

Sides

written by

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Artie (professor) is comforting Russell (PhD candidate), who is recovering from falling in an icy pond.

ARTIE

Fuck, kid. You scared the shit out of me.

RUSSELL

Sorry.

ARTIE

Don't be. You're fine, that's what matters. Although, it would be nice if you stuck to running on a treadmill for a bit.

Russell laughs. Artie joins him.

RUSSELL

Hate treadmills. They're so boring.

ARTIE

As long as you don't go for another swim.

RUSSELL

Do not give way to useless alarm. Though it is right to be prepared for the worst, there is no occasion to look on it as certain.

ARTIE

I don't particularly care for the use of Mr. Gardiner's platitudes in defense of cold water plunges. Jane hadn't fallen into a frozen pond when she wrote that.

RUSSELL

She did write —

ARTIE

No, before you suggest it, I'd rather you not become Louisa, next.

RUSSELL

I didn't hit my head.

ARTIE

You could've.

RUSSELL

You're an ass, you know?

ARTIE  
Excuse me?

RUSSELL  
You're an ass.

ARTIE  
Please. Do elaborate.

RUSSELL  
It would be nice if you would at least admit to yourself that caring for others won't kill you.

ARTIE  
You think I don't care?

He gestures to Russell.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
You think this is me not caring?

RUSSELL  
I think the second you realise you care about something, you realise you can get hurt, and you back off.

ARTIE  
I care plenty.

RUSSELL  
Do you?

ARTIE  
Tennyson's take on love and loss is misleading at best.

RUSSELL  
Then, how lucky am I to know that my housemate would probably prefer my heart to remain beating. How generous you are with your feelings. Your altruism knows no bounds.

ARTIE  
You cannot even begin to fathom how out of line you are -

*That!*

RUSSELL

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
That right there. Trademark Artie. Your mastery of deflection should be studied.

ARTIE

What do you want from me? I'm right here. Damn near pulled you out of the pond myself, so I think I care some — at least enough to be here, if that counts for anything.

RUSSELL

You don't want to be.

ARTIE

I don't *want* — okay, enough.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

You are a *student* —

RUSSELL

Stop with —

ARTIE (CONT'D)

No, you stop. There is a line. I cannot be your friend. I cannot entertain this, *this* —

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You can't, or you won't?

Artie takes a steadying breath.

ARTIE

I'm going to go make you tea. I'll leave a change of clothes on the bed.

RUSSELL

You do that. I'll be here.

ARTIE

Please don't drown yourself in the bathwater.