

## Not Quite Paradise (But Close Enough For Jazz)

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# Not Quite Paradise (But Close Enough For Jazz)

by [silverotter \(hooraytheweird\)](#)

## Summary

*“Are you jealous? You're jealous, aren't you!”*

*“No, not of the sex! Just of your being up for it.”*

It had always been about the sex.

## Notes

My profound thanks go out to my two betas, measured\_words, who made me realize some things just have to be deleted, and Naraht, who kept me from making a complete fool out of myself due to my total lack of knowledge about Oxford.

Any and all remaining mistakes are of course, mine.

“C'mon, let me take you to paradise.”

And John's grinning at him, hand outstretched, *let me take you to paradise*. And Scripps can't say no, because John's grinning, eyes sparkling, and his hair is slicked back on the sides, and puffed up on top, just like someone Scripps knew, once upon a time.

So he takes John's hand, and allows himself to be dragged out of the library.

—

Scripps met John in a lecture.

“Hi!” he'd said, plopping down in the seat next to Scripps.

Scripps had looked up from one of the endless course texts and blinked. “Hi.”

And John had smirked, and tapped Scripps on the forearm and said, “Us gingers have got to stick together.”

—

It's just a pub. A pub on Paradise street.

John, correctly interpreting the look on Scripps's face, just laughs and tugs him through the door, “Come *on*,” and then oh. Oh. It's a pub, yes, but not just any pub. There's men, and women, and they're dancing, and laughing, and kissing at the bar, *together*. And Scripps just stares, and stares, and stares, even though he knows it's rude, knows he should look away, but he can't. And John's laughing, always laughing in the background, plants a kiss on Scripps's cheek and orders them a round.

“Welcome to Oxford, Don!”

—

“Welcome to Oxford!”

The woman was bright and chirpy, dressed in an outfit that was a rather distressing shade of green.

There's other things too, schedules and room assignments, but even years later, it's her chartreuse tweed that stands out. Her virulent tweed, and the fact that there was no one he knew, that they'd all gone to different colleges, that for the first time in forever he was truly *by himself*.

Oh. Adulthood. *Oh*.

—

Steven lived in the room across the hall from Scripps, and was the most charmingly dull person Scripps had ever met. He was from Leamington Spa, and his parents were floor managers at the local Marks and Spencer. He'd come up to Oxford to read geography. He got up at eight every morning, made a cup of tea, had two pieces of Weetabix (dry), and went to the library. Every afternoon when Scripps got back to the hall, Steven would have his door open, and would be perched on his bed with another cup of tea and a book. He'd look up at Scripps's, "Alright?" and invariably reply, "Fine, thanks," with a sincere smile before he looked back at his book. He read and did work until ten o'clock. Then he'd go down the hall, brush his teeth and have a shower, say goodnight to Scripps, and get up the next morning and do it all over again.

Scripps thought he was perfectly lovely, and so began to invite him down to the pub to get terrifically sloshed, something which tended to result in being lectured about the brilliance of Alexander von Humboldt. Scripps would frequently attempt to combat the geographic onslaught with every obscure piece of poetry he'd ever learnt, the words comfortingly familiar as he recited them between sips.

—

The first few days it was welfare talk this, library orientation that, seminar after seminar, so tightly packed that Scripps barely had time to eat, let alone try to find the boys he'd come up with.

Finally, finally, it was Saturday, and he had enough free time to collapse on his hard, skinny bed and contemplate for a moment how utterly *mad* his life had suddenly become.

*It'll get better*, he told himself. *It's just the first week. Don't worry.*

"So!" Steven chirped, leaning in the doorway. "Have you started Tuesday's essay yet?"

And again, Oh. Adulthood. *Oh.*

—

"You play piano!" John had, for all intents and purposes, squealed when he stumbled onto Scripps playing Brahms 3rd in a dingy practice room, the piano wavering on the edge of out of tune.

"Yes," Scripps had said, concentrating on the music.

John had leant in the doorway, listening, nodding, then stepping forward, til he was so close Scripps could feel the warmth of him through the back of his thick woolen jumper.

"It's lovely," he'd said, and bent down, so his lips brushed Scripps's ear as he said, "You're lovely."

And Scripps had smiled, and smiled, and kept playing, happy to be appreciated.

—

*“Are you jealous? You're jealous, aren't you!”*

*“No, not of the sex! Just of your being up for it.”*

It had always been about the sex.

—

He'd tried to talk to the priest. What else could he do? But there was none of the literature Pos talked about, not even a quote from the scripture to guide his way, just a solemn old man, with solemn, tired eyes, who shook his head.

—

So he went to the library. Every morning, every afternoon, every night, in between lectures, instead of lunch, trawling through the stacks, looking for something, something, something.

And there's nothing. *Nothing.*

—

He does *see* Dakin. Sees him laughing on the grass, flirting, fingers curling around the wrist of some girl, though never the same one. Once, with a flash of hope, he thinks it's another boy that Dakin's draping himself over, but then—nothing. Nothing.

—

And then one day someone's banging on his door, and it's not even eight, and Steven (crashed in Scripps's room after another night of lager-fueled lecturing) groans and pulls a pillow over his head, and Scripps stumbles to the door bleary-eyed and half-dressed, and is not prepared for Dakin, almost empty bottle of spirits in hand, Dakin, looking the same as ever, Dakin, pulling him out the door with a, “I've got a problem and I need you to drink with me.”

“It's seven in the bloody morning you stupid bastard!”

Dakin, who finally makes him feel *something*.

—

“This tastes like fucking piss.”

“I'm a poor broke student, I buy what I can afford. Anyway, you're the one who showed up on my doorstep at half seven on a Wednesday morning demanding to get drunk. Are you ever going to explain this problem?”

And Dakin licks his lips, and shakes his head, and takes another swig.

“Later,” he promises, “later.”

—

Scripps spends his Sundays on top of Headington Hill, head pillowed in John's lap, enjoying the feeling of fingers carding through his hair.

One day, he begins, “Spring is like a perhaps hand...” the words spoken to the clouds.

“How come you know all that by heart?” John asks once he's finished.

Scripps shrugs, and winds his fingers with John's, determinedly not thinking about a different afternoon, and a different boy, and a different sky.

—

“Oh Donny,” John had sighed later, pressing his hand briefly to Scripps's cheek. “I couldn't wait for you forever. Besides, we both know...” he trailed off, but Scripps knew exactly what he was trying to say.

And fuck, he was right.

—

So, after getting drunk every night for a week, and after *Steven's* taken him aside, all worried words and concerned smile, Scripps decides—*fuck it*.

He knocks on the door to Dakin's room, tucks his thumbs into his pockets and steps back when Dakin opens the door.

“Look,” he says frankly, staring Dakin dead in the face. “I'm rather in love with you. Just—thought you might want to know.”

“What?” Dakin asks, perplexed.

Scripps rolls his eyes.

“You. I'm in love, with you.”

Dakin shakes his head, much like a dog coming out of the water.

“Right. Well. Okay.”

And he steps back inside and closes the door.

—

And for another three weeks it's just like it used to be, Scripps watching, watching, watching.

*“At least he speaks to you. Most guys wouldn't even speak to you.”*

What a fucking idiot he was.

—

Or maybe not. Because four weeks in, there's another knock on another door, and this time it's Dakin standing in the hallway, thumbs tucked in his pockets.

"I've been a total twat about this, haven't I?" he asks bluntly, stepping in and closing the door as Scripps settles himself back on the bed.

Scripps laughs. "Yes Dakin," he says drily, putting his hands behind his head. "You have."

Dakin bites his lip. Unsure is a bad look on him, so Scripps gets off the bed and stands in front of him with a put-upon sigh and a roll of his eyes. "You *could* make it up to me."

"Yeah?" Dakin says, raising his eyebrows. "How?"

And Scripps smirks, the obscene one he's been practising since he saw how effectively Dakin used it back in grammar school, and Dakin smirks back, unfolding his arms, stepping toward Scripps til they're scant inches apart.

"Oh," Dakin says, breath ghosting Scripps's lips.

Oh. Scripps concurs.

—

*"Love can be very irritating."*

He'd said, and said something flip about God, pretending him and Posner weren't talking about the same person, and well—

Love *can* be very irritating.

But it's the end of term, and exams are looming, and Scripps is still trying to figure out *blowjobs*, and every morning Dakin knocks on his door demanding a snog, and—a bit of irritation is the least of his problems.

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