

Today, Tomorrow

Alex sits alone on the edge of the porch, listening to the familiar sound of the party as they look out into the back yard.

The back door opens, and Alex turns to see a girl step out onto the porch.

"... Patty?"

"Hey. Alex, right?"

"Yeah."

"Getting away from all the noise?"

"M-hm."

She leans up against one of the posts.

"What're you drinking?"

"Orange juice."

"What's in it?"

"... Oranges..."

A pause.

"... Anyways, I wanted to ask. You're in this time loop too, aren't you?"

"... What?"

"For the longest time I thought that you were just acting differently because of something I did that loop. But no. You're in it as well."

Alex looks back at their drink. "Yeah."

"The whole time? How many loops?"

Alex thinks for a second. "Thirty?"

Patty nods. "So since the beginning."

She sits down next to them, dangling her legs off the edge.

"You do the same thing every loop, that's what I don't understand. You look miserable, sitting out here by yourself. Why don't you just leave?"

Alex doesn't look away from the ground.

"My friend wanted me here."

"... So?"

"If I just leave, what am I supposed to tell him the next day? He *really* wanted me to enjoy this."

"There is no *next day*, it'll just loop again."

"You don't know that."

“Alex, you’re in a *time loop*, you could be doing anything right now, and you’re telling me you’d rather sit here with your cup of orange juice?”

“No. I hate parties.”

“Then let’s go!”

Patty stands up, and pulls Alex to their feet. They don’t move.

“W- where would we go?”

“Who gives a shit?”

Patty steps forward, and gives Alex’s arm a tug. They don’t budge.

“No.”

“Oh come on.”

“I’ve seen the movies, okay? I know what you’re trying to do. I’m *not* leaving.”

“But you just said...”

“Of course I want to! I *really* want to.”

Alex yanks their arm free.

“What happens if we go out, we do a bunch of stupid shit—we- we drive a car into a train or something—and we wake up the next day, and it’s *tomorrow*. It doesn’t loop.”

“Well- That’d be good.”

“No, it wouldn’t. That’d mean that I’d have ditched a party my friend invited me to, to do who knows *what* with who knows *who*. We- we don’t even know each other!”

Patty looks hurt.

“Oh that’d be embarrassing would it? To play hooky with the popular girl? Are you scared of a little gossip?”

Alex crosses their arms. “... It’s not just what they say. It’s what they think.”

She scoffs. “Bullshit.”

“What am I supposed to say when someone asks me what I was doing talking to Patty Ducasse?”

“It doesn’t matter-”

“No, Patty, these aren’t just little things you can brush away. These are things I *need* to know the answer to. Otherwise... otherwise I just can’t do it.”

She looks away, and stays silent for a second.

“I don’t know what to say to you.”

Alex sits back down, and takes a sip of their orange juice.

“Just leave me alone.”

Patty stands there for a moment, then plops herself back down beside them.

She sits there for a while.

“You’re the only one going through this with me. I don’t have to make excuses, or try to explain everything to you every day. I just thought that maybe... We could spend some time together.”

Silence.

“I can’t *do* what you want me to do, Patty.”

“I *want* you to enjoy yourself.”

“...”

“You can’t just live like you’re *not* in a time loop.”

“... Yes I can.”

“You’re making yourself miserable.”

“It’s better than making a fool of myself.”

A second of silence.

“... Is it?”

Nothing.

Patty sighs. “We don’t have to leave the party if you don’t want to.”

She shifts in her seat. “How about this: I, Patricia Ducasse, see poor old Alex... *Whatever your last name is*”—“Bennet.”—“*Bennet*, all by their sorry lonesome, and invite them inside to dance.”

Patty stands up, and extends her hand. “Please.”

“I’d rather just...”

“Live a little,” Patty says. “You can sit there all day tomorrow. Whatever tomorrow might be.”

They say nothing for a moment, then sigh, put down their drink, and take her hand.

The two of them head inside.

A wave of sounds assaults their ears. Music, chatter, laughter.

She leads them by the hand through the ocean of bodies. Heat emanating from the mass. Alex quickly loses sight of her.

Only focusing on her palm in theirs, they wade their way through the crowd.

“You know this song?” She shouts over the music.

Alex shakes their head.

Patty takes Alex’s other hand, and starts moving with the music.

She mouths the words of the song to them. Or maybe she was singing, Alex couldn’t hear her.

She shakes their hands back and forth.

“Come on!”

“I’m not a dancer!”

Patty laughs. "Everybody's a dancer!"

Still holding one hand, she puts her other one on Alex's shoulder.

"You'd rather dance slow then?"

"N- Nobody else is dancing slow."

"Forget about what everybody else is doing."

"Patty."

Alex's eyes dart about. Somebody glances in their direction.

Patty puts her hand on their chin, and turns their head back to her. "Look at me."

She whispers into their ear. "Put your arm around me."

Alex hesitates, then puts a hand on her waist.

The music is *way* too active for the movements they're making. Patty brings her face closer again.

"Isn't this so romantic?"

Alex laughs. "This is ridiculous."

She grins. "Hell yeah it is."

Alex awakes to a ceiling they don't recognise.

They sit up in the bed. This is *not* their bedroom.

This is... *Tomorrow*.

Their heart skips a beat, trying to replay the events of last night in their head. *What the hell did they get up to?*

To Alex's left, Patty rolls from her side onto her back, tugging at the covers.

She rubs her eyes, and spots Alex sitting next to her.

With one look at them, she starts to giggle.

Alex smiles. "What?"

"Nothing!"

Her giggling makes Alex grin. Then it makes them laugh.

Then, sitting there together, it makes Alex wonder what they were *ever* worrying about.