

If We Sleep Together Would You Be My Friend Forever

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If We Sleep Together Would You Be My Friend Forever

by [blithers](#)

Summary

“What about me?” Mindy asks, annoyed. “Do you know how often in a person's life the whole sharing a room thing comes up? And I'm about to throw away this prime hook-up scenario with *you*? How is that even fair?”

Notes

Happy Yuletide, fujiidom! I hope you enjoy this. Title from the song "La Familia" by Mirah. Many thanks and happy returns to [hyacinthian](#) for the beta!

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

The moment is pretty much perfect.

She has three pieces of luggage, a large shopping bag from Macy's, and two hat boxes strung together with a belt in the back of their rented car. Her hair is tied up with a silk handkerchief like Grace Kelly. She's wearing a sundress that actually works with her boobs. Basically, there's no way this moment could be more awesome.

...Except for the fact that Danny is being weird and sweating over a gigantic old school map spread out over the top of the car.

"Danny." She smacks his arm. "Hey, Danny, chill. You're ruining this. It's like you're here," she brings a hand up to roller coaster height, "and you need to bring the intensity level down to here," toddler height, "with us normal people." She pauses, re-considers, and moves her hand down even closer to the ground.

He slaps a hand down on the map, the GPS jumping from the reverberation, and scowls like he's going mano-a-mano with their tiny Euro rental car. "I am driving us to a god damned conference, Mindy, not taking you on some picturesque drive to the Hamptons."

"Okay, you're, like, totally ruining my Grace Kelly mojo now. Calm down. I have actual hat boxes in the trunk of this car. Nothing about this trip could possibly go wrong."

So, as it turns out: that's *definitely* the wrong thing to say.

They roll up to the hotel at three in the morning, seven and a half hours behind schedule.

She's pulling brambles (real, old-school *brambles*, what) out of her hair and mourning the death of her sundress, which keeps slipping precariously downward and threatening to nip her out. Danny's hair is sticking up in messed-up chunks, pointed in every direction, like some teenage boy who just discovered the wonders of hair gel.

"Name?" the hotel receptionist chirps at them, and it's a massive relief to have a third party they can direct their mutual wrath toward.

"Castellano," he snaps, doing a pretty good impression of a serial killer trying to be casual when checking into a hotel.

The receptionist frowns as she pecks at the keyboard before looking back up at them expectantly. "And are the two of you together?" she asks.

She scoffs. "Ha, no. It's Lahiri. *Doctor* Mindy Lahiri."

Danny taps his fingers listlessly on the hotel counter. His eyes are smudged dark with exhaustion and his stupid fitted shirt is shredded across his chest like he just escaped from a horror movie or a pack of werewolves (probably not the hot kind).

"I'm sorry," the woman says, her perky tone implying she really isn't, "I don't see a reservation for Lahiri in our system."

Mindy stares at her. "Is that a joke? Because it's a terrible joke."

"Really, I'm sorry."

"Are you apologizing for how bad that joke was?"

"We have a reservation for two under Castellano," the woman offers, a thin note of desperation entering her voice.

"What? No. Just book me into my own room. We're doctors, we can afford it, am I right, Danny-boy?" She pulls a pine branch out of the metal clasp for the strap of her purse with great dignity and drops it on the floor of the lobby. Danny sways a little next to her, spacing out hardcore, staring at the clock behind the reception counter.

"I'm sorry ma'am, but we don't have any vacancies this entire weekend. Between the conference and three weddings..."

Mindy holds up a hand. "Did you just call me *ma'am*? What am I, forty? Oh my God, do I look like I'm *forty*?"

"...we're booked up full."

"But what am I supposed to *do*?"

"Jesus," Danny says, pulling his attention back from the brink of nowhere and scrubbing a hand down his face, smearing a bit of dirt on his left cheekbone. "Apparently I ended up with a reservation for two. Just stay in my room, Mindy."

"It's a single bed," the receptionist says, wincing a little.

They both stare at her.

"Okay," Danny says, with grim determination, "we get one of those rolling beds up there. Problem solved."

"...We just loaned out the last one an hour ago."

"Are you *kidding* me?"

"I'm so sorry," the woman repeats desperately.

"Do you know what we went through to get here? Do you know how hard it is to find this goddamn place? I deserve to sleep in a real bed and not on the floor like I'm going to end up doing because I'm a *gentleman*."

"What about me?" Mindy asks, annoyed. "Do you know how often in a person's life the whole sharing a room thing comes up? And I'm about to throw away this prime hook-up

scenario with *you*? How is that even fair?"

"You should be so lucky, sweetheart," he snaps.

"Here are your keys," the receptionist interjects hopefully, pushing a thin envelope toward them.

"Not helpful, *Jessica*," Mindy says, and tugs her broken spaghetti strap up again.

She splashes some water on her face and changes into her pajamas, folding up her destroyed sundress with solemn reverence.

"You were an awesome dress," she whispers, patting it gently.

Danny's in cotton running shorts and a faded t-shirt by the time she comes back out, laid out on the floor with a pillow and a scratchy blanket they dug out of the closet. He's combining the innate charisma of a two-by-four with the awkward tension of a thirteen year old boy at an all-girl's sleepover. It's basically super hot, if you're into socially stunted robots.

"Good night," he says stiffly.

"Night, Danny," she says, hitting the light as she climbs into bed.

She sits up again a few minutes later.

"Okay, this is ridiculous. This is a king size bed. You don't have to sleep on the floor."

"I'm not..."

"You don't..."

"I don't want to..."

"Stop it! Seriously, Danny, are you really going to argue with me about this?"

"Yes."

She rolls her eyes. "Daniel Castellano, be a man and get in this bed with me."

There's a suspiciously silent pause after she says this.

"*Fine*," he says, throwing his pillow back on the other side of the bed. "But only because I'm exhausted and because we drove through seven different states today and I can't deal with this thing and you at the same time right now."

"Good," she says, way too smugly for somebody who doesn't really know what she's agreeing with.

"If you tell anybody about this, I will deny it."

"Uh, I'm pretty sure I'm the one should be the one saying that. *You* should totally be bragging about what's happening right here." She gestures down at her body which, c'mon, they both know is pretty slamming.

He gives her a sharp look and tugs the covers back to climb in.

"...Okay, fine. Whatever, dude."

He pauses, caught in the middle of pulling the bedspread up over himself, and gives her a weirdly perceptive look for whatever-the-fuck o'clock in the morning it is right now. "You know what I mean," he says finally.

"Sure."

He shakes his head and finishes tucking himself under the comforter. The cotton sheets tug at her as he settles in, and she can hear his breath even out next to her as soon as he finds a comfortable spot.

She falls asleep first, fast and dreamless.

When she wakes up, hazy with a cozy warmth, there's an arm draped around her waist, a knee sandwiched between her legs, and an erection pressed firmly against her lower back. She lets her eyes flutter closed again, burrowing herself back into the body wrapped around her, before she remembers *Danny* and that this is a Castellano boner wedged up against her and oh yeah they are totally spooning.

So, okay. *Definitely* his penis.

And it's like now that's she's noticed it, she can't exactly *un*-notice the fact that her life has turned into a when-the-moment-is-right Viagra commercial, so she just keeps her eyes closed and tries to keep her breathing steady. And not, you know, the breath of a woman being propositioned by an overly eager piece of anatomy with a weirdly tight-ass owner.

He mutters something in his sleep, shifting a little closer and nudging his nose deeper into her hair. His fingers curl reflexively to almost touch her ribcage, digging into the fabric of her tank top, and when he exhales she feels it all the way down the back of her neck.

The next thing she knows she's blinking her eyes open in the sunlight, sprawled out in an empty bed. She can hear the shower running in the bathroom, and the sheets wrapped around her are slowly getting cold.

He sings Springsteen in the shower.

She stares at him over the spread at the breakfast buffet.

"What?" he asks, distracted, buttering a piece of toast like it's a personal vendetta.

"Penis," she says, carefully enunciating all the letters.

He looks up at that. "What?"

"Your penis, your mister pistol." She waves a hand in the general region of his dry-cleaned blue jeans, so stiff it's a miracle his tiny little legs fit in them. "It was all up in my business when I woke up this morning. I was going to carry that secret to my grave but then I was like, wait, no, this is a burden that really needs to be shared."

He goes very still and stares back down at his toast. "It was your idea," he says. "And it's biology. You're a doctor. Figure it out."

"Danny, I'm a gynecologist. I study the business of ladies. And apparently so does your penis. When the lady is *me*." Booyah.

His totally adult response is to stuff the toast in his mouth and walk away. She tries to decide if she wants an orange when there are so many awesomer options. Fuck it. She grabs a cinnamon roll and runs after him.

"Really, Mindy?" he hisses, glancing around them. "You're going to make a thing of this?"

"I just thought we might want to talk about the fact that your unconscious self totally wants to get it on with me." She smiles at him and takes a slow, seductive bite of the cinnamon roll.

"I'm not..." He grits his teeth and grabs her arm, tugging her into a corner away from people. "Look, it's nothing personal. I'm sorry if I embarrassed you - it's just..." his voice drops, and he winces a little, "...I'm not used to sleeping in the same bed as somebody else right now."

The cinnamon roll is aah-mazing, melting in her mouth. "It's cool. I won't tell anybody else about your infatuation with me. But," she widens her eyes, "I can't keep secrets from you, baby." She lays a hand lightly on his forearm.

He moves in a little closer to her face. "*Mindy*," he growls.

"Danny," she sing-songs.

"Dr. Lahiri! Dr. Castellano!" A colleague rushes up to them, barging into the middle of their Eastwood-esque showdown, which is unfair because she was totally winning. Game, set, so close to match.

"Dr. Greenstone!" she exclaims, turning away from Danny and giving him a benevolent smile. "How nice to see you again."

"Dr. Shulman tells me you're turning into quite the little gynecologist," he laughs, and his belly jiggles like some sort of weird sexist Santa thing. She keeps her grin plastered on her face.

"Well, I'm just doing as well as my pretty little hands will let me."

Danny's watching the man with an intense blankness which usually means he's *this close* to punching the person in front of him in the face.

She fake-looks at her wrist. "Look at the time! Come on Danny, we're going to be late for our first session. Dr. Greenstone, it's been a pleasure."

"A pleasure," Danny repeats flatly, allowing her to tug him along with her. She gives Dr. Greenstone a cheerful little wave over her shoulder as they walk away.

"Keep it in your pants, Castellano," she whispers. He glances over at her, annoyed.

"Do not defend that misogynist prick."

"First of all, Danny, appreciate the double entendre. Secondly, as much as I would love to see you take the man down - and believe me, it would give me great pleasure in some very specific ways - he's a joke. Let him go the way of the dinosaurs. I'm thinking we bide our time until he's taken out by the next ice age. Winter is coming, bitches."

He snorts a laugh, smothering it quickly.

"C'mon, we both know I'm like the cutest of the Bond villains," she says, and bumps her shoulder into his with a grin.

He places his hand at the small of her back as they enter the room where their first panel is being held. "Also," she whispers before taking her seat, "to get back to the subject at hand: *your penis*. The facts don't lie, my friend. Your penis totally digs me."

"Seriously?" he sighs, but there's less bite to it now.

They're sitting shoulder-to-shoulder, crammed onto thin plastic folding chairs, and he waits until the panel starts to lean over so his lips are at her ear. "I'll sleep on the floor tonight," he whispers. He smells faintly of men's cologne and the plastic-y scent of hotel bar soap.

She makes a note of the Very Important Thing their conference speaker just explained before leaning back toward him. "Don't do it for me. I just wanted to make sure we're both on the same page when it comes to how awesome you think I am. Which, by the way, is *very*."

He taps his pen against his leg a couple times, his mouth tight.

"Fine," he says, voice low. "But only because I hate sleeping on the damn floor. I'm not in college anymore."

"Uh, yeah, I think we all know that, old man," she says, and nudges him with her elbow.

It's still awkward, anyway.

Danny changes into a pair of old school pajamas in the bathroom, providing acres more coverage than the shorts and t-shirt combo he wore the previous night, and shuffles around

the side of the bed warily. She has her contacts out and her glasses on, channel surfing lazily and curled up like a comma on her half of the bed. He flips on the bedside lamp, turns off the overhead light, and then visibly panics and changes course, grabbing the pillow and throwing it on the floor.

"I'm just gonna take the floor," he says in a rush, then sniffs and clears his throat simultaneously in a weirdly sinus-y and ineffective display of masculinity.

Ugh. "Seriously, Danny, could you be more weird about things?"

His back stiffens, but he sits down on the bed, his shoulders set like he's at the edge of a cliff and expects to be pushed off at any moment.

She slides the remote toward him on the bedspread. "Try to find something that's not completely awful, okay?"

"You wouldn't know good taste if it hit you in the face," he grumbles, but he picks up the remote and starts idly flipping channels.

"You know what, I take offense at that. I have terrific taste."

"Compared to what, a thirteen year old girl?"

"Those bitches wish. ...Uh, what's *this*?"

"Ice Truckers," he says, tucking his hands behind his head and slipping his feet under the comforter next to hers.

"Okay, is that, like, truckers who drive ice around?" She's trying here. She really is.

"No. This is *truckers* who drive on roads covered in *ice*."

"So that's obviously an amazing subject for a reality TV show."

"Exactly," he agrees, distracted.

"No. Not exactly! I was being facetious, dude."

He rolls his eyes at her like a teenage girl at the dinner table. "You wouldn't get it anyway."

She sits up a little straighter, pulling the bedspread with her. "Try me."

He flips the remote around a few times in his hand, half-throwing it so it rotates on his palm in a semi-circle. "It's..." he squints at the television, "...it's about being a man."

"How did I know you were going to say that?"

He ignores that, waving a hand in front of him to paint a bleak and depressing picture for her. "It's just you, an eighteen wheeler, and a road full of ice that wants to kill you. You handle

that, you can handle anything life throws at you. It's simple. It's direct. You know exactly what you're facing."

"...That sounds like the worst job ever."

"You're missing the point."

"C'mon, if you had a son would you want him out driving death roads in the middle of the night? He'd probably wear plaid and have a giant mountain man beard and people would look at him and be scared they were about to be sexually assaulted. That could be your son, Danny. *Your son*."

He smiles a little to himself, one of his dorky half-smiles that screams I-find-this-conversation-amusing-but-not-a-full-smile's-worth. "I told you you wouldn't understand."

"You know what, actually, I think I've got this one. You think life sucks, so you want to go wrestle a bear or dominate some road full of ice to prove your manliness. Okay, that's weird, but I get it. I want Tom Hanks to show up and tell me he loves me after we've spent a year exchanging wittily romantic and extremely well-written emails. You and me, Danny-o, we're, like, the same."

He huffs and pulls the blanket up over his shoulder, and the mattress dips as he settles himself in. "That's not the same thing at all," he says, but his voice is quiet in the flickering darkness.

"It totally is. Tom Hanks is my icy death road. Admit it."

He shakes his head, his cheek pressed into the pillow. "Is not," he mutters.

"You know I'm right," she says, and yawns, digging her face a little deeper into her pillow next to him.

When she wakes up that night, she's the big spoon.

She has her nose tucked into the dip between his shoulder blades and her hands are fisted into the loose fabric of his pajamas. Her upper thigh is pressed firmly upward between his legs, saved from touching his junk only by the fact that he hadn't quite scissored his legs apart far enough yet.

The television is muted in the background, filling the dark corners of the room with flickering shades of light from an infomercial. It's eerily quiet, and she thinks it's bananas, totally bonkers, how comfortable it is to sleep with somebody as fundamentally anti-social as *Danny Castellano*. He radiates warmth like a furnace and smells pretty great and, let's be honest, has a pretty nice ass, and okay, yeah, she's definitely in lady-boner territory right now.

She rolls away from him, lying on her back and staring up at the dim ceiling.

"What's 'a matter," he slurs. He rolls onto his side, facing her, and she can't tell in the darkness if his eyes are open or closed.

She sighs dramatically.

"I don't know, Danny. Sometimes I wonder about my life, what I'm -"

"Mindy?" His voice is grave and low.

"Yeah?"

"Go to sleep," he says blearily, and his hand flops around until it lands on her shoulder, and he does this twitchy thing with his fingers that she realizes with a shock is him *petting* her, like how you rub behind a puppy's ears. "Just go back to sleep, Mindy."

"*You* go to sleep," she whispers. His long fingers trace the tendon at the base of her neck clumsily.

"That's m'girl," he murmurs, and they fall back asleep like that, his hand on her shoulder, his fingertips curled up at the bare skin by the strap of her tank top.

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She's up early the next morning for a breakfast social mixer that Danny had crossed off his schedule with a belligerent red X. She spends the entire hour nose-deep in a large cup of coffee, trying to rub the tiredness out from her eyes, instead of making kick ass professional connections. She wonders if Danny's grumpiness is catching, if she's somehow compromised her life view by being too close to a man with the infectious disease of Waking Up on the Wrong Side of the Bed-itis.

They're on different educational tracks today, so she doesn't see him again until she's grabbing a post-dinner drink at the hotel bar.

"Nice dress," he murmurs, slipping in next to her at the bar and doing some secret bartender hand-signal that makes a tumbler of something straight up on the rocks materialize in front of him.

She looks down at herself. "What's wrong with what I'm wearing?" she asks, smoothing a hand over her hips. Her dress is totally cocktail appropriate, just the right amount of snug with sequins winding down the sides.

"There's nothing wrong with it. I said it was nice."

She watches him suspiciously, but he seems to be on the up-and-up with this one, so she lets it ride. "Thanks, man."

He shrugs and takes a sip of his drink, glancing coolly around the bar like he's James Bond, tie loosened and shirt cuffs rolled up to his forearms. She stabs the paper umbrella of her pina colada into the ring of pineapple hanging off the side of the hurricane glass.

"So do you like being single again?" she asks abruptly, not sure exactly why she's broaching this subject, of all the possible shouldn't-go-there, probably-extremely-awkward subjects she could bring up.

His head whips around to stare at her. "What?"

"I mean... you got married out of college, right, so there's gotta be a part of you that thinks maybe it's a little bit awesome to join the ranks of us fabulous single people again. Man on the prowl, the bachelor life, being all like, bam, I'm going home with *that* tonight. Your whole life is wide open. You're in a bar," she gestures around them grandly, "and you could hook up with anybody here." She pauses. "Kind of. Also, not really, because we're sharing a room and that would be pretty funky."

His mouth twists up in some weird hybrid between a frown and a smile, and she thinks that there's a lot of things in that expression that a dude like Danny doesn't know how to say. "I..." he tries, then snaps his mouth shut. "It's mostly... I don't know. Quiet."

"Quiet?"

He nods, and swirls the ice cubes in his drink around slowly. "Nobody talks to me when I get home at night. It's quiet. I like that."

"You're such an anti-social weirdo," she says, taking a sip through her pink straw. He grins widely at that for some reason, and ugh, she forgets what a great smile he has underneath the perma-frown that's always stuck on his face. "Sometime I don't even know why we're friends, Danny."

"We're friends?" he asks mildly, still smiling. His teeth are so *white*, like a game show host's, and his face crinkles up all handsome-like when he smiles. So not fair.

She waves a hand. "You know we are. The point is, you've got the whole world at your feet. You don't have to spend your nights feeling all lonely and sad for yourself."

"Who said I was sad and lonely? I said I like it. I can go home, it's quiet, I can watch what I want to on TV and I don't have to deal with washing dishes that aren't my own or some mess that I didn't make."

She swirls her drink, drawing spirals in the frothy ice. "I guess so. I like that I can have Gilmore Girls marathons and live on my couch without having somebody around guilt-tripping me about my god-given right be lazy. It's like, sometimes I just want to eat chocolate and watch hot people flirting with each other, right?"

"Right," he agrees, "but without the Gilmore-whatever stuff, or the chocolate thing."

She grins at him. "You know what? Cheers, Danny. Cheers. To the single life." She holds up her glass.

"Cheers," he echoes, and clinks his scotch tumbler against her pina colada, knocking the pineapple perched on her rim gently askew.

It's dark outside by the time they make it back to the hotel room that night. She kicks off her heels at the door and flops face-down onto the bed. He throws his tie down on the bed next to

her and undoes the top two buttons of his shirt as he absently rolls his shoulders.

"You okay?" she asks, watching him from the corner of her eye.

"Yeah," he says, shrugging. "Just an old sports injury."

"Oh. Um, do you want a massage? Like, a shoulder massage?"

He narrows his eyes. "A massage?" he asks suspiciously, like she just suggested they renounce everything and take up recreational terrorism or hating on baby bunny rabbits or something.

"Yeah," she says, propping herself up on her elbows. "I'm a total pro."

He hums to himself for a few seconds before saying, "Okay," and it's like the answer surprises himself as well as her. Honestly, it's not something she thought he'd actually be up for. Danny's kind of a private guy about things like touching and personal boundaries and being actual friends with actual people.

"Well, cool. Sit over here, then." She pulls herself up to sit with her legs crossed at the edge of the bed, and gives him the I-know-kung-fu hand flick. He sits on the floor in front of her, his long legs stretched out on the thin hotel carpeting.

"I took a class in college," she says, starting to knead into his trapezius muscle with her thumbs. "One credit, no holds barred. It was part of the PE department. Basically, what I'm saying is I've got mad skills."

"Amazing," he says dryly.

"Totes legit," she agrees cheerfully, and knuckles into a knot at the base of his neck.

He drops his head back on her lap, his mouth open, and closes his eyes, and suddenly this whole thing starts to feel pretty bow-chicka-wow-wow. "That feels really good. Jesus, you have great hands. That must've been some PE class."

She clears her throat and tries not to think about the fact that Danny's head is, like, *in her lap*. "I think you're just a super-stress ball of stress-y muscles. Seriously, you need to kick back more. Take a spa day, or whatever the man equivalent of that is. Ice fishing? I don't know. Probably something awful."

"I hate ice fishing," he mutters, eyes still closed.

She starts to work her way down his spine, pressing into the thick cord of muscle and tendons on either side of the vertebrae. She pinches his earlobe to get his attention. "Lift your head up, dude. And there's a manly activity that Daniel Castellano doesn't like?"

"It's cold," he says finally, head bowed back down to his chest. "I hate being cold."

"Okay, are you the same guy who wanted to drive a giant truck around the Arctic Circle? 'Cause, spoiler alert: that shit is cold up there."

"Not the same thing," he grunts. "Ice trucking, you've got your rig to keep you warm. Ice fishing, you're sitting on some overturned bucket and freezing your ass off waiting for fish that are never going to bite."

She's silent as she continues down the spine and back up, digging into the muscles of his shoulder again, and tries to ignore the way that Danny wiggles helplessly a little despite himself whenever she hits a sensitive spot. He's kind of really, embarrassingly into massages. She pats the side of his neck gently when she's done.

He stands and turns, facing her. "That was nice," he says, carefully rolling his neck around. His voice is what she imagines he'd sound like stoned, warmer and lazier than she's ever heard him. "You want one? I mean, I never took a fancy class in college..."

She collapses backward, rolling back around so she's lying on her stomach again. "Honestly, I think I'd fall asleep. You can owe me, though. I'll bank it. I like the idea of you owing me."

He disappears into the bathroom, and she zones out, comfortably sprawled out on top of the bed with her face mashed into the comforter. She's starting to fall asleep when he comes back out to lie down on the bed next to her.

He pokes her with the toe of his foot. "You'd feel better if you changed out of that dress."

"You don't know me," she grumbles, swatting at him like a fly.

"Okay," he agrees, closing his eyes.

"That's right," she says, not really sure what she's saying at this point, and they fall asleep together on top of the blankets.

She wakes up to a room that's still dark and Danny staring at her creepily from, like, five inches away.

"Danny," she asks slowly, her whispered voice cracking from disuse and incongruously loud in the darkness, "are you Twilighting me?"

"I don't know what that means," he says, his voice low and rough around the edges, and he is *such a liar*. She knows. She's seen the audiobooks on his iPod.

"You're such a liar," she points out, and stretches out her body on the bed, pointing her toes and arching her back. When she curls back in on herself he's still watching her closely, his features in shadow and his eyes catching the thin light seeping into the room from the hallway.

"Hey, Mindy."

"Sup," she murmurs, closing her eyes again.

"We're friends, right."

She cracks an eye back open, because she has a bad feeling this conversation is about to take a turn for way-serious. "Sure," she says. "Of course. I like to think we've got sort of a bromance thing going on. Matt and Ben ain't got nothin' on us."

His face is super close to her all of a sudden, and things start to click together in her sleep-addled mind at the same moment he leans in to kiss her, close-mouthed. It's like kissing in middle school, frustratingly sweet, only about ten million times sexier because it's *Danny* and oh god she maybe really wants to make out with *Danny*? This is not going to end well.

He pulls back but she leans in fast to chase his mouth, acting on pure instinct, bumping her nose up against his in her haste. She kisses him back hard, pressing her teeth against his lips. He groans and puts a hand to her jaw. His tongue ends up in her mouth and she's not surprised at all that Daniel Castellano is a pretty fucking spectacular kisser when he gets going, focused and smart and more than a little pushy.

He breaks the kiss finally, breathing hard. When she licks her lips she tastes spearmint toothpaste.

"Um," she says, kind of succinctly summarizing the whole situation, really.

"Yeah," he agrees, sounding kind of dazed.

She clears her throat. "Uh, so is this, like, a bromance-with-benefits proposition?" She tries to ask it casually, because she isn't sure what's going on here for him. She's always figured she was the thorn in the side of his day (albeit an awesome thorn with savvy dress sense and the occasional great one-liner), but since their daily relationship is mostly based on sitcom-esque misunderstandings and reluctant engagement with a polar opposite world view, it does beg the question.

"Maybe," he says slowly, like he's figuring out the words as he says them, "...maybe I just really wanted to kiss you."

"Okay, you can't *say* stuff like that," she groans, and burrows her head underneath her pillow.

"Why not? It's the truth." He states it as fact, with the unbiased conviction of a man who can actually pull off saying ridiculously sincere things like that.

"Because it's *romantic*, and that shit is my kryptonite so pulling that out right now is so not fair."

He's quiet for a moment. "Why isn't it fair?"

She peeks her head out from under her pillow again and glances over at him. Her hair is a tangled halo around her head, floating in waves of static electricity, and she's pretty sure she looks like a witch or some B-list movie star from the 80s right now. "Can I ask you something?"

"Sure."

"Something personal."

"Okay," he answers, a little more cautiously.

"Have you seen anybody since your divorce? Like, *seen* them. *Biblically*."

He rolls onto his back and stares at the ceiling, and she can see just well enough to tell that the perpetual frown lines have reappeared. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"I'm asking if you've done the rebound thing."

He shifts uncomfortably. "...There was a woman," he starts, and clams up right away.

She can't believe she's about to do this. She's like a one-woman cock-blocking machine. For *herself*.

"Yeah, okay. So normally I'm, like, a hundred and ten percent in favor of hookups between consenting adults. But here's the thing - I am going to be the worst rebound ever for you. *Ever*. The two of us," she gestures back and forth between them, "we're awesome together, sure. But we're also not-so-awesome a lot of the time. I literally tackled you in the hallway last week because you accidentally walked out of my office with my favorite pen. You just got divorced from your bitch of a former wife, and you only recently stopped crying about it in your office."

"Not... true," Danny mutters awkwardly, in the stilted way he has when he's totally lying.

"I'm just saying, Danny. There's nothing I'd like better to do right now than blow your mind - because let's be clear about that, I totally would. Blow. Your. Mind." She slows down to stare at him significantly, just to hammer this point in. It's super important. "But you're way hot and maybe a nicer guy than you let on underneath the whole manly-man thing you've got going on. Things wouldn't end well for anybody here." She pauses. "I'd also like to point out that saying that is easily the most mature thing I've ever done. In my *life*."

"Fine." The word seems to burst out of him of its own volition. "Fine, Mindy. Forget I said anything. Whatever."

"...Are you mad at me?"

"No," he says, and flips himself on the bed so that his back is facing her. It's the opposite of subtle.

"You are!"

"Mindy, shut up."

"I'm just trying..."

"Mindy, just shut the fuck up, okay."

She slams her mouth shut, staring at his back. "Fine," she says finally. "Fine."

"Good," he mutters.

She lies awake, staring at the ceiling, her heart pounding in her throat, for a long time after that.

"Dr. L., you're back!" Shauna smiles at her over the reception counter, and Betsy lets out a startled cry and rushes to wrap her in an aggressive bear hug.

"Hey, guys," she says, patting Betsy tentatively a couple times on the shoulder.

"Sup, Dr. L. I just wanted to let you know that there's nothing wrong with the carpet in your office, and there's no reason you should be scared that it's really unhygienic right now." Morgan pinches his eyebrows together in a way-too-pointed expression of casual innocence.

"Uh, okay, that's horrifying."

"Did you and Dr. Castellano have a good trip?" Shauna asks brightly.

"It was fine," mutters Danny's voice behind her, his head ducked down and his eyes trained on a newspaper. It's the first words she's heard from him since the monstrously awkward three-and-a-half hours of silence during their trip home yesterday, which she'd spent alternating between overwhelming irritation at his stupid face, mulishly set in a determinedly closed-off scowl as he drove, and dizzying and weirdly intense bursts of the desire to jump him in the driver's seat, and wasn't *that* interesting.

She is totally screwed.

"Yeah," she agrees in what she fears is probably a weird voice, "it was fine."

Danny glances up at her then, catches her eye, and looks back down quickly.

"Mindy! How lovely you're back." Jeremy air-kisses her cheeks, and she preens. "And Danny!" He attempts to do the same to Danny, who sputters and bats Jeremy away with the newspaper like he's a puppy.

"I'm not a chick, man," Danny grumbles, but he clasps Jeremy on the shoulder back anyway.

"Thank goodness you two are back. I've scarcely had time for my nightly exfoliation routine whilst you were away."

Mindy lays a sympathetic hand on Jeremy's arm. "The nightmare is over," she says.

Danny rolls his eyes. "Okay, so I'm just gonna be in my office, catching up."

"Well, I'm going to be in *my* office, being awesome," she announces, then clears her throat. "And catching up on stuff."

"Excellent," Jeremy beams. "Everything back to normal."

"Yeah," Mindy echoes. "Totally normal."

Yeah.

End Notes

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