

Love Lies

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Love Lies

by [Danubius](#)

Summary

Max never backed off from challenges, especially, if his championship title was the prize. And if he had to make Lewis pregnant for it, he was ready to oblige.

Notes

I so did not need another story I'll never finish in my life. Fuck you Hungary for making me. As usual, I have no idea what I'm doing.

Chapter 1

The whole thing was Nico's idea.

Well, not like intentionally, the German was soaking in alcohol, but still, without him, Max would never think about it.

It happened back in 2020, somewhere around Spain when Nico was with Sky and invited him to a disgustingly scummy bar for a drink. To be perfectly honest Max didn't want to go at first, he and Rosberg barely talked with each other, so the sudden interest was unwanted – and totally surprising to put it mildly. But as usual curiosity won and Max found himself drinking beer after beer while casually talking about the weather with the blonde.

“It's not easy, is it?” asked Nico out of nowhere after some minutes of silence and it was so off topic Max didn't understand it first. “The whole Lewis thing.”

And Max had to admit, it wasn't. Because it didn't matter how many hours he'd spent in the sim, how many times he scrolled through long pages of data, how his mechanics did everything to find the missing seconds, he was unable to beat Lewis, and it slowly but surely broke him. He couldn't put the feeling of hopelessness into words, but it seemed Nico understood his silence.

“Yeah, that's what I thought. You know, been there, done that.”

“How?” For the first time that night Max was truly interested. He was ready to learn all the other's secrets, he'd even make notes on a napkin, or sacrifice a lamb if necessary.

“I don't know. I think I was just lucky.”

Well, that wasn't helpful.

“But at that time, I was so desperate I actually thought about knocking him up.” The Dutch first thought he suddenly developed some hearing difficulties. “That way he should have stopped racing” Nope, it wasn't just a fever dream, Nico really said it out loud.

“You two...?” he asked carefully.

“No, never.” But how hard it'd be to get into his bed?” asked Nico and cracked a joke about how crazy that'd have been, *ha ha*, could you imagine, thank God he didn't have to. They laughed some about the absurdity of the whole idea, and after another round they dropped the topic.

Still, Max was unable to *not* think about it. Was he really that miserable? Was it really his only hope? Weren't any other options? Wasn't it like crossing that final line? How would it ever work? Like Lewis wasn't the type who got himself into one-night stands, so ~~when~~*-if* he'd decided to do it, he'd have made a long-term plan.

Ironically, Lewis was the one who gave him the final push after a usual P1 and P2. The adrenaline was still running through Max's veins when he sensed the older one's stolen glance wandering over his sweaty figure.

"Yes?" he asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Congrats." Said Lewis quietly. He always spoke softly, perfectly aware of the fact that he didn't need to scream to be heard. "You did good today."

"Not as good as you tho." Was that really a blush, or just the angle of the lighting?

"Thank you, means a lot. Especially from you." Yup, definitely a blush.

Daniel always liked to joke about his big mouth which liked running faster than his brain and got him into a lot of trouble, but now for once the words were rolling through Max's brain for weeks, waiting patiently to be said.

"Wanna grab a drink after we finished here?"

It was surprisingly easy, if you asked Max. Or maybe he was just well-prepared.

That first drink turned into a second one, later into a dinner, and after that there was no stopping. He spent long nights on his phone texting Lewis about everything and nothing, soaking up all the information like a sponge.

He put as much effort into it just he'd do it with a race strategy. Religiously read everything about Lewis he could find on the internet like it was the most important data, coordinated every step as he was making a track-walk for the first time and gently and made sure to always push the right buttons like Lewis was just a very sensible steering wheel.

2020 slowly turned into 2021, but it was okay, because on that quiet New Year's Eve they spent together finally Max made progress.

It was just the three of them, Max, Lewis and Roscoe in Lewis's penthouse in New York, watching as the crowd counted down the last second while the Times Square Ball slowly made its way down. When they reached zero Max held Lewis's face into his hands, and slowly kissed him. It was a typical now or never moment, and Max was ready to retreat if needed – at least he tried – but when Lewis kissed back, his heart started beating faster.

"Are you okay?" asked Lewis with his palm on Max's chest.

"Sure. Just excited." He replied and it was one of the rare times when he didn't lie. He *was* excited, just not for what Lewis thought.

All this time he tried to shield himself as much as he could and stick with half-truths and vague answers. It was such a schizophrenic feeling, like he was living someone else's life.

“Yeah, me too.” Smiled Lewis with that typical lop-sided smile of amusement with which he always watched him. “Do you want to...?”

“*God* yes, please...!”

As Lewis arched his back, his left hand gripped Max’s hair and pulled it until the pain in his scalp was so sharp, he couldn’t quite bear it, right hand strongly on his hip and a sweet moan left his perfect lips Max kept telling himself that the end justifies the means.

After Silverstone he really thought about quitting. I’d be so much easier to send an “*it’s over*” text, and put an end to his sufferings. Lewis somehow was taking up too much of his time and energy, crawled under his skin, into his mind...

But stopping now would be like admitting defeat. He was closer to that fucking championship than never before.

Because in those days Lewis started to make mistakes, - rookie ones, in Max’s opinion – like he didn’t drive since he could walk. Like he was so deeply lost in his thoughts he couldn’t concentrate on the things around him. Like he was distracted. And Max was too afraid to end this *thing* between them, because maybe *he* was the distraction.

It was in Hungary when he realized, it wasn’t him. Well, indirectly, it was.

He was casually drinking his third bottle of water to cope with the Hungarian heat after scaling and intently watched as Lewis stepped on to the podium. He lifted his leg, and put it back down to the ground. Ocon reached under his right arm, whispering something in his ear, and helped him up. Another whisper, Ocon now deeply in Lewis’s personal space. A question, and a nod. A nod with closed eyes, slow head motions. Max almost could see the grimness of Lewis lips under the mask. He barely kept himself together, like he was...

Vertigo, weakness, nausea. At least google said those were the most common symptoms.

Alonso’s hand on his back brought him back to reality.

“I tried everything to keep him on his toes! Not much, but still better than nothing.” he said with a huge grin. “I love it when a plan comes together!”

Yeah, Max did too.

Then why did he feel like the whole world crashed around him?

Chapter 2

“Ready for Colorado?” asked Tiffany when she intertwined her fingers with Valtteri’s. It was high time to leave that horrible race behind, and start the well-deserved holiday they were looking forward for weeks.

“Just a second, I quickly say bye to Lewis, and we can go.” He stopped at Lewis’s hotel room door, and knocked with his free hand. When he didn’t get an answer, he knocked again, and for the third time.

“Maybe he left earlier?” tried Tiff to find an explanation.

“He wouldn’t leave without saying goodbye. Lewis? Are you in there?”

“Do you want me to ask for a spare key at the reception, or, okay, yeah, that was faster for sure.” Rolled Tiffany her eyes when she realized that Val just pushed the door open with his shoulders “Nice move, Corporal.”

“It might be an emergency.”

“And what kind of an emergency could be in...” but the moment they heard Roscoe’s painful whine, they know for sure that there was actually an emergency.

They found both the dog and Lewis in the sterile hotel bathroom, Roscoe nervously pattered on the floor tiles, while his owner was kneeling in front of the toilet, shoulders shaking with the violent vomiting while fat tears were rolling down his face.

“Fuck.” Was Valtteri’s instinctual reaction. He helplessly looked at Tiffany, who nodded to the direction of his teammate, her eyes ordering him to do something. “There, there.” Said Val as he awkwardly patted Lewis’s back when he knelt down next to him.

“You’re a basket case.”

“A what??” Valtteri raised his eyebrows, but instead of answering Tiff just pushed him away, and started to rub little reassuring circles on Lewis’s back.

“It’s okay honey. We’re here. Let it all out, it’d be better after that.”

“He lied...” said Lewis quietly. Val’d never seen him like this before, the man was a mess, his braids in his face, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and his tears were dropping to the floor from his chin. “It was all just a lie...”

“*Who* was it sweetheart?”

Right at the moment when Valtteri was ready to blame some poor kitchen staff member about the situation, for accidentally poisoning Lewis’s food – or maybe lied about some eggs in his food? vegans were *so* strange – he noticed the positive pregnancy test at the side of the sink.

“God *fucking* dammit Lewis, tell me you didn’t drive with...! He automatically raised his voice, but when he saw Lewis’s wince and Tiffany’s sharp look, he snapped his mouth shut.

“I didn’t have time to speak with Toto before the race, it was too late to call it off.” Explained Lewis weakly, still faced to the toilet “I wasn’t prepared for the chaos, do you think if I’d known I’d have risked their life?”

Val didn’t really care about the others he kicked out of the race, they could fuck themselves, and grew up. That was life, and it was time to teach them that life sometimes sucked. Like big time.

But the fact, that it could have been Lewis and his *baby*...! The regret instantly started to eat him from the inside. But he had more important things now than bathing in self-pity.

“Who’s the other father? Did you tell him? Do you need me to call...?”

“No. No, no, no, please.” Lewis protectively put his hands around his stomach, like he could shield his baby from its other parent and without realizing what he was doing he hid himself in Tiffany’s arms. “I don’t want him near them, please.” He whispered to the woman.

“Lewis, it’s very important.” Valtteri hated to be the voice of reason, especially seeing what he was doing with Lewis, but he needed to know. “Did he hurt you?”

Lewis let out a weak laugh, face still hiding where Tiff’s shoulder meets her neck.

Did Max hurt him? Would anyone ever believe him, if he’d say yes? If he’d say that despite that last almost one year was the best on of his life, the Dutch stabbed him in the back?

He should have guessed that it was just a lie. It was too good to be real. After he offered his heart for Nico, who plainly refused it many years ago, he opened up again for someone just to suffer again. Was it him? Was something wrong with him what made him unlovable? Because he did love Max. Loved him with his whole heart. But sometimes it didn’t matter how much you loved someone, they’d never love you back.

He told him after the race. He’d have done it earlier, but just as he said to Val, he didn’t have time, and thinking back to the conversation between him and Max, it was better this way.

He was sure he’d never forget how those beautiful bright blue eyes he loved so much turned to icy cold ones when he told Max he was pregnant. How that smile which always made the boys face light up looked shark-like after hearing the news. How that raspy voice which made him having goosebumps every time he talked cut deep wounds in his heart when he finally spoke.

“Well, there are only two options then. You can keep it, and miss at least one and a half seasons, or get rid of it, and you only miss a week or two with the recovery. Either way, someone else has to race in your car.”

And in that moment, he knew it was all about racing for Max. And he was just a piece in his game. While he only had to do was ask for it. Lewis hated himself for it, but he’d gladly offer

the championship title for Max if that made the other love him.

This self-hatred made him puking his guts out. He was staring at himself in the mirror, at the circles under his eyes, the tears, slowly flowing down his cheeks, and still, he couldn't get Max out of his head. And he lost it.

"No." he answered for Valtteri with a steadier voice "He didn't hurt me. I hurt myself."

Chapter 3

It was a shock for all of them when Mercedes announced halfway into the summer break that Lewis would take a sabbatical, but there were no further words about what he would do. Pierre expected something big, something life changing, like a year of missionary work somewhere in Africa, or volunteering to teach children in need, or even a new album...! But this secrecy, it was unusual.

It was strange, not having Lewis around, but what was even more strange, that Pierre didn't even see posts from him.

Charles mocked him a lot about how obsessed he was with Lewis's Instagram, and he didn't even try to deny it; he knew that Charlie would do the same if Sebastian had social media. He was waiting for days to the big announcement, checked his phone for notifications, and after another week of silence he checked his settings too, just be sure that he still got the notifications on, and it wasn't just some failure of the platform, but nothing.

Like the always open and extroverted person disappeared as if into thin air.

See, Pierre wasn't as stupid as everyone liked to think. Behind the masquerade of the bubbly French fuckboy was the always observant tactician he was. And he *did* observe.

It wasn't easy, per se, the Alpha Tauri and the Mercedes garages were far from each other, but every time he walked past them, he tried to look behind the façade all of them endeavored to keep up. Not so effectively.

He'd seen Stoff struggling with the car, fidgeting the sticker which covered Lewis's name on the side of the car with his own. Every time a reporter asked the boy about his new seat, he said he was very happy with the opportunity and he chose 'not to comment' on the rumors about the leaving of the seven-time world champion. He wouldn't risk his place in the team with a wrong word.

He heard Bono stopping for a long breath before speaking to his new driver on the radio. Pierre spent hours listening to team radio compilations on YouTube, just to check the short pause where the race engineer had to suppress the familiar name, he'd said so many times, and the disappointed silence after Stoffel saying his tires were working perfectly.

He witnessed Toto speaking in hushed, rapid German on his phone with someone, – probably his wife, Susie wasn't as subtle at the other end of the line as his husband tried to be – talking about something, but despite all those years Pierre had to listen to Marko's rants we could only catch words, and those were mostly uninteresting. He was thinking about asking Max for help, but the boy had his own problems. No matter what anyone said, losing his biggest rival affected Max just as bad as it did everyone else.

All the signs were pointing to the direction that the sabbatical wasn't planned, and the rushed decision indicated something even bigger than Lewis being the philanthropist he'd always been.

So, his last hope was Valtteri. Lewis's ex-teammate, who tried to put on that oh so famous mask of Finnish stoicism, but he couldn't do it as good as Kimi did, therefore he just moved out of the way of the media's questions. But despite the lack of words, his anger was clearly written on his face.

They never really talked with each other, at least not about important things. Some words here and there about the weather and the conditions of track wasn't like a heated discussion about politics and environment. Yet, here he was knocking on Val's hotel room.

"Yes?"

Yes, that was the question, yes, he probably should have thought that through a little bit better, because as Valtteri looked at him with raised eyebrows, he simply couldn't find the words.

"Hi."

"Hi?"

"Can I come in?" he asked, and Val just opened the door wider.

Pierre'd recognized that Valtteri was looking around in the paddock nowadays just as suspiciously as he did, like he had his own mission to find out something. It takes one to know one.

"So?" asked Val when he closed the door behind Pierre.

"It's about Lewis."

"What about him?"

That started to turn out bad. Pierre was the one who wanted to get answers but now he felt like he was the one who was interrogated.

They were both waiting for the other to say something, to share their secrets first, and Val wasn't an easy opponent. It took him only a minute or so to break Pierre.

"Look. I just..." he sighed "Don't try and deny something's going on. I don't know what..."

"I'm not saying..." interrupted Valtteri hastily, but Pierre held up a hand and cut him off.

"And I don't want to know what it is. It's... Do you still talk with him?"

"Occasionally."

"Can you tell him that we miss him? That *I* miss him?"

"Why don't you tell him yourself?"

"I don't want to be a burden." Said Pierre silently. Lewis left for a reason, and he didn't want to be one of them. He understood perfectly well that sometimes everyone needed their alone

time.

“Sure. I’ll tell him.”

“Thank you. Sorry for bothering.”

Tiffany only got out of the bathroom when the door closed behind Pierre, and hugged the tense shoulders of his boyfriend from behind.

“Nice kid.” she said.

“Hm. Do you think he’s the father of the baby?” asked Val, his eyes still glued to where the boy stood seconds ago.

“No. But I think he’d make a good one.”

Chapter 4

Pierre was prepared for everything, except a teary eyed Lando Norris in Lewis' door.

He'd spent days – what days, weeks! – persuading Valtteri until the Finn finally gave him his teammate's address just to realize he wasn't the only one. And of *fucking* course it must have been Lando. Like they didn't already have this ongoing conflict between them. Well, he won the first battle, but the Brit won the war. Jealousy cut into his heart like a sharp knife.

"Please tell me you can cook." said the younger boy in a low voice, broken here and there.

"What happened?"

"I'm just... I tried, but..."

Pierre's worry was bigger than his aversion, and firmly pushed Lando out of his way, and stepped into the house.

It wasn't like he always imagined it. He expected something eclectic, like Lewis himself, with vibrant colors and mismatching, designer furniture, even some abstract paintings on the walls. Instead, the house was decorated with light colors, soft rugs and radiated warmth and coziness. In a way, it was exactly like its owner.

When he heard the retching from the bathroom, he hurriedly opened the door, and laid eyes on the obviously sick Lewis.

"What did you give to him?!" he asked Lando louder than he wanted to, but to be fair, he *was* scared. After months, it wasn't the way he wanted to see Lewis.

"Nothing, I promise, I just wanted to make some lunch..."

"*What?!*"

"I checked all the ingredients to be sure that everything was vegan, and followed every step of the YouTube cooking vid, I promise, it was..."

"You fucking idiot! The *whole world* know you can't cook! How could you even think...?!"

"I'm sorry!" screamed Lando back, tears now visibly running down his face "I'm really sorry, I didn't want to..."

"Well, you did!"

"Guys..." Lewis' weak voice stopped their argument immediately. Pierre drew a long breath, and turned to Lando for the last time before he gave all his attention to the man in front of the toilet.

“Bring a glass of water.” He said sharply, not even waiting for an answer, and kneeled down next to Lewis. He put his hand on the tight muscles in the other’s back, and slowly started to rub them. “It’s okay.” Pierre said, and he was sure once Lewis’d successfully empty whatever Lando forced him to eat it *would* be okay.

“I’m fine.”

“Sorry for saying, but you don’t look like you are.”

“It wasn’t him.”

“Now you’re just being too nice. But I didn’t expect anything less from you.” He smiled, which put a small smile on Lewis’ face too. Meanwhile Lando got back from the kitchen and handed the full glass of water to Pierre with shaking hands, but he seemed to keep his distance. “Drink a little.” Pierre offered the glass to Lewis.

“No, thanks. It’d just made it worse. I’m fine, really. I just need to... lay down for a little.”

“Sure.”

They slowly stood up from the floor, Pierre’s arms protectively around Lewis’ waist, and led him to the beige couch and helped him to lay down.

“Do you need anything else?”

“No. Just give me a second. It’ll pass in no time.”

“Take your time.” Pierre smiled kindly, and decided to give Lewis some privacy, so he went to the kitchen from where he heard the noises of Lando putting things away. He leaned against the kitchen island, and watched as the boy got the dirty dishes one by one out of the dishwasher and cleaned them by hand, only stopping sometimes to wipe his tears and nose with the sleeve of his shirt. He looked smaller than he actually was.

“You know, that you can use the dishwasher for it, don’t you?” Pierre asked finally.

“I know. But I need to keep my hands busy or I’ll go crazy.”

“What happened?”

“Would you believe me if I said I don’t know?” turned Lando to his direction “I really don’t know. You’re right, I have no idea how to cook, but it was a step-by-step tutorial, and I *know* how to follow orders. I wasn’t even ready when he got sick.”

Inexplicably, Pierre believed him. Not because Lewis defended him, - as Pierre said, he was too nice to say anything else – but because the oldest looked like he knew what was going on. Like it wasn’t the first time it happened. And it seemed like he wasn’t the only one who noticed it.

“What if... what if it’s something serious?” asked Lando quietly, like he was afraid that if he’d said it louder it’d become true. The trembling got back, but this time it wasn’t just his

hands but Lando's whole body quivered with nervousness "If he's actually ill?"

Pierre couldn't stop himself, and went around the island to hug him. For his surprise Lando hugged back with real force, his small hands were squeezing his shirt strongly, while he hid his tear-streaked face in his chest.

"He was alone, Pear, I've been texting him for weeks now, and all this time, he was completely alone! He *is* alone! If it's really something serious he shouldn't be alone!"

Pierre didn't even react to the nickname the other never used, or the fact that Lando wetting his shirt with his tears, simply embraced him tighter in his arms, and reassuringly caressed his wild curls.

"He's not alone." He said, even if it was the hardest thing, he'd ever said "He has you."

Of course, they had each other. For the first time since Pierre arrived there, he felt like an intruder. He just walked in there like he owned the place, without asking for permission, or anything. Just about a minute ago Lando said they had been texting with Lewis for weeks; they clearly had something going on. What was he thinking?

Just when he decided he should have gone home, he had no right to be here after all, the boy gouted himself out of his arms, just to raise his head and looked into his eyes. Was he always this much shorter than Pierre?

"And you." said Lando but it sounded more like a question "You're here too. He's got us, right?"

"Sure. He's got us. We can do this."

The *together* remained unsaid, but they both knew it was there.

Chapter 5

Lewis was aware what an unusual sight they were.

He was sitting in the waiting room of the gynecologist, Valtteri on his left, head tucked into a magazine he'd found on a table, eyebrows furrowed.

"Do you have nipple patches?" the Finn asked confused.

"No?"

"You should get some. Damn. Pregnancies are crazy."

"Tell me more about it."

And not even two months ago Lewis thought racing was like a crazy roller coaster. God, how wrong he was.

Back then when he was still racing, he only had to care about staying in shape and Angie, the literal angel dealt with everything else. Nowadays it didn't matter how hard he trained; nothing could make the barely visible bump disappear. He could eat the foods he wanted to, while now he had this *horrible* craving for meat, and it didn't matter how hard he tried to resist it, he found himself eating sausage right in front of the opened fridge, which almost immediately was followed by the sickness. Besides, who was the idiot who named it *morning* sickness? It gave false hope to Lewis, who was sick all the time.

But despite all the difficulties, he'd never thought about abortion. This tiny life, growing in him was like an anchor in the sea of troubles, and kept him going. At any cost.

"Hamilton?" they heard the voice from the examination room, and they both stood up. When Lewis went to an ultrasound for the first time, he did it alone. It was actually just a smaller examination, the doc ran some test to confirm the pregnancy, and everyone behaved nice with him, he still felt lonely looking at all the couples in the waiting room, excitedly talking about baby names and their plans for the future.

In an ideal world he'd have been here with Max. They would argue about the right color of the nursery – Max would totally push orange, Lewis was sure – and the boy would hate the Mercedes onesie the team gifted the baby. But most importantly, Max would hold his hand while looking at the green blob on the ultrasonography and Lewis wouldn't have said to the doc that only one printed picture was enough.

He didn't even mention all of that to Valtteri, Lewis only said he went to the clinic once, and his ex-teammate just stated he would be there next time.

And to say it was uncomfortable was an understatement.

Not like Val hadn't seen him before without his shirt. God, the whole world had seen him, he posted a lot of topless pictures on Instagram, still, it was different. He was somehow insecure of his body and its changes even if he knew it was perfectly normal.

"How are we feeling?" asked his doctor with a kind smile. She was a nice woman, patiently answered all of Lewis' questions, and willingly gave him her personal phone number in case of any emergency.

"Good." Said Lewis, but Valtteri interrupted him.

"He's suffering from morning sickness a lot."

"It's normal, I'm afraid. It should go away after the first trimester, but feel free to call me whenever you're concerned about your partner."

"He's not..."

"Thank you."

Lewis was wrong, it was *more* than uncomfortable. He tightly closed his eyes and only felt when the doc put the cold ultrasound gel on his stomach – thank God it wasn't a transvaginal sonogram – and put the transducer on his once flat abs. He heard the rhythmic beating of the baby's heart straight away, and he grabbed the white sheets on the examination table, squeezing them hard. He still didn't open his eyes when he felt Val's hand loosening his grip on the poor sheets, and hold his hand tightly.

"Seems like everything is perfectly fine here." Said the doc finally, and Lewis' body went limp with relief. "You can't really see much yet, but they have a strong heartbeat. It's always a good sign."

"They're strong like their Papa." Said Valtteri with a smile, which made Lewis chuckle. "Can we get two pictures of them?"

If Lewis thought the ultrasound was uncomfortable, what came after was straight up awkward. He knew it was a standard procedure, and it was needed to make sure the baby was healthy, but when his doc pushed a form into Val's hand to fill it for the next time he wanted to die in embarrassment.

It was full with questions about the conditions of the "other father", diseases running in his family, and anything that could affect the baby's health. Bless Valtteri and his always present poker face, which told nothing about the thoughts that were running through his mind. The man actually didn't say a word about it until they were back in Lewis' house, and even then, he chose his words carefully.

"I know you don't want to tell me who's the father, and that's okay. But I think you should talk with him. For the baby's shake."

And the worst thing, he was right. It wasn't only about Lewis anymore. He had to take care of another human being, and it wouldn't be fair to risk something just because he didn't want to talk with Max. So when he was alone he made pictures of every pages of the form, and after some hesitation he made one of the ultrasound picture too, and attached all of them to an e-mail. It wasn't too personal, but still showed the importance. Perfect.

"Get over yourself Hamilton." He said to himself, when his finger lingered over the send label. With a deep breath he pushed it, and there was no turning back from there. He just hoped he wouldn't regret it.

It was in the middle of the night, when Daniel heard the loud knocking on his door. First, he wasn't even sure if he was dreaming or not, but the never-ending noise woke him up enough to realize he wasn't sleeping anymore. He looked at the clock on his bedside table, and groaned when he saw it was three in the morning.

"Who is it?!" he screamed from the bed, hoping it was just kids playing a prank on him and everyone else in the apartment complex, and once they realized he was awake they'd go to their next victim, but the knocking just got more urgent. "For fuck shake, I'm coming! I hope it's a fire, or someone died, because I swear to God, I'm gonna fucking kill... Maxy?"

He'd expected a whole lot of things when he opened the door, but an ugly crying Max Verstappen wasn't one of them.

"Max? What happened? Was it your dad?" he asked which only made the boy cry harder "It was him? Talk to me Maxy, I can't help if you don't tell me what happened! Who should I kill?!"

"Dan... I've made a horrible mistake."

Chapter 6

Thankfully, Dan could hit some sense into his head.

Like, literally.

Max knew he'd make the Aussie angry, and he saw the furious part of the always smiling man – he could see through the hole Daniel smacked into the wall after all – and he totally deserved it.

Not like Daniel would purposely hurt him, actually Max was sure he'd be satisfied with the furniture and the glasses he broke, but they both had to release some stress. It was Max who pushed him first, Dan pushed back, and five minutes later they were sitting on top of the remains of the chaos they created, Max with a bleeding nose, Daniel with a pack of frozen peas on his left eye.

“You fucking idiot.”

“I am.”

“You reckless, stupid, fucking...!”

“I know Dan, okay, I know! I didn't come here for this, I need a solution!”

“I'm not sure if there's a solution for this.”

“Don't say that...”

“You wanted my opinion, didn't you?”

“Yes, but...”

“No buts Max, for fucks sake! Get the fuck over yourself! It's not about you! Not even about that poor baby, it's not their fault that you're their father! It's about Lewis. And how you took over his body. Have you ever thought about that maybe he didn't want that? You forced him into something he might never wanted.”

Well, Max had never thought about it like this. But of course, Daniel was right. As always.

So, he decided to take his advice and Max went to Lewis' apartment to talk. About what he had no idea, but he was sure he needed to know more about the baby. *His* baby.

Lewis was in the kitchen, when he heard the doorbell ring. With the bottle of pickles he'd just opened in his hands he went to open the door, but his sixth sense – or call it divine intervention - made him check the peephole first.

The bottle fell out of his hands, and with a loud crash it broke into million pieces. The bell rang again, and Lewis moved back until his back touched the wall in front of the door. He hoped Max didn't hear the crash – wishful thinking! – because he wouldn't open the door.

His phone started to ring, the ringtone he chose to Max months ago echoed in the house. Fuck.

“Hi.” he answered finally.

“Hi.” said Max, and Lewis heard his voice both in the phone, and in front of the door “It sounded bad, are you okay?”

Why do you care? What are you doing here? What do you want from me??

“Yes.”

“Can I come in?”

“I'm not sure.”

Max wanted to disagree, but Dan's words calmed him down. It wasn't about him.

“It's okay.” he sat down on the doormat “Can we talk?”

“What do you want to talk about?”

“I filled the forms you sent.” Max said and Lewis saw a pile of papers slipped in under the door.

“Thank you.”

“No problem. We have no diseases running in the family. Unless lunacy counts.” He said and they both laughed at that at the same time. The air was filled with uneasy silence.

“Are you okay?” asked Max suddenly. He knew perfectly well that Lewis was just meters away from him, still felt uncomfortable talking into the void. Just now, with this closeness he realized how much he wanted to see the man.

“I've been better, not gonna lie.”

“But it's normal, isn't it?”

“The doc said it is.”

Awkward silence again.

“Look Max, you don't have to do this.”

“But I want to.”

“Really?”

They both knew it wasn't about now. Hell, even Lewis heard the subtext behind that one word, how desperate he sounded. *Do you really? For real this time?*

And Max tried just a much put into his answer.

"Really." *I fucked up, I'm sorry, I mean it.* "Hey, Christian had already left me three..." Max checked his phone "...*four* voice messages. I have to go." He knew racing was a touchy topic, and didn't want to mention it if it wouldn't be necessary, but he was sure Lewis would understand.

"Go then."

"Can I... can I come back tomorrow?"

"I won't change my mind about letting you in by tomorrow."

"No problem, your doormat is quite comfortable." he stood up "It was nice talking to you."

"Max wait..." Lewis dropped the phone to the couch, and went to his bedroom, and picked up the ultrasound picture from his nightstand where he kept it. He went back with it to the door, and just as Max did minutes before with the forms, he slipped it out under the door to the younger man. He completely forgot the phone, it was just the door between them, so he was sure Max could hear him clear. "I thought you might want to have it. You don't have to, of course, but..."

Max almost dropped his phone, when he heard the other's voice so close. He touched the door carefully, just like he'd do with Lewis.

"I do! Oh my... thank you, Lewis. Thank you." He picked up the picture, and as he went down the stairs to his car, he slipped it into his wallet.

Where it always belonged.

Chapter 7

It was easier to tell them than he thought. Both Pierre and Lando remained a permanent presence in Lewis' life since the two youngsters met at his house, like they decided to adopt him. The silent support they offered covered all his needs.

Lando lived closer, so between races it was usually him, who visited more, but Pierre also did his bit with daily text messages and occasional game nights.

As the time went by it was getting harder to hide the truth from them. Not like any of them ever asked, they just went with anything they experienced. Like the sudden sicknesses Lewis had, the sudden craving for foods he didn't eat before, the secrecy about how he spent his days, or even Valtteri's prying glares and questions of threatening him right. They deserved to know the truth for keeping up with all this shit.

Lewis was sure they at least suspected something, guessed about what was going on, made their own theory, - he *knew* that his small bump was more and more visible with every passing day – but when he told them everything, and he saw how surprised they looked, and as Lando's mouth fell open, he realized he was wrong.

“But... but who's the other father?” asked Pierre.

Okay, Lewis told them *almost* everything. But somehow, he wanted to keep this part his secret, at least for a little bit longer.

Since that faithful day when Max appeared at his doorstep out of nothing the boy visited him as much as he could, twice a week on race weeks, more times if there were no races. Lewis never let him in, he wasn't really ready for this, but every time Max was there, they spent ours sitting on the opposite sides of the door, talking about everything and nothing, like they were making up for all those fake dates where the main goal wasn't getting to know each other better. It was reversed order, still, Lewis never felt Max as close to his heart as he did there days.

Obviously, Lewis didn't want to jinx it. Things went well – *too* well, shouted a loud voice in the back of his mind – and he was afraid that saying things out loud would make everything worse again.

So he avoided the question, just like he did with Valtteri, but thankfully the two boys were too busy processing the news to notice. Lando extended his hand to touch Lewis' belly, but he immediately stopped halfway when Pierre caught his elbow.

“At least *ask*, before...”

“I'm sorry! I'm sorry. Can I...?”

“Sure. Go on.” No one touched Lewis' baby except him and his doc, Valtteri kept his respectful distance, so understandably he was a little weary at first, but when Lando laid his

palm on the small bump and immediately got teary eyed he knew it was a good decision to let him.

“Oh my God...” the boy whispered; Pierre closely followed his movement.

“Do you feel anything?”

“I... I don’t. I don’t feel shit. Lewis, I don’t feel them, did I do something wrong?!”

“... I can’t believe you just...!”

“Boys... It’s okay. Lando did nothing wrong, you’re not supposed to feel anything. Even *I* don’t feel too much. They’re not big enough to move or anything.” It was a strange feeling, Lewis couldn’t really explain it. Physically he didn’t feel a thing, but mentally he was more than aware of the presence of the little human inside him.

All in all, it went well, the weight of the secret was finally off from Lewis’ shoulder, and if he wanted to be honest, it made their interactions so much easier. Finally, he didn’t have to lie when he ran out to puke in the middle of their game, he could wear as tight clothes as he wanted, and didn’t have to hide his body in huge hoodies, but the best part was that both of them were ready to switch foods when Lewis had enough of what he was eating, or had a sudden craving for something on their plates.

And if it wasn’t enough, those two idiots were the softest, sweetest creatures on earth. Their constant bickering stopped, like it’d never existed before, and it was replaced with soft words, caressing touches and a lot of hugging.

Like now, when the three of them were snuggled close on the huge couch, with that stupid Mozart CD playing as background music because Pierre read somewhere it was good for babies to hear classical music pre-birth. In fact, all of them hated it, but none of them said anything about it, Pierre just usually fell asleep in the twelfth second it was on, head in the crook of Lewis’ neck, while the man was scrolling through his phone, trying to distract himself from the depressingly sad music with endless pages of baby clothes. Lando had his head on Lewis’s chest, facing the bump, mumbling sweet nothing to the little Fishie as he liked to call the baby.

“Damn right, Fishie, your Uncle Pierre has questionably taste in music.” Explained the boy to Lewis’ bump, fingers slowly drawing patterns on the soft skin. “Thankfully, you have me, your Uncle Lando. I’m sure you’ll love me more.” He giggled, but his smile dropped when he noticed that Lewis was watching him “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said damn in front of them... Twice. Fuck!... Oh. I think I’ll just shut up now.”

Lewis couldn’t care less about swearing, he wasn’t even sure the baby had ears already, and honestly, Lando was just adorable. They both were. ‘Uncle Pierre’ and ‘Uncle Lando’. It sounded so perfectly natural.

They didn't really talk about next times, it wasn't needed, Lewis spent most his days in the house, and Max visited as much as he could. Not making promises was easier for both of them. Usually Max just shoved up, rang the doorbell twice to tell Lewis it wasn't the postman, and sat on the doormat.

They didn't use the phone for a while now, and Max savored the thought of not having the door between them. He didn't want to rush Lewis into anything, he already did that and he learned his lesson, but he wanted to see the man more than anything. He didn't necessarily want to go *in*, opening the door and see Lewis would be more than enough. Maybe today he'd ask him. Who knows, maybe he was just as desperate to see each other as Max was.

When he heard the noises from the house, his hand froze on the way to the doorbell. Shit, Lewis had guests? It never happened before. What was he supposed to do? Did they know about...?

The giggling from the inside was music to his ears and broke his heart at the same time. He knew this voice too well.

Whoever was in the house, Lewis was happy with them. He'd have given anything to make Lewis laugh with happiness like this.

What was he thinking? He was the one who decided to fuck everything up, it was only fair from Lewis to not wait for him forever. Yes, he was the father of his baby, and Lewis never promised him anything more than that. He was an idiot to believe that they could start over again. Despite of knowing this, it didn't make the realization less painful. He had no place in Lewis' life anymore. At least not in the way he wanted.

He didn't ring the bell, he didn't even call, or send a text. He didn't want to interrupt anything. He would just leave as silently as he came. Leastways, he wanted to.

"Do you want to tell me what the fuck are you doing here?!"

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

We all know it must have been Valtteri. He should have got into a fight with Max, just to defend Lewis' honor, there would be a little bit more angst, and not long after a nice happy ending.

Thanks to PG10CL16FAN who gave me a better idea, it's not Val. It's for you and your brilliant idea. Thank you <3

Max was furious.

Obviously, he didn't say a word, but internally he was so mad he could kill the German in front of him. They sat in a bar, far too similar for the one where they had a beer together more than a year ago.

When he laid his eyes on Nico at Lewis' door, he didn't think, just tried to get the man as far from his baby as he could.

Back then, on that cursed day, when the blonde shit-stirrer planted the idea of that goddamn plan in his mind Max asked him if there had been anything between him and Lewis. He should have known Nico was lying.

"What do you want?"

"I just wanted to express my congratulations and respect for your achievement!" rolled Nico his eyes, like it was the most obvious thing on earth.

"How do you know about it?"

"What? Like it's a secret? I found it out the moment Merc announced his leaving. Sabbatical? Quite a poor excuse if you ask me."

Max didn't ask him.

It took time to Lewis to talk about Nico. Max didn't want to blame him for it, but maybe if he had known earlier about the whole situation, things would have turned out differently.

They had another talking session on the two sides of the door, talking about how Lewis found out his pregnancy in Hungary.

"I wanted to tell you right at the moment, but I didn't want to interrupt your pre-race preparation. And of course, I was so nervous. The last time I was that nervous was with Nico."

“Nico? Like, Rosberg?” Max had that unexplainable gut feeling, which made his stomach harden.

“No, Hulk, of course Rosberg. You didn’t really pay attention to him back then, do you? If you’d done, you would have realized the obvious crush I had. And how things turned sour after I told him.”

“What? I thought it was because of the rivalry...”

“Sure, it was easier to tell everyone it was the rivalry. In fact, I was just naïve. Those were different times Maxy, now it’s not a big deal, I mean, I’ve seen you openly flirt with Daniel, and don’t even let me start about Lando and Carlos. Back then you couldn’t do something like that. He didn’t even promise me anything, still, my stupid ass believed him.” the *just like I did with you* remained unsaid, but this time Max had no time to feel ashamed. He was too busy with finding out the whole story.

“What happened?”

“I just told you what happened.”

“No, I... can you tell me more about it? Please?”

“Lingering touches, whispering words. I saw more into it. At least that’s what he told me right before Abu Dhabi.”

Despite what Lewis thought, Max remembered that race quite well, actually, most of the time he was the one who was close to them on podiums. The day after the Abu Dhabi race papers were full with how Nico was ‘faultless under the pressure’ Lewis put him. Finding out that Lewis was the one who suffered from the psychological effects of Nico’s games gave Max a new perspective on things.

Suddenly he understood what Daniel was talking about when he said Max had violated Lewis’ body by getting the decision out of his hands. He felt like he was just a marionette and Nico Rosberg moved his strings. Like the man raped his mind. And Max was so desperate to win that he even let him.

“What do you want?” he asked Nico again, his hand clutched tightly on the table. He was afraid he would punch the soul out of Nico if he released it.

“I told you, I wanted to congratulate the two of you.”

“You did. So, from now on I don’t want to see you around his house. Ever.”

“Aww, there’s no need to be grumpy. Or acting like the protective Papa Bear. We both know you have no right to do it.”

“How...”

“I know everything. It’s time for you to get used to it.” took Nico a sip from his beer with a shrug. Max wanted to kill him more than anything.

“Why?” he asked finally. Call him a masochist, but he needed to know the other’s reasons.
“Why did you do that?”

“*Me??* I did nothing. It’s all on you Max. *You* are the one who did that to *him*.”

So, it was about Lewis all along. Nico searched for the weakest link to do the dirty job for him, and found it in Max. And he almost succeeded.
Almost.

Max had never been thankful for his father. He got nothing from that man he should have been thankful for, and by now he let it go and got over their relationship. But sometimes, in situations like this he appreciated the little thing he learned from him in his youth.

Like the always present poker face he put on when his father was ranting about his races, which now protected him from the malevolent smile on Nico’s face. The patience he always had while he planned the way he would get rid of the man, this time protected *Nico*, from his fist. The sarcastic eyeroll which had made Jos just as mad as it made Nico at that moment. The cheeky, borderline crazy comeback which always earned him a slap from his father, but managed to get Nico out of his balance.

“Oh yeah, I did. I did something you never had the chance.” He leaned closer to the German and lowered his voice “I touched him in places you can’t even imagine. Made his belly round with *my* child.”

Max saw as Nico uncomfortably started to move in his seat; the smile was long gone from his face.

“Stop...”

Jos taught him how to attack as a defense system.

“Because that’s your problem, isn’t it? That I did something you never had the balls to do. You’re right, you did nothing, it was all *me*.”

“Enough!” raised Nico his voice, and immediately turned around to see if it attracted attention, but luckily, no one cared about them. “I’m gonna tell the press...”

“And what? You admit defeat?”

“You’ll never get him.” The blonde spat out angrily but he only made Max laugh.

“True. But neither will you.”

Chapter 9

Valtteri sat in front of Lewis, and watched as the man only picked moodily at his food with a fork. Val thought it wasn't that bad, not even if Lando and Pierre made it, so at first he suspected sickness, but when he finally managed to catch the other's eyes, he realized that the man was just lost in his thoughts.

"That steak is exceptionally good, don't you think?"

"Mm-hmm."

Deeply lost in his thought.

"Okay, what's wrong?" he asked, putting down his fork a little louder than he wanted to, but at least the noise made Lewis looking up at him.

"Nothing."

"Lew, you just agreed that the soy granules on your plate taste like beef."

"Oh, sorry, I'm... sorry. I was goofing off, but I'm here now."

Valtteri wasn't as straightforward as Kimi, so he didn't shout 'bullshit!' right in front of his friend's face; he knew him long enough to know it wouldn't work. So, he chose another tactic.

"Hm." He hummed, and picked up his fork again.

"What hm?" asked Lewis after some minutes of silence.

"Nothing."

"Val, *what* hm?"

"It's irritating, isn't it?"

"... Touché."

Lewis had to admit, Valtteri won this time.

It wasn't like he didn't want to talk with the other, because he really did, but the only thing that was in his mind was Max.

Or to be more specific, his absence.

He wanted to share it with someone so much. The whole thing started to be too much to keep it to only himself, and he needed to get it out of his system. To hear an outsider's opinion. To not shoulder the burden alone.

To say Lewis never really had any friends was an understatement. In his early years at school, he had to face not just the racism from his classmates, but the contempt because of his grades, and later he was so busy with karting and racing that he didn't have time to make friends.

Yeah, Nico was there, but we all know how bad that ended.

So, opening up to someone was a strange concept for Lewis, but the more he watched Valtteri's openly waiting face, the more he wanted to spill his guts.

"It's about *him*."

He didn't say any names, - opening up a little was one thing, and telling the whole truth was another, and Lewis was comfortable with baby steps – but it seemed like Val knew perfectly well who he was talking about.

"Oh. And?" Val looked back at his plate, and Lewis was more than grateful for it. He wasn't sure he could tell him the story if he had to look into his eyes.

"I've sent him the forms as you advised."

"That's good."

"And we met some times after that."

"That's... also good?"

"It is. I mean, it was." Val patiently waited for Lewis to gather his thoughts, and didn't make any comments about how he couldn't find the words. Lewis started to think that he was a saint. "He came here with the form, all filled, and gave them to me. I've never let him in, I'm just... not ready for it, I guess? I know it sounds strange, but..."

"It doesn't. It sounds safe. And now you want to? Let him in, I mean."

"I wanted to. Really. It all went so well! He came here, two or three times a week, we talked, and he left. It was like dating."

"You two are way past the dating phase."

"No, we... actually, we are not."

"Was it a one-night stand?" Valtteri narrowed his eyes. It would explain a lot of things about the mysterious guy, but he never thought about Lewis as a one-nighter. Just as he expected, he didn't get an answer.

Lewis was so shady about the other father of his baby, and anytime he didn't want to tell the truth he chose not to say anything. It was not less bothering, but Val appreciated that he didn't make up any lies to tell him. Actually, this way he could guess about the missing part of the whole story.

He already knew that the man was somehow connected to Formula 1, Lewis never answered when Valtteri asked how they met, or what was the other doing. Val was sure he knew the man, so he was either working for Mercedes, or was another driver. And now he knew that it might have not been casual sex, but also not a real relationship. Interesting.

“It’s complicated.” said Lewis finally.

“Okay, go on. What happened?”

“So, everything was good, until... it was like a week ago? He just disappeared. He didn’t come anymore.”

“Did you try to call him?”

“No, I didn’t want to bother him, he’s... busy at work.” Yeah, Valtteri was almost sure it was a driver. “Do you think I should?”

“Do you want me to be nice, or honest?” he asked back, what made Lewis wince. Nico loved to use the ‘I told you so!’ phrase so much, and every time he did, ha made Lewis feel like all the things his classmates called him. Abnormal, slow thinker, stupid.

“Okay, listen.” started Val. His stomach hungrily protested, but he put down his cutlery again. “Now, at the outset, I want to be very clear that I come with no judgments, and you still didn’t tell me who are we talking about, so I’m only making assumptions here. But I’ve seen you in Hungary, I went with you all the ultrasounds, and I like to think that we are friends. And as your friend, yes. I see how much you still love him, and this whole situation is breaking your heart. But... also as your friend, no. I don’t think you should call him. Lewis, he left you and your baby. He lied to you, and don’t try to deny it, you said exactly that in Hungary. I don’t know who he is, and I don’t know what happened, but I saw what he did to you. Sometimes... sometimes people don’t change. I’m sure you want to believe in that, but sometimes it’s not like in the fucking movies. I don’t want to see you go through this shit again.”

“Val...”

“But as I said, I’m your friend, so, I’m gonna put on a good front, whichever you decide to do, even if I don’t agree with your decision. But please, *please* can we eat now, without you sulking?”

“I didn’t sulk.” muttered Lewis, but he grabbed his fork and ate a small nibble. Somehow Valtteri helped without helping. Maybe he was right, maybe it wasn’t Max who changed, or maybe he wasn’t even able to do it.

Maybe Lewis was the one who changed all along. So many things happened in so little time, and all of them formed him as a person, and made him stronger than before. Maybe he lost his career, but he got so much more than just that. He had Pierre and Lando, he had Tiff, Valtteri, and his little baby under his beating heart. He had friends, help, and a love so pure it could never be compared to the love he felt for Max. Maybe he would call him, maybe he wouldn’t. But he’d always have these people by his side.

“Val?”

“Hm?”

“Do you wanna be her godfather?”

Chapter 10

Lando dipped the brush into the paint, and started to add the black stripes to the tiger on the wall.

“The most wonderful thing about tiggers...” he hummed, as he worked on the painting “... is tiggers and wonderful things...”

It was actually Valtteri’s idea to decorate the nursery with animals, and Lewis fell in love with it immediately. And there was not many things Lando could help with around the baby, but he always liked drawing, so obviously, he offered.

Pierre was handier with a hammer and a screwdriver, so the Frenchman was in the other side of the room, the already finished changing table next to him, while he was struggling with the crib.

They worked mostly in silence, except Lando’s quiet singing of nursery rhymes, Lewis probably fell asleep either on the couch or in his bed – nowadays he got tired easily – but the younger one felt the eyes of the other from time to time. He tried to catch Pierre red-handed, but he was faster and by the time Lando turned to look at him, he seemed deeply invested in the installing of the canopy.

If he wanted to be honest, Lando liked that stupid little game, liked Pierre’s cheeky smile and those fake innocent eyes. He felt his cheeks burning red, rather because of excitement than embarrassment.

He couldn’t have told how it happened, or what was that *it*, which was going on between them, but he couldn’t care less. It was like they both knew they were gravitating toward something, something really *big*, and this reassurance made any hurry unnecessary.

He washed the black off from the brush, and dipped it into the pink paint, to make the tiger’s nose.

“Their tops are made out of rubber, their bottoms are made out of spring...” he sang two more lines from the Winnie the Pooh lyrics, and this time, Pierre didn’t turn away when he caught his eyes “What?”

“You’re so cute.”

Lando wanted to giggle, roll his eyes and turn back to the tiger on the wall, maybe after some more laughing start a pain war like they did in romantic movies, but there was no humor in Pierre’s eyes. And that shy adoration clamped all speech within him.

“O-oh Pierre...”

“Sorry, I’m... sorry. I shouldn’t have said that.”

It might have been their moment. That special place and time they were both waiting for. Because ultimately, it wasn't any better or worse than any other.

It could have been symbolic. It was their love for Lewis and the baby, who got them together for the first time after all, so being in the center of that love, surrounded by warm colors and soft fabrics...

Pierre turned back to the canopy, but he couldn't see what he was doing. He was ready for saying out thing loud for some time now, and as the last rays of the afternoon sun shined through the light-colored curtain in front of the room's huge window, and hit Lando's smile, he just simply couldn't hold it back anymore. He knew perfectly well that the younger one felt the always present vibration between them too, so he just hoped he didn't break their special bubble with this rush.

The bubble which was built at the moment he first hugged the crying Lando to his chest, and silently promised himself that he wouldn't let anything happen with the boy. Of course, it evolved with time, as Lewis revealed his secret, and Pierre's concern extended to both Lando *and* the baby. He only realized that the two weren't the same when Lando first referred to them as Uncle Lando and Uncle Pierre. It was them. They were officially an item.

Over time, Lewis got into the second trimester, and they still spent their non-racing weekends together, but the worried pressure that was in all of them at the first times disappeared and suspense replaced it. And it was like all the place in his heart which was occupied with concern for Lewis was taken by unruly curls, long lashes and a warm smile.

"It's okay." said Lando, much closer than Pierre expected, and as he raised his head, he saw that the bay sat closer to him. "I've been waiting for you to say it." Heat was radiating from his body, and Pierre wanted to kiss him more than anything.

It seemed Lando had the same thought, because he leaned forward and wrapped his arms around his neck.

"Ouch."

"Oops, sorry!" laughed Lando, and put down the paintbrush, while Pierre wiped down the pink spot from the back of his neck. Somehow it didn't break the spell; Lando wasn't sure if there had been anything that would have been able to do. Now he was sure it was their moment.

This time it was Pierre, who leaned close, put his hands on Lando's waists to steady himself, and closed his eyes to finally kiss the other.

Lewis' arrival stopped them; not because they were like ashamed teenagers, who automatically parted when they got caught, but because the appearance was so sudden.

"Hey Lewis. Did you sleep well?"

"Lewis?" Pierre really didn't want to panic, the other two mocked him enough with being the worried mother, and they were way past of the critical first three months, but there was

something on Lewis' face which made the knot of fear building in his stomach. When he was the older one put his shaking hands on his baby bump, the feeling became worse.

"Pear..." Pierre didn't want to turn his attention away from Lewis, but there was something in Lando's trembling voice, so he looked at the boy in his lap. The boy was staring at the hardwood flooring under Lewis' feet.

He only saw a little darker spot on the parquet, and at first, he thought it was just a glitch in the wood, but then he noticed it wasn't on the floor, but coming from Lewis' bare foot. A little stream of blood was running down his leg.

He jumped up and caught Lewis before his legs broke down, and helped him to sit down.

"Lando, call an ambulance, and Valtteri!" he instructed the boy, before he turned to Lewis "Everything's gonna be okay, don't worry, we'll go to the hospital, and..."

"Call Max. Please."

Chapter 11

“It was you... It was you, you fucking bastard!” tears were running down Lando’s face, as he pushed Max to the white wall of the hospital corridor repeatedly. He was angry and mad out of worry, which Max could completely understand, so he didn’t do anything to stop him. And of course, he couldn’t agree more.

It was all his fault that he wasn’t beside Lewis when the worst happened. He wasn’t there, he wasn’t the one who called the ambulance, or held the man’s hand on the way to the hospital, and it didn’t matter how hard Lando hit him, it would never be as painful as the regret he felt.

“Hey, hey stop...” tried Pierre hold him down.

“Stop? Stop?! Don’t tell me you don’t hate him for what he did to Lewis! Don’t tell me you don’t want to...!” screamed Lando, but his voice muffled as Pierre tugged him in a tight hug, and hid the boys face in his chest.

“You know I do. But you won’t help Lewis with this.”

“I’m so afraid...”

“I know baby, I know.”

Max watched them, and the lump in his throat grew bigger. He didn’t want anything more than to have someone to hug and whisper calming words to him, but the only person who could have offered this was the one who needed it the most. Max wanted to be the one to give it to him, but he was almost sure they wouldn’t let him.

“Tell me one good reason why I shouldn’t kill you right here.” Said Valtteri, arms crossed in front of his chest, but despite his words, he didn’t look like he was actually wanted to hear anything. Not like Max could give him anyway.

Valtteri called him early in the afternoon and at first Max was really surprised to see his name on the screen of his phone. He was in the middle of his daily dose of training, and was actually glad for the other to give him an occasion to stop. Until he wasn’t.

He threw everything away, and hurried to the hospital Lewis was brought as soon as he could.

“You know, you have the biggest chances of survival if he beats the shit out of you here. I mean, we’re in a hospital.” Said Daniel behind him, speaking for the first time since they arrived.

The fastest way from Monaco to England was by car, but Max wasn’t in the condition to drive, so asking Dan to help him out seemed to be the best decision. Now, he wasn’t really sure about it.

“You’re not helping.” Max muttered to Daniel.

“But he’s right tho.”

“Thanks Val. I know it’s not the same, but maybe it helps a little to know that *I* did beat him.”

“A little.” nodded Valtteri to Dan, and turned his attention back to Max “But I still wouldn’t sleep peacefully if I were you.”

Max wasn’t sure he could ever close his eyes longer than seconds anymore. Would Valtteri put a horse’s head in his bed, or it was only an Italian thing? Max didn’t want to try it.

“Can I see him?” he asked instead, but the looks he got from the Lewis protection squad made him just sit down on one of those exceptionally uncomfortable chairs.

He never understood why chairs were so bad in hospitals. Like the fact that people usually got to hospitals because of life and death situations wasn't enough, they had to make it worse with the furniture, the sharp smell of disinfectants and the painfully brilliant white color of the walls.

Max hadn’t been here longer than minutes, but he already had a headache. He tilted his head against the wall, and closed his eyes to at least block out the things he could.

But he couldn’t stop his brain.

He wanted to ask so many things about the others, and not just the obvious ones, like how long did they know about the pregnancy, or what happened in the hospital before he arrived. He was more curious about the details, the things he missed. Was this Lewis’ chosen hospital, or he was brought here because it was the closest? Was his doctor competent enough? What was Lewis’ favorite craving snack? Did he already choose a name to their baby? How are the preparations for the nursery going on?

All the things he should have know if he had been there for them.

And he really wanted to. Until Nico’s appearance he really thought things could change, and there was a future for them after staring it over, but the blonde’s words convinced him otherwise. Watching him maniacally talk about Lewis made him realize he was just as bad as the German. He really thought he made the best for Lewis when he decided to silently leave his life.

Of course, he fucked up, just like he did with everything in his life. If he had been there, if things had happened differently, if, if, if... He couldn’t *not* blame himself.

“Hey.” he felt Dan touch his shoulder, so he opened his eyes “I go grab a coffee, do you want an energy drink?”

“That would be nice, thank you.” He must have done something good in his previous life to deserve Daniel. Maybe that was why fate didn’t give him Lewis and their baby, he was not good enough of a person to have more than one nice thing in his life. Dan reached his quota.

Just as the Aussie disappeared behind the corner, the door of Lewis’ exam room opened, and a woman in white coat looked at them. She looked just as exhausted, as Max felt.

“He’s stable now.” she addressed her words to Valtteri, so Max guessed she had seen him before.

“What happened?”

“In many cases the hormonal change during pregnancy can cause changes to the cervix. Rendering it softer and more prone to bleeding. I’m afraid in this case the bleeding was caused by the pelvic examination yesterday.”

“Did that affect the baby?”

“It was caught early, so no. We stopped the bleeding; they are both fine. Yet I want him to stay here today, tomorrow you can bring them home. It looked scary, but fortunately, the problem wasn’t that big.”

“Can we see him?” asked Pierre hopefully.

“I’m afraid I can only let family in. He’s quite exhausted.”

“Can I go in?” Max asked Valtteri, and not the doctor. She said family, which meant Max had more rights than Val, still, he knew it was the Finn he needed to ask for permission. “I need to see him, please.”

“Ten minutes.” agreed Val finally “After that, it’s my turn.”

“Thank you.”

“Tell him we’re here.” asked Pierre.

“Sure.”

“And tell her I love her.” added Lando.

Max was excited to see Lewis after many weeks, of course he was. But as he put his hand on the doorknob, he only heard Lando’s voice in his head.

Daughter.

It was a baby girl.

Chapter 12

Max closed the door behind himself, but he couldn't step further into the room.

If the waiting room felt horrible, it was like hell. The smell of disinfectant competed with the iron like scent of blood which immediately turned his stomach, and the notorious beeping of the machines made him feel like someone was hitting his eardrums with a sledgehammer.

But the sight of Lewis transcended all of it.

Lewis Hamilton always had a strong and steady presence in Max's life. The man was a seven-time world champion, more than ten years older than him, the literal GOAT with all capital letters. A rock at the edge of the world, a safe space amidst the raging sea of Formula 1.

This man in front of him was different. This Lewis looked small and vulnerable; his beautiful chocolate colored skin was a stark contrast with the bright whiteness of the bedsheets. His eyes were full with worry and sadness.

And Max just couldn't go closer. Not like because he didn't want to, but because he was scared to his core, afraid that he would make everything worse. Maybe the others were right, fuck, maybe *Rosberg* was right, and he really should have kept his distance, left Valtteri to kill him, and put an end to all the sufferings he every caused to all the people around him...!

For his biggest surprise, Lewis raised one of his hands from the not-so-small-anymore baby bump, and silently reached for him.

Lewis knew that the floating feeling was only caused by the narcotics he got, but it felt surprisingly good. Like the worry he had when he first saw the small blood droplets was covered in a soft cotton cloud, and couldn't reach his mind. He felt like nothing could hurt his sweet baby girl anymore.

The rhythmic beeping almost lulled him to sleep, when he heard a small noise from the door and opened his eyes. He expected to see another nurse – maybe more painkillers? wouldn't it be too much for her? – or a very concerned Val, but definitely not Max.

Max, who was just as pale as the white walls, and had huge black circles under his puffy eyes. He looked like he just grabbed and put on the first thing he could find; the hoodie was way too small on his broad shoulders, and he forgot to wear his signature redbull cap.

It was a shame, really. His high on medication mind decided to hallucinate Max here, but it chose a version of him Lewis never wanted to see. Why he couldn't have Max in his full glory? With a huge smile, and mischievously shining eyes? Even a sarcastic comment would make Lewis happy.

He reached his hand to phantom Max, and when he crossed the room with two big steps to stand next to him and hold his hand, Lewis realized that maybe it wasn't all just a fever

dream.

Max saw how Lewis' face changed the moment he grabbed his hand. First, he tensed for a short second, which was followed by the look of surprised understanding, and finally came a content smile.

A smile, that meant everything to them.

A smile Max desperately needed.

Lewis rather heard than saw as Max pulled the chair not far from the bed closer to himself, and sat next to his bed. He tried to reassuringly squeeze the younger's hand when they looked at each other's eyes, but he was too weak to do it. Still, somehow, he might have managed to, because Max's eyes suddenly filled with tears. Poor thing, didn't he know there was nothing to cry for? Didn't he *feel* that everything was all right?

The tears escaped from Max's eyes when Lewis gently grabbed his neck, and laid his head on his chest. It wasn't easy, and Max couldn't calm down until he found a spot where he was sure he wouldn't hurt Lewis, but once he was comfortably settled down, he couldn't hold it back anymore, and the silent tears turned to half-hiccups-half-sobs.

He should have known Lewis would be nothing but kind, and the certainty that he didn't deserve it broke his heart. He wanted to say so many things, explaining his reasons, asking for forgiveness, making promises, but the words didn't come.

Lewis didn't open his eyes, his vision was still blurry, his free hand blindly found its way to Max's hair, and lovingly started to stroke the sand brown locks. He imagined for so many times how he would do it to his daughter to calm her. His fingers moved around from Max's hair to outline his eyebrows, run his fingertips on the long eyelashes, booped his nose, scratched his nails on Max's sharp jawline, drew his thumb over those beautiful lips, and finally, when the crying calmed down a little, Lewis' hand settled on Max's neck. He took a deep breath, and happily realized that Max tried to follow his breathing.

The words left Max's mouth like they were burning his throat the moment Lewis reached for his hand, and put it to his bump. The small movement under his palm broke his barriers.

"I love you."

"We love you too."

Fifteen minutes later Valtteri found the two of them fast asleep, Max cuddled close to Lewis' side, while Lewis' hand was holding the other securely, like he was afraid he would disappear while he was sleeping. Their other hands on their daughter, fingers interlocked.

Val turned out from the room, and silently closed the door behind himself.

God knew they both needed to rest.

Chapter 13

Max didn't really watch where he was going, he just knew he had to escape; the family like atmosphere was somehow suffocating.

When he woke up weeks ago at the edge of Lewis' hospital bed with a light heart and without a headache for the first time in months, everything seemed perfect. Until he looked into the carefully calculating eyes of the other, like Lewis was already questioning his words from the night before.

"Do you want me to leave?" Max had asked even though he was terrified of the answer. It was so hard for him to finally express his emotions, and while he knew Lewis deserved to know, at that moment he felt like it was a mistake.

"No, not, it's just..."

"Hey, it's okay. Baby steps. There's no need to rush."

So they really didn't. Max was there, when Lewis left the hospital with Valtteri, and it didn't matter where he was, he called the other every night, he even crossed the threshold of Lewis' house after some time.

But that was the first time they weren't alone, and Max couldn't cope. Tiffany and Val looked so normal in Lewis' kitchen, cooking like they were doing it for months as they probably did, Pierre was animatedly explaining something to Lewis, who had Lando glued to his side in the sofa, playing something on his phone. And while none of them said a single bad word about his presence, Max felt like an outsider.

Like an intruder, who had no right at all to be there, to get a glimpse of their life together. The five of them had such a strong bond he might have never been able to take part in it. Maybe he didn't even deserve to.

He quietly excused himself, and left the living room, and went into the nursery. The light yellow of the walls always calmed his nerves before, but this time it was like the huge smile on the animals were only there to mock him.

"Give them time." said Daniel on the phone, when Max called him and admitted how he ran away from the others. "I'm sure it's just as hard to Lewis as it is for you."

"I know." He was sitting on the soft carpet, surrounded by the crib Pierre build, the beautifully painted walls made by Lando, and all those small details which must have been warmed up by the touch of a female hand, probably Tiff's. He didn't want to cry, so he closed his eyes. "I just feel so useless."

"You really do?"

Max opened his eyes when he heard Lewis' voice at the door.

“I’ll call you back.” he told Dan, and ended the call without waiting for an answer. “Hey, I didn’t hear you coming.”

“You didn’t answer.”

“It’s okay Lewis. I’m fine.”

“I thought we agreed.”

They did, actually. They didn’t really talk about what happened between them in the past, mostly to avoid to hurt the other, but right there in the hospital they made the only rule they needed to start over.

No more lies.

“You’re right. Sorry. You all just seem to work so well together. I’m not sure what I’m doing here.”

“You really can’t see, do you?”

Max didn’t realize when Lewis sat down next to him, or how his hand made it’s way to find Max’s.

“See what?”

“It’s all about you Max. It has always been.”

Lewis didn’t elaborate, just rested his head on Max’s shoulder, and patiently waited for him, to put the puzzle pieces together.

He started with the wall in front of him. As the early afternoon sun shone through the windows the light hit it from an angle that it wasn’t so obviously yellow anymore; like it got a pale orange-ish shade, he didn’t see before.

The animals didn’t laugh at him anymore, in fact it was like they all headed to the same direction. The lion cub in the middle blended into its environment so perfectly Max didn’t recognize it sooner.

Just like he didn’t recognize how the crib mobile only had three racecars. Three pillows, three stuffed toys.

But the most prominent example was the rocking chair. The rocking chair, right next to the small sofa with the feeding pillow on it.

The whole room was clearly made for two people.

“You knew.” Max said silently, like he was afraid that if the words had been too loud, he would have broken the magic.

“Just hoped, I think.” Lewis shrugged “I don’t know how they didn’t see the signs.”

After everything that happened, Lewis still hoped Max would be there with him. Lewis believed in him when he didn’t deserve it, and counted on him when he had no reason to do. That trust warmed Max’s heart and scared the shit out of him at the same time.

“Lunch is ready.” announced Tiffany as she popped her head in the room “What are you doing here?”

“Just admiring what a good job we did.” said Lewis. Tiff got into the room, and sat next to Max on the floor. He wanted to reach closer to Lewis just to not touch the woman, but it seemed she had no problems with their shoulders touching.

“True, it looks really nice.”

“You left me!” complained Lando, and without asking he walked to them, and laid down on the floor, putting his head on Lewis’ chest and crossed his legs over the older man’s. His knee was on Max’s but he didn’t move away.

“The food will get cold.”

“My waist has cold.” turned Lando to his boyfriend’s direction to the door. Pierre sat next to Lando, and made sure to cover his waist with his own body.

Valtteri was the last one who arrived and the only one, who didn’t say a thing, just walked in, and sat next to his girlfriend. They silently watched the result of their hard labor and back-breaking work.

“The ostrich kinda look crazy.” said Val after closely examining the animals on the wall for some minutes.

“Ostrich? I though it’s a chicken with avian flu.”

“Fuck you, Pierre, I tried my best, okay?!”

The others might have done bigger part of the job than Max, but he silently swore to do his share in the future.

Chapter 14

Nico's head arched back the moment he opened the door. He didn't even know what happened until the pain reached his mind.

Bottas pushed him out of the way, and walked into the house like he owned it, Verstappen close behind.

"What the...?"

"Sorry." Said Valtteri with a shrug, but he directed his words to Max and not Nico "It felt good."

"What the actual fuck is going on??"

"Considering you said you know everything, you look kinda surprised." said Max with a smug smile Nico already hated. He carefully touched his nose; it wasn't bleeding but it still might have been broken.

"I'm calling the police."

"Cool." sat Verstappen down on his couch, ankles crossed, arms comfortably reached over the headboard. Bottas was standing next to him with watchful eyes like he was searching for the next opportunity to throw a punch. "Would you mind if we wait here till they arrive?"

Arrogant prick.

Nico grabbed his phone with shaking hands, and started to dial the police. He was so angry he was afraid his head would explode.

"Breaking and entering..." he started and counted all his points on his fingers "...assault..."

"Oh, come on." Rolled Bottas his eyes "It wasn't that bad."

"... You refused to leave my property when I asked you to..."

"Actually, you didn't." interjected Verstappen "But if you talk with the police, tell them why you deserved that so called 'assault'." That bastard even had the courage to use air quotes.

But finally, it clicked for Nico.

"Ooohh riight. You're defending *his* honor." he turned to Bottas.

"Well, I was his best teammate. I have the right to it."

"You were a fucking *no one*!" yelled Nico, and put down his phone without calling anyone, before he broke it with his bare hands. These two really thought they had something on him, but it didn't matter how cocky Max was, or how many times Valtteri decided to punch him, it

wouldn't change the fact that Nico was superior to them "A no one." emphasized Nico "Did you defeat him? Did you stand on the top step of that final podium, and look down on him? Did you ever have the power, to break him? Could you ever feel being *better* than him?" with every spoken word he stood closer to Valtteri, until he was shouting to his face.

"You weren't better. You only won, because you lied to him." The Finn stood still; his face didn't show any emotions.

"Sure, he said that. Admitting that he was weak would have sounded bad."

"Just like for you admitting that you were in love with him and threw it away for a title." said Verstappen from the couch. Nico almost forgot he was there.

"Kettle, meet pot." he said simply and pointed at himself at first, and after at Max.

"I'm not like you."

"You still knocked him up and made him have a bastard child just to get him out of your way."

"Don't be so humble. We all know it was your idea."

"Don't put it on me." mimicked Nico the other "You were the one, who made the biggest part of the job."

"You really just let him have all the credit?" asked Valtteri with raised eyebrows "Are you *sure*, you are better than us?"

"Of course, I'm..."

"Not even a minute ago I really believed you were the superior one. Now you give all the credit to Max? He already got the most enjoyable part of the plan..."

"Of *my* plan damn it!" Nico yelled his head off. If they wanted the truth, they would get it.

"Yes, it was my plan, and yes, I would have done it back then if I had had to, to win the championship! And it was easy! It was so easy to manipulate the shit out of Lewis! That whore would have done everything for a little affection and some nice words. I knew he would have given me that win if I had asked to, but it felt much better to crash him. After all those years when everyone was busy with him, it was finally *me*, who was cherished, who got the attention. I deserved that win."

"Did you hear that?" asked Verstappen seemingly from no one.

"Loud and clear."

The voice came out of nowhere. Nico was sure he locked the door, so it wasn't like... Max got his phone out of the pocket of his tight jeans.

"Did you know that Lando is quite good with technology? He and Pierre wired us both with some Bluetooth thingy, I have no idea, I didn't understand a word he said. But whatever it is,

it managed to catch all your words.”

“And what? You wanted to give it to the police?”

“Police? Of course not. Why would the police care about it? I was actually thinking I’d give it to the Netflix crew. They can make a whole episode about you two. You’ll get all that attention you crave so much. Thanks guys, you can stop the recording.”

“On it.”

“Well.” stood Max up from the couch “Our job here is done.”

“You wouldn’t give it to the press.” breathed Nico. “It’d break your career too.”

“My career? I’m Redbull’s golden boy. Nothing can break my career. It’d be such a nice story, can you imagine? Long-time opponents realizing their love and having a baby. *Even* after the psychotic ex-teammate slash lover slash best friend tried to fuck up their relationship. Val, what do you think?”

“Sounds romantic.”

“Yeah, I think so too. Anyway, it was a nice chat, but it’s time for us to leave.”

“You can’t do this.”

“I can. And I will. Oh, and Nico!” Verstappen was almost at the door, when he turned back to look at the blonde, and slammed him in the nose. This time it didn’t just start to bleed, but the strength left Nico dizzy. “If I ever see you near Lewis or my kid again, I’m going to kill you.” said Max threateningly, and just simply turned back to Bottas “You were right. It feels good.”

“I told so.”

Max’s hand was already on the doorknob, when he heard Nico’s voice behind himself.

“What do you want from me for the record?”

“I thought you’d never ask.”

Lewis didn’t watch a race since the moment he stopped racing. It was more than enough to find something else, to fill the hole it left in his heart, watching the broadcast would have just made it harder.

And he wouldn’t have watched it, if Valtteri hadn’t asked him to do it. He didn’t know the Finn’s reasons; he could only hope the other wasn’t planning anything. Lewis played with the idea to lie about watching it, but in the end, he decided against it.

It wasn't easy, per se. Every time a camera showed the well-known shape of the Mercedes hospitality his eyes started to water, and all those familiar faces made his hearth ache.

Until he saw Nico.

Lewis couldn't help it, and made a small grimace when he saw Sky pushing a microphone to the blonde's face.

"Lewis is just an extreme natural talent."

"What??"

"In terms of talent, he must probably be the best ever."

Lewis' mouth opened, as he listened all the praising words.
The words he always wanted to hear from Nico.

Yet, he was sitting there, one hand on his baby bump, the other on the sleeping Roscoe, and he felt nothing. He just watched Nico's figure, the shining blonde hair, those greyish blue eyes, the sharp jawline, all the things he once loved, and he felt nothing.
And it was such a relief.

Nico just went on and on, told all the words he should have told ages ago while Lewis was playing with Roscoe's ears like it was just an ordinary Sunday afternoon and he wasn't watching a race but a normal sitcom.

A cloud might have moved, because the angle of the light changed on the screen. Lewis sat closer to the tv to carefully watch everything, when he noticed the shadow on the left side of the man's face. He also has concealer on, around his nose; its color didn't blend in perfectly with Nico's pale skin color. Why would Nico wear concealer, and...?

Lewis sat fully back on the couch with a lopsided smile on his face. He would make sure to send a heart emoji to Valtteri after the race.
And maybe one for Max too.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Yup, I fucked up the timeline to make it more fitting to me.

The change was unmistakable.

It wasn't like Max had a bad season, to the contrary actually, but when Lewis left mid-season, Max led the championship with a lot of points, and after his biggest rival was out of the picture the whole Red Bull team thought it was an easy job to win.

Of course, none of them knew that with Lewis' leaving Max's competitiveness and determination left too, so they were all surprised when not just Valtteri but also Checo came really close to him.

Marko was furious, obviously, but Max couldn't care less. To be honest he hoped the rage would cause a heart attack and kill that old prick.

Christian was just as angry, but at least he was nice enough to not put it on him.

"I don't know what happened" he said to Max one day "but if you ever want to talk about what's going on, I'm here to listen."

Max once imagined telling him everything, but he decided against it. He liked Geri, he didn't want to make her a widow with causing a stroke to her husband.

His performance followed his relationship with Lewis. It was covered with black clouds most of the time, with just little chances for the silver lining, like a rollercoaster with very high ups, and even deeper lows. Max, who was never affected by his emotions on a race weekend became a mess.

Damn, Lewis really took over his life.

He became steady after everything was settled. He performed better and better, the team was happy, Marko shut his mouth, Christian survived, and caught up on the others.

But most importantly he could call Lewis whenever he wanted, got pictures from him at least five times a day, and it didn't matter where he was, he could fall asleep to the sound of Lewis singing a lullaby for their baby girl.

Brazil looked good, good weather, good car, good pace, and he started even better. Val was right behind him, starting second with Checo in third. He had the most to lose out of the three of them, he was still first but with only some points, he couldn't afford to make any mistakes.

And he didn't, it was nice and smooth, he led with confidence, the three of them made a small gang way ahead of the others.

“Keep up the good work.” He heard GP’s voice in his ears.

“On it. Sorry for the boring race.” Max said mockingly.

“Action is overrated.”

“So true man!”

In a blink of an eye, it was like a house of cards. It was like in any other race, the wanted to lap some backmarkers, when Max heard the unmistakable voice of a puncture. Someone pushed someone, who was spinning trough right in front on Max, and it was only pure luck he could pass someone in the middle of the track.

He drove off as fast as he could.

“The fuck was that??” Max was almost screaming; the pandemonium got smaller in his rearview mirror, but his heart couldn’t stop beating so fast.

“A flat tyre. Bottas out. Safety car. Be cool, Max.”

Max was everything but cool. He slowed down for the optimal speed, waiting for the safety car to get in front of him, and tried to calm himself down. Checked his mirror, Checo was still there.

He reminded himself that the race wasn’t over yet. One minus, one to go.

“Three more laps Max, you’re all alone.”

He really felt like he was alone, drove unbothered by the others, and beside that crash somewhere in the middle of the race, it was uneventful, in the good meaning of the word.

“Easy peasy.”

“Get out!”

“GP?”

“You can’t be here!”

“Get the fuck out of my fucking way, I need to talk to Max!”

Was that Val’s voice? How could Valtteri get into...? What was happening in the pit??

“Max, it’s me. He just called. He’s in labour.”

Max hit the brakes so fast the tyres were smoking from the friction.

Valtteri didn’t need to tell his who he was talking about.

“But... but it’s still too early. He can’t...” The whole world crashed around him. His mind went to autopilot, and he acted without thinking.

“Max, it’s Christian, don’t stop the engine...” so Max got the earplugs out, and got out of the car as fast as he could, just to walk to the grass and puke his guts out.

Lewis went to labour. Lewis went to labour with their daughter prematurely, which risked both his and the baby’s life.

“Are you okay?”

Checo, right next to him, his blue car parked next to Max’s. Somewhere in the back of his mind he still knew it was a race, *he just stopped his fucking car in the middle of a race*, but his thoughts ran too fast for him to acknowledge them.

“Lewis...”

“It’s okay.” Sergio grabbed his arm, and helped him to his shaky feet. “We go back to the garage, and the docs will check if you’re okay.”

Docs.

Lewis.

The baby.

Max wasn’t okay at all.

“What the hell are you two doing here??”

The green Aston Martin was still on the track, but the pilot’s visor was up. Max had never been more relieved to see Sebastian.

“I need to go back to the garage. Lewis is in labour with my kid.” It was the first time Max said it out loud, but it sounded so natural, he didn’t even realize it. He knew Seb wouldn’t make any comments about it.

“Hop in, Baby Daddy. We have a birth to attend.”

“Go, I’ll talk with Marko.” Said Checo; Max almost forgot he was there.

“Good luck with that.”

“You need luck more than I do man. It’ll be crazier for you. Have fun.”

Max quickly hugged Sergio tight.

"Thank you. Go, win that championship."

"On it!"

With that Max ran to sit on the side of Sebastian’s car.

“Hold on tight.” Said the German “Let’s go and meet that kiddo.”

Yeah, Max was ready to meet his daughter.

Chapter 16

Lewis was in week 33, and he had completely fed up of it. It was crazy thinking back at how nervous he was at the beginning; how *afraid* he was of the journey ahead of him. By now he just had enough.

It was his last appointment before the 36-week mark. From there he would be here every week, so hopefully he'd have three unbothered weeks for that. And hopefully that little lady could hurry and make an end to his dad's sufferings.

He was good, of course, and he had his own 'glowing' period, but overall, it started to be more uncomfortable with every passing day. His belly was too big to sleep comfortably, and it didn't matter how huge his clothes were, they always felt too tight. The baby's kicking interrupted the naps he took at least five times a day, because he was always tired, and just today he had to add constant peeing to the list.

Lewis loved every minute of being pregnant. It was just too much of a good thing.

"Just some more weeks." He said to his baby bump, soothingly stroking the girl. She surely took after her Papa's agitation. Which one of them he wanted to calm with his words, he wasn't sure.

"Hey Lewis."

"Hi." He greeted his doc, who helped him standing up from the armchair standing in the waiting room. Whose idea was to put soft cushioned chairs under pregnant people? The chances of getting up alone...

"Are you okay?" asked the woman after she led him to the examining room.

"Sure. Just a little bit fidgety."

"For any particular reason, or...?"

"No, no, everything's fine."

"You're just in the finish line, I get that, I'm a mother of two." laughed the woman. Lewis thought his baby would be an only child. "Take off your trousers, and sit on the chair, please."

The thought of that time being the last one for some weeks got Lewis through. Cervical exams weren't painful, but had always been uncomfortable, but this time it was like a sensory overload; his skin on the inside of his thigh was burning under the doc's touch.

"Any back pain?"

"No, not really?"

"No, or not really?"

He should have known right there, that something was wrong. It was like a chain reaction: this nervous energy radiating from the baby stuck on Lewis and now it stuck on the woman. Her head was between Lewis' thighs, getting different tools off of the small table next to her, humming absently without saying anything.

"Is there a problem?"

"Oh no, not at all."

"Then what...?"

"Lewis, you're 2 centimeters dilated."

When he thought about getting over the whole pregnancy, Lewis didn't think about doing it *that fast*.

Max was running through the long corridors, racing suit tucked down to his hips. The only thing he could think about was the article, he read on WebMD about how babies born at 33 weeks are considered to be *moderately* preterm. He read all the statistics, and while the odds of her princess being a completely healthy baby, there was still a chance for respiratory diseases, pneumonia, infection, hypoglycemia... and a full page of other problems written in medical Latin and while Max didn't understand a word, they all sounded horrible.

He was almost sure he was late. He tried to call Lewis, who didn't answer his call, and Max was more than worried, somehow, he could understand that. Lewis was too busy delivering their baby to pick up his phone. He wanted to believe the doc would call him if something bad happened. But yeah, the travel was long, even with a private jet, hour passed since he left Brazil. He just hoped he wasn't *too* late.

So when he got to the floor he was directed in the reception and saw Lewis walking slowly to his direction in a hospital gown, he was surprised, to put it mildly.

"Lew?"

"Maxy..." sighed Lewis and put one of his hands against the wall next to him, the other reached to the direction of the Dutch.

"Babe, what are you doing, what the, what...?" Max hurried to him, and embraced the other's waist to help him to carry the weight, but to his even bigger surprise, Lewis grabbed the neck of his balaclava, and wrenched Max closer to himself.

"Maxy...!" this time it didn't sound as aerial as before. "I swear to God, if you put me through this one more time, I'm gonna so fucking kill you!"

"I'm... okay? Sure, okay, sorry." Max was willing to agree to anything Lewis wanted. He had small sweat droplets on his skin, and looked like he should after a race in the middle of summer. Max wanted to know if he was okay, if the baby was okay, but there was something else he couldn't get over. "What are you doing here?!"

“Walking.” he said simply, like it was the most obvious thing on earth.

“Taking walk during active labor can help ease the intensity.” Sebastian sounded like a fucking encyclopedia.

He was standing behind Max, dressed just as chaotic, but he was so nice to keep Max company and chatting with the nurses at the reception while Max was too busy to even say a hello. He was a little bit scared of Lewis’ reaction for Seb being there, but it seemed Lewis was too occupied with being angry. To whom, was a mystery yet.

“I’m a father of three.” shrugged Seb, when Lewis still didn’t say a word, just stared at him, his hand still holding on Max’s hem.

“Oh yeah? And tell me Mr. Know it all, what else walking does?” Lewis’ voice had a sharp edge. If Max were in Sebastian’s place he might haven’t wanted to answer.

“It can help keep the labor progressing.”

“Progressing. Right. Do you want me to show you progress, you...!”

“Hey, hey, hey...It’s okay...” Valtteri just arrived at the perfect moment, and reassuringly led Lewis back to the examining room. Max always envied how easily the Finn could cope with Lewis’ moods.

“Seb? How long can a labor last?” Max didn’t really want an answer, but he needed to know.

“Approximately 10-14 hours.”

Well, it’d be a long day.

Still, the only thing Max could think about was that his baby was waiting for him.

Maybe he needed to force the huge grin off of his face before he went to check on Lewis.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Dedicated to Angie Grace and her teasing. Look Babe, I updated a whole week before the race! Be proud 🥰❤️

“Okay, Lewis, it seems you’re dilated enough, so we can soon mee with your princess...”

“No.”

“What?!”

Max was holding Lewis’ hand in the last some hours, while they were waiting together for the labor to progress. It took so long even Lando and Pierre arrived, and they came to the examining room to say hi, but after that it was just him, Val, and Lewis himself, who suffered through all the waiting.

The contractions weren’t as bad as Max thought, Lewis’ doc said it must have been because he was so used to pain and physical strain, and that was why Lewis didn’t even realize he was in labor. So there was no sign of anything typically movie like, Max’s hand was still in a good shape in Lewis’, and he wasn’t screaming for painkillers, but then the man made that comment, and something changed.

“I leave you two alone.” Said Valtteri after looking from Lewis to Max and back and stood up to leave the room. On his way he sent a meaningful look to the doc, and slightly moved his head to the direction of the door.

“What? No...! I can’t... okay, you have five minutes.” she said exhaustedly, and went after Valtteri.

“Babe?” started Max gently. He had no idea what made Lewis changed his mind, and he tried to suppress the nervousness that slowly took over his mind.

“I’m sorry, really, I’m just....”

“Tell me. Whatever it is, just tell me. No more lies, remember?”

“I can’t do this.”

“Lewis, you’ve been waiting for this for weeks, I’m listening you talking about it all the time. Not like I’m complaining, and not like I can’t understand! It must be very hard for you; I can’t even imagine that. I’ll be forever grateful for you doing this for us. And it’s finally over. We will meet with our baby. Aren’t you excited?”

And exactly that was what made Lewis hesitant.

While rationally he knew perfectly well, he couldn't stop the process, he always thought about it like something only existing in the *future*, and today was just too fast for his liking. His ADHD needed to make longtime plans.

He had this nice image in his head about packing everything he would need together with Max, who rehearsed all the routes to the hospital at any given time of the day, and they'd drive here together, weeks later.

The reality crashed around him.

"It's too early." He said the thing which occupied his mind all along finally, his voice came out in a hiccup; his contractions really coming more frequently. It was too early, and he couldn't protect his baby if something went wrong...!

"Yeah, I know. And I'm just as afraid as you are. You know, I can't say that everything will be all right, because I don't know how things will turn out, but I can promise whatever happens I'll be right here with you."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

"I'm horribly sorry, but I can't give you more time." popped the doctor her head in the doorway "Your little girl really wants to get out, and she wants it soon, so..."

"Let's do it." said Lewis just as much to the woman, as himself. "I won seven *fucking* championships, and if you idiot wouldn't get me pregnant, I could win the eighth, it will be nothing compared to that, for fuck's shake!"

And Max couldn't have been more in love with him.

"... and that's how babies are born." finished Sebastian his little biology lesson, the notebook he drew visuals and illustrating diagrams still in his hand, and he looked so enthusiastic talking endlessly Val thought he'd chosen the wrong profession.

Lando, on the other hand, looked paler and paler with every word leaving Seb's mouth, his knuckles were getting white from clutching the armrest of the chair. He looked at Pierre, who was sitting next to him, nose in his phone, probably scrolling through Instagram, and grabbed his arm.

"Tell me you don't want to have kids. Please. *Please*. If you ever make me go through this, I'm..."

Valtteri had never been more relieved to see Max, who interrupted Lando and his sentence with getting out of the room, slamming the door to the wall.

He looked like he usually did after a hard race in the Texas heat, the sleeves of his fireproofs' tucked up to his elbows, his hair ruffled, and sweat was visible on his red face.

But what made Val worry was the sign of tears in the corner of his eyes. He held his breath back, until the boy finally said something.

“Amelie...” he said quietly, and the tears he tried to hold back finally slipped, and it was like the whole world had been muted and stopped, and only Max’s words made it start again.

They all started cheering, Lando forgot he didn’t want kids and excitedly begged for Max to see the girl, Pierre tried unnoticedly rid of his tears, and Seb already started to make a list of the things they needed to get to the hospital.

Val went straight to Max, and hugged him. He was just exhausted as Valtteri imagined, he put his forehead to Val’s shoulder and got a few deep breaths.

"Is he okay?"

“They both are. They are both perfect. Just simply perfect.”

Obviously, they couldn’t meet the baby, healthy or not, she was still preterm, so they just stood on the other side of the huge glass window of the neonatal intensive care unit. It wasn’t hard to recognize her, she was the only baby with a long enough hair to poke out from under the small pink hat, and the only one not crying. Her big blue eyes looked curiously to the world around her.

And if someone still had problems finding her among the other babies, the nametag on her ankle showed her name to everyone.

Amelia Faith Hamilton-Verstappen.

Chapter 18

Right at the moment Lewis felt strong enough to get out of the bed, and he got all the green lights he needed from her doc, he was immovable from next to her daughter's incubator.

He would never forget how relieved he was when he first heard the strong, loud crying of the baby, or how the pressure left his body with an almost al loud cry as the girl's. Max next to him also had tears in his eyer, and he squeezed Lewis' hand so hard it was a miracle he didn't break any bones.

"She's here." Said the boy, voice shaky, tears rolling down his face.

"She is." Agreed Lewis, and while we had never been more tired in his life, he realized he should have been the one supporting the other. "It's okay, she's fine."

"Thank you. I... I can't tell you how grateful I am for you for this miracle."

"She's *our* miracle."

"You're both my miracles."

And to show that a day or so later Max arrived with a matching set of jewelry, a rose-gold necklace with an *A* medal on it for Lewis, and a small pair of earrings with pink diamonds for Amelie. She was still too fragile to wear them, but the velvet box with them was waiting for their small owner in the nursery.

Touching the little girl for the first time was just as memorable, than the moments right after her birth. Lewis had to be careful reaching into the incubator. There were cables attached to her little nose, helping her breathing, and the rhythmic beeping from the machines said everything was fine, but realizing that her whole hand was as big as Lewis' one phalanx, was both fascination and scary at the same time.

Still, when Amelie reached his tiny hand to hold onto his Dad's, Lewis could have melted.

"Talk to her, she has already got used to your voice." advised his doc "In some weeks she'll be big enough to get her out for some proper skin-to-skin contact."

Lewis couldn't wait for that.

Max also spent most of his racing free time in the hospital with them, always asking Lewis if he needed something, and bringing small presents and greetings from the others.

But somehow, he never touched Amelia.

It wasn't that recognizable at first. Lewis was the one with a chair in the NCIU, and all the nurses were familiar with his constant presence, one of his hand always in the incubator, his other occupied with a book or his phone, and it wasn't an overstatement to say their girl got the most attention out of all the babies there.

Lewis only realized it when one day Max was ready to leave at the end of visiting hours, and as usual gave a kiss to Lewis' forehead. Before the boy turned to the direction of the exit he awkwardly patted the glass of the incubator, like he would do to his daughter.

"Do you think I'm territorial over Amelie?" Lewis asked Valtteri one day when the Finn went to visit them. He only tried to be a caring father, but maybe he was too much. God, they were parents for only a week or so, but he was already full with doubts.

Val raised his eyebrows, and after his hand, which was on the little girl's back. The incubator had two holes, from both sides, and Lewis was more than fine with him stroking Amelia. Her skin was so *so* soft, Val was sure Tiffany would love it. They had to come back together for a visit.

"Are you serious?" he asked finally.

"Max didn't touch her before. Like ever. And I'm thinking maybe it's because, I'm..."

"Have you thought about... you know. *Asking* him?"

Yes, Lewis *knew* he should have asked Max, still he was too afraid of the answer, and never did. Not even when the doc allowed them to get Amelie out of the incubator for the first time, and not after the hundredth time when the small bundle was sleeping on Lewis' shirtless chest. Whatever was Max's problem, he didn't want to push it, not when things seemed to be so good between them.

As usual, life solved it for him. It was the day of the annual FIA Prize Giving Ceremony, and Max came to the hospital for a quick visit before going there to get his second-place trophy, all dressed in a well-tailored jet-black suit, obviously chosen by Lewis.

"You look good." admired Lewis his choice. The sand-colored hair of Max made a perfect contrast with the color of the suit. He looked so perfect, Lewis even caught some of the nurses shamelessly stare at him.

"You two look better."

"Yeah, I can imagine." laughed Lewis. His hair was in a messy bun, his clothes were too big, and if that wasn't enough Amelie just burped on his shirt. "Thanks sweetheart, just what I wanted for now." He said playfully to the girl "Can you hold her while I change?" he only looked up from his daughter, when he didn't get an answer.

The boy was pale like a ghost, angst and fear obvious on his face.

"Are you okay?"

"Please don't. I don't want to. I'm..."

"Max?"

"She's too small, I can't, what if I break her? Please Lewis, I'm not that careful, you're so good with her, I don't want to do something bad." Max pleaded, on the verge of tears, and

while it was heartbreaking to watch, Lewis immediately calmed down. It wasn't like Max didn't love their daughter, the contrary, he was afraid of *hurting* her.

"Come, sit here baby." Stood Lewis up from the armchair he was sitting on, giving his place to Max "Unbutton yourself."

"Lewis..."

"It's gonna be okay darling. I'm here with you. Loosen those buttons."

Max obeyed him, and unbuttoned his shirt, opening it up enough so Lewis could put Amelie on his naked chest.

"Here, just hold her head."

"But she's so small. I'll cover her whole back."

"Even better. She'll feel more secure."

Just like she wanted to prove her Dad's words, Amelie snuggled closer to Max's chest, and with a huge yawn she fell asleep.

"She's beautiful." Max seemed like he couldn't stop touching his daughter now he had her in his lap. He was amazed by her small hands, ears and cute little nose. And Lewis couldn't stop watching them. He needed it just as much as both Amelie and Max did.

"Fuck, Max, you'll be late! I go and change quick, and you can go leave to the Gala."

"What, no! I'm not giving her back!"

"Babe, you'll be late. You have to go there and get your trophy."

"I already have you two. My two biggest trophies."

Lewis heard the nurses going 'awwww' behind him, he should have known they were eavesdropping.

Still, he could only agree with them.

7 years later

Chapter Notes

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

Formula 1 Race Director Sebastian Vettel sat down behind the huge desk which stood in the middle of his office. He looked at the others in front of him, and let out a huge sigh.

“Why is it, when something happens, it’s always you three?”

Amelie was swinging her feet on the huge chair, and at first looked to her left. Polly, the beagle pup immediately started to wag her tail, eagerly happy to get her little owner’s attention. On her right, Roscoe put his head on his paws, puppy eyes glaring at Sebastian. Well, at least one of them looked guiltily.

“It was an accident!” stated Amelie quickly.

“So, the pile of tires fell down by itself.” Nodded Seb to his words “Must have been the ghosts living in the paddock.”

“Are there ghost living here?!”

“No.”

“Oh.” Enthusiasm left the girl’s face, and she started to play with the hem of her shirt instead. He looked so much like Max. “In this case... There’s a possibility, that it might have been me...”

“A possibility?”

“Daddy always says everything is possible.”

“Hmm... That’s true. Okay, let’s imagine then, if it was you, why would it happen?”

“I just wanted to sit on the tires. It’s high enough to see Papa drive...”

“But you do know how dangerous it is for you to be around the tires, especially during the race, don’t you, Cherry?”

“I do. Are you angry?”

“I am, but I’m not angry at you, I’m angry, because you scared all of us so much when you fell.”

“I’m sorry.”

Seb watched those huge blue eyes filling up with tears behind the long lashes, and as the soft pink lips started to wobble.

“Maybe this time I’ll decide against any further actions. But only if you give a huge hug for your Uncle Sebby, for almost giving him a heart attack.” Sebastian reached out his arms for her, and let the impact of Amelie’s strong hug push him back to the chair.

Gosh, it was just yesterday when he first held the small baby in his arms, and now she was old enough to wander around the paddock.

They grow up so fast.

“Summoned to the race director himself. I guess you can say like fathers like daughter.”

“Shut up Daniel.” Rolled Papa his eyes as he picked Amelie up when she left Seb’s office, and he gave her a small kiss on her forehead. Amelie hid her face in the crook of his neck.

“Yes, shut up Uncle Daniel. You’re not funny.”

“Arrgghh Cherry, you just broke my heart!” Daniel grabbed his heart in anguish.

The truth was, Uncle Daniel was actually quite funny. He and Papa were team mates as long as Amelie could remember, and the man was always ready to play or spend some time with her, when Papa gave interviews, or when Daddy was talking with his driver. Papa always said they were on the same level, which was totally not true, because Uncle Daniel was much taller than her.

“Chérie!”

But obviously, Uncle Daniel was not even close to Uncle Pierre, or Uncle Lando.

One of her first memory was Uncle Pierre calling her his cherry, and as Daddy said, it was even her second word, right after ‘no’, and Daddy also said she must have got it from Papa, but Amelie didn’t really understand that. The nickname stuck, and the small cherry shaped pendant she got for her seventh birthday from Uncle Pierre she wore proudly all the time showed the origin of it to everyone.

She got out of Papa’s arms, just to snuggle in Uncle Lando’s. He was just as funny as Uncle Daniel, but in a much calmer way. He was always ready to play Mario Kart, drew the best ponies, and Amelie loved to cuddle into his soft, colorful clothes.

“You scared the shit out of us Cherry.” Uncle Lando sad, hugging her closer to his chest. Amelie giggled into the sweet-smelling fabric.

“Sounds fun.”

“Well, let me tell you, it wasn’t.”

“You should wear a diaper in the car. Like babies.”

“Smartass.” said Uncle Lando with a huge grin, and booped her nose.

“Just like her Papa.”

Uncle Valtteri got her out of Uncle Lando’s arms, and gave her a tight hug. Uncle Val gave the best hugs.

“If you hadn’t wanted to finish behind me you just should have driven faster, there was no need to ask your daughter to sabotage the race.” he said to Papa.

“Very funny.”

“Is Auntie Tiff here?”

“No Cherry, she’s at home with baby Mina.”

Amelie had already visited Auntie Tiffany and baby Mina in the hospital, but he couldn’t wait for her to be a little bigger, and to play together. They were already best friends forever.

“Can you lend some diapers to Uncle Lando? So, he can poop in the car.”

“I guess your dads will need it before your Uncle Lando.”

“Why would Daddy or Papa...”

“Amelia Faith...!”

“Uh-oh.”

When Daddy used her full name, it never meant good.

He got her out of Uncle Valtteri’s arms, and got her in a strong hug right away. Amelie loved her uncles, but it was just so much better with Daddy and Papa.

“Here, give me that.” Papa got the helmet out of Daddy’s other hand, and also coaxed the backpack full with kinesio tape, elastic bands and funny smelling massage oils off of his back. Amelie knew it was all needed for Daddy to work with his driver, and she loved to play with them in the physio room.

“I’m not ill!”

“Of course, you’re not.” Agreed Papa gently to Dad’s outburst. Papa was always calm if it was about Daddy, but nowadays he was even more serene. He didn’t even say a word when Daddy ate his minced meat spaghetti, just silently ate the one with only tomato. Suspicious.

“Don’t you ever dare to scare me like that again!”

Oh yeah, and that, Amelie almost forgot about that.

“I’m sorry.”

“Are you hurt?”

“I scraped my knee.”

“It’s just a scratch.” shrugged Papa, which obviously made Daddy start over again.

“Just a scratch? Just a *scratch*? Max Emilian...!”

Good thing Papa had a middle name too.

Amelie’s very first memory was Papa giving a small kiss to Daddy’s cheek, and then they smiled at each other. Just like at that moment, when Papa fondly caressed Daddy’s back, and Daddy turning back over his shoulder grabbed Papa’s hand, his head rested on Papa’s shoulder.

Amelie closed her eyes, and crawled deeper into her Dad’s arms. It was quite an eventful day, and it really wore her out.

When she opened her eyes again, she saw that smile again. She always thought that smile was love itself.

She closed her eyes again, and that time she felt her eyelids too heavy to open them again.

Her last thought before falling asleep was that smile, and everything that it meant to her.

Because for her, that smile had always meant that she was safe.

She was loved.

She was at home.

Chapter End Notes

Wow.

I still can believe we really made it to the end.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone all the kudos, comments, subscriptions, but most importantly the support, love, help and friendships I got and made along the way. It was a hell of a ride with ups and down, but I knew all along that I can count on you guys. Thank you very much for being here. ❤️❤️❤️

And because of all the good things the story gave me, I'm still not ready to let it go, and since many of you asked if I'd add some more chapters, I decided to make a prompt/ask/request collection (??? please help a boomer with the lingo 🤔). I was jumping in the time many times, and I'm sure I left out many thing you wanted to read about, so just drop them in the comments 📩 or feel free to send me a mail to the address in my profile, and I'll try my best to write them as fast as I can!

Thank you agan, and I hope I'll see you in the future too!

(Oh wait, and happy final race day! If it makes you just as anxious as it makes me, feel free to reach out, and we can suffer together!)

Love ❤️💜💙

Works inspired by this one

[Restricted Work] by [LuceLucey](#).

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