

Episode 10 – The Unexpected

Scene 1

Noah shut the door to his apartment and tossed his keys onto the coffee table. Then he sat back onto the sofa and reached for the envelope that Sid Raymond had given him the day before. He was no longer just curious to know what was inside. After having spent the day with the Pryce family to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday, there was now something else driving him. He had been given the chance to see a loving family in action; to witness the outcome of having parents that cared for and were proud of their children. The envelope held the possibility that Noah could someday have even a fraction of what Avery, Andrew and Amber had experienced.

Noah: Here goes.

Noah took a deep breath to calm his nerves. Then, in the same manner that he would use to pull a bandage from an open wound, the nurse hastily tore open the seal. He did it quick because he was afraid to change his mind if he gave it another moment's thought.

Noah: I swear to god Sid, you better not make me regret this.

Noah threatened an empty room as he reached into the opened sleeve of yellow butcher paper and began to remove the items within it.

Noah: What the hell Sid.

Noah swore as he glanced over the first item he had pulled from the envelope. It appeared to be some type of legal record, but was printed in a language that Noah could not read. After examining it for a moment, he laid it down on the table in front of him and reached into the envelope again. Just like the document before it, the second one was also written in another language. It was a letter handwritten in black ink on top of faded stationery.

Noah: Is this your writing?

Noah questioned, wondering if his birth mother had written the letter herself and speaking to the air as if she could hear him. Then he stared at the symbols as if somehow the ability to read and understand them would come to him like magic before finally giving up and placing it on the coffee table beside the other document. He then pulled the third and final item from the envelope. His eyes grew wide as he looked at it. It was a photograph; one of a very young looking Asian girl. She couldn't have been any more than seventeen when the picture was taken.

“Is this why you gave me up?” Noah interrogated his own mind with thoughts that were directed at the mother who had given him up for adoption. “Were you too young to be a mother?”

Noah sat back onto the sofa, still holding up the picture and admiring it critically. There were quite a few more questions that had crept up into his thoughts, but none of them that could be answered by the items he had found inside the envelope. The only thing he could really do right now, was day dream of all the things his life could have been if he had been raised by a family that had given a damn about him; a family like the Pryce's...

Scene 2

Anna: Dr. Reeves, just the man I wanted to see.

Anna greeted with a satisfied expression when she saw Dr. Reeves exit the scrub room.

Tony: Dr. Shaye, how long have you been waiting?

Tony faked a polite smile, even though he was tired and covered in blood from his latest patient.

Anna: Not long. I was hoping to speak with you about Dr. Pryce.

Tony: Sure, but make it quick will you? I was just about to get out of here for the night.

Tony was direct with his reply. He wasn't trying to be rude but he had already been in the OR for the past ten hours and there were things he needed to take care of back at home.

Anna: Well I heard that you had released him to come back to work, but not back to surgery.

Anna mentioned as she stuffed her hands into the pockets of her lab coat. Tony nodded.

Tony: That's right. I released him back to work starting tomorrow morning, but he's only on light duty for now.

Anna: And what does that mean?

Tony: It means that I don't want him to overextend himself during his first week back, especially since that's what landed him on my table to begin with. So for now and until I know for certain that he's ready to go back to fulltime, I don't want to take any chances. So, I'm sorry Dr. Shaye if that's not what you were hoping for, but I'm only looking out for my patient. You would do the same if he was one of yours.

Tony explained in a tone that sounded slightly annoyed. The female doctor nodded her head to show her understanding of the situation.

Anna: Of course I would Dr. Reeves. I may be in a rush to have my surgeon back, but I wouldn't be careless enough to put my own selfish needs above his recovery.

Tony: Good. Then you should agree when I say that right now this is the best thing for him and there should be no need to discuss this matter any further.

Tony said with smug satisfaction. Anna nodded her head again to agree, biting her tongue over his arrogance.

Anna: You're right. We don't need to speak of this anymore for now. Thank you for speaking with me Dr. Reeves. I'm sorry to have taken your time.

Anna said, ending the conversation abruptly before turning around and walking away. Then as soon as she had left, Tony then did the same... **Scene 5**

Dr. Shaye was standing at the nurses' station in the cardio wing of the hospital when Avery found her. He had just barely approached her when she turned to him with a brightly lit smile. She was happy to see him back at work for the first since his appendectomy.

Anna: Welcome back Dr. Pryce. It's good to see you. How you feeling?

Avery: Thanks. It's nice to see you too and I feel great. I'm just ready to get back to work.

Avery returned with a smile of his own as he too was happy to be back.

Anna: Great. Dr. Reeves has already filled me in on everything. He wants you on light duty and for no more than eight hours a day. That means no OR time, no surgeries, and no long shifts.

Avery: Unfortunately I know that, but I have to be here. I can't sit around at home anymore. I don't do very well with idle time.

Avery spoke as though he were afraid to be turned away, but he was desperate to fill his time with something. In the last few weeks he had felt like a caged animal trying to break free. He needed to distract himself with something and work was the only thing that came to mind.

Anna: Alright then. You're going to be doing a lot of consults in the clinic and I will be stepping in to take over anything that ends up needing surgical attention. I know that this isn't an ideal situation, but it's all that I can offer you until Dr. Reeves will approve your request to get back to your normal routine. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a valve replacement to scrub in for and you have a patient waiting for you in the ER...

Scene 6

Wayne: You're quiet this morning.

Noah: I'm sorry Dr. Sullivan. It's just been a busy couple of days. I'm not sure where to begin.

Noah shrugged. He was sitting at one end of a black leather sofa, across from a man with thick rimmed glasses and a receding hairline.

Wayne: Let's start simple then. How was your Thanksgiving weekend?

The doctor asked with encouragement. He was sitting in a black leather office chair with one leg folded over the other, a pad of paper in his lap, and a ball point pen in one hand.

Noah: It was ok. Avery invited me to join him and his family for dinner on the holiday. So I went. I had a pretty great time too. I even got to meet Avery's sister, which was cool considering that I didn't even know he had a sister.

Noah replied as he watched Wayne chew the end of the pen he'd been holding.

Wayne: Sounds like it was a good thing for you. How did you feel about spending time with Avery and his family?

Dr. Sullivan removed the pen from his mouth just long enough to speak; an action he repeated throughout most of the conversation that followed.

Noah: I felt out of place for some of it. I've never spent time with a family like the Pryce's so I felt like I was intruding for most of the day even though it felt good to be included. It was also really nice just to spend some time with Avery. We've been spending more and more time together outside of work. I crashed at his place one night. It was purely innocent, nothing physical happened but we did officially put the term boyfriend to whatever this thing is. Things seem to be going ok with us.

Noah answered as he rested his hands on the tops of his knees and sat back straight against the sofa. Then he turned and looked up at the face of a clock that was hanging on the wall behind his psychiatrist.

Wayne: All of that sounds great, but why do you only say "seems to be"?

Dr. Sullivan looked perplexed as he unfolded his leg from the top of his knee and switched sides, crossing the opposite leg over the other knee. All the while he held the pad of paper so that it didn't fall off his lap.

Noah: Because Avery and I come from completely different worlds. I'm afraid that he's gonna be overwhelmed when he finds out about my past and I know that it's only a matter of time before that happens and he realizes that he's too good for me.

Wayne: Maybe his reaction won't be what you suspect. He is a doctor after all. He must know, even underneath all of his naiveties that the world isn't perfect. Heck, he may even admire you for all that you've accomplished since turning your life around.

There was a pause of silence here as Noah pondered the probability of the doctor's comment; which had only been said for the sake of inspiring him to think positively.

Noah: I hope so, but I've waited so long to say something to him about it. I chicken out every time I try and the longer I wait the harder it gets.

Noah tapped his fingers against his knees; which just barely made a sound as his fingertips hit the denim of his jeans.

Wayne: Noah I think you're getting ahead of yourself. Perhaps you should focus on what you've been learning in NA. I think you should take everything one day at a time and not fret over the what if's that tomorrow holds.

Noah: Easier said than done Doc.

Wayne: Perhaps, but you've been going to your meetings haven't you?

Wayne asked like he was interrogating the nurse. Noah shrugged with uneasiness at the grilling and gave an under-exaggerated response.

Noah: I've missed a few.

Wayne: I think now would be a good time for you to start going back then don't you think?

Wayne suggested. Noah gave thought to the idea as he glanced again at the face of the clock.

Noah: Yeah, I guess you're right.

Wayne: No, no, no, don't just say you guess. Noah this is your sobriety. You've worked very hard to get yourself to where you're at now. You don't want to take the chance of temptation getting the best of you and as you very well know both good stress and bad can cause a relapse. You need to remember all of the things you've worked for and accomplished since you got sober. You've made a life for yourself since then; one that now includes a boyfriend who must care an awful lot about you if he feels comfortable enough to invite you into his family for the holidays.

Dr. Sullivan ranted motivationally. Noah interrupted the doctor to debate his view.

Noah: Yeah, but how safe would he feel if he knew who he was really inviting over? Avery doesn't know anything about my past. He doesn't know the things that I've been through, the things that I've seen, and the things that I've had to do in order to stay alive.

Wayne: Noah you're used to getting the worst out of people; like you did when Sid found out that you're gay, but it doesn't have to be that way with everyone.

Wayne paused and glanced up at the same clock that Noah had been eyeballing

Noah: Looks like we're out of time for this session Doc.

Noah pointed out after he watched the doctor glance at the clock.

Wayne: Yeah, looks like, but before you leave, I want you to give some thought to the things I said today. I want you to try and open up to Avery between now and our next session. It doesn't matter how. It can be big or small, but let him in. Don't let your fears keep him at a distance. You may just end up noticing that the two of you are closer than ever once he has the chance to see the real you...

Scene 7

Noah: Hey. I was wondering when I'd finally run into you.

Noah flirted when he found Avery sitting in the break lounge. The blonde looked as though he was bored, but he managed to smile when he saw the nurse.

Avery: Hey. Where have you been?

Noah: They've got me working in the trauma center this week. Without Dr. Kurt around they're a little short staffed on doctors and they're trying to make up for that with extra nurses. With all the ice on the roads it's been really busy all morning. I'm sorry that I wasn't around to come and greet you on your first day back.

Noah explained apologetically as he stole the chair closest to Avery, who rolled his eyes and let out a snappy remark at the mention of the trauma center.

Avery: Oh boy and I bet Dr. Reeves is just such a pleasure to work with.

Noah: Has anyone ever told you how cute you are when you're annoyed?

Noah grinned, struck with awe over how sexy Avery was when he rolled his eyes. Avery glared back at his boyfriend. He wasn't sure whether or not to be flattered by the comment, though he knew that it was made as a compliment.

Avery: No, that one would be a first.

Noah: So, I take it that Dr. Reeves is not exactly your favorite person right now huh?

Avery: Far from it. You see, I kind of thought that coming back to work today would cure some of my boredom, but it seems that it's only intensified it. Every time I see a patient whisked off to the operating room it reminds me of how dull life is when I'm not cutting into someone's chest.

Noah: You know you're lucky you're a surgeon; otherwise comments like that one might be taken the wrong way.

Noah teased, hoping that it might spark even the slightest of smiles from his target. It did.

Avery: I'm sorry. You probably think I'm a ridiculous whining about something so trivial.

Noah: No. I don't think that. Instead I think you're adorable and I think you have good enough reason to whine. It's healthy for you to be passionate about something, even if that something requires cutting people open for a living.

Noah grinned with irony. It brought out a chuckle in Avery. He shrugged back and agreed.

Avery: I'm still bored. All I do lately is watch the clock while I wait for something to happen. Amber's gone back to Africa now and Andrew's on his way to Texas to be with David. At least when they were around I had some type of distraction.

Noah: Well you know... I have heard that boyfriends can serve as a pretty decent distraction.

Noah flirted some more as he saw a window of opportunity. Avery looked back just as his cheeks turned to a shy shade of pink and there was a glimmer of hope in his blue eyes.

Avery: Oh yeah?

Avery inquired in a flirty little demeanor of his own. While there had once been a time when Noah's flirting would have gone over his head, he was getting a little better at recognizing it.

Noah: Oh yeah. Why don't you let me prove it? Let me distract you by taking you out tomorrow night. There's this place across town that has live music. I know one of the performers that will be there tomorrow and I was hoping you might join me.

Noah explained as he kept in mind the conversation that he and Dr. Sullivan had had earlier that morning. This was the perfect chance for him to find out if Avery was interested in getting to see another side of him outside of work.

Avery was impressed by the idea of live music. It wasn't often that he had the chance to venture out into the city and experience it. Also, he was enticed by the idea of meeting someone from Noah's personal life. It had just occurred to him how little he still knew about his boyfriend.

Avery: Sure. That sounds like it might be fun.

Noah: Cool. Then I'll pick you up at your place tomorrow at six...

Scene 8

Noah parked his car across the street from a rustic looking building. Avery read out loud from the passenger's seat as he saw the sign above the building.

Avery: The Ivory Clubhouse?

Noah: Yeah. You ever been here?

Avery: No, but I've heard of it. One of my former patients tried to invite me to a show here once. He said it was the best place in town to find live music.

Noah: Well, it's definitely that.

Noah laughed at the wording as he turned off his car and removed the keys from the ignition. He was trying to mask the fact that he was nervous about taking Avery inside.

Avery: This will probably sound lame, but one of the reasons that I agreed to come out tonight is because you mentioned that you were coming here for a friend. I have to say that the idea of meeting one of your friends outside of work intrigues me a lot.

Avery spoke openly. Noah shook his head at the blonde.

Noah: Nah. That's not lame. So far I've met most of your family and friends inside and outside of work, but you haven't met any of mine. I'm sorry for that, but it's one of the reasons why I invited you here tonight. I figure that it was my turn to show you some of the aspects of my life outside of MMH. The thing is though that I'm a little nervous.

Noah took Avery's lead and decided to be open about his intentions for the evening. Avery seemed shocked by the fact that Noah was nervous.

Avery: You nervous? Why?

Noah: Avery I don't come from a family like yours. I was given up for adoption by my birth mother and kicked out of the house by my adopted father when he found out that I'm gay. I also don't really have many friends outside of you and work and the guy that I plan to introduce you to tonight is the closest thing I have to both; only he's a bit of a character. He's eccentric, pervy, and can hardly sit still for more than a second at a time. I guess I'm just afraid that once you see where I come from and the people that I know; you might change your mind about us.

Avery sighed at Noah's reply. He felt sad not only for the things that Noah had just told him, but also for the idea that his reputation may have caused Noah to hesitate on opening up to him.

Avery: Noah I'm sorry that all of that happened to you. It must have been awful that your father could not accept you for who you are and I can see why you would be afraid that I might judge you. I know that I come across to most people like a spoiled rich boy and that I even act the part at times, but you don't have to be scared. I'm not going to judge you for who your family is. I mean, no one's family is perfect; including my own, in spite of how it may look on the outside. And as far as characters go, you have met Andrew haven't you?

Avery asked rhetorically, taking the opportunity to make a jab at his twin brother's expense. Noah laughed at the humor, satisfied and even relieved by Avery's reaction.

Noah: Thank you for that Avery, but clearly you have not met Dash Levine. Speaking of which, we better get inside before the show starts. He hates it when it when I miss his opening act and trust me you do not want to be in the spotlight if he catches us sneaking in once the lights go out.

Noah warned with a chuckle as he detached his seat belt and opened his door.

Avery: Dare I ask any more?

It was Avery's turn to feel a bit of anxiety now over the thought that he might be walking into something embarrassing. Noah chuckled again and shook his head.

Noah: No Dr. Pryce, this one is something that is better left unexplained.

The nurse answered before he climbed out of the driver's seat. Avery brushed his anxiety aside, he was confident that Noah would never do anything on purpose to humiliate him. Then he took his boyfriend's lead and climbed out of the car. A moment later the two of them came together on the side walk. Noah grabbed hold of Avery's hand. The blonde blushed shyly as the nurse's fingers slid between his own, but he soaked in the romance of it all as the two of them held hands on their way to cross the street...

Scene 9

Avery got swept away by the atmosphere in The Ivory Clubhouse. After following Noah inside and scaling a flight of stairs that into a patron packed restaurant, it was obvious to the doctor that the outer building had given him a false impression as to what to expect from the interior. To one side of the room was a bar with a counter that sectioned it off from the rest of the floor. At the opposite side of the room was a stage. It was host to a baby grand piano and its player, who was a chubby little man with little hair and bifocals. He was playing a soft, almost jazzy melody that was meant to set a calming mood.

Noah: Oh good. It looks like we've made it just in time.

Noah whispered into Avery's ear, but almost as soon as he had said the words, the music stopped and the entire room went dim.

Noah: Um, we better grab a seat. There's an empty table over there.

Noah said anxiously as he pointed to an empty table that was nearby. Just then another voice overtook the room to capture the focus of the crowd; taking Avery's attention along with it.

"Everyone thank you for being here and welcome to The Ivory Clubhouse. Please give a round of applause to Mr. Bruno Pathario for lending us his talents on the keys this evening."

Avery heard a feminine yet obviously male voice address the audience. Immediately they began to applaud and show their respect. Avery scanned the room to see where the announcement was coming from, but in such a dim light it was near impossible to find.

“Now, if you would please turn your heads and give all your attention to me then perhaps we can finally get this show started.” The announcer spoke again. Then with the help of a spotlight Avery finally found its source. There was a tall figure with a broad stature seated on one of the stools at the bar with a microphone in hand.

“Ladies and gentlemen, and gentlemen, who are also ladies; I am Miss Destiny Levine, female impersonator and drag enthusiast.” Avery heard as he saw the figure slide off the barstool and step into the light. He was in a state of shock and awe when he finally got a good look at the person who was speaking. Though he wasn't quite sure whether to think of them as a he or a she, Avery was intrigued and even a little mesmerized by the sight of the man who was daring enough to imitate a woman in front of an entire crowd of people. Her costume, complete with wig and makeup was just as loud and obnoxious as her personality would soon prove to be. The fuchsia dress that she wore was cut short, a little above the knees, and was surprisingly well accented by her wig; which was an unnatural shade of pink.

Miss Destiny Levine: Now, gentlemen especially, please note that I did say Miss and I am currently accepting applications for anyone seeking the position of Mr. Right and need not fret my tasty little morsels I have no shame for sampling a resume or two or three or... oops, I better stop before I end up getting myself all flustered.

The drag queen fanned herself. The whole audience, including Avery laughed at the comedy.

Noah: Come on let's get a seat before she notices us.

Noah tugged on Avery's arm to draw his attention back. Avery blushed when he realized he had been sidetracked. Then, as Miss Destiny Levine was making her way up to the stage, Noah and Avery were quietly trying to take their seats. They had nearly made it to the table when Miss Destiny Levine began to speak again.

Miss Destiny Levine: Oh my, my, my, just what do we have here? It appears that we have a couple of stragglers amongst us tonight.

She called out, waving the attention of the audience away from herself. Right away the spotlight moved, drawing with it the eyes of everyone in the room until it got to Avery and Noah.

Noah: Oh gawd help us.

Noah said just loud enough for only Avery to hear. A sudden surge of anxiousness swept through them both; especially Avery who knew not what to expect next.

Miss Destiny Levine: Oh boy oh boy, look what the playful pussy just coughed up.

The performer said as she stepped off the stage and crossed the room to join the couple.

Miss Destiny Levine: Ladies and gentlemen I would like to introduce you all to a very near and dear, close and personal friend of mine Mr. Noah Chase. And yes, pun intended this little Asian twink is one that I've been chasing for years.

Noah: Yeah and with very little luck.

Noah retorted playfully, provoking a grinning smile from the entertainer. She nodded her head to accept the truth but came back quickly with a crude and almost out of place remark.

Miss Destiny Levine: Well, while that is quite true I do happen to know a bit of a secret about young Mr. Chase here. He happens to have the biggest Asian cock in the entire city of Mercy.

Avery was stunned by the comment. He could not believe that it had been announced so freely in front of a room full of strangers, and for a brief second he wondered if there was any truth behind it. However, he had very little time to think it over before Miss Destiny Levine had set her sights to him.

Miss Destiny Levine: Well now, who is this delectable young thing that we have here? Honey why don't you go ahead and state your name for the kind folks that have gathered here tonight?

She turned the microphone to Avery, who stared hesitantly at her while the crowd waited to see if he would reply. From embarrassment his cheeks had gone white and he had given some serious thought to crawling beneath one of the tables to hide, but he knew that it wouldn't be a solution to his current predicament. With just his luck the entertainer would probably be the sort to join him, microphone and all.

Avery: Avery.

He finally muttered meekly; which was not acceptable in the eyes of Miss Destiny Levine.

Miss Destiny Levine: Oh honey, you're gonna have to speak louder than that if you want to be heard, now please, tell us again and this time give us your full name?

Avery: My full name?

Avery squeaked again as his mind went blank. Noah nudged him gently with his elbow.

Noah: You might just want to tell her and get it over with. This really could get a lot worse.

Avery: I don't see how.

Avery whispered back naively and in just that moment the obnoxious female impersonator decided to prove the nurse right.

Miss Destiny Levine: Alright honey, well if the cats got your tongue it looks like we're going to have to do a little digging. Wallet please?

She held out her hand demandingly. Avery's better judgment would have been to deny her the request, but his curiosity to see where such a demand would lead was too much for him. So, without protest he granted her command. Almost immediately she opened it to peek inside at his photo ID. Then as soon as she had gotten the details she was after, she announced then to rest of the room.

Miss Destiny Levine: Oh my. We have a doctor in the house. Dr. Avery E. Pryce. Well, it looks like we now know who to call if we need someone to take our temperatures but then again by the looks of this young piece of meat he'll be the one making them rise

Miss Destiny Levine announced before peeking into the billfold to find forty dollars in cash.

Miss Destiny Levine: Oh and looky here. It seems that I've found my tip for this evening.

She said, swiping the cash. Then she closed the wallet and handed it back to Avery while stuffing his money into the front of her dress. Then she moved on before Avery had the chance to argue for it back.

Miss Destiny Levine: Now, tell me Dr. Avery Pryce, just what kind of doctor are you?

Avery: I'm a surgeon.

Avery replied. He may have been embarrassed by the scene that was being caused in front of all these people, but he was certainly not embarrassed when it came to his profession.

Miss Destiny Levine: Is that right now? So, tell us Dr. Pryce, is there a particular organ that you specialize in or should our audience just leave that up to their imaginations?

The crowd laughed at the drag queen's brashness, telling Avery that she was meaning more by the term organ than he would have guessed on his own.

Avery: Cardiothoracics. I specialize in cardiothoracics.

Miss Destiny Levine: Ooh how fitting since I'm sure that there are plenty of young men and maybe even a few women in our audience tonight that would love to get their hands on you and your organ for some cardio-esk activities.

Avery's face turned red by the crude compliment. He wondered for a moment just how truthful it was, though he was quite certain that she was only saying it for the sake of her audience.

Miss Destiny Levine: However, all of that will have to wait as I do have a show to proceed with. So, if you and Mr. Chase will allow it, please take your seats and let's get the real act started.

Miss Destiny Levine instructed. Then she quickly directed her sights away from the blushing blonde and back to the stage. The attention of the audience followed with her as she made her way up front. Then, finally both Noah and Avery took their seats among the rest of the patrons. As soon as they were seated, Avery leaned over to speak into his boyfriend's ear.

Avery: Now I see why you didn't want to be late.

Noah: I did try to warn you about that.

Noah said with laughter on his cheeks; though truthfully he was afraid that Avery might blame him for the humiliation he had just undergone. However, Avery had already turned his attention back to the stage where Miss Destiny Levine was preparing to start her musical act. Noah was relieved that his date seemed to be enjoying himself. It gave him peace of mind as he too turned his attention to the performance that was about to begin...

Scene 10

Avery was stunned when he first caught a glimpse of the man that was responsible for the existence of Miss Destiny Levine. Beneath all the makeup and bold fashion choices was an ordinary looking man. His weathered face lied shamefully about his age, making him seem far older than he truly was.

Dash: Oh Noah I am so happy you were able to make it tonight. It has been so long since the last time that you decided to grace us with your presence.

Miss Destiny Levine's alter ego crowed with delight when he approached the table where Avery and Noah had been seated during the performance. By now the show had come to an end and the lights had come back on.

Noah: Don't act so surprised Dash. I did say I was gonna be here didn't I?

Dash: Yes you did, oh but never mind all that. Just give your uncle Dash a hug will you?

Dash insisted as he threw his arms out. Noah stood up from his seat and accepted the embrace. Avery watched patiently as the affectionate greeting between friends unfolded, but it didn't last long and as soon as it was over all the attention was turned all to him.

Dash: And you Mr..... don't you think that I've forgotten about you. I want to know anything and everything there is to know about you.

Dash squealed as he pushed Noah aside and stole his chair to get to Avery.

Noah: Avery this is Dash and Dash, I think you've already met Dr. Pryce.

Noah hurried to make introductions as he laughed off the injustice of having his chair stolen by his overly dramatic friend. He was already pulling up another one to replace it when Dash playfully pet Avery's arm and leaned in close to speak with him.

Dash: Indeed I have and golly Avery I feel like I already know you from all the spectacular things that Noah's been telling me. Why he's been raving for months now about how wonderful you are. That's a big accomplishment too, catching Noah's eye the way you have. I have to say that, it's been quite a long time since he's been so infatuated with anyone.

Avery was flattered by Dash's statements, so much so that he was at a loss for what to say. He could only manage to blush and smile back.

Dash: My gawd, aren't you just adorable.

Dash tapped the side of Avery's face with friendly flirtation. Avery felt awkward at how close the man was getting, but the idea of asking him to move back felt rude and unnecessary.

Noah: Oh come on Dash, you're embarrassing the guy.

Noah tried to come to Avery's rescue as he could see the discomfort on his face.

Dash: Nonsense. You're the only one that's embarrassed. You're just afraid that your uncle Dash might say too much and scare him off.

Dash retorted, waving off the gesture of protectiveness. Then he turned back to Avery and continued with his touchy-feely and ever so bold manners.

Dash: Avery I admit that I'm a little much at times, but please don't be shy with me. I promise I won't bite, well, unless you tell me where.

There was a sheepish grin upon Dash's face. Avery shrugged back, pretending out of pride that he was not uncomfortable by the suggestive nature of Dash's latest quip.

Avery: I'm fine. It's nice to meet you too, but are you really Noah's uncle?

Avery asked after hearing the older man refer to himself as "Uncle Dash" for a second time now.

Dash: Oh Christ no. Noah and I aren't actually related. We met just a few years back at one of our narcotics anonymous meetings. It was back when Noah was new to the program and I had volunteered to be his sponsor.

Avery: Narcotics anonymous?

Avery repeated the words in the form of a question. Dash nodded his head with forthcoming.

Dash: That's right. Noah and I are both ex-junkies. He's been sober for three years now and I've been sober for ten.

Avery: I see.

Avery was shocked by the news and the look on his face made that abundantly clear. His reaction made Noah nervous again. The nurse bit his lip anxiously as he stared back at Avery, who had gone silent for the moment while he was trying to search for the correct set of words to react with.

Dash: Oh, well, I didn't mean to let the cat out of the bag. I didn't know that it was still a secret.

Dash said when he saw the look of surprise on the young doctor's face. Then with the same reassurance as before he leaned forward and pet Avery's shoulder again.

Dash: Oh Avery sweetie. Don't be angry with Noah for not having told you sooner. Some of these things are just hard to say in the beginning of a new relationship. If anything you should be upset at me for letting that slip out. I do have a big mouth you know.

Avery listened to Dash's plea and pushed aside the insecurities that were surfacing over the fact that Noah had not mentioned any of this to him sooner. While it made him uncomfortable to think that Noah might be trying to hide something so important, he was able to understand Dash's point. It was for this reason that he decided to give Noah the benefit of the doubt; a chance to explain all the what's and why's to him later in a much more private setting.

Avery: You know what, it's ok. I'm not upset, not with either of you. I'm sure that Noah was planning to tell me on his own eventually, so why don't we save that conversation for later and just focus on having a good time.

Dash: Ooh Noah, I like this one already. He is definitely a keeper, but since I can see that I've already overstepped my grounds and said too much, I think I'm going to excuse myself and give the two of you room to talk.

Dash insisted as he stood up from the chair he had stolen from Noah earlier. Avery wanted to try and stop him, to insist that he stay, but before he even opened his mouth Dash was already walking away. Noah and Avery both sighed when they turned their attention towards one another.

Noah: I'm really sorry if you were sideswiped by that one.

Noah spoke first, hoping that Avery wouldn't be upset with him. The doctor shook his head.

Avery: It's ok.

Noah: It is?

Noah questioned distrustfully. He had a feeling that Avery was holding back for his benefit. Avery sighed and shook his head yet again.

Avery: No. You're not totally off the hook yet. I have quite a few questions, starting with why you didn't tell me yourself and why you used your friend to do it for you, but we don't have to talk about it now. We came here tonight so that I could get to know you a little better and that is exactly what I plan to do...

Scene 11

It was a cold but dry night in Mercy when Avery and Noah left The Ivory Clubhouse.

Avery: It was nice of Dash to give me my money back.

Avery said with a laugh as the two of them stepped out of the building and started their walk back to Noah's car. Noah returned the laugh as he stuck his hands into his coat pockets.

Noah: Yeah, well, that just means he must have liked you and I know that some people find his personality to be a bit much but I do hope you liked him too.

Avery: I did. You're right. Dash is a little much, especially at first, but I actually had a really good time tonight.

Avery said, surprised by his own answer. While he hadn't exactly had Miss Destiny Levine in mind when Noah had mentioned live music, Avery was impressed by the way Noah delivered the distraction he had promised. Noah was just happy to see that his boyfriend had enjoyed himself; especially since he had been so nervous to introduce Avery to Dash in the first place.

Noah: Good. I'm glad. That's what I wanted was for you to have a good time, but I know that you probably have a ton of questions after meeting Dash tonight; especially about certain things that were said.

Noah walked slowly when he and Avery got to the sidewalk. He was trying to cover up his anxiety over a conversation that he knew was inevitable.

Avery: Yeah I do, but I'm not really sure where to begin right now.

Avery sighed with reluctance as he slowed his pace to match the nurse's. He was still in a bit of shock over the things he had learned about his boyfriend through the course of the evening.

Noah: Well, you can ask me anything. I want you to know that. I don't want you think that you have to hold back for my sake.

Avery: It's all true isn't it; the things that Dash said about you being a junkie and being in NA that was true wasn't it?

Avery asked bluntly. He was afraid that it might have even been a little too blunt, but since Noah had given him the green light, Avery saw no need to cushion it with formalities. Noah nodded back with honesty.

Noah: Yeah Avery. It's true.

Avery: So you're really an addict in recovery then?

Avery knew that this question was nearly a repeat of the last, but saying the words out loud for some reason gave him peace of mind. Noah nodded again; this time without verbalization.

Avery: Wow. I wish I knew what questions to ask next. I feel like I have too many to choose from and I know that you said I can ask anything but I've never been in this situation before. I've treated patients that were addicts, but I've never really dealt with it on a personal level.

Avery told the nurse hoping that it was enough to convey his thoughts over the situation. While he didn't want to seem judgmental, he was also at a loss for how he felt about the information.

Noah: Avery. I've been sober for over three years now just like Dash said, but before I got clean I was doing a lot of really bad stuff. At the time I felt like the drugs were saving me, but in hindsight I realize that it was doing exactly the opposite. I ended up getting addicted to crystal meth and it destroyed and nearly ended what was left of my life after my father had kicked me out of the house. Now after all the hours that I've put into NA, I see that it was all just a way for me to escape all the other problems in my life without really having to deal with them.

Noah explained with summarized details when he could see that Avery was having trouble. Avery appreciated the help, but it only added more questions to the many he already had.

Avery: It is over though right? That's why you're in recovery isn't it, so that you can move on with your life and deal with your problems in healthier ways?

Avery interrogated as he and Noah reached the curb at the crosswalk. It was here that the two of them stopped walking and turned to one another.

Noah: Yeah and that's exactly what I've done in the time that I've been sober. Going back to school, getting a job, getting my own place, all that has been part of my recovery.

Avery: And what about me? Am I a part of that too?

Avery quizzed selfishly, but without remorse. He saw his question as a method of self-defense.

Noah: I certainly hope so, because I have to say with all honesty Avery that you are someone that is very important to me.

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