

read off our names

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/20567234) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/20567234>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	IT - Stephen King
Relationship:	Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier
Characters:	Eddie Kaspbrak , Richie Tozier , Bill Denbrough , Mike Hanlon , Ben Hanscom , Beverly Marsh
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Fix-It , Domestic Bliss
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of that ends well to end up with you
Stats:	Published: 2019-09-08 Completed: 2019-09-15 Words: 22,287 Chapters: 14/14

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by [liquidsky](#)

Summary

Eddie survives.

Notes

so, listen. my true calling in life is writing *really* fucking domestic *fix-it* AUs. because, like, what even is the point of fantasy if you can't recover from obviously life-threatening injuries, huh? none at all, if you ask me.

written for my best friend because we've been going through it, apparently.

(ps. sex happens on chap 12, other than that we're good. jsyk.)

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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

Against all odds, they survived.

No one could tell you how they'd done it. They might not have made it at all had it been anyone but Eddie. Eddie had always been light, though, his small frame easily maneuvered in their collective arms even unconscious, head lolling forward as blood dripped everywhere, covering their hands and their clothes and most of everything around them. They dragged him out of the sewers, and out of the house, and Richie had clung to him until the doctors came. It should have been impossible, but, somehow, like most things, as far as the Losers were concerned, it happened anyway.

—

Six days after they had pulled themselves and Eddie out of Neibolt house, he woke up. He blinked up at the ceiling, looked around him with a bleary frown, caught sight of Richie hunched forward on one of the plastic chairs (snoring with his mouth open, glasses askew, hair a goddamned mess) and croaked, loudly, "What the fuck?"

Richie didn't wake up. He snored even louder, and Eddie wanted to throw something at him, but he couldn't lift his arms without little black dots pooling in his vision, so he stopped squirming and watched him instead.

He looked rough, with the greenish bruising on his cheeks and on his hands stark bright against the sickly white of his skin. The dark circles around his eyes made him look around fifty years older and pretty fucking homeless, but Eddie's stomach clenched weirdly all the same. He felt 13 years old again, except for all the ways in which he didn't.

He looked his fill, and some more, until finally Richie shook himself awake, nearly falling off the chair and righting himself just in time. He didn't seem to realize Eddie was awake for a few seconds, so Eddie cleared his throat.

"Fucking shit," Richie said, leaping up from his seat. "You're awake."

—

Two weeks after that, they had said their goodbyes. Richie was pretty fucking convinced he'd never see Eddie again. It made him feel like shit, but he didn't have it in him to do much more than squeeze Eddie into a half-hug and press a kiss to the scar on his cheek.

The last three months were okay, in that he remembered every single thing and woke up in cold sweats more often than not, but he *remembered*, and, whenever he wasn't having shoddy fucking nightmares, he was dreaming of Bill's stutter, and Eddie's annoying yelling, and their shared laughter. He missed all of them like a phantom limb, constantly, but he was adapting —

adapting to *change* as if he hadn't lived the entirety of his adult life without them. It was going to be fine, probably, was what he told himself.

The *point* was that he'd come to terms with the fact that he would never speak to Eddie again, which is why seeing Eddie stood outside of his door threw him for a fucking loop.

"I got a divorce," were the first words out of Eddie's mouth.

Richie blinked at him thrice before he caught his bearings.

"Congratulations?" He offered, and Eddie scoffed, elbowing his way past Richie and into his apartment, one of the thousand bags he was dragging inside hitting Richie's shin in the process.

Richie winced. "Or I'm sorry? Kind of hard to suss out your *vibe* there, Eds."

"Don't call me Eds."

"Sure, *Eddie*," Richie said, closing the door behind them. "So, you got divorced."

"I did."

"The fuck you doing here, then?" Richie asked, leaning against the back of the couch and watching as Eddie looked around Richie's living room with a disgusted wrinkle to his nose.

Eddie gave him a look. "Needed a place to stay."

"That's fair," Richie told him. "Don't you live in New York though?"

"Yes."

"We're in L.A."

"No *fucking* shit, Richie," Eddie snapped, "I needed to get away for awhile, and you offered, so."

Richie frowned. "When? We're not forgetting shit anymore, and I'm sure I'd remember inviting you to fucking *move in* with me."

"It was *implied*, dipshit." Eddie argued, and he plopped down on Richie's black leather couch as though he'd lived there his entire life. It was less surprising than it should have been, really. "You were hugging me? You cried, said 'if you ever need anything, man-' or whatever."

Eddie's impression of Richie was grossly spot-on, and Richie rolled his eyes. "First of all, asshole, I didn't *cry*. Second, I didn't mean you could *move in* with me."

"I'm not *moving in*, idiot."

Richie made a face, gesturing to the fuckton of bags that were taking up way too much space in Richie's living room. "The fuck is all this shit, then?"

"It's not my fault you *don't have shit*," Eddie told him, side-eyeing Richie's suspiciously empty center table. "You doing minimalism now? Didn't see *that* coming, Trashmouth, I thought maybe some tasteful playboy posters on the wall, you know, some cheap beer bottles? Dirty socks all over the—wait, that *is* a dirty sock. I stand corrected—"

"—Just because it's not your 70-year-old woman shitcluttering—"

Eddie interrupted him by throwing a pillow straight at his face, and Richie paused, staring at him.

"Are you fucking *twelve*?" Richie said, and Eddie snorted.

"Are *you*?" Eddie rebutted, "I can't believe you have dirty socks—"

"Unclench, Eds." Richie told him, bending down to grab the offending sock. He immediately threw it at Eddie.

Eddie spluttered, batting it away with a little yelp. "Fuck off, Rich. And for the millionth time, don't fucking call me Eds."

"This is *my house*." Richie said. "I won't stand for your micromanaging—"

Eddie scowled, "You *invited me*—"

"I *so* didn't—"

"—You did too—"

"—I fucking *did not*—"

"I explicitly remember—"

"—What the shit do *you* know? You were *dying*—"

"—I was *recovering*—"

"Fine!" Richie yelled, "*Fine*, I invited you, whatever the fuck, make yourself at home."

"*Thank you*," Eddie grinned, sounding just shy of out of breath.

Richie squinted at him. "God, you're an asshole."

"Right back at ya, Trashmouth."

Richie threw himself gracelessly on the spot next to Eddie on the couch. Eddie turned his head to look at him, and Richie sighed.

"How have you been?"

Eddie's brows furrowed. "I got a divorce."

"Yeah," Richie said, "Sorry I asked."

"No, it's—*good*, I'm okay, I think."

Richie smiled at him. "That's great. You should be."

"It's just weird." Eddie told him.

He was still frowning, looking oddly soft in a way that Richie hadn't really seen since they were thirteen and sleeping next to each other on the floor of Bill's bedroom.

"What is?"

"That time went by like it did. That we just *forgot* everything. That I would forget—"

The *you* went unsaid, but Richie heard it anyway. The breath he held trapped in his throat left him all at once, and Eddie kept his eyes on him, warm as the first rays of sunlight on Derry winter mornings.

"We remember now, though." Richie muttered, too quiet.

He had never been quiet, not really, and neither had Eddie, but he watched at Richie for long enough that words almost felt like they didn't matter, except for how they obviously did.

"We do."

"And you got a divorce."

Eddie looked at him, *really* looked. "I did."

Chapter End Notes

the title is a line from *long live* by Taylor Swift.

Chapter 2

Living with Eddie was fucking weird. He wasn't a *bad* housemate, exactly, but he was *loud*, and annoying, and he sputtered around cleaning shit that frankly did not *need* to be cleaned, and it wasn't news to Richie that Eddie was anal retentive as fuckall, but somehow he didn't expect that it would translate into washing dishes at four in the morning in his underwear, or yapping about Richie's lack of coasters, or dusting Richie's vinyl collection while mumbling different variations of the word "fuck".

Weird as it was, though, Richie couldn't deny that he kind of *enjoyed* it. A week had passed in the blink of an eye, and Richie had grown almost used to the sight of Eddie's curved stomach and the smattering of freckles on his thighs. They argued just as much as Richie had expected them to, which was just as much as they always had, and, like always, their arguing was frequently and rudely interrupted by short moments of quiet that were earnest enough to have Richie wishing he could fling himself out of a window.

It wasn't *okay*, probably, that his heart kept nearly giving out on him every time Eddie so much as glanced in his general direction. He'd had enough practice bullshitting his way out of worse things than Eddie's bed hair and exposed shoulders, though, so, realistically, he should be fine.

He also *should* have had the foresight that admitting to himself that he'd been *in love* with Eddie on the simple hopes that he wouldn't ever see Eddie again would flip on him, but he hadn't, so now here he was, blinking up at the blurry shape of Eddie's head in the half-light of his bedroom.

"Wake the fuck up," Eddie said, and Richie squinted at him helplessly. It didn't help. "Bev's been calling the landline for a full fucking hour now."

Richie blinked again. "Okay?"

"Why's your cell off, dipshit?"

"It's... not?" Richie said, grabbing his glasses from the bedside table before turning away from Eddie to pat around the bed in hopes of finding his cellphone. He did, and Eddie was right – it was dead.

Eddie met his sheepish look with raised eyebrows, so Richie groaned.

"Sorry," he said.

Eddie seemed slightly surprised – he'd developed an habit of looking very caught off-guard by Richie's displays of maturity, and Richie absolutely did *not* resent the satisfaction that came attached to Eddie's startled expressions.

"No problem," Eddie told him, eyes slipping down to hover awkwardly on the general area of Richie's exposed collarbone. Richie cleared his throat, and Eddie's eyes snapped up again.

"Just go answer the phone already."

"Okay," Richie said.

It was too dark to see whether Eddie was blushing, but Richie hoped so.

"And brush your teeth," Eddie added, familiarly winded. "It smells like a dead rodent in here."

He left it at that, too, and Richie huffed before stumbling up from the bed and into the living room. He walked past the bathroom in pure rebellion, grinning shittily at Eddie's eye-roll and plopping down on the couch to answer the phone.

"This is Pennywise speaking." He said, in his best imitation of *It's* annoying clown voice.

On the other side of the line, Bev sighed. "You're an asshole."

"I *know*," Richie grinned. "So, to what do I owe the pleasure?"

"We're meeting for dinner tonight, remember."

"How could I forget?" Richie said, after a few seconds too many.

"You forgot." Bev guessed, so Richie sighed. "I knew it, I told Ben you'd forget and he tried to convince me you wouldn't, but—"

"—You should be more like Ben," Richie told her. "Man's got faith."

"I was right, though. And we're meeting at Yamashiro at eight."

"Noted." Richie said, "Anything else?"

"Yeah, actually," said Bev, and Richie had seen it coming a mile off. "Why did Eddie just answer your phone?"

Richie pinched the bridge of his nose. "He's staying with me for a while."

"Is he?" Bev asked, and Richie heard it as she reported that to Ben, though he couldn't quite make out Ben's answer. "That's—great?"

"It's a fucking party," Richie deadpanned, "Does he know about dinner?"

"If he hasn't forgotten."

Richie glanced up at Eddie, who was busy acting like he wasn't overhearing Richie's call.

"We'll see you at eight."

—

"Don't you have anything other than *polos* to wear?" Richie asked, from where he was adjusting the collar of his hawaiian shirt and sneaking looks at Eddie's reflection in the mirror.

"*Fuck* you," said Eddie, bending down to tie his shoes. "I like how they look."

"Big mistake on your part," Richie told him. In a voice that was probably *supposed* to sound like a braindead hockey-playing jock, he added, "Where's the fucking golf game, Eds?"

Eddie glared at him. "*Fuck off.*"

"But where's the *fucking yacht?*"

"The shitfuck do you get off, *Ace Ventura?*" Eddie pointed at him. "Maybe drop the patterns next time you wanna talk crap."

Richie scoffed. "I look good."

"It's cute that you think so, Tozier."

—

The restaurant was beautiful, in that big, obnoxious way Hollywood restaurants were, and Eddie shuffled closer to him as they walked in, accidentally bumping their hands together and nearly giving Richie a fucking conniption.

Bev, Ben and Mike were waiting at a table that looked *way* too fucking fancy for the six of the them, and Richie was pretty sure his pits were sweating from the speculative look Mike kept shooting his and Eddie's way.

"What's up, losers?" Said Richie, pulling Ben into a hug and receiving a few too many manly backslaps in return. He winced, and Bev snorted.

They hugged, and said their hellos, and Bill stumbled in looking inexplicably windswept and handsome at the last possible second, pulling Mike into the kind of over emotional hug that made Eddie roll his eyes next to him.

Unbelievably, their evening spread itself on an even giddier note than the last time they'd reunited, and Richie found himself leaning closer to Eddie everytime he choked on laughter at Mike's tales of Floridian adventure. They were doing good, all of them – Mike was living it up in Florida, volunteering at a program for the literacy development of the homeless, and Bev and Ben seemed just as grossly in love as they had when they'd left Derry. Bill was well, too, his latest novel having just been sent to its first round of revisions. He sounded confident in its ending, and Richie felt happy for him, caught by a tide of fondness so strong he could barely believe he had forgotten all of them as long as he had.

Richie told them about his life, too, of how he had started to write his own material, of his radio pilot which had just recently been accepted. It was good, and Richie was having the carefree time of his life until all eyes fell on Eddie, and Richie felt Eddie's knees tense up from where they were nudging Richie's under the table.

"So," Mike started, "Eddie Kaspbrak in L.A."

Bill laughed, "Who wuh-would've thought, huh?"

"I wanted to be close to you guys, I guess," Eddie said, after too many seconds of silence. Richie felt inclined to point out that he and Bill were the only ones who lived in L.A., and he hadn't heard Eddie speak to Bill at all in the past week, but he didn't. "And also I just got divorced, so there's that."

"Shit," Bill said, and Ben winced. "Sorry, Eddie."

Eddie shrugged. "It's okay. Life couldn't exactly stay as it was after, uhm—"

"—All that shit." Richie finished for him.

He shoved his foot against Eddie's for a second, and Eddie pushed back, shoulders relaxing slightly.

"So you're staying with Richie, then?" Ben asked.

"Yup," Richie answered. "I'm making him wash my underwear."

Mike choked on a laugh, and Eddie huffed. "You're not making me do shit."

"Then why're you doing it?"

"Because you're a fucking *slob*, it's why." Eddie shoved at him, his nose wrinkling in that way that meant he was about to talk Richie's ear off. "Who the fuck doesn't own coasters? Did you know that? And he leaves his socks fucking *everywhere*, it's an atrocity. Not to mention that you only shower *once a day and who only showers once a day*, it's summer, and super humid, and—"

"—So what you're saying is that it's a miracle you haven't killed each other yet," Bev interrupted, amused.

Richie rolled his eyes. "I'm just waiting for the right opportunity."

"Please, Richie, as if you would." Eddie told him, turning to squint at Richie and entirely missing the look Bill shot Mike's way.

"I totally would," said Richie, and Ben snorted.

Eddie shook his chopsticks at Richie, brows creased. He looked slightly manic. "Not if I killed you first, douchebag."

"How would *you* kill *me*?" Richie asked. "You're like a Chihuahua."

"*First of all*, fuck you." Eddie huffed. "Second of all, you're fucking *blind*, Poseidon, I could totally take you."

"You're thinking of Polyphemus," Mike and Ben interrupted, at just about the same second.

"Whatever," Richie said, right as Eddie shot them a glare,

"Fuck the Romans, who the fucking shit cares—"

"It's *Greek*," Ben said, appalled.

Mike face was a picture of disbelief, and Bill kept patting his own chest with a handful of those crappy plastic napkins that didn't dry shit (Richie hadn't seen him slobbering beer everywhere, but he wouldn't put it past him, really) while Bev looked between them with a smile far too knowing.

"Fine," Richie said, balling up a napkin and throwing it at Eddie's face. "You'd take me, sure."

"Uh, I don't need the *contempt*, you—"

"—Guys!" Bev said, still laughing, and Eddie stopped mid-sentence in time for the waitress to hand them the bill, the world's most sullen look on her face.

Bill snorted. "I guess we're leaving."

—

They'd driven to the restaurant together, because it *made sense*, but it felt super fucking odd to say goodbye to the Losers *together* and make their way to the car *together* and argue for ten minutes *outside* said car about who was doing the driving only to realize the others were still watching them with amused looks. *Together*.

Richie frowned and shoved the car keys in Eddie's hands before stalking off to the passenger side and offering their group an embarrassed little wave that he was sure must've looked fucking pathetic.

He resolutely did not think of how the only other two people to have left together were Ben and Bev, and resolutely did *not* glance at the satisfied little twist to Eddie's nose the entire way home.

He looked at Eddie as they climbed up the elevator silently, though, and again as they pushed their way into the apartment, which smelled so much of Eddie's wild assortment of cleaning products that it had stopped feeling like Richie's and started feeling like *theirs*.

Eddie met his gaze, every single time, and Richie nodded at him once before power walking to his bedroom and closing the door on Eddie's knowing eyes.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

Eddie was sat by the counter staring blankly at the walls when Richie stumbled out of his bedroom at one o'clock in the afternoon, pants riding up on the leg, his hair all over the place. Eddie glanced up, and Richie peered down at him with a squint.

"What are you wearing?" Richie asked, scratching at his belly and doing his best not to flush as Eddie's eyes calmly followed the movement of his hands.

He eyed Eddie's silk shirt with curiosity before leaning forward to steal the steaming coffee mug that rested on the countertop in front of Eddie. It was scalding hot, and Eddie snorted distractedly when Richie yelped and slobbered coffee down his chin.

"Pajamas," Eddie drawled, "And you're disgusting, by the way."

"Good morning to you too."

Eddie made a show of looking down at his bare wrist. "It's the afternoon."

Richie sighed. "Fuck, I would've been up earlier had I known you'd be—just what are you doing, exactly?"

"Fuckall," Eddie told him, reaching up to grab the mug from Richie's hand and curling his nose distastefully before giving it back. He got up from his chair and poured coffee into a clean mug, rolling his eyes at Richie's offended look. "You haven't brushed your teeth."

"Good one," said Richie, pulling a face at Eddie's usual germaphobe tendencies.

Eddie raised his eyebrows. "You never know."

The implication of Eddie's words had Richie flushing awkwardly, and he rubbed a hand across his face, jostling his glasses. "What's with the fucking *silk*, anyway?"

"It's comfortable."

Richie tilted his head. "And new?"

"No," Eddie answered. Richie quirked a brow at him, so he added, "They were at the bottom of my bag, found them when I was unpacking last night."

"Unpacking, huh."

Eddie scowled. "If you have a problem—"

"—I don't." Richie stopped him, nudging Eddie with his shoulder on his way to the sink. "You can stay however long you want."

Richie's voice went oddly soft as he said it, and Eddie must have noticed, if the way his lips twitched was any indication.

It was rare that Eddie managed to curb the impulse of being a goddamned combative dipshit, Richie found, so he was weirdly surprised when Eddie simply grinned at him and said, "Because you love having me around?"

Richie squeezed his shoulder in lieu of answer, and Eddie hummed under his breath.

—

For two people who had never managed to go more than five minutes without nearly biting each other's heads off, Richie and Eddie sure got good at silently cohabitating. Richie secretly revelled in the press of their thighs together as they lounged on the couch next to each other every other afternoon, their laptops on and the television on mute, with Eddie sneaking glances at the shitty reruns that he valiantly pretended not to like.

Unlike Eddie, Richie actually *didn't* like them, though he really fucking enjoyed the small smiles that brightened Eddie's features every few seconds, and his little nose twitches, and even the way he kept fidgeting with the mousepad on his laptop. In these afternoons, Richie often found himself trying to avoid thinking too much about everything *else* he enjoyed about Eddie. He wasn't thirteen anymore, not by a long shot, but somehow he still kept getting caught by the stupidest crap.

The crap today was apparently the faraway look that kept crossing Eddie's eyes at random intervals, and how he seemed strangely off-kilter and subdued. His disturbing bouts of staring were oddly interrupted by human activity, which made it all the more fucking ominous.

Eddie snorted, loud and inelegant, and Richie glanced at him. "What?"

"Nothing," Eddie told him, but he snorted again less than a minute later, so Richie kicked him in the leg, "It's nothing, just—"

Richie kicked him again, "Show me, Spaghetti head."

Eddie seemed surprised by the old nickname, and Richie felt like socking himself in the face for as long as it took for Eddie to shake himself out of whatever haze he'd fallen into and turn his laptop toward Richie.

"That's—" Richie started, staring at the picture. "A fucking Thundercats meme."

Eddie snorted again before bursting into full-on laughter, his giggling still the same as it had been back then. Richie stared, heart suddenly in his throat, and Eddie kept shaking with laughter beside him.

"Fuck, that's—sorry," Eddie giggled, "How are you not laughing at this, what the fuck."

Richie stared some more. His hands twitched with the wish to run his palms across Eddie's face. He snorted instead, widening his eyes on purpose. "You unbelievable fucking loser."

He sound just thrilled enough that Eddie shoved him to the side, his body following Richie's and pressing him against the cushions. Their laptops teetered dangerously before Richie shot his hand out to right them, and Eddie's laughter faded quietly until they were left staring at each other in silence.

"So are you." Eddie said, voice hoarse from laughing.

Richie blinked at him, "So am I what?"

"A loser." Eddie told him. "We've always been."

He didn't wait for an answer, instead looking away from Richie to focus on the television in front of them. Richie leaned forward, taking his feet off the center table and placing both their laptops on the floor so he could turn toward Eddie, watch the side of his face.

"Eds?" Richie asked, careful, and he expected Eddie's familiar *don't fucking call me that* answer but all he got was Eddie bursting into tears, curling into himself on the couch as his body trembled in time with his wheezing breaths.

"Eddie?" Said Richie, and he felt so out of his depth that he might as well not have been there at all. "Fuck, Eds, what is—"

"*Shut up*," Eddie told him, "Just, shut the fuck up, Richie, I don't—"

"I'm not—" Richie started, Eddie wasn't listening anyway, so he pushed forward into Eddie's space and grabbed one of his hands into his. "I'm here, you can tell me, I won't leave."

Eddie sobbed, and sobbed, and Richie held on first to his hand then to his shoulders, fitting his body around Eddie's in a half embrace that moved them both together to the rhythm of Eddie's shaking. He held on until Eddie stopped, until his breathing started coming in regular puffs and his face didn't look quite as red. He held on, and Eddie's sniffing gave way to a tired look as he turned his face toward Richie, his breath fanning Richie's cheek.

"Eds," Richie said. He felt it more than he heard when Eddie sighed.

Eddie sniffed, and shifted out of Richie's embrace to stare at the television again, his hands travelling up to rub at his eyes.

"Fuck," he said. Richie looked away from him, afraid that his staring might have made things worse.

Looking at the television and bumping his knee against Eddie's, Richie asked, "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Eddie lied, and Richie frowned.

"What the fuck was this, then?"

Eddie glared at him, but the effect was lessened by his swollen face. “Richie, when people who are *obviously not fine* say they’re fine it means they don’t want *to fucking talk about it*.”

“Sucks for them, shithead,” Richie said, attempting at levity and inching closer to Eddie on the couch. Eddie looked down at the space between them, meaning he’d noticed it, but he didn’t argue. “Just—tell me, please.”

Eddie sighed. “You’re a pushy asshole.”

“I am,” Richie agreed.

“It’s just the usual shitfest, Rich,” Eddie told him.

Richie didn’t answer, and eventually Eddie shifted slightly into Richie’s space.

“We were happy, right?” Eddie asked. “This is just, it’s fucked, but we *were*, right? Even with the bullies and the fear and even after Pennywise, that summer. We were happy again after that, weren’t we?”

Understanding dawned on Richie just in time for him to meet Eddie’s eyes. He felt his palms grow sweaty, so he wiped them on his legs with a wince. “I was. But I was always happy when I was with you guys.”

“Me too,” Said Eddie, except he frowned as soon as the words left his mouth. “That’s a lie, actually. Not always, I guess, but most of the time.”

“Okay,” Richie told him, “That’s more honest than I would’ve been, probably.”

Eddie’s lips twitched. “It’s why it’s so fucking—how could we just *forget*? Derry was a fucking *nightmare*, and it’s the happiest I’ve ever been, how can that happen? I just. The years after I left the first time were fucking pathetic, did you know that? I was fucking *miserable* and I didn’t even *realize* until right now.”

“Right this fucking second?” Richie said, just to see Eddie roll his eyes at him.

“Were you happy?” Eddie asked him. “Before going back to Derry. Were you happy?”

“Yes,” Richie said, because it was true, even if it wasn’t the whole of it. He had been happy, but he had also been painfully, *mortifyingly* lonely, and a day didn’t go by in which he didn’t wish he hadn’t forgotten.

“Good,” Eddie nodded to himself, “At least one of us—”

“I was lonely, though,” Richie stopped him. “I would’ve chosen the fucking nightmares and every fucking godawful shitstained Pennywise memory over forgetting us.”

Eddie stared at him, long enough that Richie had to look away.

“The Losers, I meant,” Richie corrected himself.

“I know, Richie.” Eddie said, voice calm. “That’s what I meant, too.”

—

“Do you think your life would’ve been the same if you hadn’t forgotten it?” Eddie asked him.

It was late now, way too late for people who had jobs, but neither of them was afflicted with that particular tragedy at the moment, so they were both leaning against the sink in Richie’s kitchen, eating Spaghetti out of the rose-coloured bowls Richie had gotten as a birthday gift a few years previous.

“Probably not,” Richie told him.

He imagined what it would have been like to grow up with them, wondered if it would have made him more honest, more proud. Bill had always had a way about him – of making anyone feel important, loved. He wondered, idly, if he would have learned how to like himself sooner if he’d had Bill there to lead the way. He wondered, too, what would have happened if he hadn’t forgotten Eddie. If he’d remembered, every day, the exact shape of his lips and the shade of his eyes and his incessant fucking freakouts. He looked at Eddie now, from the corner of his eye, and felt sorry.

Eddie nudged him with an elbow. “Better or worse?”

“You know the answer to that already,” Richie pointed out, and he watched as Eddie attempted a smile.

“Feels nice that I’m not the only one.”

“I doubt that we are, Eds,” said Richie, “We’ve all been—on pause, almost. Like we barely fucking existed at all until we found our way back to Derry.”

“Do you think—” Eddie started. Richie turned on his side so he could watch as Eddie fidgeted with his bowl, shifting on his feet awkwardly. “What do you think Stan would’ve—”

“He wouldn’t have.” Richie interrupted him. “He made his move, and for his reasons he thought it was the right one.”

“It wasn’t.”

“It doesn’t fucking matter that we think so.” Richie snapped. “It was different for him, I think. His wife... They seemed happy, genuinely fucking happy. Whatever the reason, I don’t think he forgot like we did.”

Eddie didn’t have an answer to that. He stood there, quiet, his body frozen in place and stuck in a frown. A real fucking sad sack version of an Eddie Kaspbrak wax figurine.

Richie thought best to stay silent, too, for once in his life, so he leaned back and watched Eddie think under the cold light of Richie’s kitchen.

“Maybe not,” Eddie eventually agreed. “Still fucking sucks, though.”

Richie sighed, grabbing Eddie's empty bowl and depositing it into the sink. "Yeah, it does."

Chapter End Notes

okay, i'm writing *way* too fast, and it's mostly because i'm, uh, elbows-deep in *feelings*. there's also the fact that i *suck ass* at sticking to schedule, so i'll try my best to pace myself. no promises, though.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

why, *hello*, author here.

a short disclaimer for the rest of the fic – i generally *really* struggle with anything that is not a sort of *slice of life* format, so that's probably going to end up being what happens here, too. i'm doing my best to make the chapters seem connected and stuff (everything that happens in the fic happens in chronological order, and all leading up to the, uh, big moment, i guess you could call it) but i'm generally aiming for more of a general "domestic shenanigans" vibe.

yeah! that's what i had to say! thanks! and welcome to trope town, everyone! population: us!

Richie tripped out of Pennywise's grubby fucking grasp and into the arms of consciousness at the asscrack of dawn, blinking blearily at the blurry shape of *something* that leaned toward him in the dark. His heart was threatening to beat out of his chest, and Richie scrambled toward the opposite side of the bed with flailing hands and too-loud yelps until Eddie turned on the flashlight on his phone, and Richie was left to stare up at his furrowed brows.

"What the shit, Richie?" Eddie huffed, and Richie exhaled loudly, flopping back onto the mattress and feeling his sweaty back stick uncomfortably to his sheets.

"Nightmare." He grumbled, and Eddie, who had woken Richie up at least four times since he arrived there, had the nerve of *sighing*.

"You need to see a fucking therapist," said Eddie.

Richie scoffed. "So do you, Nancy Thompson."

"Well—" Eddie started, and Richie really wasn't fucking feeling whatever the shit he was about to say, so he threw a pillow square at Eddie's face and turned away from him, cursing under his breath.

He expected Eddie to leave, just as he had every time so far, but Eddie whacked the back of Richie's head with the pillow instead, and promptly grabbed the edge of Richie's fancy duvet to pull it away from him.

Richie grunted at him, his clammy body breaking into shivers against the cold air. "The fuck are *you doing*, asshole?"

"You're covered in sweat, jerkoff, did you plan on sleeping like this?"

"It's none of your business, first of all."

Eddie huffed. "It *is* my business if you're waking me up at four in the fucking morning, Richie."

"Maybe *don't* wake up, then, buy yourself some noise cancelling earplugs and shut the fuck up about it."

"I can't just—I'm not just going to *sleep* while you scream yourself hoarse, you fucking douchebag. How is that hard to grasp?"

"Fuck me," Richie complained, "You are *insufferable*."

"And you're gross." Eddie replied, haphazardly folding Richie's duvet and glaring at him with as much impatience as he could muster. "I'll share my bed if you take a shower."

Richie narrowed his eyes. "I swear to *fucking god*, if you snore—"

"Shut up." Eddie told him, shooting out his leg to kick at Richie's feet and nearly losing his balance. "And I don't *snore*, idiot."

—

Eddie snored. He sniffled, too, little wet intakes of breath that were *way* more distracting than they should have been, really, and for some indecipherable reason his sleeping body kept inching closer to Richie's on the bed, as though he was unconsciously trying to tangle their limbs together. It was too warm, and *weird*, but Eddie was soft, and, except for the snoring and the sniffing, blessedly silent.

Richie turned, burrowing further into the covers, brushing his arm against Eddie's elbow, and fell into a dreamless sleep between one breath and the next.

—

He woke up with a mouthful of Eddie's hair, which tasted, grossly, like *hair*, even though it smelled like vanilla beans and blow-drying. He stayed like that (half-holding Eddie and desperately inhaling the scent of him) for what seemed like an eternity, until he felt Eddie's body tense up against his, and heard his pissy mumble of,

"Get your *unwashed mouth* out of my hair, dickface."

Richie wasn't interested in following directions, really, so he pressed himself even closer to Eddie, breathing heavily atop of his head, "But you smell *so nice*."

Eddie grumbled, shuffling forcefully out of Richie's arms. Richie yelped as Eddie nearly kicked him in the balls with his tossing and turning, but he grinned at Eddie's completely blurry and non-descript features as Eddie huffed a breath right at Richie's face.

"Wow," Richie mused. "Your breath smells like the bottom of a well."

Without his glasses, he couldn't see whatever it was that took over Eddie's face as he said it, but it probably wasn't nice.

"Fuck off," Eddie told him, voice catching on the consonants, rough from sleep. Richie felt strangely fascinated.

He looked up at the ceiling, feeling the skin of his face prickle under the weight of Eddie's stare.

"Did you, uh—" Eddie started. "How did you sleep?"

It was one of the most straightforward things Eddie had ever asked him, probably, and he still felt way too fucking shaky about it. Richie glanced at Eddie's shitty old-school clock and had to squint for a million years until he managed to catch sight of the time. Not even 9am and his palms were already sweating.

"Pretty good," Richie said, feeling all kinds of unsettled by the little humming sound Eddie made in response.

"Great," Eddie added, "Can you move? I need to pee."

So Richie did, staggering out of Eddie's bed like a cheap one night stand and watching his retreating back with something that felt a little too much like *longing*. He pushed a hand through his hair and bumped into about seven thousand corners before he flopped down on his own damp bed and reached for his glasses.

Seeing didn't help – he stared up at the corny chandelier that hanged ridiculously from his ceiling (which had come as a feature) and tried to talk himself out of losing his shit. So he'd slept with Eddie, worse things had happened. Probably. Maybe.

"Worse things have *definitely* fucking happened," he told himself, only to startle when Eddie's face appeared at the door.

"Who the fuck are you talking to?" Eddie asked, and Richie took too long to catch his breath, metaphorically clutching at his pearls.

"None of your business."

"Whatever," Eddie frowned. "How fast can you get ready?"

"For what?"

"Groceries. There's no fucking food in this house."

—

Eddie was dead set on Whole Foods, which Richie personally found super aggravating, but he was hungry, not to mention too busy clinging to the last remains of his internal freakout to argue with Eddie's choice.

Eddie did a frankly *godawful* job parking Richie's "red, obnoxious car" (a direct quote from Eddie) before they chased each other to the store, where they bickered over the merits of cart vs. basket for the better part of five minutes until reaching a compromise in the form of one of those weird little hybrids. Because it was just early enough not to be close to lunch time and just late enough for everyone else to have punched the clock already, they strolled around Whole Foods in relative peace, if peace meant Eddie stopping every four seconds to bitch about Richie's choice of cereal, and his choice of toothpaste, and ramen noodles, and deodorant, and fabric softener, and, unbelievably, of *antibacterial multi surface cleaners*.

Richie had never met anyone who had as many thoughts on Kroger as Eddie did, so he watched his flailing hands and obnoxious talking with too much fondness settling in his chest, so much that it threatened to climb up his throat and throw itself at Eddie, and Richie would've been too captivated by his idiotic rambling to stop it. The same sorry feeling that accosted him so often nowadays clung to him like a vice, and he wanted to shake himself. He'd forgotten. *Eddie*, and his hypochondria, and his infuriating gibbering.

Richie stared at Eddie's hands for so long that eventually Eddie stopped, setting three different Kroger spray bottles on their cart/basket hybrid and snapping his fingers in Richie's face with a glare.

"Wake the fuck up, Tozier."

Richie blinked at him, pushing Eddie's fingers away from his face. "It's all this cleaning talk. Sending me right to sleep."

"Cleaning is *important*, jackass," Eddie argued. "Besides, it's a three-for-one deal."

"And god forbid we miss out on that."

Well aware that he was being made fun of, Eddie rolled his eyes. "Excuse my not wanting to live in a dump."

"My apartment is perfectly fucking nice, jackass."

"I'm not fucking saying it's not, dipshit, my point is just that it's *cleaner* now."

Richie nodded, offering Eddie a shitty grin. "Because you're a fucking housewife."

"Fuck off," Eddie told him, moving around Richie to grab two packs of antibacterial wipes.

"Eds," Richie started, too used to Eddie's glaring at the nickname. "I don't think we have that much fucking bacteria, man."

Eddie scowled at him. "It's a good deal."

"We're splitting the bill for this, just so you know."

"Fine by me," Eddie shrugged, getting his hands on a third pack that Richie immediately took from him and placed back on the shelf.

"Seriously, Lucy Ricardo" warned Richie, "Give it a rest."

Eddie scoffed at him, opening his mouth to deliver what probably would have been the kind of scathing reply Richie very much *lived* for, except he was interrupted by the sound of faint giggling coming from their left.

Ready to mingle with whoever had decided to giggle *at them*, Richie turned, smile in place, only to meet the eyes of a lady that could pretty realistically be their great fucking grandmother. Richie's grin faltered slightly, and she chuckled again.

"I apologize, dear," she started, and Richie watched Eddie straighten up from the corner of his eye. "It's just... You're very much like me and my husband."

"Who is?" Eddie asked, apparently on full fucking idiot mode, and Richie winced in advance, getting ready to watch Eddie lose his shit at an ancient lady in the middle of Whole Foods.

Their cart-*thing* was full, and Richie was hungry. In short, not at all vibing with the thought of getting chased out by security, so he shifted closer to Eddie with the foresight of dispersing whatever awkward exchange was about to go down, only she smiled at Eddie, all soft,

"You two, lovely couple,"

And Eddie, maybe in the most surprising display of maturity and general good sense Richie'd ever seen, smiled back, "Thank you, ma'am."

It was—*odd*, definitely fucking weird, especially as she tskd softly at them and resumed her shopping. Though not before shooting a fond look their way.

Eddie waited until she had her back to them to turn toward Richie with the sketchiest fucking look in his face. It was one Richie was unfamiliar with, but it's not like he could *ask*.

"So—" Richie tried, but Eddie reached around him to viciously grab his third pack of wipes, jostling Richie on the way.

"Not a fucking word."

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

d'you know that thing that happens when you talk a lot but somehow don't say shit?
that's kind of what this chapter is.

"So, uh—" Richie started, for about the tenth time in less than twenty minutes, shifting from one foot to another in a nervous gesture that was very much *unlike* him.

Eddie, sat on the couch with his feet up (clad in startlingly clean socks) and munching on a bowl of milk-free Cheerios, gazed up at him, already looking mildly impatient. "Spit it out."

Richie sighed. "What are we doing about our, uh, *sleeping arrangements*?"

"Our sleeping arrangements," Eddie repeated, dodging the weird voice Richie had seemed to think was appropriate for the phrase. He looked decidedly less frazzled than he should have, in Richie's honest opinion, and between *that* and his off-key *politeness* earlier, Richie was feeling a few too many steps behind the music. It was super fucking disorienting. "Your bed is sturdier."

"My—" Richie paused, "What?"

"Your bed is sturdier." Eddie said again, lifting his head to stare Richie down with a look maybe too stubborn for the situation. "So—"

"We're *sleeping there*?" Richie asked. His voice ended up weirdly high by the end of the sentence, and he crossed his arms over his chest in an attempt of dispelling the awkwardness of his teenage-girl timbre.

Eddie smiled at him. "Sounds good."

—

Even as a kid, Richie had never liked the dark. It hadn't mattered as much before he *remembered* that he didn't like the dark, but, ever since Derry, it had become just enough of a situation to have him avoid going to bed every night.

Going to bed with *Eddie*, however, was a whole 'nother ball park. Eddie brushed his teeth meticulously, and cleaned under his nails meticulously, and applied an obnoxious amount of face products *very* meticulously, and by the end of his fancy little ritual he smelled good in a way that had Richie's hands twitching with the desire to touch him, and Richie could barely think of darkness, or fear, or anything that weren't Eddie's little habits.

All in all, it was about the least surprising revelation Richie'd ever come to. He realized, watching Eddie place his ugly fucking clock on Richie's bedside table, that he'd wanted to touch Eddie for pretty much as long as he'd known him. He peered at Eddie's small frame from his side of the mattress, focusing on his hands and on the shiny fabric of his pajamas—he wanted him so much his breath stuttered, and he pulled the duvet more tightly around him, as if it could have shielded him from the onslaught of pesky *feelings* bubbling up his insides.

When Eddie turned off the lights and slid into the space beside him, Richie froze. He figured there wasn't really any inconspicuous ways of relaxing when you're sharing a mattress with someone, but he tried anyway, only pausing when he heard the ruffling of sheets and felt Eddie's body shift minisculely closer to his. Richie exhaled just as Eddie breathed in. The bed creaked under their weight, and Richie forced his eyes closed.

It didn't help help – it'd been dark, anyway, and he doubted any amount of dimness could make him less aware of Eddie lying next to him.

Eddie broke the silence first, "Can I ask you something?"

Richie, who'd assumed it'd been a rhetorical question because he wasn't used to Eddie asking for *permission*, offered no answer for long enough that Eddie sighed next to him, "Never mind, it's—"

"Sorry," Richie interrupted, the word sounding too rushed, "I thought—just, never mind, go head. You can ask."

He felt Eddie turn toward him, noticing how the sheets slipped from Richie and followed Eddie's movements. He moved forward to chase the warmth, only realizing he'd gotten too close when Eddie's minty breath fanned against his lips.

"What do you dream of?" said Eddie. "Your nightmares—when you. You know, what—"

"Everything." Richie answered. He shivered despite the fact that he wasn't cold, and Eddie's feet nudged his under the covers. "Pennywise, mostly. The house—and, uh, the park, sometimes. Bowers, too, I guess. He'd—the shit he used to say."

"What shit?" Eddie asked, even though Richie was pretty sure Eddie knew what he'd meant.

Richie exhaled. "You know what."

Eddie didn't answer for a while, so Richie assumed the conversation was over. He blinked against the darkness and stayed quiet, feeling each of Eddie's breaths as tiny shifts on the mattress. He'd thought Eddie knew – about him, maybe, about *them*, but all the things he'd thought they knew built on him like years of one-sided conversations, and he felt too tired to elaborate.

He didn't fall asleep, though, just rested there for minutes on end, feeling Eddie's movements and playing memories back in his mind until Eddie interrupted his reverie,

"I dream of my mom a lot," Eddie told him, voice strangely hoarse. "She's always screaming at me. Just—won't shut the fuck up, you know? Like she used to. And it's just that, her screaming, until It kills her. Then there's—blood, everywhere."

"Eddie."

"You wanna know the worst of it?" Eddie asked. "They're not always nightmares. Some days I'm grateful. That she's—"

Underneath the covers, Richie reached for Eddie's hand. He tangled their fingers together clumsily, their sweaty palms sliding against one another in a way that Richie's sure would have given Eddie a fucking hissy fit had it happened at any other moment.

As it was, though, he kept their hands together.

"That," Richie began, "is so fucking bleak."

Eddie snorted, obviously caught off-guard, and Richie felt inappropriately satisfied about it. He squeezed Eddie's fingers. Eddie squeezed back.

"What you said about Bowers," Eddie said, "I know I asked, but—"

"—you already know." Richie guessed.

Eddie didn't let go of his hand, and Richie adjusted their arms carefully so they wouldn't cramp.

"Yeah." Eddie agreed. "Is that—would you forget, if you could? That part of it?"

"Which part?" Richie asked. "The slurs? The fear? Or just—the fucking *taunting*—"

"—Richie,"

"Nah," Richie stopped him. "I think I'd rather remember. They were the monsters, you know? Pennywise, the fucking *dancing clown*, and Bowers. They were the monsters."

"And not you." Eddie said, so Richie sighed.

"Yeah."

Eddie paused, "And not—not me, either."

"That's," Richie searched for words, staring at the shape of Eddie in the darkness, "It's up to you."

Eddie exhaled, breath tickling Richie's skin, and the room felt too warm all of a sudden.

"Not me, either."

—

Richie had fought a child-eating clown, performed rituals, made a fucking blood oath, of all things, and yet *somehow* waking up to Eddie's body curled toward his for the second morning in a row felt a whole lot more otherworldly than anything *else* Richie had ever encountered.

He was warm, and Richie had a bright moment of feeling as though he could have stayed there forever, pinned under the weight of Eddie's leg as it rested half on top of his.

Whatever bliss he was indulging in could realistically only last so long, though, which was made *super* obvious by the loud beeping of Eddie's piece of crap alarm. Eddie stumbled into consciousness with enough poise to just about shove Richie out of bed, but Richie adjusted, shuffling to the side to avoid getting hit across the face as Eddie stretched his arms out and yawned.

"Jesus," Richie laughed, "Good morning."

Eddie glanced at him, a pillow crease high on his cheek, "*Fuck off.*"

Realistically, Richie was aware that it couldn't have been that long since his last satisfying night of sleep, but it felt like exactly that. He felt *rested*, and, funnily enough, almost giddy.

Too fucking obnoxiously too, it seemed, because Eddie turned around to hit him with his pillow as soon as Richie opened his mouth. "The fuck is wrong with you today?"

"Nothing's fucking wrong, Squidward," Richie grumbled. "Just had a good sleep, is all."

Eddie blinked at him, "Okay."

"See?" Richie said,

"Good for you, whatever. What do you want me to say?"

"Good morning, Richie, did you sleep well?" He said. His Eddie impression remained on the top five, if you asked him, but Eddie didn't seem amused.

Eddie rolled his eyes. "Good morning, asshole," then, after a beat, "do you want to go out for breakfast?"

"That's *definitely* not what I thought you'd say."

"I'm full of fucking surprises," Eddie shot back, "Do you want to or not?"

"Yes," Richie said.

"Can you hurry up, then?"

Richie made a face, "*You* hurry up, you're not even up yet, what are you talking about?"

"You take forever to get ready, and I don't, so—"

"—Yeah, that's a total fucking lie,"

"It's *not*," Eddie argued, and Richie watched Eddie fling himself from the bed out of sheer spite with a satisfied little grin.

"Then why are you hurrying now?"

Eddie scoffed, "I want to use the bathroom."

"It's not polite to lie, Ed Spaghetti," Richie sang, smirking as Eddie flipped him the bird on his way out of the bedroom.

—

Breakfast was a quiet affair only insofar as quiet for them meant a full hour of kicking at each other from under the table. It was fun, though, and Eddie had only given Richie's stack of bacon strips the stink-eye for five minutes before it occurred to Richie to slide some over onto his plate.

Eddie didn't say thanks, but Richie wasn't expecting it. Instead, he pushed half his croissant to Richie's plate, silently chewing the bacon and not meeting Richie's eye.

It was *nice*, and distinctly not friendly – which was to say that they were friends, obviously, but Richie wasn't particularly tuned in to the usual *no homo* station at all. He kept wondering what the world at large would see looking at them, and found himself surprised by how little he cared either way. For once, Richie wasn't worried about being transparent, because Eddie (with his horrifying polo shirt of the day) seemed perfectly distracted. He pressed their ankles together at one point, his gaze blank even as Richie nearly choked on his bacon.

Eddie ate, and Richie watched him, taking occasional bites of his food and putting some effort into not looking like a love-sick teenager. Chances of success were 50/50, probably.

He stared, so distracted that he wouldn't have heard Eddie's voice if Eddie hadn't knocked their knees together at the very same second as he said,

"Do you think Ben and Bev are getting married?"

"Uh," Richie answered. "Probably, yeah."

Eddie frowned, with a very specific crease to his brow that meant he was more thoughtful than particularly bothered, "They live really fucking far from each other, though."

"They're also *in love* and shit, I guess people do that."

"Pack their shit and just-go?" Eddie asked, sounding weirdly strangled.

Richie really wasn't about to point out that Eddie had packed *his* shit and gone, but it sort of seemed like he didn't have to, anyway. Eddie frowned, edging into *bothered* territory, so Richie coughed into his fist.

"Now *that*'d be a snazzy fucking wedding."

Eddie bit into a piece of bacon, "Fucking hedge walls galore."

Richie snorted, "Tasteful."

"Yeah," Eddie agreed. "How d'you think Bill feels about it?"

Richie shrugged, "Thrilled, probably. You know he's a freak."

"Definitely." Eddie said, even though they both knew neither of them were capable of *not* losing their shit about their little Bill Denbrough fan club, "We should call them. It'd be nice to get together more often."

The idea of *more often* held a clear implication of *future* that had Richie's stomach curling uncomfortably. He didn't know what Eddie's plans were, and there was no chill to way to go about asking unless he became *really* fucking cool with letting Eddie know that he thought about it at least three thousand times a day and spent *way* too many minutes playing out a scenario in which Eddie decided to stay forever.

Richie had a hard time wrapping his head around the fact that one day Eddie would have to go back to his life, and that he most likely wouldn't be part of it. It stuck to the back of throat like grease, and there was nothing he wanted less than to face up to it.

"That'd be cool," he answered, a few beats too late.

If Eddie noticed, he didn't say. "Maybe next month?"

Richie grinned at him. "Sounds great to me."

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

short chapter, kind of an interlude!

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

As far as adapting went, Richie took to sleeping with Eddie like a fish to water. It was surprisingly easy to let himself fall into the pattern of their ever present bickering, and more often than not he found himself looking forward to going to bed. Eddie's sleeping habits were a collection of weirdly charming and *super* obnoxious specificities, and Richie had developed habits of his own, in the form of cataloguing every single one of Eddie's.

The nightmares didn't become any less frequent, but they dimmed considerably in the light of Eddie's soft snoring and the warm points of contact where their bodies touched under the sheets. Richie was slightly obsessed with noticing all the small ways Eddie's frame gravitated towards his during the night, even if he never spoke a word about it, and was very careful not to let Eddie know how thoroughly he enjoyed them.

He was pleased, too, to find that Eddie seemed almost *light* – which was pretty much about the last word anyone would have associated with Eddie's brand of testy skittishness, but Richie had paused upon it anyway. It was good, all in all, and it would've been even better if Richie could have stopped himself from constantly fretting about Eddie's departure.

The idea that Eddie would just up and *leave* fit itself into every fissure of Richie's careful contentment, though Eddie didn't seem to notice. He filled every room of Richie's place as though he owned it himself, hundreds of his fucking knickknacks scattered around the living room, which Eddie dusted almost religiously. Richie didn't mind, really, except for when he had inevitably developed a weird rash from the funky scent of one of Eddie's beloved antibacterial wipes.

Even then, aggressively scratching his back and collecting inordinate amounts of blood under his nails, Richie hadn't wanted Eddie to leave.

Other than dusting the *shit* out of every corner of Richie's apartment, Richie learned that Eddie also still held on to his comic-book addiction, and that he'd sit for hours scrolling down Comixology (like a thirteen-year-old) and hunting for collector copies of ancient *Shazam* issues. He was easily amused, snorting to himself every once in a while, and Richie kept holding on to random objects just so he wouldn't reach out to Eddie.

They had good days, for the most part, and the bad ones were mostly unusual interruptions brought on by traumatic memories and a whole lot of grief. Neither of them were working at the time, which Richie felt progressively guiltier about the longer they went on with their *bon*

vivant routine. It wasn't so much about the money as it was about the lack of plans, and Richie had begun calling some of his Radio contacts back and looking into closeby venues. He didn't know what Eddie thought about it, because he hadn't asked. Asking would have meant getting an answer, and getting an answer would have meant either saying goodbye or losing his (fairly low) cool credit while begging Eddie to stay. Either option was shit, frankly, so he was cool with ignoring his problems and acting super sketchy about his secret *sort of* job hunt.

On the topic of Richie's increasingly extensive *Eddie Kaspbrak* catalogue, which, although Richie was hard-pressed to admit, was a direct continuation of his *teenage* Eddie Kaspbrak one, Richie had come to observe the following things: Eddie had a funny little obsession with Tuesdays (he liked to get out the house and people-watch by the park nearer to Richie's place), he went for runs almost daily (and Richie was overly fucking attached to his running shorts), he hated broccoli with a vengeance, and he reached for the wrong words nine times out ten (which would have been infuriating from anyone else, but on Eddie Richie just found *nice*).

He was at once the same boy Richie had been painfully in love with and a whole new person altogether, and looking at him often felt to Richie like looking through a kaleidoscope. He was different people every day, his pieces shifting seemingly endlessly, but in the end it didn't matter that much, because so was Richie, always changing, and it turned out that who they were were never really at odds.

He thought about Eddie constantly, too, and each time he glimpsed at him through the periphery of his vision was more surprising and fantastic than the last. He was there. All the time.

Now, in particular, he was standing by the sink with soap up to his elbows, washing the bowl he'd just used for his morning cereal.

Richie watched him, like always, interrupted only when Eddie turned his head and snapped, "Did you lose something, asshole?"

"Dude" Richie answered, shuffling closer to Eddie and resting his back on the counter. "Unclench."

"*You* unclench," Eddie retorted, "I'm not the one blowing holes into your skull."

Richie narrowed his eyes at him. "Just a question—"

"—What now—"

"Could you be any more fucking dramatic?"

"I'm not being *dramatic*. It's just—it's invasive."

Richie tskd, "Whatever, drama queen," and Eddie flicked his fingers at him, making big clumps of soap stick to Richie's glasses and the side of his face.

Eddie cackled, a loud burst of laughter that Richie frowned at, reaching up a hand to scrub his face clean.

Eddie kept laughing, and laughing, and Richie rolled his eyes at him, pushing him forward hard before reaching for the dish rag.

Chapter End Notes

listen, i've been using my phone to add the new chapters and i don't know *how* to make it so the freaking taylor swift thing stops showing up every single time. y'all know what inspired the title by now, we're sick to death. but yeah, because i don't know how to take it off, just—listen to *cornelia street* because tswift is a reddie and deserves all the rights. this ao3 page is now a full-blown tswift fan account... ffs.

Chapter 7

Richie was lounging on the sofa and clinging helplessly to his notes when Eddie wandered into the living room. He looked cosy, bed head and all, and Richie had meant to glance up at him briefly but found himself focusing on the patch of exposed skin from where Eddie's silk shirt had fallen open instead. Full disclosure: his pajamas were sort of ridiculous. Richie would've made fun of such an incredibly *shiny* silk ensemble had it been worn by anyone else, probably, but he'd made his peace with it on Eddie on the basis that it frequently ended up unbuttoned, and Richie was a bit too fond of the hair that curled softly on Eddie's chest.

Without so much as a glance, Eddie walked past Richie and straight into the kitchen while Richie was still staring dumbly at him, so Richie had to shake his head to try to appear at least semi-coherent.

He sighed, pushing his glasses up so he could rub at his eyes. He placed his notes on top of the table just in time for Eddie to pad back into the living room and plop down on the space next to Richie.

"How did you sleep?" Richie asked, smiling to himself when Eddie turned to him with a frown.

"Fine, why?" Then, "Did I wake you?"

"You're good." Richie assured him, watching as Eddie relaxed back against the couch. "Nightmares again?"

"Uh," Eddie blinked, "Something like that."

Richie had, on occasion, seen Eddie blush before. Admittedly, it had been literal *years* since, but it still looked more or less the same. He stared at him, "*Okay?*"

"I don't wanna talk about it," said Eddie.

Richie raised both hands, brows furrowed on a quizzical look, "I didn't ask."

"Good." Eddie nodded, and Richie stared at him some more before shrugging.

"You're being like, extra fucking weird today." Richie told him. "Just so you know."

Eddie narrowed his eyes, "Fuck off,"

"Sure."

"Seriously—"

Richie raised his hands again, "*Fine*. Jesus."

Eddie nodded, shifting on the couch so he was facing Richie. He pushed his foot against the side of Richie's thigh, so Richie closed his hands around it easily.

Eddie kicked him, very lightly, and Richie didn't let go. "Do you want to go out later?"

"Where?"

Richie shrugged, "Anywhere."

"We could go the movies," Eddie said, looking thoughtful for a second, "I hear *Suicide Squad* is on."

"I am *not* watching *Suicide Squad*."

—

"That fucking *sucked ass*, holy shit." Richie stated, reaching around Eddie to shove his bag of popcorn into the bin.

Eddie snorted, sliding closer to Richie. "Could've been worse."

"Uh, *how*?"

"I'm just saying—"

"Don't fucking say it," Richie warned, grinning at him, "I wanna be able to look you in the eye after this."

Rolling his eyes, Eddie pushed him to the side. "Fine, *Bazin*."

Richie laughed, "Nice."

He pressed a little closer to Eddie, and together they walked out of the cinema, shoulders and arms brushing, until Eddie pulled him to the side in a maneuver so abrupt Richie stumbled a few steps,

"What the fuck?" He asked, righting himself and attempting to trip Eddie with his foot.

Eddie jumped over it easily, grabbing his wrist, "Fucking *keep up*, Tozier. We're playing Street Fighter."

—

It turned out that there actually *was* an arcade – colorful, bright, and less than 10 meters from the cinema. Walking through the door felt more or less like Richie imagined travelling through time would, and Eddie kept his hand firmly around Richie's wrist, dragging him over to buy tokens then back to pause expectantly in front of the game.

Staring at the screen, Richie felt thirteen again, every uncertainty he'd ever felt simmering up his throat as he peered at the joysticks and pushbuttons. He glanced at Eddie, watched him

watch him with a small smile lighting up his features, his dark eyes reflecting the colors from the screen. His hands threatened to shake, but Eddie bumped his hips against Richie's, and Richie's body seemed to acquiesce following the lead of Richie's heart, which paused and stuttered and sped back up again at the feel of Eddie's hand sliding down from his wrist to his hand.

"What?" Eddie asked him, searching his gaze for something he seemed to have found easily enough, "Forgotten how?"

Richie blinked at him, moving out of Eddie's grasp to curl his fingers around the joystick, "Get ready to be fucking *annihilated*, Eduardo,"

"Bring it on," Eddie grinned, so Richie did.

They played in a vicious way that wasn't quite as compatible with adulthood as they thought it might have been, pushing each other out of the way and cheating indiscriminately, and Richie's cackling earned them enough side-eyes to last a fucking lifetime, but he pressed forward instead of moving back, laughing away, touching Eddie so much he felt giddy with it, buzzed on Eddie's carefree grinning and his loud stream of curses. Eddie yelled, stepping hard on Richie's foot, and Richie shoved him to the side with a nasty hip check, but neither of them let go of the controllers, and the game ended with as close to an outright blowout as it could have.

Eddie exhaled, laughing softly at Richie's crowing and gazing at him with a private sort of amusement. Richie stared at him, feeling flushed and bright and more or less like he'd choke on his butterflies and die a gruesome fucking death,

"As cool as you remembered?" Eddie asked.

Richie looked at him, "Way fucking cooler."

—

Dinner was fun. Richie had stolen half of Eddie's fries and was now leaning back on his seat with a quiet smile on his face, looking at Eddie as he fidgeted with the metal straw he'd bought at Whole Foods a few days earlier. Their conversation had faded into the kind of quiet contentment in which Richie still found some sort of thrill, and Eddie seemed in his element, taking his first sip of chocolate milkshake with a happy look that made warmth pool heavily in Richie's stomach.

"We should do this again tomorrow," Richie said, though he wasn't even sure he meant it.

Eddie looked up at him, chocolate sticking to the corner of his mouth, "Oh," he said, and Richie's giddiness grinded to a halt as though time itself had stopped. "I, uh, can't."

"You—can't?" Richie asked, and Eddie squared his shoulders.

"I should have told you before," he started, "I'm meeting someone for a job interview tomorrow."

Richie stared at him, lowering his hands to his lap so Eddie wouldn't see how his fingers had started twitching. "You're going back to New York."

"What?" Eddie's eyes went wide. "No! It's in L.A. The interview-it's like, a few blocks from your place."

"What—"

"It's, uh, it's pretty close, and the hours are great," Eddie continued, "They made me a really good offer, too, I had some of my former colleagues recommend me, so I'm uh-well, I guess I'll see whether I'm a good fit or not, but I think—"

"-You're not leaving," Richie said, and he couldn't have helped how his voice sounded. "You're staying here."

"I thought-obviously I'm fucking staying here, I thought it was obvious, that's why I didn't-uh, should I have—"

Richie stopped him, "*No*. You should-I'm really, uh,"

"Good," Eddie smiled, a slow thing quietly stretching over his face, "I was thinking you could help me find a place, too,"

"What?" Richie paused again, "What's fucking wrong with *my* place?"

"It's your place."

Richie narrowed his eyes, "And?"

"Nothing—I didn't mean anything by that," Eddie told him, "I just thought maybe you'd had enough or something."

"Enough of what?"

"Fucking—I don't fucking know, Richie," said Eddie. "Whatever, nevermind, just—"

"No, if you want to fucking move out—" Richie started, and Eddie snapped at him, voice too loud,

"I *don't*."

"Then—" Richie stopped, "Wait, you don't?"

"No."

Richie blinked at him, "Okay. Uh, good, then."

Eddie sighed, scratching at his face and leveling Richie a funny little look, "Are we—we're good?"

"We're good," Richie assured him.

"Great," said Eddie. "I really didn't wanna go house hunting. It's such a fucking hassle."

Humming in agreement, Richie said, "It took me five months to settle on mine."

"It is a pretty good apartment."

"Yeah," Richie said, "So, a job, huh."

Eddie shrugged, "Had to happen eventually."

"I guess. I'm, uh, I'm in contact with some of the radio people, you know, for my show."

"Breakfast with Richie?"

Richie smiled, "Something like that."

"And so life goes the fuck back to normal."

Richie mulled it over for a second, watching Eddie take another sip of his milkshake.

"You're still divorced," Richie told him, though he couldn't quite tell what Eddie's version of normal really encompassed.

"Yeah, but, I don't know, it never really felt like. Normal, I think, or, like normal should feel," he paused. "Whatever the fuck that means, really."

Reaching for one of Eddie's forgotten fries, Richie nodded, "My life never felt that normal either."

—

Home, now that Richie knew Eddie was staying for good, felt decidedly *different*. He analysed his furniture, eyeing each detail and wondering what Eddie thought of it, what he'd keep, what he'd change if given the chance.

His kitchen was big, well lit, and most of his appliances were at least newish enough to look spotless, most of the time. The living room was a bit of a mess, though he'd argue that was as much Eddie's fault as his, and his bedroom had become a weird blend of his and Eddie's stuff, all intertwined. Richie didn't mind, but he wondered if Eddie did.

He looked around, noticing Eddie's slippers by the side of the door, his godawful alarm sitting on the bedside table. There were little clues spread around every room, all of them pointing to the undeniable evidence that Richie's apartment wasn't really just Richie's anymore, so he turned around and strode back to the living room, where Eddie knelt by the television, messing with Richie's Blu-ray collection.

"Hey," he said, and Eddie glanced up, "Is there anything you'd want to change about the house?"

Richie watched as Eddie looked around, his gaze pausing on every one of his little trinkets, on the pieces of himself he'd left scattered around the room. The obvious tangle of their lives together.

"No," Eddie told him, "It's fine just as it is."

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

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

“What do you *mean*,” said Richie, “they are coming over for dinner,”

Eddie looked at him, and Richie watched as he raised his eyebrows minutely at the topless woman printed on the front of Richie’s stay-at-home t-shirt, “Bill called while you were busy with your hour-long *bath*.”

“First off,” he frowned, “Fucking hop off my dick about the baths,”

“–Okay–”

“Don’t you take like, two fucking showers a day?”

“Fucking—that’s not the point,” Eddie said, “Whatever, take as many fucking baths as you want, at least then I know you’re clean. That’s–Bill called,”

“And?”

Eddie sighed, “He couldn’t get reservations for Yamashiro,”

“So let’s go somewhere else,”

“That’s what *I* said,” Eddie agreed, “But he started going on about how we always get kicked out of places, shit like that, and how it’d be nice if we could meet somewhere more private, and I just–”

Richie groaned, “You totally fucking fell for it.”

“Pretty much.”

“Great,” Richie told him. “Can you even cook?”

Eddie pulled a face, “I can do ramen?”

“We’re not having people over for fucking *ramen*,” Richie snapped, “For fuck’s sake.”

“Well, can *you* fucking cook? ‘Cause I sure as *shit* haven’t seen it yet.”

“That’s why *I don’t have people over for dinner*, asshole,” Richie said, the words mashing together furiously.

Eddie said, “Okay, we have it under control,” and Richie snapped a mumbled *how the fuck*—that Eddie interrupted as he added, “We can order chinese.”

“Yeah, no one’s fucking buying *that*.”

“That’s not—” Eddie shook his head at him. “We’re not fucking lying about it, just. Fucking get the chinese, do you think they give a shit.”

“That’s not *the point*.”

Eddie stared at him, “Not to point out the fucking obvious or anything, but why are *you* losing your shit about this?”

“I’m not—”

“It kind of looks like you’re nervous.”

Richie scoffed, “I’m not fucking *nervous*.”

—

Richie was so fucking nervous. Which was not how he usually vibed, but he was acutely aware of how *cosy* his apartment looked, and the last thing he needed was any of the idiots he called best friends calling attention to the fact that Eddie had officially moved in for real. It’s not like he thought Eddie would just change his mind about it, because Richie knew for a fact Eddie was about as stubborn a fucking horse, and not even his myriad of little daily changes could have changed *that*, but it still felt hugely overwhelming, like letting everyone in on his biggest secret and having to stand to the side while Eddie fucking realized that he was, in fact, the source of most of Richie’s current and former lid-flipping.

“Could you maybe *not* blow a fucking gasket right now?” Eddie asked him, pushing him down onto the couch and moving past him to adjust some of the pillows on top of the armchair.

“I’m totally fucking zen,” Richie smiled at him, and Eddie rolled his eyes, obviously seeing the lie for what it was.

“Okay,” he said, “Then stay fucking *zen* until they get here, at least, you’re driving me fucking crazy.”

“Says *you*” Richie grunted, “Don’t you have shit you should be cleaning?”

“Fuck off,” Eddie told him, easy as anything, and moved in swift steps when the doorbell rang and Richie felt his heart jump up to his throat.

It was going to be fine, he assured himself, standing up just in time for Bev to pull him into a hug and plant a kiss to his cheek.

“I’ve missed you,” she told him, and he squeezed her further into his arms, feeling himself unwind as he exhaled against her hair.

Ben was smiling at him when they separated, and Richie found himself pulling Ben into a similarly earnest hug, accepting his back slaps with a grin before moving on to push them gently onto the couch.

“Welcome to *casa* Tozier, friends,” he said, ignoring Eddie’s pointed eyebrow raise.

Ben laughed good-naturedly, and soon enough the doorbell rang again, this time announcing Bill and Mike, who stumbled into Richie’s place with matching grins and way too many bottles of wine.

“Wine?” Richie eyed them. “What are we? Sixty?”

Bill snorted, “Qu-quit fronting and help me get those into the kitchen.”

He patted Mike on the arm (and watched as Eddie pulled him into a hug) before following Bill to the kitchen, which Bill touched and prodded like it was his own.

“Your place is nice,” Bill commented, and Richie’s palms went a little sweaty, but Bill didn’t elaborate, instead moving past him to plop down on one of the armchairs and pull Eddie into conversation.

“How’s the new juh-job?” Bill asked him, and Eddie launched animatedly into a story about his boss, one that Richie had heard about seven times over the course of the last week, then onto another, to which Ben and Bev reacted with appropriate bursts of laughter, curling into each other as Mike guffawed, lifting up a hand to wipe at his eyes.

Richie laughed, too, captivated and wondering how the fuck it was that he knew all of Eddie’s stories now. He smiled, watching as his friends talked over each other and stumbled through interruptions with bright fits of laughter that echoed through the room and set around them a haze of happiness so strong it left him almost dizzy. He talked a lot, too, trying not to pay too much attention to how Eddie offered a familiar little grin at all of his gesturing, but he couldn’t help but be painfully aware that, just like him, Eddie knew all of his stories already. He listened attentively anyway, just as Richie had, and Richie felt so warm he wondered how no one else was commenting on it.

Spurred on by Mike, Richie ran to the kitchen to grab them more wine, and he heard the doorbell right as he was stealing some dry cereal from the box,

“Eddie,” he yelled, smiling at Eddie’s answering of,

“On it!”

When he returned to the living room with a brand new wine bottle and attempting to wipe cereal crumbs off his shirt, it was to find his center table chock-full of takeout boxes, and Beverly kneeling by the television set, thumbing through one of Eddie’s comics.

She offered Richie a grin, shaking the issue slightly, “You still collect these?”

“Uh,” Richie started, “They’re Eddie’s, actually.”

“What are?” Eddie asked, oblivious to Beverly’s quirking of eyebrows. Distractedly, Eddie moved around to group to hand everyone a plate, and he looked up at Richie just in time to see him glance away from Bev.

“The comics,” Richie explained, hoping his voice sounded normal.

“Yeah,” He turned to Bev, “I have most of the old school DC ones. I’m still on the market for some of *Shazam*, but they’re super fucking hard to find.”

“I remember those,” Mike said, leaning forward on his seat to watch as Bev flipped through the pages. “They had some old ones in the library, too.”

“Any Whiz Comics?”

“I don’t think so,” Mike said, “But I could take a look around Cedar Key, we have a pretty good library.”

Eddie grinned at him, “Thanks, Mike,”

“Any time,” Mike smiled, shooting Richie a small grin too before moving to refill his plate.

“Speaking of Florida,” Ben started, “Bev and I have some news.”

All eyes turned to them, glancing between the two eagerly. Ever the comedian, Richie gaped, “Holy fuck, you’re having a baby.”

Bev snorted, “We’re not *having a baby*.”

“But we are getting married,” Ben added, glancing at Bill briefly, “Next september, we’re looking into venues around Tampa, they say the weather there helps, so.”

“If you’re super into extreme humidity, I guess,” Richie said, but he was grinning, as were all of them, including Bill. Maybe especially Bill, Richie noticed, watching the fond way he gazed at both of them, eyes almost shiny.

“I’m really huh-happy for you,” he told them, voice soft, and Bev let out a suspicious sniff that was timely covered by Richie slapping his hands together.

“Congratulations, guys,” he said, “What are the best men wearing?”

Ben grinned at him, “Please no hawaiian shirts.”

Richie scoffed, and Eddie’s smirking was interrupted by Bev’s, “No polos, either, Goofy.”

Cackling, Richie pushed Mike to the side to dodge the pillow Eddie threw his way, and Mike shoved him back, smiling at the sight.

“What’s the *theme*?” Richie asked, still laughing.

Ben rolled his eyes goodnaturedly, and Eddie smirked at them, “Doing the fucking hedge walls? I hear they’re in fashion.”

“Who do you think I *am*?” Bev frowned, sounding offended enough that Bill coughed out a giggle.

Bev narrowed her eyes at him, and he shrugged. Mike snorted, and, just as Richie decided to sip on some of his wine, blurted out, “So—Eddie and Richie too, huh?”

Richie choked, wine spraying out of his mouth and onto Bev, whose cursing got drawn out by the sound of Ben cackling loud enough to wake the dead.

“What the fuck?” Richie asked, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “What—”

“He meant, like, living together, Rich,” Eddie told him, suspiciously calm, and Richie turned to glare at him.

“I *know*.” He lied, resolutely not meeting anyone’s eyes, much less Bill’s, who he could see, from the corner of his eye, had his eyebrows raised in a smug fucking look.

Bev wiped at her blouse with a napkin, rolling his eyes. “You should’ve fucking killed him when you had the chance, Eds.”

Bill passed him another handful of napkins, smirking. “He’d have no one to argue with then.”

“I can’t believe you fucking *sprayed* me with wine,” Bev complained, balling up her wet papers and throwing them at Richie. “Dumbass.”

“It’s Mike’s fault,” Richie complained.

Mike snorted, “It was a question!”

Bill smiled, and Richie felt slightly off-kilter again, if too buzzed to really feel *nervous*, even when Bill stood up and offered Richie a hand, “You gotta show me where you keep your rags.”

“*Thank you*.” Eddie told him, and Richie didn’t get to snark about his clean-freak habits before Bill pulled him up and dragged him into the kitchen.

“So,” Bill started, “You and Eh-Eddie,”

Richie looked away from him, opening his bottom cupboard in search of Eddie’s freaking wipes.

“What about us?” He asked. His voice didn’t come out quite right, but he was feeling too weird to care.

Bill didn’t answer, not for long enough that Richie’s stomach turned dangerously, his palms growing even sweatier, but when he looked up at him, Bill grinning, his eyes kind of shiny.

“Took you fucking long enough.”

“You--What?” Richie asked, bumping his head on the top of the cupboard as he tried to stand up. Bill was watching him with an amused twist to his mouth, so Richie stared at him.

“Nothing’s happened.”

Bill's smile turned upside down, "Fuh-fucking *why not?*"

"What do you mean *why not*," said Richie, "We're not—"

"Seriously?" Bill interrupted, and Richie frowned at him.

"Seriously."

"I muh-mean *seriously* like you *seriously* buh-believe that?" Bill clarified, blinking at him.

Richie sighed, pushing his hand through his hair before leaning next to Bill with his back to the sink. "He doesn't know, okay?"

Bill stared at him. Richie fidgeted awkwardly under Bill's serious gaze, and Bill kept staring.

"You're a fuh-fucking idiot." He stated, sighing, and Richie was about to argue but Bill cut him off, "Everyone knows."

Richie's breathing stuttered awkwardly. "What—"

"It's buh-been *forever*, Rich," Bill told him, "I luh-*love* you, but holy shit."

"You knew? About—"

Bill nodded, "I guess, yeah. But it wasn't—it duh-doesn't change anything."

"It fucking changes *everything* for me, Billy," Richie stared, dumbfounded.

Richie looked at him, meeting Bill's serious gaze, and he felt—*weird*, off-balance, as though everything was shifting and he wasn't fast enough to move before being pulled under.

"You're ruh-right. Sorry," He said, "I meant that it doesn't ch-change anything for us. We're *us*, right."

Richie blinked, turning his head so he could stare at the kitchen door, focusing on the sound of laughter coming from the living room. He could hear bits and pieces of their words, and his mind filled in the blanks – the crinkles on Mike's eyes when he smiled, the shape of Bev's teeth when she threw her head back in laughter. He thought of Ben and his thoughtful words. Finally, he thought of Stan, and his rib cage felt too fragile for the amount of feeling thumping away inside.

He gazed back at Bill, who was watching him with a patient look, "Thanks. For waiting, I mean. And I, uh. I love you too,"

Bill bumped their shoulders together, "Yeah, I know."

stream lover

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

maybe *your mom* will be our *always*

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

Bill and Richie ambled back into the living room with Eddie's collection of antibacterial items to find Bev perched comfortably on Ben's lap, grinning widely at the bouts of snorting laughter coming from a teary-eyed Mike, and from Eddie, who was gesticulating frantically in his storytelling.

Bill plopped down on the spot that had been previously occupied by Bev, raising his eyebrows at them. "What's going on?"

Still snorting, Mike said, "Eddie's telling us about Richie's *accident*."

Bill opened his mouth to ask, but in truth he had barely gotten half a word in before Richie was groaning, "Fuck off, you're *not*."

Eddie snickered, "They've asked!"

"I'm sure they have," Richie rolled his eyes, "Especially, like, *hey, Eddie, has Richie traumatized any children recently?*"

Bill turned to him with a groan, "Holy fuh-fuck, Richie. Not *again*."

Ben tittered loudly, and Richie threw a pillow at him, more or less accidentally hitting Bev instead. "It's not my fault—"

"You've *got* to stop yelling at children," Bev managed through her giggling, so Richie pointed at her,

"*Children* need to stop coming at *me*."

Mike snorted, "Man—"

"I've got, like, *trauma* and shit!" Richie argued, "It's not my fucking fault children are scary."

"Wow," said Bill, smirking when Richie squinted at him. "Were they fuh-*fans* again?"

"That's the best part," Eddie grinned, "They had no fucking clue who Richie was, right, but he was—"

"—Uh, *we* were—"

"—Standing in front of one of those Build-a-Bear type things, and—"

"And why were we there, Eddie?"

"Fuck off, I was *curious*," Eddie told him, and Bill pulled a face at Bev before he continued, "The kids wanted to see it or whatever, but Richie was being super fucking loud about buying, uh—buying me one, 'cause I was—that's not, it's not relevant, anyway—"

"Do any of you *enjoy* being randomly touched by strangers nowadays, 'cause—"

"Dude, they were kids," Bev said, moving along with Ben's shaking laughter.

"Rich, man—"

Richie interrupted, "No, no, no, no—they kept, like, poking me, but I turned around and they didn't say *shit*, so I just—"

"He lost it," Eddie stated, "Like, fully fucking—"

"It was *dignified*—"

"It absolutely fucking wasn't—"

"—I asked them *what the fuck*, right,"

"Like, thirteen times in a row and screaming,"

"—I was zen about it."

Mike wiped tears from his eyes, giving Richie a look full of disbelief, "You're a riot, Tozier."

"Thanks," said Richie, just a little sardonic, "I'll probably end up in jail soon, but I'm sure you'll come to visit."

"Don't worry, Rich, we'll bring you," Ben paused, "What do people usually need in jail?"

Bev snorted, patting his hand, and Richie rolled his eyes. "Good going, Ben."

Bill leaned forward slightly, resting his arms on the center table, "So, wuh-what, you just left?"

Eddie smiled, "Pretty much, yeah—their parents kind of started in our direction, so I just sort of—"

"—Dragged me outside by the arm."

Mike whistled, "You need to see a therapist, man."

"Which one of us doesn't?" Richie argued, rolling his eyes.

Bill sighed. "Some of us already are."

"Shit," said Eddie, "Are you really?"

"Pretty muh-much, yeah," Bill told them, and Richie watched as the mood turned less giddy and the seconds ticked by, all of the Losers shifting slightly to gaze at Bill.

"Is it working?" Bev asked. Richie saw Ben's hand reach for hers, their fingers intertwining easily, and glanced at Eddie.

"I think so," Bill told them, "I duh-don't tell her everything, obviously, but it huh-helps."

"What can you say?" Bev said, "If you can't tell her what happened."

"Just-tuh-tell her how I feel, I guess. And about, uh, Ge-Georgie, and my parents."

"That's good, Bill," Mike looked at him, "And if you ever need to talk specifics, we're here for you."

Bill smiled at him, a soft thing so reminiscent of their time as kids that Richie felt his breath stick minutely to his lungs, "Thanks. And I'm huh-here if anyone needs anything, you know that."

Bev squeezed Ben's hand before standing up from his lap to go press a kiss to the top of Bill's head. She turned to them, smiling, "We all are,"

She grabbed her glass, half-empty, with its rim stained of lipstick, and lifted it calmly, "To us, and to making it out."

Together, messy and disorganized but anyway connected by the look on their faces, the Losers raised their glasses, "To us," they said, "And to making it out."

—

The apartment was left weirdly quiet without the Losers' collective laughter and comfortable sprawling, and Richie and Eddie set about organizing things in a contemplative silence that felt weirdly charged.

Richie threw the takeout boxes out, wiped the floor and the center table and organized the living room while Eddie washed the dishes in the kitchen. Eddie made thoughtful little sounds from time to time, and Richie wished he could paw his way into Eddie's brain, pick apart his thoughts. Richie had a lot in his mind, too—he couldn't seem to stop circling around the knowledge that the Losers had known about him, that they still did, and that somehow all they had for him was their obvious love and fond exasperation. It was overwhelming in the most obvious of ways, curling around his wrists and his legs and his lungs. He glanced at the kitchen door. Eddie knew — they were past that, maybe, but only vaguely, and he was getting tired of keeping up pretense.

He filed toward the kitchen, stopping by the doorway to stare at Eddie's back, the rise and fall of his breathing, the lines of his forearms covered in soap.

"Eds," he called, voice more quiet than it had ever been before as he tried the words out loud for the first time in his life, "I'm gay."

He didn't say any of the other things – nothing of the *I love you* and the *I've been in love with you all my life*, and all he did was blink when one of the plates crashed loudly against the sink and Eddie turned around to look at him.

They watched each other in silence, Eddie's eyes wide and his face flushed, but Richie didn't feel the need to fidget. He just stopped, stood his ground as Eddie studied him, surprised first, then curious. He exhaled softly when the corners of Eddie's mouth finally twitched up.

"Okay," Eddie told him, "Thank you for telling me."

Richie nodded, "You're–welcome?"

The soft wrinkles on the corners of Eddie's eyes deepened when he smiled, looking warmly at him, "Me too."

Richie wiped his palms on his jeans, "That's, uh, good to know."

"Is it?" Eddie asked, tilting his head to the side, still smiling.

Richie coughed, "It is."

Eddie blinked at him, shaking his head softly, but didn't say anything else. Instead, he turned back to the sink, grin still caught in his lips, pausing slightly when Richie asked, "Was this–was this the first time you've said it?"

"Yeah," said Eddie. "You?"

Richie sighed, "Yep. How, uh, how long have you known, though?"

"Is this fucking *twenty questions* now?" Eddie questioned, except he didn't sound at all exasperated. Instead, he came across as surprisingly indulgent. "I've never *not* known, I guess."

"Shit," Richie articulated, "Well, uh, *same*."

"*Same*?" Eddie repeated. "How old are you again?"

"Fuck off–" Richie started, but Eddie threw one of the dish rags at him before he could finish his sentence.

"Will you dry these?" He said, pointing at the clean, wet plates piling up next to the sink.

Richie walked over, "I don't fucking get why you insist on washing them by hand."

"Dishwashers are, like, fucking *crawling* with bacteria."

Richie looked at him, watching Eddie frown at the thought of bacteria as if it was the worst thing he could imagine. Richie smiled, heart speeding up, "Well, you're the expert here, Mr. Clean."

—

"Rich," Eddie called him, poking his side, "Are you awake?"

Richie groaned, turning toward Eddie in the dark all the while shimmying away from his fingers, "Fucking am now. What is it?"

"Nothing," Eddie said, and Richie grumbled at him, shifting back around until Eddie stopped him with a hand on his arm, "Sorry, fuck—it's just. I was thinking about what Bill said."

"Bill's full of shit," Rich told him, "Stop thinking and let's go the fuck to sleep."

Eddie poked him again, "Asshole, come on—"

"What *time* is it?" Richie asked, lifting himself up on his elbow so he could look over Eddie to his shitty clock. "Don't you have work tomorrow?"

"Yeah, and you don't, so—" Eddie started, "I think we should go to therapy."

Richie blinked, "Uh, together?"

"Not—obviously not together." Eddie said, "Keep up."

"It's three in the morning."

"I'm aware, like I said—"

"—Keeping up, fine,"

"—Therapy."

"Sure, okay—" said Richie, preparing himself to fall the fuck back to sleep, but Eddie nudged him again, knee pressing against his thigh, so he sighed. "What do you want to talk about?"

"Things." Eddie said, "And, uh, maybe we should both talk about the elephant in the room,"

"Your mom?"

Eddie kneed him again. "The gay thing, asshole."

The gay thing was now, as far as Richie was concerned, a little more chill than the *I'm crazy about you* thing, so he kind of felt like, "What's there to talk about? We're gay, that's all she fucking wrote."

Eddie scoffed, and Richie attempted to shuffle around so he could go back to sleep, but Eddie kept touching him, "Maybe I want to talk about it. How did you know?"

"Who's playing twenty questions now?" Richie commented, but he was pretty powerless in the face of Eddie's incessant touching. Not to mention the fucking yapping.

"Richie—"

"*Ugh*, fine." He said, deciding to commit to the dangerous territory he was about to tread on, "There was a boy."

"I could have figured out that much for myself, thank you—"

"Fuck off," Richie told him, "There was a boy, and it took me a shit ton of years to realize I was in love with him, but I was, and he was *a boy*, so."

"What was he like?" Eddie asked, because of course he did.

In the dark, Richie breathed out through his nose, mentally cataloguing all the places where their bodies touched before huffing out an answer, "The most annoying motherfucker I'd ever met."

"Oh," Eddie exhaled, and Richie turned to stare at the ceiling while Eddie mulled that one over. "But did you—I mean, do you regret liking him or something?"

Richie rubbed a hand down his face. "Nah, he was pretty fucking great. I—we had a lot in common, and. We always have fun, even—"

"Have?" Eddie interrupted, and Richie paused,

"What?"

"You, uh, *have* fun?" He asked again, and Richie realized his slip-up just in time to also realize that he couldn't be pressed to give a fuck about it now, not lying in the dark with Eddie's body semi-pushed against his, their legs touching, elbows touching, hands too close together. Eddie could know, or he could not, but it was three am, Eddie was warm next to him, and Richie had too *much* filling up space in his lungs to be too fucking cryptic about it.

"We do, still." Richie settled on eventually, and the the mattress moved slightly as Eddie inhaled.

He waited a few beats, and Richie closed his eyes against the darkness. Voice funny, Eddie asked, "Uh, do I know him?"

Richie didn't answer, not for a while, and Eddie kept breathing next to him, inhales and exhales either too close together or too far apart in a way that made it painfully obvious that he wasn't as nonchalant as he'd tried to sound.

"You know what," Richie said, making his decision. "How about I let you figure *that one* out yourself?"

Chapter End Notes

guys!!!!!! we're getting there!!!!!!

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

i am so sorry

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

They didn't talk about it the morning. About any of it, really, though Richie felt Eddie's gaze heavy on him the whole time, while they lounged on the sofa having breakfast, as Richie washed the dishes and Eddie sat by the counter organizing their grocery list. They didn't talk about it as Eddie knelt by the table adjusting his shit for the day, monkey suit and all, knocking Richie's feet off it before standing up and mumbling a funny little *see you later*.

Richie spent the morning by himself, pacing around the house until he grew tired of pacing and drove across the city to go bother Bill, who offered him a sunny grin as he moved out of the way to let Richie in. He promptly launched into a detailed explanation of the entire plot of his next novel, excitedly bouncing around ideas that Richie tried to contribute to as well as he could, even though he knew pretty much jack shit about writing horror, but he supposed Bill knew that and most likely couldn't care less.

Bill made them lunch, and Richie spent the rest of the afternoon puttering around Bill's crap while he wrote, and around 4 pm Richie drove back home with the windows down trying not to feel stressed about seeing Eddie, and overall he mostly succeeded.

He took a shower, and brushed his teeth, and by the time he heard Eddie's keys jiggling from the other side of the door he was already sprawled on the couch again, watching some season one reruns of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*.

He glanced up at Eddie as he walked into the room, dropped his handbag on the floor and leaned against the back of the couch to peer down at Richie.

"So," he started, and Richie held his breath. "I have this thing."

Richie exhaled, "Uh—you have what?"

"There's a *thing* at work," Eddie sighed, scratching the scar on his face, "I told them I wasn't going, but they just bothered the shit out of me about it today, so—"

"Okay," Richie told him. It was slightly disappointing, for a whole variety of reasons, and Richie tried not to frown as he began sketching out an excuse not go to bed until Eddie came back.

"It's, like, a fancy fucking dinner party," said Eddie. "D'you have anything you could wear to that?"

"Dude," Richie told him, "I doubt my shit would fit you."

Eddie blinked, "I have clothes, asshole. I meant for you."

"For me what?"

"Holy fuck," Eddie said, "Have you been listening at all? Fancy dinner party? In like, two hours?"

"Fuck off, of course I'm fucking listening, but what—" He paused, then, staring at Eddie. "You want me to go with you?"

Eddie shook his head, "Fucking *obviously*. How soon can you be ready?"

Richie, still stuck in Eddie's previous sentence, squinted, "Are you sure it's cool if I come?"

"I already fucking gave them your name, so now you gotta."

Eddie Kaspbrak, plus one Richie Tozier. Richie felt his eyes twitch, "Okay."

"No fucking overdoing the patterns, please." Eddie snarked, striding past Richie to the bedroom.

Richie snorted, "Leave Homer Simpson's wardrobe alone and we'll talk, dipshit."

—

"Eddie," Richie said, sliding closer to him as they walked through the door. "What the fuck?"

The dinner party was just as fucking fancy as Eddie had said, and Richie stared at the rich-looking people decked the shit out in suits with a suspicious squint.

Eddie rolled his eyes at him, "You've been to Hollywood shit before, what are you talking about?"

"And you obviously fucking haven't," Richie whispered back, "It's like, doing cocaine with your dick out in a balcony or some crap. Now this—"

Eddie elbowed him, "Just try to act fucking normal, it's gonna be fine."

"Says *you*," Richie shot back, eyeing Eddie's stiff posture, "Take that stick off your ass first,"

"I don't have—" Eddie said, his quiet voice super fucking aggressive, "I don't know them all that well yet, okay?"

"You're always in a panic, what the shit else is new?" Richie pointed out, "Just, we gotta find someone who looks normal and stick to them."

Eddie turned slightly, pointing subtly at a bald guy with suspenders, "He's my boss, maybe—"

"Yeah, no." Richie interrupted, pulling him a little to the side.

"He's—"

Richie gave him a look, "Seriously?"

"Whatever," Eddie grumbled, "*You* fucking choose."

"We should just go get a drink," then, "What do you think the food it's gonna be?"

Eddie sneaked a look past Richie at a circle full of women, fidgeting awkwardly as he accidentally caught someone's eye. "No clue. God, I fucking hate parties."

"No shit," Richie told him. "This is fucking painful, just, where's the bar?"

"—There, I think," Eddie pointed, and Richie grabbed his arm to steer him in that direction but they had barely gotten half a step in before someone called Eddie's name in a nasal voice that had Eddie cringing.

They turned around, matching smiles glued onto their faces. Richie half-heartedly hoped they didn't look manic, but their chances were slim.

"Mr. Abbott," Eddie said, too loudly, "Nice to see you."

The man smiled at him, eyes sliding down to where Richie's hand was still wrapped around Eddie's bicep, "Kaspbrak. Didn't know you were married,"

Richie let go, eyes going wide. Eddie swallowed awkwardly, a strangled laugh jumping out of his mouth, "Uh—"

"Man," another voice from their right interrupted, and all three of them turned to look at the tall, blonde guy, who kind of looked like he spent his free time bench pressing trucks, "Aren't you Richie Tozier? The comedian?"

The guy shot out a hand, and Richie, whose palms were sweating fucking buckets, accepted. The guy frowned, glancing down minutely, and Richie winced internally.

"Yep, that's me," he told him before pointing sideways at Eddie, "And this is Eddie."

"Kaspbrak," Eddie clarified, and neither of them gave any other sort of information at all, which made things decidedly weird for all of the five seconds it took for the guy to look between them curiously.

"Luke Weaver," he said, nodding. Richie nodded back, feeling almost as though he was speaking in code. He glanced at Eddie, who was looking a bit too flushed,

"So, Richard, is it?" Abbott said, and Luke seemed amused, Richie noticed. Just amused enough that he looked like a straight fucking asshole.

Richie offered Abbott his most charming smile, ignoring Eddie's *what the fuck* face, "That would be my name, yes,"

"Mr. Weaver says you're a comedian?" He asked, effortlessly pulling the freaking Luke guy into conversation, and somehow managing for the word comedian to sound more or less as if he was talking about the fucking plague.

Richie wasn't too sure what to make of either of them yet, other than that they were obviously *douchebags*, but, beside him, Eddie was fidgeting so much that Richie almost grabbed his arm again.

"He is," Eddie answered before Richie could, voice sounding anything but normal. "He—uh, does stand-up, you know?"

"I do," Richie agreed, shifting a little closer to Eddie. He nudged their feet together silently, and Eddie relaxed minisculely as Abbott appraised them with quirked eyebrows and Luke grinned.

Finally, Abbott smiled, "Kaspbrak married a comedian, huh. Who would've thought."

Richie frowned at the obvious diss, even as Eddie made a weird choking noise beside him,

"We're not—" Eddie started, words drown out by Richie's too loud statement of,

"Ed's a fucking riot," he said, "Funniest dude ever, and I'd know."

Luke snorted, so Richie squinted at him. Abbott tilted his head to the side, giving Richie a considering look.

"I meant no harm to your husband," Abbot said, and Richie figured it was a pretty fucking bold move to call attention to the fact that he absolutely *had*, but he wasn't about to just let shit slide.

Eddie turned to stare at Richie with an incredulous look that Richie purposefully ignored in favor of staring Abbott down.

"I didn't assume you had," Richie lied, giving him a facetious grin. He bumped his shoulder lightly against Eddie's, who startled, then offered Luke the same smile. "So, who are you guys again? Don't think I've heard of you before."

Abbott stop smiling, shooting Eddie a look before blinking at Richie, "I'm a VP at the company,"

"Congratulations," Richie deadpanned, before deciding to just grab Eddie's hand and make a run for it, "Also, goodbye."

He pulled a spluttering Eddie toward the bar, their sweaty palms sticking together grossly, but Eddie didn't pull away, so neither did Richie. He gestured at the barman for a club soda and a beer, pulling the beer to him and sliding the soda toward Eddie as soon as they hit the counter. The barman quirked an eyebrow, and Richie shrugged.

"What's the deal with the assholes?" He asked Eddie, taking a swig of his beer and leaning hard against the counter.

Eddie downed the whole thing in one endless gulp before sighing, "Abbott's a fucking VP at the company,"

"—So I've heard,"

"He's about to be sent off though because he keeps fucking shit up and my boss has had enough."

Richie stared at him, putting two and two together. "Holy *fuck*, you're making VP?"

"I don't *know*," Eddie told him. "I've been there for like twenty fucking seconds. I have the experience though, so who the fuck knows. Maybe, I was gonna tell you, but—"

"No, it's—" said Richie, "It's fine. Don't, uh, jinx it or whatever. *Shit*."

"That's the future, I guess." Eddie commented, and Richie blinked at him. "It's so fucking weird. Like, all this shit that never happened before, I was so fucking stuck. Now everything's moving, and it's just—"

"The rest of our lives?" Richie guessed, "Terrifying."

"Did you use to think about the future? Before?"

Before Derry went unsaid, and Richie rubbed his palm across his face, "Not really. I didn't realize it was weird at the time, though."

"Fuck," Eddie sighed, "So, the rest of our lives."

"And you're making VP, wow. You deserve it."

Eddie rolled his eyes, "How would *you* know? Because I'm so fucking great?"

"Nah, you're still the most infuriating motherfucker I've ever met," Richie answered, not noticing his words or how Eddie froze on the spot, his eyes widening, "But if anyone knows shit about risks, it's probably you."

Eddie stared at him, mouth agape, an obvious flush heating up his cheeks. He looked so dumbstruck that Richie scoffed at him,

"Fuck off, it's not that big of a compliment."

"That's not—" Eddie said, "Did you just—"

Richie blinked at him. "You're being fucking weird, C-3PO. What crashed your system?"

Eddie looked at him, his eyes tracking every inch of Richie's face, down to his neck, passing by his shoulders and stopping at his hands. He looked back up, glancing first at Richie's lips then at his eyes. "We should go."

"What?" Richie croaked.

"We're leaving."

"We've been here for ten minutes."

Eddie checked his watch. "It's been thirty. And we're leaving."

"What the fuck?" Richie asked, feeling too warm under his collar and weirdly out of sorts. "What just happened?"

"Richie—" Eddie told him, so Richie pulled himself up and followed him out.

Richie trekked awkwardly behind Eddie as he power walked across the parking lot, seeming hyper fucking focused in a way that made Richie's stomach clench weirdly and his breath come out in short embarrassing puffs.

Eddie stopped by the car and tapped his feet against the floor impatiently until Richie unlocked it. Richie moved easily behind the steering wheel and side-eyed Eddie's purposeful look and the twitch in his nose, not at all following—whatever the shit had happened between one thing and the next had given Richie enough of a whiplash that he was left to sneak looks at the side of Eddie's face and scramble for possible reasonings for Eddie's cryptic fucking behavior.

Eddie turned to him, giving him another eyeroll. "Will you fucking drive already?"

"Are you in a hurry or something?" Richie asked, dumbfounded.

"Yes." Eddie told him, "Now go."

So Richie shut his mouth and did, careening out the parking lot and onto the street obnoxiously fast. He lifted a hand to turn on the radio, but Eddie slapped his fingers away.

"Jesus," Richie muttered, but Eddie didn't budge, so he drove fast, confused about Eddie's lack of *safety first* yapping, and faster still until they reached a huge fucking line of cars along the freeway, and Eddie groaned loud enough that Richie startled.

"Are you *fucking kidding me*?" Eddie grumbled, "Why the shit is there *traffic* right now? What time is it?"

Richie glanced at him, "Dude, there's probably been an accident."

"For fuck's sake."

"Okay," Richie told him. "What's going on? Do you need to take a shit or something?"

"I—" Eddie turned to him, incredulous. "No, Richard, I do not need to *take a shit*, what the fuck."

"I don't know!" Richie exclaimed, "You're being weird."

Eddie blinked, "Oh my god."

"What?"

"Nothing." Eddie told him, "Just—we're not doing this today then, great."

Richie shook his head, "Doing *what*?"

"Just. Nothing, Richie. Turn on the fucking radio," he said, so Richie did, Creed's *Higher* bursting out of the speakers, "Oh, I fucking *hate* this song."

Chapter End Notes

well,

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

as you might have noticed, there's been a rating change up there, so if you're bothered/offended/generally off-put by (for now) lightly sexual content maybe, uh, steer clear? we're not there just yet, so you should probably be fine. but just in case!

anyway, folks! we have arrived! (also, like, general suggestion: maybe listen to *intro* by m83 while reading this chapter. i'm a cliché.)

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

That night they got home in silence, brushed their teeth in silence, standing next to each other in pajamas while Richie reached for Eddie's eyes on the mirror and Eddie avoided his like the plague. The next morning, they woke up in silence and remained in fucking silence for the rest of the day, Eddie's sentences clipped and awkward every time Richie tried to pull him into some semblance of conversation. He watched Richie when he thought Richie wasn't looking, his brows creased, and Richie didn't know what to say, so he didn't say anything at all.

—

On Wednesday, Richie paced around the house again, thinking about Eddie, and his constant frowning, picking up his things and dusting the living room because he knew Eddie didn't have the time to do it anymore. He wrote a few lines, attempts at joking that fell flat and weird when he'd tried them out loud. He went out for coffee, watched couples walk around the street with intertwined fingers and matching smiles, thought about Eddie, had more coffee, wrote more shitty fucking jokes, called a bunch of people, looked at venue prices, looked at dates, thought of Eddie, paced around the room.

Eddie got home – he was smiling, so Richie smiled back, and Eddie flicked water at him playfully when he washed the dishes after dinner.

—

On Thursday, Eddie brushed his hand against the small of Richie's back before leaving for work, and Richie's heart nearly leaped up his throat and out of his mouth. He made food, thought of Eddie, worked on his show, called more people, left to go see Bill and hear him babble endlessly about his novel, dodged every one of Bill's questions, thought about Eddie, tried some coffee at a new bakery, thought about Eddie, went back home and thought about Eddie, called Bev, called Mike, called Ben, turned off his cellphone, thought about Eddie. He ordered takeout and watched old Dana Carvey interviews, still thinking about Eddie.

Eddie got home later than usual, looking tired and worn out, but he smiled at Richie nonetheless, plopping down next to him on the couch, his socks stained dark with sweat and the black tinge of the inside of his work shoes, and Richie watched Eddie's toes flex and let his gaze wander up his legs and up, up, up until he blinked at Eddie's closed eyes and relaxed shoulders. He nudged him with an elbow, "Do you want some dinner?"

Eddie said yes.

—

On Friday, Richie woke up to the press of Eddie's body warm against his, the sound of his grumbling in response to the screeching sound of the alarm. Every centimeter of Eddie's body touched his under the covers, the fabric of their pajamas rustling against one another until Eddie pushed him back and crawled out of the bed. Eddie went to work, and Richie cleaned the kitchen, blinked at the microwave clock for five minutes, tried to work on his projects only to find that the only thing he could think of was Eddie. He called Bill again, annoyed him into going out for coffee, heard Bill talk about maybe getting back to his wife, offered shitty advice, dodged his questions. He ate three donuts and drank two blistering cups of coffee, thinking about Eddie's arms and his socks and his legs, and the warmth of his breath against the side of Richie's face in the morning. He said goodbye to Bill, stopped by Whole Foods on his way home, wandered around the isles watching everyone else's day, reached for cereal he fucking hated but knew Eddie loved, stared at the three-for-one deal on Eddie's favorite antibacterial wipes that he insisted were pointless, bought fucking 12 of them anyway.

He got home, left the groceries on top of the counter, took a shower, brushed his teeth, had a snack, brushed his teeth again, thought about Eddie, waited on bated breath to hear the jiggling of his keys.

Eddie got home, his tie askew and hair somehow even worse, and Richie blinked at him, standing up from the couch to follow him into the kitchen, "Dude, are you okay?"

"Yeah, just," Eddie sighed, "Shitty day, I guess. What's all this?"

He pointed at the groceries, moved toward the counter to ruffle through their eco bags with a curious look, and Richie watched him, leaning with his back against the fridge, "I did groceries today, we were running out of shit,"

"Thanks," Eddie told him, and Richie saw his eyebrows quirk at the sight of all of the twelve fucking packs of antibacterial wipes that Richie had bought on a whim. He looked up at him, one of the packs in hand, so Richie shrugged,

"It was a three-for-one deal,"

"So you bought—" He counted, "Twelve?"

Richie felt himself blush, watching as Eddie set the pack down on the counter, "It was a good deal,"

Eddie stared, “Have you brushed your teeth today?”

“Uh, yeah?” Richie frowned, “Like three fucking—”

He didn’t get to finish. His words died in his mouth, mid-sentence as Eddie rushed forward and kissed him, pushing him flat against the fridge, pressing their bodies together, his hands framing Richie’s face, their noses bumping, his lips sliding against Richie’s, hungry and curious all at once.

Richie’s hand jumped up to curl around Eddie’s waist, to pull him impossibly closer and closer and closer, the fabric of his suit jacket bunching up noisily under his Richie’s fingers. He kissed back as though gasping for breath, every second between the then and the now falling together as Eddie groaned into his mouth and slid his hands down Richie’s shoulders, touching his arms and his wrists until Richie was just lightheaded enough to have to pull away.

They stared at each other, Eddie’s lips wet and red, and Richie felt at once thirteen, and twenty-seven, thirty-one and thirty-eight and forty-one, he felt every minute he spent thinking of Eddie either too much or not at all, thought about remembering the lack of him even though he had forgotten, thought of seeing him back for the first time and the slick of his blood as it had soaked through his shirt and down Richie’s elbows. He thought about Eddie, walking into his house with too many bags, the sprawling of his shirts and his comics and *him*, filling up every empty space in Richie’s life, warming the space next to him and sharing his breath in the dark.

He kissed him again, leaning forward too fast, and Eddie gentled his hands around Richie’s back, licked into his mouth, eager and exploring, pushed himself flush against Richie until Richie pushed back and back and back until Eddie’s back hit the edge of the counter and Richie’s hands closed around his thighs to help him up.

Richie shifted into the space between Eddie’s legs, leaning up to bridge the distance. His hands tightened around Eddie’s legs, and Eddie groaned into his mouth and louder still when Richie pulled his lips away to sneak a hand up to Eddie’s tie, pulling it undone, travelling down to the buttons of Eddie’s light blue shirt.

Eddie helped, their fingers bumping into each other along the way, and he tried to maneuver out of his suit jacket but Richie was too close and had to move back not to get elbowed in the face. Disorganized, with panting breaths and shaking hands, they worked together to pull Eddie’s clothes out of him and then he was left there, perched up on the counter shirtless and flushed, the most beautiful sight Richie had ever laid eyes on even with the dark bags under his eyes and the huge scar on the center of his chest.

Richie traced its lines with the tips of his fingers, and Eddie shivered, leaning back slightly so Richie had more space for movement, to follow the path of his hands with his lips, first on Eddie’s shoulders, then down his chest. Richie felt overly warm, and whenever he’d thought of this he’d thought of something hazy but instead every second of it stood too sharp, unbelievably real as Eddie muttered a word Richie couldn’t decipher and wasn’t willing to try, following the path of hair down to Eddie’s navel, pressing his hands against his thighs and slightly up.

With a sigh, Eddie threaded his fingers through Richie's hair, pulling it softly. His other hand touched Richie's glasses, and Richie shook his head,

"I want to see," he told Eddie, "I've only been waiting for this for—"

Eddie exhaled, his foot kicking Richie's side, "What took you so fucking long then?"

Richie scoffed, poking a finger into Eddie's stomach before moving swiftly to unbutton Eddie's pants. He did, hands shaking, but Eddie curled his fingers around Richie's before he could do anything else,

"We shouldn't—" Eddie said, and Richie froze for a second until Eddie pushed him back and jumped down from the counter, "We have a bed."

Richie stared at him, "We do."

"Right," Eddie said, raising his eyebrows, so Richie slid closer to him, pulling him in before Eddie stopped him again with both of his hands planted on Richie's chest. "So let's fucking *hurry up* and go there."

They did, stumbling out of the kitchen and past the living room, Richie's front glued to Eddie's back and his hands all over the place, curving around his waist and his stomach and his shoulders and his arms, their legs bumping together as Eddie walked too fast and Richie too slow only for Richie to quicken his pace and Eddie to trip over Richie's feet. They made to the room unscathed, but barely, and soon enough Eddie had turned around and pushed Richie down, straddling his lap with a wide-eyed look on his face.

"Have you," Richie started, pausing distractedly to lean up and kiss the side of Eddie's face, "Have you done this before?"

"I'm 40," Eddie told him, "I was *married*,"

Richie dragged his lips down to Eddie's jaw, "That's not what I mean,"

"I know what you meant," Eddie sighed, "And the answer is no."

"Never?" Richie asked again, his hands pulling Eddie more firmly against him.

Eddie groaned, low and hoarse, "It wouldn't have made a fucking difference, anyway."

"No?" Richie said, "Why's that?"

On top of him, Eddie paused, pushing his hand down Richie's chest so he was lying down, looking up at him through heavy lids, every exhale louder than the first,

"Because it wouldn't have been you."

okay, as you might have guessed, we're traveling straight into fucking territory next chapter (probably not like, *anal*, but you know what i mean) so i'll be updating the rating when the time comes! i'll try not to add anything else, though, so if you're not into that you won't necessarily miss anything by skipping it. yeah...
anyway.....

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

okay, fellas! here i present you: the fucking! nothing that important happens here (other than the sex), so feel free to skip it if it's not your thing. also, i've changed the rating up to explicit even though no quote unquote *cocks* or quote unquote *dicks* were mentioned here at all. just to, you know, be on the safe side. if it's not explicit enough for you, please keep an eye out for the future!

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

The freckles on Eddie's thighs looked better from up close, Richie decided, hands following the path of his eyes, from Eddie's bony knees to the strain in his underwear, to which Richie pressed his palms eagerly, inhaling sharply when Eddie groaned. He looked good, biting his lips, chest heaving, his hands fiddling with the waistline of Richie's sweatpants, trying to push them down but somehow not reaching low enough. Richie shifted slightly, dragging his hands up to Eddie's navel, to his chest, up to his shoulders then down his arms until he caught hold of Eddie's wrists and pinned them against the mattress.

Thighs against the back of Eddie's, he pressed forward insistently, leaning in to lick at the juncture of Eddie's neck, and Eddie's little gasping sounds were as good as music, Richie's favorite fucking song, echoing between them on a loop that had Richie's vision swimming. Eddie's hands were still trying to push Richie's pants down, though his efforts were frequently interrupted by the urge to just run his hands up Richie's back and pull him closer to him.

"You should—" Eddie started, groaning as Richie ground down against him, "Can you take off your pants?"

Richie nodded, biting Eddie's earlobe, "Yeah, okay."

Eddie nodded, too, eyes closed when Richie glanced sideways at his face. Richie wanted to touch him all over, *had* wanted, for longer than he'd wanted anything else ever, and the impulse to keep pressing his lips to any inch of skin available severely overrun any other thought, until Eddie's feet kicked down against his ass, and he sighed impatiently, "Rich—"

Richie pulled away from him, "Hold your fucking horses, dude,"

And Eddie leaned up on his elbows, following Richie's movements so he could bite at Richie's lips.

He paused, face inches away from Richie's, "Hurry the fuck up,"

"Fine," Richie told him, sitting back to undo the knot on his sweatpants and pull them down. He pushed them down to his knees, offering Eddie a grin before leaning back into him.

Eddie stopped him, "Are we fucking grown-ups or what? Take your pants off, come on."

"They're off," Richie said, gesturing down, "What more do you want?"

"Take a fucking guess," Eddie rolled his eyes, plopping back down against the mattress and staring at Richie until he had the good sense of standing up from the bed and stepping all the way out of his pants, "Aren't you forgetting something?"

"God—" Richie started, pausing as Eddie held his breath when his fingers touched the waistband of his underwear. He smiled, raising his eyebrows, "Is there something else, Kaspbrak?"

"You are such a fucking asshole," Eddie told him, and Richie watched as he rubbed a hand down against himself, exhaling loudly, "Just—come *on*."

Richie didn't move, "Come on what,"

"On *me*, dipshit," Eddie said, "Take off your pants and fuck me already,"

Tilting his head, Richie snorted, "Fair enough."

—

"Holy *fuck*," Eddie gasped against the back of his arm, arching his back off the bed as Richie twisted two of his fingers inside him just right, "That's—"

Richie panted warmly over Eddie's hip, gazing up at his flushed chest and slack mouth, at his sharp inhales every time Richie moved his fingers. Richie felt super fucking overwhelmed, in all truth, strangely dizzy, horny enough that he felt more or less like he could come from the sight of Eddie's closed eyes and shiny lips alone. He pressed open-mouthed kisses along the length of his thighs and Eddie slurred quiet, blissed out little sounds that kept Richie so distracted he forgot to move for a second, until Eddie whined high in his throat and shook his leg at him,

"Sorry, do you fucking have somewhere to be right now?" Eddie bitched, "Will you just—"

"I'm here," Richie told him, twisting his fingers again, focusing on the warmth of him, watching as Eddie's lips twitched and his chest heaved, "I'm right fucking here, see,"

Eddie nodded, biting his lip, his hips twitching up and down to the rhythm of Richie's hands, "You should fuck me,"

"Are you—"

"*Now*," Eddie snapped, hands coming down to pull at Richie's hair. "Hurry,"

“You are *so* fucking bossy,” Richie told him, dragging his fingers out of Eddie to reach over him and ruffle through his bedside table. He made a celebratory little noise when he found condoms, to which Eddie rolled his eyes, only to frown when he saw the expiration date, which had long since passed, “Uh—”

“No,” Eddie groaned, “No, no, no, don’t fucking tell me—”

Richie winced, “I mean, we could—”

“I’m not letting you—” Eddie started.

“Okay, let’s—”

“—Shut up, *shut up*.”

Richie waited, expired condom in hand, painfully hard, watching as Eddie rubbed a palm down his face, “Eddie?”

“Fuck it. Just—fucking fuck it,” Eddie told him, leaning up on his elbows again and pulling Richie down against him suddenly, “We’re doing this.”

“We are?”

“We fucking are,” Eddie kissed Richie hard, hands all over him, up the back of his arms, around his thighs, down his ass, “Fuck me, come on.”

Richie did, fingers trembling, pawing at Eddie desperately, taking hold of himself and sinking in, feeling Eddie arch into him and pant against the side of his face, warm and vaguely wet. Richie closed his eyes, heard himself groan loudly, too loud, heard Eddie say his name at least three times in a row, his lips dragging against Richie’s jaw.

Richie felt like a live wire, wishing he had more hands to spread all over Eddie, wishing he could press his lips everywhere at once, to the crease of his brow and the slope of his nose and the scar on his cheek. To each of his fingers, too, to every knuckle and bone, he wanted so much he felt electric, hot from the top of his head to his ankles where they bumped into Eddie’s, and he moved forward and back in a rhythm that Eddie twisted and gasped to, shaking away in Richie’s arms and grasping at his hands.

“Is that good?” Richie gasped into Eddie’s lips, and Eddie nodded, so Richie kissed his chin, the tip of his nose, his cheeks.

“It really fucking is,” Eddie breathed, “So, so fucking good.”

—

Peace and quiet lasted around three full minutes before Eddie started bitching about fluids, complaining about Richie’s sweaty front sticking to his, about the crusting come on his pubes, about Richie breathing too hotly against him. Not to mention the whole rest of it.

“Wow,” Eddie mused, “This is so fucking unsanitary,”

Richie pushed himself more firmly over him, “Go fucking shower then.”

“I should, you’re lucky you’re not the one with fucking come leaking out of your—”

“—Dude,” Richie poked him, “Also, maybe next time.”

Eddie raised his eyebrows, “Yeah?”

“Obviously,” Richie said, tucking his face against Eddie’s throat and breathing deeply, “Uh, constructive criticism? You kind of smell,”

“Fuck off,” Eddie said, “Your mom fucking smells,”

“I wouldn’t know,” then, “*Your mom*, however—”

“I’ll kick you in the balls,” Eddie threatened, so Richie leaned up for a kiss.

Eddie kissed back, smiling into it softly until Richie pulled back with a groan.

“Yeah, you were right, we’re showering now.”

Chapter End Notes

we're near the end and i am *sad* about it.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

and there we have it!

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

Eddie was staring at him.

Richie, dressed in pajamas, sipped his coffee and pretended he was none the fucking wiser about Eddie's eyes being glued to the side of his face. He went about his morning, puttering around the house, answering emails, pretending he didn't notice Eddie staring at him. He took one of his long baths, laughed at fall compilations on his phone while Eddie sat on the floor organizing his collection of comics, ignored Eddie staring at him.

He ignored it, until he didn't.

"Did you lose something?" He asked, and Eddie rolled his eyes.

He kept staring at him, though, very openly. Richie sighed, so Eddie said, "I'm in love with you."

"Oh," Richie said, inarticulate as shit.

Eddie stared some more, "That's—don't you have anything else to contribute with?"

"Sorry, shit—you caught me off guard."

"By being *in love with you*?" Eddie shook his head, "It's been fucking thirty five years, asshole, and last night—"

Richie raised his hands, "Don't have a fucking conniption, Eds—"

"—I swear to god—"

"I love you," Richie stopped him, "Obviously I'm fucking in love with you too, the whole bells and shitwhistles and what not."

"And you couldn't have led with that?"

"I wasn't expecting you to just *blurt it out* like that, for fuck's sake."

Pinching the bridge of his nose, Eddie said, "Wow. Okay, anything else you think of saying?"

"Uh," Richie paused, "I'm pretty fucking sure you're the love of my life?"

Eddie groaned.

—

Richie burst into the house like a mad man, toeing off his shoes and wrangling out of his wet jacket, "Eduardo!"

He strode to the living room while struggling out of his wet jeans one-handed, his other hand busy holding on to the cause of his giddiness. Eddie glanced up at him from where he was sat on the couch, so Richie dropped the bag down on the center table in front of him and offered Eddie his most manic grin.

"You will not fucking believe this," Richie stated, so Eddie reached for the bag, brows raised, and Richie threw his wet pants to the side before looking down at Eddie's wide-eyed smile.

"Holy shit," he said, peering down at Whiz Comics #2, "You fucking found it."

Richie nodded, "I did."

"*Where?*"

"You won't believe me," Richie warned, but he continued, "A fucking street vendor, can you believe it? Like, this random guy I had never fucking seen before? He had on this funky little hat? Anyway, he asked me about the time and I stopped to tell him about it, and when I glanced down, there it was."

"You're shitting me,"

"I'm *not*."

Eddie grinned at him, flipping through the issue carefully, "I *fucking* love you, Tozier."

—

"I'm gonna shit my pants," Richie announced to the room at large. So pretty much just to Eddie, and the alarming number of cups leftover from the gallon of coffee he'd had that morning. "That's it—just, shit everywhere."

Eddie snorted, "It's going to be fine, Rich,"

"I am *so* fucked," said Richie, resting his face against the fridge door and sighing. He glanced at the microwave clock. Three hours, three fucking hours and he'd be on *air*. "I am royally fucking fucked."

"They're going to love you," Eddie assured him, so Richie lifted his head to stare at him. "You're impossible not to like."

"Really?"

"Well, no, you're a fucking asshole," Eddie pointed out, "But you're funny."

Richie raised his eyebrows, “Thanks, Ed.”

“No problem,” then, “Is this what you’re wearing, by the way?”

“It’s *radio*,” Richie glanced down at his patterned shirt, “And I fucking like this shirt.”

Eddie shrugged, “You’re right—”

“Thanks,”

“—And it totally fucking adds to the clown look.”

—

Eddie was fucking wasted. Just epically fucking drunk, handsy and loud and sticking to Richie’s back like gum to the bottom of a shoe. He was also a fucking vice-president, though, so Richie decided to cut him some slack, pulling his arms more firmly around him. Eddie heaved a sigh against Richie’s back, and Richie snorted.

“You’re fucking drunk,” he pointed out.

Eddie nodded against his back, “I am.”

“You’re cute,” Richie told him.

“I *am*,” Eddie slurred, “I have a job. *You* have a job! We have great fucking jobs, and what else? We’re also—”

“—In love?”

“—*Alive*,” he continued, words sliding into each other to the point of barely even sounding like words, “Fuck that fucking clown, man. Fuck Pennywise, fuck his little dance, fuck his annoying fucking voice. We fucking made it.”

“We definitely did,”

“Why am I still thinking of that fucking clown? *Fuck* that stupid fucking clown.”

Richie smiled, “Yeah, fuck him.”

“Fuck him for—for killing Stan, you know,” he heaved, “Stan would’ve, he would’ve liked this. Us, I bet he would’ve.”

“Maybe he still does,” Richie told him softly, running his palms down Eddie’s arms. “Maybe he can--see us, you know”

Eddie paused, burping against Richie’s back before continuing, “Do you believe that? Rich, are you fucking religious? Is that—did you grow up to be. Wait, I should know this.”

“Ed,” Richie laughed, wincing when Eddie burped again.

“It’s fucking important to know this shit about your *partner*.” Eddie told him. “It’s so fucking gay to call you partner, too, I *love* that. Anyway, are you religious? Do you go to church? What if we get *married*?”

Richie snorted, “You asking me to marry you, Eds?”

“I am *not*,” Eddie slurred again, sighing, “Because *you’re* gonna fucking ask *me*.”

“Am I?”

“*Obviously*,” he giggled, a whole fucking mess and a half, so Richie turned in his arms, nudging their noses together before pulling back to stare at him.

“When?”

“Just—whenever,” Eddie said, “We have like, the whole fucking rest of our lives.”

—

Richie would be hard-pressed to admit it, but Eddie was right. They really fucking did have the rest of their lives.

Chapter End Notes

okay, friends, we have officially reached the end of the ride. there's still an epilogue to be posted, but their trajectory itself is mostly done.

i had the time of my life writing this story, and i'm *so happy* that it got as much love as it did. thank you to everyone who has left kudos and comments and contributed to the general happy vibe of this fic. i hope you've all enjoyed it as much as i have.

because i love this story so much, i'm most likely having it as an official "verse" around here, so if there's anything you'd like to see (like, anything from smutty prompts to just general life shenanigans), drop a request in the comments or on tumblr (i'm @unhawkeye there) and i'll write it.

anyway! 🧡 thanks again!

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

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

Eddie had been right. There were fucking hedge walls.

He saw them just as Richie did, and they shared a look that Bev intercepted easily, elbowing Eddie on the sternum.

"Not a fucking word, Kaspbrak," she said, so Eddie snorted, pulling her into a hug and kissing the side of her face.

She pushed him away, and Eddie laughed. "It looks very nice, Bev."

"Fuck off," Bev told him, rolling her eyes at him.

She looked beautiful, the creamy off-white of her dress making her look almost as a 19th century portrait. Her red hair, expertly braided, looked exceptionally bright under the sunset, and Eddie loved her. He watched her turn away from him to mutter something to Richie that he couldn't hear, and his eyes fell to Richie effortlessly, as they always did, and he smiled at his quirked brows. He looked nice, too, his hair a goddamned mess, strawberry icing sticking to his bottom lip, glasses obviously a little dirty.

Bev pressed a kiss to the top of Richie's head and left, the hem of her dress turning brown as she walked across the garden to glue herself to Ben's side. His smile was pretty fucking emotional when he turned to look at her, and Eddie sighed, glancing up when Richie sat down next to him.

"What are you thinking about?" Richie asked, "You look kind of—"

"What?"

"Like an idiot?" Richie concluded, but he dragged his chair closer to Eddie's so he could press their thighs together, "What's up?"

Eddie gave him a look, "Nothing's up. Just—Bev looks really happy."

"So does Ben," Richie said, "Can you believe he kept that old fucking yearbook page for 27 years?"

"Yeah," Eddie blinked, "Who the shit would do something that?"

Richie narrowed his eyes at him, looking less than amused when Eddie grinned, "Laugh it up, jackass. I'm glad you find my pining amusing."

"Your *pinning*?" Eddie laughed, "What the fuck is this? A Victorian novel?"

"Yes, Eduardo," Richie told him, doing one of his voices. In a shitty English accent, he added, "I pined for you, oh, how I longed for you, my beloved—"

"Fuck *off*," Eddie interrupted, shoving at him.

Richie wiggled his eyebrows before leaning in for a kiss, which Eddie accepted with a put-upon sigh.

He pulled away, humming, "Why do you taste like chicken?"

Eddie groaned, "Fucking *guess*, idiot."

"Dude," Richie said, "Where did you find it? I thought for sure they were finished."

"I may or may not have stolen the last ones from Mike's plate."

Richie stared at him, "You're a fucking mastermind."

"Thanks," Eddie said, standing up and pulling Richie along by the hand, "I saw Bill getting some too, we should move in on his."

And they tried, pausing hand in hand next to Bill's plate.

"Touch my ch-chicken and I'll fucking kill you, Richie," Bill yelled on his way back from the bathroom, way too fucking loudly.

From across the garden, Bev cackled, and Richie made a run for it, chicken canapes in hand and Eddie hot on his trail.

"Richie, come the fuh-fuck on," said Bill, but Richie was too busy laughing to pay him any mind.

Chapter End Notes

that's officially all she wrote, folks!

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