

## Products And Defects

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# Products And Defects

by [adashofblue](#)

## Summary

It's nearly Christmas, and Lenny has some concerns about living together that he brings up to Carl. They have a discussion about it that quickly turns into something else.

Vague fic titles FTW! It'll make sense once you read it, which you definitely should. Have fun!

## Notes

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

*“Chestnuts roasting on an open fire*

*Jack Frost nipping at your nose*

*Yuletide carols being sung by a choir*

*And folks dressed up like eskimos.”*

It's the fourth of Advent, and Lenny and Carl are lounging in each corner of their loveseat couch, half-watching the Die-hard movies for the third time this week. It's not their fault the TV network loves airing it so much during Christmas!

The film's muted, though, it's too much noise. Lenny has put on a Christmas Classics playlist instead, and the songs trickle out softly from the speakers in the room.

Carl's spread out comfortably over the cushions, half-lying down and sipping on a can of ale. His best friend mirrors his position, but then he gets this look in his eyes and Carl's interest in the action on-screen fleets.

He's been living with Lenny for a year or so now. They've been friends since college, so he'd like to think he knows him in and out. He can tell when he's upset, sad, or expectant, but this certain expression he wears now as he sits up on the couch and fiddles with the pull-tab on his beer; it's foreign to Carl. And that's surprisingly nerve-racking.

“Hey, Carl?” Lenny calls out as if he doesn't already have his friend's full attention. Carl only nods his response, apprehensive about what Lenny's going to say next. Is something wrong?

Hmm, no, that can't be it. Lenny doesn't necessarily look troubled, more... *lost*. Lost is the closest thing that comes to mind as Carl eyes him. Then Lenny continues: “Do you think it's weird that we live together?” and meets Carl's gaze.

Well, that's not what Carl had expected to hear. He isn't sure *what* he expected to hear, exactly.

Still, his response comes naturally, and he shoots the question back at him. “What? No. Why would it be weird? Do *you* think it's weird?”

“I don't think it's weird at all! But earlier today, someone brought it up, and it got me thinkin’,” Lenny explains, drawing the pull-tab on the can back and forth now. If he's not careful, he's gonna spill ale all over himself. His tone is relatively calm, quiet, but his actions betray that facade. He's nervous, and Carl's clueless as to why. Who did Lenny talk to that got into his head so bad? And what did that someone *say*? He was out on a few errands this afternoon, so he could have run into one of their friends, or even met up with family.

Carl nods again, letting Leonard take his time and choose his words carefully. Lenny finally yanks the pull-tab on his beer off, managing only to spill a few drops, and he glares at the piece of metal in his hand as though it has personally offended him. He speaks rushed: “Well, they mentioned that we’ve been livin’ together for a while and that neither of us has a partner.”

The question comes on its own: “So what?” a touch too defensive for Carl’s taste, but now it’s already out there.

“So they said we oughta find ourselves partners and move in with them instead, since we’re both in our forties. It’s time to settle down with someone, or...”

He trails off. Carl’s skin is itching with irritation. What jackass did Lenny meet when he was out, and why did they pressure Lenny into ‘settling down’ out of the blue? Lenny didn’t mention a name or even the person’s pronouns, so it sounds like he doesn’t want to call them out. But what piques Carl’s interest is the rest of Lenny’s unfinished sentence. He figuratively *and* literally nudges him. “... Or?”

Lenny swallows, his Adam’s apple bobbing in his throat as he works up the courage to continue. He meets Carl’s eyes, and there’s heat in them now; another new and unfamiliar expression. “... or we settle down together. You and me.”

The silence that follows his suggestion, or rather the suggestion of whoever Lenny *met*, is deafening. Christmas carols still play in the background, unaffected by the prompt tension now laying thick in the air. Judy Garland drawls out wavery, tender vocals.

*“Have yourself a merry little Christmas*

*Let your heart be light*

*From now on our troubles will be out of sight.”*

Carl sets his beer down on the coffee table in front of the sofa. His anger directed at the person pressuring Lenny into these huge life decisions wins over his fluster, and he clicks his tongue in frustration, biting the inside of his cheek.

“Listen, I dunno who the hell you met, but they shouldn’t have a say in what *you* choose to do. Even if you value their opinion, that doesn’t mean what they said is true. There’s no precise age you have to be to settle down with someone. In fact, you don’t have to settle down *at all* if you don’t want to. That’s entirely up to you. No one else.”

This anxious, foreboding look on Lenny’s face softens a little, and he smiles. Carl isn’t unfamiliar with the warmth that blooms in his chest upon seeing that smile.

But they are in on new territory, that’s a *fact*. They haven’t ever really discussed the... *nature* of their relationship before; how comfortable they are together and how close they

truly are. Carl hasn't ever told Lenny he doesn't need anyone else in his life to be content, but it hasn't really come up until now, either.

"I know you're right, I do. But I also think they have a point," Lenny says, his knees curling up to his chest. His gaze flickers from Carl to the fireplace and then to the floor. His unease is back, and Carl fears the worst. He bites his lip, trying not to ask, but alas, his mouth is quicker than his mind. "D'you wanna move out? You want *me* to move out?"

"No- Christ no, Carl! That's not it at all!" blurts Lenny, scooting closer to his friend on the couch and placing a hand on his arm. His breathing comes out fast, shallow. Carl feels the fingers burn onto his bare skin; feels how thick his throat is. He swallows. It doesn't help much.

"I was thinking..." begins Leonard, voice carrying an uncertainty that rubs off onto Carl as well.

Then something hits him. *If Lenny doesn't want to split up, could that mean..?*

The hand on Carl's arm slowly moves down to his hand. It puts a hitch in Carl's breathing. It's too hot in here and his Christmas jumper is itchy. The Christmas song playing is far too cheerful. Freddie Mercury sings straight to them, unabashed and proud.

*"Oh, my love*

*We've had our share of tears*

*Oh, my friends*

*We've had our hopes and fears."*

How fitting. They've held hands before; plenty of times, too, but never like this. Never with what the intent behind it is now, or at least that's what it feels like.

"We could try the other option..?" murmurs Lenny, hope painting his tone, before he backpedals a step and adds with a stutter: "I-If you *want* to, of course! I don't wanna make you uncomfortable."

Carl looks from their joined hands; studies the contrast of their skin color, the common denominator being that they're both trembling, and up to Lenny's face, not too far away from his own now. His bottom lip is latched between his teeth in an involuntary display of nerves, and there's hope mixed with trepidation in his eyes. The warm glow the fire gives in the dark room casts long, golden shadows dancing on his face. Carl finds himself smiling, his reply coming easy.

"I'm not uncomfortable."

“You... aren’t?” exhales Lenny back, some of the tension in his shoulders dropping, and he squeezes Carl’s hand. Carl squeezes it back, fondly shaking his head. “Not at all.”

Emboldened by Lenny’s slightly lidded gaze and open body language (he’s almost leaning into Carl’s space,) Carl comes forward with what he’s felt since the beginning but is only now coming to terms with. “Y’know, I already bought you years ago, and I’m not planning on returnin’ the receipt.”

Lenny laughs softly at his silly metaphor. He plays along, asking: “You sure? This product might come with defects.”

“Oh, I know. I love the defects. In fact, I threw away the receipt the day I bought you,” Carl says and winks at Lenny, who beams at him, lacing their fingers together. His eyes fall below Carl’s for a moment and he cusses, pulling away like he’s been burned.

“Shit, man!”

“What?” Carl half-laughs, ignoring how cold his hand feels without Lenny’s in it. He realizes the Christmas music is no longer playing, but a love song playlist has taken its place. A bit on the nose if you ask him. Either this is Lenny’s own playlist and the guy’s a hopeless romantic (that would be news to Carl,) or this was fate.

Lenny hides his face in his hands. You can almost see the red peeking through the spaces between his fingers.

“I really want to kiss you,” he admits.

Heat comes to Carl’s cheeks so quick he might get burned and all he can think is: *why haven’t they done this before now?*

If holding hands and indirectly confessing their attraction to each other was the first shoe dropping, this was the other. Carl gently grabs Lenny’s arms and uncovers his face, his heart jumping to his throat when he prompts his best friend: “So do it.”

“Y-Yeah?” breathes Lenny back, leaning slightly forward and causing Carl to do the same. Carl sucks in a sharp inhale, moves his hands up to Lenny’s face, and locks their lips together.

A surge of desire and joy shoots down Carl’s spine and he hums against Lenny’s lips, a little chapped but soft and warm against his. Lenny melts like putty in his hands, relaxing fully and allowing his best friend to take the lead. Carl marvels at this new and exciting feeling thrumming in his veins and pumping from his heart out to the very tips of his fingers, which he dips into slicked back, dark brown hair.

He keeps their first kiss brief, wanting to give Lenny an out if he so needs it. After all, their friendship is too precious to Carl for this to be its breaking point. When Lenny nearly chases after his lips, he gets this funny feeling he’s got nothing to worry about.

“Okay?” he checks, surprised at how low his voice has gone. Lenny rolls his eyes and rises onto his knees on the couch to reclaim Carl’s mouth with his. He locks his arms around Carl’s neck and nearly climbs into his lap, and Carl doesn’t find himself at all bothered with the turn of events.

He draws Lenny close, marveling at how he shivers beneath his touch when his fingers skate around his waist. Their kiss goes from innocent, experimentative pecks to deep, long kisses, sending warmth coiling low in Carl’s belly.

As much as Carl wants to go further, his voice of reason tells him to slow down, just to be safe. They should still make sure the two of them work romantically. So he breaks away to breathe, puts a hand on Lenny’s shoulder to keep him at arm’s length. His chest aches when Leonard pouts.

“Alright, let’s take it easy. You haven’t even taken me out on a date yet,” he chuckles, aware of how raspy his own voice is. He sounds intoxicated, and that’s sure as hell not the work of any alcohol. Lenny raises a brow at him and gives him a little smirk, nudging him in the ribs. “I’m takin’ you out?”

“You want me to beg?” Carl raises, not missing the glimmer of approval in Leonard’s eyes. As if *he’s* gonna be the one begging...

Much more confident taking the reins, Carl pecks Lenny on the lips once, twice, maybe three times before suggesting they go to bed. It’s so dark out you can just make out the shapes of white, fluffy snowflakes outside the window, and Carl can feel a yawn coming on.

“Can I sleep in your room?” asks Lenny.

“Obviously. Come on.”

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It’s not the first time they sleep in the same bed together, but tonight is different. They dress down to their shirts and boxers. Carl has to avert his eyes and get under the covers so he doesn’t lose his composure and end up pushing Lenny into bed and climbing over him.

Lenny turns off the lights and gets into bed as well, curling up next to Carl and resting his head on his chest. It all feels so easy and domestic, and Carl can’t help but press a kiss into Lenny’s soft hair.

His best friend lifts his head from his chest and meets his eyes, and Carl makes to apologize. “Sorry. Was that too far?” but Lenny simply grins and pushes forward to kiss him soundly on the lips. He tangles their legs together and breaks their kiss to continue using Carl as a pillow. He yawns and whispers into the dark: “G’night, Carl.”

Carl rests one hand on the small of Lenny’s back and the other on the duvet next to him, letting out a happy sigh and an accompanying yawn as well.

“Good night, Len.”



## End Notes

Posting this a day before Christmas in Sweden, I'm on a roll! I hope you enjoyed the fic. :)  
Oh, and merry Christmas!

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