

CLOSET DEEP

By

Matt Gehring

mrgehrin@syr.edu

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

LUKE (24) walks around the corner from the living room to the hallway. Luke's fashion is on point - a deep V-neck, sleek belt, and rolled up jeans - and his hair is perfectly slicked to the side. He's almost in the bedroom when he hears...

TRENT (V.O.)
(singing; distorted by an
echo)
Hr prrtty fcc. Hrr prt mile.

Luke puts his ear to the door of the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

TRENT (26) is SINGING in the shower. He's tall, muscular, and has an obvious farmer's tan.

TRENT
(singing; strong country
accent)
*Everything about her. I've loved
her for a while.*

Trent turns off the shower, puts a towel around his waist, and leaves the bathroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Trent walks into the bedroom, he hears Luke humming the song he was just singing.

TRENT
Whatcha singing, babe?

LUKE
No clue. I heard you singing it in
the shower-

Trent gets up close and flirtatious with Luke.

TRENT
Well maybe I heard you singing it
first!

LUKE
No chance! I'm like, 100% sure it
was your beautiful voice first.

Luke kisses Trent.

LUKE
Tell me what song it was!

TRENT
It's new.

LUKE
Ok.
(beat)
But tell me what song it was.

TRENT
"For a While." By me.

LUKE
(flamboyantly)
Trent's singing about a giiiiirl! Is it like, a remake or something?

TRENT
Nah, it's a Trent Wilkins original.

Trent goes in to kiss Luke. Luke avoids it.

LUKE
Hold up. Why are you singing about a girl? Is this a closet thing, or are you suddenly bi?

Trent pulls Luke close.

TRENT
You know how this business works.

And Luke pulls back away.

LUKE
And you know how I feel about that.
(beat)
You're lying to everyone. 1 million Twitter followers, 2 million Instagram followers. And none of them know the truth.

Trent sits on the bed. Luke sits beside him and puts his arm around his shoulder.

TRENT
Because they can't know the truth. This is strictly a business move.

LUKE
So what does that make me?

TRENT

My boyfriend! Nothing can change that.

LUKE

I'm fine with being your boyfriend inside this house. But sometimes, I wish I could be your boyfriend outside this house, too.

TRENT

I know. I know.

Trent makes a move on Luke. Luke gives a weak smile.

INT. LIVING ROOM - 30 MINUTES LATER

Trent and Luke sit on the couch, empty plates on the table and beers in hand.

TRENT

So you know that song I was singing in the shower earlier?

LUKE

Yeah, your super masc straight boy song.

Trent laughs; Luke is pouting.

TRENT

Well, I'm premiering it tomorrow night. It's a country music industry banquet, tons of big wigs in the room.

LUKE

Ooo! Sounds like quite the opportunity. Are you nervous?

TRENT

Hell yeah. But it'd make me less nervous if you were there supporting me.

LUKE

Are you serious?

TRENT

Yeah! I mean, the song's about you, Luke.

LUKE

That's seriously sweet, but I'm a man. Not a girl. Fix your pronouns, that's like first grade knowledge.

TRENT

Oh, shush. Maybe you could dress up like one of those drag gals?

LUKE

(sighing)

Yeah, yeah. Well I'm not so sure I can let myself be caught in a lie like that. I'm sure you can still give a bangin' performance without me.

TRENT

Luke, really?

Luke's tone goes from upset to serious.

LUKE

Yes. That song won't be about me as long as you're saying "her."

TRENT

But it is, babe! You haven't even heard most of the song.

LUKE

I don't have to. You change the lyrics, I'll come to the show. That's it.

TRENT

But I can't. My life would seriously be over. I'd lose everything.

Luke gets off the couch and storms down the hallway.

TRENT

Luke? Please, Luke.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Luke is looking in the mirror, just in his underwear and t-shirt. He's back to fixing his hair.

Trent walks in, just in his underwear. He puts his arms around Luke's waist, but Luke removes them.

TRENT

What was that about?

LUKE

Your life would be over? You'd lose everything?

TRENT

Yes! You know about Steve Grand. He needed a freakin' Kickstarter to release his album after coming out. Nobody cares about him anymore.

LUKE

But you wouldn't lose *me*, Trent. How do you think I'm supposed to feel shoved back into the closet? Sure, my few closest family members and friends know that we're dating, but nobody else. You're not the only lying about yourself. You're making me do it, too. I thought my feelings would matter.

Trent takes a deep breath and is about to talk when...

LUKE

But maybe they don't.

TRENT

That's not true. You matter to me a lot. "He" or "she" doesn't matter when the song is about how much I love *you*.

LUKE

Well if it doesn't matter, then you might as well change it.

Luke tries to leave, but Trent gets in front of him.

TRENT

I have no good option, Luke! How do I pick between the career I've envisioned since I was 2 years old and the man who I fell in love with 2 years ago?

LUKE

I'm not saying it's an easy choice, but it's a choice that you have to make. It's out of my hands.

TRENT
God damnit.

Luke kisses Trent for a few seconds and leaves the bathroom.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Luke grabs his keys and walks to the front door. He opens it.

TRENT
Where are you going?

LUKE
Far, far away from the closet.
(beat)
I hate this, Trent. I hate doing
this to you. I just can't love you
in the dark like this.

Luke walks out the door and closes it.

Trent walks slowly from the bathroom to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trent picks up his GUITAR and sits on the couch. He opens his LYRIC JOURNAL to "For a While."

TRENT
(singing; playing guitar)
*Her pretty face. Her perfect smile.
Everything about her, I've loved
her for a while.*

Trent puffs his cheeks and sighs. He picks up a pencil and crosses out the word "her" in all four lines. He writes "his" in the first two lines and "him" in the last two. He plays the guitar part twice before he's ready to sing.

TRENT
(singing; playing guitar)
*His pretty face. His perfect smile.
Everything about her-*
(beat)
Him, I've loved him for a while.

Trent grins widely. He looks at some PICTURES hanging on the wall of him with highly successful music businesspeople, his first CONTRACT he signed. Slowly, his look of satisfaction turns to pure terror.

Trent puts the guitar back and erases the crossed out "her's" and the replaced "him's" and "his's." He lies on the couch, looking up to the high ceiling.

TRENT
 (under his breath)
 I'd lose everything.
 (beat)
 Everything except him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NEXT DAY, NOON

Trent is eating cereal on the couch, topless and in sweatpants. He hears a KNOCK at the front door and runs over.

Looking through the peephole, we see Luke.

TRENT
 One second!

LUKE
 Reeally?

Trent dims the lights, brings a candle to the coffee table, and grabs his guitar. He walks back to the front door and opens it.

Luke walks in and Trent grabs his hand as they walk to the couch.

LUKE
 Yep. OK. This is encouraging.

TRENT
 Sit down, won't you?

LUKE
 Of course I will.

Luke sits on the couch as Trent stands across from him, behind the coffee table.

Trent begins the guitar intro, playing it as a vamp (a repeatable piece of music).

TRENT
 I did some thinking after you left last night. I love country music and I can't give up on this opportunity.
 (beat)
 But I can't give up on you either.
 I love you, Luke.

Luke smiles.

TRENT

(singing)

Your pretty face. Your perfect smile. Everything about you, I've loved you for a while.

Luke sulks into the couch.

LUKE

Ahhh. The always-handy second person pronoun.

TRENT

I didn't go to a high class public school like yours up North. But I'll trust that you're right.

LUKE

I am, but that's not the point.

TRENT

Well does that work? Will you come to my show tonight?

LUKE

No. Quite frankly, it doesn't.

TRENT

I changed the dang words, Luke!

Luke stands up.

LUKE

You can't work this both ways, Trent. It isn't about her versus you versus him. It's about the fact that our relationship is deep in the closet, and I just can't do that to myself again.

TRENT

Not even for someone you love? We've been doing it for 2 years.

LUKE

That doesn't mean I haven't been hurting. You always mentioned how you imagined us on the red carpet together, living in a mansion together, working on our lives together.

(MORE)

LUKE (CONT'D)

But it's becoming more and more
apparent that was all just talk.

TRENT

It wasn't. Well, it wasn't meant to
be, at least. I don't know, Luke!

LUKE

I've been hurting for a while,
Trent, but this is the first time
you're writing about love instead
of a fucking pickup truck,
barbecue, Jesus get-together. It's
the first time you're really lying.
(beat)

I was deep in my self-hating,
homophobic closet for 17 years and
now I've tacked on another 2 with
you. I'm ready to be free again.

TRENT

Well in the case, I've been in it
for 26 years, but I'm doing
alright.

LUKE

You don't know what it's like to go
back in! To have absolutely every
bit of freedom taken away from you
just because you fall for someone.

Trent walks and looks out the window.

TRENT

You're right. I don't.
(beat)

But you're also not between the two
most meaningful things in your
life, where you have to say goodbye
to one of them.

Luke walks over to Trent. He puts his hands on Trent's face.

LUKE

I love you. So much. I love you to
the point where I can't tell you
what to choose because you need to
choose what you truly want. I just
know I have to do what's right for
me, too, and that means not staying
in the closet for the second time.

TRENT

I understand. I appreciate that. I just don't know what to do.

LUKE

I'd be an asshole to make you decide before this show. I'll be there supporting you like I always do. But I can't wait a minute longer after you're done.

They kiss.

INT. THEATER, BACKSTAGE - EVENING

Trent is looking in the mirror, fixing himself up. Luke starts to fix Trent's hair.

TRENT

(whispering)

Easy. There's tons of people here.

Luke rolls his eyes.

LUKE

I'm your personal manager tonight. For the last night. 5 minutes till show time.

TRENT

I haven't been this nervous for a performance in a while.

LUKE

(under his breath)

Me too.

TRENT

How about some comfort?

LUKE

You're gonna do great. You always do.

TRENT

I think you know that's not what I'm nervous about.

LUKE

And what does that mean?

TRENT

I'm either going to go out there and end my career or end my relationship.

LUKE

You don't have to decide that right now.

TRENT

I do, though. I can't go through the stress any longer.

LUKE

I guess that means it's judgement time. I'll either be your boyfriend or just another friend. That blows.

TRENT

You better get out there.

LUKE

Right.

They awkwardly hug.

LUKE

Good luck.

TRENT

I'll need it.

Trent takes a deep breath.

INT. THEATER - A FEW MINUTES LATER

A music industry EXECUTIVE (40s) walks out on the stage.

EXECUTIVE

I am pleased to introduce today's featured performer. He's been selling tons of records, working on his sophomore album, and simultaneously making the hearts of women everywhere flutter.

Luke, in the second row of the audience, gives a forced smile.

EXECUTIVE

Here with his debut single "For a While" from album number 2, it's Trent Wilkins!

The audience APPLAUDS. Trent walks out, a huge smile on his face. He makes eye contact with Luke and pulls a comical stressed face. Trent starts playing guitar.

TRENT

(singing)

*A story to tell, never been told.
I'd been wanting someone to hold.
Hadn't had luck, hadn't had love.
Now I can say my heart hasn't gone
cold.*

Luke shamelessly CHEERS after the first verse. It starts a wave of CHEERS, and Trent smiles.

TRENT

(singing)

*'Cause we laugh all day long, Got
me singing this song. And if you
wanna feel love then just sing
along.*

Trent turns around to play the pre-chorus guitar part. He turns back around.

TRENT

(singing)

*Your pretty face. Your perfect
smile.*

Luke shakes his head. He gets up and starts to walk towards the back of the theater.

TRENT (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Everything about you, I've loved
you for a while.*

Trent sees Luke almost at the back door. He's still playing guitar.

Trent takes a deep breath and begins the chorus again.

TRENT

(singing)

His pretty face.

Luke turns around.

LUKE

His perfect smile.

Luke runs to the stage.

LUKE
*Everything about him, I've loved
 him for a while.*

Luke hops on the stage and puts his arm around Trent.

A FAINT MURMUR comes from the audience.

TRENT
 This is Luke. The song is about
 him, and as awfully uncomfortable
 as this spontaneous monologue is, I
 have no shame about that. So uhh-

Trent uses air quotes while saying...

TRENT (CONT'D)
 "Deal with it." Now let's finish
 the song.

INT. LIVING ROOM - 1 HOUR LATER

The landline phone is RINGING in the house. Trent and Luke
 walk through the door.

LUKE
 I can't believe you did that.

TRENT
 Neither can I. Maybe it'll all work
 out, though.

LUKE
 I wish I could say it would, but
 I'd be lying.

TRENT
 Oh god.

Luke scrolls through his phone.

LUKE
 Billboard is praising you.
 Nashville is calling you a liar.
 And the gay Twitter fandom is
 writing some awfully vulgar fanfic.

TRENT
 Wonderful.

Luke walks to the landline.

TRENT
Is it my manager?

LUKE
How'd you know?

TRENT
Lucky guess.

LUKE
Should I get it?

TRENT
Nope. Tonight is our night. I'll
address the possible termination of
my career in the morning.

LUKE
Sounds like a plan. I love you,
Trent.

TRENT
I guess you're pretty OK.

They kiss.

FADE TO BLACK