Sad, Tragic Trauma Boy

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Summary: Rachel and Jasper play a favourite video game together, and Carl is… a little jealous. Just a wee bit of future domestic Carl/Rachel fluff and Rachel & Jasper bonding, because I need it in my life.

Author's Note: Yes, I know, they don't seem to have a gaming console in the Morck household, but let's just assume Jasper knows how to hook his laptop up to their TV and play split screen co-op. Because apparently that's possible, I looked it up.

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Carl was enjoying this. He was sitting in the leather armchair, his legs up on the stool, reading. Or not reading. He was clandestinely watching and listening.

Rachel and Jasper were sitting in the couch, a video game controller in hand, in deep discussion about the game they had started playing together. Carl had snuck glances at the screen here and there. Some kind of darkly lit setting with fantasy creatures that had horns and oddly coloured skin.

They were running through a grassy rocks setting now. Jasper was looking at Rachel, his voice exasperated. "You want Astarion in our party? Seriously?"

"Come on, he's kind of cute."

"He is such a wimp."

"So who do you fancy? Shadowheart?"

"Nah. Karlach all the way."

"Karlach?"

Jasper gave her a grin. "She's hot."

Rachel grinned back. "Quite literally so. Are you going to romance her, then?"

Jasper turned a shade redder. "I might. Are you going to—" He paused, then said, "Heh."

Rachel looked at him. "Heh what?"

"It makes sense now. Sad, tragic trauma boy and all that."

She laughed gently. "You mean because I'm a therapist?"

Jasper shrugged. "If the shoe fits…"

"I suppose it is a wee bit predictable."

"At least reskill him to five levels Ranger and then Rogue to get the multiattack. He'll be a lot more useful that way."

"That's a good idea."

Carl had no idea what they were even talking about now, but seeing them engaged in easy banter, able to connect over something they both enjoyed gave him more joy than he'd ever admit. And maybe—just *maybe*—he was a tad jealous.

That night, when Jasper was in his room and Carl and Rachel shared the couch for a laid-back Sunday evening before they'd go back to their weekly routines in their mutual flats, Carl asked her, "Astarion?"

"Secretly listening in, were you?"

"Hard not to. So, who's this Astarion and what's with the sad, tragic trauma thing?"

"He's a vampire spawn who was abused by his master."

"And that makes him a sad, tragic trauma boy?"

"It kinda does."

He grinned at her. "And that turns you on?"

"You, of all people, should know I have a weakness for sad, tragic trauma boys."

"So that's what I am, a sad, tragic trauma boy?"

She chuckled softly. "No, you're a grumpy but loveable trauma gremlin."

That made him laugh. "Trauma gremlin. Seriously."

"What, it's cute."

"I wanna see this Astarion character, see who I'm competing with."

"Oh, you'd hate him. Jasper is right. He *is* a bit of a wimp. And kind of a selfish, arrogant arse."

"Well, that last piece sounds about right."

"Oh, believe me, Astarion is a whole other level of arrogant arsehole."

He shifted his position slightly so that he could face her better. "And you can romance that guy?"

"Mm-hm," she confirmed.

"Okay, now I'm concerned."

"For what?"

"Whether I made the wrong decision romancing a woman who's madly in love with a massively selfish, arrogant arsehole."

"I never said I was madly in love with him."

"You're not? You really know how to wound a man."

"Wait, who are we talking about?"

He chuckled, then got up to grab his phone from the kitchen table to look up a photo. He pulled one of Astarion up on the screen and held it out to Rachel. "This the guy?"

"Yep."

He looked at him again. "Seriously? He looks nothing like me."

"Well, maybe that's the point."

"Is it the hair?"

"No, I think it's the fangs and the cheekbones. And maybe the hair a wee bit."

Carl flashed her a mischievous grin. "Well, then I guess I have nothing to fear when go all white."

"You'd also have to shave."

"Oh no. No, no, no, no. No shaving."

"So you've done clean-shaven before?"

"Yeah, a million years ago."

"Now I'm curious. Are there photos?"

"Somewhere, I'm sure."

"Show me."

"Fuck off."

"I'll ask Jasper."

"This was way before Jasper."

"And actually," she leaned closer and skritched his beard on one side. "I like you scruffy."

"Oh, thank fuck."

Her hand came around his neck and she pulled him closer. "Come here, scruffy trauma gremlin."

He leaned in for the kiss, still not sure whether he deserved her by his side but had decided a while ago that maybe it didn't matter, maybe it was enough for him to try and be the best version of himself that he could be.

And for now, that seemed to be working.