

Up North

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Up North

by [cupidgent](#)

Summary

Noel was annoyed. And not just because of the obnoxiously loud voice of his best friend on the phone next to him.

That was only the tip of the iceberg.

No, Noel didn't wanna be here. A 9 hour bus ride with 20 other College Prep students all the way up to Northern California. It was something that would qualify as his perfect nightmare.

Notes

hi i haven't written fics in like two years and this is my first one on this site so i have no fucking clue what i'm doing.

anyways, this fic is inspired by a trip i went on a few years ago and i felt like it was a cute idea so why not write it?

i'm gonna try my best with frequent updates so don't worry too much about that. hope you enjoy!!

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

bus

Noel was annoyed. And not just because of the obnoxiously loud voice of his best friend on the phone next to him.

That was only the tip of the iceberg.

No, Noel didn't wanna be here. On a 9 hour bus ride with 20 other senior college prep students all the way up to Northern California. It was something that would qualify as his perfect nightmare.

He never even liked this class in the first place. The past 3 years of high school had mainly been spent with numerous failed attempts to drop it but with a few of his grades being on the lower side, his counselor insisted he stayed. According to her, the class was good to help keep him in check.

But why was he here, about to spend an entire weekend with his class? As far as he was concerned it was all Cody's fault. His friend's excitement about visiting colleges he was considering, as well as his not-so-subtle pleading was enough to get Noel to hand that damn permission slip to his parents just to shut him up.

He regret his decision already.

Noel's eyes opened to a large box of skittles waving about in front of his face. He quickly turned down his music volume (which was blasting in an attempt to drown out Cody's voice) and popped out an earbud, turning around to see his friend Spock leaning over the back of his seat.

Spock and Cody, as well as Noel's other friend Sam, were all roommates on this trip. Despite how much they could get on his nerves sometimes, he loved his friends and honestly sharing a hotel room with them was the only thing worth looking forward to. He just wasn't sure about being able to survive a whole day on a hot bus with them. Or more accurately, if they would be able to survive him.

"You want some dude?" Spock asked, shaking the box some more.

"Nah, I'm good."

"I'll take some!" Cody reached over to take the box. Noel must have had his music up so loud he didn't even notice Cody got off his call. "You're finally done screaming shit into your phone?" He teased.

"The fuck does that mean?" Cody started getting defensive, as always. Normally he could take a joke, but when it came to stuff like this? Not so much. Regardless, Noel loved messing with him. Especially when he gave reactions like that.

So he decided to egg him on. "Dude you were being loud as hell."

“I wasn’t that loud!”

“Yes you were, asshole.” Sam poked his head over the seat, sending a glare towards Cody. “The cars next to us fucking heard you.” he said, causing both Noel and Spock to break out laughing. That’s one thing that Noel always loved about Sam. He always got straight to the point.

Cody shrugged, obviously embarrassed as he poured the skittles into his hand. “It’s loud as hell in here. Kelsey couldn’t hear me.”

“Whatever,” Spock attempted to change the subject. “I got more snacks in my bag if u want any.” He held up a small backpack. “Is that why your ass almost got left? You were buying snacks?” Noel raised an eyebrow.

“Look, I made it here alright! That’s what matters.” Spock stopped to zip open the bag. “Now do you guys want hot cheetos or not.” Noel instantly perked up, catching the hot cheeto bag Spock threw at him.

“Got any more in there?” Sam poked his head in, smiling when he pulled out a bag of his own. “Careful...” Spock pulled the backpack away. “Save some for later. College snacks are expensive. I don’t know if I can afford to restock.”

“Alright Stater Brothers, chill. We won’t get anymore.” Noel reassured him.

“No promises...” Sam laughed as he shoved a few cheetos into his mouth. Spock squinted at him suspiciously, setting his backpack on the other side of his seat, out of Sam’s reach.

They rode on for about 2 hours before the first truck stop. Most of that time Noel just spent on his phone, scrolling through Twitter and occasionally checking instagram. They were supposed to play Super Smash Bros on Kelsey’s switch that she let Cody borrow, but Cody so very conveniently left it in his suitcase that was now sitting in the bus storage. Now they had absolutely nothing to do and were bored out of their fucking minds.

So Noel didn’t hesitate to get out of the bus when they stopped. He didn’t need to use the restroom but he did have a need for fresh air. He was the first to get out, his friends following close behind as he walked towards one of the picnic tables outside the small restroom building. Cody stopped for a second to obnoxiously stretch and touch his toes when Sam snuck up behind him and lightly pushed him to the side, laughing when he dramatically almost fell to the ground.

“Relax, I didn’t even hit that hard.” Sam snorted, making his way to the restrooms. Cody glared as he rubbed his arm before stopping to look at Noel. “You coming?” he motioned his head towards the small building. Noel shook his head, sitting down. “Nah, just needed to stretch.”

Cody nodded and turned to follow after Sam. It took a minute before Noel realized he was alone. Where the hell did Spock go? He looked around before he spotted him talking to his girlfriend Kay right outside the bus.

Probably chewing him out for being late, Noel thought, a smirk forming on his face. Kay was worried as hell before they left. Spock hadn't been answering any texts all morning and he didn't even show up at Cody's place. Their initial plan was to meet there first before driving over to the school but when Spock didn't show they had no choice but to leave without him. It wasn't until everyone got on the bus that he finally showed up. Just a few seconds from being left behind.

Spock turned his head and noticed Noel looking at him. Next thing Noel knew, Kay and Spock were walking towards him, a few other classmates trailing behind.

"Hey Noel, what's up?" Kay gave a small wave as she and Spock sat next to him.

"Just stretching. That bus is cramped, even for a short ass person."

"Right? I don't think I could last another second in there." Another voice chimed in. Noel looked behind Kay to see one of his classmates, Aleena, smiling at him.

To Noel, Aleena was just one of his best friend's girlfriend's friends. At least she was at first. Thinking about it, Aleena could be considered a good friend. It was nice how she always helped him out during class study sessions. She also had a nice sense of humor. And a nice laugh too. She was just nice.

If he was being completely honest with himself, it wasn't exactly Cody's fault he was here. The moment he saw her hand raised when Mr. Myers asked who was going on the trip, his hand went up too.

But he couldn't put any blame on her now could he?

Noel smiled back. "Same. I've been bored out of my mind."

"And we got what? 2 more hours till we get to UCSB?" Spock added. Noel groaned, throwing his head back in anguish. "I just need like 5 more minutes out here." He wished out loud. But as soon as those words left his mouth, they were all being called back to the bus. "You gotta be fuckin' kidding me." Noel sighed, standing back up.

"Wow, you really just jinxed yourself." Kay laughed

"Just my luck, huh?"

"Hey Spock, you can have my seat if you guys wanna sit together." Aleena offered as the 4 of them started walking. "Oh, thanks!" Spock smiled, reaching for Kay's hand. "I just gotta get my stuff from my seat then."

When they got in the bus, Spock grabbed his backpack and went a few rows back to sit in Aleena's former seat with Kay. Noel sat in his same seat, popped his earbuds in and started scrolling through his Spotify playlist. When Aleena took the seat next to him, he lowered his phone and looked at her in confusion.

"I guess I'm with you now!" She nervously laughed, putting her stuff underneath the seat.

“Oh... um actually, Spock was sitting with Sam. Cody was sitting there.”

Aleena's face fell and Noel felt a small pang in his chest. “Oh! Sorry. I'll move.” she awkwardly leaned forward to pick up her stuff again.

Fuck. Now Noel felt bad.

“You know what? Cody can move, it's fine.” He shrugged, knowing damn well Cody would not be down to move.

Speak of the devil.

“What's... going on.” Cody pointed at Noel and then Aleena, looking slightly puzzled. “Spock went to sit with Kay. You can sit with Sam, right?” Noel explained.

Cody opened his mouth to protest before making eye contact with Aleena. Noel could tell he was trying really really hard not to hurt Aleena's feelings. Cody was just conscious like that. He let out a sigh before looking back to Noel. “Give me my bag.”

Noel tossed it over, and he took his seat next to Sam. There was a pause and then, “Hey where the fuck is Spock?” Sam asked a little too loudly.

“With Kay, asshole.” Noel turned around to peek over his seat. “Wait, when did you even get in here?” He could have sworn he didn't see Sam get back in the bus at all.

“Like 5 minutes ago. Cody took too long.”

“Well now you get special bonding time with him!” he laughed. “Try not to talk too loud, ‘kay?” He turned to make a face at Cody resulting in a frown from him and a kick in the seat from Sam. Noel sat back down, laughing even harder. He turned his head to see Aleena attempting to stifle laughs of her own.

“Sorry about them.”

“No no it's fine. You guys are funny.” Aleena looked at him, smiling. For some reason, that smile gave him a bit of reassurance.

Maybe he wouldn't regret this trip after all.

beach

Chapter Notes

big thank you to grace for proofreading this for me!!

Nope, Noel wanted to go home right now.

He knew from the jump that these college tours were going to be boring as hell but sitting in a stuffy ass classroom filling out an interest form? That was an all new level of boring. Part of him really wanted to write random bullshit all over the piece of paper in front of him but he couldn't risk getting in trouble here. Not that kind of pointless trouble at least.

He glanced to his side to see Cody next to him, carefully filling out each blank space. On his other side, Spock was scribbling things in while Sam just didn't fill anything at all. Noel decided to go with Sam's plan.

After a few minutes, Noel lifted his paper up as one of the tour guides (Jessie??) walked around to collect them. When she had them all, she walked to the front of the classroom and clapped her hands, commanding everyone's attention. God, Noel hated when people did that.

"Okay guys, in the top corner of your desks there's a sticker. If your sticker has the number one on it, you're gonna be in my group. If it has two, then you're gonna be with Alec." She gestured to the tour guide on the other side of the room.

Noel shifted to see his friend's numbers. He had a two but both Cody and Spock had ones. That left him with Sam. "Great, we're not even all in the same group." He let out with a groan, sliding down his seat.

"Hey, you got me buddy!" Sam said in a sickeningly sweet voice, slapping his hand on Noel's shoulder. "Oh great, I'm so lucky." Noel rolled his eyes, smiling as he pushed his friend away.

"So I guess we'll see you guys at lunch?" Cody stood up, sliding on his backpack. "Yep," Noel stood up next, picking up his jacket to tie it around his waist. "Just don't get too excited. I know how horny you get thinking about those computer science programs."

Cody scoffed as the 3 other boys broke out laughing. Eventually, Cody let out a laugh of his own, knowing there was at least some truth to the joke. "C'mon, let's go," Spock finally calmed down, catching his breath. "See you guys." he held up a peace sign before walking away with Cody. Noel nodded in response as he and Sam went to join the rest of their group standing in front of Alan?? Alex?? Noel couldn't remember his name.

“Hey guys! I’m Alec,” So that’s what it was. “...and I’m just gonna take you around campus for a bit. If there’s any place you wanna visit in particular, just let me know! Now just follow me.” Alec motioned his hand as the whole group walked out the door.

“Good god, man, I’m already so tired.” Noel rubbed at his face.

Sam hummed in agreement. “I just wanna get to the hotel and do stupid shit.”

“What even is there to-” Noel stopped when he felt a tap on his arm, slightly jumping when he saw Aleena walking right next to him. “Oh! Sorry if I startled you.” She quickly drew her hand away.

“No, no you’re good.” He awkwardly smiled, not really knowing what to say next. Luckily, Aleena kept talking. “Kay and Nat are in the other group so I’m kinda alone.”

“Aren’t you friends with Courtney?” Sam gestured towards one of the girls walking a few feet in front of them. Noel didn’t really know her that well but he did recall her being in all those group projects with the other girls.

Aleena shook her head. “If I’m being honest, she’s more of Kay’s friend than mine.” She whispered, cautiously glancing at the person in question. “But is it fine if I stick with you guys?” She looked back up at them.

“Oh, yeah sure. Though we might be pretty distracting.” Noel wasn’t planning on being quiet in the slightest. There was no way he could survive listening to whatever Alec had to say for the next hour.

“I don’t mind. I don’t really give a shit about the programs here anyway.”

They walked on, cracking jokes every now and then. A couple times, they unintentionally interrupted Alec and got a little lecture about behavior from Mr. Myer, but they still had fun. Noel never knew how funny Aleena actually was but he was so glad he found out. She even had Sam losing his shit. It honestly felt good. If the other college tours were like this, then maybe the trip wouldn’t be so bad.

As they neared the end of the tour, Alec took the group to the area by the beach. Noel let out a breath as he took in the view. The school was on the edge of a small cliff and there were a couple sets of stairs that lead down to the sandy shore. At the bottom, there were a few students sitting and relaxing while others were either wading around in the water or surfing. The sounds of waves crashing filled the air, along with the squawks of a few seagulls, and the sun was shining brightly with only a few clouds hanging around. It was gorgeous. Especially for mid-November.

Noel turned to Aleena to say something before noticing she wasn’t there. Darting his eyes around the courtyard they stood in, he finally saw her standing by the stairs that lead down to the beach. He was kind of surprised he didn’t notice her move.

Without thinking, he quietly slipped away from Sam and walked over to her. “Oh hey.” Aleena said almost mindlessly as she continued to stare out at the water. “Hey...” He looked

away from her and followed her gaze. He waited for her to say something else, awkwardly shifting when he realized she wasn't going to.

"So uhh, what's on your mind?" Noel cleared his throat before speaking. Aleena jumped as if she was jolted out of her thoughts and looked up at him. "Oh! Sorry I just... I don't get to go to the beach as often." She turned to face the water again. "I love it though. It's a shame I don't like this school. Part of me just wants to go here for the beach."

"What do you wanna major in?"

"I considered veterinary science for a while since I like animals," Aleena shrugged. "...but now I'm thinking about communications or business. But regardless I'm just gonna start school undeclared."

"Apparently that one we're going to tomorrow is good for business." Noel didn't really do research but he remembered hearing Mr. Myers mention something about that.

"Oh yeah! USCR! That's really the school I wanted to see. Apparently the campus is pretty big. It's just farther from home than I would prefer. But what about you? You know what you wanna major in?"

Noel shrugged. After 3 years and 2 months in this class, he was never really able to find something that appealed to him. It made him feel pathetic, seeing his friends already deciding what they want with their lives. Cody always reassured him that he still had time to decide and while he appreciated that, it didn't really help him.

"I... don't know." He sighed, leaning against the railing of the stairs. "But I'll be fine. Still got time, right?" He added that last bit when he noticed the slightly concerned look on her face. "Yeah, there's no rush." She gave him a smile.

"It's just I don't know if I really wanna go to college? But Myers makes it seem like it's either that or we die." He laughed weakly. "Fuck Myers. He's not even gonna think once about us after we graduate." Aleena said, obviously letting out thoughts she'd been holding back for a while. "He just makes us feel shit about our futures to feel better about himself. It's annoying."

"Yeah, you're right. Man is a massive dick."

"But my point is, don't let him decide what's best for you. Only you can really do that, right?" The last part sounded more like a question to herself.

"Yeah... thanks."

"No, don't mention it. I'm just retelling someone else's advice." She shrugged, turning to look over at the tour group only to see that they were all gone. "Shit!"

Noel turned to look, his eyes widening. He pulled out his phone to see a few texts from Sam.

[SAM]: we went to lunch in case ur wondring

[SAM]: just met up with the others call me

“Sam said they went to lunch. I’m gonna call him.” He turned back to Aleena, pointing at his phone. “Yeah, I’m gonna call Kay.” She held her hand out to excuse herself and walked a few feet away.

“Yo, where are you guys?” Noel held up the phone to his ear.

“The main food court. I’ll wait for you outside.”

“Okay on my w-” Sam hung up before he could even finish. Rolling his eyes, Noel put his phone back in his pocket and walked over to Aleena, waiting for her to finish her call.

“Got it. See you in a bit.” She sighed before hanging up. Turning to Noel, she waved her hand outward in a gentlemanly manner. “Shall we?”

“We shall.” Noel laughed and started walking. “Where do you have to go?”

“Barnes and Noble. You?”

“Main food court. That’s on the way over there right?”

“Think so. I’ll walk you there.”

They walked a bit in silence as they walked down the sidewalk. Students on skateboards, bikes and on foot passed by, all moving in a non stop flow of traffic. It kind of intrigued Noel. This was his first time actually going on one of the college trips his class offered since he never cared for the other ones. It was weird being here. He didn’t like it.

“So why did you come on this trip?” Aleena interrupted his thoughts. “I thought you didn’t wanna come.” Noel’s eyebrows furrowed. He didn’t remember telling her that.

“Huh? How d’you know?”

“I heard you say it a couple of times in class. You guys aren’t always the quietest.” She admitted.

Noel could tell the truth and say he came here because of her but... that sounded creepy. And like he had a crush on her when he didn’t. He was sure of that. “Cody’s annoying ass wouldn’t stop pestering me. He did the same with Spock and Sam I guess, though they wanna be here more than I do.”

“I mean it’s not gonna be so bad. We’re not just here for tours, right? Plus talking to you and Sam was pretty fun already.” Aleena laughed as if she remembered one of their jokes from earlier.

“Nole, over here!” A voice cut through their conversation.

Noel and Aleena both turned their heads to see Sam leaning against a wall next to a door where students rushed in and out, some with bags and trays of food in their hands. So this must be the food court, Noel thought.

“This is my stop. See you on the bus?” Noel asked, a hint of hopefulness in his voice. “Yep! I’ll see ya then!” Aleena waved, walking away. He felt a weird feeling in his chest as he watched her walk off. He wasn’t sure what it was but he just brushed it off.

“You guys dating now or?” Sam smirked as Noel approached him. Noel elbowed him in the side before reaching for the door handle. “You worryin’ about the wrong shit, man. Talking to Nat this weekend my fuckin’ ass.”

“Cut me some slack. I like to call it a work-in-progress.”

“That a new way of saying you’re a pussy?”

“Oh shut the hell up.”

pizza

Chapter Notes

i know its been a while, but i'm gonna try to keep updating as best as i can
i appreciate you guys reading so so much so thank you
and again, thank you to grace for proofreading!!

“Hey... Noel?” Was the first thing Noel heard as he felt a light push on his shoulder. For a split second he forgot where he was until he opened his eyes.

“Huh?” He groaned, wiping his eyes as he sat up. Turning his head, he saw Aleena nervously smiling at him, her eyes darting between his. It took him a few seconds to realize that he had been asleep on her shoulder. His eyes widened as he tried to come up with an apology.

“It’s fine... I kinda fell asleep... too.” Aleena practically read his mind. Letting out a weak laugh, Noel nodded, trying to steady his breathing against his quickening heartbeat. God, if only he could slap himself.

He wasn’t too sure how long he’d been out, but apparently it was for most of that bus trip. Last thing that he remembered was the bus pulling away from the last campus and one of their teachers, Mrs. Adams, mentioning some pizza place.

Apparently that’s where they were, Noel noticed when he looked out the bus window. It was a small, brick building with a bright neon sign reading Vinnie’s sitting on the top. Squinting, he saw a few people walking inside .

“C’mon dude, hurry up!”

Noel jolted out of his thoughts when he felt a hand pat on his shoulder. He looked up to see Cody leaning over the seat, gesturing towards the bus door. “Where the hell is everyone else?” Noel asked as he stood up to stretch. The rest of the bus was empty except for Aleena, Cody and himself.

“Well, you two were out cold,” Cody’s pointer finger darted between him and Aleena. “Everyone got out like 5 minutes ago, let’s go.” he tied a jacket around his waist before making his own exit from the bus.

Aleena stood up as well, pausing to give Noel a small smile before following after Cody. Noel smiled back, maybe for a little bit too long, and made his way out to where they were waiting for him.

When they got inside the restaurant, they found Mr. Myers scrolling through his phone as he stood beside a doorway in the back. Through the doorway, Noel spotted a few of his

classmates sitting at a few tables and laughing.

“Aleena, over here!” Noel heard Kay call out as the three walked through the door. She was sitting towards the back of what seemed to be a party room, sharing the table with Spock, Sam, Nat and her other friend Courtney. There was a spot next to her that she was clearly saving for Aleena with two empty seats on the other side, right next to Sam.

Not that he’d been planning to sit with her, but Noel felt a bit disappointed at the fact that Aleena wouldn’t be next to him.

“I thought you guys died or some shit. What even took you so long?” Sam scooted to the side as Cody and Noel both took their seats. “Maybe we did, bitch. How do you know we’re not haunting your ass?” Noel leaned towards his friend and made ghost noises, laughing when he got pushed away.

“You’re so fucking stupid.” Sam smiled as he rolled his eyes.

“Did we miss anything?” Cody cut in, reaching for one of the pitchers of soda they had lined up on the table.

Spock shrugged, taking a sip of his water. “Just talking about what we were gonna do one we get to the hotel.”

“Which isn’t much, right? They said we can’t leave our rooms after 11 or something,” Aleena leaned in. “..and putting tape on our doors.”

“What? Like the tapes gonna keep the door shut?” Cody frowned as he poured the pitcher of Pepsi into his glass before offering to pour some for Noel.

“No. If we open the door, the tape will break and they’ll know if we left. It’s so stupid.” Aleena ended that last part with an eyeroll.

“So?” Noel held out his cup to Cody. Aleena turned to him with a raised brow. “What?” She seemed like she was both confused and a bit insulted. Noel instantly felt guilty but made sure not to show it.

“We can just get our own tape and replace the broken piece. Simple.” He suggested as he took a sip of his soda.

“But how the fuck would we know what tape they use. Might be color coded or some shit.” Spock piped up.

There was a pause as they all seemed to take a moment to think. Two murmurs from Noel and Nat broke the silence as they both tried to speak at once. Noel closed his mouth and gave a nod to Nat. “You go ahead.”

Nat smiled and turned to the rest of the group. “What if we wait until tomorrow. If they tape the stuff tonight, we look at the tape in the morning and we see what they used. Maybe some store nearby will have some that looks like it.”

A few 'yeah's and 'okay's were muttered as the group looked at each other and nodded. "But wait..." Noel tried to speak again. "If we leave our rooms in the morning, how would they know if the tape broke from the night before or not."

"I asked them." Said Aleena. "They're individually removing the tape from our doors and then telling us when we can leave. So basically, we're stuck in there until they let us out."

"That's bullshit!" Cody groaned, rubbing his hands down his face. "So we're basically prisoners."

"Not really. I mean it is a 4 star hotel." Kay pointed out. Noel could tell Cody wanted to roll his eyes, but decided against it. Kay was Cody's friend, but he knew it was best to stay on her good side. "Well yeah, but the thought of not being able to leave is dumb as hell."

"Okay, let's say we do get the tape and get out? Then what?" Sam set down his glass after taking a long sip.

"I was thinking we would throw a little party in our room!" Kay smiled brightly as she gestured to Aleena, Nat and Courtney. When the other girls didn't oppose, Kay turned to the boys, obviously searching for some sign of agreement.

"A party? Wouldn't that be kinda loud?" Noel asked. "Not necessarily. Just can't have too many people and can't blast the music." Spock explained with a shrug.

"Then we should get snacks. Spock's bag isn't gonna make it to tomorrow, I feel." Cody laughed. Spock frowned. "What do you mean? We got plenty of stuff to last us."

"Not when we're done with it!" Sam turned to give Cody a high-five, in which the latter enthusiastically received. Spock sighed with a smile, lightly kicking both boys from under the table.

When the waiter brought the pizzas to the table, the group spent the rest of the night talking about their day, occasionally laughing at a few jokes and just overall having fun. For the first time in a while, Noel felt a bit happy. It was weird but all he knew is that he didn't want this to end.

And it didn't.

Apparently the rest of their class has just as much fun as they did because once they were all back on the bus, everyone was in a good mood. Noel wasn't sure who started it, but suddenly everyone on the bus started singing along to Party in the USA, poorly playing off of someone's phone speaker.

Noel hated this song, but when he saw Aleena next to him, laughing as she sang along, he gave in. Aleena lit up once she heard his voice and kept looking at him as she continued to sing.

It was a nice moment, and for a second, Noel forgot about everyone else on the bus as he and Aleena sat there singing together. Noel's voice wasn't the best, but Aleena didn't seem to

mind. And he appreciated that.

When the song ended, Noel didn't turn his head. Neither did Aleena. They sat there in silence for a bit until Noel felt Cody's hand tug on his shoulder from behind. It wasn't until he snapped out of his thoughts that he realized someone started playing some shitty minecraft song he and the boys always joked about.

With a laugh, Noel peeked over the seat and joined Cody and Sam's sing-a-long. For a second though, he paused to look at Aleena. But she had already calmed down and was scrolling through her instagram feed. He felt a little bad, he didn't want her to feel left out but he didn't even know what to say.

Reluctantly, he brushed it off and went back to singing with his friends.

But in the back of his head, he knew he was gonna be thinking about the way the passing lights of the freeway glinted in her dark brown eyes for the rest of the night.

End Notes

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