

high above a copenhagen skyline

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/17119790) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/17119790>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Phandom/The Fantastic Foursome (YouTube RPF)
Relationship:	Dan Howell/Phil Lester
Characters:	Dan Howell , Phil Lester
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Strangers , Meet-Cute , Amusement Parks , Ferris Wheels , Strangers to Lovers
Language:	English
Collections:	Phandom fic Fests Holiday Exchange 2018
Stats:	Published: 2018-12-23 Words: 8,623 Chapters: 1/1

high above a copenhagen skyline

by [PoisonedMind](#)

Summary

On a study trip to Copenhagen, Phil and his friends visit Tivoli Gardens. It's a day full of real life magic, a ferris wheel, flirting, and a Dan.

Notes

Written for rwdaf from the prompt: *Phil doesn't like heights but his friends force him onto the ferris wheel and he ends up riding with a stranger (dan) who has to help keep him calm.*

I really hope you like this fic!!

A BIG thank you to my beta [@yourfriendlyblogstalker](#) who is super lovely!!

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

“Oh, come on, Phil! Don’t be *that* guy.”

Sometimes Phil really wishes he could be ‘that guy’. That guy, who tells his friends that no, there’s no way in hell he’s getting on that ferris wheel.

“It looks ancient, what if it breaks down?” His voice sounds meek even to his own ears.

Charlie rolls his eyes. “It’s worked for all this time, why would it break down *now*?”

Phil decides not to mention how that fact just makes its inevitable collapse even more probable. The capsules are made to look like hot-air balloons and the baskets are open on each side which means there’s only a thin metal rod between the passengers and certain death. Yeah, Phil really wishes he could be ‘that guy’ but alas, he’s not, and because of that he finds himself getting dragged behind in the queue for *Ballongyngen*.

The queue is surprisingly long and Phil doesn’t know whether that’s good or bad. The longer he stands here, waiting, the louder his pulse pounding in his ears gets but at least he still has both feet firmly on the ground.

He glances back at the ferris wheel. It’s not as big as the London Eye and if Phil has to guess, he’d say even the Manchester Eye is bigger. He’s been on the Manchester Eye before, which wasn’t exactly great but he survived. He resolutely ignores the fact that he was clinging to his mum the entire ride.

People around them are talking and laughing but he doesn’t understand a word of what they’re saying. Probably because they’re all Danish. A strange wave of emotion washes over Phil then. He feels free, like he can do whatever he wants because he’s in a foreign country, far away from home, from his mum’s worried eyes, but at the same time he feels claustrophobic, like he can’t really breathe.

For a few seconds he wonders if he’s been switched with his alternate universe-self, while still remembering everything from his old life. Knowing his luck, it wouldn’t actually surprise him.

His friends are standing just in front of him, giddy and wide-eyed, looking around and trying to take in everything about this place. Phil takes a deep breath and looks around too.

It’s quite beautiful. Small, flowery gardens decorate the amusement park in splashes of colour and old-fashioned buildings follow the paths between the rides. Children are laughing and pulling on their parents’ hands and there’s kooky melodies playing at every ride, almost drowned out by the screams whenever a roller coaster drops.

Fun swirls in the air in here and Phil smiles despite himself, tasting the sweet playfulness on the tip of his tongue. His eyes catch on a little boy piggybacking on his dad, giggling with a youthful joy and Phil’s heart calms down a little.

Until they’re at the front of the queue and suddenly it hits Phil that he’s actually going on this ferris wheel. Then his heart starts pounding again, almost painfully, as if a little man with a

hammer is trapped under his ribs and trying to escape and then Phil feels like *he's* the one trapped.

He should've just said no.

The ride operator wearing a shirt saying *Tivoli* and a name tag, which Phil doesn't manage to read before she turns to help the passengers out through the correct exit, seems young, smiling to everybody. As she turns back to let Phil's group in, he gives the name tag a second try.

Maia.

Pretty name and pretty straightforward. He doesn't know what he was expecting but after having spent the last couple days wandering Copenhagen with his school class, listening in on Danes conversing, he had the impression that Danish was actually a language composed of guttural growls and flat mumbling. He hadn't really expected those sounds to be composed of the same alphabet Phil knows. Not that he didn't know they were, he's not stupid, he just thinks there's a clear disconnect between what is written and whatever comes out of their mouths.

Especially now, as Maia is speaking to him, a hand held out in front of him. He thinks he understands that gesture at least.

His friends are already climbing into the basket and Phil glances at Maia helplessly.

"Sorry, what?" He forces the words out, but his lips feel kind of numb. Maia smiles, she seems sweet, at least.

"You have to wait. There's a maximum of four people per pod, I'm sorry," she says.

"Oh."

The next basket comes down and the passengers file out with big smiles. Phil considers walking with them to the exit, but then Maia turns around and motions for him to go forward.

"You can go on now," she says and Phil feels ridiculous because his legs are frozen in place and everyone in the queue behind him must think he's utterly dense as he just stands there, holding everything up.

"Phil!" Charlie is shouting at him from their hot-air balloon. It rips Phil out of his stupor and he looks up and sees his friends waving at him. He inhales deeply and climbs into the basket in front of him.

Three people crawl in with him, two guys and a girl. The girl says something and it's probably a joke because they all laugh. Phil looks out instead.

The ferris wheel starts moving and he has a stray thought that this isn't too bad, but then the guy sitting opposite Phil starts swaying, making the basket rock back and forth. Phil clings to the seat and his pulse is so loud he can't really hear anything but the rhythmic thundering in his ears.

Something touches his shoulder and he involuntarily flinches at the shock. His body is in flight mode, bordering on panic and he's starting to get a little dizzy. He opens his eyes but immediately regrets it because they're almost at the top and he's looking out over the amusement park, roofs under him and even treetops, too.

"Hey, stop!" It's the guy sitting next to him and he's snapping at the guy making the basket rock. Phil glances at him and then he notices that it's his hand on Phil's shoulder and now he's looking at Phil, lips forming sounds that make absolutely no sense to Phil.

Phil shakes his head and says, "Sorry?" and his voice is wobbly.

"Oh. English?" The guy smiles and Phil somehow has the presence of mind to notice two deep dimples appearing.

Phil nods.

"Are you okay?" the guy asks. He has brown eyes and they feel almost scrutinizing as they search Phil's face. Phil's suddenly acutely aware of how rigid his whole body is. Every muscle is tense and he's not really breathing properly.

"No," he manages.

"I'm sorry about Malthe, he thinks he's funny when he does things like that." The guy glares at the other guy, Malthe apparently, who at least looks a little guilty.

"Sorry," Malthe mumbles.

Phil tries on a smile but it feels more like a grimace and looks down at his feet. His legs are shaking. Huh. He hadn't even noticed that.

"I'm Dan," the guy says. His voice is soft and he's still holding on to Phil's shoulder. His hand is warm through the thin fabric of Phil's T-shirt. "That's Zara," Dan points to the girl who smiles and waves, "And the idiot is Malthe, as you know."

Phil looks back at Dan. He keeps his hand on Phil's shoulder. It grounds Phil just enough to be able to relax his body again.

"Phil," he says and points to himself. He instantly hates his lack of social skills, but Dan just smiles and says, "Nice to meet you, Phil."

"You too." He manages a real smile this time. Small, but real.

"Not a big fan of heights?"

"You could say that."

"Don't worry. Daniel over there refused to go on this thing too because, as he kept saying, 'it's ancient, what if it breaks?'" Zara says.

Dan sticks his tongue out at her and she grins. Phil laughs.

“That’s exactly what I said too,” he says. Dan’s eyes spark and a thrill of something electric tickles down Phil’s spine.

“See!” Dan exclaims. He gives Phil’s shoulder a light squeeze. “It’s a perfectly valid reason, if you ask me.”

Phil has to look away from Dan’s eyes or he’s worried he might get swallowed up completely. They’re such a deep brown, alive and intense. Phil blames the tingling sensation bubbling under his skin on his mild panic.

He doesn’t think about it but he looks out over the edge of the basket. There’s a chilly breeze up here and it brushes against Phil’s cheeks. It feels good, refreshing, and as he takes in the view, his heart doesn’t flee up into his throat. He still refrains from looking down though.

They’re almost down again by the time Phil registers that Dan still hasn’t let his hand fall from his shoulder.

As Maia removes the metal rod to let them out again, Dan finally lets go. Phil steps out onto the ground and he feels kind of lightheaded but in a weird way. Not like the world is spinning but like *he* is spinning, or buzzing more like it, there’s a buzzing just under his skin, prickling in the place where Dan’s fingers touched.

Someone whistles. Phil looks up and finds Charlie waving at him.

“Over here, Philly!”

He gives a quick wave then turns back around to find Dan. He doesn’t expect to basically walk right into him.

“Oh! Sorry! Didn’t notice you there,” Phil rambles. Dan is smiling at him, his dimples out on full display.

“Don’t worry.”

“I just wanted to say thank you. You know, for helping me before...” he trails off. Dan looks at him and his gaze is intense and Phil starts fumbling with the hem of his shirt.

“You don’t have to thank me. I, uh, I kind of know how awful it feels, so, you know,” he waves a hand around, “Ya, uh, wanted to help.” He shrugs.

“Well, it was a nice thing to do and I wanna say thank you. So, thank you,” Phil says. He smiles and so does Dan.

“Well, you’re welcome then.”

Someone bumps into Phil’s shoulder and he doesn’t have to look to know it’s Charlie because Charlie immediately says, “Come on, what’s taking so damn long, we don’t have all day, mate.”

Phil rolls his eyes and sends a last smile to Dan.

“Sorry. I guess I’ve been recruited.”

“Looks like it. Better go see to your duties then.” Dan gives him a two-finger salute and Charlie grabs Phil’s arm and drags him towards the others. As Phil looks back over his shoulder, he sees Dan turn around and walk towards Zara and Malthe.

As soon as they’re out of earshot, Charlie turns to Phil. “Who in the world was that?”

“I don’t know. His name’s Dan.”

“Was he Danish? Why were you talking?”

Phil knows Charlie’s just being Charlie, nosy and oblivious, but he doesn’t want to talk about Dan with him.

“Did you find an excuse to hold Aria’s hand at the top of the wheel?” he asks instead, diversion and distraction.

“Sadly, no. She somehow managed to sit as far away from me as possible,” Charlie complains.

Phil snorts. “She just knows what’s best for her.”

They reach the rest of their group then and they dive into a very intense discussion on what the next ride should be.

Phil zones out, he honestly doesn’t really care. If it were up to him, he’d choose the merry-go-rounds but he knows his friends would complain the whole time about how boring he is.

Instead, his mind wanders back to Dan.

~ * ~

When Daisy whines “I’m hungry” for the fifth time, they decide to comply with her needs and set out to find something to eat. Phil’s impressed with the amount of ice cream parlours popping up everywhere. A playful breeze carries a whiff of maple syrup and Phil’s nose immediately recognises the scent as waffles. His mum usually makes waffles for Sunday breakfast and suddenly a strong wave of homesickness surges through him.

“Can we get waffles?” he asks. Daisy hits him in the arm.

“Yes! I couldn’t place the smell but oh my God, we are so getting waffles!” She’s practically squealing.

“Really?” Alex says. Phil catches Charlie looking at Aria, who’s bouncing off with Daisy in the direction of waffles, before he’s saying, “Mate, c’mon. Waffles are delicious.”

Phil shakes his head and runs to catch up with the girls.

They track down the source of the waffle smell surprisingly fast and Phil's kind of proud of his nose because there are winding paths everywhere, in every direction, with flower displays or small gardens or even water fountains blocking the view. It's not often he's surrounded by so much nature. Turns out the smell comes from a stall called *Femkanten*. He's got no clue what in the world it means but the important thing is, he can get his waffles here. A little taste of home.

As they're queuing, someone pokes Phil's shoulder and he turns around to tell Charlie to go bother someone else but then he's suddenly face to face with Dan's dimples.

"Hey again, Phil."

And because Phil is in possession of exactly zero people skills and a little lost in the way the sun makes Dan's coffee curls look like silk, he blurts out, "What are you doing here?"

He wants to sew his mouth shut and the seconds of silence between the last word leaving his lips and Dan answering are stretched out, thin and wobbly. Phil's about to break and babble out some excuse of how he has to go, sorry, he's supposed to meet his friend, but Dan finally opens his mouth.

"I was gonna meet Chris Evans, what are *you* doing here?"

It takes an embarrassing amount of time before Phil notices the way Dan's eyes twinkle and the pulling on the corners of his mouth. His poker face is good, Phil's got to give him that.

"Damn, I thought this was the queue for Chris Pine," Phil says. Dan's smile finally breaks through, dimples popping, and Phil kind of feels like he's back on that roller coaster his friends forced him on just before.

Before Dan gets a chance to say anything, Charlie's right by Phil's side. "Oh, you're Dan, right? Nice to meet you, mate." He sticks his hand out. "I'm Charlie. Phil's most favourite person in the world."

Dan takes his hand and Charlie continues, "This is Alex, Daisy, and Aria. Everyone, this is Dan, Phil's new Danish friend."

Phil wants to kill Charlie but he also kind of wants to hug him because there's a pink tint painting Dan's cheeks now.

"Hi!" Dan waves awkwardly at them, eyes flitting between them without settling, and Phil feels just a tiny bit better knowing he's not the only awkward one. The silence following gnaws at Phil's throat, though, and he asks about Malthe and Zara.

Dan's eyes land back on him and stay there.

"They're over there, keeping a table free for us." He points. Phil follows the direction and makes eye contact with Zara who smiles. When he looks back again, Dan's still looking at him. "Would you guys wanna sit with us? There aren't many tables free at the moment."

Phil can see at least two tables with no occupants but he's not about to mention that.

Charlie says, “Sure, yeah! That’d be cool! Getting to know some real Danes!” and Alex clips him on the shoulder. Phil sends a silent thank you to him then smiles at Dan.

“Yeah, why not?” he says. He feels jittery, like small electrical charges spark in his veins or like ants are crawling under his skin. He bounces on his feet, the surge of prickling energy needing an outlet.

Alex pulls Charlie back around and Phil suspects it might be to prevent Charlie from babbling further.

“So, do you recommend anything?” Phil gestures towards the menus hanging above the counter. “Because I’ve got no clue what any of that says.”

Dan laughs. “This might make me sound like the most boring person but the original Belgian waffle with whipped cream is actually pretty fucking delicious.”

Phil doesn’t think it makes Dan sound like the most boring person. On the contrary, Phil finds himself wanting to know what flavour of ice cream is Dan’s favourite or if he’s a dog or a cat person.

“Or soft ice. That one’s a classic,” Dan continues.

“Soft ice?”

“Yeah. It’s like... well, soft ice cream? You don’t have that in England?” Dan furrows a brow and Phil thinks this particular baffled expression makes him look sort of like a puppy, head cocked and lips parted as if he’s going to say *aroo?* at any moment. Phil almost overdubs him that way in his head.

“You mean like Mr Whippy?”

Dan just stares at him for a moment, a completely lost look on his face. “What? Mr Whip—*what?*”

“Yeah, soft serve!” Phil says. Dan blinks.

“You call your soft ice *Mr Whippy?*” He sounds utterly horrified. “What is wrong with you British people?”

If some other stranger had said something like that, Phil might have taken slight offense, but there’s something about Dan that makes Phil feel like they’ve been friends forever. There’s a comfortability and soft ease around him that diffuses the sharp sarcasm and Phil’s never met anyone he felt he could talk to like this, instantly.

Then a sign saying *Popcorn* catches Phil’s attention and he whirls around to face Dan because this is *vital*. “Wait, you can get popcorn here? Can you get it on your waffles?”

The laugh flying out of Dan is high-pitched and loud and so infectious that Phil breaks off into laughter himself.

“No. I’ll have to disappoint you there unfortunately,” he laughs. “Although there *is* the Tivoli Popcorn Factory somewhere in here where they make popcorn with all kinds of weird flavours.”

Phil considers making Dan promise to take him there.

~ * ~

There’s something weirdly thrilling about making friends with someone from another country. Phil can’t put his finger on what exactly it is but sitting here, squished between Daisy and Dan with Charlie animatedly talking about how good *real* fish and chips is, Phil can’t stop smiling.

It’s suddenly exciting, talking about his life, explaining the British culture and watching the Danes’ reaction. It’s fascinating to learn about the similarities and the contrasts, how much a sea between two neighbouring countries can really make a difference in the way society is viewed.

Sometimes Malthe will stop in the middle of a sentence and turn to Zara and Dan, saying something in Danish and they’ll either know the word in English or they’ll help trying to explain what he means to Phil and his group until all of them reach a common understanding.

Or sometimes Charlie will ramble on with the most British expressions and is met with utter confusion and they’ll have to try to explain to Dan, Zara, and Malthe what in the world Charlie is talking about. Although, sometimes Phil thinks not even Charlie really knows what he’s talking about.

But most of all, it’s exciting because Dan keeps turning to Phil, whispering sarcastic comments or genuine inquiries just to him.

Phil’s heart keeps jumping whenever those brown eyes land on him.

~ * ~

Zara suggests that Phil’s group should definitely stay and hang out with the three of them, they could give them the Great Tour of Tivoli as she puts it. Charlie and Daisy are almost ecstatic, practically jumping on their feet, because *actual Danes*, oh my God. Dan snorts and falls behind to walk beside Phil.

Aria sends a smile back over her shoulder to Phil and he doesn’t really know how to interpret it.

“So.” Dan bumps his shoulder into Phil’s. Phil doesn’t know if it’s because they’re walking so close together or if it’s intentional. The spot where he touched simmers though, warm and tingly. “You’re on a study trip?”

“Yeah.”

“How do you like Copenhagen so far?” Phil sneaks a quick glance at him but Dan is already looking.

“It’s a beautiful city. The people are pretty nice, too,” he says. He walks closer to Dan in order to avoid walking into a mother pushing a pram but ends up brushing his shoulder against Dan’s. Not that that really bothers Phil.

“Is the rest of your class in Tivoli, too?”

“Nah. Just us five. We really wanted to go and this is our day off from school activities. Others are probably out shopping or something.” Phil shrugs. “Are you from around here?”

“Yeah. I live basically down the street which is pretty cool. Where in England do you live?”

“Near Manchester, if you know where that is?”

Dan nods. “Yeah, up North, isn’t it?”

“Yes!” It’s weird. The fact that Dan knows Manchester, it shouldn’t excite him the way it does, lots of people knows Manchester exists. “How do you know?”

“Uh, the football club? Manchester... United?” His voice goes high and Phil laughs. There’s that soft pink glow on his cheeks again.

“Yeah, Manchester United. I know of it. Vaguely,” Phil says, still smiling.

“My father’s an avid football fan,” Dan explains. He rolls his eyes and gestures to himself, “The sports gene got lost somewhere in the process, but my brother definitely got it. Runs all the damn time.”

There are roses everywhere. Phil noticed the beautiful flower gardens before, but meandering the gravel pathways with Dan, his group of friends, new and old, a couple steps in front of them, it feels a bit more like wandering a fairytale.

They walk across a wooden bridge with small, coloured lights decorating the balustrade and stop on the platform above a lake. Their friends are pointing at a tall, golden tower, laughing at the screams when the seats rush towards the ground.

Dan tucks at the sleeve of Phil’s T-shirt, turning him around. He walks to the edge and leans on the railings. Phil walks over and joins him.

“It’s quite a beautiful amusement park,” he says. He keeps his voice low, almost mumbling, he feels like the tenderness of the moment will be broken if he speaks too loudly.

Dan hums. He turns his head and looks at Phil and Phil doesn’t look away. Then he smiles and turns back to point at a building peeking through the treetops behind the lake.

“See that tower over there?” He moves closer to show Phil where he means. Phil sees it, it isn’t exactly hidden, standing tall and proud, outlooking the city. He shuffles slightly closer, anyway.

“Yeah,” he says. As Dan lowers his hand again, his arm brushes against Phil’s, they’re standing that close.

“It’s The City Hall,” Dan says. “*The Killing* has filmed scenes there.”

Phil feels a surge of excitement pump through him. “Oh, really? That’s so cool! I’ve seen that show, it’s really good!”

Dan laughs. “It is indeed! I’m glad your taste in TV isn’t as horrible as your weird popcorn-waffle-fantasy is.”

“Hey!” Phil jabs Dan’s side with his elbow and Dan curls away, laughing. He kind of misses the warmth of Dan right next to him. “I’ll have you know, popcorn is amazing and can be eaten in combination with all kinds of food!”

“Yeah? What about, like, popcorn and cheese, huh?” Dan’s grin turns wicked. “Goat cheese popcorn, how does that sound?”

“Sacrilege!” Phil exclaims, horrified.

Dan laughs again and Phil decides he really likes the way Dan’s whole body lights up when he laughs like this.

“Hey, guys!” Alex says and Charlie puts his arm over Phil’s shoulders.

“We wanna go on the Golden Tower there, wanna join?” Charlie asks and gestures towards the tall tower they were laughing at before.

Phil shoots Dan a look, trying to gauge his reaction. He really doesn’t want to go on that ride, the ferris wheel was high enough, this tower will for sure be the death of him.

“I think I’m gonna pass on that one,” Dan says, “But you guys go ahead.” He glances at Phil.

“Yeah, not really my thing either,” Phil mumbles.

“Okay, cool, cool.” Phil really expected Charlie to put up more of a fight to drag Phil on the ride but he’s thankful he doesn’t.

“Meet ya by the Dragon Boats?” Malthe asks.

Dan nods. They walk off and it takes Phil a few seconds to realise he’s now alone with Dan.

A duck swimming under the bridge quacks.

“Wanna try the Dragon Boats?” Dan asks. Phil shuffles a bit, he’s suddenly very aware of every little movement his body makes. Like the way his fingers pick at the hem of his shirt again or the way his hand twists weirdly outwards as he puts it in his pocket.

Or the way his throat moves when he swallows and he’s even more aware of the way Dan’s eyes seem to follow that movement.

“Yeah,” he says.

“Follow me.” Dan grabs Phil’s arm to pull him along.

~ * ~

They get boat number two. Dan tells him to remember that because they’ll light up their boatnumber when their time is up. The little lake they’re on is surrounded by flowers in full bloom, red and white and yellow, and there’s a delicate scent floating in the air. Ducks swim around between the boats, quacking, feathers gleaming in the midday sun.

Dan reaches down, dipping his fingers into the lake. “The water is actually surprisingly cool,” he says. Then he sits up again and flicks droplets of water on Phil.

“You evil person!” Phil gripes, mock-offended.

“Really? Evil person? That’s the best insult you can come up with?” Dan’s smiling, eyes radiant, and he’s so bright Phil figures the sun must’ve decided to take up residence inside him.

“You barbarian,” he says, schooling his features into something he hopes comes across as stern.

“You absolute buffoon,” Dan counters.

“Oooh, you think you know some English insults, do you, Danish boy?”

The light catches in Dan’s eyes then, glinting, and he looks entirely impish.

“Din store båtnakke,” he snickers. Phil opens his mouth to say something but he’s utterly lost. “Din åndsbolle. Du er en skovl. En sand ogginok!” Dan’s laughing so hard he almost tips over their boat and Phil squeaks.

“What in the world did you just call me?” Phil demands. He doesn’t care if it’s the worst insults in the world, not if calling Phil those words makes Dan laugh like this.

“M not telling!” Dan says, smiling. “You’ll never know.” He waves his hands around in a big circular motion, whispering, “Mystery of the universe.”

“You dumb dork,” Phil says, pushing at Dan’s shoulder. Which makes the boat rock dangerously and both of them yelp.

~ * ~

Their friends aren’t anywhere near the Dragon Boats when Dan and Phil climb out of their boat. Dan suggests getting an ice cream while they wait and they’ve walked less than a minute before Phil notices a stall proclaiming to sell ‘Original Fish & Chips’.

“Dan—”

“Phil.”

He sends a glare Dan's way then points at the fish and chips-sign. "It's like being back home," he says and puts a hand on his heart.

"You Brits really live up to your stereotypes, don't you?" Dan jokes.

"No, of course not. We only drink 10 cups of tea, not the 20 the stereotypes suggest."

"Right, and us Danes actually do have a potato in our mouths whenever we speak."

"I knew it!" Phil fistpumps the air and immediately cringes but Dan is laughing again, that full-body laugh, and Phil doesn't so much mind his awkwardness.

They get ice creams and Dan finds them a bench from where they can look out over the lake and the gardens while keeping an eye out for their friends.

They're silent for a while, just letting the distant shrieks of joy and the quiet quacks from the ducks float between them. People are strolling past them, big families or just young couples, and Phil idly wonders how many of them are foreigners, too, like him. How many of them are from around here, built a life here, friends and family. Something heavy settles in Phil, not bad-heavy, just the melancholic feeling of observing strangers and pondering the lives they may live.

"Do you sometimes just sit and observe people?" Dan asks and Phil can't help but smile because Dan's thinking the same thing Phil is. He hums in agreement. "It's weird, realising others have full-on lives, too, isn't it? Almost kind of mindblowing," Dan continues.

"Yeah," Phil says.

Two girls walk past them then, and the taller one reaches out and takes the other's hand. It makes Phil's heart flutter just a little bit. He doesn't know if it means anything but it makes him happy nonetheless.

He glances at Dan and finds a small smile resting on his lips as he follows the girls with his eyes.

~ * ~

"*There* you are! We've been looking *everywhere* for you guys!" Charlie exclaims dramatically, throwing his arms out and almost hitting a child walking by.

Aria rolls her eyes. "Don't listen to him, he's overcompensating from chickening out on The Golden Tower."

"Am not!"

"Yeah. You are," Daisy says. "But don't worry, Zara suggested we go to the bumper cars and even small kids drive those."

The look on Charlie's face is the definition of petulant and Phil laughs. He's only slightly disappointed his alone time with Dan has been disrupted.

As they walk, Aria trails behind and ends up beside Phil. Dan's walking with Malthe and Alex, not that Phil's watching him.

"They're some nice guys, aren't they?" she asks.

"Yeah, they are. It's lucky we met them," he says. He looks down at the ground to see where he walks. He's awfully clumsy and even a small rock could end up being a tripping hazard.

"You've been getting along quite well with that Dan, haven't you?" Phil doesn't know why she keeps turning her statements into questions.

"I guess," he shrugs. When she doesn't say anything, he adds, "He's pretty easy to talk to."

"Yeah. He seems really sweet." He notes the way she says sweet instead of nice this time and something churns in his stomach.

Phil just shrugs but refrains from answering. Because that's the whole problem, isn't it? Dan *is* really sweet. And he's easy to talk to and he's interesting, captivating in a way Phil's never found a guy before. Anyone, really. But he's also someone from another country and Phil lives in *England* for God's sake, and they're young and practically strangers, anyway. There's no reason why this should work out, there's no reason why Phil should give in when their time is already limited to hours.

"We talked before, when we were queuing," Aria says. Her voice is low, but it still cuts through the noise of the whole park; the happy music, happy laughs, happy shrieks. "About finding each other on social media. We'd all really like to keep in touch. It'd be cool to have some friends overseas, wouldn't it?"

He looks up at her. She smiles at him, a genuine smile, her single dimple denting her freckled cheek and Phil smiles back.

"Yeah, that'd be nice," he says.

"Plus," she adds, "We all feel like we've been friends for a long time." She nudges Phil in the arm with her elbow. "And in a cheesy way it kind of feels like fate, doesn't it?"

~ * ~

Surprisingly, the queue for the bumper cars is basically non-existent, which means they get the entire rink almost to themselves. Which also means it quickly turns into chaos and then outright war, complete with battle cries and absolutely no mercy. Phil can't remember the last time he was having this much fun, though.

Charlie is everywhere, steering into everyone, no tactic, a complete menace. As Phil does a sharp right turn - or is it left, Phil never knows - to avoid his oncoming murderer, he bumps straight into Dan. Dan, who gives him a devilish smirk, his hair wild and windswept, who *winks* at Phil before he reverses and drives straight into Phil again.

It's on then. Dan doesn't just get to do that, drive into Phil like that and think he gets away with it. Look like that and think Phil can just ignore it. Either one of those, both of those, it

doesn't matter, but Phil is hot on the trail of him.

The sparks made by the antennas fly over them and it makes Phil nervous because what if they fall into his hair and set everything on fire? He feels like a fuse, ready to spark whenever, and when Dan smiles at him again, he feels himself light up.

"Taste my car!"

"Excuse you!"

"I am *right* up your butt!"

"Nononono, go away, go away, go, go, go, *go!*"

It's a cat-and-mouse game for a while and, somehow, Phil kind of forgets everyone else. Dan is at the center of his attention all the time, trying to gauge where he's going next, getting there first. His smile is brilliant, eyes glinting when the neon lights get caught in them, and when Phil finally gets him, Dan sends him a look of utter betrayal, like Phil just stole his sweets or something.

When their time is up and Phil's crawling out of his car, Dan runs up to him.

"I can't believe you got me," he whinges, stressing believe to the point where he sounds like a whiny child.

"Sorry, but you can't beat a master." Phil shrugs. Then his foot gets tangled in the seatbelt and he tumbles over, arms flailing and an embarrassingly high shriek flees from his mouth.

Dan catches him before he actually falls, though. He has an arm around Phil's chest and the other on Phil's back, actively locking him in place.

Dan says, "Sure about that?" and Phil swallows. He's so close right now that Dan's breath hits Phil's face and it smells vaguely of waffles and he's still holding onto him.

"Definitely," Phil breathes. Dan's lips are mere centimeters from his and Phil keeps looking down at them. God, he kind of wants to lean in, to give in to whatever is pulling at his heart, but he can't. For so many reasons.

Dan's eyes flit down to Phil's lips too. His heart is pounding, he's sure Dan can feel it under his palm, about to break through his ribcage and jump at Dan, tug on his hair and sing, *here, take me, please, I'm all yours if you want me*.

He's so nervous and he doesn't realise he's taking a step back, pulling out of Dan's hold, until there's space between them again and he can breathe.

He immediately regrets it. Dan clears his throat, looks down, away, and Phil can still feel his hands on him. He wants to just step back in to Dan's arms again, wants to turn back time and step forwards instead of backwards. To take the chance instead of holding back and letting the fear keep him from something that could be happiness. But that's not really how he's

wired. He doesn't like taking chances, especially when the outcome could so easily be disappointment.

"Are you two coming?" Alex shouts and both of them flinch slightly, reality kicking in. Phil looks out and their friends are all standing outside again, waiting on them.

"Yeah!" he yells back.

He turns back to look at Dan. His hands are clasped in front of him, eyes still not meeting Phil's. Then Phil notices the way Dan's thumbs shake, the way he's biting his lip and something seems to slide into place inside Phil. As if someone pulled the blindfold off him, letting him see everything clearly again.

Because Dan's nervous.

Dan's nervous, too, like Phil is, and he's unsure and this is all probably just as daunting to him as it is for Phil.

Phil takes a step towards him, grabs his wrist and pulls him towards the exit.

"C'mon, Danish boy, the others are waiting."

Finally, Dan looks at him. There's something simmering in his eyes and for a second Phil thinks of hot coffee in the morning, chocolate shared between two, and he loosens his grip on Dan's wrist. Lets his fingers fall down slightly. Slowly.

He can't pinpoint what changes in Dan's face but there's something challenging in the way his mouth is set and his eyebrows rest. Dan keeps looking at Phil, too. As if he's daring him, letting Phil take the wheel and set the course for where they're going.

Phil lets his thumb glide down the side of Dan's hand, lets his pinky bump into Dan's. He keeps his eyes trained on Dan's face and he swears he can see the corners of his lips struggle to not lift up into a smile.

Then Dan curls his pinky around Phil's.

~ * ~

Seriously.

Dan holds his hand - no, not even that, holds his *pinky* - and Phil can feel himself unraveling. It's like seeing a loose thread on your sweater and pulling it, thinking it'll fall off, go away, but then discovering it's actually the seam and you're pulling it apart.

Phil might be feeling a bit dramatic but. Seriously.

Because suddenly Dan's in his space all the time, he's poking and teasing, being sarcastic and sweet, making Phil laugh and blush, and he's pulling on Phil's thread, unraveling him with such an ease, it's not even funny.

Aria keeps glancing at him, smiling. Even Charlie's picking up on it, slinging a nonchalant arm over Phil's shoulders, all wiggling eyebrows and sly smiles.

"I'll ride with Phil." The way Dan says it, it sounds like some mundane fact, like taking your jeans off before bed, like two plus two is four, and yet the words send a thrill through Phil's body.

He's scared. Not because of the ride they're queuing for, but because of something else. Because he's so close to giving in, and he wants to, God, he wants to, but he can't. He's going back to England and Dan's going to stay here and there's going to be an entire sea between them. Aria might think they can keep in touch over social media but Phil wants so much more.

He wants this. But he wants it unlimited, not with a ticking clock in the back of his head counting down the seconds until he has to say goodbye.

Dan tells him the ride they're going on is called *Rutschebanen* in Danish and Phil puts a hand on his shoulder asking, "Are you okay? Are you gonna be sick?"

Dan sticks his tongue out and shoves him.

"It translates to The Roller Coaster," he says.

"Wow. That's so creative."

"I know, right? But the cool thing is, it's one of the oldest roller coasters in the world."

"Really?" Phil can hear the skepticism in his voice.

"Don't worry, it won't break down." Dan studies him for a moment, then adds, "If anything happens, I'll protect you."

Phil knows he's teasing but he still feels a little surge in his stomach at the words.

~ * ~

Even though it's almost summer and it's been warm enough to just wear a T-shirt outside, the sky eventually gets darker, pink hues blending with the blue, coalescing into purple tones. It's a beautiful sunset. There are a few cirrus clouds floating above, fluffy and weightless.

Zara tells them they need to find the Tivoli Lake and Dan's eyes spark, he reaches out and grabs Phil's hand, practically dragging him through the concourse. The others can follow Zara or Malthe.

As they're weaving in and out of groups of people, Phil notices the lights coming on. The rides flash, the railings twinkle. Fairy lights make the trees everywhere sparkle as if they're covered in glitter. Somehow, the garden turns enchanted, it feels like there's magic fizzing in the air, like the sun going down turned a switch somewhere, starting the magic hour.

Dan eventually slows down and he stops when they're standing on a bridge looking out over the lake. He doesn't let go of Phil's hand.

"Why are we looking at a lake?" Phil asks because Dan is staring intently at the water below them.

"Shh, it's about to start." Dan turns his head to look at Phil and the shadows on his face are deeper, longer in the crepuscular gloom. "You're gonna love this, trust me, Philly."

Something warm grows wings in Phil's chest and it might very well be his heart, fluttering like a hummingbird.

He turns and looks out over the lake, too.

Soon, soft music begins to play, bells tinkling and blue lasers shine upon the lake, where small fountains spray water in the middle. Then blue smoke shoots out from the lakeside, seemingly moving under the water and Phil gasps.

It doesn't look real, more like a fairytale.

"It's beautiful," he whispers.

"It is," Dan says and scoots a little closer.

Then the smoke turns green and the fountains dance to the music.

"It looks like magic." He can't take his eyes off the show, the coloured smoke seeming to blow around the fountains in the middle before it all turns dark for it then to light up in purple, the water soaring high and lasers shining through it, creating a beautiful image on the water wall.

Dan bumps Phil's shoulder gently and says, "It's like the cheap version of the Bellagio Fountains water show."

Phil laughs.

"Shut up. This is amazing. Truly." He finally rips his gaze away from the colours dancing on water and smoke and finds himself looking directly into Dan's eyes. It's dark now, but the lasers illuminate Dan in multicolour, a kaleidoscope and Phil's breath gets stuck in his throat.

He's beautiful, Phil thinks. It's not that he hasn't noticed, it's just that he's so close Phil can see the lights play in his eyes, can feel the heat of him, and it strips him completely of his self control.

Then drums roar and the lights flash and Phil jerks back around to see what in the world is going on, his heart in his throat.

The music turns dramatic, ominous, and the lasers light up the sky instead of the water. A blanket of smoke is floating above them, catching the lights and creating the illusion of a physical roof.

Dan leans in close, his lips brushing against Phil's ear as he whispers, "For how long are you staying?"

It's nighttime and every booth, building, all the rides, the lights are going, bright and noisy, and when Phil glances at Dan, he's the same way, blazing and boisterous, dimples deep.

He should've probably expected Dan to ask this question at some point. And perhaps he did. Somewhere deep down Phil has known this was coming. He just doesn't like thinking about what it actually means. He'd rather forget that this is only a temporary moment, that they're already running out of time.

He whispers back, "A week. We're going home in two days."

Dan doesn't say anything, just stands close, breathing. Phil can feel him every time he inhales.

"Oh," is what eventually leaves Dan's lips.

The show is turning intense, music loud and dramatic, lights flashing in blue and green and white and red, violent and ferocious. Phil thinks it's a story of good fighting evil and he's back to thinking about fairytales.

If this were a fairytale, Phil would turn around and he'd cup Dan's jaw and lean in. They'd kiss and Dan would tell him he's coming with him. He'd say *oh, I'm actually moving to England*, he'd say *I'd follow you anywhere, Philly*, and Phil would smile and they'd live happily ever after.

But this isn't a fairytale.

It's life, real and raw and unfair. Hopeful in the befores, beautiful in the nows, but bittersweet in the afters.

Phil doesn't look at Dan, he keeps staring at the show. It looks like good is winning over evil. It looks like the usual fairytale ending.

Phil mumbles, "Yeah," and it's too many seconds after Dan said anything, misplaced and futile.

~ * ~

When they finally manage to find the others, most of the rides have closed down for the night. Everything is still bright and dazzling around them but the crowds are beginning to thin out.

Phil hasn't let go of Dan's hand yet, he feels like that'd be the scythe cutting any possibilities and something in him just can't do that. Dan hasn't even tried to loosen his grip either and even though their palms are getting sweaty and it might objectively be getting kind of gross, he's glad that he's not the only one trying to hold on. Figuratively and literally.

“We should probably think about going back to the hotel soon,” Daisy says. They’ve been wandering the winding paths aimlessly, talking quietly, as if any loud noise might disturb the night somehow.

“Yeah.” Charlie drags it out and Phil is hit with the realisation that this is actually it. He’s going to have to say goodbye, soon.

Dan squeezes his hand and Phil looks at him. His lips seem heavy, like he has to force them up into a small smile when he glances at Phil.

He bumps his shoulder into Dan’s as they walk but then he trips over his own feet and Dan has to catch him again.

At least it gets a genuine laugh out of him.

“You gotta be more careful, I can’t have you hurting yourself,” he says.

“Sorry,” Phil says and he wants to tell Dan he’s not just apologizing for his clumsiness.

They’re walking by one of the gardens, a big one, with sculptures and water fountains and benches and it’s all lit up in the night. There’s a grandiose building on their other side, Danish flags waving in the warm wind. And then, hiding behind a tree, the ferris wheel appears.

Something clutches around Phil’s lungs at the sight and he falters for a second. Dan sends him a quick glance then seems to figure out what Phil’s looking at.

“You sure?” Dan’s asking about Phil’s fear of heights, but it feels like he’s asking about everything else, too. Phil nods.

“Hey, guys?” Dan’s yelling because they’ve fallen quite far behind. “What about a last ride?” He gestures to the wheel. It’s still going, probably one of the last rides still operating at this hour.

It doesn’t take much convincing and Phil figures all of them are quite hesitant to end this day.

Charlie slaps Dan’s back. “Mate! Why didn’t I think of this before? It’s brilliant!”

Dan gives him a quizzical look and asks, “Why?”

“The *skyline*, of course!” He says it like it’s the most obvious thing, but Dan just snorts and Phil raises an eyebrow.

“The Copenhagen skyline is not usually what we pride ourselves on, but sure,” he whispers to Phil. He’s close again, close, close, close to Phil’s ear, breath hot on his skin.

It’s not Maia that lets them into the baskets this time, not that Phil was really expecting her to be here still.

Dan grabs him before he walks in with Malthe and Alex, pulling him back behind their whole group. Phil turns to look at him, but Dan just winks and Phil kind of hates, kind of loves how

it makes his heart skip a beat.

As they all file into the baskets, Phil understands why Dan did it, though. Because they end up alone in their own basket.

When the wheel starts moving and they slowly rise higher and higher above the ground, his heart begins to pound again but this time, instead of freaking out alone, he reaches out and grabs Dan's hand.

Dan smiles and squeezes his hand.

"Okay?" he asks.

"Yeah."

The wheel stops every time a basket gets to the ground, so it takes a long time before they rise above the rooftops let alone the treetops, but Phil is grateful for the slow pace this time. He wants this moment to keep going forever, but that's not how moments work. They begin and they end.

They don't say anything else. The silence isn't awkward, it's comfortable, warm, and Phil leans in, lets his head rest on Dan's shoulder. It's bony and sharp under his cheek, but he doesn't want to move ever again.

Just before their hot-air balloon stops at the top, the treetops sink below them and the Copenhagen skyline emerges. Phil immediately understands what Dan meant, it's really not anything special and the utter anticlimax of it all makes him chuckle.

Dan turns to look at him, a smile dancing on his lips. Phil's heart is hammering in his chest, and he no longer knows whether it's because of the heights or because of the beautiful guy sitting next to him.

Dan's eyes seem to trace Phil's face, intently and purposely, as if he's trying to commit every little detail to memory. They end up at his lips and they stay there. Phil darts his tongue out self-consciously and Dan mirrors him.

A big bell somewhere chimes 11. Phil imagines how every loud chime knocks the seconds away, time slipping through his fingers like grains of sand in an hourglass.

Dan's smiling and his thumb is going in gentle circles on Phil's hand, matching the rhythm of the bell, around and around and around.

But that's the thing, isn't it?

Time is always running out; seconds tick by, minutes pass, hours disappear and that's *life*. It's what you do in those seconds, minutes, hours that matter. It's what you choose to spend that precious time on that, in the end, when all the seconds you've been given have run out, will make up a life full of memories. And it's the memories that turn people immortal.

Phil will happily spend his last seconds, minutes, hours here, making sure Dan will remain a part of him for a long time.

And then Dan breathes something that sounds like Phil's name and he surges forward, his hands coming up to cup Phil's jaw, his long fingers ending in his hair.

But the sudden movement makes the basket rock dangerously and Phil positively shrieks before their faces collide and their teeth clank and oh God, oh God, oh God, but Dan is laughing, he's laughing loudly and freely and he sounds so damn happy that Phil can't help but laugh, too, because of course this is how it happens.

The ferris wheel moves again and they look outside. They missed the moment where they were at the top, but the view is still kind of charming. The city is lit up by a thousand lights everywhere, the high-rise buildings are outlined against the night sky and Dan turns back around and kisses him then, for real.

Dan kisses him on the ferris wheel, in a rocking hot-air balloon and for once, Phil is one hundred percent certain that his heart does the flippy-over thing because of the way Dan sighs Phil's name.

Dan kisses him, hot and wanting, but trembling and nervous, on a ferris wheel, while they're high above a Copenhagen skyline.

~ * ~

Dan asks, "We're gonna keep in touch, right?"

Phil looks down at their hands, clasped together resting on Dan's thigh. He's wearing ripped jeans and Phil lets his index finger sneak into a rip, touching the skin under the material. With a small smile, Phil looks up, meeting Dan's eyes.

"Yeah. I'd really like that."

End Notes

If you're interested in what Dan actually calls Phil while in the boat:

"Din store båtnakke" = "Your big buttneck" (a loving way to call someone an idiot)

"Din åndsbolle" = "Your ridiculous bun" (lol i don't know how to actually translate that but... close enough i guess?? basically means the same as 'twit' but the word is honestly just too silly to be taken seriously)

"Du er en skovl" = "You are a shovel" (also a way to fondly call someone an idiot)

"En sand ogginok" = "A true weirdo" (i guess?? but seriously, ogginok is the funniest/silliest insult to call someone... if you use that in a serious context, no one will be able to take it seriously)

Anyway, I hope you liked this fic :D

You can give it a cheeky [like/reblog](#) on tumblr if you feel like it!

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