

## Finally

Aziel's ears were ringing, the piercing noise weaving its way through his ear, and banging in his head. His eyes were closed and smoke filled his lungs. He focused on taking a breath of air in, counting as he sucked in the polluted air, *one*... he opened his mouth, *two*... the air caught in his throat, *three*... his chest felt tight, as if the world was crushing him, *four*... the ringing began to subside, *five*... his fingers twitched, *six*... the weight began to lift, *seven*... the world darkened, *eight*... his eyes closed.

Aziel woke from his sleep. He felt new, like the world had shifted. He found himself next to still sleeping Reggie, both of them in a clearing filled with green grass and trees leaning in for warmth. The air felt clean and fresh, nothing like the smoke-filled breaths from last night.

"Morning," Reggie opened his eyes and groggily smiled.

"Just a quick question," Aziel shot in, swiping the smile from his friend's face with the seriousness of his tone, "How did we get here exactly? Like I swear we were in a car."

Reggie sat up, a frown edging over his goofy face. "That is a good question, maybe aliens abducted us and that's why it smells so nice here."

Aziel frowned, he knew his friend was joking around, but something didn't sit right. "It does smell really good."

Reggie smiled, his dimples engraved in his cheeks. The two stood, stretching their long limbs. Reggie was still in his ripped jeans, Star Wars shirt and odd socks; one striped and the other pink and fluffy.

"So." Reggie's smile grew wider and more contagious. "I 'spose we're now on an adventure. Let's figure out how to get out of here." He stumbled towards an opening in the trees. "Come on perfect boy."

Aziel blushed at the nickname. His father had always made him wear tailored suits and ties that scratched at his neck, and unfortunately it had become a pet name.

The two twirled their fingers together at some point and now Aziel was dragging Reggie along, the sky sinking into a sea of golden orange and red above them.

"There must be civilization somewhere," droned Reggie, his brown curls falling across his face in front of his eyes. The sun had fallen behind the trees, making the forest glow as the moon rose. The two boys' steps crunched the fallen leaves strewn across the ground; all other noise had subsided. Amongst the quiet, a faint roaring could be heard. Aziel's ears pricked and the two boys froze.

"A car," he said.

Their feet began to thump, chasing the growl of an engine. The trees disappeared, revealing a highway and a car racing towards them. The two jumped and flailed their arms, screaming for help. The car grew louder and *louder*, fumes surrounded them as the it sped past. Another roar began and the two waved their arms at it, hoping to catch

the attention of the driver. The car sped past. Then another and another until the sky grew dark and the pair were still lingering on the side of the road, half-heartedly waving their arms.

The sun rose and Reggie was lying on the ground beside the road, playing with a discarded piece of glass. "So I have a theory," he said.

"Honestly, I am not in the mood for alien theories," Aziel replied, knowing exactly what the curly-haired boy was going to say.

"I have another theory." Reggie stood, the glass held between his thumb and forefinger.

"Tell me when we have food, water and warmth." As he said this, Aziel realized he had not felt hungry and thirsty, even after all this time had passed.

"I'm not hungry." Now this was odd; Reggie was always hungry. The boy had an appetite that could not be satisfied, as if a ravenous beast dwelled within his stomach. "I suggest we walk more today, because no cars will actually stop for two astoundingly attractive twenty year-olds. Let's find a house or something."

The two found an abandoned house; it had holes in the wall and there was no door, but at least there was a roof. Aziel leaned his head against the wall and closed his eyes.

"Stand up, I want to show you my theory." Aziel stood, not bothering to argue, Reggie would have somehow gotten him standing anyway. He pulled out the piece of glass and opened his palm. He dragged the tinted piece from one side to the other. Aziel snatched the glass from him.

"Are you insane?"

"Just look," he said. There was no blood.

A wildness spread through the darkening room, all talk evanescent. As if emotions had died out and chased themselves away through the opened window. Icy wind slashed their exposed skin and coiled into their bodies. The boys stood opposite each other and intertwined their hands. The thin slice on Reggie's palm slowly threaded back together. Aziel gaped at the curly-haired boy's skin, their breaths mingling.

"So we're actually dead." Reggie laughed, his hair bouncing as he did so. Aziel continued to stare at their hands, his eyes turning glassy.

"Dead? But," he tightened his grasp on Reggie's hand. "No, we're still here." Reggie caught the other boy's flailing arm and held it down, rubbing circles on the back of his hand. "Just think; no one can see us now," he said. Then, Reggie kissed him.