Painfully Aware by Python

Summary: It's really not Tom's fault -- Barnaby/Troy, with appearances by Joyce and Cully -- answer to use the phrase "painfully aware" from Aphrodite's Blessings
Rating: FRT - young teen
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Characters: Detective Chief Inspector Tom Barnaby, Detective Sergeant Gavin Troy, Joyce Barnaby, Joyce Barnaby
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Index

Chapter 1: Chapter 1
Cully Barnaby brought two glasses of red wine into the front room. She handed one to her mother curled into a corner on the couch. She smiled. “Here,” she said lightly. “This should improve your temper.”

Joyce Barnaby took the glass and half glared at Cully. “You would take your father’s side,” she huffed.

Cully didn’t hesitate to sit on the middle cushion next to Joyce. She set her glass on the coffee table. Then she squeezed Joyce’s arm and rested her head on Joyce’s shoulder. “I don’t understand. What did he do that’s so terrible?”

Joyce grimaced. “He fell asleep during the lecture. At least we were in the back row.”

Cully chuckled. “Oh, Mum, I told you Professor Richars is as dull as powder. He’s one of the worst speakers I’ve ever heard, all stuffy and pretentious. And the way he says how everyone in the audience must be painfully aware of something, like it’s never occurred to him that there could be a point of view other than his own.”

“I know. You warned me,” Joyce paused and smiled ruefully. “I thought perhaps you were exaggerating because he was your least favorite teacher.”

Cully shuddered. “I didn’t need to exaggerate. I can’t imagine anyone going to hear that man speak by choice.”

Joyce sighed wistfully. “It’s a shame. I normally love hearing about Impressionist painting, especially Monet.”

“So where has Dad gone?”

Joyce gave a small genuine smile. “Where else? Troy’s.”

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Gavin Troy set an open beer bottle in front of Tom Barnaby. Then he took the chair next to him at the kitchen table. “How boring was it?”

“Oh, it was bloody awful,” Tom answered and took a drink.

Gavin bit the inside of his cheek to keep from grinning. “What about Mrs. B?”

“She managed to stay awake.”

Gavin lost the battle and grinned. “That’s something.”

Tom rolled his eyes. “The man was so dull and pretentious.” He took on a snobbish accent. “As all of you here must be painfully aware…” He waved an arm. “Horrible. I’m glad I slept through most of it.”

Gavin laughed quietly. “Is that why you’re here?”

“Yes. Joyce is a little upset with me.” Tom took another drink. “It’s not my fault. She picked the lecture.”
“You didn’t actually say that to her, did you?”

“God, no. Do you take me for a fool?”

Gavin reached out to caress Tom’s fingers wrapped around the bottle. He lowered his voice to a seductive whisper. “Does this mean I get to keep you tonight?”

Tom’s eyes sparked. “You’ll have to take it easy on me. I’m sore from her repeatedly elbowing me in the ribs.”

Gavin smirked. “Don’t worry. I’ll kiss it and make it better.”

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