

They found *Emma's* almost completely by accident.

Isaiah and Lucas had been on their way to the local Starbucks to do some work when the rain started. Working in their flat was like some sort of slow torture; their hyperactive brains distracting them from even attempting when they were in the same room as their consoles. Besides, Starbucks was warm, and the coffee was decent, if overpriced, and the wifi was better than at their dorm, so...

They weren't even halfway there yet, and being the sensible students they were, they'd forgotten to pack anything that even resembled a raincoat. This wasn't rain that you could ignore either, like the light splattering of springtime showers. No, this was the type of rain that promised thunderstorms and flooding.

Spotting a nearby awning, Isaiah pulls Lucas under it, which coincidentally turns out to be the entrance to some sort of cafe. The word *Emma's* is elegantly inscribed in the glass on the door, above a sign that proclaimed their free wifi. Isaiah and Lucas exchange glances - *dude, are you thinking what I'm thinking? Duh, bro, of course I'm thinking what you're thinking* - then, taking it as a sign from above, they stumble inside before they, like. Drown, or something.

The cafe is instantly, blessedly warm. The smell of coffee wafts through the air, warming Isaiah's soul to its core. Sighing with content, they instinctively scope out the best seats with power sockets nearby and went to claim it as their own. The cafe has a sort of homey, mismatched feel to it, the tables and chairs all different, but somehow matching. Squishy armchairs are dotted around the room, and a crackling fireplace sits opposite the counter.

Isaiah sends Lucas a pleading glance, his eyes beseeching him to say yes.

"No," Lucas says sternly, before glancing around and sighing. "Okay, okay. Maybe. But let's see how their coffee is first, before we make any commitments,"

"Our coffee is brilliant," a scary-intense looking brunette calls from behind the counter. Her name tag reads 'ANGEL' in neat block letters, with a golden halo drawn at an angle on top. Isaiah wishes that it was her real name.

She's simultaneously the most beautiful and the scariest person Isaiah's ever seen - although the latter could be a cause of the former. Her hair and eyes are mere shades darker than her bronze skin, giving her the appearance of a monochrome statue. If he was interested in girls, Isaiah would probably be too intimidated to talk to her - as he observes in Lucas, who is, in fact, interested enough for the both of them. He watches his friend flush a blotchy red, the colour spreading down his neck, his Adam's apple bobbing as he tries to form coherent syllables.

"What would you recommend?" Isaiah asks, taking pity on Lucas' inability to speak actual human words.

"Well that really depends on what you're here for," the girl smiles, and pulls two mugs out from under the counter. The mugs, like the rest of the decor, don't match, but are disarmingly charming. One of them has all the Avenger's logos on it, and the other bears a turtle wearing a hat. Isaiah falls a little bit in love, and when he turns to Lucas, he can practically see the shackles tying him to Starbucks splintering. "Do you actually want coffee, or did you prefer tea?"

The coffee, it turns out, is brilliant. Better than Starbucks could ever dream of. The wifi is fast, and they don't have to pay for it, and when he tries one of the many slices in the cabinet, Isaiah legitimately thinks that it could be the best thing he's ever eaten in his entire life.

It kind of just makes sense that they stay, after that.

Isaiah met Lucas when they were both in year nine. From his primary school, there were exactly eleven other students who were going to the same college as him. One of those students was his friend. On their first day of college, however, his friend promptly ditched him to go and bother his older brother - such was the way of the thirteen-year-old.

He spent much of the first few weeks of college alone, sketching in his form class when bored. Then, one such time, when he was sketching a particularly detailed portrait of Captain America, another boy plopped down beside him.

"That's really good," the other boy had said matter of factly.

"Thanks, it's what I'm gonna do when I'm older," Isaiah blurted with all the confidence of his age.

"That's awesome! I think I might be a lawyer maybe, or a police officer, but I don't really know for sure. My name's Lucas, what's yours?" Lucas responded with an easy grin.

"Isaiah," he'd said, and the rest, as they say, was history.

Isaiah had never really had such a close friend before - but that was okay. He thought that perhaps he was just waiting for Lucas to turn up.

It turns out that the barrister's name is actually Cara. She's only a year older than Isaiah and Lucas, and goes to the local uni, and Isaiah thinks that she might be the coolest person he's ever met.

There's no one else working in the cafe that they can see, and it is pretty dead - between the wind threatening to blow small children away, and the rain tipping down outside, they reckon that anyone with half a brain would be inside keeping warm.

Isaiah and Lucas pretend not to watch her as she moves around making a drink for herself. Watching people without really watching them is a talent of Isaiah's - as an artist, he's picked up some pretty weird skills - so it isn't a surprise to see her walking over to their table.

"Do you guys mind if I sit with you for a while? This shift is always pretty dead, and on a day like today..." she collapses into a chair at their table.

"Go ahead," Isaiah smiles.

Lucas, once again, seems to have gone mute, which actually is probably a good thing. If he could talk, he'd probably say something stupid and scare her off so. Cara seems like an easy person to talk to though, so Isaiah's reasonably certain that he can handle this conversation.

And - yeah, he was right. Cara's awesome, and they quickly bond over their shared love for art. He finds out that Cara's only studying to be a Veterinarian because her parents wouldn't let her get a massive student loan for something she didn't really need a degree for, which - fair point, actually.

"Still - these are really good. You're talented," Cara said, flipping through Isaiah's sketchbook.

"Thanks," Isaiah smiles. "Oh! That one's my favourite," he stops the page from turning.

The image is of Isaiah and Lucas, copied from a photograph. In it, they're both laughing, heads tilted up, smiles evident on both their faces. Isaiah had drawn it just before he'd come out to Lucas, so he'd always have something to remember their friendship by in case things went sour.

"Of course it is," Lucas mutters from his seat.

He keeps on shooting Isaiah incredulous looks like - *dude how did we trick this freaking supermodel of a girl into thinking we're cool?* Isaiah has no idea, but he's not complaining.

By the time they leave, Cara has well and truly worked her way into their lives. Lucas had managed to actually contribute a sufficient amount to the conversation, without accidentally offending anyone. Cara makes them promise to come back before she lets them leave, and - it's nice, having someone that isn't them wanting them to come back. Isaiah thinks that they might just have found somewhere that they could return to after anything.

Well. A place that isn't each other.

So the thing about *Emma's* is that everyone who works there seems to be unfairly attractive. They've come up with a theory that they only hire perfect tens.

There's Cara, obviously, but there's also Nick, the other barrister that works there full time. With his long blond curls and sharp blue eyes, he's probably one of the most stunning men Isaiah's ever seen.

"Bro, his cheekbones could probably cut glass. That's so unfair," Lucas murmurs to him one day. Isaiah gives him a strange look, to which Lucas rolls his eyes and promptly responds, "Just cause I'm not gay, doesn't mean that I can't appreciate a good-looking man when I see one. It's not like you don't appreciate Cara's looks on a regular basis."

Which - yeah. That's actually a really good point.

There's Emily, who comes hand in hand with Nick. She's only two years younger than him, and they share the same blonde curls and blue eyes.

"Excellent genes in that family," Isaiah mutters to Lucas when Emily is first introduced as Nick's sister.

Emily only works when one of the others can't make it, but she's there more often than not anyway.

Then there's Jackson. He owns the cafe, and is also their main pastry chef. He looks like he'd be more in place on a rugby field than in a kitchen, with arms the size of Isaiah's entire head. He's got tattoos running the length of his arms, and he looks like he could rip their heads off without a

second thought. He'd completely terrified Isaiah and Lucas when they'd first met him, but he'd just nodded and offered them a free custard square.

Isaiah isn't usually big on custard squares, but this was like some type of religious experience. Lucas had groaned slightly, and Isaiah muttered something about never eating anything else again, and Jackson had graced them with the tiniest of smiles before retreating back into the kitchen.

Cara looked relieved. Isaiah wondered what would have happened if they didn't like the custard squares.

The other regulars to the cafe are also ridiculously attractive, which is profoundly unfair. There's a string of pretty girls - and quite a few pretty boys - that come in to swoon over Nick; there's a red-headed girl who comes in, sits in a corner and has quiet conversations with Cara over tea; there's Sasha, an engineering student, who comes and sits behind piles of books and dirty mugs, and Charlie, who alternates between reading and staring wistfully at Sasha.

"We're the worst looking people in this cafe." Isaiah laments after a week of being there and staring at pretty people eating pastries.

Then he looks at Lucas, and not for the first time realises how nice he is to actually look at, all sharp angles and freckles and brown hair. He's attractive in a careless way, the kind of person that just gets more and more attractive the longer you look at them. Isaiah sighs, and adapts his previous statement - *'I'm the worst looking person in this cafe.'*

"That's okay. I'm okay with being unattractive if it means we can be surrounded by attractive people all the time," Lucas shrugs.

It's one of those weird statements that probably shouldn't be comforting but is - even if it only makes sense to them.

Isaiah has plans, okay?

When they finished college, Lucas went off to police college, got a job at the local station, and Isaiah...

Well.

He went to uni, got a BA with a major in Art History, then booked a spot at a tiny studio by their apartment. He was good, and he knew that he had what it took to be really good, but he just needed to be noticed. There was only so much he could do through a blog.

In most ways, this was the hardest part.

"If I could just get a place at an exhibition or something..." Isaiah trails off.

Lucas had heard the rant about a thousand times already, but he was still patient.

"You'll get there," Lucas patted his shoulder.

"A foot in the door, that's all I need," Isaiah says earnestly, pencil clutched in his hand. "Maybe I should start a new series,"

"Good idea," Lucas says absently, staring off at Cara and Nick working.

Isaiah follows his gaze to Cara. She's leaning over a mug, trying to do some new form of latte art - a flower, or leaf, or something. Her tongue is sticking out, and her brow is furrowed in concentration, and it's kind of adorable. Isaiah's apparently not the only one who thinks so either - Nick is frozen where he is, paused in the middle of wiping a spill. He's staring at Cara with something akin to longing in his eyes, watching for only a few careful seconds before moving on. Cara turns to say something to him - but then she pauses, watches him for a few moments, the same intense expression on her face.

Huh. Interesting.

Isaiah feels his fingers twitch, and he scrambles for a pencil.

"Dude, chill," Lucas says, looking at him bizarrely. "It's not going anywhere,"

"How did I not see this earlier? Actually, why did I not think this earlier?" Isaiah mutters, sketching furiously.

"What? What's happening?" Lucas actually sounds slightly concerned.

"Look," Isaiah nods towards the counter.

Lucas looks, and.... Yup. There it was. He'd seen it.

"Bro," he whispers.

"Yeah," Isaiah whispers back.

"Oh my god," Lucas grabs his arm.

"And Sasha and Charlie too, look," Isaiah grins, and starts sketching again. "I should just do a series on *Emma's*,"

"You should," Lucas nods.

"Yeah," Isaiah says. "I really should."

It all just comes easy after that.

He goes to *Emma's*, spends a couple hours drinking coffee and sketching, then heads over to the studio to transfer to canvas, or to start painting. The finished series will consist of twelve paintings, all of them workers or regulars at *Emma's*. Some of them will be small, and others large, and they'll all be painted in the same warm, golden tones.

Sketching the people at *Emma's* comes easy - they're all incredibly easy to look at, and incredibly interesting to draw. There's such a large variety as well - Cara, with her dark skin and curly hair, Nick and Emily, with their matching blonde locks and strong expressions, Jackson, with his muscly

arms and pastries. Sasha has her books and mugs, and Charlie has his Kindle. The nameless girl Cara talks to, her eye makeup so dark it could be war-paint.

Isaiah loves it.

He figures that he should probably tell them at some point, but he doesn't want them to get mad at him. He just wants to have this thing for a while, this thing that's completely and irrevocably his.

Lucas comes and watches him paint sometimes, when he's not working. It's nice, the two of them there. Since they stumbled into *Emma's* for the first time, it feels like they haven't really had much time where it's just them. Not like they used to. This, however. This is nice.

It takes him two and a half months to finish all the sketches and have them transferred to canvas. Ten of the paintings are finished, and the last two well under way. Isaiah's planning on scanning them into some of the owners of the local galleries once they're finished, and he knows in his heart of hearts that they're good enough to be shown.

He just has to finish first.

There's a new guy at the counter.

Isaiah repeats: *there's a new guy at the counter.*

Cara's not there - it's her usual shift, but she's conspicuously absent. Isaiah knows it's her shift because every Tuesday for the last month he would come in for a coffee, then sit at the closest table and work on his art. Cara would come and top off his coffee when it ran out, and when she went on her break, she would come and sit with him and they would talk about various artworks. It was fun.

Today though - today, she's not here. The guy standing behind the counter is most definitely not Cara. He's got a type of dark, brooding thing going on, his eyes as dark as a freaking midnight sky. A beanie is shoved on his head, pulled down over his ears, and Isaiah can see the edge of a tattoo peeking out from under his collar.

It's really working for him.

"Can I help?" the guy says, raising an eyebrow at Isaiah.

"Uh. Yeah," Isaiah stutters, stumbling to a stop before he can say something stupid like '*a ring*'.
"Cara?"

Which - yeah. That's not too much better, really.

"She's off sick," the guy says, looking surprised - and it's ridiculous how attractive Isaiah finds it.

"Oh. Is this your first shift?" Isaiah asks, and reading the guy's face, he can tell that it is. "I just haven't seen you around before... and I come here a lot, so,"

"It is. But don't worry, I've worked at a coffee house before, so your coffee won't suck," the guy says, seeming to take Isaiah's comment as a challenge. It wasn't meant as one, but damn if this

guy isn't taking it literally. He's actually rolling up his sleeves, something that is really doing something to Isaiah, and *God, okay, he needs to stop, now.*

"Okay. Alright," Isaiah thinks for a moment, then leans forward onto the counter. "So, don't get me wrong, Cara and Nick are great and all, but they both suck at making chai tea lattes. Think you can do better?"

"I know I can do better," the guy smirks - it's a good look - and pulls a mug out from under the counter. "This latte's going to blow your mind."

(It's not the latte that blow's Isaiah's mind.)

The latte, it turns out, is pretty damn good. Isaiah might be a little bit in love.

Jackson eventually gets around to giving the new guy a name tag, so he finds out his name - or at least, part of it - is Thatcher. Emily finds out that Thatcher transferred from another university, and that he's halfway through getting Masters in writing. She tells Isaiah that he wants to be a journalist, and that she hadn't really been able to get much else out of him apart from that.

Isaiah's a bit disappointed, honestly. Emily gives no indication on whether or not Thatcher's gay, or bi, or anything else other than straight, and Isaiah doesn't ask. He's pretty sure that at this point everyone working at *Emma's* knows about his sexuality, but he hasn't explicitly told anyone, and he doesn't want to assume. He just figures that if they want to know, they'll ask, and then he'll tell them. Besides, what business is it of theirs what gender Isaiah likes?

The only people he's ever explicitly come out to are his parents and Lucas. His parents hadn't cared much, thank God, something that was so relieving to him at the time that he started crying. His parents just exchanged one look, then scooped him up in a massive hug. Lucas had just shrugged, and said that from the way Isaiah had been waxing poetic about Chris Evans' shoulders after *The Avengers* came out, it was fairly obvious.

"Yeah," Isaiah had sighed. "Chris Evans has great shoulders..."

"Yes, Isaiah. I know. We've been through this," Lucas had looked at him seriously. "You know I don't care about any of this, right? You're my best friend,"

Isaiah had teared up a little bit, and they'd spent the rest of the night hugging and crying and repeatedly saying "I love you, man!" and "No, I love *you*, man!"

It was a bonding experience for the both of them.

The point was, though, that Isaiah, having never really told anyone about his sexuality, wasn't really sure how to ask about someone else's. He wasn't even sure if he *should* ask. What if Thatcher wasn't gay, and took offence?

What if he was?

Isaiah spends the next few weeks sketching picture upon picture of Thatcher. He finds out a lot of things about him while he does so as well - his first name is Westley, though almost nobody ever

calls him that. Once, Lucas called him Westley from across the room, then spent the next two days convinced that Thatcher was going to kill him. It was pretty funny. Isaiah's not too sure why though, as the one time he called him Wes by accident, his eyes had gotten all soft and crinkly, and the way Thatcher smiled at him had him convinced that he'd never call him anything else again.

It was so cute Isaiah had spilt his latte all over the counter, then flushed a bright pink when Wes had just laughed and made him a new one.

Wes wears beanies almost all the time, and pairs them with combat boots and leather jackets when outside. He rides a motorbike to *Emma's* most days, all sleek black metal. Isaiah loves drawing him next to Cara, their two aesthetics so completely opposite it's incredible. Wes is kind, and attractive, and he makes good coffee, and *damn* Isaiah is in so deep.

"He could be gay. You never know," Lucas says one day, hunched over their table.

"Yeah, right," Isaiah scowls, looking at the way Wes is talking to a female customer. Wes sees him looking and smiles over at him, sending a small wave their way. "I'm gonna be so alone,"

"Aww, that's okay dude, you can always come and live with me in my attic, okay? I'll even get you a blanket so you can be all cosy and warm," Lucas pulls Isaiah in, ruffling his hair.

"Get off!" Isaiah says, shoving Lucas' arm off him, but he's laughing, so the effect is somewhat ruined.

Lucas just grins back, then steals the last bite of Isaiah's custard square.

"Hey!" Isaiah protests, looking around indignantly.

He catches sight of Wes again, but this time the other man refuses to catch his eye, and is instead polishing a glass so furiously, Isaiah starts to worry about the *glass*. Wes looks for all the world like he wants to smash it instead of place it gently under the counter, and it's kind of scary. Isaiah pretends that it doesn't bother him that Wes won't look his way.

"Seriously though, I reckon you have a serious shot," Lucas says, oblivious to the way Wes is suddenly avoiding Isaiah like the plague. "He actually looks like he enjoys talking to you. It's incredible,"

"Sure," Isaiah snorts. "He gets on with you, Cara and Nick just fine,"

Lucas barks out a laugh. "Dude, he looks at me like I've killed his entire family all the time. I don't think he's smiled at me once since he's been here,"

"Don't be stupid, he smiles all the time," Isaiah says dismissively.

"He smiles at *you* all the time," Lucas says, hitting Isaiah's arm slightly, before going back to his coffee, and ignoring the fact that he's completely just shattered Isaiah's *entire world*.

It was early.

Isaiah had spent the night finishing off his series, painting the final image of Cara, Nick and now Wes behind the counter. Cara was laughing, Nick looking fondly at her, and Wes in the midst of

pouring a coffee. He's quite proud of it, honestly. All he has to do now is scan them into the gallery owners.

But first, coffee.

He's been up for most of the night working, after the owner of the small studio left him the keys to lock up. He must have fallen asleep at some point - he'd woken up about twenty minutes ago, plastered to a desk, paintbrush still in his hand. It was safe to say, his first priority at this point was getting some decent coffee - so naturally, he heads to *Emma's*.

He doesn't even think they're open yet, but Wes must see him pawing pathetically at the door, and pauses in setting up to go and let him in, a casual smirk on his face.

"You look like death warmed up," Wes says, his voice fond. "You alright?"

Isaiah loses his words for a second at the sound of Wes' voice, warm and gravelly from sleep still. "I just need coffee. Like a big coffee. The biggest. Scratch that - all of the coffee you have. I need it,"

"Okay okay, calm down. Gimme a sec," Wes shoots him a grin, and - Isaiah doesn't need coffee, he needs a shot of tequila.

Wes turns and gets a giant flask out from the kitchen, larger than *Emma's* usual to go cups, drying it with a towel on his way out. Isaiah watches as he fills it with coffee, fascinated with the way his hands make the motions almost on instinct. It's an art form in itself, really.

"Here," Wes hands the flask to Isaiah.

Their fingers brush as Isaiah takes it, sending chills down Isaiah's spine.

"Big enough for you?" Wes quirks an eyebrow - and if he were anyone else, Isaiah would think that he was flirting.

"Uh, yeah," Isaiah's voice is nearly an octave higher than usual when he answers. "Thanks, Wes,"

It's almost seven hours later that he notices the name on the bottom - neat letters proclaiming the flask as belonging to a *'W. Thatcher'*. It shouldn't feel like a big issue, but - it really does.

He stares at the flask for a long, long time.

Isaiah had sent copies of his work to several of the local gallery owners, so now all he had to do was wait. He hadn't wanted to upload them to his blog in case he got accepted by a gallery owner who had strict copyright, but it was a close thing. The main thing he wanted to do was show everyone at *Emma's*, but he didn't want to risk anything just yet.

So yeah. Now he just had to wait.

He goes to *Emma's* and gets coffee, talks to Cara and Wes, hangs out with Lucas, sketches random people he sees. It's entertaining enough, but he misses having something to do every day. He misses having a *purpose*.

It's three weeks later when he gets the email.

Dear Mister Waters,

We're delighted to inform you that your series 'Coffee Bliss' has been accepted into our new exhibition. The opening night is on the 21st of October of this year, and we would love for you to attend. Please find attached tickets for you and a plus one. Additional tickets will cost \$20 each.

Kind Regards,

Blue Stone Gallery.

"Dude, dude, dude, dude dude dude dude dude!" Isaiah jumps on Lucas, shaking his shoulder before grabbing him in a giant bear hug.

Lucas hates bear hugs.

"Bro, get off!" Lucas pushes him off his bed.

Isaiah jumps back on, and hugs him again. "I got in!" he chants, "I got in, I got in, I got in!"

"Where? What?" Lucas rubs his eyes, then sits up.

"Blue Stone Gallery! They put me in their new exhibition!" Isaiah grins wildly.

"Oh my God, dude, that's awesome!" Lucas grins back, thumping his arm.

"Yeah! They gave me two tickets to their opening night, do you wanna come?"

"Yeah, bro! That's so cool, you're all professional and stuff now," Lucas teases. "When's the opening?"

"The twenty-first," Isaiah smiles happily. "Hey, I'm gonna head over to *Emma's*, I think I might tell Wes and Cara,"

"Okay, have fun," Lucas says. "Tell them I say hi,"

"Will do," Isaiah stands up, and all but floats out of the room he's so happy.

It seems like things are finally heading up.

"You. Did. What?" Cara asks, and Isaiah can all but see the steam coming out of her ears.

"I uh. Did a series on *Emma's*. It got accepted into Blue Stone Gallery's new exhibition," Isaiah says, slightly less enthusiastically.

"And you didn't think to, you know, ask any of us first?" she says, glaring at him.

"I thought it would be better if you didn't know... more natural," Isaiah explains, then immediately regrets it.

"Oh so that just makes it okay for you to invade our privacy like this," Cara snaps, and if Isaiah wasn't already scared out of his mind, he was now.

"Uhhh," he croaks, then looks to Wes and Nick standing just behind her.

Nick just shrugs at him, expression apologetic. Wes avoids his eye for a second, then sighs and rubs a weary hand over his eyes.

"Cara," Wes says, touching her shoulder. "Don't you think he has a point? You're an artist too, can't you see where he's coming from?"

"That - ugh! Stop trying to reason with me!" Cara wheels around to him.

'Thank you' Isaiah mouths to Wes, who grimaces in response.

"Isaiah's our friend, we should be happy for him," Wes continues. "You of all people should know how hard it is for an artist to make it,"

"I'm sorry, Cara," Isaiah says softly. "I just didn't want to risk our friendship,"

"You should have thought of that earlier," she whispers back, then turns and walks off.

Isaiah stares after her sadly. "This is why I didn't want to tell anyone," he mutters.

"Sorry man. She'll come round," Wes leans over the counter and pats Isaiah's shoulder sympathetically. "I think it's awesome though. Congratulations,"

"Thanks," Isaiah smiles. "I should probably go though... I'll see you tomorrow maybe," he turns and heads for the door.

"Don't be a stranger!" Wes calls after him.

Isaiah waves in acknowledgement, then leaves the cafe.

He tries to ignore the thought that tells him that what he's leaving behind is irreparable.

"Hey, Isaiah..." Lucas says, eyes pleading.

"What is it?" Isaiah sighs, rolling over.

He'd been lying on his bed, face down, sulking after what happened at *Emma's*.

"Hypothetically..." Lucas trails off sheepishly. "What would you say if I couldn't make it to the opening night?" he rushes out.

Isaiah groans dramatically, then buries his face back into his pillow.

“Oh no. What happened?” Lucas sits down and pats Isaiah’s shoulder.

“Cara’s mad at me,” he mumbles.

“Why?” Lucas sounds surprised.

“Paintings,” Isaiah grunts.

“Oh. I’m sorry,”

Isaiah groans again. “Wait. Did you just say that you can’t make the opening night?” he looks up suddenly.

“Yeah...” Lucas scratches his neck. “I’m really really sorry, there’s a work thing I can’t miss,”

Isaiah just sighs. “What happened? Everything was going so well,”

Lucas rubs Isaiah’s shoulder.

“It’ll be fine,” Lucas says again.

Isaiah mumbles something inelible, then faceplants back into his pillow.

Here is safe.

Here is good.

Lucas had gone out to his event a while ago, leaving Isaiah where he was, sitting on the couch and making him promise to eat something before he fell asleep. He’s wearing his oldest, comfiest clothes, binge watching Parks and Rec, wallowing in his feelings. The opening night of the gallery starts in half an hour, and Isaiah’s planning on spending the whole evening staying right where he is.

It’s a solid plan.

A knock on the door startles him out of the show. Thinking it’s Lucas forgetting his keys, Isaiah rolls his eyes and stands up. There’s another knock on the door, more insistent this time, and Isaiah’s just saying, “Hold on, dude, I’m coming!” when he opens the door, and --

It’s not Lucas.

Wes is standing on the other side of the door, wearing a suit and a smile.

“You ready?” Wes asks.

“What?” Isaiah asks, confused.

“... For the opening?” Wes elaborates.

“I --” Isaiah stops. Frowns. “I wasn’t gonna go,” he admits.

“What?” now it’s Wes’ turn to be confused.

“Lucas has this work thing, and Cara’s mad at me, and it just doesn’t really feel like something I’m supposed to be celebrating right now,” Isaiah explains.

He’s still confused as why Wes is here - but looking as good as he does in that suit, Isaiah’s not going to start complaining any time soon.

“Lucas... what? I’m confused,” Wes scratches his head.

Isaiah sighs. “Do you wanna come in?”

Wes nods, and they move to the couch, Isaiah curling back into the ball he was in not moments before.

“I don’t wanna be rude or anything, and I’m not really complaining - but why are you here?” Isaiah asks Wes.

“Lucas came down to *Emma’s* earlier. He said that something came up, but did I want to go to your opening tonight? And I thought, yeah, that sounds like it could be fun, then he gave me the time, and your address, and said that you’d see me then,” Wes says slowly.

Isaiah exhales. “Of course he did. I uh. Wasn’t planning on going,”

“Yeah, I realise that now,” Wes grins easily. “So what were you planning on doing?”

Crying, Isaiah thinks. “I was just gonna rewatch Parks and Rec,” he says instead.

“Okay. Mind if I join?” Wes asks.

Isaiah looks at him and nods, perhaps a bit too fast. Wes smiles again, and toes off his shoes so he can nestle into the couch. Isaiah hits play, and tries not to watch Wes too much. It’s not working too well for him. They watch for a while, then Wes shucks off his his jacket and loosens his tie. Isaiah’s mouth dries out, and his breath catches in his throat at the sight of Wes’ tight white shirt.

“Like what you see?” Wes teases, noticing Isaiah’s stare.

Isaiah flushes and looks away.

“Hey,” Wes says, suddenly gentle. Isaiah looks up, and sees that Wes has shifted so he’s right in front of him. “It’s okay,”

“Wes, I...” Isaiah breaks off, looks down again.

He feels a hand on his face and closes his eyes.

“Isaiah,” Wes breathes, and Isaiah opens his eyes to see Wes staring at him with such intensity that it hurts to breathe.

Isaiah breathes out slowly, shakily, then all of a sudden Wes’ lips are on his, and his eyes are glued closed, all of his other senses telling him that one of Wes’ hands is in his hair, and their bodies pressed together, and Wes’ other hand is pulling him close, closer than they’d ever been before. They break apart slowly, breathing each other’s air for a while until they’re dizzy with it.

“Wow,” Wes whispers.

“I thought...” Isaiah breaks off, then laughs a little. “I thought you were straight,”

Wes chuckles, sliding his hand from Isaiah’s hair to his hand, then twining their fingers together.

“I’m bi, so... you’re half right, I guess,” he explains. “I thought you were dating Lucas,”

“Lucas?” Isaiah snorts. “He’s so unbelievably straight it’s not funny,”

“And you?” Wes prompts.

Isaiah presses his lips together. “I’m really, really not,”

“Lucky for me,” Wes smiles, then leans in and kisses Isaiah again.

It’s exciting, and new, and perfect.

So, goddamn perfect.

And - later, Isaiah will take Wes to the exhibition, and they’ll ooh and aah at all the paintings, and Wes will kiss Isaiah in front of his series. Later, when Cara forgives him, Isaiah will spend all his free time at *Emma’s*, sketching Wes until he goes on break, then sketching him some more. Later, they’ll move in together, and get a cat, and start a life.

Right now though?

Right now, they’ve got seven seasons of Parks and Rec, and a couch, and an empty apartment.

And it’s pretty awesome.