

Cat Bennett

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

At a simple and relatively empty diner, sits two young men at a table set for three.

JACE HART, a shy and wide-eyed man in his early 20s, fiddles with the golden engagement ring on his left ring finger. His eyes keep flicking from his watch to the front door.

Beside him is DAVID CONNERS, a far more outgoing and laid back man, also in his early 20s, places a hand adorned with a matching ring on Jace's shoulder and gives him a reassuring smile.

DAVID
You're stressing over nothing,
y'know? It'll be fine.

Jace sighs, dropping his hands to his lap.

JACE
I know, I know. I just...

As he trails off, the front doors are thrown open.

The two turn to see NOLAN HART, a handsome man in his late 20's stroll in. He flashes the hostess at the front door a charming grin, before noticing the two at their table.

NOLAN
Eyy! Jay-bird! How's my little man
doing?

Nolan bounds over to the nervous younger man, completely ignoring a patiently sitting David.

JACE
Hey Nolan... I'm um, fine...

NOLAN
Only fine? Not great? Not
fantastic?

Jace just laughs nervously.

NOLAN (CONT'D)
Oh just c'mere. Haven't seen you in
forever!

Nolan tugs him into a tight embrace as Jace just shoots the mildly bemused David a panicked stare. David just shrugs.

Jace glares at the other man, and gestures at his captor with the free hand that's not being crushed against Nolan's body. David chuckles at this before clearing his throat.

DAVID

Um, it's nice to see you again,
Nolan. And I agree, it really has
been a while, hasn't it?

Nolan drops, Jace back into his seat to turn to finally acknowledge the other person at the table. The cheery and warm smile he had worn since he entered the restaurant drops.

NOLAN

That it has, *Conners*.

David's almost hopeful and laid back demeanor drops at the cold response. He just lets out a disheartened sigh and settles back into his seat more.

Jace nervously glances between the two. He looks overwhelmed by the tension between the his companions, and tries to defuse the situation.

JACE

Um, well take a seat! They already
came around asking for drinks and I
already ordered you your favorite.

Nolan perks up at this and sits down, but not without blatantly scooting his seat as far from David as possible

NOLAN

You got me some Jameson?

The nervous smile Jace had plastered on his face falters.

JACE

Oh... uh, no... a Shirley Temple...

Nolan gives Jace a weird look.

NOLAN

Why?

JACE

I mean, you used to order it all
the time... I just thought...

Nolan shakes his head and chuckles, though it lacks a lot of his earlier warmth.

NOLAN
I guess it truly has been a while
then.

JACE
Yeah... I guess so...

David watches the two for a beat, they both look as wistful as they look uncomfortable. David forces a smile and claps his hands together.

DAVID
Anyway! So Jace and I have
something to tell you!

They both look up at him.

NOLAN
Oh? Yeah, I was wondering why you
called me up so suddenly. Jay, I
honestly thought you meant what you
had said after I...

Nolan trails off, while everyone at the table shifts uncomfortably.

DAVID
I mean that's all behind us now,
right babe?

Nolan makes a face at David calling Jace babe, but the other two ignore it.

JACE
Right... I mean, it's been almost a
year now. Besides, I don't want to
keep even more things from you...

NOLAN
(sotto)
I don't know, you seemed pretty
fine with hiding things from me
before.

Jace winces at the comment while David scowls.

DAVID
Really? Are you really bringing
this up again? Now? We're trying to
make peace here, and involve you
with something again. And you have
to start going on about *this*?

NOLAN

Yes I'm bringing this up now! I was hoping this would just be a nice dinner with my baby bro, but nooo, you just had to come with and ruin this, just like you ruined him!

Jace, who had been silently staring down at his lap since he spoke, suddenly stands up, forcing his chair back with a screech.

JACE

Nolan. Stop it.

The two stare up at him in surprise. Jace's expression as icy as his voice.

JACE (CONT'D)

David didn't ruin me. No one did. I'm not broken, Nolan.

NOLAN

Jay-bird... you know I didn't mean it like that--!

Jace cuts him off with a glare.

JACE

I don't care if you didn't mean it or not! I care that keep saying things like this and then wonder why I never came out to you in the first place!

Nolan winces at his brother's sudden shouting, while Jace is starting to cry with anger.

JACE (CONT'D)

You didn't think your comments had an affect on me? Or when I watched you bully other gay kids?

Nolan pales.

NOLAN

You... you saw that?

Tears are streaming down Jace's face, staining the paper table mats beneath him.

JACE

Of course I did, Nol! I looked up to you!

(MORE)

JACE (CONT'D)

I would have followed you to the moon and back. You were my idol!

NOLAN

Jace...

Nolan tries to reach out to comfort the sniffing and shaking young man, who now looks just so much younger, but Jace smacks his hand away.

JACE

Just... watching you make fun of kids like that, I... Your word was gospel to me, back then, so I thought I was also a mistake. That I was also broken, a freak.

Jace is calming down now, and angrily wiping at his tears as if he could also wipe away those memories. David reaches out his hand, and Jace immediately takes it, and goes over to stand beside him.

JACE (CONT'D)

God, there are times when I still do... If it weren't for David, I don't know where I'd be...

David pulls Jace down for a kiss, the ring on David's hand catching the light as he cups the other man's face. Nolan's eyes widen at the sight of the ring.

NOLAN

Wait, is that--?

Jace pulls away to see Nolan eying the ring, and raises his hand to show his own.

JACE

Yes, so this is why we invited you here. We wanted to let you know that we're getting married.

If Nolan's eyes got any wider, they would pop out of his head.

NOLAN

I... what... you two... but...
(beat)
When?

JACE

June, probably, maybe July.

DAVID

We were considering a beach wedding, but I'm worried that might be a bit too cliché.

Nolan shakes his head, looking as though he was still trying to wrap his head around the whole thing.

NOLAN

No, I meant since when? How long have you two been engaged?

The couple look at each other.

DAVID

Like five? Six months?

JACE

Six, it's definitely been six.

Nolan stares at the two, looking them both up and down before his eyes finally land on their still interlaced fingers.

NOLAN

Why did you decide to only tell me now?

Jace stares at him, he's stopped crying for a while now, but his expression is still sad and misty eyed.

JACE

Because we knew you would act like this...

NOLAN

But why now?

Jace turns his face away, and David gives his fiancé's hand a squeeze.

JACE

We had hoped you had changed, but I guess not.

The three fall silent. The whole table is heavy with unspoken emotions and regret, until finally Nolan breaks the silence and stand up too.

NOLAN

Look. I'm sorry for today.

He opens his wallet and places a twenty on the table.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I know I'm not the greatest brother, or whatever, and god, I'm so sorry about making you feel that way.

He pushes in his chair.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

Just know that I still want the best for you, Jay-bird, even if I don't act like it sometimes...

Nolan turns to leave.

NOLAN (CONT'D)

I... I hope you enjoy the wedding. Both of you.

JACE

Thank you.

Nolan throws them a look over his shoulder.

NOLAN

And David?

David blinks up at him in surprised.

DAVID

Yeah?

Nolan flashes him a weak smile, the first smile he's given David the whole time.

NOLAN

Take care of my little man for me, will ya?

David returns the smile and gives Jace's hand another squeeze.

DAVID

Of course.

Nolan nods and walks out the way he came, still flashing the hostess a smile, albeit a more apologetic one, as he disappears through the doors of the diner.

FADE OUT.