

the memories of all we have loved

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the memories of all we have loved

by [floatingstark](#)

Summary

'He'd spent so long trying to fill the hole his parents' death had left in him he hadn't stopped to think about the new one he was making.'

-or-

Auguste and Laurent throughout the years - strangers and brothers, again.

Notes

Hello friends!! My first dive into that Captive Prince universe so be gentle with my tender feelings! TRIGGER WARNINGS: sexual assault, self harm, suicide, etc. Please let me know if I missed anything! I will update the list as I add more chapters. This should be about 3, for the record.

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

He couldn't breathe. He couldn't see. He couldn't think. He didn't even remember the six hour flight. Or the hour drive from the airport. He hasn't been able to quiet the turmoil in his head since he got the call and the carefully constructed walls he built around him started collapsing.

It was a Thursday, just after 10pm. He'd been up for over 24 hours but even as his bones ached with exhaustion his mind wouldn't quiet.

"Mr. D'or?"

"Yes! Yes that's me." He stood up hastily. "How is he?"

The nurse didn't even spare a glance at his rumpled state and sweaty, drawn face, for which he was eternally grateful. "He's stable. He was taken out of the ICU about two hours ago and put into his own room. He lost a lot of blood, but the doctor was able to stop it and stitch up the wound. We administered a tetanus shot and sedated him so he can rest. He's sleeping, but otherwise fine."

"Thank the Gods," Auguste exhaled shakily, rubbing his hands down his face. "So he's going to be okay?"

"Well, it will be a long road to recovery. The laceration was relatively deep and it looks like Laurent did some nerve damage. It's too early to tell what that will look like long term; it's very likely he will experience some numbness in his left hand. But there are always exercises he can practice at home and physical therapy is an option if it appears the damage was severe enough."

Auguste nodded gravely.

"There is also... the emotional aspect." She continued, "Laurent was in a state of shock from blood loss when he was brought in, however, the cut on his arm is consistent with a self

inflicted injury that typically indicates an attempt at suicide. Recovery from that, well, it'll be much longer."

Suicide. Auguste swallowed around the lump in his throat.

"When can I-" he cleared his throat after his voice cracked, *"When can I see him?"*

The nurse hesitated, "Unfortunately not until tomorrow. Visiting hours ended at seven. But you can come back tomorrow at noon-"

"No, wait I- Can't I see him now? I haven't seen him at all."

"I understand that sir, but visiting hours are over. Laurent is sleeping right now anyway, you won't be able to speak to him."

Auguste shook his head wildly, "I have to see him – I need to see him. Please, please just for five minutes. Please, he's my baby brother."

Auguste could see the moment the nurse cracked; she sighed and said, "Five minutes. I can't let you stay longer than that."

"Yes. Yes, I'll be out. I just need to see him. Thank you so much."

The nurse led Auguste down a long hallway. The unit was relatively quiet, the sounds of machines quietly whirring and sneakers on linoleum bounced off the white walls, almost blinding in the fluorescent lights. They stopped in front of the last door in the hall and the nurse gestured inside.

"Five minutes, I mean it. Don't touch or move him, he needs his rest."

Auguste jerked a nod. He heard her receding footsteps and stared at the door leading to his brother. The distance between him and Laurent was the shortest it had been in two years, but in that moment it felt like oceans stood between him and his brother. Shame made him scared to go in. But the five minutes he had would not wait for his courage.

He opened the door gently and walked inside.

D'or money had afforded Laurent a private room, sterile and quiet with bright lights illuminating stark white walls. Two plush chairs sat on the corners of the far side of the room. A small table with a potted plant was under the window. It was almost pleasant – maybe somewhere you could chat with someone over tea, softly, with the light hitting the leaves in the morning. For a moment, Auguste could pretend.

And then his eyes slide to Laurent.

With his pale hair and skin tucked under matching white blankets, it was almost too bright to look at him. Auguste stepped in closer. His footsteps sounded deafening in a room where the only noise was Laurent's soft breathing and the beep of the vitals machine.

Auguste rounded the edge of the bed, keeping his eyes on his brother's face. Laurent looked so small even though he knew this was the biggest he'd ever been.

At least he thought he knew – his last memory of seeing Laurent had been two years ago. Laurent was 13 and Auguste had come home for the Winter Solstice. He hadn't planned on coming, after his parents' deaths going home to Arles left him feeling hollowed, haunted by the ghosts of memories in his childhood home. But he hadn't made it the year before and Laurent had become increasingly persistent in his attempts to drag Auguste home. So he gave in and flew in from his home and life in Ios for a week in Arles with Laurent and his Uncle, who'd moved in just after the funeral.

It hadn't gone well. Auguste had been tense the entire week, snapping at his Uncle for his condescending attitude and grinding his teeth at Laurent's clinging, so much more suffocating than when he was a child.

“Oh, Lou,”

Slowly, carefully, he slipped his hand around Laurent’s cold fingers. His arms were bandaged from elbow to wrist. Auguste didn’t want to think about that.

On the flight over Auguste almost had a panic attack, unable to quiet his insidious thoughts. Now, facing his little brother, he couldn’t think of a single thing to say. How could he? They were practically strangers.

The last time they spoke Auguste had been distracted, getting ready for a night out with a beautiful woman he’d met at the gym. They’d barely spoken anymore, and while Auguste did feel the sting of guilt occasionally, he led a busy life and he knew Laurent did too. They grew apart. Time did that to people, distance did that to people. Going home to Arles was painful for Auguste, who’d grown up so close to his parents - a mirror image of his father in many respects.

He’d spent so long trying to fill the hole his parents’ death had left in him he hadn’t stopped to think about the new one he was making.

“You’re going to be okay. I spoke to the nurse on the way in.” Auguste murmured. “You’ll recover.”

His eyes slid to the bandages around Laurent’s arm. “But, I guess you might not be happy about that.”

Auguste’s eyes welled up so suddenly he inhaled a sharp breath, instinctively taking his hand back to swipe at his eyes. “Gods.”

Since he’d gotten the call from the hospital he felt one moment away from breaking and somehow had managed to keep it together. Seeing Laurent, though, so different but so very much the same as his memories, delivered the final blow.

“I’m so sorry,” he whispered through his tears, “I’m so sorry, Lou. You have to wake up.”

He leaned forward and shakily kissed Laurent’s forehead. He tried transferring all that he couldn’t say and Laurent wouldn’t hear into the action. He stood there, his forehead pressed into Laurent’s, his hands framing his delicate face, until the door creaked open.

“Mr. D’or.”

Auguste breathed deeply before he straightened up. He turned towards the door.

The nurse looked on sympathetically, “I’m sorry. I need to close this area.”

“It’s alright, I appreciate you letting me see him.” Auguste rubbed his eyes. He was so deeply exhausted in that moment. There were a thousand things he still had to do to make sure he was prepared for when Laurent woke up and all he could think about was melting into the floor.

He looked back at Laurent briefly, catching his hand one last time, “I have to go. But I’m coming back this time, I promise.”

Auguste leaned back in the plush leather seat of the booth, lifting a cigarette to his lips. It was an unusually cool summer evening in Ios, the breeze from the open windows swept through the restaurant and visibly ruffled the feathers of born and bred Akelions. Even after a decade of living in the southern country, it still amused Auguste to see people sliding on coats and shivering in 20-degree weather.

Auguste blew out a puff of smoke. He checked his watch – 6:54pm. He had gotten to the restaurant 15 minutes prior, picking a booth in the back of the restaurant with a clear view of the front door so he could watch everybody who entered. He wanted to be ready the moment it opened with the person he was so anxious to see.

Laurent. It had only been a month since he had seen his little brother, but it had felt longer. After years of seeing him most days, of making time between his work and Laurent's schooling and friends and dates, the four weeks that he had been unable to find a free moment to even think had felt like an eternity. Taking another long puff of his cigarette, he recalled the time when he'd gone months at a time without even thinking to call his baby brother.

Auguste knew this was the real reason he was so anxious to see that blond head walk through the door. The past weeks had been a nightmare at the firm; he was the lead attorney representing more than a dozen women in a class action lawsuit against a big name producer. It was the biggest case he'd ever worked on, and certainly the most case work to do. Trial was set to begin in three months and he knew it would be grueling for everyone involved. With the case having such a high profile he had been running himself ragged to prepare. Tonight was the first night he had a moment to spare and hadn't hesitated to text Laurent and invite him out for a catch-up.

He could only hope that Laurent wasn't taking his radio silence as anything other than him being dedicated to the case and not some excuse to cut him out. Not again.

"You've reached the mailbox of Auguste D'or, please leave a message after the tone."

"Hi Auguste! You'll never believe what happened! I made Regionals! I can't believe it! I just got back and Uncle and I are going out to dinner to celebrate. Uncle said you'd be too busy to come, which makes sense, I mean, who would take an eight-hour flight for a stupid chess match... but I wanted you to know. Call me back when you can, love you!"

"You've reached the mailbox of Auguste D'or, please leave a message after the tone."

"Hey Auguste. Uncle just told me you texted saying you won't be able to come home for your birthday. That sucks! It's what you get for going into the family business – you saw how overworked father was and that was after law school! Makes me even more sure I am never going to be a lawyer as long as I live. I do enjoy reading about it though, especially the differences in Akielos' Tort Law and Vere's; I found a book about common law jurisdiction in

father's office last week and haven't put it down since! Anyway, we'll speak soon. Maybe Uncle and I can come visit you? Let me know! Bye!"

"You've reached the mailbox of Auguste D'or, please leave a message after the tone."

"Hey Aug. You must be real busy down there. I wanted to talk before Uncle and I go to Ravanel on his business trip. Apparently the place we are staying at has bad service so I won't be able to talk to anyone for a few weeks. I'll call you when I get back – hopefully you'll be able to talk then! I love you!"

"You've reached the mailbox of Auguste D'or, please leave a message after the tone."

"Hi Auguste... it's me. Guess I keep missing you. Just thought I'd call to - catch up. Uncle told me you've been super busy with work. Which is good! That's- really wonderful you're finally getting to do this. I bet father would have been over the moon to get to work with you on a case. Well, I suppose not on it, can't imagine they'd give you something that big just out of law school but – you know. He'd be proud. Um. I am too." A pause. "Well. I just wanted to say hi. Hopefully we can talk soon or – maybe you'll come home for Delfeur Day this year? So, yeah we can talk whenever you can. Goodbye Auguste. I love you."

"You've reached the mailbox of Auguste D'or, please leave a message after the tone"

"Hi Auguste. It's Laurent. Call me back please? I feel like it's been ages."

"You've reached the mailbox of Auguste D'or, please leave a message after the tone"

“Hi. Sorry I keep bothering you- Uncle is always telling me I should stop pestering you so much. I’m trying not to I just – I really miss you. Hope everything’s good in Akielos. Bye.”

“You’ve reached the mailbox of Auguste D’or, please leave a message after the tone”

“Hey Auguste. Did I do something? I’m really sorry for whatever it was. I know I can be – difficult and needy... I’ll stop calling you so much.”

Auguste shook himself. He could stew in guilt later. Now, he wanted to be present. So when Laurent came in he could immediately quell the intrusive thoughts he no doubt had been having.

The door swung open again, bringing in another breeze and a golden head. Auguste grinned and watched Laurent scan the restaurant before his eyes settled on Auguste in the back. He waved a hand over towards himself.

“I thought you quit smoking.” Was the first thing Laurent said when he got to the table.

“I did. I have.” Auguste replied. He snubbed out his cigarette in the crystal ashtray beside his plate. He ran a hand through his beard and hummed, “Just takes the edge off sometimes. Sit down, sit down.”

Laurent quietly took off his bag and set it beside the chair before sitting in it. He looked pristine, as Auguste had long come to understand was due to Laurent’s meticulousness and the natural grace he’d inherited from their mother. His blond hair was swept over his shoulder into a braid, a few wisps framing his face but otherwise entirely neat. He wore a navy blouse, buttoned up all the way to his neck, and fashioned a matching ascot around his pale neck.

He fidgeted.

“How’s work been treating you?” Laurent asked. He was tense.

Auguste reached across the table to grasp cold fingers, “Brutal. But I’ll bore you with the details later. Distract me for a few hours, tell me about the lives of the young and the restless.”

“You’re only 31. I think that hardly disqualifies you from also being young and restless.” Laurent remarked. But he squeezed back Auguste’s hand and started telling him about his exams.

The dinner, all things considered, could not have gone better if Auguste had written it himself. The food was wonderful, genuine Akelion cuisines served fresh from highly sought after chefs, all with a view of the sprawling sea behind them. Laurent, after his initial hesitation, was excitable and cunning as ever, telling Auguste all about his schooling and poking fun at Auguste’s mispronunciation of designer’s names (“It’s *Versace*, Auguste, not Ver-sa-chi. Honestly, I’ve told you a thousand times – I’m surprised you even passed the Bar with that memory.)

The brothers opted for shared appetizers so they could chat and pick; by the time the waiter replaced an empty plate with their last order Auguste could feel himself filling out his slacks. He leaned back, eyeing his brother in disbelief as Laurent scooped more scallops onto his plate.

“Whatever we don’t finish you can take home,” Auguste said, “You seem to be enjoying it.”

Laurent smiled, small and bashful, “Yes, well. This place is very good.” He took another bite and chewed thoughtfully. “I don’t think I can take all this home.”

“Why not? You’re a college kid, shouldn’t you always want to take free food?”

“It’s not that I don’t want to, I just don’t have room in my fridge.”

Auguste looked at Laurent, confused. “How much food could you and Erasmus have? The two of you eat like birds without anyone to look after you.”

Laurent gave him a dry look, patting his mouth with his napkin before throwing it onto his plate. “Yes. Well, Erasmus’ boyfriend lives with us now.”

“*What?*”

“It’s new.”

“I- He lives with you?” Auguste asked. At Laurent’s nod, he continued, “He’s not on the lease is he? Is he paying any rent?”

“No, and no. But it isn’t like we need any help with the rent.” Laurent shrugged.

“That’s not the point, Laurent.” Auguste’s head immediately went into lawyer mode; he started thinking about the next causes of action. “Were you okay with this? Did Erasmus ask you?”

“Of course he asked, come on, you *know* Erasmus, he wouldn’t do anything that he thought would even remotely annoy someone.”

Auguste opened his mouth to respond before – yeah, point taken.

“He asked a few weeks ago. Kallias was practically living there already so it wasn’t that big of a change.” Laurent played with the tip of his braid. “Plus, Erasmus – he’s been through a lot. With relationships. So he deserves to be happy.”

“Yes, but not at the expense of *your* happiness.” Auguste pushed. “If you’re uncomfortable with this-“

“I’m not uncomfortable,” Laurent said, “really, I’m not. I like Kallius, and I like seeing Erasmus happy. It’s just different living with a couple.”

Auguste had only lived with roommates for the four years he had been in undergrad, in a large, Patran house with three other guys he had met at his rowing competitions in high school. As soon as he graduated and began law school in Ios, he’d opted to live by himself, preferring the perks of no roommates – namely, quiet when he needed it, freedom to decorate however he pleased, and no nosy friends when he brought a woman back. Money had never been an issue for the D’ors; Auguste and Laurent’s grandfather and great uncle had opened the law firm D’or and D’or almost 54 years ago, which had grown to an empire that had branches in all four countries’ capitals. The opening marked the beginning of a long, fruitful business history for the D’ors, from investing in rising companies, to land ownership across the globe. Laurent and Auguste had millions in their trust funds before they could walk, and it only grew when Auguste was named Junior Partner the year before.

Clearly it was not money that had Laurent staying in a living situation he clearly wasn’t too fond of. Laurent could move out any time he wanted if he really wanted to. Hell, he could buy an entire apartment building, and one for Erasmus too.

No, money wasn’t the issue.

Erasmus was Laurent’s closest friend. They’d met three years prior at a charity event their family’s foundation was throwing. Erasmus was a nervous waiter who’d tripped and spilled a tray of hors d’oeuvres on Laurent’s cream-colored blouse. When everyone had held their breath, waiting for the inevitable melt down, Laurent had knelt down, helped a shaking Erasmus up, and walked out from the ballroom Erasmus in tow. They’d been inseparable ever since, relying heavily on each other as Erasmus was too timid to make many friends, and Laurent kept most people at arm’s length.

Laurent didn’t have another friend to get an apartment with. And Laurent hated being alone.

Auguste looked at Laurent, at his calculated bored gaze, and made his decision.

“You should move out.”

“No. I told you, I’m fine. It’s not a big deal.”

“You should move out,” Auguste repeated, and before Laurent could answer, he said, “and come live with me.”

Laurent froze, eyes flickering back and forth between Auguste’s “I-. What?”

“Move in with me. Living with a couple sucks, no matter how much you like them.”

“I can’t just— move out, I mean, the lease isn’t up until next year.”

“Why not? Just pay the months you have left. Then you wouldn’t be putting the burden on Erasmus.”

Laurent opened his mouth and closed it twice. Auguste could see he was picturing it, could see he wanted to say yes. He was guarded, though, always protecting himself, and Auguste grimaced thinking about the part he’d played in that particular reflex.

“Come on, I have plenty of space. You practically study there half the week anyway. My dining room table is covered in fabrics and that weird torso.”

“It’s a *dress form*,” Laurent muttered, but cracked a smile. “And it’s different from actually living there.”

“How? We’ve lived together more than half of your life, I’d say we’re good at it.” Auguste grinned, leaning forward, “What? Don’t want to live with your big brother now that he’s old and boring?”

“I think out of the two of us you’re hardly the boring one,” Laurent’s eyes slid to the side; he rubbed at his wrist, “I don’t want to get in your hair.”

Auguste looked at Laurent for a moment. He was grown now, freshly 20 and sharp as whip, but to Auguste he’d always see him as that sweet child pulling on his sleeve and asking for piggyback rides. He couldn’t count the number of times he’d failed that kid, but he’d spend the rest of his life making up for it.

“Laurent, would you do your poor, overworked brother a favor and just say yes? I argue for a living, this is a losing battle for you. I *want* you to live with me. It’ll be fun.”

Laurent looked back at Auguste, staring for a long moment before he nodded. “Okay. Fine. You could stand for a little culture in your life anyway.”

Auguste’s laugh was booming.

Auguste shouldered open the door to his apartment, blowing out a sigh of relief as he slid his briefcase onto the entryway’s table. He skipped lunch that afternoon without realizing it and by the time his stomach began to make a point about it he was already on his way home.

“Laurent!” he called, toeing his shoes off and walking towards the living room. “I’m home.”

He didn’t receive a response, not that he expected once.

Auguste sat down on his EZ Boy and grabbed a few menus he kept on the side table. He rifled through them listlessly.

Laurent had been living with him in Ios for a little over four months. Auguste knew it wouldn't be an easy road, you couldn't mend a relationship in a week that had been eroding for five years, but he'd been hoping for a little more. More than the icy looks and scathing altercations. Maybe it was naïve of him to hope for the Laurent he knew, the sweet child who looked at Auguste like he hung the moon, but even after the dozens of hours of research into the behavior of recovering teens Auguste was still knocked off kilter by the brother he couldn't recognize.

The door to Laurent's room opened and Laurent walked out with a duffel bag slung over his shoulder. He closed the door behind him and passed Auguste without a word. Auguste did a double take at him when he passed. Laurent was wearing a cropped Metallica sweatshirt with a black harness strapping under it and ripped acid washed jean shorts. His blonde hair was twisted up in a black clip out of his face, tendrils falling out in the front over glitter dusted eyes.

"Where are you going?"

Laurent didn't respond, slipping his foot into the Doc Martens he kept by the door. Auguste sat up, looking over to notice the headphones in his ears.

"Laurent." He said louder.

Laurent looked up blankly. He raised an eyebrow.

Auguste sighed. He motioned to his ears, grimacing at Laurent's huff and impatient, "What?"

"Where are you going?"

"Out." Laurent responded, pulling the up the laces of his boot.

"Out where?"

“Just out. I’m going to Nicase’s.”

Auguste clenched his jaw. Nicase was Laurent’s newest friend; they’d met in the support group Auguste insisted Laurent attend when he finished in-patient care and moved to Akeilos. At first, Auguste had been thrilled Laurent made a friend. Every moment he hadn’t spent at school or in therapy he locked himself alone in his room. Auguste thought Nicase, who understood Laurent in ways Auguste never could, would be a good influence on Laurent.

Or he had until he’d gotten a call in the middle of the night from the police letting him know Nicase and Laurent were in the station. Apparently the friend’s house they’d hang out belonged to a 25 year old. A neighbor called in to complain about music at 3am and when the police showed up to find a group of high school kids drinking and smoking they’d rounded everyone up and started making calls.

It had been an ongoing battle. Auguste tried to get Laurent to open up to him. Laurent pulled away from him even harder. Auguste lectured Laurent about falling into the wrong crowd. Laurent told Auguste to fuck off.

Auguste braced himself for the headache, “What are you guys gonna do?”

“I don’t know, we haven’t decided. We might go to the boardwalk.”

“Dressed like that?” Auguste cringed at his tone, and Laurent’s subsequent look. “I just mean, it’s winter. Won’t you be. Cold?”

“Say what you really mean, Auguste, playing stupid doesn’t suit you.” Laurent spit.

“I’m not- I’m not trying to, uh, shame you,” Auguste said as delicately as he could, trying to recall the strategies Laurent’s doctors had told him about navigating discussions about Laurent’s body. “Your body is your own, and I-“

“Is it?”

Auguste closed his eyes to get through the wave of nausea. His words came out clumsy and unpolished, “You can dress however you want, I just worry. You know how I feel about Nicase. I just want you to be safe- it’ll get dark soon and if someone tries to take advantage of you-”

Laurent smiled, slow and deadly. “Now you think you can protect me? After the bang up job you’ve done already.”

Auguste flinched; Laurent may as well have hit him. “Lou,”

“Don’t call me that.” Laurent put his headphone back in. “I’m not a fucking child anymore, even Uncle knew that.”

Auguste heard the door slam, unable to see from his head in his hands.

It was evening by the time the moving guys had loaded the last of Laurent’s stuff into Auguste’s penthouse.

After tipping the four movers he closed the front door and let out a sigh of relief. Moving always exhausted him.

He turned and walked towards the hallway leading to the bedrooms in the rear of his condo. Laurent had claimed the second master bedroom he would frequently sleep in when he stayed over, a burgundy room with a white ceiling and windows overlooking the city around them.

He knocked on the slightly ajar door before stepping inside, “All moved in. How’s it feel?”

Laurent was sitting on the edge of his bed, looking overwhelmed but happy surrounded by boxes and suitcases. “Good. Tired.”

Auguste chuckled, leaning against the wall, “I’ll order some food. There’s a good Patran joint that delivers quick.”

“Thank you. That would be nice.”

Auguste nodded and ran his knuckle over the wall, “Did you want to paint it a different color? I kind of went crazy when I moved in.”

Laurent shook his head, looking around the room at the rich color, “No. No I like it; reminds me of home.”

That was the idea. When Auguste had moved in two years prior, the condo had been the picture of Akelion living – white, clean walls, sleek design and open floor plan. Laurent had just moved out of the last apartment they’d shared to move in with Erasmus for college, and Auguste had felt a little nostalgic for his homeland. As soon as he moved in he’d redone the whole place – painted every room with rich, deep color, replaced simple lights with ornate sconces and decorated the walls with elaborate mouldings.

“I’m surprised.” At Laurent’s look he elaborated, “That you like it. I wasn’t sure if it would be too much, all the reminders.”

Laurent looked away and rubbed at his wrist gently, “Sometimes, yeah. But- this is a reminder of the good parts. Akelion architecture is terribly boring.”

Auguste smiled softly, “Couldn’t agree more.” He walked over and sat next to Laurent on his bed. He tapped the nearest box with his foot. “Did you want to unpack after dinner?”

“No, I’ll start tomorrow. I have a schedule that should finish about half of all this by five. “

“Of course you do.”

Laurent gave Auguste a small smile, “Thank you. For letting me stay here.”

Auguste waved him off, “I wanted you to come. It’s been too long since I got to force you to watch my soaps.”

“It’s only been two years since we lived together.” After a moment, “And those shows are awful.”

“Well get used to them little brother, because we’ll be watching them every Thursday night in the living room.”

Laurent groaned, laughing when Auguste grabbed him around the shoulders to ruffle his hair. “Stop!”

Auguste grinned when Laurent pushed him away with a glare, his hair sticking up in the front with static. “Wash up, I’ll call in the food. We can catch you up over dinner. I have the entire last season of *The Silk Trader* recorded and no work tomorrow.”

Living with Laurent was easy enough. After a week or two of Laurent tiptoeing around the place, constantly checking to make sure that he could spread out his projects in the dining room or that he could listen to music without headphones and *yes Laurent you can leave the dishes in the dishwasher overnight, go to bed already*, Laurent had settled in nicely.

Auguste liked living with his brother. It was nice to chat with someone over coffee in the morning. To unwind with at night over a game of chess, though Auguste lamented the days where he lost to Laurent on purpose. He liked being able to keep an eye on Laurent, making sure he was eating and sleeping and generally not slipping into the unhealthier tendencies he tried to hide.

It was a far cry from the early days when they last lived together. 16 year old Laurent had wanted nothing to do with Auguste, had no interest in talking and no qualms about effectively flaying Auguste when he did. It had taken a full year of Auguste's unrelenting attention, family therapy once a week and dozens of nights painfully unpacking the prior years to get to a point where Auguste felt like Laurent actually believed him when he said he would never neglect Laurent again.

Auguste knew moving in together after only a year apart wouldn't feel like it had when they first did, but he was relieved nonetheless to see the evidence everyday of their reconciliation. And to see that Laurent had grown into an adjusted, albeit shy young man. Some days Auguste felt dwarfed by the man Laurent was, strong enough to walk through hell and not burn the flowers on the other side.

Laurent was tidy and considerate, and a soothing presence when Auguste was overwhelmed from the severity of work. With the case looming over his head, trial only two months away now, Auguste spent every spare moment he could pouring over transcripts and business logs. The other lead attorney was Makedon Aetos, a serious man with an even more serious expression. Auguste had been wary to bring him onto this particular case, unsure how this imposing man would be able to deal with the intricacies of such a sensitive situation. Makedon had proven himself worthy of his position, however, interviewing every woman involved with a gentle firmness and leading the case, methodically, towards trial and hopefully, justice.

God, Auguste prayed for justice. The defendant used his position as a producer to lure and assault young women who had dreams he wielded against them. It had gone on for years, woman after woman, and people all over the film industry had known. Had done nothing. It made Auguste want to scream, to bloody his fists and tear away the curtain hiding the truth of who all these people really were.

He would have to start here, working on one case, against the biggest name and hope the rest would soon topple too.

Auguste sat at the coffee table in the living room, files spread out in front of him. He blew out an exhausted breath and rubbed his eyes. It was getting late and he knew he wouldn't get much more meaningful work done but with the trial so close he was restless.

He turned when he heard a key at the front door and smiled when Laurent bustled in, arms full of magazines.

Laurent kicked the door closed behind him and deposited his stuff on the kitchen island before he meandered over to the couch, "You look as tired as I feel."

"I'm not entirely sure seeing you isn't just some sleep paralysis dream." Laurent sat beside him and Auguste bumped his shoulder, "What's with the magazines?"

"Oh. It's for my couture construction and design class. We need to make six pieces by the end of the year that tell a story. I needed inspiration."

"Well, whatever you make I'm sure it'll be bizarre and stunning, like always."

Laurent smiled, a small and private one he used when he was reigning in his giddiness, "I'm excited." He glanced at the table, "Still working?"

"Yes. I'm meeting with Makedon and the rest of the team next week to go over opening statements. I want to make sure I'm prepared. This is an important case."

Laurent hesitated, "Because it's your first as a partner?"

"No. Well, yes, that is a big part of it." Auguste gazed at the papers in front of him, "These women deserve to see him punished. And if it goes well, criminal charges will follow."

"I was reading about it the other day. The case. It sounds like you have more than enough evidence to get a settlement."

“You shouldn’t be reading about this stuff.”

It was the wrong thing to say. Laurent tensed against him. “I’m not a child. You can’t hide this from me, it’s national news.”

“I’m not trying to hide anything from you, Laurent.” Auguste sighed, “And I know you aren’t a child. Trust me, I know.”

Auguste sagged, feeling suddenly, thoroughly exhausted. From the case and from his life. From the weight of all his mistakes on his shoulders.

“I just meant that this is all hard to stomach. And after... everything, I want you to be able to move on and not have to always think about it.”

They sat in silence for a few moments, Auguste slumped down and Laurent sitting ridged next to him. Auguste was about to try to salvage the evening when Laurent said, very quietly, “I’m never going to be able to avoid stuff like this. Not forever.”

Auguste looked at him then, at the tense line of his neck and the dull look in his eyes.

“You’re right. I’m sorry, it’s been a long day.”

Laurent sat for a moment, before, deliberately moving an inch closer. For Laurent, it may as well have been a mile. “I - appreciate it. I know you’re trying.”

They sat still for a moment, the sounds of the city speaking in between them, before Auguste turned minutely. Giving Laurent space.

“I couldn’t always protect you,” he murmured into the room. “not when it mattered. If you would- just allow me some moments to feel like I’m doing right by you. Even if they’re fleeting.”

Laurent held himself very still. “Of course.”

Auguste, gently, put his hand over Laurent’s knee. He took a moment to just enjoy this closeness – it had taken years before Laurent could handle physical touch without flinching. Some days, he still couldn’t stop himself from the reaction.

After a minute he heaved a sigh and slid his hand back. Leaning back in the couch he loosened his tie. Laurent followed suit, curling his feet under himself and tucking a pillow under his arms. Auguste found himself struck in that moment by how young Laurent looked. It was easy to forget, sometimes, that he was still a young man. Laurent carried himself with the air of a man far beyond his years, in essence and in history. Only when he was comfortable would he carefully, slowly, unfurl to show glimmers of someone that felt tangible. Existing in the real world authentically, not stoically.

“Auguste?”

“Yes?” Auguste replied equally quiet.

“Promise me something?” Laurent asked seriously.

“Anything.”

Auguste waited, until he was about to prompt his brother again, when, “Nail the bastard.”

Auguste smiled, closing his eyes. “We will.”

End Notes

Ahhh!!! Okay, so I wrote a few scenes for this story last year (? maybe the year before bc who knows with covid lololol) and sort of just shelved it. I didn't think about it for a long time but there have been some beautiful stories lately that have been inspiring me like the wonderful Itallends' ITAOAK

(<https://archiveofourown.org/works/25284097/chapters/61300450>) and Spacepolitician's Overgrown (<https://archiveofourown.org/works/33403915/chapters/82972741>). They were in the same vein and inspired me to continue so big thank u to them for getting this lazy bitch moving. also go read those because wowza.

No Damen yet but he's coming, although that relationship takes the back burner for this because I envision this dealing mostly with the brothers. Anyway, hopefully more chapters in the next two weeks? dont quote me on that bc i'm ~trash

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