

put me under your wing

Von CruxisLyrica

Well, would you look at that: The world didn't end after all.

The realization that Armageddon had in fact not happened and they somehow miraculously survived the confrontation with Satan had yet to sink in as two lost souls were sitting on a bench, sharing a bottle of cheap wine and waiting for the bus to arrive. Whatever was left of their adrenaline was promptly replaced with fatigue and alcohol.

"I suppose I should get him to drop me off at the bookshop." Aziraphale mused. He never indulged in sleeping before; the concept of losing control over his consciousness and wasting away hours doing, well, *nothing* never appealed to the angel. Today, however, after this rollercoaster of a week and the apocalypse that wasn't, a few hours of rest didn't sound so far off.

"It burned down, 'member?" Crowley's voice, soft and hesitating, reminded him ever so gently and brought back flashes of memories so distant and already forgotten, yet only a few hours old.

"Your bookshop isn't there anymore."

"...Oh?"

"I'm really sorry. It burned down."

"All of it?"

"You can stay at my place, if you like." Crowley continued, his nonchalant tone was soon to be betrayed by his flushed cheeks (for which, if someone were to ask, he would blame the alcohol).

Aziraphale's heart skipped a beat. Or maybe two. Luckily, breathing was optional for him, being an angel and all, because he was quite certain he forgot how to breathe as we speak. His chest tightened and Aziraphale could feel something inside of him

growing, screaming and banging on the walls around his heart to be let out. Something he was sure he had shut out a long time ago, but it reappeared, more powerful and determined than ever. A tiny voice in his head was calling him out: *Isn't this exactly what you yearned for all these decades? Centuries even? Possibly millennia?*

The fleeting emotion called hope set its roots deep in the angel's mind, more than eager to sprout and spread its blossoms in full bloom, just to be cut down mercilessly because reality was anything but kind.

No, the angel reminded himself.

No, he *couldn't*.

Not after---

~~"There is no 'our side', Crowley. Not anymore."~~

"I don't think my side would like that."

A hollow lie had been told.

If Aziraphale was completely honest, he didn't care what 'his side' – well, *former* side – had to say anymore *at all*. However, Aziraphale wasn't honest, in particular not to himself, because if the angel hadn't spoken those deceitful words, he would have undoubtingly and without a single shred of hesitation accepted Crowley's offer.

Yet he *couldn't*.

He *mustn't* hope.

He simply wasn't *allowed* to. Not when he had uttered these hurtful words less than a couple of days ago.

~~"It's over."~~

"You don't have a side anymore. Neither of us do." Crowley took another sip of the bottle and offered Aziraphale the remaining content. The glasses made it impossible to read his expression. "We're on our own side."

Our own side.

The angel wasn't aware just how much he needed to hear these words again until he choked on a sob and blinked the first upcoming tears away.

If the incident in 1941 was the key moment Aziraphale's walls of denial finally began to crumble and he reluctantly admitted to himself that yes, he was indeed *very much* and *hopelessly* in love with Crowley, demon, hereditary enemy and best friend, had been so for far longer than he was actually willing to acknowledge, then it was now, right at this very instant, that his last remaining shackles, which had bound and tortured him for so long, were destroyed for good.

Aziraphale was done holding back. He had enough of stuck-up higher-ups and foolish decisions based on simple-minded rules from heaven, only for them to crush the angel with sorrow and remorse. He was tired, *oh so tired*, of ignoring his wishes and shutting out his screaming heart.

Aziraphale's hands were shaking, out of excitement or for fear of the unknown he wasn't sure, it might as well have been both. Really, who could tell at this point anyhow? None of it mattered right here and now; he accepted the bottle all the same.

The bus to Oxford (which would drive to London anyway but just won't know why), arrived and for the very first time, Aziraphale chose to sit right beside Crowley and, as if it was the most natural thing in the world to do, reached out for his hand. The demon flinched and Aziraphale halfway expected (and quite possibly feared) Crowley would pull back, but none of that happened. Aziraphale's heart fluttered and he could literally feel the butterflies in his stomach when Crowley laced their fingers and squeezed his hand firmly, almost confidently as if he was trying to say *everything will be alright*. And Aziraphale trusted him, always had deep down, because Crowley had never lied to him before.

The apocalypse might have been avoided but things were far from over for the unlikely pair. A fact that lingered heavily on their minds, but neither of them was brave enough to voice it just yet, too afraid it would break the magic of the moment like a fading magic spell after midnight.

Most of the ride was spent in silence. It was not the awkward silence, not by any means, but a content and comfortable one basked in warmth and safety.

"Maybe it was part of the Plan," Aziraphale mumbled, recalling Crowley's question before the express courier arrived all of a sudden.

"Say what again, angel?"

"All of this. Maybe it was---"

"Are you going to say *ineffable*?" Crowley pushed his glasses down and glared at the angel. "*Really?* Say ineffable, c'mon I dare you and you can say goodbye to holding hands."

A sigh escaped Aziraphale's lips. The demon really did have a knack for being overly

dramatic, didn't he?

"Oh dear. This is just about as worse as never talking to you again, isn't it?" Aziraphale teased.

"You really put me on a spot there." Crowley scowled. One might even say the demon pouted. All that was missing for him was to cross his arms, but there was no way in hell, heaven or earth he would let go of his angel's hand so easily (despite his previous threat).

"I would say it rather worked out well, didn't it?"

"Bastard."

The angel didn't even try to hide his amusement anymore. "Should I say thank you for the compliment?"

"Don't flatter yourself, angel."

"Whatever you say, my love."

"Ngk."

Aziraphale felt the grip around his hand tightened and stole a glance at Crowley, who was now facing the window, ears tinted in the same lovely color as his hair. He was not alone, neither of them was, and even if they didn't know what tomorrow might bring or *if* there even was a day after tomorrow for them, Aziraphale felt right here at this very moment for the first time what freedom truly feels like.

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