasn't me. If you tell me it was me- regardless of if it's true or not- I won't be able to believe you. You care very much about self-preservation, most likely more than I do, taking care of the body like it's a temple and whatnot. I'm not very good for you. I don't do you justice, I ruin you. I hope you realize that soon. Please. Leave me while I'd still be able to carry myself if you did. I'm becoming attracted and soon I'll become clingy past the point of any feasible return and then by the time you realize your errors you won't be able to get me off of you and I'll become either abusive or self-destructive if you try to leave and, if I'm abusive you won't be able to, if I'm self-destructive you'll feel too bad to. You'll try to fix me again and the cycle will repeat. I will destroy you, loving me is impossible. I'm going to turn you into someone else, a carbon copy of me. I have cold hands and commitment issues. You already know I'm not myself, there's nothing here. You call me Patrick though you know that's not me but it gives me some sense of identity so I'm thankful. I'm sorry that I'm emotionless during intense or devout moments and that I can't process your feelings for me and that I want sex and I want to fuck things more than I want to hold hands and have snacks or watch TV or just fucking talk like normal people do

and that I stutter when I talk about myself or you try to get me to open up. I'm not used to doing that. People like me don't fall in love and get married. I don't get it. I said I get everything but I don't. I need your attention and affection because when you read me that one poem you wrote and compared me to a waterfall or something else similarly picturesque I'm sorry I really don't remember what and I left the room without saying anything it's because I didn't know what to do. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm afraid.

...I stand on the corner of 23rd and stare at the crosswalk. The sky closes in on me, I become entirely detached from my body. I ask the same questions and I always want a different response. There is no such thing as permanent identity in urban environments. I was sleeping on a pile of garbage in some alley for twenty minutes because my brain is overheating as usual which explains half of the things that have happened to me today. I read, I cut my fingers on page corners and do it again and again. All statements are verbose, I've never won a game of Keno because I've never played it, I had a small section of my life where I actually said 'ain't' from time to time to seem more relevant and charismatic but Evelyn said it wasn't like me so I stopped immediately... I'm not excited during Christmas, I danced with you when we met, but jokingly because people were looking at me strangely because I was dancing with a man, that may not even have happened, I tend to dream up scenarios that I want to have happened, I smile twenty-three different kinds of smiles depending on the situation, I'm never happy...

The door is closed, but it's not locked. I swing it open, there's things on the stove. Music is playing but it sounds like it's in Chinese because I'm too overstimulated to convert it into rational language. It's ten fifty-three. I had a strange dream once that I slept with my brother in the back of a car. He didn't look like himself, though. He looked... I don't know, different.

"Patrick?"

I close the door, I lock it, I bolt it. I walk into my room, the sheets are made, and it's upon this that I realize that my apartment has actually been cleaned. The dust pile wasn't there, the pillow was removed, my Madonna poster is gone, there's a layer of new plaster where the hole was and I wonder if you did that yourself, you're so good at things. All things. I slide off my shoes and I can hear the shower running. "Yes," I say.

"Patrick!" the shower stops running. I don't know what to do with myself so I stand there until you come out, wearing one of my bathrobes. I feel my heart jump over a beat but I'm not bothered. It doesn't even fit you, it's dragging on the floor at the hems. You're so small...

"I brought you-" I stop, I make a confused expression for no reason, and carry on- "I brought you something," and I hold up the poster. I roll it out and you squeal in delight, throwing it out of my hand and onto the bed so you can give me a hug. You kind of jump at me, so I'm forced to throw my arms up so I can hold you up. Once again, you're on the heavier side so I wheeze hard. You are the most beautiful individual in the entire world and if anyone disagrees I will cut them without thinking. My nerves start firing off and I stand there, still in the hug, perpetually suspending us both in emptiness.

"I missed you so much," you do that thing you do where you brush my hair out of my face. You look at me like I'm something amazing and captivating. You look at me the same way a housewife looks at her husband when they've only been married for a little while, when she's still happy. You ask me if you can kiss me and I do it. I get grabby quickly because I want tactile intimacy and I try to start touching you and we both get into it but you yelp.

"What?"

You gasp, you look genuinely shocked by something. "I'm cooking dinner," you say. You try to

pull away but I'm not ready to let go and I hold onto you for an excessive amount of time. You slide out from under my arms and tell me it'll only take a second. You frolic away and I stand there wondering if you give good head.

I try to get that thought out because it's not romantic at all but I can't. I eroticize everything in an animalistic way. Is sex even as good as people make it out to be? Is it as good as I make it out to be? It's a Pyrrhic victory. What I am without physical confrontation, I'm not sure, but it's really just flesh colliding and things slipping together and not knowing where you are for half of it. Masturbation is worse because halfway through you realize exactly what you're doing and get hit with a wave of self-disgust, and all of this feels futile and it starts to get boring before it's over. Sex is better than it in that regard; it's a lesser of two evils type of comparison. But I want you again, and I can feel myself stirring but I haven't moved my arms from the hugging position and I'm letting it happen. The face you made when I gave you the poster, the face you made when I gave you my coat. That rosy, jovial expression is from the same person that rode me and I don't know why but that really turns me on. You made the greatest sounds. I want to try different positions. A few minutes pass, you skip in and stop.

"Dinner's ready!"

"I'm so sorry." I have to force this out because there's no other way to say it. So it sounds forced, it sounds like I'm saying it more by obligation than by desire and I kick my other leg because I deserve it. I sound like I'm trying to keep myself from laughing at a joke. "I'm so sorry for hurting you."

You pause, processing that... "What? But you didn't hurt me?"

"I have before."

Your expression melts. "But you didn't mean to." I choose not to speak up, instead tapping my hip fervently with my fingers. I take my time, and then I breathe. I look at my shoes. I don't know how to respond. "Did something happen at work? Are you okay?"

A lot of time passes. "Don't- don't do that. Don't leave me."

You hold onto my arm and give me a firm sort of look. "I'm not going anywhere, lover. We're just going to eat. Don't worry, okay?"

I hold onto you tighter and start rolling my hips into you.

"I'm scared."

"...Of?"

"I want you to leave but I don't."

I start sliding my hand up under my bathrobe. Your. Our?

"Patrick," you say.

I try to will myself to become hard by thinking of anything vulgar so I'll have a reason for you to not leave. I palm you wherever I can reach, and I guess the thing about my hands was right because you don't look happy but you sound it. You give me feelings I've never really had.

You regain common sense. For a second, you lost yourself to me. You try to twist out of my arms, but that gives me more room to touch you. "Not right now, Patrick." My hands are going places

and they're going there fast. "Let's eat first, okay? Then we can do whatever you want."

"I don't want to do whatever I want. I want to do what you want. I want to do this together."

"Patrick, you need to eat..."

"No..." I grab hold of your thigh and start rubbing it. This makes you yelp because my hands are cold.

"The food is good," you say. You're looking at me with wide eyes, which is cute. "Roast... chicken, though I'm not good at stove cooking, but I wanted to try." Conflict of interest. I run my tongue up and down your neck. "I had some macaroni, too. A lot of cheese... I was going to use Gouda but it didn't taste... as good so I," I undo the tie on your bathrobe, push one side of it out of the way and try rub myself against your leg. You hold onto me, you curl your fingers around me. "...cheddar instead... Oh, God, Patrick."

"Luis?"

"I want you too, just, not now, okay?"

...I wait for something to happen, and nothing happens, so I apologize. He looks at the floor, breathes out. His face is pink. "Don't worry, lover," he says, brushing past me once he calms himself. He kisses me. Lover. I like that. He stands in a far off corner of the bedroom, takes my- HIS bathrobe off and proceeds to dress himself in simple night clothes. I've hurt him and I want to fix it but I don't know how and my brain thinks of sex because it's the ultimate in personal intimacy.

Jesus fuck. I'm going backwards and forwards. Just when I think I'm making progress I take twelve million steps backward... No, sex with you won't fix everything. It's not the ultimate in personal intimacy. It's the *farthest fucking thing from it*. Nobody really likes it, it's never... consensual... it just happens... I'm sorry. I'm hungry, I say.

...he looks at me with a skeptical, insecure kind of expression. "Yeah, let's eat, okay?" That's his compassionate voice.

"Hey," I say, approaching him. I touch his shoulder which makes him stiffen up again. He's so on edge. I try to shush him. "I didn't mean to. I just got..."

"I know," he says. "Don't worry about it. You had a hard day, didn't you?"

"Yeah." I try to remember some of it but most of it is blank space. "I saw some bad things."

"Like what?" He feels my forehead.

"Jean doesn't like me anymore."

"Oh... Why?"

"She hates you."

"Oh."

"And me."

"Why?"

“I don’t know, jealousy?”

“She’s jealous?”

“Yeah. Jealous of us.”

A new expression sets in, something like raw, unfiltered surprise. You don’t say anything for a long time. I see you brood. “I thought you-” You falter, swallow. “weren’t... ready for a relationship like that. That’s, I mean, that’s what you said? Isn’t it? Wasn’t it?”

...I stare at him, I look somewhere else, I turn my head. He holds my chin to turn me so I’ll look at him, I stiffen up. The longer I stared, the more everything else faded away. I don’t have anything to say, because that wasn’t a slip of the tongue. Had it been, I would have corrected myself immediately. Maybe I’ll stare at the wall until my eyes water. Maybe I’ll masturbate in bed. Maybe I’ll talk to myself until I fall asleep. Because that’s what I’m used to...

“Let’s have sex,” I say. But it comes out like “No. Yes, I do.”

“Yes I... do?”

“I do it.”

“What do you do?”

It’s like a sneeze, sort of. When you know it’s coming but it won’t come on its own so you kind of wait for it. It’s very brusque, very sudden, but if you move too much or breathe too much it doesn’t come. He knows I want to say it but if he presses it’ll slip. He holds onto my arms and rubs into them slightly. My thoughts are becoming more innocent.

“I, well, I love...”

Instead of saying ‘you’ - despite the fact that’s objectively the most important part of the entire statement, I pause, then I lean down to kiss you instead. My apartment doesn’t look like the same environment when the lights are off and I try to flip them back on but you stop me with your palm. We’re close enough to the light switch for this to be possible. You kiss me back which makes my muscles finally relax. You hold me tenderly.

“I love you more,” you say.

“No. I do.” My mind inverts. “No, wait. I’m not good.”

“I wish you wouldn’t say things like that about yourself,” you breathe hard. “especially not at times like this.”

My hand is sliding up your shirt and you don’t seem bothered by it this time. I push it up over your stomach which is strange and new and interesting. You blush like you always do. I feel bad because you cooked and it doesn’t look like we’ll get to eat it hot at this point.

He looks to the side for a moment before swallowing and looking up at me. “Do you want me to heat up the food later?”

This is an invitation so I say ‘yes’ all the while inching my hand into his briefs. I don’t know what I’m going to do down there, it’s just that what works on women can... sometimes work on men, so I do what I’d do. I lean against him and push us both against the wall. I feel around down there and he shakes, he mumbles, he breathes. Foreplay is nice, but I’m becoming increasingly impatient. It’s

what he seems to care about the most so I grab a hold of his dick and start tugging it lightly. I want to try that thing that happened and I scoot down enough to rub his nipple with my tongue and I feel him throb. I worry he's going to cum early and it's going to get all over my suit. He clutches my shirt and neck so he can kiss me sometimes, which is very stimulating...

You make the nicest sounds, do you know that? Serene. Nothing over the top, excruciatingly tame but it's nice in it's own way. You like to make it last, too, which I've definitely taken notice of... But I'm incapable of slowing down once I'm enjoying myself.

I turn you around and start doing the same thing. I press my face into the back of your head. I kind of burrow into your hair which is softer than I'd have ever imagined. I slide your briefs down just past your thighs, but I pull too hard and I nearly tear them off. I don't want to wait for a buildup this time. "I want you," I say. I squeeze your ass in a very resolute way and perhaps it's just the timing of this, but you make a sound and it's...

"I'm just going to," I say, mumbling, "I'm gonna just fuck you until you're numb, you know? That sort of thing..."

Your voice is very quiet. "Patrick, please..."

My hands shake relentlessly. I feel territorial. He lives with me now, he lives in my house. I retract myself to go through my drawer and he sighs from the lack of contact which pleases me greatly.

...I want myself to seem more emotional, like I'm capable of being soft when I need to and I'm rigid on the outside, but you've seen all sides of me so it's too late for that. I'm rocking into you slowly and I hold onto your waist from behind. I get closer and lean into you and we adopt the same rhythm. Your skin at this point is a canvas of various marks mingling together, some look like bruises which makes me nervous. I suck on your shoulder and will myself to go slower because you like it that way. I've always liked being fully dressed while my partners weren't so I unbutton your night shirt and slide it off as best I can; it slinks into a clump on the floor...

You're so polite. You ask me for more, but not in a vulgar way. You say things through the glances you give me when your head is turned, the way you back up into my hips when I move my hands. I like the way you look bent over, so I push your back down a little and hold onto your hair which makes you groan. It's such a simple way to start but it gets to the point where you're writhing beneath me, begging me for it and I pretend I can't hear and keep grinding on you. I give your dick a long stroke and a few drops of precum end up on my palm. I wipe it onto my index finger and push it through your lips, you groan so, fucking, loud. I pull my finger out, I push it back in. I do this repetitively, you hold onto my wrist. I slide my middle finger in. My hair is a mess.

"Nice and wet," I mumble to myself. I'm not really talking to anyone... "You're doing good. So good. Get them nice and wet so it won't hurt."

"Ah," you say when I subtract my fingers. I lean into you closer which practically crushes you and you constantly have to adjust your footing to have some room; I'm overbearing. I'm dominant, you're meek, and that makes me feel good. I trace the rim of your asshole with my index finger before pushing it inside. I feel you clamp up around me out of surprise but you loosen a little when I shush you. I wish I'd turned my camera on when we started this. I'd watch this one. I slide my middle finger and my ring finger in as well.

"Do you like this? Does this feel good?"

His left leg gives out and he loses all balance, sinking to the left. I hold him up and try to still his shaking by giving him a kiss. I kick his ankle softly to the side with my foot, sweeping his legs

apart and getting my lubricant. I put it in my pocket because I felt I'd need it.

"You belong to me, you know."

I dip my finger into the bottle and push it back inside without warning. He sighs. I swirl it around.

"Say it."

"I belong to... you," you say. It's so hard to keep myself under control when you talk like that. So slow. I put my middle finger in and spread you out but I pulse everywhere because I really can't wait anymore.

"Who do you belong to?"

"I belong to you," you whine.

"Say it louder."

"I, I belong to you."

"Yeah, just like that." I undo my belt and sink my pants enough to let my dick out. I hiss, finally understanding how uncomfortable it was before this because most pants from Armani sets I have have... no elasticity... that's not important right now... I slap your thigh with my dick. "Who owns you?" I hope that one day we can do something nice together like go to the beach.

"You."

I feel wonderful. Pleasantly warm but not overheating. I push myself in very slowly which, of course, gets another excruciatingly pained-sounding moan from you but you have this blissful smile on your face so I ignore it. "Yes, that's right. Good, good." I'm on autopilot. It's almost like you curl up around me whenever I push back in. Everything but my dick feels numb, but it's a nice feeling. It all feels tingly. "You want me. You want me so bad."

It's harder to hold on because you're slicked with sweat and my hands keep falling off. I think of yesterday after our shower together, and I... I was going to do things; stare blankly into the window that is my TV, go onto my patio, have a lemon soak again, do a face mask, exercise, crush up a Xanax and try to snort it, but I didn't really want to do anything but loom over him on my bed as you slept and stare at the marks you have everywhere. Which I did do, until I got restless and fucked you again. And then I got bored later and tried to do it again. And that other time... And again after that, so there's the chance this is more painful than enjoyable...

"You need to stop me sometimes," I say, once again talking to nobody. "You don't just want me to keep you here and fuck you all the time, do you? That's not romantic. Lover," I toss in lover because it felt appropriate.

He stutters a lot. "Oh, oh God Patrick, can we do this on the bed please?"

"Just a few more minutes, lover," I say.

Eventually he can't respond because with every individual thrust he cries out. Sometimes it's unintelligible, sometimes it's a word. Yes, ah, please, Patrick, something along those lines. I don't want to stop looking at my work but I feel the need to close my eyes and I do. I jolt, which makes me think I've cum, but I haven't. I give him a reach around with my left hand and put a few fingers in his mouth with my right as there's something about that that I liked.

I call him lover a few more times and I feel things move around in my core, I was humbled, I kiss his neck because that's romantic and I started biting which is romantic to some. I visualize myself burning my apartment to the ground all the while screaming about how happy I am while he packs both of our valuables so we can go live in the forest because I don't need it anymore. I don't need anything as long as I have him but I can't stop fucking crying. I'm burning with fucking love and I'm so in love that I'm just kind of crying, tears are just kind of happening, today is better than last week, today is better than the last few months. I'm sorry for hurting you, it will never happen again. People live inside of houses together.

"Can we go to the bed now" you ask, and I realize I lied so I nod a lot but I don't stop thrusting or pulling you and I feel you tense up. Before I can get words out I feel some of it hit my fingers. You put out a lot more now than you did yesterday. Your legs shake. This can't work. I imagine him calming me down during another episode or giving me an ice bath when I have a withdrawal and I'm so fucking parasitic. I have nothing I can give you there's nothing. Nothing here. I break myself open.

It happens. It feels beautiful, everything becomes color and sound, I go weak. You hold my hands. Your mouth on my mouth. I watch it drip from between your legs. Backwards. We go backwards. You hold onto me and I fall backwards. I hit the bed. I sink the both of us over it. My mind is going. I feel it vividly, I feel its vulgarity slipping. I become something new. Love is thawing me. Very little else matters. Sleep.

Promise

Chapter Summary

Can we run that again?

Chapter Notes

what the hell you read this whole thing cover to cover
i am MYSTIFIED, THANK U
this was really just me murmuring to myself about a ship i like i'm surprised you
tolerated this much THANK YOU... lots of love... and honestly i may write more
someday i have tons of more thoughts but i don't wanna beat a dead horse, you know?
and once again thank you so much for giving me the time of day. blessed be!!!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I wake up from a dream at which I stand on a cliff overlooking Los Angeles at night.

Luis made cranberry muffins for desert.

I guess they were supposed to be a surprise. They're somewhat hidden. They sit on the counter, staring at me.

Something I noticed upon waking up today is how largely unconscious I am throughout all things. I function half on auto-pilot and I do things, I end up in places and then have no recollection of getting there. This morning began unsteady and slow, I had a headache. My bedroom didn't look like it normally would have, so I had to harshly scan my surroundings. The walls were bone white instead of milk white which made me shoot up until I registered it was actually a trick of the light. Everything became softer, I calmed down. Luis was in my grasp. He was using my chest as a pillow. I laid back down and we went back to normal, him sleeping on me soundlessly. I took a short nap. Last night was strange. I remembered all of it and stared at the ceiling, cycling through it in my mind. It's vivid, obscene. Last night has put me in a mental place I'm not sure I can crawl out of. Last night has done things to me.

And now, I feel sluggish. Awful, but calm. Satisfied. I got myself out of bed and did exercise but everything hurt, so I took Advil and resumed. I'm hungry so I sit on the kitchen floor and shovel his cold food into my mouth and, despite the temperature, it's actually very good. This and that champagne of his, he actually has good taste. The chicken is flavorful even in cold and he used some sort of spice on it, basil, what tastes like a sprinkle of lemon? It's burnt on the bottom which I eat around- I'm not surprised, he said he wasn't good at it. I make and drink some coffee. I put an empty bowl into the microwave and watch it spin. The muffins are still there and they test me. I walk around.

I categorize my mistakes by severity of embarrassment or level of transgression and square them away where I can never see them. I color code them. I analyze reoccurring incidents. I do autopsies on conversations that I walked out of feeling distraught even if I can't remember who they were

with. I tell myself that I do this as to never repeat the same incidents that brought me to this place I am in now, but I know there is no way to evade who I am and what I will do. Nothing is real. I guess I'll marry Luis and die at the ripe age of forty-seven.

I play *Promise* and lay on the floor. I like extended versions of songs because they allow you to lay on the rug, feeling the fur between your fingers and sapping into your skin forgetting you're alive as the chorus ripples through every inch of you for the ninth or tenth time.

Why does he do that? Why does he insist on sleeping on his stomach? I just noticed he's been doing that for a while. I flip him over so he'll be laying face-up and I do that thing he does where he feels my forehead. His forehead is average temperature, I guess. I feel my own forehead for him. It's the same. I sit on the side of the bed, waiting for something to happen. I move my couch. I dust my CD collection, but someone's already beat me to that. I check that the front door is locked three times, it always is.

I feel a momentary lapse in time and self-awareness. I don't know what to do again so I take a short walk up and down the block, I buy myself water, I go back to my apartment and lay on the floor again. This bores me. I go back outside and I buy him a gift. I'm asked if I'd like it wrapped and I say '...sure'. My emotions swing very rapidly. One moment I'm somewhat enjoying myself, and the next I'm convinced I'm wasting time. I'm easily bored. Luis doesn't look good in hats. They're not for him. Neither are tight-fitting suits. But, you know, I've noticed that he compensates his body type by wearing larger clothes sometimes. Like in *Stop Making Sense*, but for a largely different purpose. David Byrne wanted his head to appear smaller so he wore larger clothes, I guess by wearing unhealthily oversized jackets sometimes Luis wants to appear... larger. Clearly he has a stylist. I don't know who, but they need to be fired. I'm convinced he doesn't dress himself. One part of his outfit always outshines the whole and you're more visually attracted to, I don't know, his shoes or something. One then doesn't know where to look. I want to grab him and ask him what exactly he thinks he's doing, but I can't. It doesn't really matter, does it? Does anything? None of this matters. I'm going to stop talking about it. I turn off my mind, and float downstream.

Time goes by...

Consumerism is a true mind killer. It overwhelms me. There's far too many options, too many things to buy, and you can't do anything anymore without being advertised artist sized lofts or being asked to promote something or sign someone off a check for a million dollars or maybe you'll round the corner and be asked for an interview. You cycle through commercials you've heard in your head and you realize just how much you've been hard wired into remembering jingles better than you remember birthdays. I forgot my middle name years ago and I can remember the exact address and latitude and longitude coordinates for Armani's main building. The collapse of my personality will become beautiful, new, and modern. I will become things, all things material.

Did I say we were dating last night? I'm sure I said that or something along those lines. I've never had a long-term relationship that I've particularly cared for. People who have loved me never look at me, they look at the person they particularly find attractive and latch onto him because according to many and myself I'm very attractive. But that's not the same thing by dictionary- no, social definition- as loving someone. Maybe this is how the world has always worked and I'm the one who's wrong. My brain repeats, the same thoughts keep popping up, it's my mind's way of scratching an itch. I call Courtney for some reason but nobody picks up. I get angry for a moment and throw one of the muffins on the floor but, upon realizing my error, scrape it up and eat around the part that made direct contact. I throw that out. My nails are chipped, I bite them until they look normal again. I'm eager. I walk into my bathroom and my eyes are red.

I stand ominously in the archway before my bedroom staring down at Luis. I don't move, or blink

for that matter; I just stare into him because I heard asleep people are conscious enough to know when they're being looked at. But he doesn't wake up for ten minutes. I walk around. I walk around a little more. I pace around. I'm making a mess, I throw out the muffins. Here's a scarf you bought or knit for me a year ago that I kicked under the fridge. It's covered in dust. I put it on for a few seconds. I feel bad about the muffins and scoop them out of the bin. I try putting them back on the counter but I forgot the orientation you had them in. I remember now. It was a heart. I make a really bad, visceral, guttural, deep, low sound from somewhere deep within me and leave the kitchen.

Fear slow cooks in the front of my mind as I start to shake him. Gently, at first. This is okay, he doesn't wake up quickly anyway. He's an extremely heavy sleeper. This could be some kind of deepened state of narcolepsy, but I'd have never pictured him as a narcoleptic because that's Courtney's thing, not his. Or do they both have it and I just haven't noticed? I've had more than enough of my fair share of short term affairs and relationships. I say I'm a blonde type of person but depending on my mood and my opportunities I am very indiscriminate. Everyone has preferred ideals, everyone leans. My relationships are inconsistent, unreliable. This might not last, it probably won't. In short: whenever you run, there's the danger of slipping, so I try not to run at all.

"Luis, wake up Luis," I say.

I'm not sure if I'm doing this because I want attention again or I'd like an equal to talk to. Am I lonely? Let's calm down. I keep shaking him and he's not budging. Prerequisite of all life, when people don't wake up, something is wrong. Let's actually calm down this time. I slap both of his cheeks expecting a response and nothing happens.

What's my future?

Waking up spread out in the middle of my bed, drowning in a pool of my own sweat, him strewn to the side due to my erratic movements when I sleep or- even worse, him sleeping turned away from me. Feverish types of wet dreams where the images feel so real that they consume you and you wake up drooling, fully stimulated in every erogenous zone and itching to do something. And maybe I'll actually wake up in that sort of state and he'd ask me what the matter is and I'd suddenly get off out of nowhere and he'd look at me in shock. Nothing can fill my bedroom like the voices- of other people- like his. I will wake up screaming or hyperventilating or reciting a will I've been mentally proofreading for ages and he'll have to coexist with that. I don't remember what I said last night before I fell asleep, but I'm sure it was 'I love you' or 'I want to fuck you again and I will' and regardless it really doesn't matter because the second one means I love you all the same. I hope he can learn that sex and fucking are two different things to me and I'm incapable of having one. He's the kind of person to describe sex as 'making love', which is too different. I don't like it. I want all sex to be objectified so I can't distinguish it from love. If there's even a minute difference, I will collapse.

I leave him alone after consoling myself and return to my bedroom and lay in bed with him, stagnant. I hold onto his wrist in a hard grip trying to feel a pulse, and there is one. I sigh. I calm down. I don't think of anything for a long time.

I go into the bathroom and steam my face which opens my pores. I've become accustomed to the fact I will die alone. I can't ever feel anything. I hurt so much. I stare into the mirror hopelessly, waiting for something to happen, until I wink at myself. I didn't do that originally, so I'm taken aback for a moment, until he winks again. We talk for a while and he describes my entire life as something round, like a cheese wheel, with a large chunk missing. I'm lonely so I start trying to French kiss the mirror again but he, disgusted by this, shoves me off and walks away. I have no reflection. I spend a lot of time puzzled about that before I leave my bathroom and then I walk back

in. And then I do it a second time. Back to the bed. I need a lock of his hair. 'Please, please let me' I say to myself as I gently cut some of it off and slide it into my pocket.

I'm taking a bath with a soothing, detoxifying wash in it. I'm thinking about Hall and Oates. I start scraping at my arms and mumbling, slowly descending deeper into the water.

I want to feel loved. I want to feel needed by someone, but not necessarily through sex, as I've discussed. I've had so much of it. I know how I work. It's not the action anymore, it's the affirmation that comes second to the fact I can do it to someone. It's a consistently failing cycle of irrevocable destruction and it's going to happen. It's inevitable. It's not even the sex. I think, it's- no, it's not that either. I think it's the fact that he wants to have sex with me. I'm not even sure if he wants to. I mean, the sex is good, the sex is incredible, but I don't really want it to be incredible, I don't want to feel it, I don't want to feel anything he can make me feel. I say this, but it's also an integral part of my functioning now, and it only happened in a matter of days. Have I really been this lonely?

I get out of the tub, I mess up my hair on purpose, racking my hands through it. I look at myself. At a loss for why I did that I get angry at myself and slam one of my hands in the door, I have two of them, and I yell. And then I do it again. And then I calm down and I try to look at myself the way he sees me; like I'm something worth coming home to. The air is vicious and cold. Time escapes me.

God, what would- what would make this easier, what would make this easier is if- if he was, if he was a woman, I wouldn't have to worry about these things, because he'd, I wouldn't have to worry about him leaving- though a part of me wants him to- because I could just get him pregnant or something and then I wouldn't have to worry for some eighteen years or something- but I wouldn't, I know I wouldn't be there for it, and if he was a woman, he'd be dead, he's protected by this immovable steel wall of- immunity, I don't think I can keep doing this. If he was a woman I wouldn't be. I don't think I

"Patrick..."

I feel a pair of hands wrap around my shoulders and hold onto them carefully. They knead at them again. I'm staring at myself in the mirror and I guess I have been for a while because my eyes are watering. I swallow. Luis slowly develops as a part of the mirror's image, peeling out from the side of me. He's wearing what, at first, looks like a champagne, lace-trimmed silk peignoir but isn't. It becomes blurry when it loses that form.

"You've been in here for a while," he says. "I wanted to check on you. Is that okay?"

I mumble.

"Did you have a good bath?" He looks down at my hand and holds it up to get a better look. "Oh, I hate that."

I mumble.

"When you're in the tub for so long your skin gets all... leathery."

"How are your..." I make eye contact through the mirror. "legs."

"Fine now," he says. I notice his face flush.

"Huh."

He nods.

I don't say anything.

"But," he whispers directly into my ear which makes me twitch, "you're going to have to be a little more easy with me next time."

Mm.

"You didn't... you know. You didn't slow down like I asked."

Yes I did.

"You didn't tell me to slow down last time."

No I didn't.

"Stop being silly, Pat." He's blushing more now.

"You didn't."

"It's okay if you couldn't stop yourself..."

"That wasn't last time. That was the first time."

"Uh-huuuuh... Which was the last time. You're so silly."

"No, last night was the last time."

He goes quiet and then stands up a little taller to get a better look at me. "Last night?"

"Yes." I use excessive force in my tone.

"What happened last night?"

"You know exactly what happened."

"We didn't do anything last night." He pauses. "I mean, at least, not anything like *that*."

"What?"

"You said you were tired and you went to bed."

"What the fuck..." I breathe hard, "are you talking about?"

"I think you might've had a good dream about me," he says, hiding his face behind my shoulder as to hide his clear excitement and how red his face is. There is nothing in my eyes but blackness and negative space.

"No, it was real."

"It was a dream, Pat."

"No." I tense up. I can feel shudders coming on. "It was real. You called me lover. And you let me put my fingers in your mouth."

What feels like five, ten, fifteen, twenty minutes later I feel his fingers sliding into mine and I hear

him sigh. We stare at each other for a long time. I feel myself radiating an emotion that has no word to describe it that I know of. I stare at him until I begin to feel disoriented, strange, and I am the first to break contact and look to the left. He stands on his toes and gives me a soft kiss on the back of my neck.

“Patriiick,” he says.

“It was real.”

“Patrick...”

“It was.”

“Look at me, Patrick,” he says. I turn just enough to make this possible. “It wasn’t. I know, it can seem like that sometimes.”

“It was.”

“Come *on*, Pat.”

“It was.”

“Well... how about... maybe it can be real tonight,” he whispers again, sort of embracing me. “*Loooooover*.”

I bypass this mentally but I can tell my cock heard it. “Where’s the poster I brought you?”

“Poster?”

“It had Diana Ross on it. Promo art for *Swept Away*. September 13th, 1984. Her fourteenth album. Lots of different genres featured on it. So many, it felt experimental.” To accentuate this, because he looks bewildered, I start humming *It’s Your Move* to jog his memory.

“I know that album, you just... Never got me a poster.”

I did. I did get a poster and on it was promo art of *Swept Away*, Diana Ross' fourteenth album. It was released on September 13th, 1984. I was going to buy it but I was busy with more important things on September 13th, 1984. I was sitting alone at home, debating masturbating, touching myself. That's when I remembered *Swept Away*, Diana Ross' fourteenth album was released (that day, September 13th, 1984). But I was busy. At this point I was masturbating to my reflection in the mirror so I couldn't go outside and purchase Diana Ross' fourteenth album, titled *Swept Away*. It was released on the 13th of September, 1984. A day I was busy masturbating. My cum tasted okay.

“But I did.”

“Was that in your dream, Pat?” He feels my forehead.

“No. I got it before I came home. I gave it to you before we fucked.”

“But we didn’t-”

“I got it from this black girl. I was in Brooklyn or Harlem or something when I got hit by a car and then someone hit me with a flashlight and then bleeding wrists and then dead cop and dead kids and dead girls and dead women and and fetal tissue and I slept on a pile of garbage and I came home with a poster which I gave you.”

As expected, silence lingers while I watch his blush fade. With the most despondent expression I've seen on him he asks, "Have you been taking your medicine?"

"Not important."

"Yes, that's important," he says. He molests my forehead as he does. "Have you?"

"You do realize Xanax is not medicine," I say far too loud.

He recoils from me. "You said it helped."

"It doesn't." I push by him, murmuring 'where is that fucking thing' and I scale my entire apartment. When I don't find it I turn and yell, 'where did you put it?'

"I never had it," he says softly.

"Fucking liar where is it."

"Did you take your medicine yesterday?"

"I don't know why you're so obsessed with that. Where's the poster?"

For a moment, his eyes widen. "Patrick?"

"YES?"

"I think you're hallucinating. Or you were."

"Nnnnnno."

He walks up to me and cups both sides of my face, which I imagine must be hard because I'm moving. There's a weird taste in my mouth.

"Look at- no, look at me," he says.

I pull away and throw cushions off of my couch looking for the poster. He holds my free hand and pulls me back up, where he embraces me. This makes me feel weird and I make a grotesque sound and pull away again, and he follows me into my room, where I feel like an animal backed into a corner so I express this by making another murmuring sound. I try to hide in my closet but he follows me in. "*Mmhmnnno*" I say, pushing past him so he can't see me. I cover my face with my arm. My nose digs into my elbow. I hit a wall with my elbow which makes me cry out. I run, I slip. I don't know where I'm going but I go places. Eventually this comes to a head where I squish myself against the wall since I've covered all ground possible and he comes up behind me, trying to turn me around. When he can't do this he does that thing where he hugs me from the back and presses up to me but this makes me feel very strange and somewhat violated so I start murmuring again. He fails to soothe me. I don't want this affection. I am desensitized.

"It's okay, it's okay," he says. "Shh, shh. It's okay."

"No. It's not."

"I understand you now..."

"No no no no no no no."

"You're just... a little... spacey."

"Spacey," I echo.

"It's probably the cocaine," he says, quietly.

"No."

"Then what is it?"

I become feral and aggressive. "You."

"Me?"

"Yes, Luis, it's you. It's you. It's always been you. It's something about you. It's you and people like you. It's you. I was just fine until you came along and you were you and you ruined my life by being you."

He says nothing.

"I appreciate it," I say. "The concern. The worry. It's all very nice of you. But I swear, I'm okay. Really."

Solitude would be nice. I'm trembling, vibrating slightly because the circumstances are just a little too much at the moment for me. This had a rough beginning and its end is now. I don't know what to think or how to feel and my own actions don't make sense in my own mind. There is nothing beside this. There is a chance Luis is not here and he actually is off in Atlanta like he's supposed to be, and that I am just making this up in my mind because I'd like it to have happened. There is the chance I'm making all of this up and everything is fine and I just need enough sleep to rest myself for eternities. There is far more to myself than I have bothered to reveal. He knows little and won't know more. There is the reality that nothing is real and I am merely an obscene byproduct of my own mind's hyperactivity. There is nothing else outside of this room with a mess on the floor and reduced lights and strange things here and subtle sounds over there and a man in front of me. I can no longer force myself to try. I'm not ready. That's what it boils down to. I don't want to finish this conversation. I want to withdraw, regardless of if he follows me or not, and sit on my floor and count the amount of drugs I need to take in order for me to black out and purposely damage my liver and destroy my frontal lobe. It takes ten. I will come up with some excuse to not do it. I ordered something four years ago and it never came. I can tell myself I am waiting for it. I will bleed long and I will bleed hard while I wait. I don't matter.

He reaches over and he touches me, I feel my chest uprooting and I can't move again. I'm called back to the moment he differentiated me and myself and I feel the same. I remember everything I forgot at the hotel. It explodes from a deeply sequestered area of my mind as if it was being tied down and couldn't withstand the pressure. I start even doubting that that happened. I touch him back, doubting he's here. It's chaste but I move on my own and hold him.

He fixes my hair. I let him.

"Hey," he says.

"Hello," I say.

He smiles at me. "Hello?"

"Hello."

More time passes like this, and I want to describe it as a comfortable, unprovoked silence. It's

natural./p>

“Patrick, can you tell me something?”

I answer with a blink.

“Do you want to be alone for the night?”

Imagining sleeping alone on a bed that inevitably will be cold is an uncomfortable thought. I don't respond.

“I think you need a little more time.”

I nod.

“So I should go?”

I shake my head.

"Then, I will."

He hugs me harder. He is soft.

“But you’re not gonna...”

I blink.

“You’re not going to stop talking to me again, are you?”

I look at him carefully. I squeeze his hand and with my opposite, I rub his head- the spot I cut hair off. He hasn’t noticed. Maybe he never will. I close my eyes, I breathe. And I smile, which causes him to smile.

“Hope not.”

"You won't?"

"Will you?"

"No, silly."

"Am I dreaming?"

The answer lies in the switchblade in my pocket. One hand falls from his back, the other remains. I unsheathe it, I hear him gasp as it must tear his soft, soft skin- even if just on a minor scale- through my pocket. I rub circles into his back like he did to me. I sheathe it, but keep it threateningly apparent. I run it up his body, starting from his thigh up to his neck. I kiss him. Slowly, he kisses me back.

Tomorrow, we can go out to eat. Tomorrow, I'll give him that gift.

probably gonna write more at some point to be honest, whoops

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