

Well, This Is Awkward

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Well, This Is Awkward

by [derryderrydown](#)

Summary

Written for the anonymeme prompt: Brooker almost kisses Mitchell, but they are somehow interrupted. They both know what was about to happen, and they both know the other knows what was about to happen, because, well, it was obvious, but neither of them wants to address it directly. It is intensely uncomfortable.

You can tell when a kiss is in the offing. There's always that lingering moment of, "Holy crap, they want to snog!" and the flash of trying to remember when you last brushed your teeth, followed by the paranoia of wondering if you've got a bogey that's going to drop out of your nose at an inconvenient moment or whether you're going to spontaneously orgasm as soon as their mouth touches yours or if you can even remember *how* to kiss because it's been so bloody long and then it all melts away at the feel of somebody touching you, wanting you, not being utterly revolted by you.

Well, it does unless somebody knocks loudly on your dressing room door before you can get to that final, marvellous bit, just to tell you that sound's ready for you.

"Um," Charlie said.

"Right," David said.

"I should-" Charlie said.

"Yes," David said.

"Sound," Charlie said.

"I should probably, too," David said.

"Right," Charlie said.

They stared at each other for an endless stretch of time, and then Charlie opened the dressing room door and left.

A sound engineer was waiting at the edge of the studio, where Charlie could just see the audience. Oh, god, he was going to have to go out there and read words and be entertaining and couldn't he just claim he had a headache and make them all go home?

Somebody seated at the end of one of the front rows looked in his direction, then turned to her neighbour. Now both women were staring at him. Which, okay, they were meant to but not right now. Right now, they were meant to be listening to the warm-up act with his jokes that Gene Hunt would have thought past their use-by date.

Charlie deliberately turned his back on them. Which just meant he was staring at David instead.

"I, er, need to get miked up," David said.

"With you in a minute," the sound engineer said, fiddling with the collar of Charlie's suit.

"Yeah, of course," Charlie said, and he had no idea where to look until the sound engineer patted his shoulder.

"You're done," he said.

And Charlie was left to loiter as the sound engineer got to run wires up inside David's jacket. He should, Charlie thought, have become a sound engineer, not a TV whatever-he-was.

Eventually, the warm-up act gave up on getting anything more than a polite titter out of the audience and it was time to get to work. Thankfully, the audience cheered a lot louder just at Victoria, David and Josie walking on stage, so perhaps he'd survive tonight after all.

Half an hour later, and he was willing to bet that, no, he wouldn't survive tonight. In fact, he'd melt into a puddle of embarrassed goo and slide under his desk, and that would be a hell of a lot more pleasant than having to carry on with this clusterfuck of a show.

He gave in to the urge to rest his head on the desk. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm an utter cunt and I'm incapable of reading out the words on the nice screen in front of me. You're all going to be here for another three days."

"I think it's sweet," Josie said, but whatever came after that was lost in the irritated instructions coming into his ear.

"Okay," he said, sitting up straight. "Apparently we're just going to keep on charging through in the hope that I'll have learned to read and talk at the same time by the time we do the pick-ups. But you're still probably going to be here for three days."

"Will I get paid overtime?" Victoria asked. "Because I'm booked for an evening, not three days."

"They might release you lot and just keep me here," Charlie said. "Chained to the desk until I master the basic rudiments of language."

"They could just put up subtitles," Victoria said. "Leave you to grunt along in your own special way and translate it for the rest of us."

"Oh, thank you very much! I think we know who isn't going to win tonight."

Victoria curled up in her chair. "We knew who was going to win as soon as we saw who else was on the show."

Oh, fuck, no, Charlie thought. Don't go there. Not with David sitting awkwardly in the middle, barely saying a word.

But if she was going to say any more than that, she was interrupted by the voice in his ear telling him to get on with the introduction to the Mad Men VT and could he please try to get the words out of his mouth in one piece.

If the stuff down the lens was bad, it got excruciating at the point when he was trying to coax the panellists into being entertaining.

Well, it wasn't a problem with Josie and Victoria, who were happily arguing about Joan Holloway/Harris, but David was hardly saying a word. Which wasn't too much of a surprise considering Charlie could barely bring himself to look at him, never mind ask him anything

about Don Draper's gradual disintegration and serial adultery and ability to carry on kissing people even after being interrupted.

It was going to be a long, long evening.

And finally, at half past ten, the voice in his ear said, "Right, nearly done. We just need some shots of you talking to David."

"Saying anything in particular?"

"Asking him why he's been in such a shit-awful mood would be a good start."

"What?" Charlie sat up straight at that and stared in the direction of where he thought the voice in his ear was.

"Oh, you must have noticed. You two normally fill the show on your own."

"I think he's not feeling too well," Charlie said weakly, and remembered too late that while the rest of the studio couldn't hear the voice in his ear, they could hear him. And there was only one 'he' that he could plausibly be talking about.

The audience let out a heart-rending, "Awww," and David *blushed*, which was eighty-five different kinds of wrong, and Charlie gave serious thought to crawling under his desk and never, ever coming out again.

Okay, he told himself resolutely. He was a professional and David was a professional and they could get through this together.

Well, not *together*, because he'd been a total idiot and not ignored the knock on the door for long enough to kiss David, but they could both get through this, separately.

"Yes," David said, "I'm actually dying of leprosy. It's why I'm single. For some reason, leaving body parts lying around the place isn't considered attractive."

The audience's, "Awww," was leavened with laughs and, past the lights, Charlie could just make out two women in the front row whispering something to each other, and laughing. He suspected they were laughing at the sheer incomprehensibility of David being single, but he might just have been projecting.

It was even more difficult than he'd expected to come up with stuff to say to David, and he'd expected it to be about as difficult as, say, persuading David that *not* kissing was the mistake, not *almost* kissing.

But he made it through and, by quarter to eleven, the audience was filing out and they just had to get the stills done.

"David," the publicity girl said, looking at the screen of the little camera, "you stand behind Charlie, Josie and Victoria on either side." She frowned at the screen. "David, put your hand on Charlie's shoulder. And try not to look so terrified."

"Is that to me or him?" Charlie said. "I'm not used to being touched. I keep thinking it's the lead-up to a punch in the face."

"I promise I'm not going to punch you in the face," David said, and, strangely, that was very reassuring.

Once the stills were done and he'd waited patiently to be de-miked, Charlie took a deep breath and followed David into his dressing room.

"Oh," David said, looking surprised.

"Look," Charlie said, "I know this is going to sound fucking stupid, but, if we hadn't been interrupted, would we have- You know."

"Kissed?"

"Yeah."

"It did seem to be heading that way," David said.

"And." Charlie swallowed. "And if we managed to get five minutes without being interrupted, do you think we could..."

"Kiss?"

"Yeah."

"Can I just clarify?" David said. "If we hadn't been interrupted, you would have kissed me? And it was purely the interruption that stopped you, not any sudden realisation of total heterosexuality and a love of curvaceous blondes rather than pedantic male brunettes?"

"One hundred percent the interruption," Charlie said.

"In that case-" David said, and Charlie kissed him.

And the whole horrific evening melted away.

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