

## step backward, step forward

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# step backward, step forward

by [spikeymarshmallows](#)

## Summary

Aside from a few hidden meals with Mom, Diego and Klaus haven't been back to the Academy in thirteen years. They pulled each other from the pits of despair and, against all odds, have built a happy life together.

And then their Father dies.

It'll be fine, right? They've had loads of therapy, and they're happy, and it's just one little funeral, right? What could possibly go wrong?

## Notes

Inspired by [this goddamn image](#) and the idea of Klaus and Diego escaping the Academy and living their absolute best lives, and being cute and madly in love, and oops, I've accidentally smattered in angst everywhere...?

But seriously, it's the most self-indulgent thing I've ever written, and *I will not apologise for art*. I made modern technology a thing because, like, if I'm making a self-indulgent universe, I want Klaus to have pictures of him and Diego being adorable on his phone, damnit.

Special thanks to emptydistractions for beta-ing and being the best, and to unrememberedskies for also being rad and basically helping come up with half this dang universe and listening to my incoherent screeches]

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

Klaus excused himself from the small group of people he was talking with as soon as he saw Diego's picture, a rare photo of him actually smiling for the camera as Klaus pulled a face beside him, flashing across his phone screen.

"Hey baby," Klaus said, stepping out of earshot. He rested one hand on a large marble pillar, spinning around it lazily.

"Hey."

In that one word, Klaus could tell something was off.

"You okay? It's 3am there." Klaus stopped spinning around the pillar, suddenly serious. He leant against it instead, the cold soaking through his silk shirt.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm okay," Diego said, voice still strange.

Klaus' stomach was twisting uncomfortably in worry. Before he could demand that Diego tell him what was wrong *right the fuck now*, Diego continued.

"You should probably get a flight home soon though."

"You didn't go and get yourself shot in the head again, did you? Because if you did, I'm going to be really pissed off about it." He kept his tone light, even though his heart squeezed at the memory of that horrible phone call from Eudora. He remembered how he'd literally vomited in worry, and how the flight home from Egypt had felt like a lifetime.

Diego chuckled. "No, I'm fine. Really. Just, uh, seems like Dad kicked the bucket. Funeral is on Sunday."

"Huh." That was definitely not what Klaus had been expecting to hear. "I mean, do I have to?"

Diego snorted. "We don't have to. Probably should."

"Now, does that sound like me?" Klaus teased. He felt a little giddy with relief now that he knew Diego was safe. Klaus exhaled, staring up at the beautifully carved ceilings. "Fine," he said after a moment of consideration. "Can you book it for me? Otherwise I'll forget. Put it on the gold card. I'm *this* close to having enough points to fly us to Japan."

"Already done," Diego told him, tone smug. "Email should already be there."

"You're the best," Klaus said softly, hoping his genuine tone came across. "I love you. Looking forward to seeing you again."

"Love you too," Diego said. "I'll pick you up from the airport."

"Yay. Okay. I guess I better go finish up, given my time here just got halved. Tenthed, really. Is that a word?"

"It's not a word. Go. Do your thing. I love you. Bye."

"Yes. Go to sleep. It's 3am, and I need you to have lots of energy for my return."

Diego laughed and the line went dead. Klaus smiled to himself as he shoved his phone into the back pocket of his slacks. He let himself have a moment to breathe before he beamed and stepped out from behind the pillar.

"Okay, where were we?"

\*

Klaus dozed most of the flight home, even though he knew it would fuck up his sleeping patterns. It didn't matter which rules he stuck to; he always ended up jet lagged anyway, so he figured he may as well be rested when he finally made it back in the country. Customs was a breeze, thank god.

God, he couldn't wait to sit on Diego's dick, fuck himself silly, and then try to get some *actual* sleep. He needed a long hot shower too. And a massage. Klaus was pretty sure if he played his cards right, he would be able to convince Diego to give him a back rub.

Diego smelled so good when Klaus finally got his arms around him again. Diego always smelled good. Klaus rubbed his face against the leather of Diego's jacket, sagging. The journey home had been surprisingly painless, but nobody in their right mind *enjoyed* going through customs after a long flight. Diego's hands were warm on the small of his back where they rested under his coat and shirt.

"I missed you," Diego said, finally drawing away.

"I was only gone for a few days," Klaus pointed out, sliding into the passenger seat of Diego's car.

"Still missed you," Diego said, a cheeky smile on his face.

"Well, hurry up and get me home so I can do my best to apologise for my absence."

Diego smirked.

\*

Despite Klaus' best intentions to ride Diego until they both saw stars, Diego seemed to have other ideas. After Klaus' painfully hot shower, Diego manhandled him onto his hands and

knees on the bed, and put his mouth to good use. He spent far too long teasing Klaus with his tongue while Klaus bit a pillow to muffle his cries.

Diego twisted his hands in Klaus' hair when he pressed inside. It had been too long, and the stretch was so good that Klaus was pretty sure his eyes rolled back. Klaus' back curved, and he moved his head so he could pull his own hair with Diego's fingers. The subtle pain was delicious and Diego gripped his hair harder, pulling Klaus' head back so that he couldn't hide his moans in the pillow anymore. His other hand grabbed Klaus' wrist, pinning it to the small of his back. Klaus was almost in tears by the time they were done, body shaking as his orgasm was wrenched out of him, fingers curled with Diego's where they still pinned him.

Klaus collapsed onto his front, caring about the wet spot as much as he usually did—that was to say, he didn't give a shit. Diego sat back on his heels, idly pushing his come back inside Klaus and making him shiver. Diego could be downright filthy; Klaus was surprised Diego wasn't cleaning him up with his mouth.

When Diego made a move to climb up the bed, Klaus looked back over his shoulder with a smirk and a flutter of his eyelashes. "You know, while you're down there..." Diego hummed, sounding amused. "Give me a back rub?"

Diego snorted but shifted on his knees so that he was sitting at the top of Klaus' thighs. His hands worked their magic, and every so often Diego leaned down to press a gentle kiss to his back. By the time he was done, Klaus was drooling against the pillow and grinding his hips across the bed. Diego eased him onto his side, spooning up against him and fucking him slowly as he rolled his hips against Klaus in a way that left him whimpering and grasping the sheets with shaking hands.

After they showered again, Klaus cuddled up to Diego and rested his head on his chest, listening to the soft patter of his heartbeat.

"It's gonna be weird as shit going back to the Academy, isn't it?" Klaus said into the silence. Diego's breathing had evened out, so it wouldn't have surprised him if Diego was asleep already.

Diego made a grumbling sound in his throat as the fingers that rested on Klaus' shoulder starting to trail absent patterns.

"Yeah, probably," Diego admitted. "We can still not go."

"Nah," Klaus said after a minute. "Should probably make an appearance. You can say hi to Mom and fight with Luther. Two of your favourite things." His tone was teasing.

"Could fuck you in our childhood bedrooms," Diego mused.

Klaus snorted. "Just one of many ways we can say 'fuck you' to Dad."

"I'm sure we can think of others along the way," Diego mumbled, sounding half asleep. He kissed Klaus' forehead before settling back.

Klaus lay awake a little longer, enjoying the feeling of being beside Diego again.

\*

The Academy always loomed in such an intimidating manner that it sometimes made Klaus snort with laughter. There was just something about how hard it *tried* that pushed it right past 'terrifying' into 'ridiculous'.

Klaus had only been back to the house a handful of times in the past thirteen years, and then only when his father was away. He and Diego would enter through the little side entrance near the kitchens, not daring to enter via the main entrance lest they be caught.

It was weird to be standing on the sidewalk in front of the house. He wasn't sure what the feeling was, but it was uncomfortable. Diego seemed to share the same reservations, though he kept his face blank. And then he frowned and seemed to nod to himself, walking towards the front door.

The kitchens had always smelled like Mom; they'd been one of her domains. The house still smelled like... Like Klaus' childhood. It was cold and a little musty. If misery and solitude had a smell, he'd guess that this was it.

Klaus quietly shut the door behind him. Diego seemed determined to keep moving.

"I'm gonna go check on Mom," Diego said, leaning back to give Klaus a quick kiss on the cheek. Klaus nodded and smiled, preferring to move at a more sedated pace.

It was eery how little had changed. Once upon a time, he might have thought this was what stepping into a museum was like. Now he knew that this was nothing like that; museums had more character and far more life to them.

Off of the atrium, he heard Diego's low tone followed by Mom's chirpy voice and the click of her heels. And then another female voice? It had to be Allison; Vanya would never speak above a mumble. Klaus couldn't make out what they were saying but didn't feel inclined to rush in and interrupt them. He needed to ease himself into this, into the house, steadily building up his reserves to tolerate whatever bullshit he was sure would arise.

Once Klaus had successfully steeled himself he moved into the parlour.

"Allison, oh my god, look at you," he crowed, throwing his arms around her in a brief hug before he withdrew again. He looked at her, taking in her perfect makeup, gorgeous hair, and impeccable outfit. He'd seen pictures of her over the years in magazines and on television. He'd even seen a few of her films. But seeing her in person was something else entirely.

"Look at me? Look at you. You look..." She trailed off, shaking her head.

"Dashing as always?" Klaus said, flicking his hair off his shoulders and batting his eyelashes.

"You look *healthy*," she laughed.

"I have to ask, is it botox or are lifestyles of the rich and the famous so good that you just haven't aged at all?" Klaus asked nosily, tucking his fingers under his chin.

She laughed again, throwing her head back. There was a breeze of her perfume as she did, something light and floral and perfectly her. "Well, I haven't had work done, if that's what you're asking," she teased.

"Well," Klaus continued, "I have to get your autograph while we're here. I can add it to my collection."

She beamed at him and squeezed his hands before running her fingertips over the insides of his palms, a habit she'd had since she was a child. She stopped suddenly and glanced down before drawing Klaus' left hand up to inspect his wedding band. The tiny inlaid diamonds twinkled even in the frankly *terrible* lighting.

"Oh my god," she said. She glanced at him and then at Diego, narrowing her eyes. She dropped Klaus' hand and leaned back on her heels as she crossed her arms. "You two?"

"Surprise!" Klaus said, doing jazz hands. She did a double-take at the tattoos on his palms.

"Oh no, that's not the surprise. Anyone could have seen that one coming from a mile away. It's the *married* bit I'm still caught up on. When did this happen?"

Klaus looked at the ceiling, trying to remember. "Hmm, wait. No. Hold on. It was—" The numbers always got caught in his head; there was the anniversary of being together, and then their wedding anniversary and—

"Three years. Four in May," Diego said staunchly. He hadn't moved, his arms still crossed over his chest, feet at parade rest.

Klaus beamed. Right. They were going away in a few weeks to a little cabin in the mountains to celebrate.

There was a hurt look on Allison's face as she pursed her lips. Klaus was struck with sudden guilt.

"No, no, it's fine," she huffed. "I just assumed that since I invited you both to mine... But it's fine."

Klaus shot Diego a guilty look. Diego shrugged. They hadn't made it to Allison's wedding because *someone* had gotten himself shot in the side of the head. Klaus had sent a very nice present though!

Klaus grimaced. "I'm sorry," he said, "we didn't invite anyone. It was just us and the photographer and the officiant. It wasn't a legal marriage so we didn't need witnesses and... I have pictures! If you want to see!"

Allison raised her eyebrows. "There are pictures?" A little smile tugged at the corners of her mouth.

"Of course there are! I looked amazing, if I do say so myself," Klaus bragged, digging into his coat pocket for his phone.

"And I'm out," Diego said, unfolding his arms. Through habit, he kissed Klaus on the cheek and then turned on his heel and all but stomped out of the room.

"Uh oh, trouble in paradise?" Allison asked. She was as much of a gossip as Klaus was.

Klaus chuckled and winked. "Not even a little. Diego just hates it when other people see him happy. He has his reputation to think about, you know."

"That does sound like Diego," Allison admitted.

Klaus unlocked his phone before Allison snatched it from his hand.

"Wait, hold on," Allison said, staring at the home screen. "Oh my god. You guys went to Pride? I can't believe that's Diego." She paused before adding, "I can believe that's you though."

Klaus grinned down at the picture taken last year. He sat atop Diego's shoulders in rainbow knee-high socks, denim cut-offs, and a tight crop top with a giant rainbow flag wrapped around his shoulders. The picture was too small to see the rainbow flag tattoos on his cheeks or the coloured eyeliner he'd painstakingly applied. Diego was shirtless beneath him and instead of turning his wry grin to the camera he was looking up at Klaus, probably because Klaus had said something stupid.

"Of course Diego isn't wearing a shirt," Allison joked, handing the phone back with a shake of her head.

"Well, can you blame him? I mean, abs," Klaus said indignantly, seeking the album with the safe-for-work-photos of the two of them. "Okay, so, firstly, this is what I wore." He passed the phone back over, delighted at her gasp. "I did cut a rather striking figure, I know." He watched as she zoomed in on his silver brocade suit jacket, studying the detailed needlework.

"Klaus, this is incredible," she breathed. "Was it designer?"

"Oh, something like that," Klaus said airily. "Later, you can see the silk shirt underneath. It was *amazing*," he sing-songed.

She rolled her eyes and kept looking at the picture, 'ooh'ing at the silver diadem nestled amongst his curls. Once she'd satisfied her curiosity, she started flipping through the rest of the pictures.

"Oh my god," she gasped. "Diego looks..." she struggled with the word. "Diego looks *happy*. I didn't know he could look that way." She said it jokingly but there was a sadness underneath it. "He looks damn good in that suit though."



Klaus preened as if the compliment was for himself. But goddamn, Diego had looked so good that day that Klaus had been tempted to call off the tiny ceremony and drag Diego to the nearest private room so he could blow him. Klaus hovered over Allison's shoulder, watching as she moved through the pictures, smiling to himself at the memories. Diego really had looked happy that day.

"Oop, no, wait!" He snatched the phone from her when he realised what was coming up. "No, hold on, let me just—" he swiped through the next few images until they were in the safe territory of their honeymoon.

"What was that?" Allison asked, eyes wide.

"Nothing," Klaus lied. "Just some very not-safe-for-work images if you know what I mean." Klaus winked.

"Klaus," Allison said flatly, "you have an album in here titled 'yes daddy', which, oh my god, I so do not want to know. Also, I could see them, and it's clearly still the wedding."

"Just some terrible pictures. No biggie," Klaus said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Diego cried, didn't he?"

"Like a fucking baby. But don't you *ever* tell anyone I told you that or so help me, Allison, I will find your childhood diary and sell it to *People* magazine."

"Yeesh, okay, message received. Now can I have it back or what?"

Klaus handed the phone over with narrowed eyes.

Allison laughed at some of the honeymoon pictures, particularly the ones of Klaus wearing bright pink sunglasses and a sunhat almost as wide as his shoulders.

"These are amazing. Where did you guys go?"

"Oh, it's a tiny little town in Jalisco. I have some pictures of the resort, just hold on." He leant over her to move to another album, bringing up their random holiday pictures. "This one is Ben's favourite," he told her when they reached a photograph of one of the beautiful buildings in the town.

Allison froze. "Ben?" Her voice was small. "You... you see Ben?"

"Oh, yeah," Klaus chuckled awkwardly. "I guess you weren't around when I discovered that. Wasn't in the, uh, right frame of mind back then."

Allison quirked an eyebrow. "You mean you were high?"

"Well, of course. My brother had just died!"

"Uh-huh."

Klaus huffed a dramatic sigh. "Well, anyway. Ben likes to come along on our adventures."

There were tears gathering at the corners of Allison's eyes but she dabbed quickly at them.

"I'm," she stopped and cleared her throat. "I'm glad to see you're doing so well."

Klaus grinned. "Well," he said, changing the subject, "how are things going for you?"

Allison's face fell as her smile went tight.

Just as Klaus was about to pry for more details, her pocket started vibrating. She drew her phone out and frowned. "Sorry, I gotta take this," she said, already bringing her phone up to her ear.

Klaus exhaled, shoulders dropping. He looked around the room and smiled weakly at Ben on the chair near the fireplace. At first, Ben didn't pay him any heed, instead finishing the page of the book he was reading. Then he looked up at Klaus.

"Allison looks well."

"Right?" Klaus agreed, shoving his hands into his pockets. "I still think she's had work done."

"Does it matter?"

"Absolutely not. I want to know where she goes. Whoever it is knows what the hell they're doing."

Ben rolled his eyes.

"How come I didn't get a portrait?" Ben huffed and jerked his head up towards Five's portrait.

Klaus chuckled. "Maybe Dad hung one in his study so he could forever be reminded of the pain he caused?"

Ben snorted. "Yeah, I bet that's it."

Klaus turned and headed out into the atrium and up the stairs.

"Where are we going?"

"I want to get something else to wear."

"What's wrong with what you're wearing?"

"Benny, it's been how many years? Do I really need to dignify that with an answer?"

Ben huffed. "Can't we do something a little more exciting?"

"You mean to say Daddy Bear's funeral isn't keeping you on the edge of your seat?" Klaus asked.

"Wait, that's not your room," Ben said.

"Oh, what would I do without you?" Klaus asked condescendingly as he opened Allison's door. "Do you think anything from my wardrobe would still fit? Unlikely. I know I barely look a day past 20, but I'm hardly my twinkly seventeen year old self anymore. Diego's wardrobe would just be black on black. Luther's?" He shuddered. "Vanya is probably hip height, at best." He opened Allison's large wardrobe with a smug grin. "Besides, aside from *moi*, Allison has the best taste in this family." He paused, contemplating. "That said, Mom does okay but I'm just not feeling 1950's housewife right now."

Ben stretched out on Allison's bed to watch as Klaus rifled through Allison's things.

"This is pretty, don't you think?" Klaus said, holding up a sequinned mini-dress. "Probably not appropriate for a funeral though."

"Probably not," Ben said drily. He grimaced at the dress when Klaus threw it on the bed and it went right through him. "Thanks. I'm surprised Dad let her have that."

"She rumoured him, I'm sure," Klaus said absently. He pulled a few more pieces out, holding them up against himself before discarding them too. The pile splitting Ben's hips from the rest of his body grew. "Oooh, this could work." He held up a black leather skirt. "Do you think Diego would fuck me in it later?"

Ben's expression screamed 'god give me strength'. He didn't say anything, and Klaus knew it was because he believed if he replied to Klaus' shenanigans it only encouraged him. Oh, if only Ben knew that his lack of reaction was just as good to Klaus.

Klaus started stripping down, tossing his clothing across the bed as well.

"Do you mind?" Ben asked, annoyed.

"It's not like you can feel it," Klaus said with a shrug, already down to his underwear. He paused. "Do you think if I made you corporeal right now, it'd split you in half? Or would you be on top of them?"

"I'd rather not find out," Ben said.

"Party pooper," Klaus said with a raspberry. He shimmied into the skirt. "Hmm, it's a bit early 2000's, don't you think?" He glanced at Ben. "Yeah, I shouldn't be asking you, should I?"

Ben sighed heavily. "I'm going to go see if Diego's doing anything interesting. Or, I don't know, try to throw myself off the roof." He disappeared.

"I love you too!" Klaus called, grinning to himself before he went back to trying to put together a decent outfit.

\*

In an outfit Klaus was more or less satisfied with, he found himself at a loose end. Unless...

Being in his father's office was weird. The room was too still and even though Klaus couldn't see him, he could still very much feel the presence of the old bastard. He frowned and pushed into the room anyway. There was no way he was going to let some dumbass memories stop him from doing this.

Klaus started with the desk. He shuffled through the things on top of the desk, even though he was pretty sure that the paperwork wouldn't be there. When his hunt availed nothing, he moved to the drawers, sinking down into Reginald's large desk chair. The leather squeaked faintly.

He began with the filing cabinet, fingering through the various files. He wasn't even quite sure what he was looking for. He wanted to know where they'd come from. Or more specifically, where Diego had come from. Klaus was entirely uninvested in his own family history, but after leaving the Academy Diego had begun trying to learn more about his heritage. Unfortunately, aside from knowing he was from Mexico, Diego was kind of blindly searching. He'd started learning Spanish a few months after they'd left and he and Klaus had travelled to Latin America a few times over the past couple of years. But Klaus wanted to find documentation, a birth certificate, anything that might allow them to narrow down *where* Diego had come from. Diego was firm on not wanting to find his mother; after all, she *had* sold him. But connecting with his culture? Yeah, that he wanted.

There were loads of files and Klaus thumbed through them, shoving them back into their manilla folders as each appeared useless. He slammed the drawer shut and swivelled around to the other filing drawer. He flicked through a few files and... Huh. It was the sturdy red leather book his father had always been writing in. Klaus pulled it out and opened the heavy book carefully. He knew it wouldn't give him the answers he was seeking, but god he was *curious* about what the old bastard had written.

Before he could read anything, he heard heavy footsteps down the hall. Klaus quickly shoved the book into the back of the skirt.

Luther's looming frame filled the doorway. He frowned when he saw Klaus sitting at the desk.

"What are you doing here?"

"Well, hello Luther dear, nice to see you too," Klaus said coquettishly. "How have you been? Me, I've been wonderful, thank you so much for asking. You're looking..." He hummed, raking his eyes up and down Luther's *enormous* body before continuing, "well."

"What are you doing in here? Get out of his chair."

"Oh, you know, just thought I'd see if dear old Dad had written a will of some kind," Klaus mused, tracing a fingertip in an infinity shape across the desk.

"Pogo has that information," Luther said bluntly. "And what do you need Dad's money for? You seem to be doing just fine." He squinted at Klaus and took a few steps closer. He was probably checking Klaus' eyes, as if that was the only way to tell if someone was high.

Klaus' smile was, he hoped, indulgent. He propped his chin up in his hand, elbow on the desk. "Well, maybe Diego and I are wanting to buy an investment property," Klaus commented, drumming his fingers against his cheek.

Luther's eyebrows knit together. "Investment? Wait, you own a place already? In this economy?"

"Well, the bank still owns part of it, but yes. Hopefully we get a nice tidy inheritance and we can pay that off and buy another one." Klaus smiled, humming as he looked at the ceiling in false contemplation. That said, now that he was thinking about it... He'd bring it up to Diego later.

"Well," Luther said, back to his usual self, "Pogo's taking care of it. Get out of his chair. Don't make me say it again."

Klaus tilted his head. One of his curls fell across an eye. "Maybe Dad and I have been chatting and he said I could."

"Bullshit," Luther snapped. "Get out of his chair."

Klaus rolled his eyes and stood, hoping that the book wouldn't fall out of the back of his skirt. "Ugh, you're just as fun as I remember," Klaus huffed before waltzing towards the door.

"I'll take that as a compliment," Luther said.

"It's very much not meant as one," Klaus said, slamming the door behind him. He wasn't all that annoyed, if he was being honest, but Luther and his attitude still rubbed him the wrong way. Apparently Diego had rubbed off on him. There had been times he'd wondered how Luther, how all of their siblings really, were doing over the years. Obviously with Luther that concern had been misplaced.

As soon as Klaus was around the corner and out of immediate eyesight, he pulled out the book. He grinned to himself and tucked it under his arm beneath his coat before scurrying off to find Diego.

\*

The silence in the parlour was awkward to say the least. If Klaus had his way, it would get even more awkward still.

But for now? He was really struggling not to pour himself a drink. There were bottles of the stuff *right there* and here he was, making some goddamn mocktail. Maybe he should have

taken Diego up on his offer to make it for him but Klaus hadn't slipped up in years. He just hadn't expected to be quite so tempted by the bottles before his eyes.

Besides, *Allison* had a drink. He eyed her scotch enviously.

Luther stood, hands playing awkwardly with the pockets of his coat. He had none of the easy confidence that Klaus remembered from childhood. Klaus might have felt bad for him, if Luther wasn't still such a dick.

"So I was thinking we could have a memorial service in the courtyard at sundown. Maybe at Dad's favourite spot."

"Dad had a favourite spot?" Allison asked.

"Yeah, under the old oak tree. We used to sit out there all the time. Did none of you used to do that?"

Klaus couldn't see the other's expressions but he was confident in his guess that there would be a combination of blank looks and irritation. Maybe some hurt from Allison and Diego; he could see that going either way. Klaus, on the other hand, had no doubts about his father's opinions, and had never even had an iota of hope that his father might have liked him.

Rather than risk Diego launching into a diatribe about how *no, Number One, none of us ever got special attention like that*, Klaus hurriedly finished making his needlessly fancy mocktail.

"Will there be refreshments?" Klaus asked. He left the ingredients over the wet bar and traipsed across the room. "Tea? Scones? Diego makes amazing guacamole."

Luther didn't bother concealing his eye roll.

"Wait," Allison said, "is that my skirt?"

Klaus glanced down at himself. "Yes. This old thing? I found it lying around. It's a little dated, but it's not like anyone important's going to see me here." He winked at her before flopping down onto the couch beside Diego. Diego put his hand on Klaus' knee. He held the drink up, silently offering Diego a sip but Diego shook his head. Klaus shrugged; more for him.

"Listen up," Luther said, as if Klaus was still talking. "There's some important things we need to discuss."

"Like what?" Diego asked, irritation etched across his face.

"Well, we need to talk about the way he died," Luther continued, very studiously looking away from Diego. Klaus smelled drama, and he was *here* for it.

"And here we go," Diego muttered, shaking his head.

"I thought he had a heart attack?" Vanya asked, a little frown on her face.

"According to the coroner's report," Luther said stiffly.

"How did we get a copy of that so quickly anyway?" Allison interjected.

"Oh, Diego stole it." Klaus said, patting Diego's leg proudly.

"Can't you get fired for that?"

"Probably." Diego shrugged, still lounging easily on the sofa.

"*Anyway*," Luther huffed as his frown deepened. And people thought *Klaus* was the one who needed constant attention. "I'm just saying I think something happened. The last time that I talked to Dad, he sounded strange. Said I needed to be careful who to trust."

"He also used to say that we were training for the end of the world. Big deal."

"Luther," Diego said condescendingly, "he was a paranoid, bitter old man who was starting to lose what was left of his marbles."

"No. He must have known something was going to happen." He turned and faced Klaus. Klaus' eyes widened at the sudden attention.

"Oh, here we go," Diego muttered.

"Look, I know you don't like to do it, but I need you to summon Dad."

Klaus pulled a face and once again mournfully wished that his drink contained some booze. He couldn't begin to describe how little he wanted to do what Luther had asked.

"Look, I'd love to call Dad in the afterlife and interrupt his tennis game with Hitler, but well, I just really, really don't want to."

"Too bad, that's your thing."

Klaus instinctively put a hand up to prevent Diego from standing and starting shit with Luther.

"Yeah, but I didn't leave here at seventeen for shits and giggles. If I wanted to see Dad again, trust me, I'd have visited. Besides," he said, crossing one leg over the other. "I'm still not very good at it."

"Liar," Allison snorted. "He can summon Ben."

Klaus hissed at her. "Traitor."

"Look, whatever," Luther said, shaking his head. "Summon Dad. We need to ask him what happened. This is important."

Klaus rolled his eyes and sank back into the couch.

"Then we've got the issue of the missing monocle," Luther continued.

"Who gives a shit about a stupid monocle?" Diego muttered. Unconsciously, his hand on Klaus' knee tightened painfully with his irritation. Klaus dug blunt nails into Diego's hand in warning and Diego released the grip instantly, shooting him an apologetic look before returning to glare at Luther.

"Exactly. It was worthless. So whoever took it, it must have been personal. Someone close to him. Someone with a grudge."

"Where are you going with this?" Klaus asked, even though he could probably make a pretty accurate guess.

"Isn't it obvious? He thinks one of us killed Dad," Diego said, sitting forward.

"Ugh. I hoped you weren't going to say something like that. It sounds just as insane out loud as it does in my head," Klaus sighed dramatically and shook his head.

"How could you think that?" Vanya asked, voice small.

Diego stood. "Great job, Number One." He headed towards the door and Klaus was so busy being pissed off at Luther that he didn't even watch that ass as it walked away.

"That's—that's not what I'm saying," Luther stuttered.

"And people think I'm the crazy one," Klaus huffed as he stood, already preparing to go after Diego.

"Hey, I'm not done!" Luther called after them.

"Oh, sorry, just gonna go murder Mom, be right back!"

"That's not what I was—" He heard Luther exhale heavily and then Allison's clearly pissed off strut as she followed the rest of them out of the room.

\*

It took Klaus far longer to find Diego than expected. He wasn't in any of his old haunts and it bothered Klaus that he was having such difficulties finding him. Klaus knew Diego, probably better than he knew himself, and not being able to locate Diego in an instant got to him.

He eventually found Diego in one of the old training rooms, laying into one of the dummies that still stood there. This was the training room Klaus and Allison and Ben had utilised more. It was smaller and less well-lit than the other. He didn't know why Diego was whaling on a dummy in here, but he supposed it didn't matter.

Diego glanced up at Klaus as he stepped into the room before refocusing on his target. He'd stripped down to his tank top and left his clothes folded neatly at the edge of the mat, his



wedding band sitting on top.

"Am I interrupting?" Klaus asked, hovering at the edge of the mat.

"Just blowing off some steam," Diego gritted out between punches.

It had been a long time. Like, a *really* long time since Klaus had seen Diego react like this. If he had to hazard a guess, the last time had probably been back in his damn house.

"You know, we both have an alibi," Klaus pointed out, rocking back and forth on his toes.

"Not the point," Diego said, punches not slowing.

Klaus hummed to himself. "Would you like to be left alone?"

Diego's hits slowed for a moment as he considered the question, before he nodded sharply.

Years ago, that response might have hurt. They'd been raised in an environment where attachments were weird, to say the least. Both Klaus and Diego were independent to a fault in some areas and completely codependent in others. Thank god for therapy.

Now, he was able to accept Diego's communication for space without it being the end of the world. Diego would come and find him later.

"Love you," Klaus said, backing out of the room.

"Love you too," Diego called back.

\*

The parlour was empty when he'd passed it on his journey to the bedrooms from the training rooms. Dad's urn still sat on one of the tables in the centre of the room. He stopped and poked his head inside, double checking the room was really as empty as it looked.

Yep. Coast was clear.

He squinted at the urn, as if caught in a staring contest with it. He didn't *want* to summon Dad but now Klaus was a touch curious about how he'd died.

He took a few cautious steps into the room, as if he was expecting Luther to burst from behind one of the bookcases that concealed the 'secretly-not-so-secret-passageways'.

Nope. No Luther so far.

He stared at the urn, eyes still narrowed.

Fine. He'd try to summon Dad but *only* if Luther didn't find out about it. He didn't exactly harbour the same vitriol towards Luther that Diego did, but Klaus hated authority figures and he hated being told what to do even more. He'd do the thing, begrudgingly. If Luther found out, Klaus would deny that he'd followed any such order or request.

"Ugh, *fine*," Klaus grouched, picking up the heavy metal urn and stomping over to the bar to set it down.

Klaus rolled his neck and exhaled heavily. Okay. He could do this.

Maybe he couldn't do this. Klaus had much better control over his powers now. He could *summon Ben* and *make him corporeal* enough that Diego could hug him, and Klaus could manifest him out to help him win arguments against Diego. He summoned ghosts all the fucking time for work too!

And yet he couldn't summon his cunt of a father.

He'd been at it for ages and nothing. Not even a tingle!

"You always were a stubborn asshole!" Klaus shouted at the urn when his nth attempt failed.

"You busy?"

Klaus jolted in surprise and clutched his chest as his heart started racing. He exhaled when he saw it was Diego leaning against the doorframe.

"Thought I'd try and contact Dad, but I think he's screening my calls," Klaus said wryly.

Diego chuckled and walked across the room. Klaus tried not to watch his hips too closely; it was probably not the ideal time to get on his knees and make this visit suck a little less.

Diego looked better now. He'd showered and although he'd spiked it, damp hair stuck to the edges of his face, curling and going fluffy. Klaus thought they were darling; Diego hated them.

"So," Diego said lightly after a very, very long moment. "Mom had the monocle." He leaned back to rest against the wet bar, folding his arms across his chest.

Klaus blinked several times in surprise. "Huh. Do you think...?"

Diego shook his head. "No, she couldn't. She..." He trailed off, lips pressed tightly together. "Luther can't know. He'll throw a fit and try to interrogate her, and—" He cut himself off short and shook his head again. "She didn't do it. I *know* she didn't. I don't think she could, even if she wanted to." He glared at the ground as if it had personally offended him. Klaus wanted to reach out and smooth the little divot between his eyebrows but he held himself back.

Finally, Diego exhaled, running a hand over his face. He visibly shook off the thoughts weighing him down. He studied Klaus now, really looking at him for the first time since he'd entered the room.

"I'm sorry about before," he said with a grimace.

Klaus shrugged, unbothered. "You feeling better?"

Diego nodded. He was still looking at Klaus intently. "How're you doing?"

Klaus shrugged loosely and blew a raspberry through his lips. "Having the time of my fuckin' life, really."

Diego pushed off the bar and came around behind Klaus. He tucked his chin over Klaus' shoulder, hands coming up to wrap around Klaus' waist. Klaus tilted his head back, smiling softly as he pressed an idle peck to Diego's cheek before falling back. He brought his hands up to rest on Diego's, lacing their fingers together.

"I hate being here," Diego grumbled, his voice low. "Feels like I'm seventeen again, and all the bullshit is just... It's like we never left."

"Ugh, preaching to the converted," Klaus huffed. "Why did we do this again?"

"Something something, familial duties." Diego shrugged, still not lifting his head up. He was quiet for a moment. "So no luck summoning him?"

Klaus shook his head. "Nah. I can't tell if it's because I don't actually want to see him or he's just being a stubborn prick, as usual."

Diego snorted softly. He relaxed a little more, the tension in his shoulders progressively easing. Klaus stood there and let his eyes slip closed as he enjoyed the hold, the steady rise and fall of Diego's chest, the warmth of Diego's body against his.

"Soon as the funeral is done, we can leave," Diego said. He kissed the side of Klaus' neck, resting his head there.

Klaus nodded silently, just allowing himself this moment. Fuck summoning Dad; *this* was what he'd rather be doing. Diego's hand shifted slightly so that he was running his fingertips over Klaus' wedding band. All these years later, and the little touch still made something warm bloom inside of Klaus.

The silence that resonated through the house dissipated with the dull thud of music from somewhere upstairs. The house wasn't known for its soundproofing and when the volume of the song increased just a little, Klaus was able to make out the music. He remembered the song from their teens and Luther's obsession with music from the 70's and 80's.

Behind him, Diego's hips were shifting but not in a way that indicated Klaus was about to be fucked over the wet bar. It was a smoother rhythm and he realised with a breathy chuckle that Diego was starting to dance. Diego pulled back a bit and smirked at Klaus before spinning him so they were facing each other.

Klaus laughed as Diego grabbed his hands, taking a step back as he got more into the movements. Diego was by far the better dancer and Klaus let him lead, laughing as Diego moved both of them in time to the music.

"You're such a goof," Klaus grinned as Diego dipped him and pulled him upright again.

Diego's smile was toothy. He didn't say anything but Klaus could hear the *yeah, but you love it* without words being exchanged.

There was no rhyme or reason to the way Diego led them but that's how he always was. It was a combination of latin dancing, and moves that belonged in the 90's or on a comedy skit show, and his own crazy sense of rhythm. For someone that oozed sexuality, Diego didn't dance dirty. Not really, not when he was just dancing for himself, for the sheer love of it.

Klaus found himself relaxing into the dance, unable to stop the laughter bubbling out of him at Diego's grin, the way he spun him, or kissed his cheek when he was close enough.

Diego had just spun him again, Klaus' skirt flaring out when lightning cracked through the room. The air was suddenly buzzing with electricity. Klaus and Diego stopped short, and Diego was already reaching out to protect Klaus from some invisible enemy. Objects around the room started vibrating as metal started flying through the air; even some of Diego's knives dislodged themselves and shot across the room to sink into the walls.

"What the fuck?"

The room was suddenly incredibly dark and all the lights were flickering. Through the large windows, Klaus saw blue and black flashing outside.

"What the fuck?!" Klaus repeated, tugging at Diego's sweater and pointing even though Diego had already noticed it. His eyes were wide. The light cast an eerie glow over everything.

Diego grabbed Klaus' hand and headed towards the door. They barely remembered to throw on their coats before they ran outside and at the last moment, Klaus grabbed a fire extinguisher. Wind was raging outside; it blew with a frigid sharpness that cut its way into Klaus' bones.

The fire extinguisher proved useless and Klaus threw it with frustration into the dark, crackling hole in the sky.

"What's that gonna do?" Luther yelled over the roaring. When Klaus turned around, Allison and Vanya were also there. Everyone's eyes were wide as they stared at this... *thing*.

"I vote we run!" Klaus shouted over the loud white noise in the air.

The hole crackled louder still and Diego yanked Klaus back and behind him. His hand in Klaus' was as icy cold as the air around them. In any other circumstance, Klaus might have rolled his eyes but currently he was too busy staring in horror. Daddy dearest's training hadn't exactly covered things like this.

And then there was a person; a person whose shape flickered, a scream on its face, and then the person fell into a heap on the ground. Klaus winced.

The person pushed themselves up with a groan. Klaus' heart started *racing*. It was Five. Five, looking the same as when he'd left all those years ago. Klaus had spent years trying to summon him, and had alternated between hoping he'd simply disappeared and wondering if he'd moved on.

Maybe instead of summoning their father he'd summoned Five's spirit finally?

Everyone was incredibly still.

"Is it just me or does anyone else see little Number Five?" Klaus asked, voice quaking.

\*

They somehow ended up congregating in the kitchen. Five hadn't even said hello before he'd started stomping towards the kitchens. He hadn't even let Klaus hug him!

"What's the date? The exact date?" Five asked as he slammed a breadboard down on the table.

"The 24th?"

"Of?"

"March."

Five paused, a look of satisfaction flashing across his face. "Good," he said before grabbing some bread and laying it out casually.

"Is that all you have to say?" Luther asked incredulously.

Five said nothing; it was as if Luther hadn't even spoken.

Luther stood, looming over Five. It made a rather funny image. Klaus made a poor attempt at suppressing a giggle and Diego nudged him. He shrugged and made an innocent face.

"It's been seventeen years," Luther said.

Five, unintimidated, took a step closer and looked up at him with an unwavering gaze. "It's been a lot longer than that."

There was the strange puff of air and then Five was across the room, grabbing the peanut butter from the top shelf.

"I haven't missed that," Luther muttered, sitting back down with a huff.

"Where'd you go?" Diego asked.

"The future. It's shit by the way."

"Called it!" Klaus crowed. Diego rolled his eyes at him and Klaus grinned smugly to himself. Diego's thumb on his knee kept drawing idle circles.

"Should have listened to the old man," Five continued, darting around the kitchen to grab various things. "Never thought I'd say that. Jumping through space is one thing; jumping through time is another." He stopped and looked at Klaus. "Nice dress."

"Aww, *danke*," Klaus cooed, smoothing the hem down a touch.

"Wait, wait," Vanya said. "How did you get back?"

"In the end, I had to project my consciousness forward into a suspended quantum state version of myself that exists across every possible instance of time."

"That makes no sense," Diego mumbled.

"Well, it would if you were smarter," Five said without skipping a beat.

Both Klaus and Luther put hands on Diego to stop him from getting up and physically fighting Five. Diego shoved at Luther's arm and remained standing for another breath, as if to prove that he wouldn't obey Luther just because.

"How long were you there?" Luther continued once Diego had sat down again.

"Forty-five years. Give or take."

Luther sat down heavily.

Klaus' eyes widened theatrically. He shot a look at an equally stunned Diego.

"So you're... how old?" Diego asked.

"Jesus Christ, I know our education was lacking, but I wasn't aware it was quite that bad."

"You're fifty-eight?"

"No, my consciousness is fifty-eight. My body is, apparently, thirteen again." He shook his head and took an aggressive bite of his sandwich. He glanced down at the newspaper in the middle of the table; the front page bore a picture of their father. "When's the funeral?"

"Later today. You made it just in time. Yay!" Klaus clapped his hands delicately together.

"Heart failure, huh?"

"Yes," Diego said at the same time that Luther said, "No."

"Well, nice to see nothing's changed," Five said dryly, still going at his sandwich with a vengeance. His eyes slid over to Klaus and Diego and he raised an eyebrow at how their

hands were resting together on Klaus' knee. "Including that, apparently." He looked between Luther and Allison. "And I'm guessing this one remains unconsummated."

Luther opened his mouth to say something but Five cut him off. "That wasn't a question." He swallowed his mouthful and swaggered towards the door.

"That's it? That's all you have to say?" Allison asked incredulously.

"What else is there to say? *C'est la vie*."

Klaus looked back over at Diego and he was sure his expression was likely just as bewildered as Diego's. "Welp. That was something."

\*

It was bucketing rain by the time they all trailed outside for the funeral. Klaus was regretting his decision to stay in Allison's skirt now that he was outside, but there was no way he'd admit that to anyone (except Diego). It was freezing, which, rude, it was meant to be spring.

The courtyard was just as miserable as he remembered. There was a statue of a boy off to the side that was new. Well, he didn't know how old it was but it certainly hadn't been here the last time he'd been at the house.

Klaus hunched over under his little pink umbrella. Everyone except for Diego and Luther stood around the courtyard under wide black umbrellas. Diego stood there, already drenched by the rain, glaring at the urn in Luther's hand. Klaus loved one (1) dramatic bitch.

Ben stood to Klaus' right. He also didn't have an umbrella but it wasn't quite the same given he couldn't get wet.

"Did something happen?" Mom's voice was sweet but confused. Worry flashed across Diego's face and then vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

"Dad died. Remember?" Allison said, tone verging on incredulous with just a touch of concern.

"Oh. Yes. Of course," Mom said, although the words didn't register across her face.

"Is Mom okay?" Allison asked Diego, cocking her head to the side.

Diego nodded, rain running down his face. "Yeah, she's fine. Just needs some rest. Recharge, you know?"

They slowly turned their attention to Luther in front of them when he cleared his throat. The courtyard would have been silent were it not for the pouring rain.

Couldn't they have had this another time? Later? After the rain had eased? Klaus *hated* being cold.

"Whenever you're ready, dear boy," Pogo said.

Luther nodded sharply and poured the ashes out. They fell heavily down onto the ground and formed a little hill of dirt.

Klaus bit the inside of his lip to stop himself from snorting. Well, that was anticlimactic.

Ben barked a laugh.

"Might have been better with some wind," Luther muttered to himself.

Pogo, unaffected as always, asked, "Does anyone wish to speak?"

There was more silence. Klaus glanced over at Diego. Diego wasn't looking at him but he rolled his eyes at Pogo's question.

"Very well then," Pogo sighed. "In all regards, Reginald Hargreeves made me who I am today. For that alone, I shall forever be in his debt. He was my friend and my master, and I shall miss him very much. He leaves behind a complicated legacy—"

"He was a monster."

Diego's words startled a laugh out of Klaus.

"He was a bad person and a worse father, and the world is better off without him."

"Diego," Allison said sharply.

"My name is Number Two because he couldn't be bothered to give us actual names. He had Mom do it."

"Would anyone like something to eat? I can make cookies!" Mom piped up, woken by the mention of her.

"No, it's okay, Mom," Vanya said softly.

"Oh, okay then," she said, expression going blank again.

Diego stepped forward, the way he always did when he was about to give some form of diatribe. Klaus pressed his lips together; he wasn't supposed to laugh. He was *not* supposed to laugh. This wasn't funny.

"Look, you wanna pay your respects? Fine. Whatever. But at least be honest about the kind of man he was," Diego said angrily as he slowly walked. When Diego's eyes flashed over to him Klaus looked away, not wanting to make eye contact lest he laugh and piss Diego off further.

"You should shut up now." Luther's voice was dangerous.



Klaus sighed internally. Of *course* this was going to happen. So much for all that therapy. He glanced over at Ben, who'd folded his arms across his chest and was looking at the scene before them, unimpressed.

"Ten bucks that they're throwing punches in the next thirty seconds," Klaus muttered to Five, hoping that Luther and Diego wouldn't hear him over the rain.

Five rolled his eyes. "I'm not an idiot. I'm not going to bet against that."

Diego rounded on Luther, fury radiating from every inch of him. "You, of all people, should be on my side here, Number One." He sneered over the name. "After everything he did to you--"

"Not all of us wanted to run away from their problems, unlike *some* people." Luther looked between Klaus and Diego with narrowed eyes, as if Allison and Vanya hadn't also fled shortly after.

"And thank god we did or we would have ended up just like you. Who knows what he would have done to us? What he would have *kept* doing to us?"

"Stop talking."

"He would have taken us and broken us down even further, and when he was done breaking us, maybe he would have sent us a million miles away just like he did to you."

"Shut up," Luther said, visibly shaking with anger.

"My money's on Diego," Klaus said to Five.

Five's eyes darted between the two. "Luther has strength but Diego has speed. I'll take that bet. Should be interesting."

Klaus grinned. If he weren't holding his umbrella he'd have rubbed his hands together gleefully. He wasn't thrilled that Diego was fighting but at least it *was* interesting. Also, Diego could probably kick Luther's ass, and that would put Diego in a great mood and probably be therapeutic as fuck.

"Number Two, shut the fuck up," Luther said, voice low.

"I'm trying to help you, *Number One*. Don't you see what he did to you? To all of us? He raised us, not as children, but as experiments. And he failed us. All of us. You included. You were nothing more than an experiment to him and you're an idiot if you think otherwise."

Luther lunged at him, fists already flying. Diego dodged it and threw a punch of his own.

"That was a minute," Five muttered. "I should have taken that bet."

"Stop it!" Vanya shouted, her little voice surprisingly loud.

"Hit him!" Klaus cried, bouncing on his toes. He was going to get railed into next week once this was done, regardless of the outcome, and hoo boy, he was excited for it.

Diego goaded Luther as they went for each other. They were quite evenly matched and Klaus was genuinely unsure who was going to win.

Pogo was shouting at them to stop but the words fell on deaf ears.

And then, Luther threw a punch as Diego ducked at the right second and Luther's fist slammed into the statue in the courtyard. It flew to the ground, the head smashing off.

"And there goes Ben's statue," Allison said, rolling her eyes.

Klaus looked over at Ben, both of their eyes wide.

"I had a statue?" Ben asked, incredulous, disappearing from beside him.

Diego stumbled across the courtyard and slid out one of the knives he always carried from his belt. Klaus' eyes widened, suddenly worried. Nope, nope, this was bad.

"Diego, no!" Vanya cried but it was too late. Diego flicked the knife across the courtyard and it sliced effortlessly through Luther's enormous overcoat. Instead of blood though, there was... Hair? Was that hair? Luther's hand slapped over the broken material before Klaus could get a good look at it.

The courtyard was utterly silent again, Diego and Luther breathing hard as they glared at each other. And then, Luther was rushing towards the house, shoulder checking Diego as he went. Diego stumbled backwards a few steps before catching himself.

Allison shook her head in disgust and followed Luther inside.

Vanya was next. She stopped a few feet from Diego. "You're an asshole. You never know when to stop, do you?"

Diego's expression was cool. "Can't wait to read the sequel, sis. Got enough material yet?"

Vanya shook her head as she too returned to the house.

Five looked up at Klaus. "I think that's a draw."

Klaus hummed absently. "Yeah, I think you're right." He sighed heavily.

"Good talk. We should do this again sometime," Five said, so that those remaining in the courtyard could hear him. Then he vanished in a flash.

Diego didn't look at Klaus as he all but stomped over to Mom. She tilted her head at him, smiling genially.

"Hello, Diego dear," she said, as if she hadn't seen anything particularly dramatic happening.

"C'mon, Mom," Diego said, resting a hand at her lower back and leading her inside.

Klaus was left alone in the rain, thoughts frazzled. What had seemed fun and hilarious only moments ago suddenly twisted uncomfortably in his gut.

Ben popped back up beside him.

"It doesn't even look like me," Ben said mournfully, nodding at the statue. "But pretty cool I got a statue, I guess. Better than a dumb painting."

Klaus laughed, even though his stomach was curling in discomfort, and turned back towards the house. "Best funeral ever!"

\*

It was only when Klaus sat down on his bed that he realised he'd managed to avoid his bedroom since he'd returned home. Entering the house had been weird; being back in his bedroom? A whole new level.

The same curtains hung over the windows, the same boring bedspread lay across his tiny bed, and the same scorch marks were still on the rug on his floor. Here, in this room, nothing had changed.

But everything about Klaus *had*.

Right?

He and Diego had been back here less than a day and it felt like all the progress they'd made had just disappeared. It felt like he was seventeen again and so fucking lost. Diego was fighting with Luther again. Five was... Five. Vanya was ignored. Klaus *really* wanted to get drunk.

No ghosts had shown their ugly faces since Klaus had arrived but they didn't need to. He could feel them throughout the mansion, and the memories had certainly left an impression in any place that drugs hadn't burned them away.

He ran a hand over his face, exhaling slowly. Surely they'd be getting out of here soon, right? They'd done their bit. They'd gone to the funeral. They'd said 'hi' to Mom. Diego had fought with Luther. All in all, the visit had gone as expected aside from the arrival of Number Five. And now, he just really wanted to get the hell out of there and curl up with Diego on the couch to watch a sitcom with him and Ben, and forget that the past few days had ever happened.

He didn't even care about Diego fucking him senseless, as a way to cool off from the anger and adrenaline. He just wanted to get out of here.

He was just going to change out of his sodden clothes, and hopefully by the time he'd changed, Diego would have cooled off enough for them to leave.

He exhaled again, weighed down by the memories of this room. He dragged his eyes over the space, at the faded posters on his walls, the trinkets on his bookshelf and desk. His eyes settled on the little stuffed unicorn in the corner of the bookshelf.

Shit.

He'd forgotten about that. When he and Diego had left, Klaus had... Well, Klaus had very much not been in a good way. Ben had died a few days earlier and Klaus had taken whatever he could get his hands on. Diego had grabbed him in all his vomiting and withdrawing glory, packed them a backpack each, and they'd disappeared into the night. Taking his unicorn hadn't been on his mind nearly as much as trying to stave off the waves of agonising grief and violent withdrawal.

With shaking hands, he crossed the small space and lifted the toy up. He used to keep some of his stash in here. He wondered if...

His stitching had definitely improved since he was a teenager. He picked the stitches apart easily with his fingernails. As he suspected, there was still a baggie in there and a good number of pills. For a moment, Klaus was trapped. There had been some really, really good times on these pills. And he'd been sober for so long... It wouldn't matter if he took one, even half of one, right? It'd just make being back in this house a little easier and—. He stopped himself right the fuck there. No, he was not thinking about this. He was going to flush these fuckers now.

Diego walked in, still dripping wet, saw the unicorn in Klaus' hands and knew. His eyes settled on the bag.

"What the fuck, Klaus?" Diego snapped, crossing the room in three steps to snatch the little bag from Klaus' fingertips. He'd stripped off his coat but his clothes underneath were still sodden.

Well, it looked like Diego hadn't cooled off any.

"What do you mean, '*what the fuck*'?" Klaus had never been one to take Diego's bullshit lying down and he wasn't about to start now.

"We've been back here five fucking minutes and you're already after this shit again?" He shook the bag, the colourful pills so freaking happy against the darkness of Diego's expression.

"I've been clean for eight years, why the fuck would you assume that that's what I'm doing?" Klaus demanded indignantly.

"I don't know," Diego said sarcastically, "maybe because I walk in here and see you with a bag of fucking pills?"

"Yeah, real nice to know that's what you think of me," Klaus said, shaking his head, lips twisting into a sneer.

"Relapses happen, Klaus. You're the one who taught me that. My brother spends almost ten years an addict and you think I'm ever gonna forget that?"

Klaus reeled back as if he'd been slapped. Suddenly, he felt very, very sick. There was such a bitterness to Diego's tone, a misery that indicated that no matter how good Klaus was doing, Diego would always remember it.

"Well," Klaus said coldly, "if this is how you'd respond to a relapse, it's really goddamn lucky I'm not relapsing, isn't it? Nice to know you'd respond like this instead of with, oh, I don't know, compassion and support?"

Diego's expression changed suddenly. Realisation crossed his face and then crumpled into guilt. "Shit, Klaus, I—" He made an aborted move towards him and then fell back on his heels.

The silence hung heavy and far too long.

"I remembered they were here and I was going to flush them. That's all," Klaus said, quieter but still bitter. "But," he hesitated before admitting softly, "I would be lying if I said I hadn't been a tiny bit tempted." Diego inhaled sharply. Klaus rushed on to say, "I wasn't going to. I wasn't. I promise. I... I always come to you when it gets real bad, remember? Those are the rules. But there was a moment..."

Diego swallowed and stared up at the ceiling. "I... I'm sorry for how I reacted. That. That was bad. And not how I should have responded if you were struggling. But... If you think that the image of coming home and finding you like—" He stopped abruptly, voice getting choked. And Klaus knew. Klaus knew *exactly* what incident he was referring to. He still felt sick to his stomach about it. (He still wasn't sure entirely how accidental it had been either and that hurt like hell too.)

"If you think that that doesn't regularly feature in my nightmares to this day..." Diego shook his head and exhaled slowly.

Klaus took a step forward, wanting to reach out, wanting so badly to touch, to comfort. He rested a hand on Diego's shoulder. The sweater beneath his hand was cold and wet. "Diego I... I had no idea. Why didn't you say something?"

Diego still wasn't looking at him. "Because I don't hold it against you. I don't. That was a lifetime ago. I've seen how hard you've worked and still work. I can forgive, but—" He stopped and sighed. "But I can't forget, no matter how much I want to." His hand came up to rest on top of Klaus', squeezing his fingers. "I'm sorry I overreacted," he continued.

Klaus shook his head furiously. "No. No. I don't blame you. I mean, you walk into your ex-addict husband slash brother holding a bag of pills in the house that caused half his trauma..." Klaus tittered. "But yes, you may need to work on that whole 'compassion'

approach for next time." Diego raised an eyebrow. "Not that there will ever *be* a next time," Klaus rushed to add.

An awkward silence settled between them. They hadn't fought, as in actually fought, in years. He didn't know what to do after fights; never really had. In Klaus' defence, Diego was not much better.

Diego gently removed Klaus' hand from his shoulder and threaded his fingers between Klaus' as he pressed his blank palm against 'Goodbye'. He stepped in closer, bringing cool fingers to rest against Klaus' jaw. Klaus leaned into the touch, and let his eyes flutter closed.

It was Klaus that closed the distance between them, the first gentle kiss tentative. He felt Diego shakily exhale before he slowly, sweetly, deepened the kiss. A tiny sound got caught in Klaus' throat. He curled his fingers around Diego's wrist, breaking away from his mouth so he could kiss the steady pulse there. Diego pulled him back in and buried his hand in Klaus' curls, pulling him exactly where Diego wanted him.

He stepped in closer, their chests pressing together, and god, even through their damp clothing Diego felt so warm and solid, felt so *safe* against him. Diego cradled his head with both hands, holding Klaus like he was something precious and bringing Klaus in closer still.

When Diego withdrew, Klaus whined. Diego chuckled and without pulling too far away, he shut the door behind him. And then he was back, kissing Klaus with the same brutal sweetness as before.

This time, it was Klaus who pulled away but only for long enough to peel off Diego's sweater and shirt, dropping them to the floor. He pulled his own top off too and let it fall in a heap behind him. Their bare chests were cool as they met and Klaus shivered. Their kisses remained sweet and tender, Diego still holding Klaus' face as he kissed Klaus with a familiarity that made him ache.

So maybe he wasn't about to get that brain-melting fuck he'd predicted but this was definitely a fair trade-off. Klaus melted against Diego, revelling in the steadiness of his body against him. Klaus wrapped his arms around Diego's neck and took a few steps back, pulling them to his old twin bed.

Diego guided him down against the mattress, pulling away only long enough to remove his boots and pants. Klaus took the opportunity to do the same, tossing the skirt over the edge of the bed to join the sodden piles on the floor.

And then Diego was against him once more, skin cool against his. Klaus shivered but it wasn't from the cold. He wrapped his legs around Diego's waist, bringing him as close as he could. He wanted more. He needed more. He wanted to be as close to Diego as two humans could be, to crawl under his skin and never leave this place where he was safe, and loved, and cherished.

The Klaus that had slept in this bed for seventeen years had never believed someone could want him like this, could make him believe he was worth loving. But Diego had shown him

over and over and over again what he felt for Klaus, had slowly coaxed Klaus into believing it, until there was no doubt in his mind that Klaus was worth loving.

He hoped Diego knew the same.

He believed Diego knew the same.

Their kisses became more frantic and desperate. Klaus tilted his head to the side, letting Diego suck and bite down the column of his neck. He was always careful not to leave marks there because Klaus had a real job but Klaus still basked in the touches.

"Diego, please," Klaus gasped out, running blunt nails up Diego's back. He was already so hard, cock rubbing against Diego's, the close press of their bodies giving a dry stimulation. He needed more.

Diego nodded and kissed him again, running his fingers gently through Klaus' damp curls. Once he'd kissed Klaus breathless he drew back, hand curling around Klaus' thigh, spreading his legs a little further. He spat into his hand and rubbed it over Klaus' entrance, pressing in just a touch before he spat again and ran it over his own cock.

It was tight and a little dry, but Klaus' eyes still fluttered shut in pleasure. Diego was still for a moment after fully pressing in, his eyes on Klaus' face, watching him carefully. Even after all these years, even knowing Klaus could take it, Diego was still careful with him.

Klaus was overcome with a rush of affection; a bittersweet, vulnerable feeling that left him unable to speak. Diego's eyes softened as he saw something in Klaus' face, and he brushed his nose against Klaus'. He kissed him once, so sweetly that it left Klaus dizzy.

He started to move, slowly at first. Klaus gasped in pleasure, curling his arms and legs around him. He picked up the pace, pushing his arms under Klaus' knees and bending him in half as he worked on really wrecking Klaus.

"Oh fuck," Klaus breathed, head falling back. "Fuck, Diego, I need..." He stuttered on his words.

Diego bit at the juncture where Klaus' jaw met his ear, making Klaus shudder and tighten.

"I've got you, sweetheart," Diego murmured, moaning softly against Klaus' skin. His fingers dug into Klaus' thighs before he shifted and braced himself against the bed, really giving himself the leverage to fuck Klaus hard and close and tight.

Klaus curled his arms around Diego's shoulders and ran his fingers over Diego's short hair, back arching as he tried to fuck himself back against Diego. He was no longer cold, everything feeling so very hot as they moved against each other.

His orgasm was building quickly. Diego knew exactly how to ruin Klaus. Klaus wasn't sure if he wanted to come right fucking now or if he wanted this to continue for an age. His mind was fuzzy, blurred with pleasure and closeness and adoration. He managed to drag his eyes open, staring at Diego through lidded eyes. God he looked beautiful like this, his cheeks

flushed, teeth biting his lower lip. Klaus' mouth fell open as he panted, eyes rolling back as Diego fucked him particularly hard before easing off again.

Klaus did his best to suppress his moans, with varied success. He was *loud* and the walls here were thin. And god, Diego was so good at this, fuck.

Diego leant down to kiss Klaus again and really started to fuck Klaus in earnest now. They could do that gentle, making love shit when they got home. Right now? Klaus needed to come, needed Diego to come inside him. His head was spinning wonderfully and he finally allowed his eyes to squeeze shut.

Their kisses turned sloppy, more moaning into each other's mouths than anything. Diego's abs felt so good, his cock trapped between their two bodies. Their skin was slick with sweat, easing any friction and making Klaus desperate with it. Finally, Klaus' orgasm flooded through him, making his eyes roll back, his fingers digging hard into Diego's shoulders.

Diego followed shortly after, his thrusts getting sloppy and erratic as he allowed himself to surrender to his own orgasm. He bit hard into the meat of Klaus' shoulder hard, muffling his groan as he came.

They parted minutely, panting, staring at each other through lidded eyes. Klaus brushed his nose against Diego's and smiled sleepily before he fell back against the pillows. Diego buried his face in Klaus' neck as he struggled to regain his breath.

Once his breathing was a little more normal he eased out of Klaus, letting his legs drop down. Klaus' heart was still racing in the best possible way. Diego shuffled off of Klaus and pressed a kiss to his cheek. Klaus hummed happily, letting his eyes close again.

When Klaus was able to feel his limbs again, he shifted. He was starting to get cold and they both moved to get under the blankets. It took some manoeuvring to fit them both on Klaus' childhood bed but they made it work. Fortunately, Klaus was well-versed in the art of entirely plastering himself against Diego. It was nice being tucked into Diego like this, his back against the wall, Diego protecting him from the outside world. It reminded him of when they'd first left the Academy.

"I love you," Diego said softly, pressing a kiss to Klaus' forehead.

"Love you too," Klaus said, curling around him.

They lay in silence for a little longer, just basking in the afterglow.

"Just like old times, huh?" Klaus chuckled, digging his chin into Diego's pec until Diego winced and flicked the side of his ear.

"Something like that," Diego mused, staring at the ceiling. "More clothes back then. Fewer orgasms."

"Did you ever want to? You know, back then?"



Diego broke his eye contact with the ceiling to stare at Klaus'. He hummed. "I wanted something. I mean, we were kids. I remember wanting to kiss you. A lot." He drummed his fingers over Klaus' shoulder. "Wasn't ever brave enough though. I'm glad you were."

Klaus grinned, reminiscing on their first kiss all those years ago. They'd been curled on a tiny mattress like this, in the dark, freezing cold. Klaus had bridged the gap between them, taking a leap that he'd never once regretted. "That's me. Big, brave warrior right here."

Diego chuckled, running his fingers idly up and down Klaus' upper arm.

Silence fell over the room again.

Klaus had plans to leave soon. Really he did. But Diego was so warm against him, and felt so good and safe. And he'd just had a truly spectacular orgasm. Would it hurt if they stayed and napped, just for a little bit?

He let his eyes fall shut, enjoying the closeness of the moment.

The peace was disturbed by a sudden insistent tapping at the door.

"Go away," Klaus called over his shoulder, shuffling so he was pressed closer to Diego.

The door opened as if he'd said nothing and Luther bumbled through. "Oh good, you're both still here." He stopped, taking them in. He wrinkled his nose. "Gross," he muttered before shaking himself and seeming to remember his mission. "Um, so. Anyway. Family meeting. Now."

"Yeah, we'd love to but we're a little busy right now," Diego said tightening his arm around Klaus and very pointedly not moving. Klaus could practically hear him rolling his eyes.

"You look pretty done to me. Anyway, the world ends in six days, so, family meeting. That's an order." He left the room, the door slamming behind him.

Klaus looked up at Diego with wide eyes; Diego stared back. On one hand, it sounded too ridiculous to be true. On the other, Luther didn't have a sense of humour that either of them knew about.

Diego groaned and pushed himself up so he was sitting. The cold rushed over Klaus' skin as the blanket was no longer covering him and Diego's body was no longer pressed against his. "Well, I don't know if he's fucking with us or not but I figure... It's a pretty outlandish lie, particularly for Luther, so it's probably worth at least getting dressed for."

"Yeah, I guess," Klaus muttered, accepting the dry clothes he'd arrived in from Diego and fumbling to get himself into them. Diego disappeared momentarily to get some dry clothes from his own bedroom before returning to Klaus'.

Klaus fixed Diego's mussed hair once he was dressed, kissing him once, twice, okay, a few times, before finally parting again.

"I guess we should go save the world," Klaus teased as they left his childhood bedroom, fingers twined with Diego's.

## End Notes

Thank you for reading!

I've already written another 5 fics for this universe so... I hope you liked it or something?

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