

anything

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by [djheddy](#)

Summary

“You’re in a good mood,” Neil said, looking across the parking lot to see Nicky walking out the stadium, the others behind him.

Andrew shrugged. “I’m preparing myself to be entertained.”

Neil looked at him. “Huh?”

Andrew gestured towards the foxes. “They’re about to surprise you, for your birthday.”

Neil stood up straight. “Oh god,” he said, but it was too late.

or, the foxes force neil to celebrate his birthday in classic fox fashion, and andrew and neil cant help being cute

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Neil and Andrew were leaning against the car, waiting for the others to finish changing after practice. Neil stuck his hands in his pocket and turned his face up to the clear blue sky, eyes closed and sighing contentedly as he felt the breeze drift across his face. He smiled and opened his eyes when Andrew poked him in the cheek. Andrew was staring at him, a frown on his face. Neil grinned and leaned forwards. When they met Andrew opened his lips and blew smoke into Neil's mouth. He gasped, surprised, and Andrew pushed him away, taking another drag while Neil breathed out, tasting the nicotine on his tongue. He shook his head, knocking his shoulder against Andrew's lightly and looking away so Andrew couldn't see him smile.

"You're in a good mood," Neil said, looking across the parking lot to see Nicky walking out the stadium, the others behind him.

Andrew shrugged. "I'm preparing myself to be entertained."

Neil looked at him. "Huh?"

Andrew gestured towards the foxes. "They're about to surprise you, for your birthday."

Neil stood up straight. "Oh god," he said, but it was too late, suddenly a grinning Nicky and a beaming Matt were in front of the charge and Matt was ruffling Neil's hair and Dan was scooping him up in a hug and they were *singing happy birthday*.

"Please. Stop." Neil said, wrestling away from hugging bodies. He glared at Aaron, who was looking away and barely moving his lips as he joined in, as if to say *even you*, and then at Andrew while the singing continued. "You let this happen."

Andrew shrugged, finishing his cigarette and watching it fall to the ground, crushing it with his toe. But when Neil looked to Renee's face for confirmation she was smiling.

"Fuck's sake," Neil said, and put his head in his hands. Finally the singing stopped, so Neil looked up, managing a small polite smile. "Thank you," he said, "let's hope we never have to do this again."

"Stop being a drama queen," said Allison, "how often does a young stud get to turn 19?"

Neil raised an eyebrow and Matt cleared his throat. "Well," Nicky said, looking thoughtful, "I mean excluding like the fact we thought you were already 19 and your other birthday was two months ago." He grinned.

Neil rolled his eyes. "19 isn't even a special age. You don't get anything at 19."

"You get the party of your life!" said Matt. He put his hand in his pocket and fished out his car key. "Let's go."

Kevin stepped forward and placed a hand on Neil's upper arm to guide him towards the passenger seat. Neil shook it off and took a deep breath. He plunged himself into the seat and glared at Andrew again. "Traitor," he said.

Andrew gave him a brief unimpressed look and started up the car once Nicky, Aaron and Kevin were in the back. He turned the key and shot off.

When Neil realised they weren't even going back to Fox Tower he sighed. "What do I need?" he asked, turning to face Nicky.

"We got it all man, don't worry," Nicky said. He grinned at Neil's expression. "Seriously, you need to lighten up. You think Andrew would let us make you do anything you were gonna hate?"

Neil turned to study Andrew's neutral expression. "Fine," he said tightly, but that only made Nicky laugh louder, and Nicky and Aaron simultaneously made *whipped* motions with their hands.

Kevin started talking about new recruits for the summer, and Nicky and Aaron joined in. Everyone was in a good mood today, Neil thought, remembering Andrew against the car in the parking lot, and the observation only served to make him more suspicious, sinking further into his seat. He popped his feet up onto the dashboard and sighed.

"Stop sulking," muttered Andrew, and he grabbed Neil's hand, resting their hands between them. He started to trace little patterns into Neil's palm and across his knuckles, and Neil stared out the window, then closed his eyes, feeling tension uncurl from his body as Andrew stroked his hand over and over again.

He awoke abruptly when Andrew pulled roughly off the highway. Three bodies in the back hurtled to the side of the car. "*Jesus*, Andrew," Aaron said, rubbing his head where it had hit the window.

Nicky untangled himself from his cousin. "If you could concentrate less on your boyfriend and a bit more on the road that'd be swell."

Neil opened the glove compartment for a suitable weapon but only found a pen. He passed it to Andrew who threw it half-heartedly at Nicky. Kevin chuckled.

"Columbia," Neil noticed, recognising where they were at the edge of the city. "Original."

"Could you pretend not to be an asshole, just for one day?" said Aaron, crossing his arms. "Nicky's spent ages planning this."

"Oh god, that just makes it worse," Neil said.

Nicky beamed at his cousin. "Thank you Aaron," he said. "I have, and Neil's unenthusiasm is not going to bring me down."

Andrew pulled off earlier than they would for any of their usual places, and Neil found himself sat in a car in what looked like an abandoned parking lot. As the others piled out the back, and he saw Matt's truck pull up behind them, he looked at Andrew one last time, a plead on his face.

Andrew rolled his eyes and grabbed Neil by the collar. "You're only making it worse for yourself," he said, and pulled him in for a bruising kiss. It only lasted a few seconds before he pulled away. "And Nicky really has put a lot of effort into this."

Neil opened his mouth. "Hypocrit!" he yelled as Andrew smirked and opened his door. "You'd hate this too."

"I'm not stupid enough to have friends," Andrew said as he got out the car.

Neil closed his eyes, counted to five, and opened his door.

When he leaned against the car he felt like he was facing a firing squad. He stuffed his hands in his pockets and waited for his sentence.

Nicky produced a bottle of vodka and Matt pulled plastic shot glasses out the back of his truck. Allison handed them round and winked when she handed one to Neil. "It's too early for speeches," she said, "but I just want to say for the record that I love a birthday. Let's get wasted," and downed her shot.

"That was beautiful," said Matt, and everyone else followed suit.

Andrew and Neil looked at each other, and Neil let the gaze anchor him as they downed their shots. Vodka burned down his throat, and he smirked at Andrew, reaching out to lace their fingers together.

"Fine," he said, feeling himself relent. "What's next?"

He hadn't considered what this display of public affection would do to his friends, but kept his eyes firmly on Matt's while Nicky looked like he was going to cry. Matt cleared his throat, so obviously *not looking* at where Neil held Andrew's hand that it was clear he wanted to. "Right!" he said, rubbing his hands together as Dan and Renee started collecting shot glasses. "So Neil, we've only known each other a year, and you're not the most vocal guy with his opinions, so we weren't really sure what you'd enjoy. So mostly we just came up with a bunch of shit we thought sounded fun and then Andrew vetoed almost everything until we were left with basically nothing to work with." He sighed, and Neil squeezed Andrew's fingers.

Nicky stalked off at that point, and the others turned to follow him. Neil dropped Andrew's hand. "Wait," he said. "That was it? That was the explanation?" He turned to Andrew, but he'd already started walking off after the others. Neil shook his head, hurrying to keep up. It was so unlike Andrew to... well, *anything*, with the Foxes, that Neil couldn't help but go along with it.

But he had no idea where they were going. As far as he could tell it looked as though they were in an abandoned car park on the edges of Columbia for an old abandoned factory. “What is this place?” he asked, walking alongside Andrew.

“Factory,” Andrew replied shortly, looking at Neil. He poked him in the side.

Neil sighed. “I can see that Andrew, thanks.”

When they reached the door Nicky produced the vodka again, and Neil could tell it was going to be a long evening. He took his shot, but hesitated. But then Andrew was holding his own shot glass against Neil’s lips, a question on his face. Neil couldn’t help it, he smirked and returned the favour, and they poured their shots into each other’s mouths. His throat burned, his face burned, he wanted to kiss Andrew. He settled for reaching out for his hand again, squeezing it with a grin.

The Foxes were grinning, and Matt and Dan turned to each other to do the same, pouring shots into each other’s mouths and then Matt flung his shot glass into the air and grabbed Dan, kissing her dramatically as she laughed. Allison and Nicky did the same, Allison throwing an arm around Nicky’s shoulders, both wincing lightly against the alcohol. Kevin and Aaron had already done their shots and were looking around with matching unimpressed expressions. Renee was watching them, sucking at her water bottle, smiling at their friends.

Neil couldn’t help it. He grinned. “Next?” he asked.

“Did you know,” said Allison, “this factory is abandoned?” She had a look of trouble on her face as she grabbed Neil’s hand and dragged him forwards, one arm settling round his shoulder.

“We drove past it a few weeks ago,” Nicky said, “so me and Allison came and looked around.” Something in Neil’s chest tightened, and he frowned.

“It’s properly abandoned,” said Dan, “Allison had people look into it and everything. No one wants it, it would take too much repair to be worth anything.”

“Ok,” said Neil slowly. Andrew finally tore away from the group and opened the door.

The first thing Neil took in was the fact that the factory was huge. It had an enormous open first floor – in some corners dark and impossible to make out details, where walls were bricked up or blocked-out, and in others streaming light filtered through with the spring breeze where windows had shattered. There was a second floor mezzanine above their heads, an open staircase winding its way up in the corner.

The second thing he noticed was that there were decorations *everywhere*. Streamers and balloons which said “19” and “happy birthday” on them, cushions on the floor in one corner with a projector screen set up for a movie, further away a table with alcohol, a huge board nearby leaning against a wall with a hundred photos on. Neil pulled away from his

friends to walk around. He studied the photos, and recognised some from the stadium, but there were others too, from the last couple of weeks.

It had been a hard month. Neil still bore the scars from meeting his father, and after consultation with doctors knew he always would. Every night had been plagued with nightmares – even now, he felt the tiredness sitting resolute in his bones from the couple of hours he'd managed last night, even with Andrew a breath away, hand stroking hair off his forehead as he'd shaken, too afraid to sleep, too tired to be fully awake.

But it had also been a month of celebration. March had meant winning the championship, and there were photos of that – an official one clearly torn from a newspaper, with Allison holding Renee up in the air, Aaron grinning with an arm around a crying Nicky, Kevin clacking sticks with Matt, Dan crying into Wymack's shoulder as he was turned away, clearly shouting something gruff at someone off camera, and Neil and Andrew in one corner, facing different directions, with arms casually thrown around each other, Neil turned towards his teammates, his face looking as though he'd run a marathon, Andrew looking at Neil as though he was everything. And then there were selfies, photos of the after party, and after that, trips they'd taken to Columbia, road trips, the picnic in the park – after Baltimore, there was no more talk of sides, or separations, none of the Foxes wanting to leave Neil's side, Neil shooting warning glances at anyone who brought up how separate they used to be, or implied they might not be welcome in each other's spaces.

He looked at the photos, at this factory they'd found, at the decorations and drinks and comfort and safety, at everything they'd done for *him*, and blinked.

Matt put a hand on Neil's arm, and he jumped, surprised at how lost in thought he'd been. "Happy birthday dude," Matt said, hugging Neil to his side.

Neil looked away from his friends for a moment, blinking furiously, feeling emotion soar in him, breathed in deeply, then turned back and smiled at Matt. "Well fuck," he said. And then he gave in completely. Knowing it was a mistake, knowing it would only have bad consequences, Neil sought out Nicky's eyes. Nicky looked uncomfortable, fidgeting at the side of the group, meeting Neil's eyes then looking away. Neil walked forward and brought Nicky into a bracing hug.

Nicky softened immediately, and tightened his arms around Neil. "If you cry you're buying me a new sweater," Neil said into Nicky's ear, and Nicky laughed. Neil pulled away. "Alright. What's next?"

Next turned out to be a brief scrimmage upstairs. Upon discovering the factory still had working plumbing, and showers, they'd brought racquets, balls and changes of clothes. The only thing they didn't have was armour or helmets, but as it was a friendly that shouldn't be a problem. Andrew and Aaron painted goals onto opposite walls with chalk and Neil tightened his hand around his racquet, grinning in anticipation.

"Right," announced Dan. "We're playing a game." She raised her eyebrows at Neil, grinning. "We're going to draw positions out of a hat."

Kevin and Neil groaned. “Oh *god*,” Neil said.

“What’s the point in that?” said Kevin.

“It’s fun,” said Renee, producing a hat with little pieces of paper and holding it out to Kevin. Kevin scrunched up his face in determination, waggled his fingers round in the hat, and pulled out *backliner*. He sighed dramatically.

Neil went last, and almost thought they’d rigged it when he saw Andrew had *striker* and he had *goalie*.

Neil positioned himself in front of the chalk goal. This was going to be embarrassing. He shook his head at Nicky, who was similarly positioned in front of his own goal. “At least you’re huge,” Neil shouted across the room.

“Thanks Neil, make sure you tell that to everyone we know,” Nicky yelled back, grinning.

Kevin was Neil’s sole backliner, and he had Matt for a striker. Somehow Allison had managed to get dealer, and clacked sticks triumphantly with Dan who had offered to be referee, but Neil also noticed that she’d brought her camera with her. Allison called “*Oh you’re going down!*” to the other end of the floor, where Renee was waiting as backliner, Aaron as dealer and Andrew as striker. Both twins looked unimpressed at this unfortunate outcome, and Renee and Nicky were laughing against each other as the two got into position, barely looking at each other.

“Oh if they’re not even going to look at each other this is going to be *easy*,” Neil heard Allison say to Matt.

Kevin started to shout, “Matt, make sure you –“

“No,” said Allison, glaring at him. “Kevin take that exy stick out your ass for once. This isn’t about winning.”

Even Neil agreed he wasn’t sure what was so wrong with enjoying winning. Kevin raised an eyebrow at him and Neil shook his head, grinning.

It was disastrous, obviously. For one thing it was clear Andrew would stab anyone who crashed into him, so Kevin tripped over his feet the first time he almost checked him, and Andrew walked lazily forward with the ball. He threw it to Aaron who caught it and threw the ball against the wall at Neil’s back. Neil had lunged in the wrong direction, fell over, and winced as he hit the hard ground. He got up again quickly. He had no idea how Andrew did this. His limbs were in all the wrong places. He stretched out and repositioned his body.

Matt drove the ball forward and passed to Allison, who threw the ball so hard at an unaware Nicky that it almost hit his crotch. She stretched an arm across Nicky’s shoulders and muffled a laugh against his head.

After Neil's third unsuccessful save against Aaron, he realised he was having fun. He watched his friends, laughing at their own incompetence, wearing bruises proudly and criticising each other across the court.

"Hey Andrew," Neil called at one point when play was restarting. Andrew looked up to meet his eyes. "Bet you can't score on me." It was the first time Neil had ever suggested a bet, and there was almost a reverent hushed silent before chatter started up enthusiastically, as Foxes took sides and yelled out amounts of money.

Andrew sighed. "I'm so disappointed in you," he said, but he didn't reject the bet, instead took his racquet in both hands and got into his starting position.

They stared each other down.

"Wait, what are you betting?" shouted Nicky.

Neil didn't look away from Andrew as he mouthed, *anything*.

Andrew's eyes bore into him. He smirked.

Aaron served to Andrew immediately, and this time Kevin clacked his racquet into Andrew's, being careful to keep their bodies apart, and the ball dropped into Kevin's racquet as he tore away. Aaron was ready though and lowered his body, crashing Kevin to the floor. "Illegal check!" shouted Dan through laughter at having seen Kevin go over, and then Andrew had the ball and was racing it towards Neil. He feinted around Allison and hurled the ball at Neil – who beat it away.

Neil's jaw dropped. "Oh my god," he said, grinning as Allison raised a fist in the air. He adopted a presenter voice and said, "The legendary Andrew Minyard loses reputation in *stunning* blow against rising star Neil Josten."

Andrew rolled his eyes. "Set it up," he called, and moved back into his position.

They went again, and this time Neil saw a slight tick on Andrew's face and threw his body to the right where he knew Andrew would aim the ball. Kevin looked like he wanted to kiss him, and this was all so *ridiculous* and the fact that it was bothering Andrew was just a bonus.

Allison threw the ball to Matt, but Renee slammed her whole body into him and threw the caught ball to Aaron while Matt glared at her. Neil heard him say, "I thought you were so sweet when I first met you," and then Aaron was passing the ball to Andrew and suddenly Andrew was running at Neil, and Neil planted his feet firmly, and it didn't look like Andrew was going to stop –

And then Andrew crashed into Neil, pushing him back against the wall and crashing their lips together. Neil was so stunned he didn't move, let himself be kissed, planting his hands back against the wall, feeling one of Andrew's hands grip his hip tightly, almost forgot where he was, and it wasn't til a second later that he heard Andrew tap the ball against the

wall. Andrew moved back and raised his eyebrows. Neil panted, stunned, then Andrew tapped the ball against Neil's nose. "What do I win?" he asked.

"*HO. LY. SHIT.*" yelled Nicky. "*DID YOU SEE THAT?*"

"Oh god," said Aaron, "I'm never going to be able to *unsee* that."

"Babe is it wrong I found that hot?" asked Matt, concern in his voice. Neil looked over Andrew's shoulder to see Dan wrapping an arm around Matt's waist, giggling uncontrollably into her hand.

"He cheated!" shouted Kevin, furious. "He's literally holding the ball in his hand! He tackled the goalie!"

Nicky's laughter ricocheted off the walls, echoing loudly through the factory, and then everyone was laughing. The Foxes started peeling away to Kevin's loud objections, and Matt rolled his eyes and caught up to him, nodding sympathetically as Kevin listed his problems with Andrew and the game and everyone made their way to the showers or downstairs.

Neil turned his attention back to Andrew, whose eyes hadn't left his face. "What was that for?" he asked.

Andrew didn't answer, was still burning his eyes into Neil's, but he brought up a hand to cradle his face as he kissed him again, softer this time. When he drew away he said, "What do I win?"

Neil rolled his eyes and pushed lightly at Andrew. "That was so blatantly a foul, asshole," he said.

Andrew shrugged. "Ref didn't say anything."

"That's because Dan's probably just won 10 bets about us."

"Good for her. What do I win?"

Neil started walking off. "Anything, Andrew."

Later they ordered pizza, and someone stuck on a film, and Nicky announced that they were playing "*drinking Harry Potter*," where every time anyone said Harry's name they had to drink. Aaron, Kevin and Matt had joined him, and it sounded as though the rules for when they drank were getting more and more ridiculous.

"Every time a bad guy is on screen!" shouted Nicky.

"Every time someone's too sincere," said Kevin.

"Every time someone makes up a new rule!" said Matt, drinking.

“Every time Matt drinks,” said Aaron, drinking.

Andrew and Neil were sat at the edge of the group, legs crossed on the ground, knees touching, film within view but not quite joining in. They sipped at whisky, Neil thoroughly entertained by the spectacle. In another corner Dan, Renee and Allison were still making cocktails, giggling and chatting in quiet voices.

When Neil got bored of watching his friends he watched Andrew instead. Andrew’s face was turned to the screen, for all his protestations against the movie choice he seemed caught up in the storyline. It didn’t mean he didn’t catch Neil staring though, and he turned his face towards his, an eyebrow raised. “Well?” he said. “Are you having fun?”

Neil sighed. “Yes,” he said warily. “Which concerns me. Nicky isn’t going to do this every year is he?”

Andrew just looked at him. Neil replayed his words and looked away. *Every year.*

“Planning on sticking around?” said Andrew. Neil looked up at him.

In that moment it suddenly felt incredibly important, this thing they were doing. Him and Andrew, and this thing they had, this safety and happiness, touches and looks. Living, here, with these people who were his family. He didn’t know how to put it into words. He looked at Andrew, and tried to put everything into that look, taking his hand and squeezing it. “Yes,” he said, and he leaned forward, waiting for Andrew in the middle, and Andrew met him there. Their kiss was gentle, slow, it was Andrew’s lips brushing teasingly against his, it was Andrew’s fingers brushing across his cheek, it was everything they didn’t say out loud, and Neil sighed into it.

When Andrew pulled away, Neil grinned and said, “So I guess public displays of affection are on the table now?”

“Don’t get used to it,” Andrew said, but he wrapped a hand around Neil’s waist and Neil rested his head on Andrew’s shoulder. “Happy birthday.”

Neil didn’t find he minded the words for once. “Oh hey, what do you want for winning?” he asked, as the girls finally joined the others on the floor, Dan settling into Matt’s lap and Allison throwing an arm each round Aaron and Nicky, and Renee passing Kevin a drink. Neil turned his head to look up at Andrew.

Andrew tightened his arm around Neil’s waist, bringing him even closer so that Neil could feel Andrew’s heart beating against his side. Neil uncrossed his legs and folded them over Andrew’s knees so he could face him. “Nothing, Neil. I don’t want anything.”

End Notes

thanks for reading! :D -hedy xxx

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