

Of all the days in his life, John couldn't remember one of such turbulent emotions. The happiness of the morning had given way to a feeling of complete confusion, which in turn had given him a temper roughly equivalent to a bear with a branch stuck in its behind.

He had gone on to breakfast as planned, but his jaunty step had been replaced by slow wandering with his hands deep in his pockets. Emotions battled inside of him. The happiness at the thought of being with Kat, just talking to her, stargazing with her, simply holding her hand, still simmered in his mind. The confusion had tainted its edge, however, and John did not know what to do. This was not as simple as having feelings for someone next door or a work colleague. Kat was both, which meant that she was always around, which increased the potential awkwardness and embarrassment from an unrequited affection quite significantly. He was thinking exactly of that when he collided with something large and solid, and sprang back with a yell.

"Whoa, John!" Virgil said, grabbing the top of his brother's flailing arms to stop him falling backwards. "Easy, boy. What's up? Left your eyes in your room?"

John steadied himself and stepped backwards out of reach. He gave Virgil a grin that didn't reach his eyes; a quick exit was necessary to avoid unwanted questions.

"Nothing, Virg," he said. "I just slept badly, that's all. I think I need a good breakfast to wake me up." The lie felt bitter on his tongue. Suddenly he wasn't hungry at all.

He kept the smile up, ignoring the concerned gaze of his brother, until he rounded a corner. It dropped off his face like a slate blown off a roof as he entered the kitchen. He accepted Kyrano's offer of a cup of coffee and leant against one of the counters. The retainer said nothing of his deflated mood. The same could not be said about his siblings gathered around the table. Cherie and Scott were scrutinising him carefully; John knew that look, and decided to beat a fast retreat before they started on him. Gordon, however, never the most diplomatic of people, threw John an amused look.

"You look happy," he said. "Got out of the wrong side of the bed?"

"Something like that."

John drank his coffee with closed eyes. This was not what he wanted right now. He drained the cup and set it down, thanking Kyrano. He made to leave, when Gordon piped up once more.

"Not having breakfast?"

"I'm not hungry," John said.

"That's not like --"

"Leave it, Gordon," John snapped, and strode out of the kitchen without a backward glance.

His face burned and his fists clenched in fury at himself. He wanted to go and apologise, but his legs carried him all the way down to the poolside, blissfully empty so early in the morning. He fell into a recliner and ran a hand over his face, pulling at his features. Why was he overreacting so much? He folded his arms and stared off across the pool. The sea in the distance was flat; he wished his mind echoed the calm. Why are you acting like a hormonal teenager? he asked himself. But he knew the answer. A battle was ongoing in his head. The white armoured champions of his feelings charged headlong into the darker warriors of worry. There was no doubt about it. He definitely wanted to be with Kat. It was as clear as the cloudless sky above him. If the situation was different, if they didn't live in such close quarters on the island, John wouldn't have had a second thought about asking her out. But the fact was that they did, and so he could do nothing. I'm not going to ruin Dad's dream, he thought. I'm not going to jeopardise the team by throwing a wrench in the middle of my friendship with Kat. What if she doesn't want to be with me? What if I make her really awkward? And then everyone will start asking questions... I'll be mortified.

It was settled in his mind that he would do nothing. His white champions were firmly stamped down. That didn't mean he stopped feeling for her, however. In fact, it seemed to make him feel even more strongly. You've seen Romeo and Juliet, he thought. Unrequited love didn't get him anywhere. In fact, neither did true love... It had always been a minor thought that with the arrival of the new recruits some couplings could occur. John, however, had never thought that he would be involved in any.

He lay back and closed his eyes against the rising sun.

"What am I going to do?"

From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/20/2005

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