

can't fight that feeling

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by [throughfire](#)

Summary

“We have to keep this quiet,” he realizes.

“That’s,” Eddie starts, his eyebrows tilting inwards adorably. “I mean, yeah, if that’s what you wanna do, then—”

“Not for long,” Buck protests. “I’m thinking until tomorrow.”

The eyebrows rise with interest; the eyes beneath get their spark back. “Yeah?”

“It’s Maddie and Chimney’s wedding day,” Buck says, slipping his hands down the last bit and entwining them with Eddie’s. “Today should be solely about them, about their love. You and I can have tomorrow. All the tomorrows.”

It's a perfect summer night. Warm despite the late hour, and not a single cloud drifting across the sky to hide the moon and the stars.

Buck doesn't know what time it is, exactly, because his phone still lies on the coffee table and he hasn't felt the urge to go inside and grab it. He doesn't need it to realize that hours must have passed since they first moved out here, into the garden, and perched themselves on a lounge. One, singular. It hasn't felt crowded despite his long limbs and Eddie's muscular stature; it's felt perfect. He can't remember feeling this relaxed in years.

Eddie is coming back outside, now, moving quietly with two new bottles of beer in one hand. He leaves a crack in the door open, hands one bottle over to Buck with an easy smile, and then he sinks back down on his abandoned spot at the foot of the lounge. He crosses one leg under himself; lets the other foot rest steadily on the ground beneath them and sighs out contentment.

"Thanks," Buck tells him. He takes a sip from the bottle – it must be his fifth one tonight, perhaps even the sixth – and presses his foot in under Eddie's leg. His thoughts are a bit blurred by the alcohol and he feels more courageous like this, more inclined to yield under the weight of everything his heart longs for.

"Time's it?"

"Why?" Eddie cocks an eyebrow, hand halted mid-air with the neck of the bottle aimed towards his mouth. "Are you getting bored of me?"

"No," Buck says. Honest. "I could stay like this forever."

Maybe *too* honest. He could perhaps have twisted those words a little in order to save himself, his heart, simply by alluding to the world around them – how quiet and warm it is – but he doesn't want to. For once, he doesn't want to shield that part of himself from Eddie; that lovesick part that Eddie is completely unaware of. He wants it to be heard.

Eddie just smiles. He might not have caught on to the underlying meaning, the implication that Eddie is what's truly making the night special. He just takes a swig of that beer, finally, and then says, "Nearing two. They're all still passed out in there."

"*Fuck*," Buck breathes out. "We're gonna be dead on our feet tomorrow. Maddie actually *will* kill me if she catches me yawning during the ceremony."

Eddie curls a hand around Buck's ankle and gives it a weak shake – it's more of a hold, a source of comfort – then he smiles and says, "You won't. You'll be so caught up in it all that you won't even realize that you're tired."

Buck hums in consideration. "Guess you're right."

A moment passes. They drink their beer in silence, with comfort spanning all around them, and the last thing that Buck wants to do is end this. Leave it behind. Go to bed and wake up to a world that has no idea that he and Eddie shared these hours together, undisturbed.

It's been three hours made up of quiet conversation. Soft murmuring with that back door cracked open as a faint reminder that other people still exist; that they're not drifting through the universe alone even though it has felt like it ever since Albert passed out on the couch and left the two of them alone in wakefulness.

They've talked about everything. Anything. And it shouldn't be so easy, shouldn't feel so intoxicating. They spend so many hours of every week in each other's company, and yet being with Eddie still makes Buck's heart beat faster – he still clings to every word when Eddie speaks because he never tires of hearing him. There's a magic to it, to the synchronization between hands and mouth and to the emotions that flit over Eddie's face when he turns thoughts into words.

If Buck allows himself to really think about it, about this evening, it feels domestic. There's *always* a sense of domesticity to their evenings together anyway; they cook together, eat together, and he gets to watch Eddie take Christopher to bed and stay behind afterwards to watch movies. It happens several nights a week at this point, and he loves it. Feels like he belongs in that routine.

But it's *more* tonight. Of everything. It feels more poignant somehow; sits heavier in his heart.

They were all having such a good time, eating junk food and talking about love and life and baseball while each of them got their asses kicked by Chris in one videogame after the other. The afternoon turned into evening, the evening grew older, and eventually Christopher lost his fight against sleep and sagged heavily against Buck's side, warm and safe with a smile still lingering on his lips.

Chimney gave up, next, proclaiming a need for beauty sleep around ten and heading off to the guest bedroom with a grin lining his entire body, excitement palpable in every step that he took down the hallway to indicate that he was only really going to bed to get *out* of it as soon as possible again.

Albert was out like a light an hour later, and everything was suddenly so quiet. So different. Buck got to carry Chris to bed, tuck him in and press a kiss to the kid's forehead; got to come back out to the kitchen to the sight of an Eddie who was stacking plates in the sink, looking warm and comfortable and safe.

They weren't tired. Neither one was inclined to go to bed any time soon, so they moved towards the backyard, armed with nothing but beer as they headed into the warm summer night.

Buck truly feels scaled off of everything else, still. Open and vulnerable to the moonlight with nothing but that bottle in his hand to cling to, to depend on.

There's been no distractions out here; no movie playing, nothing calling for their attention or stealing one of them away from the other the way their nights usually progress. They've been *talking*. They've been focusing on each other; spoken and been heard in ways Buck can't remember being listened to before. He never wants to go back inside.

“Do you think Maddie is nervous?”

“Yeah,” Buck ponders. “More so than Chim at least.”

“*All* of us are more nervous than Chimney.”

Buck snorts, then he keeps laughing quietly to himself because it's true and he's slightly drunk and it's quite hilarious, really. Chimney is getting *married* in less than twelve hours, and he's been the very definition of relaxed all day. He's been laughing with them, has sipped on decaf coffee and been happily drawn into Chris's world of virtual reality with no signs of stress about the upcoming day. When Buck passed by the guest room on his way to the bathroom ten minutes after Chimney had first sauntered off to bed, he glanced in and saw the man fast asleep on top of the covers, still fully clothed. There's not been a single grain of worry in that mind of his, nothing but happiness radiating off of him. Buck adores him.

He drinks in Eddie's lazy grin, now. The leftover amusement in those gorgeous eyes, the lingering laughter along the curve of his mouth. He lets the moment ebb out slowly between them, enjoying every fading second of it until it no longer feels like his voice will ruin it anymore.

“I talked to her on the phone this morning,” he says. “She seemed to be doing okay. She's excited about it, about being with Chim, committing to him like that. I think it's just the rest of it – everything around it – that worries her.”

Eddie hums to show that he's listening, tightens his grip of Buck's ankle a fraction, rubbing his thumb against the sliver of skin that peeks out between sock and denim.

“I remember when we were kids, she used to play pretend wedding with her stuffed animals,” Buck goes on, smiling at the memory. “She loved dressing up in mom's fancy dresses whenever our parents were out for the night and then I'd help her hang them back up in the closet again so mom and dad wouldn't notice afterwards.”

“I can picture that,” Eddie grins, bright-eyed and beautiful, ever so attentive. “You doing everything you could to help your sister be happy – it sounds quite familiar.”

Buck allows those words to sink in beneath his skin, lets them warm his cheeks up and presses his toes more firmly against Eddie's leg. A silent response, a sign of appreciation.

“I think,” he ponders aloud, pausing briefly to piece together one thought with another. “I think being married to Doug destroyed that fairytale aspect of it for her? Turned it into a horror story and peeled all the magic away from it. And Chimney has restored some of her faith just by being himself, by loving her and by giving her time, but... I don't think anything can take that fear away completely.”

Eddie's nodding in response to those thoughts, with new emotions crowding his eyes. His voice is low when he says, “The past never goes away completely. No matter how strong someone is – and she's one of the strongest people I've ever met – it'll always be there. It's all a matter of moving forward anyway, on from that point I guess. About growing with it.”

Buck knows that Eddie understands this. Eddie has such a tender heart beneath that tough exterior, and he knows about love and loss, about pain and aftermaths and about finding new hope. He knows what it's like to carry the weight of a tough past into a future and brave the risks of history repeating itself again.

Buck suddenly finds himself feeling overwhelmingly glad that Eddie and Maddie have met each other – that both their paths have carried them onwards to a point where they crossed. He's grateful for the entire whirlwind of a map that they *all* have made up together, from Buck and Maddie and through everyone at the firehouse, to Athena. Their own world map of paths coming together to a single point of comfort.

"I can't imagine that her nerves are *too* bad, though, what with the company she's had today," Buck contemplates, tapping into something lighter, following those fictional paths in his mind to a safe and reassuring point. "If I were getting married, I'd want Hen and Athena around, too."

Eddie shakes Buck's ankle again, says; "You'd be good company, too."

"I don't know," Buck shrugs. "I feel like my mouth gets away from me sometimes. I say dumb things and I don't even realize it."

Eddie considers him, then, with a gaze that is so warm, so attentive. It's both safe and unnerving to be in the focal point of.

"You're always calming me down when I can't see sense," Eddie lands on eventually, speaking slowly, with certainty underlining his words. "There's never anything dumb about it."

Buck usually tries not to read too much into his friendship with Eddie – worries that he'll project his own feelings or that his hopelessly hopeful heart will misread things that aren't even there. Eddie was the one who brought this particular aspect of their relationship up though; who brought it into moonlight where it hovers, highlighted, between them. And it rings true to Buck's ears, too. Eddie doesn't work himself up over much, doesn't act unreasonable or lose himself to emotion all that often, but when it does happen it's always Buck who manages to reach him, who breaks through the barrier of pent-up emotion and brings him back down to some sort of equilibrium.

He thinks, maybe, that he makes Eddie better when he's around, the same way Eddie makes Buck better in return. That they help each other grow.

"I think so."

Buck looks up from his own fingers on the neck of his bottle, meeting Eddie's gaze. He can feel his own eyebrows tilt inwards in confusion, and asks; "I said that out loud?"

"No more beer for you," Eddie grins. "You did. The ending of whatever thought you were working your way through, at least. It all played out in a pretty complicated manner on your face."

Buck feels instantly warmer under that, under the knowledge that Eddie was watching him. He feels settled, too. A bit loose and entirely happy here, in inebriation and Eddie's company. He grins back sheepishly and taps the glass of the bottle with a fingernail, saying, "I probably should have stopped after the second one."

He still takes another swig from the bottle right after, though, because he doesn't feel all that bad about it. Chimney is asleep but entirely sober inside the house in case anything were to happen that would put Chris at risk, and beyond that Buck feels too good right now to fully grasp the consequences that may hit him tomorrow. Thinking straight is damn near impossible with the way Eddie's looking at him, anyway, so he really doesn't blame himself.

"How many nights like tonight do you think you'll get in your lifetime?" Eddie asks him.

He's probably talking about the circumstances – a weekend off, a warm summer night under a cloudless sky with nothing but his sister's wedding on the horizon to pay attention to. And when Buck thinks about it like that, the prospect of denying himself a couple of extra beers does seem foolish, because an opportunity to relax and enjoy himself on such a glorious night may not come around again for a long time.

Buck has had five – or six, he really *has* lost count at this point – beers, though. He has enjoyed himself to the point where his heart's more present in his thoughts than the rational part of his mind, and to his ears Eddie's words sound more pointed than they really are. His heart ties those words to the part that the two of them play in the equation of this beautiful night, to the piece of history that is unfolding around the two of them sat upon this single lounger. How many times will he and Eddie be together like this, talk like this, be so unfiltered and raw with each other?

The thought of it never happening again makes Buck's chest twinge painfully; makes the prospect of going inside even more repulsive to him. He wants it to be the two of them like this forever, at any hour of the day, but he'll settle for two AM in this backyard with only the moon as their witness if it means that it'll never end. He just *doesn't want it to end*.

Eddie *still* has his fingers curled lazily around Buck's ankle, resting in a rather protective manner over old scars and denim. He applies more pressure to the touch, now, and smiles crookedly as he says, "Hey, don't go all wistful on me. What are you thinking now?"

He's too beautiful. Too earnest. Buck wants to curl against his chest and scoop out every thought from every corner of his own mind, murmur them all into the collar of Eddie's shirt and feel them land safely within Eddie's arms. He so desperately wants to give all of himself to this man, and holding that one, important part of himself back is exhausting.

"I don't have anywhere to sleep," he sighs. It's *a* thought, it's just not the one Eddie was asking for – the one Eddie deserves to hear.

"Yes, you do. Do you want me to pretend that that was what you were really thinking?"

Buck is suddenly ashamed to look at Eddie. He nods in the general direction of him; swallows uncomfortably and says, "Yeah."

Eddie nods back at him, then he finishes off his beer, all while glancing over at Buck. Buck can feel the weight of that gaze, the knowing nature of it upon his skin. It makes him feel transparent, as though it doesn't really matter that he didn't share the thoughts that Eddie wanted to hear because Eddie can see right through him, see it all carved into bones and rushing through veins.

Buck sighs again. He's suddenly very aware that tomorrow is going to be hell. Carrying this night with him, carrying a heart that is so full and empty all at once – so starved for what it cannot fully have – is going to be *hell*. And Eddie will be right there, just like he always is; at Buck's fingertips but never Buck's to fully hold on to.

A moment later – Buck's not really sure how much time has passed while he's been moping – Eddie's the one who's exhaling heavily into the night air. When Buck finally looks up at him again Eddie is already shaking his head at something, a dejected twist to his smile as he pushes himself up off the lounge and leaves Buck's ankle and toes feeling cold; all of him lonely.

All Buck manages is a confused noise in response to the turn of events. There's disappointment throbbing painfully in his stomach and desperation is making him curl his fingers tighter around the neck of the bottle just so that he won't reach out after Eddie – try to reel him back down.

"You keep zoning out on me, man," Eddie offers in response to Buck's hopeless communication, his smile *still* stained with something that Buck can't pinpoint. "Let's just go to bed."

Buck has no bed to go to, but pointing that out lead him absolutely nowhere before so he just takes his disappointment and goes. He'd follow Eddie anywhere.

He closes the back door quietly behind himself and musters up a tired smile at the sight of Albert's limbs hanging awkwardly off the couch; his face half-eaten by the armrest. Buck feels pretty awkward himself. A bit empty inside, suddenly, where something akin to dread can surge forcefully and put him off-kilter. He almost feels like he's done something wrong.

They leave their empty bottles on the kitchen counter. There's a whole graveyard of them now; empty and left behind to speak of past events. It *already* belongs to the past; they've already moved on and Buck isn't getting any of it back.

He desperately wants to drag Eddie back outside by the wrist and wish for the magic to swallow them whole again, just for another minute. He can behave for another minute; *be* with Eddie without letting his heart turn those sixty seconds into something wistful.

The next moment, his fingertips are brushing against the knot of bone in Eddie's left wrist, moved there by alcohol and desire. His thoughts are slow, his heart eager, and when he tears his gaze away from his rebellious hand to look at Eddie's face, he finds that Eddie's already watching him, his expression unreadable.

He looks at Buck's hand, then, where it's still touching Eddie's wrist, and seems to be contemplating it all. Is perhaps trying to make sense of something that cannot possibly be

sensible because all it is built of is Buck's emotions, and they've always, always made a senseless mess out of everything that Buck has invested himself in, one way or another.

Buck has always ended up alone in the aftermath of those emotions, and he can't have that, now. He can't have Eddie figuring these particular emotions out and abandoning Buck in them, so he withdraws his hand as though it's been burned by the touch. His reflexes are shit, though, and his movements are sluggish, and he doesn't quite understand. Eddie's hand is catching his own mid-escape and he doesn't understand how anything can feel so nice, so comforting, so *right*.

Something in his expression must be loud, because Eddie spends a long moment gauging it, searching Buck's face for something that he doesn't know how to give away. He feels too exposed already, can't imagine that there's anything left inside of him that isn't also pinned to his skin, evident in the palm of his hand. Whatever it is, Eddie takes it – drags Buck across the hardwood floor by the hand, then down the hallway and into his room. He clicks the door shut behind them and hits the light switch on the wall, casting the room in a warm glow..

They're standing face to face, now, watching one another. Hand in hand, still, with Buck's heart in Eddie's possession, and Buck can't quite breathe right. He can't even bring himself to blink because he doesn't know what's about to happen, but he's terrified that he's going to miss it.

Then Eddie kisses him. It's one, swift press of lips against lips, soft and breathtaking and *over*. He's already leaning back again, looking at Buck with a gaze that somehow manages to pose a question and a challenge all at once. He's searching Buck's face again, awaiting a reaction, but he's not moving away, not taking it back. And Buck *wants*.

He's slightly drunk and entirely in love and he cannot turn away from this, cannot deny himself this taste of everything that he has ever wanted when it's being offered to him.

He has Eddie's '*how many nights like tonight do you think you'll get in your lifetime?*' stuck on repeat in the back of his head and plastered onto his skin with a sticky sense of urgency, because he can't argue with it; he knows that this opportunity will only come once.

So he leans in. Rises to the challenge and answers the unspoken question with another kiss, curls his free hand in the front of Eddie's shirt and just *holds on*.

Eddie kisses back with hunger right away; his want clearly spelled out in the intensity of his actions. He still isn't backing away from this. He's letting go of Buck's hand, but only to press both of his to Buck's hips and drag him in even closer.

The collision of their chests is soft but pointed; the air in Buck's lungs already fragmented. He makes a noise against Eddie's mouth, hitches in another labored breath and trembles all over when Eddie sucks his bottom lip into his mouth.

He lets go of Eddie's sweater and slides his hand up to Eddie's jawline, curls the other one around the back of Eddie's neck and opens his mouth under Eddie's, his mind already clouded with arousal. It's all hot and slick and overwhelming, and Eddie's sneaking his hands beneath the hem of Buck's shirt, pressing distractingly against Buck's skin.

It's been years since Buck had another man's hands on him like this – wide, strong palms and deliciously rough fingertips – and he wasn't in love with that man. He hasn't been in love with any man before; hasn't gotten past the rushing desire of a single night or the fleeting crushes gone up in smoke before a spark ever had a chance to ignite. Not until Eddie. And he knows that there's no going back *after* Eddie – that the world won't be the same again after meeting him, having him, surrendering completely to him. No matter what happens after tonight, he'll always be a bit in love with Eddie.

Eddie is kind. Safe. He navigates the unit that they make up so easily; moves Buck's arms out of his way and peels Buck's shirt off and away in one swift movement that leaves Buck feeling winded. A moment later he's pressing in close against Buck's torso again, bringing his everlasting warmth and pressing it with those intoxicating palms all over Buck's skin while he resumes their kiss.

Buck mindlessly flaps his hands against Eddie's stomach, tries to think past the taste of Eddie's mouth in order to coordinate his fingers; make them grab the hem of Eddie's shirt and tug it upwards. He wants to see Eddie's torso, too. Wants to feel it against his own palms, wants to feel Eddie all over when they kiss.

As soon as the fabric is drawn over Eddie's head and discarded somewhere on the floor, Buck kisses him again. Long and filthy in a way that makes arousal twist in stomach. Both of their breathing's gone rough at this point, and it sounds so loud in Buck's ears, so raw and visceral and he's so fucking *hard*, has such trouble stopping himself from grinding his hips against Eddie's and chasing that feeling in his gut until he crashes right through it, into bliss.

He moves his mouth away eventually; drags his lips down over Eddie's chin and down to the hollow of Eddie's throat. He trails kisses along the collarbone, feels Eddie's hand at the base of his own spine, pressing them together, and finds a particularly soft and inviting spot to drag his teeth over. Eddie makes a noise in reaction, soft and vulnerable, and then Buck has to taste that, too. Commit it upon tongue and mind and engrave it somewhere along his spine so that it'll affect the way he walks, later. He surges back up to capture Eddie's mouth with his own again, hot and frantic and perfect, swallowing that sound right up.

Eddie's jeans are still in the way. Buck tries to get them open, but it's hard when he can't think – when Eddie is kissing him so thoroughly that he can't even move his fingers properly. He can feel Eddie's skin against the back of them though – the very distracting trail of coarse hair that is dipping down below the very fabric that Buck is failing to get past.

Then Eddie's biting down on Buck's lip, and it's all just too much, makes him curl his fingers in the waistline of those damn jeans and mutter, "*Fuck.*"

Eddie laughs against his mouth. Kisses him again, off-center and wonderful, all while slapping Buck's hands away playfully and easily popping the button of his pants open, dragging the zipper down while he's at it. He does the same to Buck's trousers a moment later, easy as anything, and it shouldn't be so hot. Shouldn't make Buck's knees feel so unsteady.

"I hate you," he mumbles, pressing his hand against Eddie's breastbone and pushing them in motion towards the bed, completely fucking done with being patient.

Eddie nods. His smile is tangible against Buck's mouth; his breath hot when he says, "Sure you do."

Then they're kissing again, stumbling blindly to the bed. Eddie turns them at the last moment, pushing Buck down on the bed and then crawling right over him. He kisses a path as he goes, all the way from below Buck's navel to his throat until he's back at the mouth, and it all turns slow and filthy again. A slick, slow exploration while Eddie holds himself up over Buck's body. Buck brushes his own hands over Eddie's sides, slips them down to those defined hips and then back until he can slip them in beneath denim and cotton that is still in his damn way.

Time doesn't exist anymore – has been stretched out beyond recognition, strewn all around them in tiny, insignificant pieces where it can't affect them. Buck has no idea of how long he's been lying there, trapped within the span of Eddie's arms and confined by the humid heat between their bodies, but he mourns the loss when Eddie finally moves back from him.

He only sits up, straddling Buck's thighs and weighing Buck down, anchoring him here, in the moment. Eddie's staring down at him with the most intense of looks, cursing under his breath as he rakes his gaze from Buck's face down to the open v of the zipper of his jeans.

"Holy *fuck*," is all he says, and it really shouldn't make Buck blush considering what they've just been up to, but the want is so bright and undeniable in Eddie's eyes, his attention all-enveloping and addicting to be under, and Buck can't help it.

Eddie looks so good above him, too. His cheeks are flushed and there's already sweat starting to shine along his hairline; his hair disheveled and his chest rising and falling heavily.

Buck has no sanity left, no thought in his mind that isn't *Eddie* and no concept of a reality beyond this bed. His voice is rough and desperate and *honest* when it rasps, "Come back."

Eddie smiles at him. *Softly*. And that's a piece of reality slipping in unannounced; explosive as it hits Buck because that is a smile that Buck sees *every* day, in the most casual of moments. A smile that has been aimed at him a thousand times and that always unravels him a little, but tonight it cuts right down to his bones and flays every layer of emotion off of him until he feels bare and exposed and so damn confused. He wasn't expecting everyday fondness to be woven into the sheets of this bed; to interrupt such an uncommon occurrence and forever brand that soft smile with the association of wandering hands and languid kisses and arousal.

He wants to take it all – the duality of fondness and arousal – and make a future out of it. Doesn't want to leave this bed and spend the rest of his life trembling to pieces every time Eddie smiles at him over a cup of coffee again. Buck wants too much in the worst kind of way and his body aches with it. With want and confusion and a love that's been kept at bay for too long.

He ends up whimpering under the weight of it all, digging his fingers into Eddie's thighs where they bracket his hips, and he can't even bring himself to feel embarrassed about it because Eddie is still smiling down at him as though he's beautiful, as though his chaotic emotions are things to admire.

“One moment,” Eddie promises, and then he leaves. Moves down the bed slowly and takes Buck’s jeans and boxers with him as he goes, exposing inch by inch of Buck’s body and drinking each one in with something that can only be described as hunger shining in his eyes.

He stands up, after, making quick work of disposing his own clothes, and then he’s finally coming back. He settles between Buck’s legs; kisses the inside of the right thigh. It’s so delicate, so affectionate – unlike anything Buck has ever experienced before and it’s exhilarating. Terrifying. Like finding a new universe in the palm of one’s own hand.

Eddie’s hands are strong around Buck’s thighs. The pressure of his fingers against the skin is firm as he pushes those hands up over Buck’s hips and sides, the weight of him making the mattress dip on either side of Buck’s head when Eddie finally brackets Buck’s face with those damn hands and dips down for another kiss.

Buck slips his own palms around Eddie’s back, presses his fingers into the flesh at the curve of Eddie’s ass and drags him down, tired of the cold in the room and desperate to feel Eddie against him again. All of him, every gloriously naked inch.

Eddie is hot and heavy and the weight of him on top of Buck makes breathing even harder, but he likes it. Likes the struggle, the fight to stay here, to keep it. They’re both hard – have been hard for so long, now, but Buck isn’t in a hurry to do anything about it yet He’s so caught up in the rush of it all that he is determined to make it last, to be lost within this moment for as long as he possibly can. He’s fairly sure that it’ll be over for him the moment Eddie gets his hand around him; he doesn’t even think that he’ll need that much if Eddie keeps kissing him like this, licking into Buck’s mouth in a way that makes his entire spine go lax.

Buck flips them around eventually – wants to feel Eddie beneath himself. He situates himself on his knees between Eddie’s thighs and just looks for a moment, takes in the beauty of those features. The dusty black of those thick lashes and the swollen red of that mouth, the stubble over that sharp jawline that has scratched delectably against Buck’s skin as they’ve kissed.

Lean lines of muscle and bone. Abs and hips, the cock long and thick and leaking against Eddie’s lower stomach. Buck has to breathe in deeply at that. Settles a hand against Eddie’s chest to steady himself and presses a curious thumb against Eddie’s left nipple – finds himself stunned and utterly enticed by the moan that it draws out from Eddie and does it again. He licks over the other one, and gets Eddie’s hand against the back of his head as a response. It rests heavily there, and the fingers curl around a handful of Buck’s hair when Buck sucks at that nipple experimentally. He’s so beautifully responsive. So beautiful, period.

Buck contemplates it all for a moment; the feeling of Eddie under his hands; the sight of him tousled and aroused on this bed, seemingly willing to take anything that Buck will give him, and to give anything in return. And despite the thick, thick fog of desire in Buck’s mind he’s *still* so utterly aware of how this will be his only chance to have Eddie like this, to steal these little bits of the other man that he’ll be able to hide away in his ribcage later.

So he makes his way down Buck’s torso, trailing fingers down Eddie’s side yet another time and scraping teeth over the soft skin at Eddie’s hip. He presses a few kisses over Eddie’s

lower abdomen and smiles against the flesh there when his affection makes Eddie shiver beneath him.

Then he takes Eddie's length in his hand, to the sound of his own name moaned from between Eddie's lips. A rumble from deep within him, soft and encompassing as it sinks into the room. It almost sounds too precious for what they're doing, holds too much meaning.

"Can I—" Buck forces out past his bottom lip, past the stinging left there by teeth that have bitten desperation into flesh.

"*Anything*," Eddie tells him, breathless. "Yes."

It's all Buck needs. More than he could have ever asked for. He leans down and licks from the base of Eddie's cock up to the tip, takes the balls into his palm and sucks the length of Eddie into his mouth. Then he loses himself to it, to the weight and taste upon his tongue. He slowly settles back into the rhythm of it, the coordination between hand and mouth – revives dusty knowledges of how to breathe just right, how to swallow around the thickness.

Eddie sounds beautiful. He's struggling to stay still beneath Buck; his hand still heavy at the back of Buck's head and twisting even tighter in the hair, now.

It doesn't take long until Eddie's coming apart under Buck's attention. He's murmuring Buck's name over and over again like a broken prayer, warning him as though this is something that Buck could ever back away from, something he'd ever want to miss out on.

Buck stays. Works Eddie through the orgasm, swallows everything down with his eyes still half-open so that he can see the bliss take over Eddie's expression; commits the exquisite display of satisfaction to memory where it takes over Eddie's entire body.

After, he moves up and lies half on top of Eddie, with his nose pressed in tight to Eddie's jaw. His own cock is painfully hard against Eddie's hip, and Eddie is so warm beneath him, so firm and real and gorgeous. Watching him come undone like that – knowing that Buck was the one to make him fall apart – has brought Buck so close to the edge. He'll just need a few thrusts against Eddie's hip and then he'll come, too – he'll just breathe Eddie in, taste the sweat upon Eddie's throat and that'll be it, he'll be gone. Lost. *Done*.

Only, Eddie is turning his head towards Buck, now, and capturing Buck's mouth in a quick kiss before he's suddenly bringing his own hand up to his mouth, licking along the palm in the most obscenely beautiful fashion Buck's ever seen, and then his hand is disappearing down Buck's body, wrapping around Buck's cock and pumping the length slowly.

It's so *good*, and Buck is so *close*, and Eddie is kissing along the side of Buck's neck, now, making everything even more electrical.

"It's – *Eddie*," Buck pants, swallowing painfully. "I'm gonna – I won't last."

"No, fuck that," Eddie mutters. He kisses Buck's mouth one quick, sloppy time, and adds, "I want to taste you, too."

And it's too much. Those words alone are enough to unravel Buck even more, to make him shiver with anticipation and love upon the sheet while Eddie moves down the length of his body, touching every inch of skin reverently on his way as though he still hasn't had enough of Buck, of Buck's body against his own.

He wastes no time to get his mouth on Buck's cock. It's warm and slick and *perfect*, and Buck can't breathe. He's pulled taut under Eddie's hands, so full of pleasure that he thinks he's about to explode with it, turn into embers and blow away in the wind of his own, final exhale, but in the end he just comes. Succumbs entirely to the bliss that washes over him and feels oddly safe and more whole than he's ever been under Eddie's touch.

He's faintly aware of Eddie kissing his chest, later. Feels another press of lips against his shoulder, and one on the side of his neck, just below his ear. And suddenly he's terrified and desperate, crumbling apart at the edges of his own elation and reaching for Eddie – dragging him in for a proper kiss because it can't end now. It can't be *over*.

Eddie kisses him back readily. Lazily. A quiet aftermath of something grand. His arm rests heavily over Buck's stomach, with his hand curled at the opposite hip, and his weight is still such a comfortable thing to be anchored by where he's tilted half on top of Buck.

Buck doesn't remember coming up for air from that last kiss, can't recall it coming to an end. He thinks he falls asleep with Eddie's mouth still brushing against his own.

*

He wakes up alone and drenched in sunlight. He can hear noises from cars passing by on the road outside the house, and there are different noises sounding from within the walls. It's a house in motion, full of people who are getting ready.

Everything smells of Eddie. The pillow, the sheets, the blanket that wasn't even in the bed last night that is now draped over him. It's the safest scent Buck knows these days; the strongest sign of home that he can come up with.

His body aches from a mix of exertion and exhaustion, and he finds it pleasant, like an invisible memory to carry around with him, to press and prod in secret like a bruise collected in a moment of pure euphoria.

His heart is affected, too. It trembles with both fear and contentment, because it got what it wanted last night; it had Eddie in every capacity but one. He got to taste and feel and hear Eddie, and was felt and heard in return. Was so carefully handled as he fell apart on this very bed, and seems to have been put together again by sunrise, healed under Eddie's arm as they slept.

He hates that it happened here, though, in Eddie's home – in this place that Buck views as a safe place. Now he's gone and riddled it with memories – splendid ones that will still hurt to think of because that's all they'll be now. A past. One that Eddie, evidently, already has moved on from. He might even be regretting it at this point, with sunlight highlighting it all.

It's yet another monumental mess caused by Buck's infamous emotions; he has once again been left alone in an aftermath that he's not too sure that he'll be able to get out of unscathed. One part of him in particular already feels a bit shattered.

He wants to go back. Wants to relive the night over and over and never have to wake up to regret it. He knows that the regret is inevitable as soon as he gets out of the bed, though – that he'll have to force himself to wish that last night never happened because that will be for the best. Will create the easiest reality to live in.

He allows himself a few more minutes in that bed and cherishes the all-encompassing scent of Eddie. Drags his hands over his hips and thighs, presses his fingertips against parts of himself that feel extra sensitive, where the memory of Eddie's strong hands lingers a bit more heavily, and relearns this new body that has had and lost, that has been thoroughly admired.

He can hear the doorbell after a while; figures that it must be Bobby who's joining the party, as promised. He sits up reluctantly, eyes closed and envisioning the day ahead. His sister's day. His own heartache can wait.

There's a towel on the foot of the bed, and his suitcase stands beneath it. The same, giving hands have hung his suit up on the door of the closet, and Buck tries not to picture Eddie walking around the room quietly as Buck slept this morning. Doesn't need those kinds of domestic daydreams in his arsenal when he's already so fragile.

He showers in Eddie's bathroom; uses every product he can find in there and comes out with that scent of home coating every inch of his body. It feels a bit like an armor, something safe to move around in even though he has no idea of how to navigate the upcoming day. He doesn't know how to be the Buck that he was yesterday when he feels so thoroughly different.

He gets into his slacks and the white dress shirt, hangs the tie around the back of his neck and steels himself with a hand on the door handle. Takes a deep breath, and goes out.

Chimney, Bobby and Albert are all huddled around the coffee maker in the kitchen, made up of sunshine smiles and easy chatter while Bobby pours them all magic liquid into mugs. It looks so easy, so natural. No complications, no stress, nothing like Buck would have imagined a wedding day.

"Soon-to-be brother-in-law," Buck hums in greeting, grinning when Chimney looks over at him. "You look calm."

"As can be," Chimney confirms. The happiness is rolling off of him in waves, bright and contagious. "I'm marrying the woman of my dreams today, what's there to be stressed about?"

Buck finds himself smiling back at him, wide and genuine. He's so happy that Chimney exists, and that his and Maddie's paths crossed. So grateful that they both get to be happy.

He buttons up his shirt in the shadow of the resumed pre-wedding chatter, then he focuses on fixing the sleeves around his wrists, willing himself not to roll them up until they're at least

halfway into the wedding menu later tonight. When he's done, Bobby's handing him a cup of coffee with a crooked grin, and Buck accepts it gratefully. He knows he's going to need it to get through the day.

He's inhaled about half of the beverage when Eddie comes into the room. His shirt is unbuttoned and he's got his tie hanging loosely from his fingers, his hair is a mess and he's breathtakingly gorgeous. Buck's entire chest hurts just from looking at Eddie, from drinking in all that skin that's on display where the sides of the shirt sway invitingly as he walks.

Eddie's smiling easily, moving around the three men by the coffee maker and settling in next to Buck by the sink, announcing, "Chris is almost done. He'll be the most handsome guy there – sorry Chim."

"I am *completely* fine with that," Chimney supplies happily, beaming along with the sun. Bobby's laughing at him, clamping a hand down on his shoulder, and then they're all suddenly in motion, moving like a unit with their mugs in their hands and disappearing towards the living room without a word.

They have time, Buck supposes, for coffee and contentment.

Eddie turns to face Buck in their newfound solitude. He's gripping his shirt, now, and lining the buttons up in order to button them from the hem and up, but there's still so much skin on display, so much beauty to appreciate in the golden light.

Buck loses his breath over Eddie on a daily basis; it's nothing new. But they've never been at a wedding together before, and Buck hasn't been faced with the task of being in the same room as a suit-adorned Eddie for a whole day before either. He has no idea how he's supposed to deal with that, how he's supposed to keep himself from looking at Eddie all day, keep his tongue from slipping.

There's a bruise blossoming over Eddie's collarbone; a definite trace to speak of where Buck was last night. Buck's affection marked upon Eddie's skin, stark and undeniable. He kind of wants to reach out and press a fingertip to it just to see if Eddie is as sensitive after last night as Buck feels.

"You okay?" Eddie asks. His voice is low. Comforting. "Nervous about today?"

Buck forces himself to breathe, to focus on the question. He boils it down to that; to today; to the wedding. Last night is over, anyway. Already left behind, with nothing but a bruise left to prove that it really happened. There's no reason to speak about it.

"Not really," he says, because it's true. "Just happy."

"Good," Eddie hums, and it sounds so genuine. His smile brightens just from hearing it.

He's buttoned the shirt up half of the way now; his fingers long and skilled as they work. It's distracting to watch now that Buck knows just what those fingers are capable of – what they feel like against Buck's skin and what kind of noises they can coax out of Buck's throat if they touch the right places.

They're flicking the collar of the shirt up expertly, fitting the tie around Eddie's neck and tying a quick knot as though it's nothing. Easy. Something to do in sleep. He pushes that knot up tight against his throat and flattens the rest down against his front, looking so damn handsome.

He truly is beautiful inside and out. Soul, heart and face. He has his own gravitational pull and Buck really doesn't blame himself for being in love with Eddie. He can't imagine *not* being in love with him. He just wishes that things were different. Less painful. That he was less greedy.

"Buck?"

Buck blinks, thumbing at the ear of the mug. "What?"

"Your tie," Eddie says, using a tone that indicates that it's not the first time he's saying it. There's an amused twist to his expression that seems to be reserved solely for Buck, and he really shouldn't be allowed to look so pretty. "Want me to help you with it?"

Buck glances down at his own torso where his tie hangs untied from his neck, and he doesn't think before he nods. Doesn't realize what it is he is agreeing to. A moment later, Eddie is stepping in so close that their toes are touching upon the floor, and Eddie's knuckles are brushing against Buck's chest as he starts to shift the tie into position.

It's so intimate that it makes Buck's breathing stop yet another time, feels as electrical as that moment did last night when Eddie had just kissed him and the entire world seemed to be holding its breath in anticipation.

He looks up and admires the focus on Eddie's face, the soft, absentminded smile and the faint line between his brows. He looks relaxed. Peaceful and happy. His movements are slow and deliberate; his fingers warm against Buck's shirt any time they brush up against him. Then he's moving those fingers up towards Buck's collar, repeating those same steps with Buck's shirt and tie as he did with his own a mere minute ago.

He finishes with his hand pressed to the center of Buck's chest, smiling prettily at Buck and murmuring, "There. Perfect."

Buck swallows thickly. He feels warm all over. Eddie isn't removing his hand from Buck's chest, and Buck has no intention to move away from the touch, but he really needs to come up with something to say that isn't *I love you* or *kiss me*. He just doesn't have any words – has nothing but his heart to give.

In the end they end up looking at each other in silence while the moment blossoms and spreads around them until it surely must be encompassing the entire world – making traffic stop and urging the sun to shine even brighter just for them.

Though the world isn't all that affected. Distant joy barges in from the living room in the form of wolf whistles and cheerful compliments, and Buck blinks through the realization that Chris must have finally come out of his room.

He discards his mug on the counter behind him, and then he follows Eddie over to the doorway where they peek into the living room to get a look at the boy. And Eddie was right: Chris looks positively adorable in his suit and bowtie, carrying it as handsomely as his father does next to Buck. His hair has been carefully pushed to the side with what Buck assumes is Eddie's hair products, and his smile is wide, bright and absolutely beautiful.

Pride is swelling in Buck's chest. He's aware that he's not really entitled to that feeling, but he embraces it anyway. Lets himself cherish it where he stands, joining in on the chorus of compliments and awe with the rest of the guys.

Christopher is such a sweet boy with such a big heart, and in the background of the continued shower of admiration in the living room, Buck finds himself leaning against Eddie's side, pushing past his own, inner emotional turmoil for a while.

"You did good with him," he says quietly, for the millionth time. "He's the most amazing kid."

Eddie leans into him in return, smiling at Buck once their eyes meet and murmuring an equally quiet and entirely heartfelt, "Thank you, Buck."

And this is good. Normal. *Their* normal. As long as the quiet conversations and the brushing upper arms and the kind smiles aren't lost, everything is fine. Buck can live like this.

"Are we going to talk?"

Buck can't live like this.

He backs away from the doorway, from Eddie's side and all the comfort he's ever known to be entirely his. Not his to keep; he'll have to give it back now.

He presses his back against the nearest countertop, crosses his arms over his chest and shakes his head. From his peripheral, he can see that Eddie has followed him, and a moment later he can feel that familiar warmth radiate off of Eddie's body as the very man comes to stand right in front of Buck. Their toes are touching again.

Buck swallows, deflecting his gaze to Eddie's shoulder. He says, "No, I think it might be best not to—"

"Why?"

It startles Buck into looking up at Eddie's face. The expression that meets his gaze is open. Curious, with that everlasting kindness shining in his eyes. It kind of makes the whole situation even worse because he can't lie to a face like that, to someone as kind and caring as Eddie. Eddie deserves to know.

"Because it would be unfair of me to tell you what I'm thinking."

Eddie tilts his head slightly. Says, "Not if I'm asking you to share it."

"You don't know what it is yet, you won't want it."

“I don’t know,” Eddie agrees. “But I want to, if you’ll let me.”

Buck thinks back to how Eddie’s hands felt on him a couple of minutes ago; to the ease with which he crowded Buck’s personal space and stayed there. Thinks of the lack of regret in Eddie’s behavioral pattern this morning and how there’s no hint of sadness in his expression now. Eddie truly wants to know what Buck is thinking, and there’s nothing indicating that he’ll be cruel when he hears it.

“I want more,” Buck says. “Last night was... one of the best nights of my life, easily, but I still want more. Of everything. Late night talks that last until the morning is threatening to break us apart, *kisses*, you looking at me as though you adore me. I want more of Chris, of this home, of *you*. Of you and me. Forever, preferably – I’m very greedy. And I know that it’s really unfair of me to ask you for that when you’ve already—”

“More sex?”

Buck closes his mouth. He tries to find his footing, but there’s nothing but truth lining his body; nothing else he can stumble around in, so he splutters, “*All* the sex.”

Eddie beams at him, then. It’s small and private and soft but it’s still so *bright*. He’s moving in impossibly closer and doesn’t stop until the tips of their noses are brushing. His hand comes up to the side of Buck’s face, his thumb brushing over the cheekbone.

Then he kisses Buck once, swiftly, and it’s very similar to the starting point of everything last night, only this time it’s more of a punctuation. A dot. Something finally clicking into place.

“I want that too,” he says quietly, breath warm against Buck’s mouth. “All of it. *Everything*.”

Buck’s fingers are trembling with the urge to reach out, to touch, to hold. Hope running wild in those veins of his, filling up his senses.

“With me?” he breathes out.

Eddie laughs at him, bright and beautiful; kisses Buck again and says, “With you, and Chris.”

“Obviously with Chris.”

“*Obviously*.”

Buck looks at him for a moment, taking in the undeniable affection in that expression and the sincerity in that voice. He thinks back to the soft smile in the middle of all the white-hot desire last night, that same smile that’s been present in the most mundane of moments like a neon-lit sign for Buck to miss out on all along. The touches, the conversations, the evenings spent in each other’s company straight after eternity-long shifts.

The future that Buck has been secretly dreaming of is suddenly coming together, because Eddie is standing in front of Buck telling him that he wants it to. That it’s *okay* to want it. That they can *have* it. And it dawns on him that Eddie isn’t just brushing against his fingertips anymore, but that he’s actually allowed to grab on to Eddie fully, now, and hold on. There’s no reason to hold himself back anymore.

He nudges his nose against Eddie's gently, and sees Eddie smile in reaction to that silent little hello. Then he kisses Eddie again, anew.

They kiss slowly. It feels a lot like they're reintroducing themselves to each other in the morning light, savoring the certainty of it – the knowledge that the two of them don't have an expiration date anymore.

Buck struggles to open his eyes, after. His eyelashes cling delicately to each other, and Eddie comes back very slowly into his view. The sun is shining on him, and his smile is so pretty and his eyes are so full of a happiness that *Buck* put there. It's Buck who's making Eddie this happy, and that realization alone deserves its own punctuation in the form of another kiss – deserves to be sealed in and put to rest in a vault of universal truths because he can feel it in his entire body. How right this is; how perfectly they fit together.

His arms have wound up around Eddie's neck at some point during the past blissful minutes. He untangles himself, presses his hands to Eddie's shoulders and then further down to his elbows where he just holds on.

Traffic noise is starting to filter into his consciousness again, and he can hear the continued chatter from the living room in the aging morning. The day is still ahead of them, eager to start up properly.

"We have to keep this quiet," he realizes.

"That's," Eddie starts, his eyebrows tilting inwards adorably. "I mean, *yeah*, if that's what you wanna do, then—"

"Not for long," Buck protests. "I'm thinking until tomorrow."

The eyebrows rise with interest; the eyes beneath get their spark back. "Yeah?"

"It's Maddie and Chimney's wedding day," Buck says, slipping his hands down the last bit and entwining them with Eddie's. "Today should be solely about them, about *their* love. You and I can have tomorrow. All the tomorrows."

"I like that," Eddie murmurs, squeezing Buck's hands gently. "We can stay away from each other for another day."

"Act completely normal," Buck agrees, feigning confidence.

Eddie nods. "Easy."

"*So* easy," Buck insists, nodding back. He takes a deep breath and loses himself in Eddie's eyes a little, in the warmth of them. He steals another kiss for himself, then, because he can. Because the day hasn't forced them to move quite yet.

It tastes of happiness.

Maddie looks stunning. Her dress is wonderful and her hair's perfectly done up, but it's the smile that matters, the loud and unabashed joy that stains all of her features when Buck gives her away to Chimney with his heart straining with affection against his ribcage.

He spends the entire ceremony crying, standing off to Maddie's side and watching it all unfold up close. Listens to careful words of love and life and fate and only allows his gaze to wander towards Eddie among the rows of seats a handful of pointed times. Eddie's watching him back every time.

The reception's held outside, so everyone makes their way out as soon as it's over. Buck collides softly with Eddie in the aisle; gets a soft smile in greeting and Eddie's thumb pressed gently under his eye, wiping away wetness.

Buck has to force his hand not to reach for Eddie's waist. He wants so desperately to shove it in under Eddie's jacket and leave it there, warm against cotton and flesh.

"If you don't stop, I'll kiss you," he warns.

Eddie keeps smiling at him in that same, fond way. Keeps brushing his thumb gently over Buck's skin despite those words.

"That's not really a threat," he points out quietly, with a mischievous glint in his eye.

Christopher has already filtered out of the room with Bobby and Athena, and there's no one near them who'll pay them any attention, no one but them who's focused on anything but the ceremony they just attended, so Buck allows himself a moment. He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and savors the feeling of Eddie's hand against him for a few more seconds before he takes half a step back and groans.

This day is going to be *awful*.

He was prepared for it to be, is the thing, just not for this reason. He thought that he would be staring at Eddie wistfully and wishing for something he could never have; he never imagined that the torture would be to long for something that he absolutely *can* have. It's somehow equally horrible.

"I'm gonna go and be in some pictures with the bride and groom now," he says, pointedly not looking at Eddie. "Please stay out of my sight so I don't end up looking like a lovesick fool in all of them."

Eddie's responding laugh is melodic. Deep and beautiful. Buck carries it with him in his heart when he goes.

*

Maddie has seated the two of them together at a table, with Chris tucked away among the rest of the kids, so they can't really stay away from each other. Things run quite smoothly anyway, though. There's not a soul present that isn't cheerful, that isn't thriving off of Maddie and Chimney's love for each other, and there's a comforting white noise of happy

conversation all around them. It gives Buck and Eddie room to talk to each other, to murmur quietly in the shadow of everyone else, because no one seems to be paying them any attention.

They make it all the way to desert before everything grinds to a halt. A woman Buck vaguely pinpoints as Maddie's colleague slides up to them on her way from the bathroom and smiles warmly, though there's a calculating edge to her gaze.

"You're Eddie, right?" she asks. "Christopher is your son?"

Eddie brushes a hand to his jaw, nodding. "That's right."

The woman nods, and her smile grows even bigger.

"Thought so," she sing-songs, already backing away from them again. "You three make a beautiful family."

Eddie trembles with amusement right away, then he's turning his head slowly towards Buck and laughing properly at what must be a look of utter surprise on Buck's face. He can feel the stunned width of his own eyes; the way his mouth hangs open with a lack of a proper response to someone who's already long gone.

In the end he bristles. "We haven't even *touched* each other since the ceremony. This isn't working."

They haven't, is the thing. They've both been very careful not to draw any attention to themselves, not to press a palm to a shoulder or a knee against a knee. It's all been terribly platonic.

"We're acting the way we've always done, Buck," Eddie tells him calmly, unperturbed.

"Well," Buck grunts, "act *different* then."

He moves his chair another inch away from Eddie and glares at the centerpiece of the table.

"What?" Eddie laughs. "You're not even going to look at me now?"

"If I do, I can't stop," Buck tells him. "You're pretty."

Eddie just keeps laughing at him, quiet and lovely. Not allowing himself to look at that happiness as it plays out on Eddie's gorgeous face is the cruelest thing Buck's ever done to himself, but he's determined not to fuck today up, not to cause a big *thing* at his sister's wedding. They can behave until tomorrow.

"You really think we're acting the way we've always done?"

Eddie hums. "Pretty much. Though I'm fairly sure that you let me touch you a whole lot more before you knew that I wanted you – if I didn't know better I'd be offended."

“Why did it take us so fucking long to get our shit together, then?” Buck asks him, glancing at Eddie from the corner of his eye. “If we’ve been acting so much like a couple all along, why didn’t we realize?”

“It’s scary to believe in things you want to be true,” Eddie says, shrugging. He’s looking right back at Buck, his body tilted on his chair in a way that isn’t subtle at all. “I know I was too scared to hope that you’d want me back that way.”

“How could I not?”

Eddie grins at him, slightly bashful and entirely pretty. Buck smiles back, and time passes on around them. Buck catches himself after a while; realizes that he has turned in his seat again, that he’s got a knee pressed into the side of Eddie’s thigh. His heart is screaming at him to just lean forward, to wrap a hand around the back of Eddie’s neck and draw him in for a kiss.

“No,” he hisses. “Stop looking at me.”

Eddie laughs again. Says, “But I *like* looking at you.”

Buck makes a high-pitched noise of exasperation. He forces his body to turn once again, and shoves a forgotten spoon of strawberry deliciousness into his mouth while he resumes his glaring contest with the flowers on the table.

He can *feel* the fond amusement roll off of Eddie in waves, warm and enticing.

*

To his credit, Eddie takes pity on Buck once the tables are being pushed to the sides and a dance floor is being assembled. He leans over, murmurs the promise of staying away for a while into Buck’s ear and somehow manages to sneak in a kiss against Buck’s temple before he’s leaving. He’s had his fun teasing Buck, but it’s obvious that he cares about Maddie and Chimney; that he’s honoring their day by distancing himself.

And the day truly is a wonderful one; the night young and wild and full of warmth. Buck dances with Chris for a long while; clings in a drunken, lovesick embrace to his sister for a solid five minutes outside the bathrooms, and sings along to the band’s rendition of *You Were Always on My Mind* with Chim from the top of his lungs while the rest of the party cheer on. He feels a bit loose, a lot happy, slightly drunk and entirely euphoric as the hours go by. It’s almost perfect.

He sits down to the side later on, just to take in the scene for a while. Carla has taken Christopher home to bed at this point, and some of the guests have given in to the late hour and gone home, too, but there’s still a crowd of joyful beings, and the band is still going strong.

Eddie took his suit jacket off a long time ago. He has rolled up the sleeves of his shirt, too, and is leaning with one enticing forearm against the bar, listening to whatever Hen is saying to him with a wide, easy smile.

He's so damn handsome. Buck has been good about not looking at Eddie too much during the night, but now that he finally allows himself more than a fleeting glance, he finds it impossible to look away again. There's something about knowing that Eddie wants him back – that his staring is appreciated – that makes looking at him slightly addictive, and he's done fighting it. Gives up. He doesn't think that his starved eyes will hurt anyone.

He smiles when Maddie comes towards him. Her hair has come undone and is falling loosely around her face and her smile is tired but beautiful. She sits down heavily in the chair next to Buck, breathing out slowly.

Buck is about to open his mouth – mention something about how great the day has been – but she beats him to it.

Literally. She smacks the back of her hand against the side of his knee.

“Hey,” he protests, frowning at her. “What was that for?”

She looks entirely unimpressed with him. “You’re acting like an idiot.”

Buck blinks back at her.

“Neither of you are being subtle,” she says in way of an explanation. “I don’t know what you think you’re doing, exactly, but you’re not fooling anyone, Buck. Just *be* with him.”

“I don’t—”

“Howie and Chris saw you this morning, you know,” she says, smiling slightly. “*Kissing*. Apparently they backed right out of the room and agreed to pretend not to have seen anything, but he told me about it earlier. Almost made me cry all my make up off.”

Buck truly feels like the younger brother, then. He's tried to get away with something grand and he actually thought that he'd done a pretty decent job of it, only to be called out by his older sister on it now. His cheeks feel warm.

“We didn’t want to draw any attention to ourselves,” he tells her, tilting his head as he looks at her. “It’s *your* day. Yours and Chimneys, and we—”

“—would make it absolutely perfect if you stopped being idiots and were as happy together as Howie and I am,” she cuts in. She looks him straight in the eyes, pauses for a moment of consideration, and then adds, “We deserve good things, Evan. Take it and run – don’t hold back for a second.”

Buck turns his head, then. Catches Eddie’s gaze from across the room and keeps it. He smiles, and Eddie smiles back with a curious tilt to his head, as though he can sense the raw happiness that is simmering in Buck’s chest and can tell that something has shifted. His expression is so open, all of him so patient, as though he’s ready for anything Buck has to offer him.

Buck presses his elbow to Maddie’s. Looks over at her and murmurs, “I’m proud of us.”

“Me too,” she says, eyes shining. She closes them briefly when Buck leans over to press a kiss to her forehead, then she smiles softly at him and adds, “*Go.*”

Buck does. He gets up from his seat and moves with determined steps across the dance floor, holding Eddie’s gaze the entire way. Eddie catches him with a hand against Buck’s waist as soon as they’re within arm’s reach of each other; smiles brightly and offers a soft murmur of, “Hey there.”

“Maddie thinks we’re dumb,” Buck announces, happy to be drawn in by that palm.

“She’s probably right.”

Buck breathes him in for a while. Presses a hand to Eddie’s chest, and taps a finger over the heart. Says, “I love you.”

Eddie beams at that. He usually doesn’t wear his heart quite as readily on his sleeve as Buck does, but his emotions spill readily over his bottom lip when he says, “I love you, too. Quite a lot actually.”

Buck is definitely blushing in response, and he most definitely doesn’t care. He feels safe in Eddie’s hands, with Eddie’s heart under his own palm where no one else needs to see it.

“I’m going to kiss you now.”

Eddie’s hand tightens at Buck’s waist; his smile turns playful. “It’s about time.”

Chimney wolf-whistles somewhere in the background, Hen’s making a pleased noise to the left of them, and Eddie’s smile is soft against Buck’s mouth when he finally, *finally* leans in.

Everything about it is perfect.

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