

off with his head

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off with his head

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Summary

Not waiting for his response, Scar opens the envelope up and finds a card sitting neatly inside. His eyes narrow at it as he pulls it out and sets the envelope aside. Opening the card, his jaw drops. “A personal invite from Ren to some kind of charity event?” He meets Bdubs’ gaze. “How in the world did you end up with this?”

“It was in your mailbox, Scar.” Bdubs answers, resisting the urge to shake his head. “You know, the thing downstairs I always remind you about checking?”

“Oh, right. That thing.”

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

i. long live the wannabe.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The lights in the bar are dim, set on low. Most are provided by the shelves of liquor and the lights hanging above, allowing the bartender to clearly see what he's doing. The counter top itself is a dark wood, almost black in the dim lighting. Patrons sit on the stools, varying types of drinks in their hands. There's a sign hanging off of one of the walls, outlined in red LEDS, **BEST**.

Two bartenders stand behind the counter, pouring and mixing drinks for paying customers. Music blasts through the speakers, forcing people to yell over to friends they sit across from. Tables are spread out across the floor, some filled and one or two sit empty.

Someone sits by himself, hand curled around a glass of rum. He's sitting at a table a bit away from the chaos of the bar patrons, having found a spot tucked into the corner of the building.

A sudden shout of excitement draws his attention, eyes darting over to the counter of the bar. A few men sit there dressed in jerseys, beers in their hands. Their eyes are glued to the television screens lined nearby the counter, where some kind of sport game seems to be playing.

His lips curl in distaste as one of the men loudly cheers again.

Sighing, he brings his glass to his lips and takes a sip. He doesn't particularly care for all of the noise of this place, but at least they have decent drinks. Cautiously, his eyes trail around the room, taking everyone in. Most of the patrons are young adults, groups of girls out and about for a girl's night, and others are older, most likely here for the game. There are only a handful of people sitting alone like he is. Most are sitting at the bar though, unlike him.

He stares down at the brown liquor in his glass, eyeing it as if it'd have the answers he's looking for. Namely, what he's doing here. He hasn't the slightest clue, but he asked to show and he has. He isn't particularly pleased about it though, considering he has much better ways he could be spending his Wednesday night. He has a perfectly good alcohol shelf at home, and even better company, one he prefers much more than this loud bar.

Glancing down at his phone, he tries to ignore the gaggle of girls ogling him over their drinks. He sighs tiredly, sincerely hoping his company arrives before one of them dares to approach and ask for his number while they have the liquid courage to do so. He doesn't want to deal with drunken, giggly girls tonight.

"Oh, there ya are!" A voice calls out to him, and he looks up. Two men are walking over to him, one dressed in a red button up, sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He's wearing washed out jeans and a pair of red combat boots. Sunglasses rest on his face. His companion wears a green t-shirt, a black jacket covering his arms. To match he's got a pair of jeans on and sneakers. "You really know how to blend in!"

"Well, you did say this is supposed to be an inconspicuous meeting." He shrugs in response as the two men slide into the seats across from him. "How're you doing, Ren, Martyn?"

Martyn's face knits together as Ren frowns slightly. "Well, things certainly aren't great, I'll tell ya that much, my dude." Ren sighs, shaking his head. The glass of rum is offered to him, and the man takes it.

“I’m assuming you heard about Scar?” Martyn asks, and he nods.

“Hard not to. Did he actually walk in and threaten you guys?”

Ren sets the glass down, alcohol swishing around in the glass, “Sure did. Martyn had the barrel of his gun pressed to his head and everything. The dude’s got guts.” He comments. “But we’ve got something for him.” He takes a second sip of rum, exhaling sharply as the liquor runs down his throat. “Holy moly that stuff is *strong!*”

Sitting back in his chair, he eyes the pair in front of him and crosses his arms, “Oh? Sounds interesting.”

Martyn’s blue eyes flash dangerously as he speaks, “Let’s just say we’ve got something that’ll knock him down a peg or two. And we’re going to need a man on the inside.”

“I’m listening...”

The music booming overhead drowns out their voices as they continue to speak.

Clapping his hands together, the mayor of Aqua Town leans back in his seat. He adjusts the fake monocle sitting on his eye and grins brightly at the man in front of him. Sunlight spills into the office through the windows and it casts long shadows on the floor. There’s a cat bed right beside the desk, and while it usually has the mayor’s beloved cat in it, it remains empty.

The mayor hums, “Alright Mr. Bdubs! Status report, how are we looking?”

In front of him is a man with short brown hair. It sticks up wildly, swerving to the left. He wears a light blue shirt and black pants, a small golden pocket watch hanging from his belt. He holds a small stack of papers in his arms, and he glances down at them, “Ah, yes! Well, have I got a report for you!” He exclaims.

Bdubs walks up to Scar’s desk, setting a few papers down for him to look at. “There’s been an increase in graffiti around town as of late, specifically in high traffic areas.” He starts.

Scar furrows his brows as he reaches for the papers and takes them, lifting the first page up so he can read it. “More of this stuff? Good golly, I feel like we’re never going to get rid of it.” He says, lips curling into a frown. “It’s like they just keep popping up no matter how much we scrub away.”

Matching his frown, Bdubs nods along. “Should we change tactics? Maybe leave it up for now and see if any more gets added?” He suggests. “Oh! Or we can station some people around the area, and try and snuff out the graffiti makers!”

Tapping his chin, Scar hums in thought, “Maybe that’s not such a bad idea... I’ll talk to good ol’ Xisuma about it and see what he thinks. Did you—” He cuts himself off as he lifts another page and finds an image of the graffiti below it. He smiles, “Aw, Bdubs!”

Grinning, Bdubs bows graciously, “I am one step ahead, good sir!” He jokes, meeting Scar’s smile.

“Good, good! See, this is *exactly* why you’re my PR guy! My public right hand! As *amayzin*’ as always, my good man.” Scar compliments, and Bdubs can only beam in reply. “Now, anything else?”

“Right, there’s one other thing,” Bdubs says, and the smile drops from his face. Noticing this, Scar straightens up in his seat, concerned. “It’s been brought to my attention that there’s been one or two corner shops popping up, though they’re a little suspicious.”

“Corner shops, eh? Under normal circumstances I wouldn’t be too concerned, but the look on your face says these aren’t normal circumstances.” Scar comments, seeing how Bdubs’ lips are tugged down in a deep frown, eyes dark with concern.

“Yeah... these stores are a part of some bigger chain, but I’ve never heard of it before. It’s called Genesis Beta.” He explains, and his eyebrows knit together in confusion as he says the name.

“Huh.” Scar says bluntly, giving his initial reaction. “Doesn’t ring any bells.” He shifts through the papers on his desk, deep in thought. “I’ll see if I can do some digging and see if anything is found.” He lifts his head up to smile at Bdubs, “A wonderful report as always.”

Bdubs meets his smile, and he nods his thanks. “Oh! One more thing boss!” He cries, looking down at the papers in his hands. Scar looks at him curiously as he reaches into the stack and pulls out a red colored envelope. He doesn’t pull the envelope out of the stack completely, he pauses. His smile dips into a thoughtful frown.

“And what might that be?” Scar inquires, his voice taking on a curious lilt. He holds his hand out for the envelope, and Bdubs gives it. Not waiting for his response, Scar opens the envelope up and finds a card sitting neatly inside. His eyes narrow at it as he pulls it out and sets the envelope aside. Opening the card, his jaw drops. “A *personal* invite from Ren to some kind of charity event?” He meets Bdubs’ gaze. “How in the world did you end up with this?”

“It was in your mailbox, Scar.” Bdubs answers, resisting the urge to shake his head. “You know, the thing downstairs I always remind you about checking?”

“Oh, right. That thing.” Chuckling, Scar sets the invitation down with a hum. “Well, that’s certainly surprising. I never would have expected *Ren* of all people to give me an invitation to a public event that *he*’s hosting.” He muses. “Especially as of late.”

Raising a brow, Bdubs looks at the mayor, “Are you going to go?” He asks, curious.

Scar leans back in his chair, lacing his fingers together as his elbows sit on the arm rests. “Hmm, I’ll leave that answer up to time.” He says simply. Meeting Bdubs’ eyes once more, he smiles, “Well! That’ll be all for now. Thank you for this helpful info as always!” He smiles.

Bdubs meets the man’s smile as he exits the office.

He walks along the halls, intending on heading back to his office to continue working. He has a few... concerns he wants to work through. And he’d like the privacy of his office to do it in. Yet as he walks, something (or accurately, *someone*) grabs him by the arm. A loud shout of surprise escapes Bdubs as he’s pulled by the arm somewhere.

When he gathers his bearings, Bdubs hears the sound of a door being shut, and he sees snow white hair in his vision. Previously tense, he relaxes and whacks the perpetrator on the arm. “ETHO!” He yells, making the man in question snort. “You scared the daylights out of me!” He scolds, and Etho’s arms smoothly slide around his waist.

“Oh, did I? My bad.” Is the man’s cheeky response, and Bdubs puffs his cheeks out.

“What the hell man?! Give a guy a little warning next time! And did you pull me into a broom closet?!” Bdubs continues to rant, eyes scanning the room he’s been pulled into now that he knows he’s not going to be murdered. Brooms and cleaning supplies lean against the walls, or are sitting on the shelves. He looks back to Etho, who’s got his mask pulled down so he can smile.

“You’re as loud as ever, Bubby Boo,” Etho teases, and Bdubs cringes at the name.

“C’mon! I told you to stop calling me that, it sounds so stupid!” He whines.

“Whaaaat? But I always get such fun reactions from you!” His partner laughs at him, and Bdubs almost hates how his chest warms at the sound of the man’s laughter.

Huffing, Bdubs turns in Etho’s arms, setting his pile of papers onto the shelf beside them. With his arms free, he wraps them around Etho’s shoulders and tugs him close, “Shut up,” He grumbles, “Don’t make me come up with a ridiculous name for you. I’ll do it!” Bdubs threatens, and Etho pretends to be scared.

“Oh no, anything but that Bdubs! I’m terrified!” He teases before leaning down and pressing his lips to the shorter’s.

Bdubs definitely doesn’t melt into the kiss, not at all. He *doesn’t* (he totally does). He relaxes in Etho’s hold, letting his eyes fall shut as he enjoys the time with the other. And huh, how ironic is that? Kissing in a closet. Closets seem to mean a lot to them, considering it’s how they first met after all.

With a grin, Bdubs murmurs against Etho’s lips, “You better be. I’ll attack you with towels again.” It’s his turn to tease the other, who simply laughs into the kiss.

Humming softly, Etho is ultimately the first to pull away, but not before pressing his forehead against Bdubs’. He breathes in through his nose, exhaling through his mouth. Bdubs takes the time to study Etho’s face, a pastime of his. A favorite pastime, even. He brings his hand up to take Etho’s jaw in his palm, fingers gently tracing his bottom lip. There’s a long scar there, one that starts at his top lip and extends down to his chin. He still hasn’t gotten the story on that one.

With Etho’s arms around him, he feels the other pull him closer and Bdubs smiles lightly. Shifting his head, Etho moves to bury his face in Bdubs’ hair. “How’d the meeting with Mr. Mayor go?” He inquires, voice soft as to not disturb this gentle air they’ve made for themselves.

Bdubs supposes getting back to his office can wait. He’d much rather spend some quality time with Etho. He’s *much* better company anyways.

As Bdubs leaves his office, Scar turns to focus on the papers on his desk. He spreads them out so he can get a clear view of everything, and grabs a piece of paper. He reaches for his pen, pulling the cap off with his teeth before jotting things down. He’ll need to remember a few specific things when he speaks with Xisuma.

Also... he’s got a few personal notes of his own to make.

When he finishes his notes, he opens a drawer of his desk and sets it all inside. He pulls a key from his pocket and locks it before leaving his seat. He stares at the drawer for a few more seconds before tearing his gaze away. Tugging on the lapels of his suit jacket, Scar heads to the door of his office. He walks down the hall, stopping at a room.

Just as Scar goes to grab the doorknob and open the door, he hears a laugh from inside. His eyes widen and he pushes the door open as carefully as he can. Poking his head inside, he sees Grian sitting on the floor, back against the wall. Jellie has her paws on his chest, standing on her hind legs. She's licking his chin, and Grian has the biggest smile on his face. Scar doesn't think he's ever seen him smile so brightly before.

Jellie is purring at him, kneading her paws against his shirt. It makes Grian absolutely melt, "Ohhhh, you're so incredibly cute!" He coos at her, petting her head. Scar doesn't want to ruin the moment, but before he can back away, red meets green and Grian's precious smile dims.

"Sorry, sorry, don't mind me!" Scar says as he steps into the room. He shuts the door behind him and moves to sit by Grian on the floor. "I see Jellie has decided to attach herself to you." He chuckles lightly, offering Grian a kind smile.

"Mm, she's very cute." Grian answers, still petting her furry head as she nuzzles against his hand. Scar finds himself feeling very grateful for his precious little Jellie, silently thanking her for keeping an eye on Grian while he couldn't. He's noticed, ever since their little run in with Dogwarts last week, his bodyguard has seemed troubled. "So, how was your oh so very important meeting with Bdubs?"

Running his fingers along Jellie's fur, Scar huffs, "Well, it was quite interesting. I've been given an invitation to a charity event."

"A charity event?" Grian raises a brow, "By who?"

"Oh, you'll *never* guess, songbird." Scar chimes in return, sending the man a lazy smile. Grian simply tilts his head at him, prompting him to continue. The mayor reaches into his suit, pulling the invitation from his inside pocket to hand it to Grian.

Grian takes it from him, skimming it over. As soon as he reads it all, Grian's eyes narrow at the words on the invite, as if they'd have the answers for his already brewing questions. "Ren personally asked you to come?" He asks, looking over to the man. "Ren as in the guy who's close with that Martyn guy who basically declared *war* on you?"

"Yep! That's the one!" Scar chirps with faux cheerfulness, and Grian's lips tug down in a frown.

"It's a trap." He declares, giving the invitation back to Scar.

"Oh it's *definitely* a trap." Scar agrees, nodding at him. He stares down at the invitation, Ren's words almost mocking him. "Though I'd be lying if I said I at least wasn't a *tad* bit interested." He comments as Jellie walks over to him and makes his leg a pillow.

"This is why I say you lack self preservation skills, Scar." Grian grumbles in reply.

Waving him off with a chuckle, Scar shakes his head, "But think about it! While I'm not denying this could be a trap, what if it isn't? This charity event that Ren is hosting... it's an event for a rare kind of cancer, the same that landed his brother in the hospital." He starts, drawing Grian's attention to him. "While I don't doubt that he's genuinely trying to raise money, this could be a ploy to get some good ol' reputation points with me." He chuckles.

“After that whole ‘*red winter is coming*’ stunt last week?! Are you insane?!” Grian exclaims, making Jellie lift her head up at him. She meows, “Sorry baby.” He coos, petting her head. He returns his focus to the mayor, “I don’t think this is a good idea, no matter what Ren’s reasonings are. You’re walking right into enemy territory, and the odds are against you!”

Casually, Scar moves to take Grian’s hand in his own. He offers the man a smile, “Geez, have a little faith in us, would you, songbird? I don’t mind defying the odds with you.” He winks, and Grian’s cheeks warm.

He huffs, “You make my job very difficult.”

Scar can only laugh at him.

Chapter End Notes

WOOOOOO I'M SO EXCITED FOR THIS FIC OMG????

we're in for one hell of a ride guys, buckle in >:3c also !!!! finally got to write ethubs in the au ohmygOD. I've been thinking about them a lot lately <33333 I'm not sure when the next update will be since I've got a secret project I'm working on and I'm brain rotting very hard over the owl house (esp with the season finale oops) so I'll probably be writing some stuff for that as well !! but rest assured, this series will continue to be updated <33 ALSO !!! shout out to the crime au discord for inspiring the scene with grian and jellie <333

with that being said, thank you for reading! drop a comment/kudos if you enjoyed !! see ya next chapter! :D

ii. they sharpen up their teeth.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I *can't* believe we're actually doing this.” Grian grumbles to him as they stand outside the giant manor that Ren has rented out for the event. The man has his arms crossed over his chest, dressed in a fine red suit, a black vest and button up underneath. His hair has been pulled back into a neat bun, and he's watching the number of guests walking in through the front doors. He mumbles something under his breath before turning to the man beside him, “Why are we doing this? I thought we agreed it was an obvious trap.”

Scar chuckles, dragging a hand through his hair. It's slicked back with gel, sure to stay out of his eyes. He turns to Grian with a charming smile, green eyes lit with amusement, “Well my dear songbird, it turns out that there's something Ren and Martyn have in their possession that I'd like to snatch.” He answers, tugging on his suit jacket. He's dressed in a brown suit, a crisp white button up popping out nicely. “Besides, they don't expect us to walk in and already know it's a trap!”

Grian quirks a brow at him, “And what is this thing that they have?” He inquires.

The smile on Scar's face dips for a moment as he thinks back to earlier that morning.

He had been the first to make his way to the office, considering Grian had gotten caught up in something that Bdubs needed help with. He claimed that Grian had a real eye for architecture and wanted his opinion on something. Scar hadn't seen any issues with it, deciding to head up on his own. He knew Grian would catch up with him when Bdubs let him go.

Whistling a tune to himself, Scar twisted the doorknob to his office and pushed it open before stepping inside. However, he froze upon entering the room, sight focusing on the white paper slipped under his laptop. Casually, he glanced around the room to see if anything was tampered with.

He found nothing.

Feeling himself on edge, Scar took careful steps toward his desk, unsure of what laid ahead. He did not stop looking around the office, not once. One can never be too careful, and Scar wasn't about to take that chance.

He approached the desk, still finding that nothing had been messed with. Slowly, he reached for the folded up sheet, pulling it out from underneath his laptop. Unfolding it, he kept himself on high alert as he read it.

“Mr. Mayor,

Dogwarts has something dangerous in their possession.

It could destroy you.

They will have it on them at the charity event, though it will be hidden in a backroom.

Looking at Grian, Scar tries to think of an answer that won't make Grian want to kill him. Though

if he were being honest, he really can't think of anything! So he offers his right hand a casual smile, "Oh I have no idea."

Grian stares at him, long and hard. He narrows his eyes, making his disapproval quite clear to him. "What?!" He cries before dropping his face into his hand and groaning. "You're telling me we're about to walk into a trap and you don't even know what it's for?!"

"Nope!" Scar chuckles, that cheerful smile ever present on his face. Grian merely glares at him in return, opening his mouth to say more. Yet Scar interrupts him, patting him on the back, "Relax, G-Man! If I know Ren, then this is hardly a threat to us. He's not exactly a threatening guy, so it'll be fine!" He says.

"It's not Ren that I'm annoyed with." Grian grumbles in response, making Scar chuckle. He takes a moment to compose himself, taking a deep breath in and a deep breath out. "Despite being heavily against this, I can't exactly walk away and leave you to deal with this yourself."

"Atta boy!" Scar beams at him, moving to take Grian's hand in his own. "Now, let's head inside and get this little event over and done with!" He leads the man to the front steps of the manor in front of them, with large pillars and an overhang above their heads. The doors are large, painted brown. Security stands at the front, allowing people inside. When Scar reaches them he flashes his invitation and they're allowed inside.

The inside of the manor is large, grand. Crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling while large glass windows line the walls, giving everyone a decent view of the night sky. There's tables stationed around with white table cloths covering them, platters of food neatly arranged on them. One table has a selection of drinks for the guests to pick from. There's a stage to the back of the building where a small group is currently playing music from.

Scar pulls Grian to the side, humming quietly. "Do you see Ren yet?" He inquires.

Grian shakes his head in response. "No sign of him." His eyes jump around the room, looking at all of the people standing around and talking. He doesn't recognize any of their faces, and Grian isn't sure if that's good or bad.

"Oh, wonderful. That just means we have time to enjoy ourselves." Scar hums as he takes Grian and drags him over to the wide selection of food. He snatches a small plate for himself and one for Grian, pressing it into the man's hands.

"Wh- Scar! We aren't here to have a good time!" Grian hisses, setting the plate back down on the table.

"What do you mean? C'mon Gri, relax a little! The man of the hour hasn't shown up yet, we've got some time." Scar answers as he takes a few cookies, dropping them onto his plate. Grian simply frowns beside him, shaking his head. "What did I say about enjoying yourself in my company, songbird?" The mayor singsongs, making Grian stiffen for a moment.

"Ugh, fine." He grumbles, picking up a plate and taking a slice of pie.

Scar smiles at him in response. He goes to grab something else when someone's hand collides with his and he immediately pulls it back, "Ah, apologies! Go ahead." He says, turning to the person and smiling. He then blinks, spotting none other than Bdubs in front of him. "Bdubs!"

"Mr. Mayor! I see you decided to drop by." Bdubs greets, offering Scar a smile. He's dressed in a green suit, brown hair swept to one side. "Sorry about that!"

Scar waves him off, “Don’t you even worry about it.” He glances down at the two plates in his hands, raising a brow.

Bdubs seems to see what he’s staring at, and the smile turns into a frown, “*Someone* refused to get his own stupid plate.” He says, though it leaves Scar a bit confused still. He shares a look with Grian, who only shrugs at him.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about Bdubs, I just took you up on your offer!” A voice chimes in, and the three are turning to see a man dressed in a black suit approaching them.

“Etho, wonderful to see you.” Scar greets, smiling.

Dark blue eyes shift to focus on Scar, and the corners of Etho’s eyes crinkle. His mask covers up his smile, but his eyes give it away, “Well hello there Mr. Goodtimes!”

“Don’t change the topic mister!” Bdubs cuts in, jutting one of the plates at him, “Since you’re here, take your dumb plate!” He demands, and Etho accepts it with a light laugh.

“I didn’t know either of you were coming.” Grian speaks up, making Bdubs and Etho look at him.

“Oh! I wasn’t planning to, but then Etho asked me to tag along.” Bdubs explains, shrugging casually as he places food on his plate. “I had nothing else planned for tonight so I figured eh, what the heck! A last minute date night won’t kill me.”

“Last minute is an understatement, Bdubs.” Etho comments, teasing him. “You had me waiting until thirty minutes before the event was going to start to let me know if you were coming or not.”

“Hey! It was a big decision!”

“Oh yeah? Between what?”

Scar and Grian share a look before sneaking away to leave the arguing couple. Neither of them really wanted to get involved, or be around for their banter.

The two make their way to a free area, holding their plates in their hands. They find themselves by a window with room to breathe, seeing as the guests have all spread out. Standing together, the two eat in silence as music fills the silence for them.

Though, with the face that Grian is making, the silence doesn’t last very long. Scar notices how Grian’s eyebrows seem to furrow as he takes a bite of his pie. “Something on your mind?” He asks, gently nudging him with his elbow.

Red hued eyes glance at him as Grian’s lips tug down in a frown, “Do we have a plan with all of this?” He asks.

Resisting the urge to chuckle, Scar smiles. He taps his chin, “Well, first we have to get the husband out of the way.”

Grian blinks owlishly at him, “Excuse me?”

Meeting his gaze, Scar replies, “Ren’s husband? The blond? Totally gave you the heebie jeebies?”

“Husband? Wait, they’re *married*?” Grian asks, surprise lacing his voice.

“I think so..? I wasn’t looking too hard and Ren wears a bunch of rings, *but*, I swear they have to be. You saw how they were when they ran into us.” Scar shrugs as Grian thinks back to a few

weeks ago when the duo had run into the alleged married couple.

“Huh... well anyways, we’re dealing with Ren’s husband first, yeah?”

“Yeah, I totally saw the other guy with a ring. Bit of an odd style but that’s Ren for ya.”

“You’re the expert on this Ren guy here, not me.” As Grian speaks his eyes flitter about the room. He’s keeping a careful eye on the people around them. No one seems to be listening in on their conversation, or paying any mind to them really.

“Well I dunno, I wouldn’t say expert! We used to go to school together, yes, but that doesn’t make me an expert!” Scar says, and Grian only raises an unimpressed brow at him. “Anyways, I was hoping you’d be helpful with his hand but apparently not!”

“I’ve hardly met the guy! All I know is that he supposedly knows me!” Grian exclaims, finishing off his pie. He sets the plate down on a table nearby.

“Okay, okay. What we *do* know about him is that he's Ren’s husband. Maybe. Probably. Most likely. I mean, it wouldn’t be–” Scar breaks out into the beginnings of a ramble, and Grian should cut him off now before he goes any further.

“*Scar.*”

“Sorry, sorry! Getting off track,” Scar coughs, “This guy is way too happy to jump the gun. Ren needs to get that man’s emotions in check or they might get ‘em killed.”

Thinking back to their encounter, Grian tries to remember what the guy was like. “It seems to me like he’s got a terrible case of tunnel vision. He’s hasty, quick to jump to conclusions. His emotions rule his mind, they’re the driving force behind his actions. And he seems to stick Ren like glue.” He spitballs, listing things from the top of his head. It had been a short interaction, but it isn’t difficult for Grian to pull from.

Scar makes a sound of impressment, “Mm tunnel vision, I like that. Clever bird~.” Grian’s cheeks warm at the name. “Maybe, if we can get him away from Ren, you can use yourself as a distraction. If he’s focused on you then I can deal with Ren.”

Nodding in agreement, Grian hums, “I’ll try and lead him away, maybe lure him in with this whole... memory issue.”

Setting his plate down by Grian’s, Scar meets his gaze, “Just don’t overdo it. You call me the second it becomes too much. Promise?”

Grian chuckles lightly, offering him a halfhearted smirk, “What, don’t think I can handle it?”

Though his tone had been light, Scar’s brows crease in response, “You know that’s not what I mean. We don’t know Martyn like we know Ren.”

“Since when did you do the worrying, huh? I thought that was my job, Mr. Mayor.” Grian nudges him, ignoring how warm his chest feels.

“Oh you do plenty of that on your own, allow me to worry a little.” Scar glances at Grian with a soft yet worried gaze, “He gave you quite the fright the first time we came across him. I’m looking out for you.”

Huffing quietly, Grian crosses his arms and looks away, “All he did was catch me off guard.”

Scar frowns at him again, “You were zoning out for the next few days and kept messing with your shirt, even in meetings. It got to you.”

“I–” Grian purses his lips, frowning, “I’ll be fine. One meeting with him isn’t going to kill me.”

“I just need him distracted, songbird. If that means he’s knocked out cold then so be it.” Scar clearly doesn’t seem very keen on the idea of leaving Grian alone with Martyn, but what other choice does he have here?

“You and I both know the moment he sees me he’s going to focus on me. It’ll distract him and *I* can get some answers out of him. Seems like a win-win to me.” Grian says, acting casual. The idea doesn’t bother him all that much. It sets him a bit on edge, sure, but it’s nothing he can’t deal with.

Seeming to accept that response, Scar nods his head as he brushes his hand through his hair.

“Alright... this could get dicey though. You sure you want to stay by my side through all of this? Even if we know it’s a trap?” He looks over at Grian, lifting a brow at him.

“I’m not scared to jump if you’re asking me to.” Grian answers honestly, offering the man a slight smirk. Shouldn’t Scar just know by now? Grian is sticking by his side, regardless of what happens.

Something in Scar’s gaze softens and he nods in return. He goes to say something else, but a voice stops him.

“Holy cow, hey there my dudes!”

Chapter End Notes

rubs my hands together ehehehe~

this was a fun one to write, we've had the dialogue saved for a while now fghfghfj glad I finally got to implement it !! :D oh, official note !! updates will most likely slow down, a project I'm involved in officially began and I gotta put time toward working on it <3 I'll still try to update when I can though !!

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter, if you did, drop a comment/kudos !! also there's a reference I slipped in there with the note scar got ;3 feel free to take a guess at what it is!

iii. it's never as it seems.

Chapter by [mochiwrites](#)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

As they're approached, Grian immediately steps in front of Scar. It's a slight step that he takes, done in a way that hides his true intentions. To an everyday person, it'd simply appear as if Grian were taking a step to the left, being careless of how much space is between him and the mayor.

Yet to a trained eye, it's obvious that Grian has moved to shield Scar should he need to. He has no weapons on him (no obvious ones anyway), but such a thing wouldn't stop him. His eyes are locked on the man in front of them, who's dressed in a fancy black suit, long brown hair braided. His suit is decorated with floral patterns that can be seen easily under the lights. His red tie makes a nice contrast against the black.

"Ren," Scar nods at him, keeping his tone cheery and polite.

"Scar! It's great to see you my, dude. I wasn't sure if you were gonna come." Ren regards him warmly, blue eyes kind. He's without his shades for once, allowing anyone to see his face.

"Well, I'll admit I was quite surprised to see a handwritten invite from you. And I thought, ah, how could I turn down an invitation from an old friend?" Scar meets his warmth, playing the part of the loveable mayor. Though, what he says makes Grian side eye him.

Scar casts a glance around the room, seeing a few people watching them. He fixes his gaze back to Ren, and his smile becomes bashful as he scratches his cheek, "Though I wasn't quite ready for how many people would show up! I won't have to do an impromptu speech, will I?"

This pulls a laugh from Ren, deep and jovial. "Not to worry Mr. Mayor, there will be no surprise speeches for ya." He promises, and Scar's shoulders relax.

"Phew! What a relief!" Scar's smile brightens the slightest bit, and then he turns his attention to Grian, "Ah, I hope you don't mind that I brought Grian along!" He leans in toward Ren to comically whisper, "Ignore how grumpy he seems, he's always like that."

Under normal circumstances, Grian would've snarked Scar in return for that. But these are not normal circumstances and Grian has a job to do. Ren and Grian's eyes meet for a moment, and Grian takes his chance to glare at the man. Scar may be willing to act all buddy buddy with the leader of Dogwarts, but Grian certainly isn't. He hasn't forgotten Martyn's words, or the Iskall incident. He still remembers that this is a trap.

"Not a problem at all baby! The more the merrier!" Ren says after a moment, smiling down at Grian. Though there's something almost tense about Ren's tone, about the way the words seem to be strained the slightest bit. It's as if Ren were holding himself back.

Grian's eyes narrow. There's a feeling that arises in him, hearing Ren call Scar "baby". He frowns.

The sound of a spoon being tapped against a glass startles everyone, and the once noise filled room quiets. Ren's head perks up, "Ah, that's my cue! Enjoy my dudes!" He exclaims with a wave before running off.

“Thank you, we will!~” Scar sings after him.

Grian’s eyes dutifully follow Ren as he turns and walks off. He doesn’t like that little interaction just now, it seemed too forced. He doesn’t tear his eyes away until he hears Scar let out a sigh beside him. “Well, that went better than expected.” Scar hums.

“Seemed to go just fine to me, with how buddy buddy the two of you were acting. But Ren sounded off.” Grian replies, moving away from Scar to lean against the wall instead. “He sounded strained, and he certainly didn’t seem happy that I was brought along.” His brows furrow at the thought. “Wonder why.”

Scar lifts a hand to his chin, tapping it in thought, “Well, this is probably just a trap for *me*. He might not be happy that you’re getting caught up in the middle.” He murmurs in response, shrugging.

Grian opens his mouth to reply but is stopped by the sound of a microphone being tapped. “Is this thing on?” Ren’s voice echoes throughout the hall, drawing everyone’s attention. Grian’s red eyes snap toward him, seeing the man standing on stage. It’s nothing fancy, just a platform that rises two or three inches above the ground. He holds a microphone in his hand, staring at the crowd with a smile.

A few people nod at him, and Ren grins. “Perfect, we’re in business baby!” He cheers. “I just want to take a moment and thank you wonderful, wonderful people for showing up tonight! So give yourselves a round of applause, I love seeing your beautiful faces!”

Applause breaks out around the room, and Scar joins them all in clapping. Grian stays still, simply moving to watch the crowd in the room.

Ren waits until the noise settles down to start speaking again, “We’ve already raised over one hundred thousand dollars for our cause, and I cannot thank you enough from the bottom of my heart.”

Grian glances at Scar, finding the man’s gaze on him. His cheeks warm before he recalls Scar’s earlier statement, “You called Ren an old friend before, what was that about?” He mutters.

“Ah, that.” Scar hums, shifting his eyes to stare back at Ren. The man speaks animatedly into his microphone, talking about everything he has planned for the charity event. “Since you asked... Ren and I used to go to high school together. We were good friends.” Scar’s voice fades to something soft, laced with nostalgia and fond.

The knowledge surprises him, as that was definitely something that Grian was *not* expecting. “You’re old friends, but he’s trying to kill you.” He bluntly points out.

Sighing, Scar replies, “We had a... falling out of sorts. Difference in ideals, all your typical high school drama.” He looks to Grian for his reaction, but finds a confused stare on Grian’s face. “What, was that not your high school experience?” He inquires.

Grian’s face scrunches up, “I never *had* a high school experience.” He admits, and Scar stares at him with bewilderment.

The two of them tune back into whatever Ren is talking about, listening in once more.

“Now, before I get to talking about our *final* event of the night, I just wanna take a moment to thank you all once again.” Ren hums, smiling at the crowd before him. He speaks confidently, kindly. He is open and honest with the people before him, raising the excitement in the room.

And yet with a single sigh, that all changes. The atmosphere in the room shifts and dampens, it turns more bittersweet than excited. Ren's smile dims slightly, as his voice becomes shaky from emotions.

"I don't know if many of you know this, but my younger brother, Renbob, suffers from thymic carcinoma. He's the whole reason why I started up Renchanting, my brother is my biggest inspiration. He's such a strong guy, and he's the best dude you'll ever meet. And knowing that this fundraiser will benefit him and other people suffering this disease is absolutely wonderful."

There's quite a bit of new information that Grian is learning tonight. Though a part of him wonders if Ren is lying. But as he looks at the crestfallen expression on Scar's face, he banishes the idea. And as he looks at Scar, he sees something from the corner of his eye.

"Scar, look." Grian whispers, nudging him with his arm. "*There's a door over there.*" He subtly nods his head toward it, and Scar's gaze follows.

Across the room and to the left of them is a door with a sign posted on it, one that says **NO ENTRY**. Guests stand nearby, and it's in a blind spot of the stage, so Ren wouldn't see them either.

Scar hums quietly, "*Nice work.*"

It isn't very difficult for the two of them to reach the door. There aren't any security guards around them, and with Ren doing his speech, they're able to avoid any prying eyes. Grian leads them to the door, hyper aware of their surroundings. Ren's voice sounds around them as he continues to speak, explaining some things that he had planned for the evening.

The pair blend in with the crowd, pretending to move as if they wanted a better spot for looking at Ren. Scar keeps his head ducked, not wanting to attract any attention. They've already had a few people spot him and come up for a chat during the night.

It'd be best if they avoid anyone while trying to sneak around. And thankfully with the amount of people crowding the room, no one will notice them slip inside a room they aren't meant to be in.

When they reach the door, Grian casts one last glance around the room. His heart beats loudly in his ears, adrenaline running through him. If they get caught here it's all over. They have to be so careful, and it'd be foolish to rush in without taking in their surroundings one last time. Ren's speech is coming to a close, and he still has the attention of the audience.

Good.

Grian reaches for the handle of the door, glad to see that it's locked. He mutters a curse, "*It's locked.*" He tells Scar.

"*Which means this isn't a part of the trap.*" Scar mumbles, eyes scanning the crowd as well. "*We have to get in there. Are you able to get it open?*" He questions, leaning in close so Grian can hear him.

"*Not unless you buy me some time.*" Grian snorts, reaching into his pocket. He grabs a bobby pin. He had been keeping it on his person in case he needed it, and is he lucky that he did.

With a contemplative hum, Scar tries to think of something. With Ren's speech winding down, they won't have that handy distraction anymore. So what can he do to buy Grian some time? While thinking, Scar's gaze shifts to the man in front of him. He stares at him, and... notices just how small Grian is.

Not to say that Grian is *incredibly* small, no, he's probably just below the average height. If Scar wanted to, he could probably cover most of Grian's body with his own. His brows crease at the sudden thought and it comes to him. "*I've got it! Though, you're going to need to trust me here, songbird.*" He says.

Grian turns to look at him with a stare that says *really?*

Scar smiles at him before moving to cover Grian's frame with his own. His hands find a place on Grian's waist, holding him. He feels Grian tense beneath his hold, "*Scar, what are you—*" He whispers, and Scar hushes him.

"*Trust me. Focus on getting that door open.*" Is all he responds with, speaking right by Grian's ear. He's given a full body shudder in return, making him chuckle. Green eyes then drop down to the spot just below Grian's ear, humming quietly. He has this... temptation to kiss the space of skin. He isn't sure why, but it *could* help prevent anyone from coming over to them. After all, anyone who sees them will assume they're a couple, from their close proximity.

Grian, who had been trying to keep his hand from shaking as he works to get the door unlocked, jumps. He feels his face growing warm at the close proximity. He stops for a moment as he lets himself process what's happening. Scar is... who even knows what he's doing. All Grian knows is that Scar is very close and it's making his hand all shaky. But not in a bad way. There's no dread sitting in his stomach, no bad feelings. Just embarrassment.

He almost goes to ask why Scar has decided to do this when he was meant to have a plan, when he realizes this *is* the plan. His back is pulled to Scar's chest, and he realizes that Scar is hiding him. And he's doing whatever *this* is to add to it.

With this in mind, Grian continues to work on getting the door unlocked. He shimmies the bobby pin around, hoping it'll catch on the mechanism that locks the door. Scar marvels at just how nicely Grian fits in his arms. He thinks he'd like to hold him outside of a distraction tactic.

Whoa, slow down there cowboy. *What* did he just think?

His eyes widen as he tries to figure out where *that* thought came from, and he should probably start wondering why he started touching Grian in the first place! What is going *on* with him? And why is he enjoying this so much? He's always been touchy with Grian, and he certainly won't deny that the man is attractive.

Maybe Scar's attraction to him is getting a little out of hand.

"*I got it!*" Grian whispers just as Scar pulls away from him. He successfully prevents Scar from getting lost in his thoughts without even knowing it.

It's Scar's turn to blush, nodding stiffly at Grian. He doesn't trust himself to speak right away, so he simply gestures for him to open the door. With one last glance behind them, the pair slip inside.

The door clicks shut behind them, and as it does, someone watches.

Two blue eyes turn away from the closed door, an uneasy look crossing the man's face. A hand falls on his shoulder, squeezing comfortingly. "They fall for it, me hand?"

“Sure did, boss.” He replies, nodding at Ren.

“Awesome. I told you that no entry sign would get their attention.” Ren replies, his gaze landing on the door with a smile. When he doesn’t get an immediate response, he looks back to his partner. He sees how uneasy the man is, how his fists clench tightly. He sees how tense he is. “Hey, Martyn it’s alright.” He says soothingly.

“I-I know. It’s just— you know how important that book is. Scar *can’t* get his hands on it. It’s imperative that it stays with us.” Martyn mumbles, frowning slightly. “I don’t doubt you Ren, but I *am* nervous about this.”

“Don’t you worry baby, it’s all gonna work out, and that book is gonna stay with us.” Ren hurries to reassure him, his voice gentle as he speaks. Without his glasses on, Martyn gets a nice view of his deep blue eyes. They remind him of the ocean, it’s depth deep but its currents strong.

He offers Ren a smile in return, “Alright.”

When Grian and Scar walk through the door, they’re met with a long hallway. Large windows are on the right hand side, the walls of the hallway painted a creamy white. There’s a few doors on the left side, with large door frames.

There’s a chandelier that hangs overhead, casting light into the hall. Down the hall is a large brown door, and Scar’s eyes zero in on it. “I think we found it.” He says, nodding at it.

“Right... hey uh, what was with that plan back there?” Grian asks, furrowing his brows.

Scar seems to tense under his gaze, flush creeping up his neck. He casually tugs at his collar, coughing, “That was my grand idea of hiding you. And also making sure no one approached us.” He explains. “I think it worked well. Anyways, to the door!” The mayor exclaims, clearly avoiding the topic.

Grian frowns but allows him to avoid it, accepting his answer for now. After all, he didn’t hate it. He’s simply curious about it. He sighs softly, “Lead the way, Mr. Mayor.” He says lightly, and Scar hurries toward the door.

However, as they walk, they come across a door that’s been left ajar. It catches Grian’s attention and he stops walking for a moment. He squints at the sight, finding it odd. He walks toward it, the floorboards creaking under the weight of his steps.

“Grian? You find something?” Scar questions, the creaking sound catching his attention.

“I might’ve.” Grian replies, reaching his hand out to touch the door. He pushes it open slightly, finding a staircase that leads downwards. He frowns as Scar comes up behind him. “It’s a staircase.” He notes before turning to look at Scar behind him, “Think it’s worth checking out?”

Scar squints his eyes, peering into the darkness of the staircase. “It might be. Though I’m not sure if we’ll have enough time to search.” He says. He stares at it for a few moments longer, squinting his eyes even further as he hums. “*Unless...*”

“Unless what?” Grian questions, having a bad feeling about whatever is going to come out of

Scar's mouth next.

The mayor smiles at him, beaming as if he's just come up with a fantastic idea. "We split up!"

Chapter End Notes

WOOOOO AN UPDATE !!!!!

I've literally had the start of this chapter sitting in my drive for a Bit and I just kinda... yk. hid it under the rug DBFBFBG but we're back and kicking and MMMMMM THAT DOUBLE LIFE HUH???

it's given me some inspiration and OH MAN do I have some thoughts turning around. though I'll be posting those on my tumblr <3

if you enjoyed, make sure to leave a comment/kudos !! they fuel me like caffeine :3

iv. i'll never be your king.

Chapter by [mochiwrites](#)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Staring at Scar as if he's grown three heads, Grian wonders if he's hearing correctly. Did Scar seriously just suggest that they split up? In unfamiliar territory? In a place where they're willingly walking into a trap? He can't be serious, can he?

But if the look of a lightbulb going off on Scar's face is anything to go by, it's best to assume that he *is* serious. Still, it won't hurt to ask. And then smack some sense into the man. "Are you *mad*?" Grian questions, "You can't be serious, right?" There's a part of him that hopes Scar will say '*sike!*' and inform him that it was simply a joke.

Yet that does not happen. Scar simply nods at him, still looking proud of himself for his suggestion. "Oh I can assure you Grian I am *completely* serious." He confirms. "This is the best way to cover as much ground as possible and find whatever it is that Ren has on me."

His response doesn't sit right with Grian, it makes him uneasy. He doesn't like the idea of leaving Scar to fend for himself, and he tells the man as much. "In case you've forgotten, this is a trap, Scar. One that we've walked right into! You can't genuinely believe that this is a good idea."

It's only then that the smile on Scar's face falls, replaced by a thoughtful frown. His shoulders drop the slightest bit, and his eyes carry a serious glint as he meets Grian's stare. "I don't like this idea anymore than you do, songbird." He says, expression tightening with stress. Grian decides that he doesn't like that look on Scar's face. He finds himself wanting to smooth the crease forming in between Scar's brows. "I don't want to let you out of my sight, but we have no other choice in the matter. If we want to find what we need, we *have* to split up."

Grian frowns himself, knowing that Scar has a point. But he's meant to be the man's bodyguard. He's meant to protect him. If something happens to Scar while he isn't around, the responsibility falls on *him*. He has a debt to repay, and leaving Scar alone is not going to decrease what he owes. Yet he also knows that finding whatever Dogwarts has on Scar is important. He doesn't know what it is, and neither does Scar. And they aren't going to find out unless they split up to cover as much ground as possible.

Besides, they worked out that this space wasn't a part of the trap, else the door would have been easily accessible to them. Still, knowing that doesn't make the pit forming in Grian's stomach go away.

"I really don't like this." Grian tells him, and Scar reaches out for his hand in return.

"Neither do I. But," Scar squeezes it gently, "We aren't that far away from one another. I'll yell really loud if I need you." He says, and it puts some of Grian's nerves at ease.

"Alright." Grian relents, burying his bad feelings for now. He looks down at their hands, giving Scar's a squeeze in return. "Don't do anything stupid." He says, giving Scar a serious look.

The man cracks a smile in return, chuckling at him, "I promise I won't do a single stupid thing unless you're there to catch me." He jokes, winking at Grian.

Fondly rolling his eyes, Grian shakes his head and takes a step back. “Good. I’ll meet back up with you here in fifteen minutes.” He says before turning and pushing the door fully open. It opens with a soft creak, allowing Grian to get a full view of the staircase. He turns back to Scar, “Be careful.”

“Cross my heart.” Scar smiles, and Grian seems content with his answer. He heads down the stairs, and Scar moves to continue his walk toward the room at the end of the hall. He pays close attention to his surroundings as he does so, noticing a few paintings hanging on the walls as he walks.

When he reaches the doors, he pauses and presses his ears up against the wood. He doesn’t hear anything from the other side, no sounds of conversation or even movement. Which means the room is empty. Good.

Deciding that it’s safe enough, Scar grabs the doorknob and twists the door open. Light from the hallway spills into the room, illuminating the darkness inside. He glances around, senses on high alert. He can’t see much in the darkness, but he can make outlines of the things in the room thanks to the light. His eyes slowly start to adjust to the darkness as he looks around.

There’s a few bookshelves lining the walls, a chair or two resting nearby with little round tables. Scar looks around, raising a brow. But what catches his attention is the podium in the middle. Thanks to the light from the hallway he sees it the most clearly, and oddly enough the back of it, where one might place papers or notes, is facing him.

Scar walks toward it cautiously, seeing something resting on the ridge that juts out. His ears feel tense, every part of his body feels on edge. He frowns, trying to listen for anything. Yet he still hears only silence and the floorboards creaking under his steps.

He stands in front of the podium, hand reaching out to grab whatever it is that he sees. His fingers touch something hard, yet it feels soft beneath his pads. It feels almost grainy, stiff. Scar traces his finger along it, realizing that it’s a book cover. One made of leather.

A curious sound leaves him as he feels something engraved in the leather cover. He places his whole hand over the cover, feeling lines beneath his palm. He moves to trace the grooves and makes out some kind of rectangular shape? Scar’s brows knit in concentration as he tries to make sense of whatever it is that he’s feeling.

Something compels him to pick the book up. It feels like it’s one of those medium sized books, maybe a few hundred pages at most.

Turning to face the light, he sees that the leather is dyed a deep purple. And when he flicks it open, he finds that it’s empty.

“*What?*” He questions, blinking at the blank pages with confusion. He flips through every page, his confusion piling on top of itself. “Why is this empty?”

“Gotcha baby.”

The lights in the room flicker on, and Scar’s head snaps up. With the warm almost yellow like lights he can see the dark wood floor and the shelves around. It looks like the room could have been some kind of study. His attention is stolen as he hears the doors slam shut. Ren and Martyn stand where they first were.

Shit.

His body tenses at the sight of them both. He takes a step back in order to put space between them. Scar realizes he can’t go very far when the ledge of the podium presses up against his back. He

runs through different ideas in his head.

He could make a run for it, maybe try and burst through the doors. No, that wouldn't work. Not with Ren and Martyn standing there, possibly with weapons. He could shout for Grian, but could he even get into the room? Would Scar's voice even carry with the doors shut?

It seems his only option right now is to play nice. Buy some time. Grian will notice that he isn't there and will know something's up. If he can get those two away from the door they've got a shot at this.

With this in mind, Scar puts on a charming smile, "Ah, hello gentlemen! *Fantastic* evening we're having, hm? So much money raised, and for a wonderful cause!" He speaks with the charisma of a leader, and wears the smile of the mayor.

Martyn glares daggers at him while Ren huffs, "Don't bother with the pleasantries Scar, we all know what's going on here." The leader of Dogwarts demands. "You've walked right into our trap." He smiles.

Scar shakes his head, tutting at him, "What, do you mean showing up tonight? Oh trust me, Grian and I were very well aware that the letter you sent was a set up." He replies smoothly.

"Wait, Grian. Where is he? He should be here!" Martyn suddenly exclaims, and he whips his head toward Ren. "Ren I—"

"Go." Ren offers him an encouraging smile. "I got this."

Martyn hesitates for a moment, conflicted. He obviously wants to stay and help, but he also *needs* to find Grian. Ren's encouragement seems to sway him, giving him the right push that he needs to turn around and leave the room.

Scar finds himself concerned over Martyn going to find Grian, especially after their last run in. But this *was* a part of the plan, and he knows that Grian will be alright.

Steely blue eyes gaze at Scar, and a satisfied smile forms on Ren's face, "Where were we? Oh right. Man, our plan must have worked flawlessly if you thought that invitation was the trap!"

"What now?" Scar questions, blinking. "What do you mean?! The invitation was so *obviously* the trap! C'mon, it was a handwritten invite and everything!" He bemoans.

"And yet you started snooping around all because of a little note slipped under your laptop." Ren replies, making Scar go stiff. His eyes go as wide as saucers upon his realization.

"*Oh my god.*" He mumbles, feeling an icy chill crawl up his spine. It coils around his bones, sinking into his skin and causing his body to stand on edge. He and Grian walked into a trap *inside* of a trap! "How did I not see that?!" He exclaims, looking down at the book in his hands.

"There it is!" Ren grins, "Betcha wondering how we pulled this off. And why." He prompts.

This is his chance, Scar realizes. He needs to get Ren talking, to buy time. Which means he also needs to get moving.

So he takes a few steps, walking to the left. He starts to enter Ren's space, "By all means, the floor is yours." He gestures, "Besides I'd like to know what this," Scar wiggles the book in his hand, "is all about."

“The book is how we lured you here. See that little invitation you got? That was a genuine invite. We knew you’d assume it was a trap. But the note? That was the *real* trap.” Ren explains, and Scar frowns. “We just needed someone who had access to your office to slip in and place it.”

The invitation... Bdubs had given that to him, hadn’t he? And Bdubs *does* have access to his office, even early in the mornings and late at night. Now that he thinks about it, hadn’t Bdubs seemed hesitant to give the invitation to him?

A cold shock rolls over Scar like a wave, his heart pounding in his ears. His mind goes over every interaction with Bdubs he’s had lately, he hadn’t noticed that anything was off. Then again, Bdubs is a *very* good actor. No... “Don’t tell me... you turned Bdubs against me?!” He cries, the beginnings of anger and betrayal clawing at his throat.

He almost doesn’t want to believe it, not when he and Bdubs have been through so much together.

But then Ren is shaking his head, “Nah, Bdubs is stubbornly loyal to ya. But the same can’t be said about his boyfriend.” A smug smile forms across Ren’s face and Scar finds himself overcome with an urge to smack it off. Instead, he watches as his friend turned enemy begins to circle him like a predator does to its prey. It’s an obvious intimidation tactic, one that would have worked had he not been close to the door.

“Etho?” Scar says and he mutters a curse, shaking his head. “And poor Bdubs played right into his hands.” Though he’d be lying if he said he wasn’t relieved. He isn’t sure what he would have done if Bdubs was the one who turned on him. Etho’s betrayal is... manageable.

“It was easy to convince him, considering we’ve been getting information from him for years now. Bdubs unknowingly helped with that. This last request of ours just... made Etho’s loyalty a little more *official*. Ya get me?” Ren makes a small twirling motion with his hand.

Scar’s grip on the book in his hand tightens. He glares at Ren, feeling a hot blinding anger take hold of him. He’s angry at Ren, at Etho, *himself*. How did he not see any of the signs? How did he not notice that there was a mole right under his nose? For years Etho had been doing this? And he never picked up on it?

No, he stops the pity party before it can begin. He has to focus right now. As Ren has been talking, he’s been walking further from the door, and Scar closer to it. He needs to focus on getting out of here, he can worry about confronting everything else later.

“Well, it’s certainly upsetting to hear that Etho chose the wrong side, but we’ll move on.” Scar sighs in disappointment, pretends that he doesn’t seem as angry and as betrayed as he feels. He will not give Ren the satisfaction. Besides, he still needs answers. And he’s going to get them. “And this little decoy of yours? How does that play into all of this?”

“That, my friend, is your Achilles Heel.” Ren hums, nodding toward the book. “Martyn and I know the truth, Scar. We know what that book means and how important it is to you. Which is exactly why we set up that decoy in your hand. Can’t have ya stealing our leverage.” He says it with a little shrug. “I figured we’d dangle it in front of your face, show ya who *really* has the power here.” Ren speaks as if it makes perfect sense to him, but Scar stares at him with bewilderment.

“Aaaand how is this here book important to me exactly?” He asks, because clearly Ren knows more than he does. “I’ve never seen it before in my entire life.”

Ren seems to hesitate the slightest bit at his response, as if he wasn’t expecting it. He shakes his head, “Don’t play dumb, dude. It’s too late for that. We know that book is connected to the

Watchers, the group *you're* leading.”

Yet it still doesn't make any sense. Scar has never seen this book, and quite honestly he has no clue who these Watchers are. He's pretty sure he'd know if he was leading a third group.

“Ren, are you sure your head's feeling alright? Because I've got absolutely no clue what this book is.” Scar's face pinches together in his confusion, “The only group I'm leading is the townspeople. And my own little group if you will. But we hardly have any sort of name like *that*. Now that I think about it, I'm not sure we even have a name.” Scar taps his chin in thought.

“Stop pulling my leg man. Just admit it, you're cornered with nowhere else to run.” Ren demands, eyes narrowing with frustration.

Sighing, Scar shakes his head. He checks behind him, seeing that the door is directly behind his back. Good, he's in position. Now, let's see if he can milk some information, “I'm being serious here Ren. Maybe if you'd—”

“Scar!”

The doors behind him are kicked open, and Grian stands in the doorway. He's breathing heavily, hands shaking. His eyes look a little unfocused, and his emotions are more open than normal. Scar sees concern, fear, panic, but most noticeably, he spots a haunted look in Grian's eyes.

So much for milking information.

With each step that Grian takes down this staircase, he tries not to think about how it brings him farther away from Scar. It makes him worried, not having his eyes on the man he's supposed to be protecting. But he tries to remind himself that Scar is capable of handling himself should something happen. That scar on his hand is full proof of that. Hell, the night they met is all the proof that Grian needs.

But it doesn't stop him from feeling nervous.

Glancing behind him, he checks to make sure that he left the door open. It'd be bad if the door had been shut behind him, he may not be able to hear Scar if it was. When Grian's eyes land on it, he sees that the door is still wide open, giving him a good view of the hallway they had just been in. Good.

Turning his attention back to the staircase in front of him, he continues his descent. He wishes he had a flashlight or something, with how dark it is down here it's hard to see anything. In an effort to keep himself from falling over, his hand grazes along the wall. When he makes it down the steps, he lands on what he guesses is concrete floor. It sounds different from the wooden one upstairs.

He listens with rapt attention for any sounds, hearing nothing besides his own heartbeat in tandem with his footsteps. Deciding to take a look around, he tries to walk within the room, eyes beginning to adjust to the dark sight before him. He can faintly hear the sound of music above him, along with the occasional thumps on the ceiling.

He's probably directly below the hall now.

As he walks, he feels something whack his forehead. Immediately stiffening, his hand reaches up to grab whatever he felt. He feels some kind of chain grasped in his palm and on instinct Grian tugs on it.

Light flickers on in the room, allowing Grian to actually see the area around him. The light is dim, and there's only a single lightbulb to aid his eyes. He looks at the chain in his hand and recognizes it as a light switch, seeing as it's connected to the light bulb above his head. Well, at least he can see now.

Turning his attention to the room around him, he realizes that he's in a basement of some kind. Or maybe a storage cellar. There's containers and old barrels within the room, along with boxes full of different objects and old furniture.

But perhaps what catches his eyes is a book. It lays on top of one of the boxes, as if haphazardly placed there. Squinting at it, Grian takes a few steps toward it. The spine of the book is on the right, meaning that it's been placed upside down. Weird.

Grian doesn't think much of it as he picks the book up. He holds it in his hands, feeling the leather beneath his fingers. It's dyed purple, though it's worn down from time. The corners of the book are losing its color, a few bits of leather either missing or fraying.

Furrowing his brows, Grian turns the book over in his hands, curious about what it could be. And why is it down here in the cellar? Does it belong to someone here?

He finds himself regretting even going near the book, and he nearly drops it as he turns it over. Yet he keeps his grip on it, hands trembling. His breath hitches, red hues widening.

The first thing that Grian sees is the engraving on the cover of the book. The rectangular symbol on the front stares at him, as if mocking him. Each corner of the rectangle is missing, as if a chunk of it had been removed. He knows what this symbol is, who it belongs to. And he knows what this book is, even if he's only ever seen it once or twice.

A door slams above him, and it startles Grian so bad that the book falls from his grip. His head snaps up, heart fiercely pounding against his rib cage with adrenaline. It rushes through him, filling his veins and rushing in his ears. Black spots dot his vision and he realizes that *hey he's not breathing*.

Gaspings roughly, Grian tries to get a hold of himself. He can't afford to get distracted right now. He tries to take a few deep breaths in, willing himself to calm down. Yet his eyes zero in on the book by his feet, and a strange fear overtakes him. He finds himself moving, bending down to take the book back into his hands. When he dropped the book, it had fallen open to some random page.

Holding it, Grian's eyes move to scan the pages in front of him.

– Upon turning of age, One shall bestow wings onto His devotees. It is a glorious gift, one that should be given the utmost respect.

Our gracious One has shown us His Will, and the elders are to do as the following:

1. While the devotee is reciting His Word, you will take the ritual knife–

Grian stops reading. His hands are shaking so badly, and his back feels like it's on *fire*. It feels like

there's something digging into his skin, a blade cutting it open. It hurts, and it itches and Grian wants it to stop. He slams the book shut, wanting to do nothing more than throw the book as far from himself as possible. Yet he doesn't.

No, he holds onto the book instead, glaring down at it with as much anger as he can muster. He holds the book tightly in his grasp, knuckles turning white due to how tight his grip is.

"Grian?"

Spinning on his heel, Grian stares at the person before him. It's Martyn. He glares at the man, feeling all sorts of emotions well up in his chest. Anger, panic, fear. He needs to get himself under control, especially with the enemy right in front of him like this!

"Grian, what are you doing with that book?" Martyn asks, eyes wide with what seems to be regret? He takes a step forward and Grian takes a step back, clutching the book to his chest. "Give it back, you weren't supposed to see that."

"Absolutely not!" Grian hisses, moving to hide the book in the jacket of his suit. "Why do you even *have* that?! No one should, it should—" He cuts himself off as he stares at Martyn with fear, "You... you're working with them, aren't you? That's how you got the book..." He takes another step back.

Martyn's eyes widen at his claim, and he wildly shakes his head, "No! No, Grian I'm not! Ren and I are trying to take them down! I wouldn't betray you like that, I-I promise!" He claims, and Grian bites his lip. "You weren't meant to see that, honestly I didn't think you'd be coming along tonight! This was just supposed to be a trap for Scar."

Upon hearing that, Grian forces his growing panic down in favor of getting information. "Why? Why do you have this?! And why the hell are you trying to trap Scar?! What do you have on him?!" He shouts, demanding answers.

Martyn stares at him for a moment, frowning. "I... that book was picked up by one of Ren's guys off of someone working with the Watchers. Coincidentally, that book is all of the dirt we need on Scar." He explains.

Grian doesn't understand. Scar has no connection to them, at least as far as he's aware. He tries to shove down any anxiety at the thought. He tries to ignore that little voice screaming at him, *you never really escaped*. Scar isn't *like* them. He's never laid a hand on Grian, or locked him in a room because he was being disrespectful. Scar never *punished* Grian for not being perfect.

He needs clarification, he needs to understand. "What the fuck are you talking about?"

Martyn sighs, brushing through his bangs, "Grian, you don't have to pretend around me. We know that Scar is the leader of the Watchers. We're trying to help you." He explains, and Grian feels... oddly numb.

Scar? The leader of *them*? No, that doesn't make any sense. Grian would know if he was, and everything he knows about Scar contradicts everything about *them*. He takes one look at Martyn, if only to see if he's actually being serious. His brows furrow, observing Martyn's face. He finds no hint of deceit in his eyes, nor anything playful.

Unable to help himself, Grian laughs. "Oh that's hilarious!" He laughs, shaking his head. "You think *Scar* is their leader?! The man gets distracted at the drop of a hat, and you think he can kill people for disobeying him?!" He really shouldn't be laughing, not when he's near hysterics like

this. But laughing is the only thing stopping him from breaking down right now.

“Grian, I’m serious!” Martyn exclaims. “Listen he—”

“No. You listen to *me*.” Grian cuts him off sharply, stopping his laughter and glaring at Martyn, “He’s not the enemy here! He *saved* me!” He exclaims, as if that’ll absolve Scar of the false accusation. “You don’t think I wouldn’t recognize the voice of the man that tormented me for years?! Scar is innocent, he has no connection to them!”

Martyn simply frowns at his response, sighing and shaking his head. “They told me you’d say that.” He mutters, upset.

“They..?” Grian asks, brows furrowing together in confusion.

“The Listeners.” Martyn answers, taking a step toward Grian. “They told me that if I ever found you, you’d be disoriented, brainwashed. Grian you’re not hearing yourself. I don’t know what Scar did to you, but Ren and I are going to help you, I promise.” He takes another step, holding his hand out. “But if you aren’t going to listen, I’ll have to use force.”

Panic flares up within Grian, and he takes another step behind him. He’s cornered by the boxes and barrels and he curses. Think, *think!* There has to be some kind of way out of this, but what is it?!

He gets an idea.

He forces his body to relax, keeping the panic at bay. He looks at Martyn with a softer gaze than before, freezing. “...Martyn?” He asks, keeping his voice light and full of disbelief. “You... we’re friends. I. I remember you. From *before*.”

Martyn freezes right where he stands, light blue eyes going wide. He doesn’t take another step, gaze focusing on Grian in front of him. “You remember?” He asks, sounding surprised. Grian eagerly nods at him, and a hesitant smile blooms across his face. “You remember!” He exclaims, grinning, their previous conversation forgotten.

“I do! I remember you and Timmy and we – we used to go to school together! The three of us, we’d all walk home.” Grian says, causing Martyn’s eyes to fill with tears. Grian smiles at him, and before he knows it, Martyn is running up to him, wrapping him in a warm embrace.

“I’m so glad.” Martyn mutters, holding him tightly. Grian lets himself relax in his hold, finding the hug oddly warm.

“So am I.” Grian replies, bringing his arms up to wrap around Martyn in return. “But I’m also sorry about this.” He raises his hand, slamming it against the back of Martyn’s neck. He knows where the pressure point is, using it to knock the man unconscious.

“Wha...” Is all Martyn mumbles as his eyes fall shut and he goes limp in Grian’s hold.

Grian’s arms drop from his hold on the man, letting him fall from his grasp and onto the ground. He huffs a sigh, “Seems like Bdubs’ acting tips really paid off. Whaddya know.” He mumbles, looking at Martyn’s unconscious body. As his eyes land on a rope nearby, he gets an idea.

He won’t realize it until later, but Martyn had knocked the book out of his suit jacket when he fell. The book landed right by Martyn’s hand, leaving it within the ownership of the unconscious man.

Standing in the doorway, Grian spots Scar right in front of him. Their eyes meet and Grian knows Scar can see the panic written all over his face. He doesn't care, not right now. He looks down at Scar's hand and his heart is in his throat at the sight of that same damn book.

Later, Grian, worry about it later. "We're getting out of here." He says, looking at Scar. He ignores Ren who's standing behind him.

"Sounds wonderful to me." Scar hums, agreeing with him without any issue. Not that Scar really would, considering their goal is to make it out of here unscathed.

"Uhm, guys? I'm standing right here." Ren huffs, "And I hate to tell ya this, but neither of you are going anywhere. Not yet at least." He says, and Grian fixes his eyes on him.

"Yes, we are." Grian hisses, "Unless you'd like Martyn to die."

Ren immediately tenses, "What are you talking about?" He asks, keeping his gaze focused on Grian.

"I hid a knife on me when we got here. While I was downstairs, Martyn found me, and I knocked him out cold. That cellar is pretty handy, with all the junk it has I was able to find a rope. Who knows how long he has until that rope snaps thanks to the cut I made on it. And considering he's unconscious, he won't be able to catch the knife I tied to it if it falls." Grian says smoothly.

Scar whistles as he casually walks over to his side, shoving the book into the pocket of his jacket.

"You're bluffing." Ren says, calling him out.

Grian shrugs at him, "I could be, but I also might not be. You want to take that chance?" He asks, raising a brow. "His blood would be on your hands. If I'm not bluffing of course."

Ren stares between the two of them and the door, frozen. His gaze drops to the ground and he grits his teeth, frustrated. Grian watches as his fists clench and he growls. "Fine! Get out of here!"

Grinning, Grian grabs Scar's hand and drags him out. The two run as fast as their legs will carry them, taking a back door that they find rather than the front. After all, it *is* a charity event. And Scar's the mayor. It'd be weird and it'd draw unwanted attention.

When they do manage to get far away, the pair allow themselves a moment to stop and breathe. The cold February breeze bites at Grian's skin, and his hands are *still* shaking. But at least they made it out of there, and neither of them are injured. Grian works on catching his breath while Scar surveys the area. They're a few blocks away from the manor now, and the streets are quiet.

He focuses his gaze on the man in front of him, "Grian are you— *oof!*" Grian crashes into his chest, arms wrapped tightly around him. He's pressing his face into the vest of Scar's suit, burying it there. Scar blinks in surprise, looking down at the other. His surprise melts into soft concern and he moves to embrace Grian, holding him close. He can feel the tension in his back, the way he trembles slightly. "Are you alright?" He murmurs softly.

"The book." Grian mutters, "Tell me you don't recognize that book." He says, and there's something about the way that his voice edges on begging that makes Scar frown.

He holds him closer, "I swear songbird, I have no idea what that book is. I didn't even see the real thing apparently, considering this one's a fake." He says. Almost as soon as he says it, he feels Grian relax in his hold, and hears him exhale softly. "I promise you." He then pauses, "Did you

really trap Martyn though?”

Grian laughs, the sound sweet and gravely, “No, I did tie him up though. But I kept the knife. Ren was right, I was totally bluffing.”

“Clever bird.” Scar whistles with pride.

They stand like that for a few moments, clinging to one another.

Later, they will return home and Scar will tell Grian what Ren told him. They will create a plan for dealing with Etho, and figure out how to approach Bdubs. The following day, Scar will turn Etho away, removing him from his ranks with the following words, “Now I suggest you get out of here and think real hard about what banner is going to take in a backstabber. I’ll of course put in a good word. Not that Ren needs it after the loyalty you’ve shown.”

Later, they will break the news to Bdubs, and try to find out his side of the story. Scar will show him compassion, Grian will not. “He loves me.” Bdubs will claim.

“If he loved you, then why did he use you? Why did he lie to you?” Grian will ask.

Bdubs won’t have an answer.

But that will be for tomorrow. For now, Scar will hold Grian and they will return home.

Chapter End Notes

AND WE REACH THE END >:D

I had such a fun time writing this chapter ohmygod. there’s been so much excitement for it between stellar and I and <333 it’s finally here !!!!! I’d love to hear your thoughts on this one <33

also for anyone curious! the note signed 13 is a reference to Last Life, when bdubs killed grian after etho started playing the 13 music disc <3

and if you’d like more info on etho and bdubs and what happens next, check out my tumblr !! I’ll be posting some info there that I think you’ll enjoy ;3 @mochiwrites

update — the post can be found [here!!](#)

End Notes

catch me on tumblr @mochiwrites

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