

sentiment

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sentiment

by [bwug](#)

Summary

a christmas themed vignette featuring light, wily, and the space between them.

Notes

this is a tooth achingly self indulgent christmas gift to myself. hope you enjoy :-)

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

There was a knock at the door.

The sound echoed through the halls of one Albert W. Wily's fortress. A peculiar feeling settled in his chest as the noise drew him away from his work. He wasn't the type to get visitors.

By the time he reached the door, there was no one outside. Atop the front step lay a delicately-wrapped gift basket, perched somewhat crookedly, as if delivered by a particularly nervous postman.

He took the basket into his arms and swept back inside his lair.

Albert placed it on his desk to study it closer. In typical festive fashion, the basket was adorned with red-and-green wrapping paper. Less typically, the paper was patterned with cartoon skulls dressed in Santa hats. A large red bow glittered enticingly on the handle; it held the package snug together. Tied in with the ribbon was a small tag. Taking it into his fingers, Albert read the words:

From, Thomas Light.

To, Albert Wily.

His teeth dug into his bottom lip as something in his stomach turned.

With delicate, ginger touches, Albert unwrapped the basket. A plethora of gifts had been concealed inside. Boxes of German cookies he'd enjoyed as a boy. Handfuls of books, some nonfiction and others sci-fi, dog-eared and well-loved from Tom's personal study. A purple christmas jumper knitted with tiny bats.

And, most importantly of all, a letter. Penned in handwriting all-too-familiar, on thick, cream cardstock. Albert's hands trembled as he slowly scanned its contents.

Dear Albert,

I know that our relationship has been... strained, as of late. Nevertheless, I wanted to send a bit of holiday cheer your way. Inside this basket you will find an assortment of items that I hope you enjoy. I picked them out myself.

In addition, if you feel up for it, you're welcome to come and visit Light Labs anytime. It would be good to see you again.

Warm wishes, Tom.

"You sentimental old fool." Albert muttered as he moved to grab his coat.

—

It was late when Albert arrived outside Light Labs. Overhead, the sky was a murky black, crowded with thick clouds. Festive lights strung across the building cut through the gloom. They winked cheerily down at him. He felt a little ill.

He stared at Light's door. Apprehension knotted in his chest. It was difficult to shake the feeling that this was an incredibly stupid idea. *He doesn't really want to see me. He's just being polite. No he's not, you idiot. He clearly cares about you. Does he? Doesn't he?*

Trying to bury the thoughts whirling in his mind, Albert willed himself to reach forwards and press the doorbell.

Seconds stretched into ages as he waited. Footsteps grew closer and the latch on the door clicked into place. Albert's heart dropped into the pit of his stomach. The door swung open.

Wide blue eyes met Albert's grey. Surprise parted Tom's lips. Albert returned his gaze with a sheepish, awkward glance. Tom's face broke into a grin.

He ushered Albert inside. "It's good to see you," he murmured, leaving the unspoken *'like this'* to hang behind his words.

"The kids?" Albert asked.

"Sleeping. They won't wake up for a good couple hours now. You can stay as long as you like, though. I'm sure they wouldn't really mind."

“Mhm.” They would definitely mind. That was alright. He hadn't planned to stay long.

Tom gestured for Albert to take a seat at the table. As Albert sat, Tom began to rummage around the kitchen, setting out two mugs. The sound of water heating filled the air as Tom hummed, “How have you been?”

“Fine.”

“If there’s anything you want to talk about…”

“You don’t mean that.”

“Don’t mean what?”

Albert bristled. “*Anything*’.”

Thomas glanced over his shoulder. His gaze softened as it landed on Albert. “You can say anything you want to me, Al. I don’t mind.”

"Why?" Albert shut his eyes, resentment bubbling up the back of his throat. “Why do you have to act so utterly, cloyingly *nice* all the time? It’s ridiculous! You have every reason in the world to hate me! And- *and yet!* You send me gifts! You invite me into your home! You sit me down and say ‘*Oh, you can tell me anything, Al*’ as if I’m too stupid to tell that’s a lie!”

Thomas blinked, perturbed.

“You’ve always been like this,” Albert’s voice rose into a snarl, “Always pretended you were so kind, so gracious, so above it all. And everyone loved you for it. I’m sick of it! Can’t you just do me the decency of being honest with me for *once*?”

The room fell into a dead, uncomfortable silence. A distant sound rang in Albert's ears. Thomas let out a sigh, pulling open the fridge, retrieving a bottle of Irish cream. Finally, he said, “I’ve never lied to you, Al.”

Albert stared at him.

“Yes, our relationship has been strained. Yes, you’ve caused plenty of trouble for me and my family. Yes, there have been days where I’ve found myself cursing your name.”

He began pouring the cream into the mugs.

“However. There would be no point in lying to you. If I wanted nothing to do with you,” metal clinked against ceramic as he mixed the drinks, “you would most certainly know.”

Albert’s mind floundered. He wanted to say *something* ; however, so many thoughts were crowding his brain he could hardly untangle them.

Thomas approached the table and set the mugs down. He slid one in front of Albert. Inside was a decadent hot chocolate, topped with a tower of whipped cream and tiny marshmallows. It smelled divine.

“I…” Tom started, before pausing, clearing his throat. “I’ve always cared about you, Al. I’m truly sorry if anything I’ve ever done has made you feel like that’s not the case.” His eyes shone as he gazed at Albert. “You’re incredibly important to me.”

A shaky breath escaped Albert as he returned Tom’s gaze. Embarrassment descended upon him as

he realized his outburst. He felt a little like he wanted to crawl into a hole very far away and die.

“I...” Now it was his turn to stumble over his words. “God. I’m sorry, Thomas. I don’t know what came over me.”

“Mm, well. I did say you could tell me anything you wanted.”

Albert took the mug gently into his hands. It was incredibly warm. He held it like that, letting the warmth seep into his skin. “It’s... hard... to talk about things. It feels as if— it must be better to keep those thoughts to myself—but then, they keep piling on top of each other until...”

“They all come spilling out. I understand.” Tom took a sip from his own mug. “I suppose I wish I had noticed sooner you were struggling. I feel as if... there was more I could have done.”

Albert was quiet at that. There was still too much distance there to broach.

“...Oh, well.” Tom murmured.

“Oh, well.” Albert echoed in agreement. The hot chocolate had cooled slightly, and he took a sip. It tasted rich and sweet on his tongue.

Gradually, the tension between them dissolved until only a slight stiffness remained. Albert found himself falling into easy conversation with his old friend. It felt good talking to Tom again.

Time melted away as they spoke. Eventually, Tom got up, taking both his and Albert’s mugs and placing them in the sink. Albert’s gaze flicked from Tom to the clock. He felt startled realizing just how late it had become.

“I should get going.” Albert’s voice was faint as he spoke.

Tom glanced at him, his gaze gently pleading. Albert shook his head.

An understanding sigh left the other man’s lips. “I’ll miss you.”

“...Yeah.”

Albert shouldered his coat. He paused briefly in the doorway; glancing back, he locked eyes with Tom one last time, before disappearing into the darkness of the night.

End Notes

alternate ending: wily agrees to stay over, they fall asleep on the couch watching a movie, rock wakes up and is completely scandalized to see his dad cuddled up with dr. wily.

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