

Burning Feathers

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Burning Feathers

by [Spongecatdog](#)

Summary

Alfred F. Jones and Arthur Kirkland have been working cases for months, slowly taking apart crime piece by piece at a time. Over time, they have risen in both fame and notoriety. Whispers pass ears and pique interests.

Pride blooms and grows stronger in Alfred's heart as every feat is surpassed and completed from petty crooks to informants of the Italian Mafia. Every case he takes brings him one step closer towards the burning sun in the sky.

Didn't somebody tell him that if you fly too close to the sun, your feathers will burn and lead to your doom?

(Also known as a really long fic that's all actually a really long metaphor for the tale of Icarus.)

Notes

So if anyone reads any of my other things and has been wondering where the hell I've been in the last few months,

This is it.

This is the reason why I've been out of commission for so long.

Because of this long ass fucker right here.

But its finished now.

Also, reccomendation from your friendly neighborhood trashcan, grab some tissues, popcorn, and whatever else you need to have to get comfy, because trust me when I say that this is going to be a long ride.

Now if you will excuse me, I will be partying, because the 70s RusAme is finally finished.

Do you know the story of Icarus?

Alfred F. Jones was new to the force but that didn't diminish his need to find criminals and lock them away. If anything, it made the urge even stronger. He was quickly paired with another officer, a man that had gone through training with him, named Arthur Kirkland.

Arthur huffed, making a fallen hair fly upwards only to fall back into his face. He irritably pushed the strand aside as he watched Alfred spin in his new chair. When Alfred fell on the ground from spinning too quickly, Arthur began to wonder if the reason they were paired together was not actually due to high success but due to Arthur being one of the only people who actually got (read: forced) Alfred to work for once.

A sigh escaped Arthur's lips as Alfred popped back up, head turning frantically to make sure no one other than Arthur had noticed his blunder. When he saw no one snickering or shaking their head, a large grin spread across his face in relief.

It begins with King Minos holding the famous inventor Daedalus as well as his son Icarus prisoner in order to punish Daedalus for defying him and allowing his daughter and the hero Theseus to escape.

Alfred huffed loudly and fell back limply on his desk chair. He as well as his partner had been placed on office duty for the next week due to 'unprofessional behavior' on the job. Alfred snorted and flicked the pen on his desk, idly watching as it rolled up and then back down. 'Unprofessional behavior!' Ludwig was just jealous he couldn't do anything other than stare at the other people stuck in the building like he was! Needless to say, being forced to stay in one place instead of moving about freely like he usually did was becoming more straining on the younger man's nerves by the minute. On the other hand, Alfred's constant huffing and near refusal to sit still and actually do the work he was assigned to do was beginning to wear on his partner's nerves. Arthur felt his hands twitch as the urge to smack the other grew. The urge to cuff the back of Alfred's head or even smack him intensified every time Alfred tapped that damn pen or sighed loudly, but unfortunately there were too many watching eyes surrounding them. Arthur had no doubt that at least five people would fight each other simply to get to the captain first and tell him of the discord amongst the pair.

Of course, there was always some discord between the two of them. There was hardly a moment when Arthur wasn't yelling at Alfred for one thing or another. However, if Ludwig

had any inkling of the two of them being at odds with each other, the chances of being taken off of the case would be so likely that Arthur might as well save the captain some work and resign from the case himself.

So dealing with Alfred's childish behavior until the boss decided they had been good enough to allow them back into the field it was.

Alfred had turned from sitting lazily back on his swivel chair to practically laying on the desk and staring around the room with his head on his arms. Blue eyes lit up as they caught sight of folded up paper that had most likely been made from one of the file report papers, many of which were still spread across his desk in a giant mess. Before Arthur could open his mouth to stop Alfred, the man grinned widely and flicked the paper, his face brightening when the tiny triangle managed to hit the back of one of the officers actually doing their work. Alfred quickly jerked his head to the side and spoke as though Arthur and he had been talking the whole time, blue eyes sparkling the whole time.

"So yeah, this dude was telling me about this new protest they've got going on downtown! Something about trying to inspire people to 'save the environment'!" Alfred snickered and sat back in his chair with a grin. "Seems like there are protests everywhere these days, right Arty? It almost feels like people are going to start protesting fighting those dirty fuckin' commies any time now!"

Arthur gave him a dry look and replied in a tone that hopefully showed how unamused he was with how Alfred was acting. Still, it would be too troublesome to get into another fight with someone over Alfred's childish behavior for the fourth time that day, so he might as well go along with Alfred's farce.

"Alfred. What people do is their business. If they want to protest cutting down trees, that is their issue. Unfortunately, you're my business, so I suggest you start working on those reports before I make sure you're taken off the case." It was an empty threat, of course. It was no secret that while Arthur seemed to barely stand Alfred, he still enjoyed Alfred's company a thousand times over rather than having to deal with any of the other officers. Arthur paused and gave Alfred a nasty look. "And don't call me Arty! My name is Arthur, and you know that perfectly well!"

Alfred snickered and began to spin in his chair, obviously gleeful at the way it was making his vision swim. Suddenly, a hand landed on the back of Alfred's spinning chair, forcing it to

freeze and almost causing Alfred to fall out of the chair from the sudden stop. Arthur and Alfred both froze in place with horror clear on their faces, looking up slowly and internally hoping it wasn't who they thought it was. Unfortunately, Lady Luck did not seem to be favoring them lately.

Above them stood their captain, Ludwig Beilschmidt.

Despite having his Germanic blood being diluted by at least two generations of American blood, one could hardly tell Ludwig didn't come straight from Germany. His platinum blond hair and icy blue eyes made it hard to believe he wasn't pure German. That and his accent was freakishly strong. Not that Arthur could talk, really. He himself had a strong British accent due to being born and bred in the country itself. Arthur had been in America for several years but that still didn't stop Alfred from snickering and teasing him whenever he lapsed into some of his old habits.

"Kirkland. Jones. I expect to see the two of you in my office. Now."

Ludwig left without another word, leaving the two men to stare at each other with wide eyes. There was a beat of silence before Alfred chuckled and moved to stand up, holding a hand out to help Arthur up as well.

"I suppose that's our cue to leave."

Arthur didn't answer, preferring to let his silence answer the other instead of words. Neither of them needed to point out the fact that Ludwig, who had no qualms about yelling at officers in front of the entire station, calling them to his office had to involve something big. Whether it was bad or good, neither knew. They walked towards the glass door. If Arthur had noticed the hesitance in Alfred's walk and voice, he didn't point it out.

Daedalus was a fantastic builder and was able to create things unthinkable to the average man, but it was then that he really put his talents to the test in order to escape the prison trapping them; he was going to build wings.

It began from that moment in Ludwig's office that the two would begin to be placed on harder, more serious missions usually assigned only to the top policemen. Arthur and Alfred were working their way up to the top, slowly dismantling the mafia from the bottom up. It was a tough job, and God only knows how many times Arthur almost gave Alfred a black eye for complaining about taking out the 'small fry'. Of course, Arthur didn't exactly care for picking up the small time drug dealers or the idiotic kids who decided playing mafia was fun. They still had to do it though. There had to be some proof of their competence and ability to work together well enough to succeed on the small missions to show they would be capable of being able to face stronger opponents and handle any situations that may occur.

So that was why when Ludwig handed Arthur the manilla folder without a word, Arthur gave Alfred a stern look, daring the other to complain about how small the folder looked. To his credit, Alfred managed to keep his mouth shut until they reached the car, where he promptly let out an annoyed groan. Arthur rolled his eyes and slid into the driver's seat. They may have worked together for years, and Arthur could trust Alfred to always have his back but like hell would he ever allow the sunny blond to drive the car. Green eyes flickered over to the manilla folder in Alfred's lap before returning to watch the road.

"So what exactly is the case? Ludwig would only tell us so much in the office, so I assume it must be decently important to warrant such caution."

Arthur heard movement to his right and scowled and without turning hissed his words lowly at the blond next to him.

"Alfred, I swear if you even dare to put your feet up on the car that was just cleaned *yesterday*, I will make sure every restaurant within fifty miles will know not to give burgers to you *for a month*."

Whether it was Arthur's threat or his venomous tone, Alfred backed off immediately, no doubt with a pout on his face. He heard a huff and a muttered "Don't be so doggish, Arty." Arthur rolled his eyes. A flip of a page and then a loud, drawn-out groan was heard.

"Ugh, you didn't tell me we were going after guys who aren't even in the mafia!"

There was a pause of silence that lasted so long that Arthur was half tempted to break his own rule and look away from the road to see why the other was so silent. With Alfred, silence

can only be expected to last so long though. Sure enough, there were tiny mumbles that seemed to pour out of Alfred unconsciously.

“Seriously? These are the guys that were worrying Ludwig so bad he wouldn't even talk about them in person? They don't even look like mafia people!” A tone of sullenness was beginning to seep into Alfred's tone. “Where are the scars? The Godfather-like look? The eyepatches?! Can you believe this, Arty?!”

Arthur let out a drawn out breath as if it would help to release the irritation building. He wasn't sure how much more he could take of not having a clue of what on Earth Alfred was making Alfred whine so much. The actual whining itself was not doing his growing headache any favors either. Luckily enough, they had finally gotten to the city. Although searching for a spot to park the car was a pain, it made it far more easy to hide and read a secret file amongst a thousand other people who wouldn't look twice at a parked car in such a vast city. After spending at least twenty minutes finding a decent parking lot, five minutes cursing at how many people there were in America, and five more finally spotting a parking spot and fighting over it with a nearby car, they were parked. Arthur promptly plucked the folder from Alfred's hands, receiving an annoyed “Hey!” for his efforts and began reading about the two men Alfred had been complaining about for the past thirty minutes. A single, bushy eyebrow was raised almost immediately.

Lovino Vargas

Age: 21

Ethnicity: Italian

Relations: Acquaintance to Italian Mafia; Also serves as informant

The rest of the page was simple, mostly detailing who the man was while mentioning a Feliciano Vargas, who was the second paper in the file. The second page telling about Feliciano was almost identical aside from a few minor things. Feliciano was another informant that was rarely seen without Lovino. While it was not confirmed Feliciano and Lovino were related beyond name, many sources stated they were brothers. Overall, the two were not remarkable in ways that would make them stand out so greatly to warrant such secrecy... Until Arthur flipped to the third and final page that is.

Arthur's eyebrows creased in confusion as he read the paper. Blinking, he reread the page as there was no way the two seemingly innocent men staring up at him through the pictures on the page were connected to that many dangerous people. A second scan proved his eyes weren't deceiving him, and Arthur had to lean back in his seat as the prospect of who they were really going after meant. This Lovino and Feliciano Vargas had so many connections it was insane. They were affiliated with the Yakuza, Italian Mafia, drug cartels, and hell even the police. No wonder Ludwig had refused to talk about the two in person. They would have probably known within minutes and fled. Arthur could definitely see why the two needed to be locked away in order to truly begin dismantling the mafia. The sooner Lovino and Feliciano could be stopped the better. Ironically enough, the same could be said for Alfred's whining. Arthur neatly put the pages back in the file and handed it back to Alfred. If it smacked the blond in the face, well then, accidents happen. Alfred made a startled squawking noise as Arthur started up the car once more and began driving off to where the Vargas brothers were last seen.

According to the files, they frequent a restaurant called *Barbetta*. Arthur sighed as his eye twitched. It figured that the two would want to go to one of the more famous, fancier Italian restaurants available in New York. Getting into the place would be tough enough without having to force Alfred into looking like a true gentleman, so plan A was likely not to happen. However, Plan B sounded good despite the only details being '*grab Feliciano and Lovino as they pass an alleyway and club them until unconscious.*' Unfortunately it had little to no chance of working, but it was still a funny thing to imagine if Arthur was honest. Arthur started up the car, smirking as Alfred made another noise of surprise as he was jerked backward. Alfred sat up quickly and turned to Arthur with a sullen pout.

"You could've warned me, you know! Don't have to make me bang my head on the seat..." His words trailed off as confusion began spreading on his face. "Where are we going anyways?"

Arthur breathed deeply, trying to preemptively soothe his nerves that he knew for a fact were about to be torn to shreds by Alfred in about five seconds.

"We heading towards *Barbetta*, so you may as well sit back and enjoy the ride."

Almost as if on cue, a loud whine was heard on Arthur's right, making his eye twitch.

“But that’s an hour away on a good day! It is going to take way too long to get there!”

Arthur rolled his eyes and jerked roughly to the left in order to dodge a passing civilian. A loud screech of protest was heard and met with a very lovely middle finger in their general direction from Arthur.

“Drawing out your words is not going to help make it any shorter, you know. Take a nap or something.” Arthur paused, his tone turning more serious as he continued. “Don’t think I haven’t noticed those bags under your eyes. You are working yourself too hard, and we both know it.”

Although Arthur couldn’t act as though his situation was any different. Shadows clung underneath his eyes as though they were afraid of the light just as they did Alfred’s own eyes. It had gotten to the point Alfred began to point it out and joke about how people were going to mistake them for overgrown racoons if they didn’t get more sleep soon.

Alfred huffed and leaned back in his seat, spending at least fifteen minutes of the ride moving around in the seat in order to be ‘comfortable.’ After successfully staying still for an all time record of forty-five seconds, the sunny blond popped up as if remembering something and began rifling through what sounded like the stash of cassettes that Alfred somehow always managed to keep hidden no matter how hard Arthur tried to find them. A moment later, the distinct sound of a cassette being placed inside of the stereo was heard within the car. Muffled snickers were coming from Alfred’s side of the car, and Arthur already knew what was going to play. The music started, and Arthur fought the urge to pinch the bridge of his nose in exasperation. Almost immediately, Alfred began singing (read: *caterwauling*) along with the song.

“I fought the law, and the law won!”

This was going to be the longest trip of Arthur’s entire existence.

Daedalus pieced the wings together feather by feather and kept them together with wax, slowly building up the escape.

Arthur still couldn't believe Plan B had worked.

He was looking back at the two unconscious men in the back seat so many times to confirm that they were actually there to the point Alfred looked like he was beginning to worry.

Feliciano and Lovino Vargas were not strong by any means. In fact, the two seemed below normal standards of strength. Had they not been their targets, Arthur might have worried more about their abnormal lack of strength. That aside, Lovino and Feliciano were not high in the hierarchy of the mafia by any means. They were still merely acquaintances of the Italian mafia although rumours mentioned that the Don was considering making the two men a part of the family. As Arthur drove, he had to wonder if the reason why the two hadn't been invited was due to their horrible strength and proneness to crying. He could definitely see why a mafia boss would prefer not to have men who wept at the sight of two men cornering them in an alleyway. While that may have been an acceptable reaction from most people, it wasn't exactly good for a Don's reputation if their 'hardened soldiers' blubbered all the time. Thirty minutes into the drive, Arthur's ears perked up at the shuffling in the backseat. Thank goodness, he was starting to worry they had clubbed them too hard. There was a rush of Italian from behind the bars separating Alfred and Arthur from the Italians. Alfred turned around in his seat so that he was now facing the two in the back with a wide grin on his face.

"Yo! Glad to see you're awake! Arty took quite a swing at ya, so its great to see you awake!" Arthur made a small noise of disapproval as a light blush dusted his cheeks. Alfred, the git, continued talking with an even larger shit eating grin. "Might wanna switch to English though. Can't exactly understand Italian, y'know?"

There was pause before a several more rushed angry Italian and a low scathing "Stupid Americani." was heard in a thick Italian accent. Shuffling continued as the man began to push at his still unconscious brother in an attempt to drag him back to the world of the waking. "Feliciano, wake up. This is not the time to sleep." A low whine and then sleepy drawled out Italian from the newly dubbed Feliciano as he half-heartedly swatted the hand pushing him. Apparently whatever the man had said had irritated Lovino as a loud smack resounded in the car followed by a shriek accompanied by rapid, high-pitched Italian. Alfred blink and turned to Arthur as if he could explain the behavior from either of the Vargases. Arthur responded with an awkward shrug and continued driving, causing Alfred to shrug as well and turn back to watch the bizarre men in the back seat. Luckily, they were not even a few miles away from the police station, the minutes they would have to all deal with each other ticking away quickly.

Unluckily, Alfred had taken a liking to messing with the somewhat volatile Italian, who was currently flipping back and forth between rapid Italian and English while still managing to get his anger at Feliciano across in both languages. If Arthur said he wasn't impressed by it, he would be lying. Alfred whistled loudly in order to get Lovino's attention, making everyone in the car aside from the blond himself flinch from the sharp noise. Fortunately, it seemed to finally give Feliciano the boost he needed to fully escape from sleep and stop his brother's (weak) attacks.

Arthur really knows he should have shut Alfred up after that.

He really did.

And yet, somehow Alfred got the words out before Arthur could stop them.

"So...Why don't you guys have those really long cigars or somethin'? Isn't that a part of mafia protocol? Or eyepatches? They should totally be a necessary thing if you want to be in the mafia. Just my opinion though."

There was a moment of silence, and Arthur began to become genuinely concerned Lovino was about to fling himself forward through the hole in between his and Alfred's seat in order to try and kill Alfred. He could practically feel the steaming hot rage pouring out of Lovino. Instead of the furious bout of cuss words mixed in both Italian and English like Arthur had expected, a loud, exasperated sigh came from the man as he flopped back against the car seat.

"And just when I thought you couldn't get any stupider... Who's bright idea was it to capture us anyway? Surely you know how important we are!" Pride growing thicker in Lovino's tone as he continued speaking. "Its practically suicide to try and touch us!"

Arthur hummed under his breath, an eyebrow quirking upwards.

"And why is that?"

A loud scoff that practically oozed condescension met his question.

“Because we help the mafia and dozens of other powerful organizations that can kick your american asses, obviously! If you don’t even know that much about us then what kind of stupid stronzo are you?”

Arthur chuckled while Alfred let out a loud snort, hiding his snickers behind a hand. Alfred lowered his hand after a few more muffled laughs with a wide grin still on his lips as he looked Lovino straight in the eyes.

“Ah, really? Wow, that’s great! Even better, we got you to actually confess to it! And to two cops no less!”

Lovino’s face paled as his eyes grew wide. He made a small noise while mindlessly opening and closing his mouth in dumbfounded shock before finally giving up on coming up with a witty retort and sank back into the seat as if hoping it would swallow him whole. The sound of Feliciano's babbling soon filled the silence that Lovino’s ceased ranting had left empty. By the time Arthur had finally pulled back into the station, he was five seconds away from tearing out his hair and yelling at everyone in the car no matter how ungentlemanly it would have been. It turns out that letting Feliciano and Alfred in the same city let alone car was a horrible idea as no one could hear their own thoughts over all of their ramblings. Lovino had chipped in every now and then when he felt the urge, which didn’t help the slowly growing headache forming in Arthur's head at all. He let out a long, relieved breath as he parked the car and took out the key before walking towards the back of the car to finally take out Lovino and Feliciano and get the bloody mess over and done.

Predictably, Lovino grumbled as Alfred grabbed him to lead him inside of the station, and Feliciano began tearing up again the moment Arthur started walking near him. The Italian shrieked as Arthur came closer and tried running ahead of them until Alfred reflexively grabbed his shirt, making Feliciano jerk back towards him. Arthur barely managed to steady Alfred before he fell backwards with both Italians. Arthur huffed and took the disgusted looking Lovino while Alfred took the still teary Feliciano inside of the building. As soon as they had crossed the threshold, Ludwig had been ready to receive Feliciano and Lovino, given Alfred and Arthur an approving nod, and walked off with both Italians in tow towards an interrogation room.

Daedalus never once forgot about King Minos even while focusing on the escape.

Arthur moved towards the interrogation room where Ludwig had dragged Feliciano and Lovino. His fist rose upwards and stopped only an inch away from the wood when he heard muffled voices talking inside of the room. While eavesdropping was admittedly not the most gentlemanly thing to do, Arthur was rather curious about what the people inside the room were saying, especially with how quickly Ludwig had whisked them off into a room that was rarely used these days. Biting his lip, Arthur debated on listening to the increasingly loud words on the other side of the door. Deciding that eavesdropping on your boss was probably not the best idea, Arthur turned to leave only to stop a second after as his ears picked up fairly interesting words.

“So what’s the big deal on catching us anyways? You’re not turning sides on us are you, potato bastard?”

A frown crossed Arthur’s face. What was Lovino talking about? *‘Turning sides?’* Before he could go deeper into thought, a second, higher pitched voice joined.

“Ah, calmato, Lovino! I’m sure Ludwig has a very good reason for this! He’s always been so nice to us after all!”

There was a grumble from Lovino that sounded suspiciously like “Yeah, maybe because of your dumb ass”. Arthur’s teeth began worrying at his lip as the conversation continued. It seemed the longer he stayed and listened, the more his suspicions were building up and being confirmed. Ludwig couldn’t really be working with Lovino and Feliciano...could he? Arthur’s memory flashed, and he was stuck with the line from the file replaying itself ominously in his head.

Subjects both have ties to the police organization, so be careful who knows about this mission.

Arthur’s head jerked up as he recognized the familiar German drawl that was known across the station.

“...worried about you two. Things have been getting rough out there ever since Kirkland and Jones have been taking people out. The Russians have been getting curious about them...too

curious. And we all know who they would go to first to find out information. Who knows what they would do if you said you didn't know anything." There was a pause as if Ludwig was considering something. "No, I take that back. There are many ideas of what they would do to you two if they thought you were withholding information."

Feliciano made a small noise of fright as Lovino hissed, probably agreeing with what Ludwig said and hating every second of it.

"So what now? Gonna just throw us in your shitty ass jail cells? How the fuck is that going to help us?"

There were muffled sounds of shuffling inside of the room, making Arthur back up some. It would be hard to explain if Ludwig found him this close to the door while they were talking. There would be too many questions, and Arthur isn't sure he could wipe the shock off of his face and be able to talk his way out of any questions Ludwig might throw at him.

"Don't worry. I will see to it myself that you both have the best treatment available... You have my word on that much."

A chair screeched as it was pulled across the floor, likely because Ludwig was standing to walk out of the room. If Ludwig was this close to leaving, then Arthur needed to go, and he needed to go now. And so with thoughts of Ludwig and his betrayal fresh in his mind, Arthur quickly walked to where he knew his partner was. His face paled as a thought made itself prominent in his mind.

How on Earth was he going to explain to Alfred about Ludwig not being who he says he is?

As Arthur turned the corner to find his partner with a large cup of coffee in his hands and intensely dark bags under his eyes, Arthur found his answer.

He wouldn't.

After all, it was King Minos who had trapped Daedalus and Icarus.

Arthur tried his best to hide his distrust towards Ludwig, he really did. That being said, Arthur was never good at hiding his distaste very well. He did pretty well when surrounded by the general populace, but there was no escaping the looks he shot Ludwig when Arthur thought no one was looking. Arthur just couldn't stomp down the feelings of hurt and betrayal curling inside of his chest whenever he saw the blond German. How long had Ludwig been working with criminals? How long had he been duping them, using Alfred and Arthur for his own amends? And that...That was the part that stung the most. Arthur had no way of telling how far back Ludwig's dealings were. Arthur didn't even know if the whole charade had been playing out ever since Alfred and Arthur had joined the force.

And it killed Arthur inside not knowing that.

Arthur began to watch Ludwig more closely as if all of the blond man's secrets would become written on his body if Arthur stared long and hard enough. He noted all the things Ludwig said and all the places he went and began to read deeper into his words and actions. Wherever Ludwig went, emerald green eyes followed.

Once again, let it be said that Arthur was never the best at hiding his distaste.

So really, he wasn't surprised when Alfred confronted him about it. Arthur had hoped for more time, banking on the fact Alfred had a tendency to be oblivious in most cases and not read the atmosphere. He should have known that Alfred would have noticed something was different in the way Arthur was treating Ludwig, especially with how much time they spent together. It was inevitable, really.

Alfred slammed his drink down and spun his chair so that the back was now facing Arthur before sitting down in it and lazily flopping one arm over the chair while the other grabbed his drink. He stared at Arthur for a minute or two from above the back of the chair as if he could somehow figure out the answer to whatever question was plaguing his mind, making one of Arthur's bushy eyebrows lift in response. The fact that Alfred insisted on noisily slurping his drink as he stared didn't help at all.

"If you have something to say to me, then say it."

There was a pause in the slurping as Alfred's eyes flickered to the side as if contemplating something before landing back on Arthur and hardening. He set the drink to the side and crossed his arms on top of the chair.

“What's up with you and Ludwig, dude? You've been throwing him weird looks like he laid a gasser in your face or something.”

Arthur nose wrinkled in disgust. Alfred always has such a way with words. Still, the point managed to get across to him. Arthur fiddled with the pen in his hand as he thought of a way to respond. Biting his cheek, he decided to try and stick as close to the truth as he could.

“I...have been having my worries about the police station lately. Ever since that case of the Vargas brothers I have been worrying that there may be other informants finding their information by other cops... Given by how criminals react at times or even how they sometimes manage to slip out of the justice system's fingers, I am not that surprised to be honest. Disgusted but unfortunately unsurprised...”

Alfred shuffled in his seat. It didn't take a detective to figure out how uncomfortable the idea made Alfred. To imagine that your coworkers, friends or not, were willing to sell you out for cash or worse isn't pleasing to anyone, let alone a social butterfly like Alfred.

“Yeah but why are you acting so edgy towards Ludwig especially? Its not like it's really been anyone else either, just him...”

Arthur cursed internally. He had been hoping Alfred would have bought his story about not trusting other officers in general. How on Earth was he supposed to answer that without giving away anything? Not for the first time in his life, Arthur wished he had paid more attention in his high school theatre classes instead of bickering with that frog Francis all the time. Oh well, there was no way to change it now... He may as well get the truth out now before it was too late.

“The truth is, Alfred, that-”

Arthur's words were cut off as the man of topic appeared by their desk with a beige folder that was becoming increasingly familiar every day that was passing. It was beginning to make Arthur question whether or not Ludwig had folders hoarded away somewhere in his office or if they were given the same one every day. Arthur mentally shook himself and focused on leaving the building to read the folder. He couldn't tell whether those thoughts were spawning from the lack of sleep or from being almost constantly surrounded by Alfred anymore if he was honest. Arthur wondered whether or not they were being set up with this case as well or if it was actually genuine. It was horrid that he couldn't tell anymore. Fingers snapped in front of Arthur's face, making him step back and look at Alfred with wide eyes that quickly narrowed.

"Why on Earth did you do that?"

Alfred gave him a look mixed between annoyance and worry.

"C'mon dude, I said your name forty bajillion times before I did that!"

Arthur reflexively replied with a "'Forty bajillion' is not a number." before he could stop himself. His words were met with a drawn out groan from Alfred. A hand was placed on his shoulder, shocking Arthur for a second and making him truly look at Alfred. There were signs of stress that really shouldn't be there on such a young face, and Arthur realized with a short start that he was probably the cause of some of those bags underneath Alfred's eyes if the look of heavy concern in the other's eyes were any sign. Guilt began to burn in his throat as emerald green eyes jumped around the younger's face. Arthur opened his mouth to tell Alfred he was fine and didn't need Alfred to worry about him but was cut off quickly.

"Listen, Arthur. Something is up with you, and you don't want me to know about it for whatever reason. I get that. Sometimes we just need time and secrets to ourselves. Just know that if you need me or if you are ever in trouble, I'm here, okay? I don't call myself a hero for nothing, y'know!"

Arthur blinked, taking in the words slowly. He could feel his heart flutter slightly in his chest. Since when has Alfred been able to be anything but crude? Was he truly growing so quickly?

"But, like, if it's about taking down McDonald's, I'm not sure I'm going to be able to do it. That place is too good to quit."

Arthur rolled his eyes and gave Alfred a small smile that was quickly returned by Alfred. Of course Alfred would ruin the moment with something silly, but it seemed to be even better that he did. A serious Alfred was something that was not natural and should not be seen more than a minute.

“I am truly sorry for worrying you, Alfred. It was never my intention to do so... Perhaps one day I can tell you what it is that is bothering me so much. Until then, I believe it is best if both of us had the rest of today off.”

Alfred’s eyebrows creased in confusion.

“But what about the folder Luddy just gave us? Shouldn’t we get started on that first?”

Arthur shrugged. It wasn’t like he even knew whether or not the case was actually real or something Ludwig had given them for some reason of his own, so he wasn’t too concerned about finishing the case early.

“It will be fine. Although if it makes you feel better, I will read the file to make sure it is nothing that cannot wait until tomorrow. Deal?”

The small ease in Alfred’s shoulders told Arthur he was making the right decision. Perhaps the two of them would finally have a peaceful night and be able to have more than five hours of sleep.

“Deal. I’ll see you tomorrow then, Arty! But for now, I’m pretty sure I hear McDonald’s calling my name!”

Arthur chuckled as the other turned around and left. Alfred had the strangest obsession with fast food. Arthur began walking his own way towards his home, folder in hand. Speaking of said folder...Arthur’s eyes flickered from side to side. It would be stupidly dangerous to view the folder if it held anything valuable. But then again, the streets were empty, and Arthur doubted Ludwig would ever give an important case to Alfred and himself if he was an

accomplice to crime. That and Arthur's curiosity was beginning to grow more and more intense as the moment passed. Perhaps one little peek wouldn't hurt, right?

Right.

Arthur paused by a streetlamp and opened the folder to view its insides. His breath caught in his throat. There was no way this could be right. If it was, that meant that Arthur needed to find Alfred right away and get started on the mission no matter how much the both of them needed sleep. The innards of that folder took precedence over everything. Arthur turned sharply to run after Alfred and catch up to him quickly. If he was lucky, he could still catch up to Alfred and tell him everything.

A loud bang echoed, leaving Arthur's ears ringing. He blinked and looked down at his clothes, wondering how long that red stain had been there. Had Alfred spilled ketchup on him earlier? How had he missed the huge stain? Why did it...appear to be getting bigger? It was then that Arthur noticed the hot pain ripping through his body. It was like someone was cutting into his muscle and skin with a searing hot blade. No, not a blade, a bullet.

Arthur dropped suddenly in the empty street.

His last thought before his eyes fluttered shut were those of hope that Alfred had gotten home safely.

Despite the odds, the wings were coming together and slowly bringing Daedalus and Icarus closer and closer to the vast freedom of the outside.

Alfred burrowed deeper into his jacket as the night time chill seemed to grow colder. It wouldn't be the first time he was grateful for the bomber jacket, and he highly doubted it would be the last. While Alfred didn't exactly care for the cold or the night, it was the best time to see the stars. In the day, the glittering stars were always overshadowed by the sun but at night with only the moon as their companion, the stars really began to shine. Even through the city smog, they looked as beautiful as always. Sometimes the ability to clearly see all of the stars at night made Alfred sorely miss his old home in the country. While his childhood home may have not been the best looking or most expensive, it was still his home, and he loved it to this day. Even now he remembers looking out of the window at night, watching the stars and wishing to be among them.

“Is this seat taken?”

Alfred jerked out of his reverie to look at the owner of the mysterious voice. A tall man with a long, tan coat stood next to the bench with his head cocked to the side, waiting for Alfred to respond. Although the darkness made everything look different, Alfred could almost swear that the man had purple eyes. Alfred resisted the urge to shiver as he remembered that there was a horror movie with a particularly horrifying ghost that had started along these lines. Ah, but now that Alfred looks a little closer, the man looked too solid to be a ghost. Unless he was one of those ghosts that looked like a human and lured their prey only to kill them later?! A voice that sounded suspiciously like Arthur’s told him how stupid that was and that Alfred had yet to answer the other. Alfred gave a half-hearted shrug and muttered a low “Sure.”

The man sat down softly without another word. Alfred watched him warily for a few seconds before returning to watch the sky above him.

“It is beautiful, is it not?”

Alfred blinked and gave the other a side glance so that he could view the other before looking up once more.

“Yeah. Space and stars are great like that. They’re always up there, just twinkling away. It must be nice to be able to shine all the time without a care in the world.”

Alfred wasn’t normally philosophical in the least, but somehow it felt right at the moment with the mysterious stranger next to him and the darkness of the night surrounding them aside from a few street lamps. Man, wouldn’t Arty be proud? He would have to tell him all about it tomorrow, not that the other would probably believe him. Alfred hoped Arthur was catching some Z’s right about then. The man really needed it despite whatever he said otherwise. The silence was beginning to wear on Alfred’s nerves, and his mouth moved to speak before he could think.

“Okay! That’s enough of that! So what are you doin’ out here so late? Most people are tucked up in bed, y’know.”

The strange man looked at him strangely. The guy was seriously starting to weird Alfred out. Why was he acting so shocked at a little question? Suddenly, Alfred's earlier theory of stranger dude being a ghost was starting to hold more and more evidence. Purple eyes blinked as the man turned his head upwards towards the stars, leaning back some until he was turned fully upward towards the sky. After a few seconds of silent staring, purple eyes slid to the side to watch Alfred.

"The same as you, I suppose. I wished to see the stars... It has been a while since I was able to relax and look at them closely."

Well, that solves the ghost theory! Everyone knows ghosts aren't interested in space! Or at least, Alfred is pretty sure he heard that somewhere. Besides, now that Alfred wasn't half sure the man was a ghost, he didn't seem that bad when he wasn't being creepy and watching Alfred silently! Aside from that, there was something about the man that seemed off. Not like the creepy sort of off that Alfred was definitely aware he was feeling but another type that was begging Alfred to realize whatever it was. Was it his hair? Or maybe it was his clothes... His voice even? He couldn't quite pinpoint it. Oh well. There wasn't much use worrying about it now. Alfred turned upwards towards the stars as well.

"It's funny... As a kid, I always wanted to be an astronaut when I grew up. I wanted to be a hero for everyone."

The words slip out of him before Alfred could stop them. Alfred's eyebrows creased in confusion. That was strange. He had hardly ever told anyone about that childhood dream aside from Arty, but Arty knew practically everything about him from the day he was born to the last time Alfred played with action figures. The last time he played with action figures wasn't important though and definitely should not be questioned. A low voice brought Alfred's attention back to the present.

"What made you change your mind?"

Alfred's smile remained on his face despite the bittersweet look that began to grow in his eyes.

“That’s the funny thing. I didn’t. I just never had the money to get into those kind of schools.”

A loudly panting man was running towards them, making both Alfred and the stranger jerk their heads forward to see who was running this late at night. Alfred squinted his eyes and identified the other as one of the younger recruits that had just joined. It wasn’t until he got fifteen feet away that he understood what the other was yelling. A loud ringing began in Alfred’s ears when the words registered in his mind as he reflexively stood up to run towards the hospital. The words kept bouncing around viciously in his head.

“Alfred! Arthur has been shot!”

Finally, the wings were complete.

Alfred chewed his lip as he watched Arthur lay still on the bed. It wasn’t normal to be that pale. Only corpses were that pale. He had seen enough corpses in his day to know that much. Alfred resisted the urge to call the nurse back in the room for what was probably the fourth or fifth time. It wasn’t like Alfred wanted to annoy the staff. No, for once, annoying people wasn’t his goal. He just wanted someone in there at all times to help Arthur, because anyone with eyes could plainly see something was wrong with the pallid man. Of course, having a shot wound in his thigh helped to emphasize the fact Arthur was very clearly not okay.

It had been horrible waiting as the doctors removed the bullet from Arthur’s thigh. Alfred couldn’t stop chewing at his lip, causing it to bleed, close up when he finally allowed his lip to rest, and crack open again when he started worrying it again. He couldn’t sit down for more than a minute, pacing the room several times and making the horrible, hospital coffee just to keep his shaky hands busy. After the seventh cup and third spill, a nurse gently took him to one of the chairs and passively threatened him to either “calm down or be removed by hospital security.”

Not knowing Arthur was going to be okay was horrible but not being at the hospital was even worse.

So he was left bouncing in the chair, eyes jumping back and forth between the door of the operating room and to the nurses watching him warily. His fingers kept tapping the metal of

the chair arm as his leg bounced. Needless to say, he was a nervous wreck, and Alfred was pretty sure the nurses were beginning to consider putting him under sedation.

Fortunately, the surgeon came out to tell Alfred that his partner was in fact alive before the nurse could decide whether or not it was morally sound to inject an antsy person with morphine.

And that was where Alfred was now. Arthur had yet to wake up, but the doctors and nurses had assured him several times that the blond would wake up eventually.

They say that getting shot in the thigh of all places was really lucky considering only a little farther up and Arthur would be dead no matter what, but Alfred doesn't think getting shot at all is very lucky.

Casting another glance at his partner- no, his friend's pallid face, Alfred swore to take down every fucking piece of shit criminal in New York even if it killed him. He would find the person who did this to Arthur and make sure they would pay for what they did.

Breathing deeply, Alfred tried to calm himself and put his easygoing smile back on his face. He would hate it if the first thing Arthur saw when he woke up was Alfred glaring at the wall with a face that told anyone he was ready to destroy something if the chance arose.

After all, what kind of hero would Alfred be if he made other people worry?

Daedalus left first in order to clear a flight path, but first he gave his son two warnings:

Eyelids slid back slowly to reveal emerald orbs after what had seemed like forever. Alfred jerked forward in his seat before pulling himself back frantically as he choked on the cheeseburger forcing its way down his throat. After hacking it back up and safely out of his windpipe, Alfred threw his arms around the baffled looking man.

“Arty! Come to join the land of the living again, eh? I thought you’d never get your ass back here!”

Arthur blinked and gingerly pushed Alfred off of him and touched whatever was laying on top of his head, pulling it down in his hands in order to view it better. He stared at the object in his hands for a few seconds as if it would poof away and reveal that it was never there, because why on Earth was it on his head. When it didn’t disappear from his hands, Arthur turned to Alfred with his eyebrows scrunching together in confusion.

“Alfred?”

“Yup?” Did he really have to pop the ‘p’? Either way, that wasn’t the main thing concerning Arthur at the moment. Glancing back at the object in his hands to make sure it hadn’t disappeared in the last few seconds (it hadn’t), Arthur continued.

“Why is there a cheeseburger on my head?”

Alfred seemed to brighten up, eyes sparkling.

“To help you heal, of course! I mean, the doctors didn’t like it very much for whatever reason, but this dude at McDonald’s told me it was the best thing to help people get better, so I kept sneaking it in here even when they threw it away! I’m not sure why they would throw away a perfectly good burger though..”

Arthur blinked and then chuckled softly. It was nice to see that Alfred could be so...so *Alfred*. It was almost soothing to see something so normal after being shot.

Being shot.

The memories began flying through Arthur’s mind at dizzying speeds. Walking away...reading the file...the sudden burning pain in his leg. Arthur jerked upwards in order to sit up only to be pushed down by Alfred a second later.

“Sorry, Arty. No hard feelings. The doc said you’re not allowed to move too much. Might irritate the stitches or somethin’, y’know?”

Arthur sat back slowly, keenly aware of the intensified pain in his leg. He slowly appraised the room. It didn’t look particularly easy to bug, but Arthur supposes that bugged rooms never do. His arm shot out to grab the other’s arm, using it to pull Alfred closer until his mouth was almost grazing Alfred’s ear.

“Alfred. I want you to listen to me and listen to me closely. There are certain people who are paying special attention to us right now. We have been stirring up the underworld more than we thought... The fact I was just shot proves that much. I can’t say much now in case someone is watching us... Just watch out.”

Arthur let go and smiled at Alfred as though nothing had happened. Although he had said little to nothing, worry was building up in his chest. Was he there too long? If someone was watching, would they be tipped off that Alfred had heard something? All he could do now was try and play it off.

“And that is the secret to my world famous scones.”

Alfred’s eyes narrowed in confusion until he realized what Arthur meant. Alfred’s loud laughter soon filled the room.

“Aw, c’mon, Arty! *World famous*? I’m pretty sure if they were world famous then everyone would die from your shitty cooking!”

Arthur bristled and jerked his head to the side with a look of annoyance. He was looking for a cover, but Alfred didn’t have to go that far.

“I’ll have you know that my cooking is well-known amongst our peers!”

Alfred snickered and held up a hand to his mouth as if it would help to hide his growing smile.

“Yeah, well-known for giving you serious stomach problems!”

Do not fly too low to the ocean or the mist will clog the wings.

Alfred sighed and ran a hand through his hair. Things had been looking down recently... Not only had Arthur been shot and subsequently forced into waiting on the sidelines until his leg healed, which was probably going to take forever, but he was also stuck with Ludwig's brother. Don't get Alfred wrong, Gilbert was cool and all, and he loves drinking with the guy when he has a chance but working with the man was an absolute pain. Nothing got finished and since they were 'new partners who are still working out the kinks' the pair were bumped down to petty theft, nothing like the cases Alfred and Arthur had been working *for months*.

So needless to say, things were shit, and Alfred was feeling like shit.

There was no way he could actually get anything that would actually make an effect or even go about finding and arresting whoever had shot Arthur. Arthur wasn't going to be able to work or do practically anything until after that despite whatever may Arthur want. It also turns out that nurses can be quite forceful when they want to be. Alfred had learned that lesson personally the fifteenth time he snuck a cheeseburger into the room. He would never be able to look at the tubes in the room again. And to make things even worse, Gilbert kept stealing his McDonald's, which was never okay by any means.

But Alfred couldn't let any of that get to him.

“Don't let life get you down, Alfred. No matter Hell or high water, you cannot let life bring you down. Never fly close to the edge.”

So no matter what, Alfred couldn't let anything get to him. He just had to tough it out and hope Arthur could be back as soon as possible.

A folder that had become increasingly familiar in the previous months when he was working with Arthur was plopped down on his desk. Alfred paused and eyed it warily before looking up to see who had dropped it and if receiving the folder meant what he thought it did. When Ludwig's stern face was the one above him, Alfred's heart fluttered, and he allowed himself to hope he could begin changing the world once more.

Do not fly high in the sky or the sun will melt the wax holding the feathers together.

Alfred still couldn't believe Ludwig was allowing him to take the cases concerning higher level criminals by himself. Arthur, it seemed, couldn't either.

Not for the first time since he had found out, Arthur gave him a worried look that practically bled of concern.

"And you are sure you are fine out there alone? God, what is Ludwig even thinking these days, letting a green kid like you take down criminals most teams can't even dream of touching?"

Alfred shrugged and slurped his drink noisily in response. It wasn't like he didn't like it. If anything, Alfred loved the chance to actually affect the crime world by doing something other than being sent to watch the protesters. Being stuck in one place was beginning to drive him up a wall, especially with Gilbert as a partner.

"Maybe Luddy was just afraid if I did anything else with Gil that I would snap and kill 'im. He has been stealing a lot of my food lately."

Although, really, Alfred isn't sure about the reason himself. It was weird... Ludwig had came out of nowhere, plopped the file on his desk, and left without a word. When Alfred had finished that case, Ludwig returned and did the whole thing again. Even weirder, it was like Ludwig wouldn't look him in the eyes anymore these days. Alfred wondered if Gilbert had said something weird to him... Alfred snapped forward in his seat with a loud, offended gasp.

"That's it! Oh my God, are you fucking serious?!" Alfred turned sharply to face Arthur with a look of danger on his face. "Sorry, Arty, gotta go. Gil might've fucked me over and stuff."

“Oh wait, Alfred! Come back here! Damn it, Alfred! Don’t get a big head out there! It will be the end of you, I swear it!”

Arthur barely got the words out before the blond was flying out the door. He sighed and rearranged himself in the bed. Being stuck in a room with only his thoughts for company when Alfred was away was beginning to wear on his nerves. It was all he could do to not worry himself to death about Alfred facing crooks that even they as a team never faced. Or, Arthur thought grimly of the growing aches and garish discoloration of the area surrounding the wound on his leg, *further* to death.

Arthur was never much of a religious man, but God knows Alfred was beginning to make him want to be one.

Daedalus then flew off into the sky to lead the way, but Icarus, who was overcome by the joys of flying, began to fly higher and higher into the sky.

Alfred completed cases after cases well with few bump ups aside from a few gunshots and knockouts via suffocation, but hey, everyone was still alive by the end of it, so how bad could it possibly be? Besides, Alfred was getting the be the hero, Arthur was doing well, and Alfred was getting closer and closer to the people who shot Arthur.

Needless to say, things were beginning to look up.

Despite Arthur’s constant warnings of ‘not getting too cocky’, Alfred couldn’t help it. Why couldn’t he be proud if he was literally dismantling the crime system more quickly than what he and Arthur had ever done when they were working cases together. Not that Alfred didn’t miss Arthur as his partner. It was tough going in places alone all the time knowing that if Alfred fucked up, even a little bit, it could cost him his life.

Alfred opened the door slowly, wincing at the low creak its rusted hinges made. He really hoped nobody had heard the noise. Only trouble would meet him if the reason why Alfred was here had already been alerted to his presence halfway through the labyrinth-like building. Okay, maybe that was a bit of an exaggeration, but the condemned building really did seem to be endless with room after room winding around the place. If the information in the folder

was right, he would come upon a staircase soon. Staircases were the best and worst place to be while searching for a criminal. Good news was that stairs were an easy way to escape quickly. The bad news was that ambushes were frighteningly easy to do. With only limited ways to go, the enemy could easily guess where one was headed. Fortunately, nothing met Alfred on the stairs, and he arrived at the top without any problems. Alfred resisted the urge to pull out the paper tucked away in his pocket, already having the words written on it memorized by heart.

Ivan Braginsky

Ethnicity: Russian

Known head of Russian Mafia; Be very careful. Known to use mind tricks and have several tactics hidden up his sleeve.

This was it.

It was his time to shine and finally take down one of the big guys.

He was finally going to be the hero this city needed.

Alfred opened the roof door slowly, thankful at least this door had decent hinges. He opened the door only enough to look around the rooftop and deem the area near the door safe enough. If it turned out someone was standing beyond his vision, Alfred always had his trusty pistol at his side. Opening the door only enough to be able to squeeze through, Alfred nudged his way outside. He was almost afraid the loud thumping of his heart and racing thoughts would give him away to whoever may be on the roof. Alfred quickly dodged behind a nearby box, pistol out and ready to shoot anything that move too fast. When only the sound of his own beating heart met Alfred's ears, he let out a low breath he didn't realize he was holding.

Alfred turned so that he was now facing the other half of the rooftop. He leaned slightly to the left with both hands gripping the gun harshly. After confirming no one was on that side,

Alfred quickly scooted to the other side of the box. Alfred breathed deeply and leaned to the right, eyes widening when he saw

Nothing.

Alfred blinked, scrunched his eyes together, and looked again as if this 'Ivan Braginsky' guy would suddenly appear. Of course, it wasn't shocking when he didn't. Humans don't exactly appear and disappear at will. But still, it was strange the man wasn't there... The information on the paper had come from several different sources, stating that Mr. Braginsky frequented this building as he apparently had a thing for the view. The chance of misinformation wasn't that low, but it was still strange. Oh well, Alfred thought while sighing, he would just have to regroup and try again when they had better information. Damn, and he was really looking forward to telling Arty all about how he had heroically taken down a Mafia leader too... Alfred put his gun away and sat back on his heels before standing up to walk back down to the seemingly infinite stairs.

The last thing he remembers was a loud clang and sudden, intense flash of pain in the back of his head.

But the higher he flew, the closer Icarus got to the sun.

The first thing Alfred felt when he regained consciousness was pain.

The back of his head ached and seemed to throb in tandem with his heartbeats. There was also a loud, irritating ringing in his ears that he couldn't seem to banish no matter how much he willed it to go away with his mind. A fierce pain in his neck was also making itself very well known to Alfred's slowly waking mind. Combined with the lowkey headache, the pain was mixing to make a very unpleasant cocktail that made Alfred miss the pleasant nothingness of unconsciousness. Unfortunately, sleep was looking like less and less of a thing Alfred was going to be able to do the more the pain intensified. He groaned softly, wincing at the way even the small sound seemed to make all of the pain in his head increase tenfold. Okay, noise was definitely not a good thing.

Wait... Where exactly was he anyways?

It felt like someone had glued Alfred's eyelids together but with enough time he managed to get them to slowly slide open. Even when he did manage to get them fully open, it didn't feel like it. All he could see was blurred images, whether that was due to what he was beginning to identify as a concussion or because of his missing glasses, Alfred couldn't tell. Either way, even the seemingly dull lightbulb hanging from the ceiling was beginning to make Alfred wince in pain. Biting his lip roughly, Alfred forced himself to blink harshly a few times. It managed to clear some of the blurs, leaving Alfred slightly more aware of his surroundings.

Okay, so the lightbulb dangling was a definite but there also appeared to be a sink to his right. Some light shuffling around whatever he was tied against left Alfred paralyzed from pain but also told him he was currently tied to some sort of metal chair. If he squinted, Alfred was pretty sure he saw either rust or blood covering it. Hopefully, it was the former, but the latter was more likely unfortunately. Wait, why would he be in a place that might have blood? What was he doing before he woke up again? Alfred squeezed his eyes shut, forcing himself to remember what he was doing before he woke up in the small room despite the aching pain that met him.

Alfred jolted upwards in realization before wincing and slumping in the chair. That's right! He was searching some creepy, abandoned building while looking for some kind of Russian guy.

But why was he looking for a Russian guy in an abandoned building again? A few more minutes passed before Alfred remembered exactly why he was searching for the Russian.

Alfred cursed internally as the reality of the fact he had been not only knocked out but also kidnapped by a fucking Russian Mafia leader. Alfred slumped forward with a low "Fuck."

God, he was so screwed.

The heat began melting the wax, causing his wings to fall apart.

A childish giggle made Alfred jerk upwards and regretting doing so as another round of intense pain wracked his head.

"You Americans really are a curious kind. Always so reckless even when all of the information tells you not to be."

Alfred hissed lowly. If Alfred thought the ache in his ears couldn't get any worse, he was easily proved wrong by the high pitched, grating voice of whoever was talking to him. A sour thought crossed his mind that the other was making his voice obnoxiously high pitched on purpose in order to make the pain even worse.

“Although it was quite interesting to see you wake up. Even if it did take a while, you do not disappoint, Mr. Jones.”

Alfred fought the wave of nausea down. Being tied down with the enemy mocking you was bad enough, like hell he was going to let the other tease him about throwing up on himself. Forcing himself to distract himself from the pain, Alfred began working on forming a sensible question. Asking who the hell the other was would be a good one.

“Who...the fuck...are you?”

There. He managed to get an actual sentence out, which considering how slow his thought process currently was, was a pretty big deal. Another giggle met his question, causing Alfred's irritation to grow. If the other was going to keep giggling at him, Alfred didn't know how long he was going to last before he flipped and pointedly cussed him out. Luckily, he was answered before Alfred could start his tirade.

“Ah, you really don't remember me, Alfred?”

Alfred rolled his eyes in exasperation.

“I don't exactly make it hobby of mine to become best friends with all the Russian mobsters, you know. And would you stop giggling? That's seriously starting to get on my nerves.”

Something cold was suddenly placed on his face, making Alfred blink at the sudden change in vision. All at once, he could finally see everything in the room clearly, including the rather large man standing in front of him with a creepy smile. A moment later, Alfred noticed the large pipe in his hands that looked more than capable of breaking someone's kneecaps.

“I will excuse that last comment as you are still experiencing a concussion and cannot think clearly enough to think straight at the moment.”

Alfred would have spat back a sarcastic “Concussion or not, you’re still annoying as fuck!”, but it was then that bright, blue eyes met dark, purple ones.

“My name, as you have seem to have forgotten, is Ivan Braginsky. Also known as Alfred F. Jones’s current captor. It is lovely to see me again, I’m sure.”

And then he

Alfred’s breath caught in his throat. No way. No fucking way. There was absolutely no way the man in front of him, the fucking *Mafia Boss*, was the same guy Alfred had met at that park all those months ago. The glaringly obvious evidence was becoming harder and harder to deny as the seconds passed.

How many people had purple eyes after all?

As if the situation couldn’t get any creepier, Ivan began talking as if reading things off of a list. When Alfred was finally able to understand what the Russian man was saying, he felt the urge to vomit rise sharply once again.

He was fucking reciting Alfred’s entire goddamned life.

“Alfred was a lovely preschooler who played with all of the children no matter what age. He seems to have like the idea of being a ‘hero’. This was fine in play until he punched another child. Alfred claims that the reason he hit the other child was due to him bullying his twin brother, Matthew. We explained that while bullying is bad, hitting other children is not going to help. Unfortunately, Alfred did not listen as he continues to try and attack other children if he thinks they are being hurt in any way. The main person Alfred is ‘protecting’ is his twin brother Matthew.” Ivan paused, eye flicking up from the paper in his hand. “Is that where

your need to ‘save’ other people began? Interesting. Most people would have moved beyond that childish notion long soon after, but you kept it.”

Alfred bristled. It had been years since his more troublesome times as a child had been brought up by anyone. The fact that it was a creepy Russian bringing up the past made it about ten times worse.

“Shut..the fuck up...or I swear I’ll...”

Ivan paused only a second to shush him before returning to the documents in his hand. He shuffled a few around until his eyebrow rose.

“Oh my, Alfred. You even fought during police training?”

Alfred jerked his head to the side, immediately regretting the action as it set off another wave of pain. He spoke through gritted teeth.

“It wasn’t...my fault. They kept...kept picking on Arty and some other guys they knew wouldn’t fight back... Couldn’t stand it, so I fought back...for them.”

Ivan hummed under his breath as he studied Alfred carefully. After a few seconds, a wide, childish grin split across his face.

“Interesting.”

Began

Alfred focused on breathing in and out, hoping that it might dull the pain and allow his thinking to move faster than a snail. The urge to close his eyes was strong, but who knows what Ivan might do if Alfred took his eyes off of him for even a second. So breathing slowly while having a staring contest with a very dangerous Mafia leader it was. While breathing at

a pace didn't exactly heal everything, it did help Alfred to focus somewhat more. He was getting closer and closer to forming a straight line of thought, and he is pretty sure that he might be able to talk a little more smoothly now.

Okay, so the forefront question on his mind right now that was begging to be asked.

“What..the hell are you doing...with my file anyways? How did you...get it?”

Ivan blinked before giggling again and slowly walking around Alfred, sending every red flag possible to go flying up in the American's mind.

“Oh, this? I got it from some very lovely people. You might know them actually. I believe their names are Feliciano Vargas, Lovino Vargas, and a certain Ludwig Beilschmidt.”

Alfred froze completely. It wasn't until he realized the burning in his throat that he remembered to breathe. He began heaving in order to make up for the lost air, all way staring wildly at the wall with wide eyes. There was absolutely no way they would have sold him out. Feliciano and Lovino, sure, but Ludwig selling him out was out of the question. Ludwig had always been there for him from the very beginning of Alfred becoming a policeman. He had always been there with his strict and serious personality but even Alfred knew that the man had some sort of fondness for him. The evidence was in everything from how he treated Alfred differently from other officers and helping him to how Ludwig was always there when Alfred wasn't sure about something but couldn't ask Arthur. Aside from that, Alfred knew for a fact that Ludwig would never sell out one of his officers no matter the reason. It just wasn't him.

Alfred bit his lip roughly, chewing on it in thought. Despite how much he wanted to avidly protest the idea, doubt was beginning to seep in his mind, slowly bringing up little things that Alfred had thought was strange. How much more nice Ludwig was being recently, even letting him borrow more money to buy donuts and coffee or not getting quite as angry when Alfred was late. The sudden reappearance of the beige folder despite Arthur still being incapacitated and Gilbert definitely not good enough to help on such large cases...Hell, letting Alfred operate a case alone was strange enough... But he thought that...That was just... Alfred shook his head slowly before looking up at Ivan with defiant eyes.

“There’s absolutely no fucking way Ludwig would do that to me. He isn’t that kind of guy. He’s...he’s better than that!”

Alfred really wished he sounded more like he was yelling at Ivan for being wrong and less like he was trying to convince himself of his own words. Ivan giggled again and suddenly Alfred’s head was being tilted upwards by something cold and metallic.

“Oh poor ptichka. You do not really think that, do you? Surely you cannot be so blind? Ah, but you Americans can be quite stubborn about not seeing the truth when you want to, da?”

Ivan’s eyes flicked to side while a contemplative look made its way on his face. He hummed and shrugged casually, continuing on as though he was merely talking about the weather.

“Although, it is always interesting what noble men will do when those they love are in danger. Who knew your dear Ludwig would become quick to share information when I threatened to slowly break all of the timid Italian’s bones one by one and never letting him die even when he begs for it?”

Alfred let out a shuddering breath as he stared at Ivan with a mixture of shock and terror.

And then came the rage.

Falling

“What the actual fuck is your issue?! What the hell makes you think you can just...just fucking do that? Who the fuck do you think you are?!”

Ivan smiled sweetly before a loud clanging sound resounded inside of the room. Alfred instinctively flinched, headache intensifying to the point tears were beginning to sting the back of his eyes. Alfred stared at the ground blankly as hitching breaths mixed with moans of pain poured out of him. After a few minutes, Ivan must have had his fill of watching the

blond policeman try to pull himself back together. A deep voice, vastly different from the childish tone Ivan was using only seconds ago, filled the room.

“I am a leader of many dangerous men who would love any shot to kill you. It would be best if you remembered this, da?”

Ivan giggled and hid his smile behind a hand. His eyes widened as if remembering something before he lowered his hand. Alfred was seriously getting spooked by the way Ivan’s mouth seemed to split his face in half from how much he was grinning. His high-pitched voice was back in a second despite how strange it was considering his words.

“Ah, I am also the person who ordered for Arthur Kirkland to be shot.”

There wasn’t even time for shock to settle in Alfred’s mind. He just jumped straight to a frightening rage befitting only something from stories long gone about monsters. Pain brushed aside, Alfred began to shout at the top of his lungs as if it would help to diminish the burning hurt inside of him.

“You goddamn fucker! How dare you?! How fucking dare you?! Don’t you fucking laugh at me, you piece of shit! How could you! I swear when I get out of this rope, I will tear you limb from goddamned limb, do you hear me?! I will rip you apart!”

Alfred didn’t notice the hot tears pouring from his eyes until a gloved hand wiped them away. Alfred immediately snapped at the hand, wanting to hurt the man in front of him in any way possible. A low hiss was heard from Ivan as the hand moved away from his cheek and collided with Alfred’s face with a loud smack, forcing Alfred’s head to jerk to the side. Alfred stared ahead unseeingly as the pain bloomed on his cheek, only another source of pain for Alfred’s already aching body. Gloved hands gently cradled his face, bringing it to face Ivan’s own face.

“Oh, poor ptichka. You did not truly think all of this was an accident, did you? No, no, Alfred. It was all carefully planned from the moment you caught my attention with your attempts to break down the criminal empires. I made sure this moment would happen, and I have been waiting to meet and talk to you officially for a very long time. Did you really think it was just some random criminal who shot Mr. Kirkland? No, I arranged that. He had to be taken out of the way if I ever wanted to come somewhere alone and become so reckless. My

little talk with Ludwig went beyond your past, you know. I also made sure it was very clear what cases you would work and how it would go.”

Ivan brought the dumbfounded Alfred’s head closer to his until Ivan’s forehead was tenderly against Alfred’s own.

“All of this so I could be with you, ptichka.”

Into the ocean

Alfred’s mind was going into overdrive, and he was pretty sure he might start hyperventilating at any moment now. Cold shock was seeping into his very being, freezing him in place as Ivan continued to cradle his head as though they were lovers. And

Oh God.

Oh no.

Everything this whole time had been planned. Ivan had been moving the pieces across the chessboard from the very moment they had met that one short time months ago that had barely been remembered by Alfred until this moment. Ivan had caught The Vargases and Ludwig in order to force information out of them and use them as pawns as well. He had fucking shot Arthur. Looking at Ivan now, he knew there was no telling what Ivan would do just to make sure he had Alfred. There was no telling how many lives would be lost or tortured just so Alfred could be chained by his side for however long the Russian chose to keep him. Because that was slowly becoming the most pressing question. Not how could Alfred escape (he couldn’t), whom he could go to for help (no one), or even where he could run away in order to get away from Ivan (no where). The only question left was how long it would take until Ivan tired of him.

Alfred had his freedom roughly taken away from him.

And that was probably the most terrifying thing he could imagine.

In which he succumbed to the waters, never to return again.

Purple eyes shone eerily as they watched Alfred breaking down. They seemed to light up with joy as Ivan spoke.

“You are mine now, ptichka”

End Notes

So how do you feel? Are you crying? Angry? My beta was quite angry by the end of this. She did not approve of dear ol' Luddy's actions, lemme tell you.

Anyways

Some thing that you might want to know/clearing things up:

Number one: There is no definite way to really tell when this story was. That was completely intentional and hard as fuck to make sure it stayed that way. The only really big tip was the radio tbh but shhh no one needs to know.

Number two: Here are some of the symptoms of a concussion:

Low-grade headaches that won't go away

Having more trouble than usual: Remembering things, Paying attention or concentrating,

Organizing daily tasks, or Making decisions and solving problems

Slowness in thinking, acting, speaking, or reading

Getting lost or easily confused

Neck pain

Feeling tired all the time, lack of energy

Loss of balance, feeling light-headed or dizzy

Increased sensitivity to: Sounds, Lights, or Distractions

Blurred vision or eyes that tire easily

Loss of sense of taste or smell

Ringing in the ears

Number three Ptichka = fond way of saying 'little bird' if I'm not mistaken. I could be totally wrong though. I don't claim to know any Russian. If this is wrong, can someone please tell me, and I will try to fix it.

Number four: Originally, the Vargas twins were going to either be related to the Don or soldiers. Seeing as they wouldn't be very good soldiers, I decided not to do that. If they were related to the Head Leader of the Italian Mafia, it would take too much time explaining how Alfred and Arthur had to deal with that etc., etc. and that wasn't the point of the fic at all (Even if it may have seemed that way from how long it took to get to the Russians). Informants were good though and fit somewhat well so

Also Number five: Try not to be too upset at Germany. Corruption was still pretty big in the government back then. No where as bad as the 20s, but it was still there.

Also, if you're still here reading this, have a fun fact.

Originally, I was going to have how Arthur ended up post shooting be a mystery and then have Alfred kidnapped, leaving the reader clueless of his fate. Then I figured out hat doing that wouldn't be very smart and would cut out a lot of things I needed for both plot and

metaphors, so he was going to live again. But then I was tempted to kill Arthur off just because it would probably crush the reader. Once again, I figured this wouldn't work and so Arthur lived to see another day. Fortunately, Arthur got to live in the final draft. Unfortunately, medical care back in the 70s was shit, and the likelihood of getting life-threatening bacteria in his wound after surviving the bullet wound was really high due to the lack of both antibiotics and the fact the doctors would have wanted him to stay in bed.

So in other words, you can now rest assured that Arthur will die.

Such a fun story.

Thanks for staying with me the whole time.

If you have any questions about something that happened in the fanfic, feel free to ask me.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!