The Necessary Recovery of Nigel Ibanescu

by AvixiLynn91

Summary

After he's shot, Nigel completely stops talking. Under the care of Darko, he slowly begins to die a little each day. Concerned, Darko hires a caretaker, who ends up stealing from them. In need of assistance badly, Darko hires (at the last minute) a very lost and confused Adam Raki, who happens to be in the right place at the right time as Nigel's new caretaker. Romance, pain, suffering, trauma, and hope is restored.

Notes

Hello all!

This is my very first shot at a Space dogs fanfic. I have been a LONG (and I mean LOOONG) time shipper of Nigel and Adam. I felt the need to contribute to this fandom after authoring a few stories of Hannibal and Will.

Also, Romanian is NOT my first or even second language, so please excuse any spelling or grammatical errors, I literally had NO ONE but Google Translate to help me -_-.

Enjoy!
6 months. 6 long, drawn out, treacherous, excruciating fucking months was how long it took for Nigel to barely be able to stand on his own two feet again without falling face-first on the cold hard ground.

He didn’t know how, or even why, more importantly, but he knew he was alive, and that was the biggest kick in the ass since he found out his darling, lovely Gabi was fucking the cunt of a whiny man-child-boy-toy American named Charlie Countryman. He didn’t take too kindly to it then, and he didn’t take too kindly to it now, even though he knew in his heart he didn’t love Gabi anymore.

Nigel’s eyes roamed over his empty, disheveled body staring blankly back at him in front of the mirror, and landed on that nasty reminder that his past indeed would remain to fuck with him for all eternity; the scar the bullet wound had left behind after it traveled across his temple.

Most of the surgeons didn’t think he’d survive the operation, let alone the recovery period itself, but he had, and fuck him for surviving. If there was a hell, Nigel was condemned to it already and it hadn’t even begun.

The first 2 months involved him eating and drinking out of tubes that were shoved practically up his ass and in through his nose, and then passing the contents of the food through the nasty-ass colostomy bag he had befriended until he was apparently allowed (as the doctors and nurses instructed) to piss and shit on his own.

He couldn’t even have the rights to piss and shit as he wanted, and at the time, he couldn’t piece together if that was more amusing to him, or more depressing than his beautiful Gabi flying out of his hands and into the sack-of-shit-arms of the American.
Nigel’s brooding and inner turmoil was interrupted by the sound of the hospital room door clicking open, and he heard his long-time friend Darko walking in, but he didn’t make any effort to meet eye-contact, or ever acknowledge the other man’s presence within the room. All he could focus on was how the lights of the room seemed to beam a bit too brightly and not only burn his now-less-than-tanned skin due to months of remaining in doors, but also somehow managing to give him the worst fucking headache he’d had in months, and that was without having to be shot at by some stupid lousy rookie cop who should have had his gun lodged so far down his throat he wouldn’t be able to bring up anything but bullets for the rest of his natural born life.

The nurses said he’d been lucky indeed because of the cop’s poor aim, but Nigel felt anything BUT lucky. He knew, one way or another, this was the life he’d been dealt, and the life he’d earned after all the lives he’d taken away in a single breath, without fear or hesitation, or even pity. He’d had no remorse then, and he still didn’t even now as he stood dressed in his favourite Daschund blue shirt and simple white dress pants that barely covered his ankles (when the fuck had that happened?).

His eyes were red, (but then again, when weren’t they?) from the lack of sleep due to the nurses coming in to check on him every fucking hour on his last day in the hospital. They somehow managed to be more excited than he was that he was soon going to go home.

Darko had arranged to come pick him up, but Nigel felt that was more out of pity than actually wanting to help out.

“Prietenul meu, again with that same fucking shirt? Aren’t you getting tired of those same old dogs? That shirt must stink more than that bitch of a child Gabi ran off with.” Darko’s words barely grazed by his ears before Nigel slowly turned around.

On instinct, Darko flinched, waiting for the harsh, loud, vitriolic words and threats of a lashing that usually would befall him whenever he insulted Nigel’s darling dear wife in the past, but to his amazement, they didn’t come this time. Nigel simply gazed at him, almost with dead-eyes, and then looked down at the clean hospital room floor.

Deep down, Darko wondered what had happened to the old Nigel everyone had grown to despise and fear, but he didn’t dare ask the question. The nurses had told him Nigel was likely suffering from amnesia, and the psychiatrist told him Nigel likely had PTSD-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Darko thought Nigel would still be Nigel after everything they’d been through, and he almost had the nerve to tell the quack of a doctor to go shove a spear up his own ass, when he took a second look at Nigel.

Nigel didn’t stand as tall as he normally did; instead he was somewhat stooped over, as if he felt some pain standing up straight. He had dark bags under his red eyes, and he had lost some weight since the last time Darko had come to visit him. His normally-prominent cheekbones were more than jutting out now, making his handsome face seem more angular and menacing than previously.

“You look like shi-” Darko’s words fell away as Nigel turned and reached for his bag of belongings under his bed and simply held them in front of him tightly in his hands, as if the bag was going to grow legs and run away from him.

Darko felt a stab of guilt coursing through his body then and there. Everyone Nigel had grown to love and care for had either abandoned him, or died. It made sense for him to cling onto the very last thing he could name as his own. Maybe this PTSD shit was actually something serious after all.

Darko shook his head, banishing that thought away. PTSD or not, Nigel was still his best friend, and they shared a lot of memories and experiences together. Nigel had been his best man at his wedding, and he had been the best man at Nigel’s. They had shared a life together, a business, and were blood-brothers. If anyone was going to help Nigel when he needed someone, it would be Darko, and he
could do it without making Nigel feel more like shit than he probably already did.

“I’ll take that, Nigel.” Darko stepped forward with his hands outstretched for the bag, but Nigel simply held it tighter and walked forward towards the door.

Darko sighed, knowing he had already lost the battle, and he could do nothing but throw his hands in the air and follow his friend out the door.

2 Hours Later

The drive back to Darko’s apartment was more of a bitch than he had anticipated; Nigel sitting beside him and staring out the passenger’s window with a dead expression painted onto his face. He hadn’t made any effort to speak to Darko since they checked out of the hospital. What was worse, was that every time the car’s tires hit a pothole or a bump, Nigel’s body and head just shifted with the movement of the vehicle almost like a dead-weight. His head just bounced on his neck like a bobble-head toy, and he continued to stare out the window silently.

Darko turned off the car as soon as he entered the apartment complex’s parking lot and watched as Nigel sat and continued staring out the window into the barely lit parking lot.

“Neică, we’re here. Now I don’t want you to get all pissy at me and pitch a fit, but those fucking nurses told me that for a few months, you’re going to need a wet nurse.”

If Nigel had been in his good spirits, he would have thrown back his head, clenched his eyes tightly shut together, and laughed his fucking ass off at Darko’s confusion of the English language. He knew that the other man had meant Registered Nurse instead of Wet Nurse, but he found that he didn’t care if Darko was confused, lost, hopeless or as tired as he was; he just couldn’t feel a thing except hollowness.

Darko- as if reading Nigel’s thoughts-hit the dashboard of the car in frustration. “Fuck, I meant a Registered Nurse, sorry neică…fuck this day, huh?”

Nigel could barely even gather up the strength to turn his neck, but a small part of him did feel sorry for Darko’s piss-poor attempts at making light conversation. He just turned his eyes barely half an inch to signal to Darko that he had heard him; he just wasn’t listening.

Darko nodded. “You will have nothing but the best, I will see to it personally. Someone who knows their shit and knows what the fuck to do, because I fucking don’t.” He gathered his key from the ignition and unlocked the door, taking one long look at Nigel as he sat still as a block of wood with his bag of belongings clung ever-so-tightly to his chest.

Darko wondered if Nigel was even breathing sometimes, for the other man’s chest hardly rose and fell as he took in breath.
A Thief

Chapter Summary

Don't worry, Adam appears in the next chapter, and Nigel won't be "mute" for much longer! He'll be up and cursing about as his usual self by chapter 5, I promise.

Chapter Notes

Darko's words translated: "I'll be back, Nigel, shoot the pig if he's not helpful."

Chapter 2

Drew Nighy was the name of the nurse Darko had called up and hired to care for Nigel’s well-being. Drew was a man in his mid-to-late thirties, was a bit thick in the gut, a lot shorter than Nigel imagined he’d be, and more importantly, was a bigger douchebag than both he and Darko had anticipated.

Nearly balding dark brown hair was the first thing that made Nigel 100% sure he was going to find this “nurse” very fucking annoying, as it was parted to the side and barely managed to hide the bald-spot the man was sporting. It seemed as if Drew was more concerned about keeping up appearances than he was with caring for Nigel’s health and comfort.

The first day the man arrived, he had immediately laid out the “ground rules”, which was really fucking hilarious considering how Darko and Nigel had hired the man; not the other way around.

Nigel sat on a black leather couch in the living room of Darko’s apartment, a light blanket covering his thin frame as he didn’t move or look at Drew and Darko standing a few feet away in the hallway discussing the job.

“First things first, I’m not changing any diapers,” the asshole of a man began, “I’m not going to wash him, or help him shower; that’s not what I was trained in.”

Darko rolled his eyes, but kept listening.

“I can prepare meals, make sure he sleeps when he’s supposed to, make sure he takes his medication whenever he’s supposed to, and make emergency calls if there’s a need to make one. I’m not going to sing him a lullaby or read him a bed-time story; I’m not a nanny. I’m not going to clean every inch of the apartment; I’m not a professional cleaning service.”

Darko crossed his arms over his chest and glared at Drew. “Done yet?” He hissed in a heated tone of voice.
Drew snorted, “Consider yourselves lucky, I was about to book a flight to Santa Barbara. I did this out of the kindness of my heart since you mentioned the guy was shot.”

“Lucky my ass.” Darko whispered, and he had meant it for himself only to be heard, but it reached Drew’s ears anyway.

“Excuse me?”

“Nothing. We’re very happy to have you, can you start today?” Darko asked, checking his watch and almost uttering an expletive when he noticed what time it was.

Although Nigel showed no interest in caring for and continuing the business, Darko made a silent oath to both himself and to Nigel that he would take over and look after things while Nigel rested and recovered. That included going out to meetings and keeping an up-close-and-personal track of the trades and the shipments. Regulated cash flow was something Nigel wouldn’t be able to keep a track record of, according to the doctors, due to his amnesia, but Darko knew that was bullshit. He knew the old Nigel was still in there, somewhere, and until he resurfaced, he would make sure Nigel wouldn’t have a heart attack worrying over a deal gone wrong or money lost. It was the least he could do for his friend anyway, and the only thing he was good at, so he did it.

“Can we make this quick? I’ve somewhere I need to be and something I need to do.” He waved his hands at Drew impatiently, but the short fat man didn’t budge a muscle or blink an eye.

“I may stay overtime if you require, but that costs extra by the hour, go it?”

“Yeah yeah fine, whatever you want, man.” Darko grabbed his shiny black suitcase and one small matching black folder in his arms and sped his way to the door, but then stopped mid-way and turned back to poke his head into the living room to look at Nigel.

“Ma voi intoarce, Nigel, trage de porc dacă nu este de ajutor.” Nigel didn’t even snicker as he normally would whenever Darko had said something similar in the past. Darko didn’t have time to worry, otherwise he would, and he quickly left the apartment and prayed Drew wouldn’t fuck it all up on day one.

1 Hour Later

Nigel had remained in the same spot on the couch all afternoon while Drew headed on upstairs to fix his bed for his afternoon nap. At least….that was the excuse he had come up with.

Drew wasn’t stupid. He had seen Darko’s fancy 2017 brand new car. He had looked at the furniture in the apartment all over, and he knew the pair were well-off with plenty of money. He also knew that somewhere in the apartment was some cash lying around.

Drew rummaged through the drawers and closets in both Darko’s bedroom and then Nigel’s, and began growing frustrated when his chubby hands found next-to-nothing in the drawers and cabinets.

He heard a slight noise after nearly 15 minutes of searching, and stopped to peer out into the hallway. He looked down past the landing of the staircase in the hallway and found Nigel still on the couch, his head lolled to the left and eyes closed, seemingly asleep.

Drew huffed back to Darko’s room, and closed the door with a soft “click”. He resumed his search and pulled open the white Victorian decorated closet doors and found over 30 pairs of expensive, fashionable suits in there.

“Fancy fucker.” He said in a low gruff and picked the first suit and searched the pockets through and
He found nothing in the first 7 or so suits, just some thread here and there from picking at the pockets all too quickly, and some high tailored quality handkerchiefs here and there.

Almost ready to give up, Drew stepped back and looked up at the second and third shelf of the closet. He found nothing, still, but his eyes fell on a crack in the wall behind the second shelf. He gathered a few boxes, and standing on them so he could reach, he leaned up as far as his arms could reach, and he growled in annoyance and shoved Darko’s expensive Italian shoes out of the way on the shelf, not giving a damn as they clattered onto the carpeted floor below with a “thud!”.

He eyed the crack in the wall and saw that it was cut into a perfect square shape, with a hole in the center that could and did fit his thumb through. He pulled at the hole to the right, and with grace and ease, the wall slid to away and open.

“You clever bastard.” Drew chuckled, once he had opened the door in the wall and looked ahead greedily at three large bags of beautiful white cocaine.

He grabbed at one like a kid grabbing presents on Christmas morning, his eyes growing wide with lust. He brought the bag to his nose and took a deep, long sniff and breathed out against the bag, sighing in content.

Drew was about to get down and enjoy his prize, when he remembered to close the door to the secret in the wall. He grabbed at the sliding hand-made-door, and had nearly slid the door back in place, when he noticed something shiny beneath the second and third bag.

He leaned forward, his left hand still grasping desperately and tightly to the bag, and squinted until he could make out what it was he was looking at.

Resting beneath the bags was a small handgun, a Bersa Thunder .380, with its silver shiny handle and clip gleaming back at Drew.

Drew had expected the drugs and maybe some, but he hadn’t been expecting a handgun in the home. “Holy shit….” he breathed out in a rasp, but he had barely uttered the last syllable when a large, thick, strong hand wrapped around his throat and yanked him back with such a wild force that he flew backwards and the back of his head slammed up against the bedroom door.

Drew felt the wind literally being knocked out of him, and he reached back to cradle and nurse his throbbing skull, but he stopped midway when he heard a “click” and felt the cold hard barrel of a gun being pressed up against his neck roughly.

He opened his eyes and was face-to-face with one very pissed off and red-in-the-face Darko.

“Drop it, you fat ape.” Darko growled and looked down quickly at the bag of cocaine still in Drew’s hand.

Drew immediately dropped the bag with a “plop.” “Listen, I swear I wasn’t going to-”

“You shut the fuck up, you liar,” Darko interrupted, kicking the bag away with his left leg, “you were going to steal from us, and that’s all I give a shit about at the end of the day.” He pressed the gun harder against Drew’s neck, and the other man gasped out a choked whine.

“N-no! I was j-just-”

“I said shut the fuck up!” Darko leaned closer in Drew’s face, eyes wild with anger and a silent
promise of a swift death.

“Listen, I s-swear I won’t tell anyone, you will n-never know I was even here! Please just l-let me g-go!” Drew stammered, sweating bullets down his forehead and onto his wide nose.

“I don’t think so. You see, Nigel and I always hear the same words, the same pleas, the same empty promises. In the end, you have to understand we’re looking out for ourselves and the business.” Darko spoke in a very calm and rational tone, as if he was discussing the change in weather with an old friend. He stepped back and turned off safety of the gun, and put on the silencer with grace and practiced ease.

“No! W-w-wait! Please!” Drew held his hands up in front of his face, his eyes watering down tears as he slid down the door, begging and praying and silently hoping Darko would just let him leave with his life.

Darko licked his lips, his teeth poking out from his upper lip a bit in a feral grin, “I’m sorry, this is the way a business is run; cold, and quietly.” With those last words spoken, Darko emptied a single bullet through Drew’s hands covering his face, and right in the center of his forehead into his head.

Drew’s now life-less plump body dropped forward and he landed right on top of Darko’s expensive brown Italian shipped shoes, the blood dripping all over the front of his toes.

“...Why the fuck do they always fall at my fucking feet?” Dark sighed and leaned down to grab the bag of cocaine and cursed under his breath.

He had barely put the cocaine back, when the door squeaked open. In the middle of the doorframe stood a very grumpy-looking Nigel.

His tired, sunken eyes glared volumes at Darko as he peered between him and Drew’s corpse on the floor.

“He was trying to steal from us, Nigel. Now I gotta figure out how to hide this pig’s fat fucking body somewhere the cops can’t find it.” He closed the closet door and nearly kicked the door when he saw some blood had gotten on his suit and tie.

“Fucking hell, the least you could do is help me put the fatass in the car, Nigel!” He practically yelled as he threw his hands up in exasperation.

Nigel said nothing, but bent down, his sandy dirty blonde hair dripping in his eyes, and grabbed Drew’s arms and with surprising ease, lifted half his body up and dragged it into the hallway. Darko followed suit and grabbed Drew’s legs and together, they heaved him down the stairs. The body’s head kept thudding and thumping every time they lowered it down a step, making Darko’s blood begin to boil with how the day had turned out.

Darko paused for a quick breath, and glared at Nigel. “You know what’s the biggest part of what's going to fucking piss me the fuck off for the next few days now, Nigel?” he wasn’t expecting an answer, “now I have to look for a new wet nurse for you! Fucking fantastic!”

Nigel almost gave half a smile. Almost.
A Change for Adam

Chapter Notes

Here's our lovely Adam! I took bits and pieces from the movie Adam (2009) as best I could, but I didn't want to imitate the film word-for-word.

Kudos for Harlan and Beth being supportive of Adam!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 3

“It was a very sad day when Dad died, and it got even more sad after because I was missing him. Now I am beyond sad because Beth told me we are not right for each other and we can’t be together. The good news is she said we can stay friends, so I have at least her friendship still. Maybe I can ask her out again later, but now I am shy and scared because I don’t know how she is feeling and what she is thinking. I wish Dad were still here, he’d know what to do because he was always better at social interaction.” Adam spoke in a very monotone, robot-styled voice as he tore off piece-by-piece bits of bread he had left over, and tossed them gently into the pond to feed the ducks and their hatchlings. He was seated in front of the little pond on a cold, small hard wooden bench in the park down the street from where he lived (and where his Dad used to live with him) in his apartment.

Adam used to come to visit and feed the ducks all the time with his Dad, but he now only visited them once a week as he was still not comfortable going out on his own too much. Luckily, the weather was getting a bit warmer, so he could probably venture out more now.

The wind slightly blew back his medium-length-curly dark brown hair, and he closed his deep blue eyes as he felt the bread crumbling and tearing almost into precisely sized and shaped pieces. Adam looked down at the bread and beamed, proud of himself for making the bread bits so easy and small and neatly precise for the ducks to feast on.

He was dressed in a dark grey vest, a bit chilly as the wind still blew about, and he had on his favourite thick cream coloured pants his father had bought him for his job interviews. They had helped him land work, and he was very happy with how hard he had been working on his own. His Dad would have been so proud of him. After all the hours and times they had put in together to work on Adam’s interviewing and presentation skills, their hard work had indeed paid off when Adam had been offered a position of employment in a toy company. He didn’t get paid much, but it was enough to keep buying his favourite meals and to be able to purchase tickets for shows and events about Space whenever they were available in museums, theaters, and carnivals.

Adam was so lost in his thoughts and the increasing whistling and howling of the wind, that he
almost didn’t hear his best friend, Harlan Keyes, come and sit down beside him on the bench.

Adam jolted, then smiled, not meeting Harlan’s eyes as he laughed softly.

“Sorry Adam. I was callin’ you from the other side of the street when I saw you weren’t home, but
looks like you couldn’t hear me.” Harlan wore soft grey gloves, and he rested his hands on his
kneecaps, looking ahead at the ducks swimming freely across the pond, picking up the bits of soaked
bread wherever Adam had tossed them.

“The ducks are very hungry today, Harlan. I was hoping to see some raccoons too, but I guess
they’re still sleeping because they are nocturnal creatures, which means they really do only come out
at night, but I was hoping to at least catch one and maybe talk to him and feed him and bit because I
really love how raccoons aren’t like the other animals—”

Harlan coughed a little, but smiled warmly at Adam.

“…Sorry Harlan…I really didn’t mean to talk so much, I am sorry for annoying you…”Adam
lowered his head a little, feeling a heated blush drawing on his face and he shook his head, eyes
clinched together so tightly, the skin around his eyes formed little wrinkles.

Harlan turned to face Adam directly, but did not touch him. “Adam, Adam, shh, it’s ok. I am not
angry at you, Adam. I’m very happy to be here with you right now.” He spoke in a reassuringly
calm tone of voice so much that Adam’s eyes opened immediately and he flashed a small innocent
smile at the green grass below at his feet.

“Adam, your boss called me and left me a message.” Harlan spoke still as gently as ever, smiling a
small half-smile at Adam.

Adam, however, stopped smiling right away. He began breathing a bit rapidly. “Did he say what it
was about? Because I still really feel horribly about making that mistake about $500 for 1,000 dolls!
Or was it $5,000 for 100 dolls? I’m sorry I can’t remember, Harlan! I know you’re not too happy
with me right now either probably, but I can’t tell because I don’t know what other people are
thinking and feeling and I can’t read anything from their expressions or their words and it is so
difficult for me to-!”

Harlan gently put one hand on Adam’s shoulder tentatively, ready for a reaction at any time. Adam
stopped talking, and he breathed like someone who had run a marathon, his chest heaving in and out,
his eyes clenched tightly shut again as he gripped the edge of the bench so forcefully and tightly that
his knuckles and fingers were turning white.

“Adam, please relax. Open your eyes slowly. Yes, that’s it.” Harlan waited for Adam to take all the
time he needed, and once the younger man’s breathing was audibly calmer and slower did he resume
his talking.

“Adam, you are NOT in any trouble,” Harlan made sure to emphasize and stress the word “not”,
“you’re just being relocated because your boss found something that would better suit your talents
and what you enjoy doing.”

Adam didn’t move for a long time. It was as if he had froze right to the spot, but he turned his head
ever so slightly, still not looking directly at Harlan. “So I am not fired, but I have to leave to do my
work at home?” He asked in a small shy voice.

Harlan smiled as he saw a few strands of Adam’s hair blow gently down and cover half his forehead.
Adam pushed the hair back neatly into place.
“You’re not fired, Adam, but you are right about leaving to do your work somewhere else…”

Adam was quick on the hint. “But not at my home?”

“Not at your home Adam, no.” Harlan concluded.

Adam sniffled, but he quickly remembered what his father had taught him about confidence and inner strength. “I have to go to…Canada?”

Harlan laughed out loud at this, causing Adam to laugh too, even though he was extremely tense and nervous. He just didn’t want to worry his friend and make him feel bad.

“No Adam, but I wish it would be Canada. Heard there’s a lot of interestin’ things and interestin’ folks down there. You’re being relocated to England, Adam.”

Adam again didn’t move. After minutes, he grabbed another piece of bread from his plastic bag, and instead of tearing it and tossing it for the ducks, he tore at it with his fingernails anxiously. This was not going to be good, and he was trying his best to understand the situation, but he was feeling too much all at once and it was all so confusing!

Still, he remained calm as ever, and tore the bread and let it shred and crumble onto his lap.
“England; temperate maritime climate: it is mild with temperatures not much lower than 0 °C in winter and not much higher than 32 °C in summer. The weather is damp relatively frequently and is changeable. The coldest months are January and February, the latter particularly on the English coast, while July is normally the warmest month. Months with mild to warm weather are May, June, September and October. Rainfall is spread fairly evenly throughout the year. Population: Greater London: 9,787,426, Manchester, Bolton, Sockport: 2,553,379,” Adam began hyperventilating as he listed off everything he could remember reading about England in a textbook he had once found in the Library his Dad had dropped him off at once when he was working a longer, later shift.

“Adam! Slow down!” Harlan’s eyes were wider than Adam had ever seen them, which made him panic even more.

“Harlan, you have to tell me, are you upset? Are you scared? Because I don’t know anything anymore! Liverpool population: umm….uh… 864,122! S-s-south Hampshire population: umm…. 855,569! Enconom-my….!”

“Adam, do you need me to take you home?” Harlan asked, trying to remain calm for Adam’s sake.

Adam began swaying on the bench, but he managed to nod a few times, his dark brown hair bouncing back and forth across his forehead and skull frantically.

“Alright, Adam. I’m going to gently take your hands and help you off the bench now.”

**Later that Night**

Adam refused to eat that evening, even when Harlan offered to make him his Mac and Cheese as he
liked it. What worried Harlan furthermore was that Adam even refused and showed no interest in watching *Inside The Actor’s Studio*, which was his favourite show. Harlan had turned on his laptop and got everything ready for him, but Adam just lowered his head and barely mumbled: “Not today, Harlan.”

Harlan was shocked, as Adam usually stuck to his very organized and strict schedule, and deviating from that schedule usually ended up in Adam having a small panic or anxiety attack of sorts. However, Adam just sat at the small circular table in the kitchen, looking at his fork, which was long forgotten and sat buried in the middle of his now cold and mushy Mac and Cheese.

A silent Adam definitely meant a worried or depressed Adam. Harlan then pulled his chair a bit closer to Adam’s, but made no attempt at touching him or forcing him to look at him. He spoke very calmly and tried to relay the exact message Adam’s boss had left back to Adam.

“Adam, listen son. I know you are scared and confused and want answers. I do too, but your boss said in his message that you are being relocated to England as a marketing and advertising project because the toy company is planning to make these new space model toys for the early introduction of astronomy education for young children—”

“I’m going! Harlan! I think this is wonderful! I know I have never lived outside of my home and I know England is pretty big and although the weather can be a bit unpredictable and sometimes there’s a lot of heavy precipitation, I am going! I know everything about space there is to know!”

Harlan smiled a big smile once he saw the life literally bounce back into Adam’s eyes; their bright blue hue returning and shining with excitement and glee at the sound of a job opportunity involving doing something that he knew he was good at and confident in.

“That’s the Adam I know! You’ll have to give some small presentations about the toy, but it won’t involve speaking in front of a very large group, Adam, and they will train you for many hours and many days so you are ready.”

Adam blanched a bit, but nodded, not ready to let this dream involving space and toys go just yet. He had practiced public speaking a bit with Harlan and his Dad, but he still felt he needed more time and more practice to get everything right as he wanted and as he knew would make everyone proud.

“Adam, you do need to confirm this with your boss, though. He left you his number and asked that you call him back to confirm if you want to go before we can see to getting your tickets and flight booked through the company.” Harlan continued, looking at Adam intently to make sure he was still with him.

Adam nodded, still thinking about what kind of a project and what kind of ideas he could bring.

“Adam? Can you make that call?” Harlan asked gently.

“Yes.” Adam just smiled and nodded.

The room was silent for many long minutes.

Harlan spoke again, “Adam, please make that call now.”

“Oh! Yes, of course Harlan! I’ll grab my cellphone!” Adam hurried to his bedroom to grab his backpack where he always kept his cellphone so it would never get lost.

After a few minutes ticking by, he returned, phone already at his ear, and number punched in.
“Hello? Mr. Klieber? Yes, I’m listening…”

**Morning**

Adam and Harlan drove over to Mr. Klieber’s office and picked up Adam’s tickets and signed a few forms detailing the project and outlining Adam’s specific job duties. By mid afternoon, after they had their lunch, they were looking at booking the soonest flight, for Adam had to be in England before Friday, and it was already nearing the end of Monday.

The soonest flight they could book was Tuesday at 9 o’clock PM.

Adam felt rather uncomfortable and rushed, but he had both Harlan and Beth drive over and help him pack all day and half of the evening.

“Adam I am giving you some extra cash you can carry in your pocket, but remember, do NOT spend it all, it is emergency money!” Beth opened her purse and pulled out roughly $350 in cash, and counted them one by one while Adam watched how the bills shined and bent almost symmetrically as she laid them out before him on the table slowly.

“See? This is exactly $350, but it is for an emergency, Adam. You know? To buy food and drinks, but only if you are really in an emergency!” She turned and gathered the money in a small wallet she had purchased for Adam earlier than morning. The wallet had little stars and planets on an orbit decorated in the front.

Adam looked at the wallet and smiled, then looked back up and over Beth’s right shoulder, admiring the way her dark hair flowed over her neck and draped itself almost majestically like a fountain over her luscious body.

Adam really had wanted to be with Beth and be her boyfriend to have sex with her and be in love with her forever, but she didn’t seem to see them working out in the long-run. He had cherished the few kisses and tender touches they had exchanged, but he wasn’t going to tell her he still found her sexually appealing and that she aroused him. He had already scared her enough when he asked her if she was aroused sexually at the park, and he knew never to do it again because she said it upset her.

“Thank you, Beth, I promise I won’t use this unless it is an emergency.” Adam held the wallet in his hands, fumbling with it for a brief second before he felt the warmth of Beth’s hands around his neck, and gently pulling his body close to hers for a small friendly hug. True to his word and her word, Adam was glad she was still friendly and absolutely supportive and understanding.

“I’m going to miss you, Adam.” She said, her eyes getting slightly watery as they tried to get into contact directly with his, but Adam looked somewhere behind her at the wall.

“I’ll call you as soon as I am in the airport, then on the plane, then off the plane, and when I have found my room, Beth, don’t worry.” Adam said very stoically but friendly.

Beth nodded and gently laid a hand on his shoulder before running her hand down to cover Adam’s.

“I know, you’re going to be just fine, Adam, I promise.”

Adam offered her a warm genuine smile, still looking at the white wall behind her and wondering if the walls of his room in England would be white too, and if he could maybe decorate his room with his space decorations and planet and star stickers.

Harlan walked up to the pair and held 2 large suitcases filled with clothes for Adam and many other personal items. “Adam, the taxi is going to be here soon, we have to get all your stuff downstairs now.”
Beth gave Adam one last friendly hug, and Adam closed his eyes as he smelled her lavender perfume. “Goodbye, Adam.” She spoke sweetly and tenderly.

Adam grabbed the last few suitcases, and took a small last look at Beth, wishing more than anything else in the world he could be able for once to see and understand how she was feeling at that exact moment.

Beth’s chin quivered slightly, but she gave a warm smile to Adam, her little white teeth shining up at him in the soft glow of the setting sun.

“Goodbye, Beth.”

And off they were.

Chapter End Notes

    Hannibal and Will make a cameo next chapter!
Flight to Bucharest

Chapter Notes

I uploaded another chapter today because I won't be able to upload anything else for at least a week, so I decided to work a bit harder today and give everyone enough to read until I get back from a trip!

Enjoy, and I hope the cameo from Will and Hannibal was in character :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 4

“Adam, this is where I have to go, please son, try to understand.” Adam was—with one hand—holding tightly to the side of the bench in the seating area of the airport—and with his other hand—holding tightly to Harlan’s hand, eyes closed tightly as he tried to drown out the loud hustling bustling sounds of hundreds and thousands of people walking back and forth, talking and laughing and children playing and screaming.

“Adam, people are staring.” Harlan didn’t raise his voice or speed up his talking, but remained as tranquil as ever. This seemed to help Adam, and he opened his eyes slightly.

“Harlan, I can’t do this…this is a mistake!” Adam breathed bit-by-bit in a frenzy.

“Adam, we talked about this, you said you were going to do this for your father. Please, Adam, do this for yourself and him.” Harlan rested a warm, reassuring hand over Adam’s, which like a hook, tightly clung to his other arm.

Adam shook his head, “Yes, but I really don’t feel well, Harlan!”

Harlan sighed and looked over to their left. He eyed the washrooms and the clock hanging on the wall over the doors.

“Adam, it’s nearly 8 o’clock. Your flight takes off at 9 o’clock, remember?” He said in a supportive but firm tone of voice this time, wanting Adam to slowly understand.

Adam stilled for a moment. “Yes, I know, Harlan, thank you.”

“Did you want to take some time to yourself? Go to the bathroom? Freshen up a bit?” Harlan nodded and gestured over to the men’s room quickly.

Adam looked over and let out a puff of air, most likely frustrated or anxious, Harlan couldn’t tell really which it was.

After some moments of thinking to himself, Adam slowly got up, but still held tightly to Harlan’s hand.

“Adam, I meant for you to go alone.” Harlan wanted Adam to start getting used to a few weeks without him, and now was a time as good as any to begin. As much as he had grown to care for Adam almost like his own son, he sometimes wondered if he had done more damage to the young
man by coddling him and not allowing him to do everything on his own without checking on him constantly.

“Oh, okay Harlan…I will be in the bathroom…just right there…” Adam pointed with his shapely chin jutted out, and eventually let go of Harlan’s hand and shuffled his feet towards the bathroom, his space wallet still tightly clasp to his chest as he had held since Beth gave it to him.

It took almost forever for him to get inside, as a small line had formed already inside. Adam had 2 other people waiting ahead of him in line, but it was okay because he wasn’t in a rush and didn’t really need to use the bathroom anyway; he just wanted some air and Harlan said it would be good for him.

Adam kept to himself, but looked briefly at the man in front of him and almost gasped when he saw his reflection in the mirror to their left. The man was the exact same height as Adam, same build, but had more thick and curly dark brown hair the same shade as Adam’s, a thick dark brown beard, and he had on thick black rimmed glasses. He was wearing a dark grey suit with a red tie in the front tied as neatly as Adam had ever seen, and he almost seemed as if he had stepped out of a modeling photo shoot, with shiny black dress shoes on his feet.

Adam’s gasp made the man turn around abruptly, and he took a look at Adam before grinning.

“Are you alright there, Mr.?” He asked in a deep, but confident tone of voice.

Adam almost felt jealous of this man right away because he seemed so over-confident and he seemed to have no trouble with socializing. Adam had to try and try before he could even get a sentence out, and he always messed up and did something wrong or said something wrong, because people would usually laugh at him or snicker behind his back, but this man? Adam doubted if anyone would ever dare laugh at him.

“I’m Adam Raki. I am on my way to England for my job because my boss wants me to give a presentation and advertise a new space model toy we are making for the early education of astronomy for younger children.” Adam said this all in one breath of air with as much confidence as he imagined this man would have whenever he was talking to someone new.

The man’s dark brown eyebrows rose on his forehead and he smiled and chuckled, but not in a mean way. “Wow, that’s very intriguing, Adam.”

The man at the head of the line in front of the man Adam was speaking to suddenly turned and looked blankly at Adam.

This man was a bit taller than Adam and his look-a-like, had thin pouty lips, very prominent thick, high cheekbones, and shortly cropped dark blonde hair which was starting to turn to silver at some of the roots. He wore a black and white checkered suit and held his matching coat folded nearly like a napkin over his right hand with his hands clasped in front of him. He seemed very much in control and Adam thought he looked very business-like.

“I see you’re making acquaintances already.” He breathed into the back of the neck of the man Adam was talking to.

“We could be twins.” The man Adam spoke to whispered in a mysteriously hushed tone to the blonde tall man.

“Yes indeed. The resemblance is uncanny.”

Adam was starting to sweat because of these strange men, when he heard one of the toilets in the
stalls flush. He thanked whoever was listening internally for the on-time interruption, and he quickly ran into the stall one thin lanky man exited, nearly making the fellow leap up in shock.

Adam slammed and locked the stall door behind him, and grabbed his head in both his hands and swayed back and forth, silently urging himself to calm down, and silently reminding himself that this was good for him, he was doing this for himself and for his Dad, and he needed to do this, his job was important, and he loved his job and was good at it.

Adam didn’t notice that in his rushed state, he had left behind his space wallet on the counter near one of the many sinks in the washroom.

The strange men he had been talking to however, did notice it.

The blonde man looked down at the wallet, still silent, and then looked at the dark brown curly haired man with the glasses. The dark brown haired man smiled and nodded the smallest of nods, knowingly.

“I can’t wait for fishing season to begin.” Said the blonde in a relaxed voice, eyeing the stalls ahead of him.

“I prefer hunting.” The dark brown haired man answered in supplication.

Outside the washroom, Harlan looked up at the clock, pulling his white autumn coat around him tightly. He didn’t know why the airport had AC on this early in the year, with it only being spring.

It was almost 8:40, and Adam still wasn’t out yet. This worried Harlan, so he gathered Adam’s belongings and headed in the washroom, hoping Adam was alright.

When he entered the washroom, there were barely 2 other men in there, and one stall was closed and locked tightly. Harlan didn’t need to look down at the feet in the stall to know it was Adam.

He gently and carefully knocked on the stall door. “Adam? It’s almost 9 PM, son, we have to get you to the terminal so you can get to the gate you’re supposed to be at.” He tried speaking so no one else could hear him, worried about Adam’s sense of trust and socializing in a strange public place.

The bathroom door clicked open almost immediately and Adam pushed past Harlan and out the doors.

“Adam! You forgot your wallet!” Harlan yelled after him, noticing that luckily, no one had stolen the little space wallet as it sat right by the sinks in the bathroom.

He grabbed it and ran after Adam as fast as he could, but Adam wasn’t too far. He was trying to grab his cellphone, and Ipod all at the same time while trying to put on his earphones.

Harlan sighed a sad sigh. He knew from dozens of interactions spent with Adam, that Adam was beyond spooked and nervous now. He didn’t want to ask to bring up a bad or unpleasant memory and have Adam flee at the last minute; it had taken them enough of a struggle to get the taxi to the airport without Adam asking the driver to turn around multiple times.

“Adam, we have to get you to the security and they will check your boarding pass before you get on the plane, okay? But this is where I can’t come any farther with you, Adam.” Harlan handed Adam his wallet, knowing that the boarding pass and his ID were all in there and ready to go.

Now it was Harlan’s turn not to make eye contact with Adam, because he knew it would make the parting more difficult than it was already turning out to be.
Adam looked at everything except Harlan, but did not fend off the hug that Harlan gave him.

“You call me and Beth as SOON as the plane has landed, alright? Make sure you’re safe, yes?” He repeated, hoping he wasn’t overwhelming Adam with too many instructions at once.

To his surprise, Adam smiled a very child-like-innocent smile. “Don’t worry, Harlan, I wrote it all down and I won’t forget now that I wrote it down.”

Harlan mirrored the smile. “That’s good, son.”

An announcement called out that the plane for England was about to take off, as was the plane heading to Bucharest, Romania, and this was the last call for passengers of either of those destinations to get in the appropriate gates.

“I have to go, Harlan.” Adam, without another look back at Harlan, stood in his place in line at the security checks.

“Bye, son.” He barely heard Harlan’s voice over the loud hustling and bustling as people wheeled their items and suitcases and dragged their bags with them, some yawnning and coughing louder than others, while others spoke in foreign tongues that sounded almost like Alien-Speak to Adam’s ears.

Adam reached into his wallet and pulled out his ID and his boarding pass and looked up to double check he was at the right gate. Yes, the lady had said this was it when he checked in before. Now all he had to do was stand tight and patiently.

Once it was his turn, he held up his ID and his boarding pass to the security guard, a large tall broad-shouldered African American man. The guard looked at his pass and then once at Adam and sighed.

“Wrong gate.”

“Oh…but the lady said this was my gate…” Adam barely had the chance to finish before the guard gently turned him around and pointed ahead to the gate at the opposite end of the airport terminal.

“Better hurry, there’s barely 4 people left to process in line before they leave.”

With that, Adam began to panic, not wanting to miss his flight, and he raced over, trying to weave his way through and through people and the groups they were huddled in to make his place in line.

He had almost tripped over someone’s feet and had an angry elderly woman yell at him before he reached the front of the desk as the last person showed their ID and walked off ahead of him.

“I’m here! Please let me through!” He said out of breath, sweating clinging onto his forehead already.

The desk attendant looked at his ID and his boarding pass and laughed a warm laugh. “You just made it! Go on through, everything looks great from here on.”

Adam laughed, not sure of what else to say and do, so he grabbed his carry-on luggage tightly and walked in the direction he saw loads of other people going at this terminal.

It was when he was already on the plane and putting his carry-on luggage on the shelf above him when he felt his phone vibrating. He dug it out of his pockets and saw it was Beth calling.

“Hi Beth! Yes! I just caught it barely. I am going to sit down now…yes the seats seem very comfortable, but maybe not so good for the neck because I am worried about the way the seats are
curved…”

Adam sat down and after a few more words, Beth wished him luck and all the happiness and they hung up. Adam was about to make a call to Harlan to let him know he was safely aboard when he heard the intercom turn on and the pilot speak.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen, it is now shortly after nine PM and we are going to be taking off soon. Please be advised that I’m going to turn on the seatbelt sign, so before I do, please be sure your children and items are all seated and stored as comfortably by your side. Have a most enjoyable flight!”

Adam sighed and finally made his call to Harlan.

8 Hours Later

Adam woke with a jolt. A baby somewhere on the plane was crying loudly, and its mother began hushing it and trying to put it to sleep as best as she could.

Adam rubbed his eyes and looked out the window. He saw clouds beginning to dissipate around them, meaning the plane was soon preparing to land. He checked his watch, and knew that within an hour and half, they would be landing.

Adam suddenly felt excited and happy that he had taken this trip after all. Sometimes, as his father used to say, last minute made decisions were those that were the most enjoyable.

Adam pulled out his Ipod and was about to listen to some of his favourite classical music tunes, when he felt the person sitting next to him stir. Adam tried looking and shifting all the way towards the window, not ready at all for a conversation, but the older man seated next to him smiled and yawned, already making eye contact, which disturbed Adam deeply.

“I’ll admit, it’s a damn good view.” He said as he stretched in his chair.

“Umm, yes.” Was all Adam could offer back, hoping he could finally listen to his music now.

“Have you ever been to Bucharest before? This is my fifth time coming here. I do it every year.”

Adam pulled out one of his earphones, knowing that listening to music would be useless now. “I don’t see how Bucharest has anything to do with England, seeing as they are hundreds of Kilometers apart from each other. Actually, to be precise, it’s 2,244 kilometers, which is exactly 1,394 miles.”

The man paused, then rubbed his eyes. “Damn…you some kind of scientist?” He asked as he grabbed a bottle of water resting between his feet, opened the lid and drowned himself in the contents.

Adam didn’t budge. “No. I’m highly interested in space and astronomy, though.”

“Oh so you’re an astronaut.”

“No, I would very much like to be one, one day. I can even go to school for it if I want, but Dad died and that really upset me so I couldn’t become an astronaut.

“Jesus…I’m sorry, kid.” Adam’s neighboring passenger stopped drinking the water and just stared emptily at the bottle, which was now also empty.

“That is incorrect.” Adam interjected.
“What?”

“You referred to me as a kid, but I am not a child aged 10-13, nor am I a baby goat.”

The passenger snorted now and rolled his eyes, clenching the bottle between his hands for recycling. “So how old are you then? Because you don’t look over 21.”

“I’m almost 29.”

“…Shut up…no way!” The man gasped at this news.

“It is very impolite to tell someone who has not offended you in any way to ‘shut up’.” Adam responded, feeling a bit heated and wishing the flight was over so he could hurry to call his boss and let him know he wanted to go to his room and rest.

“No I mean…hell you look very young for your age, and that is a GOOD compliment, I swear.”

“I didn’t hear you swear except when you rudely told me to ‘shut up’.” Adam finished.

“It’s just an expression…no need to get uptight.” The passenger finally got up to go to the bathroom once he had had enough of this strange young man with the dark brown curls and the baby blue eyes.

“Oh…I don’t understand most social cues and expressions…” Adam’s words died into the thin air, seeing as the man was now gone.

Adam sat back, grateful and relieved for the warm familiarity and comfort of silence once again, and he was about to finally put on his headphones and listen to his music when he was reminded of Harlan’s voice telling him before he boarded the flight to make sure he was going to get to the right place and not be lost.

A flight attendant happened to be walking by with an offer for breakfast just then, and Adam was thinking of asking for some Milk and Bran Cereal, when he remembered his first initial question.

“Umm…are we almost in England now?” He asked in a soft mousey voice, hoping the answer was “yes”.

The flight attendant flipped her short red hair back and cocked an eyebrow up. “You must really be suffering from jet lag.” Was all she said and she was about to turn to go when she heard Adam cough.

“No, I feel fine, actually, I got more sleep than I thought I would, but this baby woke me up and I was rather irritated by it but it is ok because the baby was probably hungry, and the mother did a good job of attending to it right away like most parents should be doing.”

The flight attendant placed a hand on her hip and snorted sarcastically. “Wonderful news, sir. I’ll file that with the ‘Don’t Care’ department as soon as we land in Bucharest.”

Adam froze.

Bucharest.

Why had she said they were going to land in Bucharest?

What did Bucharest have to do with England?
Why had his neighbour next to him mentioned Bucharest?

“If you’re not ordering breakfast, I’m afraid I’m going to be moving along, sir.” The flight attendant moved quickly without another word, leaving Adam frozen and rooted to his chair.

As if on cue, his neighbour got back and plopped heavily down back in his seat.

“Damn she was hot.” He muttered as he stared at the flight attendant’s ass as she weaved her way in and out of the isles.

“Why did she say we are going to Bucharest for?” Adam asked, feeling his heart pounding like a jack hammer in his chest, but urged himself to remain calm, and he took three long breaths in and out.

“Because that’s the flight we’re on? How much have you had to drink, buddy?” His neighbour chortled and pulled out a magazine and began reading.

Adam stood so suddenly and abruptly that he nearly hit his head against the underside of the shelves above them. “No! This wasn’t supposed to happen! I was supposed to be on the flight to England for my work’s space project! I can’t be here!”

Adam’s voice started growing louder and louder, and it soon invoked the then-quiet baby to start crying again, and a lot of the passengers gave him dirty looks and told him to calm down and sit back down.

“No! This can’t be right! I have to double check my pass!” Adam reached for his wallet and dug through it like a wild man, pulling out the pieces of ID and his pass. He nearly dropped down on the floor in fear when he saw his ID.

The picture on the ID card was the same man from the bathroom; his glasses were off however in the picture, but it was the same man. The name to the right on the card read: Will Graham.

“This…this isn’t mine!” Adam dropped the card and it landed on his neighbour’s thigh. The man picked it up nonchalantly, then looked at it, and looked briefly back up at Adam.

“Sure as hell it is.” He supplemented and left the card on Adam’s seat.

“IT’S NOT!” Adam retorted, smacking his hands over his head and covering his ears. He wanted to go home, he wanted to talk to his father, he wanted Beth to hold him, he wanted Harlan to help calm him down, he wanted his cereal! None of this was right and it was never supposed to be like this!

“Then it must be your clone or your twin.” His neighbour said, shaking his head and continuing to read his magazine.

“Good morning ladies and gentlemen, I hope everyone had a lovely good night’s rest, and a better morning. With the view and the clear skies we’ve been having, it looks like it will be a safe and pleasant landing for us today. We land in another hour, please enjoy the rest of the flight and be sure to enjoy the refreshments.” The captain finished his little speech, and Adam sat back in his seat, not wanting to get into trouble.

When he looked out the window, he saw tons of tall and older looking buildings, many tree tops and small ant-like cars and lights of the cities and towns below.

Beside him, his neighbour set down his magazine, leaned over to get a quick view at the cities down below and smirked.
“Welcome to Romania, baby.”

Chapter End Notes

Evil Murder Husbands! Switching poor Adam's ID and boarding pass with Will's!

Don't worry though, Darko will soon help our Adam!
Welcome to Romania

Chapter Notes

So I squeezed in one more chapter before my train was going to take off!
You guys have been so amazing, liking and following my work!

Thank you all, here's another delightful treat!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 5

“Uite, prietenul meu! Bani gheata, haha!” After they had driven all the way to a thick neck of woods far out in the middle of fucking nowhere and pulled Drew’s bloated corpse from the trunk of their car, Darko had gone through the fat fucker’s pockets and wallet, getting ready to erase all traces of Drew Nighy from the planet forever, and had landed upon a few hundred dollar bills. He had immediately shoved them in his friend’s face, cackling like a little demon.

Nigel rolled his eyes as his friend smacked his lips together hungrily and stuffed the bills into his own pockets and resumed his digging. It seemed Darko had a nasty and morbid sense of humour of serving justice by stealing from a thief even when he was almost in the grave.

Nigel would normally slap his friend on the back and join in the loud boisterous rounds of laughter, followed by the two going off to Darko’s club and celebrating the night in the club with tons of sexy women dancing and sliding over and on top of their laps, half nude with perfectly sized tits and shapely asses just as they liked them, with cigarettes and alcohol supplied for them all night into the wee hours of the dawn.

Of course, that’s what Nigel WOULD have done in the past. But the Nigel standing in front of Darko in the dark woods didn’t even offer half a glance at his best friend; instead he just threw the dirt over Drew’s body as quickly as he could before his arms started getting heavy.

Darko lit a cigarette, casting an almost devilish glow, his eyes darkening against the light of the cigarette, and the smoke giving off an eerie bluish tinge as he blew it out his nostrils and into the hot dark night air. Darko however did notice Nigel’s pause in digging, and his heavy breathing.

Nigel placed a hand over his heart, and found to his amazement and awe, it was still beating, though he could hardly feel it when he first rested his hand over his chest. He literally felt as if he had no blood in his veins, no heart, no soul. It was as if he was being controlled by someone else, like a bloody fucking stupid puppet dancing on the stage while someone else pulled the strings.

Fuck love for doing that to him. Fuck Gabi for doing that to him. Fuck Charlie Countryman for ruining his chances at love. Sometimes Nigel didn't blame Gabi, but instead, he blamed that greasy pissant of a boy that she had fell for instead.

Deep down, Nigel knew that they had both been at fault; both Gabi and the shit-eating American. If he ever laid his eyes on them again...

“Fute-ma, Nigel, you look like you’re about to knock on death’s door, friend…maybe you should
stop digging.” Darko made a grab for Nigel’s shovel, but Nigel snatched Darko’s shirt collar in his hands like a viper and shoved him aside roughly.

“Holy fuck frate, you know, for someone who barely escaped with a bullet kissing your skull, you’re rather fucking strong!” Darko laughed and took another long drag from his cigarette before clapping Nigel on the back rather hard.

“We’ll be back in business before you know it, frate. Don’t worry. It’s only a matter of time before we’re on our game and about time too, because I’m sure Petrov and that pathetic son of a whore group he calls a “gang” have been missing us terribly. I’d say they’re due for a visit, Nigel.”

Nigel’s nose scrunched in displeasure, half from Darko’s tobacco breath all in his face, and the other half at the sound of the name of the leader of his longest rival gang. Petrov, the Russian bitch-fuck that he was, had last sent his little cousin Alexei to steal more than 5 kilos of cocaine from Nigel as a method of initiating his cousin into his gang and deeming him worthy of the business.

Alexei had gone undetected, right under Nigel’s nose, and had done exactly what his cousin had asked him to do. Nigel would have normally caught on a lot sooner, but he had been so troubled and busy with his marriage beginning to fall apart with Gabi, and his obsession with making her stay with him to make it work that he hadn’t notice anything unusual about the new “recruit”.

The accident had made Nigel forget a lot of the specific details, but he could remember Gabi screaming at him one minute, her beautiful eyes running to the brim with tears and her dark mascara running down in black streaks down her gorgeous white cheeks, and Darko calling him on the phone the next minute, screaming that there had been some sort of tape of them, and they were both going to get fucked in the most deep and dark temniță ever in Bucharest.

He hadn’t remembered much more than that, and for once, Nigel was happy he couldn’t remember more than that. Whatever the fuck happened that night, Nigel knew it was the beginning of his downward spiral into fuckery and darkness, and he didn’t want to walk down that part of memory lane for as long as he lived. He had barely made it out in one piece the first time, and he wasn’t a fool to dance that same song and dance ever again.

Nigel suddenly heard classical music coming from somewhere off in the distance. His head whipped around so quickly he could have sworn his neck “clicked” audibly.

Darko looked up and his eyes widened. “What the fuck, Nigel?” He asked, looking around the dark woods, his cigarette already halfway gone, the ashes falling down onto his shoes.

Nigel put up a hand to get Darko to shut the fuck up, but the sound was gone and in its place was the silent ambiance of the woods.

After a few weird moments of nothing but silence to Darko’s ears, Nigel finally put his hand down, and looked back down at the grave they’d freshly covered.

“What was that all about then?” Darko prodded, stubbing out his cigarette with his toe as he flicked it down into the ground.

Nigel wanted to bash Darko over the head with the shovel. He could have sworn he had heard a cello playing somewhere outside the woods, but he realized he probably was imagining it.

If there was one thing Nigel did miss about that cunt of an ex-wife of his, it was her flawlessly beautiful cello playing.
Adam was about to burst out into tears for the tenth time in less than 24 hours. He had been forcibly removed from the airport in Bucharest, his boss wasn’t answering his calls, and his phone was going to die from low battery. He hadn’t eaten a proper meal yet, and he wanted to brush his teeth and take a bath. But Adam couldn’t do any of those things right now, because he had been threatened to leave the airport by security who barely spoke English.

Adam had had a small panic attack of sorts after being denied a chance to speak with someone at the terminals and he was too afraid of the big burly security guards. He had tried cutting in line a few times as quickly and politely as he could, as he felt this was an emergency, and instead, he was told he was disturbing the other passengers, so he had been asked to leave. Now with nowhere to go and no phone charged to make calls, Adam began wandering the streets of Bucharest.

He knew he was doomed, because he was definitely late to meet Mr. Klieber’s contact at the hotel, wherever it was. He knew he was going to miss his space project, his presentations, and his chances of finally doing something he always dreamed would make him happy.

The streets of Bucharest were no better, each passing step making Adam’s mood worse and worse by the minute. The buildings old, but beautiful in their own ways, as the architecture depicted older models that were dating way back before anything Adam had ever laid his eyes upon. It was as if he had stumbled into one of the textbooks he had seen in the library.

The people walking by were kind of shady, most of them leering and jeering at him as they sat and stood on the sides of the buildings, smoking, laughing among themselves, and walking to and from the little markets littering the streets. Smoke and strange spices filled the air, making Adam very hungry, but also somewhat sick to the stomach.

After a few hours of walking, Adam’s feet really began to hurt, and he was getting tired of dragging his suitcases with him. He was happy and grateful Harlan had told him to buy the ones with the wheels for easy mobility and transportation, but he was getting tired of lugging them around nonetheless. If anyone would look at him, he was sure they would assume he was homeless.

Adam looked everywhere for pay-phones, but he couldn’t find one, as many people simply used their cellphones. He felt the need to scream and cry out again, but his father’s voice echoed in his mind and told him to remain calm and to be strong. He would figure this out. He just needed to find a warm hotel to stay in and charge his phone to call Beth and Harlan!

**Afternoon**

“Frate, you HAVE to eat something. I haven’t seen you eat anything since 2 nights ago!” Nigel tried to shut out Darko’s paranoid voice by raising the volume of the TV mounted high on the wall, lighting his own cigarette and desperately tempted to blow the smoke out in Darko’s face.

But, as the saying went: “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you.”

Darko stomped over to where Nigel was lying down on the couch and yanked the cigarette clean out from between his teeth.

Nigel almost growled in anger.

“THESE aren’t fucking helping your health, you dumb fuck!” Darko hissed and snapped the cigarette in two after putting it out.
Nigel glared at him and his hand shot out for another cigarette from his carton lying flat on the little glass table beside him, but Darko was faster, and he swiped the carton right off the table like a bird of prey attacking a field mouse down below on the grounds.

Nigel growled this time deep in his throat.

“You’re not getting anymore of these until you fucking eat something.” Darko threatened deeply as he stuffed the carton in his white dress shirt pocket.

Nigel merely flipped him off, but turned back and faced the TV, assuming his previous position with his back on the seats, seemingly comfy but obviously pissed off.

“Why do I fucking bother with you. You’re fucking hopeless.” Darko rested a hand against his forehead and sighed an exasperated sigh.

Silence was the only thing that greeted him.

After a long moment, Darko spoke up. “Fuck it! Don't talk to me then. I’m headed out. You can rot in here for all I fucking care.”

With that said, Darko turned and left the apartment, slamming the door with full force behind him.

Nigel waited until he was sure he was gone before he pulled out another cigarette carton from under one of the sofa cushions. Picking one out from the carton, he lit it, sighing in relief as he took a drag.

Fuck Darko.

He looked at the cigarette in his hand, watching the swirls of smoke dancing from the tip almost magically. This was the only thing that could, and did cure him.

2 PM

Darko had literally circled around the streets and past the shops and the same old buildings he had driven by for the last few years more than 3 times within 25 minutes before he had settled on parking his car at the side of the street near his favourite Café. He was frustrated and close to entirely giving up on Nigel, but he knew that if he did, Nigel would be completely dead and lost. The man was barely making it on his own as it was, and Darko knew he couldn’t handle much more of it on his own. He needed help; Nigel needed help.

He just didn’t know exactly where to turn. He knew Nigel did not need to see a fucking quack shrink. He was not crazy. He did not need another woman, especially when Darko knew that Gabi was Nigel’s closest love and companion ever. Sure, he had seen his friend with tons of women through the years, but he knew it wasn’t “love”. He never asked the other ones to marry him, so that’s how Darko knew that Gabi really meant something to Nigel.

Darko knew he couldn’t find someone even close to Gabi, so he didn’t even consider it an option. But he didn’t know how to get a nurse or a doctor down either, because Nigel wasn’t physically sick…at least he didn’t appear to be.

Darko soon felt the need for a cigarette himself, and he began fishing in his dress shirt pockets for the carton, when he heard a loud bang and crash coming from within the café he was about to enter.

He stepped around the side of his car and onto the sidewalk and he walked closer and closer to the door of the café, when he nearly collided with a young man with slightly unwashed dark brown hair flopping over his forehead and over his ears, slightly tired eyes cast downward and a small blush
painting over his creamy soft white cheeks as a small thin stubble was growing over that babyish skin.

“Excuse me, I’m sorry.” Darko almost didn’t hear him, because soon the café owner, Milo, came out right behind the young man screaming profanities in Romanian.

Adam covered his ears in fright, not wanting to hear the very bad man screaming very bad things at him.

“I said I was sorry! I just wanted to find somewhere to charge my batteries! I miss my father! I miss my mother! I want to be with them again! I want to hold them again! I want to take care of them again like they took care of me when I was younger! I want to be able to be the man of the house again! I am so unfamiliar with this strange country and the strange noises and the strange rude people! I just want to go home!”

Darko shook his head and shrugged as Milo pointed at the young man and then looked at Darko as if he knew what was wrong with him and knew the answers.

“Come in, Darko. Same as usual today, right?”

“Yes Milo, the same and could you-” Darko stopped dead in his tracks, barely a few feet inside the steaming warm café when the thought hit him like a shit ton of bricks.

“Wait…Milo, what’s that man’s name?”

“What man?” The owner asked, already heading to the back of the café.

“That man that you practically scared the dick off who ran out of here!” Darko yelled, immediately starting to head back to the front doors.

“I don’t fucking know! He just came in here like a moron and started asking for a room. Like I’m a fucking hotel manager or something. What the fuck’s wrong with people these days, I don’t fucking know.”

Darko didn’t even bothering listening to anything else. He ran back outside, looking rapidly from left to right, to left again, and ahead of him, then behind him, then right again. He could not find the young man.

“SHIT!” Darko unlocked his car doors and leapt into his car, turning on the engine and blasting down the street where he remembered the man was headed when he exited the café.

Darko didn’t have to drive too long and too far when he noticed the young man pacing further ahead past a group of young women who were heading past him. They turned and laughed at him as he huddled in an almost fetal position, trying to give them space to move around him and continue on down the street.

Darko pulled up his car and rolled down his window as low as he could, and while keeping half an eye on the road ahead, he stuck his head as much as he could out the window and called out to the man.

“Hey! Hello! You!”

Adam kept walking, and pretended he couldn't hear, even though he took a small glance at the man in the shiny clean new black car. He was probably talking to someone else or had confused Adam with someone else…probably that Will Graham person!
Adam walked a bit faster, not wanting Will Graham to ruin more of his day than he already had.

“Stop! Boy!”

Adam slowed down once he heard those words and turned, but didn’t look at the crazy man in the shiny clean new black car.

“I-hel-lo.” He said, trying to stand tall and proud, but he felt he could not, not after everything that had happened.

“Would you please come here a minute? I want to speak with you.” Darko spoke loud and clear, but he felt he had to lower his voice once he saw the young man shudder in fear.

Nigel had told him he was always too authoritative. Infuriating know-it-all wise old ass man.

“Why?” Adam asked gently. He was always told never to talk to strange men, or crazy men either, no matter how nice and shiny and new their cars looked to be.

“Because there’s an intersection coming up and I can’t just drive along like this with traffic gathering up behind my ass like a flood.” Darko was beginning to grow weary, but he wasn’t going to let go. Not when he had a hope for Nigel.

Adam wrung his hands nervously. "B-b-but you have a shiny new clean car and I'm very tired, stinky and sweaty from walking around the filthy streets, and hungry..."

"I'm not going to ask you twice. Get in, now." Darko all but growled out at the scared looking young man.

“Okay.” Tired, hungry, alone, scared, and in desperate need of a bath, Adam approached the car.

“Other side, boy.” Darko instructed, nodding with his head to the passenger side.

“Oh. Sorry.” Adam immediately moved over to the right side of the car, and Darko was about to turn to greet him, when he noticed that the right backseat car door opened instead, and Adam plopped down with his luggage on the floor of the car and on the left seat instead at the back.

“Well…nice to meet you too.” Darko glared at the young boy in his rearview mirror.

“I haven’t introduced myself to you and you have not introduced yourself to me yet.” Adam corrected, looking down at his dirty hands.

“You’re a pretty sly smart ass, aren’t you?” Darko chuckled, but didn’t say it rudely or cruelly. He felt he had definitely made a wise choice, running after this kid.

Adam didn’t look up at him, but turned to look out the windows instead. “I’m no ass; I’m a human being. I don’t consider myself sly either, but thanks for the compliment…at least I think you were complimenting me. I can’t tell much because I suffer from Asperger’s Syndrome. I’m an Aspie.” He spoke very as-a-matter-of-factly.

Darko turned a left and was already making his way back to his apartment. “What’s that? Are you diseased or something?” He asked, wondering if he should kick the kid out of the car if he was sick.

“No, it is a form of autism. Actually, it is generally considered to be on the “high functioning” end of the spectrum, and that’s what my doctors said about me. I am actually very high functioning, meaning I can do a lot of things on my own, like cooking Mac and Cheese for supper, washing and
ironing out my clothes, watching my own shows, going places, finding work and doing my work and traveling…until now…”

Darko shook his head in awe of how perfect, yet strange this kid was. “So what’s the problem then? You sound like everyone else, except maybe a bit…different?” He hoped he hadn’t offended the kid.

Darko turned more corners and made a few shortcuts before he saw their street coming up. He couldn’t wait to show Nigel what he had found and how wonderful their luck had been. He realized he had been stepping a bit too much on the gas pedal, and reminded himself to calm down before he freaked out the already-alert and high-strung kid.

“Well sometimes I can sound...detached…robotic…I don’t always recognize and identify with the emotions and feelings of others, but I really want to learn more about them and not be so…awkward…”

“You don’t seem awkward to me.” Darko said assuredly, finally pulling into the dark parking lot underground.

Adam shrugged a bit, holding his luggage closer and picking at one of the stars on his space wallet. “I don’t always pick up on the little things NTs can normally pick up on in regular social interactions, like sarcasm and social jokes and mannerisms.”

“What the fuck’s an NT?” Darko inquired, turning off the car and unbuckling his seatbelt, letting it slide up across his toned stomach and over his chest as it slid back in its place.

“Neuro-typical. It’s what Aspies like to call everyone who does NOT have Asperger’s Syndrome.”

“So…am I an NT?” Darko asked.

“Yes.”

“Oh. Great…I guess…”

“Yes.”

Silence.

Adam suddenly looked up and noticed that Darko had opened his backseat passenger car door and was grabbing Adam’s belongings.

Adam immediately dove forward and grabbed onto his items like his life depended on it.

“What the fuck! Kid! Calm down!” Darko cried, utterly in shock at how strong the kid actually was as he fought almost in a tug-of-war fashion and pulled on the straps of his suitcase and up and out of the car.

“NO! THAT’S MINE! YOU AREN’T SUPPOSED TO TOUCH ANYONE’S THINGS WITHOUT ASKING PERMISSION FIRST!” Adam cried, getting so lost and confused with the way things were going in this country.

“I was just trying to help you! You’d think you’d understand it, given how you said you helped take care of your mom and dad!” Darko let go finally of the kid’s items and watched as he picked them up and held them to his chest one-by-one, as if they were pieces of his life he was gathering together to hold onto from other prying hands.
“Yes I did say that and yes I did do that. It is good to be nice to people, that’s what my father always told me, how he raised me, and he took care of me so I took care of him.”

Darko stood closer to Adam, noticing him flinching when his personal space had been invaded.

“Which is exactly why you’re here. I have a friend, kid, and he is very sick and very lonely. He needs someone like you to help take care of him, because I sure as shit don’t think I can understand him and help take care of him the way I used to.”

Adam frowned but made no move. “But if you’re his friend he can tell you what he wants you to do. Open communication should be very easy for an NT like you.”

“Trust me, it isn’t. I’m not the type to just blabber out my feelings to anyone. Fuck, I don’t even think I’ve told my wife half the shit I am thinkin’ and feelin’ half the fuckin’ time.”

Adam frowned a deeper frown and looked back at the car. “Okay.”

Darko stood taller. “So let’s go. Just meet him.”

Adam looked at him, but did not make any eye contact. “No.” He said firmly.

Darko rolled up his shirt sleeves. “Yes.”

Ten minutes later, Darko somehow (under the good graces of whatever god) barely managed to drag a kicking and screaming Adam up the steps, with his luggage held tightly in his hands and to the apartment door.

Adam kicked at the back of Darko’s legs, asking to be let go and Darko nearly dropped his keys a few times before he was able to fish out the right one of the front door and leave it in the slot.

“Kid! If you kick me one more time, I swear!” He wheezed, trying to make sure the kid didn’t tear his hand out of his grasp and run away.

Darko was surprised the police hadn’t been called by now, but he knew he had to hurry, as the kid was growing louder and more fidgety by the second, and while they lived in a well-to-do neighbourhood, nosey neighbours were everywhere ready to stick their ugly ass noses into everyone's business but their own.

“Harlan! Beth! Dad! Mom!”

“Lower your voice!” Darko pulled the kid closer to the front door, but the kid fought back even harder.

“LET ME GO! RIGHT NOW! I WANT TO GO! I WANT TO GO TO ENGLAND FOR MY SPACE PROJECT!”

“You can! I promise you! But I need your help first!” Darko yelled back, not sure what the hell he was promising the kid and what the kid was even rambling and screaming about. He just wanted the noises the kid was letting out to stop before someone looked out their window and called the police.

He was barely able to be heard to his own ears over the loud screaming of the strong kid he held against the side of his body as he turned halfway to open the door. He kept hoping and praying the kid would soon grow silent, for he didn’t know how much more of this tantrum he could take.

It seemed as if Darko's silent prayers had been answered.
Before Darko could place his hand on the doorknob, he saw it turning and the door slammed open with a loud BANG as it rattled against the walls inside the apartment.

Adam immediately stopped kicking and screaming. Growing silent and still at once, wiping his eyes, he looked at a tall man with sandy, dirty blonde hair, wearing a blue shirt covered with little brown Daschund dogs. He was wearing thin, silky black pants that glistened and gleamed in the afternoon sun. He had a tattoo of a very sexy looking woman on the left side of his neck.

The man stood, glowering at Adam and the very bad man who was holding him and forcing him to be here with him, and he had a very nasty ugly scar across his temple and over a bit of his forehead. He had very thin eyebrows, and very strongly accentuated cheekbones, thin lips, and dark maroon colored eyes. Adam thought he looked very strong and dangerous, and he calmed down and stilled even more as he looked at the man’s naked feet.

Darko stammered, unsure of where to begin. “F-frate, I-”

The blonde man gave him a very threatening look, and he silenced immediately. This was a very dangerous, very serious man who commanded and demanded compliance.

Then he looked over at Adam, eyes piercing through from the front, to the back of his head practically, the way he was so focused on him.

“W-who are y-you?” Adam asked as politely as he could, though it came out very fearful and cowardly.

The man peered at him almost viciously, before opening his mouth, taking a small breath that was barely audible, and then he spoke:

“I’m Nigel, who the fuck are you?”

Chapter End Notes

Darko’s words English translation: "Look my friend, cash!"
"Fuck me"
temniță= Jail
Chapter Notes

So guess who was able to come up for air during the crazy trip and squeeze out one more chapter?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 6

“I’m Adam.” Adam was barely able to introduce himself, when the man who had brought him to this strange apartment grabbed his hand again and pulled him inside the large apartment against his will.

Adam cowered in fear as the other tall blonde haired man with the handsome face looked him up and down, sizing him up and probably judging him to laugh at him and poke fun at him later, just like everyone else always had.

Adam heard the front door close and the lock clicked in place after it.

Darko finally threw down his car keys and looked at Nigel, who was wearing a facial expression that clearly said: “What the fuck do you think you’re doing?”

Darko shoved past Nigel, not in the mood for this attitude after hauling the strong kid named Adam to the apartment. “Don’t give me that fucking look, Nigel. It’s been a long ass day!”

Nigel said nothing, but continued glaring at Adam’s shaking little body.

Adam looked at the floor of the apartment, almost seeing his own reflection in the shiny linoleum silvery tile floor, wondering who had done such a good job at cleaning the floors.

He was counting the tiles one-by-one, when a voice broke through and interrupted his counting.

“Kid, come here!” Adam’s head snapped up to attention once he heard Darko’s commanding voice
Adam practically sprinted away from the glaring Nigel, and ran and huddled in the farthest corner of the kitchen he could locate.

Darko held in his hands a glass of vodka, and sighed, rubbing the back of his neck and skull a few times.

“What’s your deal, kid?” He asked, feeling a migraine definitely coming on.

“I’m n-not a kid! I’m 28 years old, and my birthday is coming up so I will be 29 soon!” Adam looked at the off-white coloured walls and suddenly remembered his own apartment back at home and fought off tears. He wanted to be back at home so much that it hurt.

“Fuck if I know.” Darko chugged back another gulp and watched out of the corner of his eyes as Nigel climbed up the steps slowly and weakly, passed the landing in the hallway, closed his bedroom door once he entered it, and presumably went to brood again or to sleep.

Darko sighed and lowered his head, still rubbing the tension out of the back of his neck.

Adam continued to shake in the corner of the kitchen, and Darko suddenly felt like the biggest piece of shit in the world; taking this kid without his consent, practically kidnapping him in his car, and dragging him to the apartment.

Darko looked directly at Adam, and made sure to lower the volume of his voice, just in case Nigel was somehow eavesdropping. Darko doubted it, though. It seemed all Nigel did lately was sleep, brood, sleep, smoke, and brood some more. Rinse and repeat with some alcohol in between.

“Listen, Adam…,” at the sound of his voice, Adam turned around but kept looking at the floor, shoulders still slightly quivering. Again, Darko felt like a big piece of shit and he fought the urge to roll his eyes, “…see, you just met my friend. You know? The one I told you about in the parking lot today?”

Adam didn’t even nod, but somehow, Darko felt he had understood him.

“He’s the one who’s very sick and lonely. I really can’t get through to him anymore like I used to, and I’m outta ideas for what to do…” Darko trailed off, looking down at his almost-empty glass and reached to pour more vodka.

“He didn’t look sick.” Adam whispered out, wondering why these men were acting so strange.

“Trust me, he is. He’s been through a lot, and I really can’t look after him all day.” Darko fingered the rim of the small wine glass, wondering how the large kitchen suddenly felt so small around him. He knew he couldn't exactly tell Adam what he and Nigel did for a living, why and how time consuming it was to not only sell and push their merchandise across the country, but to also squash out and eliminate competition on the side brutally to make sure they were always well respected, feared, and on top.

“If he takes his medication, he should be fine.” Adam commented bluntly, shifting his weight from foot to foot uncomfortably.

Darko gave half a smirk. “See that’s the thing! He does take it, but it’s all painkillers really. He’s been through a fuck load more than that, and no medication in the world can cure what he’s got.”

Adam frowned, still not budging from the corner in the wall. “What sickness does he have?”
Darko wasn’t prepared to hear or even answer that question. How could he sit down and tell the kid that Nigel had gone and fallen madly and deeply in love with a woman who had toyed and played with his heart before taking a large bite out of it, and tossed it deep into a dark well? How could he tell him and make him understand how horrible it felt to love someone and care for someone so much with all your might and heart, and not have them return it even a little bit? How could he find the words to put together what betrayal and disloyalty really felt like?

Darko didn’t have the words at the moment for it, so he just held out his open palms in front of him and his mouth fell open like a gaping fish out of water. “I…just…uuhh…”

Adam waited and waited, but the man didn’t speak, so he turned again to face the wall.

“I want to go.” Was all his little fearful voice said, the wall swallowing it up whole as soon as the words came.

Darko stood up slowly, approaching the kid as if he were an exotic animal never seen before by anyone, and so easily frightened.

“Look, kid, I don’t expect much. Nigel doesn’t even talk to me, and today was the FIRST time he’s spoken in MONTHS. Can you imagine not hearing your best friend talk for nearly half a year?” He stopped a few feet before Adam.

Adam merely shook his head ‘no’.

Darko stuffed his hands into his grey suit pants and sighed. “It sucks. It sucks more than you can imagine, and the pain…” he trailed off, then looked at the ceiling, eyes closing slowly on their own accord, “…just go up and talk to him. That’s all I can ask you to do right now.”

Adam didn’t move or utter a single word.

Darko wondered if he had heard him.

“Look, I know I fucked up your entire day big time, and I’m really sorry. But I really need your help.” Darko had never begged anyone in his entire life for anything. Not even when he'd been tied up and thrown in the back of a truck, brutally beaten and tortured within an inch of his life, and he’d be long dead before he let anyone hear him begging. But for some reason or another, he didn’t feel any loss of dignity or any shame begging this kid for his help.

Adam began speaking, the words flying out of his mouth like a floodgate wide open: “I’m scared of losing my job! Mr. Klieber’s already mad at me because I messed up the order and prices for the dolls! I’m going to miss my space presentation, and the kids will not be able to have the access to the space model toys I was supposed to help make! It will all be because of me not being there, and I didn’t call Beth and Harlan and they are going to be mad and worried too! It is all falling apart, like I knew it would!”

Darko took a few steps back, his eyes widening at the kid’s rant and confessions.

“Woah kid…slow down there!” He held his hands in front of him like a surrender move.

Adam shook his head and clenched his fists by his sides strongly. “No! I am going to lose everything! No money, no payment for the apartment, no home to live in, no food, no cereal and milk, no feeding the ducks, no seeing my little raccoon friends, no asking Beth out to be my girlfriend anymore! I am going to be homeless and out in the street! I’m going to die!”

Darko began to panic, almost second-guessing his decision to bring the kid here in the first place, but
that thought flew out the window as naturally as breathing came to him. Darko was a man who always listened to his gut instincts, and they had saved him more times than he could count on both his hands twice. He knew that deep down, there was something almost like a miracle about this kid, and he was going to stick with that thought.

“Kid! Kid! Listen! Calm down!” He got a bit closer to Adam, who suddenly glared deeply, his dark brown eyebrows marring his handsome boyish features.

“I’M NOT A KID! MY NAME IS ADAM RAKI!” He bellowed out, hands still clenched into fists, but he didn’t move from his spot in the corner.

“Alright! Adam Raki! Listen to me, please!” Again Darko caught himself begging, and again he found it didn’t bother him in the least.

This seemed to work like magic, for the kid named Adam calmed down, but his frown remained on his young face.

“Adam, I haven’t the slightest idea what the fuck you’re really talking about, but I can promise you, you won’t be without a job and you won’t be homeless!” Darko spoke his words with sincerity and utmost confidence, making Adam unclench his fists very slowly, but he still didn’t move from his position at the corner of the kitchen.

“I won’t be going to England to do my work…yes I will have no money and yes I will be homeless.” He said dejectedly.

Darko gave him the most reassuring smile he could muster, which he was sure would likely scare the kid, as Darko didn’t smile too often, unless he was receiving a big fat paycheck, or was in the arms of his wife.

“No you won’t, because you’ll be working for me and getting paid by me.”

Adam looked up at Darko’s nose, not meeting his eyes, but his frown completely had disappeared. “You’ll pay me?” His shy voice breathed out.

Darko nodded, “Yes.”

“Will I be doing my presentations for you?” Adam inquired, his hands completely relaxed at his sides now.

Darko was about to ask what the hell was up with the presentations and all the talk of space toys, when an idea hit him. He saw how excited and flustered Adam had gotten over the aspects of losing his job, so he knew that was the only way he could get him to calm down and stay without running off forever.

“Yes! You'll be doing that! For me, and Nigel!” Darko barked out gruffly before he could stop himself.

This was a really fucking stupid idea already, but for some fucked up reason, it made the kid named Adam pause in thought, his mouth part-way open to form his response.

“You and Nigel want to learn about space toys for children?” He asked, moving his left leg forward half an inch, still fearful and untrusting of Darko.

Darko smiled and moved back to his stool at the counter, wanting to maintain a welcoming and warm environment Adam could settle in and trust in.
“Yes, your boss Mr…Mr…Heiser?”

“Klieber.” Adam corrected shortly.

“Right…Mr. Klieber has written a few papers about the toys you guys make, and Nigel and I think it’s really fucking cool, Adam.” He was lying through his teeth to the kid, which made Darko feel as if he’d received a huge kick in the balls.

He looked at the boyish, innocent face of Adam, and he wanted to take back his lie, but he knew he’d likely make Adam freak out and probably crush his poor little heart. So onward, he lied.

Adam walked forward another inch, eyes on Darko’s chin, but he seemed very calm since he first entered the apartment; his body posture more open and his arms not tightly crossed against his chest or at his sides in fists.

“He said it is for marketing and advertising the space toys for the early education of astronomy for younger children.” Adam spoke again with as much confidence as he could, ready to make a good impression.

Darko grabbed his wine glass and lifted it, nodding up at Adam. “Yeah, exactly Adam. We really want in.”

Adam didn’t move for a long time. “Want in where?”

Darko clenched the glass. “You know…want in…?”

Adam stared at him blankly.

Darko stared back, the only sound in the kitchen the ticking of his Armani watch. Was this kid for real?

“Uh…just…in on this…?” He finished with a bit of a higher pitch in his voice, hoping the kid would piece it together.

“If you mean inside the house, you are already in it. In fact, all three of us are indoors, and we have been for nearly half an hour…but your angry friend could have been here longer, I’m not sure.” Adam explained as if he were talking to a three-year-old child.

Darko wanted to facepalm, but instead he closed his eyelids wearily and forced back a long sigh.

“I mean we both want to hear more about your work, Adam.”

Adam straightened ever so slightly that it was barely noticeable. “Oh…well you could have just said it like that, Mr. Bad Man.” He finished shortly.

Darko this time did sigh out loud. “My name’s Darko, kid. Darko.”

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Darko.” Adam nodded politely like his father had told him to do if he couldn’t and didn’t want to offer his hand for a handshake when meeting someone strange and new.

Darko smiled a very weak smile and held up his drink again, watching the liquid swirl about, drenching the thick glass as he shook the glass, pausing before he threw back his head and drowned himself in the strong alcoholic beverage.

“Cheers, kid.”
After helping Adam settle his belongings in Darko’s guest bedroom, Darko showed Adam his adjoined bathroom in his own bedroom and waited for him to clean himself up and pick out fresh clean clothes to wear.

Adam emerged, freshly shaven, from the steamy bathroom with some hair still wet at the back of his neck, a few beads of water stuck on his pert little nose. He was wearing bright yellow shorts with deep blue little astronauts floating around on them, with a black shirt that read in white capital letters: I ❤ SPACE.

Darko really began to wonder if this kid was almost 29 as he claimed, but didn’t bother asking any questions, feeling dizzy from the alcohol and the headache he’d developed since he walked in the apartment that day.

He simply led the kid to Nigel’s closed bedroom door, all the way at the end of the hallway on the right-hand side.

Darko knocked for two seconds, hoping he hadn’t caught Nigel sleeping, because fuck, was the man ever the grumpiest motherfucker when he had his sleep interrupted.

When Nigel didn’t come to the door, Darko took his chances by twisting and turning the knob and poking his head in the room.

Inside was completely dark, as the blinds had been pulled all the way down, and to Darko’s shock, they had been taped down with thick black duct tape to block out whatever bits of sunlight still kept trying to shine through into the room.

The room was surprisingly tidy, only the bed being a bit unkempt, as Nigel lay still with his head peeking out at Darko, eyes darkening once he saw not just only Darko, but the small-barely-pubescent-boy peeking in at him from over Darko’s shoulders, standing on his toes for the view.

Nigel felt like he was suddenly back at the hospital; being examined by some medical fucking doctors and nurses all day. They had done nothing but gape at him back then like he was some fucked up freak of nature after surviving a bullet to the temple, and he didn’t need it here from this kid, who probably couldn’t grow a beard and pubic hair if his life needed it.

Nigel angrily grabbed another pillow at the bedside, and flung it as hard as he could at both Darko and the kid. It hit Darko square in the face, and made Adam yelp and duck down behind Darko.

“The fuck, frate?!” Darko yelled, bending down to grab the pillow, face turning red from embarrassment and anger.

Nigel didn’t say anything; he only sunk down lower on the bed and pulled the sheets up to cover his head.

Darko turned on the lights violently, almost making the switch and the dimmer snap off the wall. He walked over to the bed and tore the sheets clean off of Nigel in another hawk-like swipe.

“Get up, you lazy fuck!” He almost screamed.

Adam stood, still crouched at the front of the door, but made no move to come in the room after Darko’s outburst of violence. If these men were so violent towards each other, would they treat him even worse if he couldn’t do his job right for them?
Nigel reached for his bedsheets again, but Darko held them firmly behind his body, moving back towards the center of the large bedroom. “No you don’t. I’m tired of seeing you lying around like a corpse feeling nothing but sorry for yourself.” He turned to look at Adam, who crouched down even lower.

“Adam, please come in.” Darko switched the nature of his tone of voice from dangerous to gentle instantly, making Nigel open his eyes a bit more, then cover them abruptly when the bedroom pot lights hit his retinas roughly.

“Nigel, I’ve got someone you need to meet. He’s come to work for us.” Darko watched as Adam carefully treded in the room, looking down, watching his footsteps leave little marks in the thick white carpet as he walked forward.

“Adam, this is my stupid, best friend in the whole world, Nigel Ibanescu.” Darko stepped to the side a bit, allowing Adam to look at Nigel, but he looked and focused more so at his chest instead of his face.

Darko didn’t blame him, considering how Nigel’s face hurt even him to look at most days given the state he was in.

“H-hello.” Adam repeated in the same frightened stammering voice as he had barely 60 minutes ago at the front door when Nigel burst the door open.

Nigel grunted and looked at Adam up and down, eyes lingering a bit on his yellow shorts with the astronauts decorated on them.

Darko smiled lightly; it was as good of a salutation Adam was going to get from Nigel today. They had definitely made some sort of progress.

Adam looked at Nigel’s sandy blonde hair, angular sharp cheekbones, thin-yet-very-handsomely-chiseled lips, and the silvery days-old stubble he was sporting. He flickered his eyes very quickly to meet Nigel’s dark tired eyes, taking a small note of their color and features.

“You know,” Adam began, twiddling and fidgeting with his fingers, “…I saw your clone at the airport in the bathroom before I came here. You look a bit meaner than him, though.”

At this statement, Nigel looked at Darko, who was resisting the urge to break out into a hearty laugh behind Adam.

Nigel’s dark, heated glare only seemed to say: “What the fuck’s going on?!”

Chapter End Notes

Cute little Adam! ^_^ He’s already worked his charm on Darko!
Chapter 7

Adam was sitting on a loveseat in Darko’s office. A light fan hoisted high above on the wooden beamed ceiling slowly turned its blades, creating a small bit of fresh, cool air in the warm Romanian summer weather that had began stuffing the apartment when Darko opened the windows for fresh air.

The fan, however, could do nothing to help take away the mounting and growing tension in the room when Nigel walked in, looked at Adam, and simply glared as he stood rooted to the spot in the doorway.

Adam didn’t mind though, because he was used to people not understanding him his whole life. Harlan and his Dad told him to get used to it, but never really “put up with it”, whatever that meant.

Darko paced the small office while talking to someone on the phone in the far-right hand corner where his desk, laptop, and business folders usually were. He was yelling and swearing in that language Adam didn’t understand.

Adam flipped through the magazines spread all over the coffee table in front of him, wondering why Mr. Darko needed to look at all these women who barely wore any clothes. They were kind of beautiful, now that Adam thought about it, but he didn’t understand what exactly the magazine was trying to advertise or sell.

He picked a magazine up, and held it open. A woman with a perfect hour-glass figure and tits
definitely way too large to be considered natural was lying on a small bed with her legs spread, wearing nothing but a black thong that barely covered anything.

“Is she your girlfriend?” Adam asked Nigel, not meeting his eyes as he looked at the headboard above on the bed in the photo.

Nigel snorted but didn’t crack a smile; he just glared away at Adam, wondering why his usual methods of intimidation weren’t working on this little twink. Usually, with a single deadly look, Nigel had the biggest of grown men turning like mutts with their tails tucked between their legs, running as fast and as far away from him as they could. But this little kid? Not even a titter. It was all very amusing, but annoying to Nigel, and he began to feel his temper flaring.

Darko slammed his hand on the desk, and kicked the rotating chair down onto the floor suddenly, making Adam leap up in shock and drop the magazine.

“Măgar!” Darko screamed, moving the cellphone away from his ear and looking at it before he hung up and clenched his teeth together like a wild dog.

“The fucker hung up on me! I can’t fucking believe it! Motherfuck!” He turned and looked at Nigel, and then Adam, and cleared his throat.

Nigel cocked an eyebrow, barely.

“Adam…I’m…sorry you had to hear that…it was…a business call…” He stated, putting the chair back at the desk and picking some dust and dirt off his white dress shirt more so in shame than anything else.

Nigel shook his head, not believing the effect the little kid was already having on his right-hand man, and longtime best friend.

Adam looked through a few more stacks of magazines, hoping he’d find some about constellations, space, and more importantly; the new telescope he was saving up for purchasing so he could see the upcoming yellow moon that was going to happen in a few more days.

“Nigel, Arvarg told me to—” Darko began, but stopped when he saw Nigel casting him a glare that told him to shut the fuck up before he went on any further.

Right…no discussing business in front of the kid. How Darko could have forgotten was very odd to Nigel, for he had felt the kid’s presence within the room before he had actually even entered it, like an unwanted house guest that had long over-stayed his welcome.

Darko was either getting too used to the kid, or he was growing too soft in his more mature years. Nigel didn’t want to know which of the two it was, for either meant trouble to him and to the business. He wasn’t known for being the big old softie; he was known for being the meanest, baddest motherfucker without remorse or pity, and who’d shot a man ten times through the head before even blinking once. Nigel was going to take his reputation to the fucking grave if he had to do it kicking and screaming, and he wasn’t going to let a small kid who could barely tie his shoelaces from America change all of that.

Darko sighed and turned to Adam. “Kid, you gettin’ hungry? It’s about time we all ate.”

Adam looked up from the magazines and gave a small half smile that made the corners of his mouth tilt up ever so slightly that Nigel didn’t notice it the first time, despite how intently he was glaring at the kid.
“Yes, it’s way past my supper time now, and I will need some food before I begin working on the space toy for you and Nigel.” Adam simply sat at the small loveseat in front of the coffee table, looking back at the floor somewhere.

“Alright kid.” Darko muttered, reaching into his dress pants and pulling out whatever bills of cash he had lying about. “Name your place.”

Adam didn’t say anything for the longest time, but stirred when Darko cleared his throat impatiently.

“I…I was told never to tell strangers where I live.” Adam finished, looking down at his shorts and picturing himself on the moon with the astronauts littered everywhere on the fabric.

Nigel snorted grossly at this, the sound echoing due to how loud it was.

“Pleacă!” Darko growled at Nigel, infuriated with the fact that his so-called-‘friend’ was being more of an asshole than he thought, especially for someone who had been shot and nearly left-for-dead for months on end.

Adam didn’t understand why what he had said seemed amusing to the man named Nigel, but he was glad his new employers were so understanding of the ways his father taught him to protect himself that they didn’t yell at him and get angry enough to fire him.

“Kid…I just mean tell me where you’d like to go get food.” Darko sighed and rubbed both his temples tiredly, wishing the day was over.

“Oh,” Adam sat up a bit, feeling his stomach forming a small growl, “I just want to eat some sliced frozen chicken and broccoli because I usually do the days after I have my macaroni and cheese. Harlan made some for me before I came here but I did not eat much of it, but I will tomorrow.”

“What the fu-” Nigel began, but Darko put his large hand almost directly on top of his lips to shut him up.

“Oh,” Adam sat up a bit, feeling his stomach forming a small growl, “I just want to eat some sliced frozen chicken and broccoli because I usually do the days after I have my macaroni and cheese. Harlan made some for me before I came here but I did not eat much of it, but I will tomorrow.”

“Not even half a year goes by before you talk, and all you can do is cuss, huh?” He hissed as quietly to Nigel as he could before turning his neck to talk to Adam.

“We don’t have that, kid.” Darko said bluntly, hoping the kid would drop it and ask for something else to eat.

“But that’s what I want to eat.” Adam retorted back almost instantaneously.

“But we don’t have it, that’s what I’m tellin’ you!” Darko began, feeling his anger slowly starting to rise. He didn’t mean to get angry at the kid, but he was being impossible!

“I always eat it! I always prepared it at home! I just want to eat before bedtime! There’s nothing I can work with for the space toys because I only see scantily clad women with big breasts everywhere in your magazines, and I don’t think they’re interested in space and lunar eclipses! I just want to do this job and get my money so I can finally buy a new telescope because mine is getting too old but I’m not throwing it out because it’s the first one my dad got me! I can see everything with it, and I saw a lunar eclipse just two years ago. Did you know that there’s going to be a yellow moon coming up soon? This means that the moon will appear to change colors, but it actually doesn’t really change. It only looks like it because sometimes there’s scattering of light through the atmosphere. Moonlight must pass through more atmosphere when it’s on the horizon than when it’s higher in the sky. Then, by the time the moonlight is visible, all the fragments of light on the blue end of the color spectrum have been scattered away by the air molecules, leaving only red, yellow and orange pieces of light.” Adam finished effortlessly, not even a bit out-of-breath.
At this, Darko, still looking at Adam, grabbed the fistfuls of cash, and heaved them into Nigel’s hands forcefully.

He simply walked over and back to the small loveseat where Adam sat and threw himself upon it, kicking up his black socked feet on top of the coffee table and unbuttoning the first few buttons of his clean white shirt.

“Fuck this shit, you two are going shopping. I’m done.” He announced into the room, throwing his head back on the top of the sofa and closing his eyes.

Nigel simply stood, still staring at Adam, but he was no longer glaring or frowning.

30 Minutes Later

Nigel and Adam had located the closest small family-owned-family-run grocery store that was a few blocks away from Darko’s apartment, and Nigel had lead the way inside ahead of Adam, who held onto a small basket he’d picked up as soon as they walked in through the sliding doors of the store.

Nigel wanted to get this done as quickly and painlessly as possible. He somehow felt that this was a bigger form of torture than the time he had been tied upside down and beaten repeatedly with a baton, and then left to die in a meat freezer by a small, over-confident Czech gang that had tried to overpower his gang, and steal his business nearly 5 years ago. He had refused to give information to the small group of assholes as they jeered and mocked him with idle threats of how they were going to gut him like a fat old pig, and leave him to bleed out into a bucket before they cut him up into tiny pieces to mail to his darling dear wife back at home while she waited for him to return.

Nigel hadn’t even blinked or shown a sign of distress as they tortured him into the early hours of dawn.

Darko had then broken down the doors with at least 20 other men behind him, and gunned down the stupid little Czech pricks until they cleared the streets of Bucharest, never to be seen or heard from again. That was how to get business done.

No, Nigel felt that was a fucking cake-walk compared to this shit he was being subjected to because of Darko’s whiny ass.

He looked back over his brown short-sleeved shirt with the propped-up collar that served nothing to shield him from the wide-eyed-baby-blue eyes of the young boy who looked no older than 20 following closely behind him like a lost duckling.

Adam’s hair was neatly combed and tucked to the right side, giving Nigel a view of his clear skinned forehead, which was covered in a small sheen of sweat as they wandered up the first aisle they could find.

Adam hurried behind Nigel, the zipper of his open-blue spring jacket clicking as it hit some cans and packages of food here and there, but the noise didn’t seem to annoy Nigel. He peered back again, almost snickering as he saw how pearly clean and white the shirt was Adam was wearing under his blue jacket. His jeans were a bit of a darker blue, but they were ironed so nicely and straightly, that Nigel wondered if the kid was a serious-ass-clingy-momma’s boy or just a straight-up-nerd who never had gotten laid.

In either case, he soon concluded that he didn’t give a shit; he just needed to grab the kid some lousy grub, and get the fuck out of the small grocery store as quickly as possible before he went more bat shit insane than he already was.
They moved over to the frozen meats section of the grocery store. There were only a small handful of people at this hour in the store; a middle-aged couple who were checking out when they had walked in, and a small group of 4 teenaged punks who probably were trying to catch the store owner off-guard so they could make away with some cash from the till.

The young punks laughed and a few pointed at Nigel and Adam as they walked by them and Nigel opened one of the freezer lids and peered inside.

_Fucking bastards wouldn’t be laughing and pointing when their heads are shoved up their asses, now would they?_

Nigel thought to himself as he moved back and allowed Adam to shift through the freezers and pick out whatever brand of frozen chicken and broccoli he wanted.

Adam held one package up somewhat disappointedly.

“This has funny letters and writing on it I can’t read and understand, and it is not the same brand I like back at home…” He began, sighing as he moved away from the freezer.

_Just take it and shut the fuck up before I strangle you with my bare hands, you picky little fucking shi-

“But dad always told me to try new things, so I’m going to take this one, Nigel.” Adam’s little announcement literally blasted away Nigel’s heated, angry thoughts in a second flat.

Adam flashed a little innocent smile at the freezer, put the food away in his basket, and turned away to continue looking down at the rest of the aisle away from Nigel.

Nigel was for once in his life absolutely dumbfounded.

He had been expecting a temper tantrum, some pouting, crying, whining, and maybe even screaming, but he hadn’t expected the kid to be content in a second’s time. This kid was sure as hell full of surprises, and it had been a long time since anyone surprised Nigel like this.

Nigel just stared in awe at the kid’s retreating back, not sure of what to do for once in his life before something caught his attention.

To the left behind the freezers he could hear soft giggling that sounded feminine. He quickly lifted and tilted his head in the direction it was coming from, and in between the aisles in a gap, he saw a flash of red.

One thought immediately came to Nigel’s mind as easy as taking in breath was.

_Gabi._

Nigel dropped the carton of cigarettes he had been carrying in his hands, and moved to the other side of the aisles. He saw no one.

He began panicking, wondering if his mind was fucking with him, when he saw a black leather coat and a short red-haired woman just about to exit the store.

Her hair! It was the same style and the same color as Gabi’s!

Nigel ran as fast as his long legs could carry him, but somehow, the woman walked faster.

He saw her growing smaller and smaller as she walked out of the doors and into the night.
Nigel nearly smacked his head onto the sliding doors as they closed on him, creating a thick barrier between him and finding out if that woman was really his Gabi.

“Open the fucking door!” He screamed at the owner, but the owner wasn’t at his till.

Nigel panted heavily against the doors, his breath fogging up the glass before it opened on its own.

Nigel leapt out through them like a caged animal being freed, and he looked up and down the almost empty parking lot for the longest time.

“GABI!” He yelled out into the night.

“GABI?!?!” He hadn’t been expecting an answer, but a small part of him hoped, and it hoped like Nigel had never hoped before.

Only the small buzzing of the cheaply lit lights responded to his calls, and Nigel felt like the biggest asshole moron on the planet for calling out in the middle of the night to Gabi.

The doctors had said he’d probably be seeing things due to the head injury, but he had thought that was all bullshit medical babble up until now.

But there was no way he was going to admit to anyone he had likely been imagining seeing his darling ex-wife in the middle of the night in a cheap-ass grocery store.

Nigel closed his eyes painfully, then turned back, itching for a fucking cigarette, when he suddenly remembered in his panic and alarm, he had dropped and left them in the store.

He had moved a few feet barely when he remembered something else…or rather, someone else- he had left behind in the store: Adam!

Nigel began running back to the front doors of the store faster than he had exited, hoping and praying the kid would stay in the fucking store until he found him.

Darko was going to fucking murder him!

Nigel burst through the sliding doors once again, his head whipping back from the left to the right, but Adam was nowhere in sight.

Nigel ran forward to the freezers, but Adam was not there, either.

He began running aisle-to-aisle, peeking his head up and down them looking for Adam, but it seemed as if the kid had truly vanished.

Nigel almost groaned. He was fucked for sure now.

He reached into his pockets for his cellphone, when he felt a small finger tapping his right shoulder.

Nigel whipped around, fist raised, ready to punch the guy with the over-sized balls who dared touch him, when he froze.

Adam stood directly behind him, eyes raised to look at Nigel’s tattooed neck. He held his frozen food in his arms stacked over each other. On top of the last box of food, rested a few cartons of cigarettes, and beside them aligned perfectly straight, rested a blue lighter that had a small dog’s head on it.

“It kind of matches your dog shirt, but this dog isn’t the same breed as the ones on your shirt. You
also dropped all your cigarettes. You really should stop smoking, because it is very bad for your health and can lead to lung cancer. Lung cancer is one of the most preventable cancers.” Adam presented as if he were speaking for an infomercial, eyes still on Nigel’s neck, not ready to meet his eyes.

The kid was alright, he was safe, and he was ready to go wherever Nigel took him.

“I spent half the cash Beth gave me, but she said it was for emergencies. I guess this is an emergency, and I will tell her that, because I don’t ever lie, ever.” Adam finished, sounding a bit tired at the end of his sentence as he moved his line of vision to the cigarettes.

For the first time in half a year, Nigel smiled a very warm, genuine smile, and it came to him 100% naturally.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was a bit shorter than the others, but I blame the trip, and I also blame Adam's over-the-top adorableness.
Chapter 8

Manhattan, 2 AM

Beth looked at her digital clock on her dresser and began to panic. It was almost 2 AM and Adam hadn’t called her to return her two distressed and stressful voice messages. He said he’d call her as soon as he landed, and when she had checked the departure and landing times of Adam’s flight, she’d seen it had arrived only an hour later than it was due.

Where was Adam?!

Beth picked up her cellphone and hurriedly dialed Harlan’s number. He picked up after the first ring.

“Beth?” His tired-but-alert-voice spoke on the other end.

“Adam hasn’t called.” She said softly, looking at her digital clock and feeling even more panicked when she saw how slowly the time was ticking by.

Harlan tapped something and sighed, “Yeah he hasn’t returned any of my calls either, Beth.”

“His plane arrived safely!” Beth nearly yelled, when she remembered it was in the early hours of the morning.

“He’s probably really tired from all the excitement, Beth.” Harlan tried being as calm and level-headed as he could, even though he knew Adam was a creature of habit, and never strayed off-course from a set schedule.

“He said he’d call…” Beth’s sad voice trailed off into a whisper, swallowed up in the dark, silent
night.

“I’ll call his boss at the first light of dawn, I promise. We’ll find him, Beth.” Harlan said, trying to comfort her as best he could.

Beth smiled a weak, tired smile. It was the best they could do for now. “Thanks Harlan. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight, Beth.”

**Bucharest, 4:30 PM**

Once he had plugged in his cellphone to his charger in an outlet in the walls of Darko’s bedroom after his meal, Adam walked back out into the main living room.

Darko had gone out to meet up with his wife and run some errands, and Nigel was nowhere in the living room.

Adam didn’t want to roam around the strange apartment, and he was about to go to lie down until Darko got back, when he smelled nicotine hitting his nostrils from the far-right hand side.

He turned and gave a soft gasp when he saw balcony doors open to reveal a small, glassy table with silver legs and some plants arranged around the two chairs seated at the table.

On one of the chairs sat a grumpy-looking Nigel, smoking his third cigarette, flicking the ashes into the ashtray in front of him where the other 2 put-out cigarette butts were laying, off and dead to the world like Nigel felt at the moment.

In his right hand, Nigel held the one (and only) picture he had left saved of Gabi. She was bent, leaning forward wearing thick dark sunglasses with red rims and handles that matched her beautiful fiery red hair. The tip of her nose was kissing a single pink rose Nigel had bought her 2 years ago on their anniversary as a gift, and she was smelling it with a small smile painted on her gorgeous red lips.

Nigel had snapped the photo on his IPhone in a hurry, afraid she would change positions quickly after sniffing the rose he offered her. He was still glad he had caught the shot, no matter how angry and broken he was because of her betrayal. It did indeed capture the one-true moment of her rare beauty.

*Why did she have to go and fuck that cunt-suck boy, Charlie Countryman?! We were so happy together before that son-of-a-whore had to ruin everything!*

Nigel’s angry internal monologue and ranting was interrupted when he heard soft feet moving in his direction, and heard the chair opposite his being pulled back a bit noisily, as the metal silver legs scraped along the cement-floor of the little balcony.

Adam sat down in front of Nigel, and looked down at the picture of the woman with the white skin and the red hair when Nigel placed it down beside his elbows and took another drag from his cigarette.

“Who’s that woman?” Adam inquired, feeling warm as the late-afternoon sun hit his body, causing him to involuntarily relax in the hard chair.

“None of your fucking business.” Nigel spat, turning his body to the right and looking out over the balcony railing at the tops of buildings and trees ahead in the horizon.
Adam kept staring at the woman in the photo. “She doesn’t look like your girlfriend in the magazine.” He stated blankly, trying to remember if he indeed had seen the red-haired woman in the magazine at all or not.

Nigel suddenly remembered all the hot, kinky sex he and Gabi had had over the years; all the little scratch marks her red and black painted fingernails had scraped and dug into his skin as she lay beneath him in a moaning hot mess, her red hair matted to the pillow and her forehead…

Nigel snapped out of the memory. Gabi was dead to him, as far as he was concerned.
‘Till death do us fucking part.
He had meant his vows, but she hadn’t.
“Gabi was a wild thing, but no, she wasn’t in those porno mags.” He said, more to himself than to the inquisitive kid seated at the small table.

Somewhere in the streets, a motorcycle roared and a car honked in retaliation.
“I’m waiting for my phone to charge back up so I can call Beth.” Adam announced, finally looking at a few lines in the glassy surface of the table when he felt he had stared at the woman in the picture Nigel was holding long enough. Clearly, Nigel was sensitive about this woman, and Adam didn’t want to be yelled at or spoken to rudely, so he didn’t bring up the woman again.
“I’m preoccupied with not giving a fucking shit as to what you’re fucking doing.” Nigel hissed back in frustration.

Why the fuck can’t a man enjoy a fucking cigarette in peace?!

“Oh. I’m going to go and watch some space videos on Youtube because I think you don’t want me here anymore.” Adam stood up and tucked back his chair as he had found it, walking back into the living room.

His little voice hit Nigel's ears before he disappeared completely out of his sight: "I can tell you're angry because you keep swearing, but I don't know what you're angry at."

Nigel huffed and bit down hard on his tongue to keep his comments to himself.

It was finally peacefully silent, with only the wind, some birds, and the sounds of human life down below in the city to keep him company.

Nigel sat, still looking out into the purple-pink sky, the ashes of his cigarette falling in his lap. He tried getting lost in the sounds of traffic dying down as everyone headed home or out somewhere to enjoy their hours and minutes instead of being like him; sitting and wasting away in his misery and sorrow.

Nigel didn’t want to remember Gabi or that squeaky cunt of a boy she had run off with, but it came to his mind as he felt more ashes falling with a soft ‘plip’ on his dark grey pants.

…..

Fuck it.

Nigel got up, tossed his cigarette down below the many levels beneath the apartment, and walked back to where Adam was seated on the living room chair, headphones on and a captivated
expression on his face as he watched something on his laptop.

Nigel watched Adam’s eyes following from left-to-right something along the screen, and he admired the way Adam’s youthful features were lit up and noticeable now by the light the screen of his laptop was giving off as it bounced back on his face.

Adam’s face was clean-shaven, and so very innocent; not a single wrinkle marring his lovely features in comparison to Nigel’s worn out, exhausted, jaded face.

Nigel almost envied how that young thing could sit there without a care in the world, protected from the world and its darkness by a single laptop, macaroni and cheese, and headphones.

How Nigel ached to have a life so simple, yet so tranquil…

Adam looked up from his laptop and his gaze rested on the belt of Nigel’s pants.

“I can go if you want.” Adam offered, sitting up straight after he paused the Youtube clip.

Nigel shook his head, “No…I just…”

Adam looked back at his laptop, unsure of what to do in this situation. His father had never really prepared him for men like Nigel and Darko, and here he was faced with them and unsure of how he could deal with them.

“Forget it, it’s stupid.” Nigel said, waving away at Adam.

Adam moved away from the laptop, but still sat. “No, you can tell me.”

Nigel almost gaped in complete shock. He had been nothing but rude to the kid, and yet he was still showing Nigel more care and courtesy than even Darko had shown him in decades worth of friendship.

Nigel didn’t know what to say, and it seemed as if Adam had turned into a statue while he sat, expectant of Nigel’s response.

Finally, he clipped out: “Would it be alright if I joined you?”

Nigel almost regretted the words as soon as they flew out of his mouth. He wished he had just walked away like he normally would have done, had it been anyone else in the room. But for some reason, he couldn’t just walk away. This kid wasn’t just a “someone…”, he wasn’t just “anyone…” he was more, yet Nigel didn’t want to really acknowledge that yet.

“S-sure.” Came the soft reply so delicately that Nigel almost didn’t hear it.

8 PM

He had been expecting a rejection, avoidance, and to be ignored, but Nigel had never been expecting the kid to open up to him and give him nearly a 3 hour lecture/presentation on outer space.

Together, they had watched over 5 videos on the moon, solar flares, constellations and where their names came from, and Nigel, ready for a break from the videos, had now asked Adam to explain to him what the Lunar Highlands were.

Adam had spoken with the most energy and enthusiasm Nigel had ever seen in anyone as soon as he asked the question.
“The lunar highlands are elevated areas on the moon that were created by material that accumulated in layers from the ejecta of craters. The highlands are riddled with craters and the rocks found there are thought to be between 3.84 and 4.48 billion years old. These craters were formed by the intense bombardment on the moon in the early days of its existence,” Adam waved his hands excitedly as he explained in utmost detail.

“Their features are the most marvelous and captivating of all.” He continued, and Nigel smiled warmly, noticing the way that Adam’s teeth poked out a bit every time he formed the letter “f” or “v”, noticing how his tongue darted out to wet his lovely, shapely lips when he had gone on a bit too long, and listening to the sounds of his small, quick intakes of breath to continue forward with his profound presentation.

“The light spots on the moon are called technically the lunar highlands. The darker areas of the moon are called maria, and they are lower in altitude than the lighter spots.”

Nigel nodded, not wanting to miss a beat or a word this boy was saying, for he felt if he did, he’d be missing out on the most intriguing, fascinating, and most lively of experiences the world had to offer him.

“What about the rocks found on the moon? I have heard plenty about those before in high school.” Nigel asked, hoping the kid hadn’t run out of energy and stamina. As much as he fought it, he found he couldn’t help how much he craved for more from the kid. He wanted to listen to him talk all night, and it still wouldn’t be enough sustenance to awaken his dead heart.

“The rocks found in the highlands are big and largely anorthosite. This means they are igneous and originate deep in the body of the moon. They form when lava cools over time and are made out of plagioclase feldspar, making the crystals of the rocks are glassy, brittle and nearly transparent. These rocks also have a very large amount of calcium.” Adam answered, his hair falling a bit down onto his forehead as he moved with glee and excitement, proud to be presenting his knowledge of the moon and space to someone so eager and ready to listen.

Everyone else had always made fun of Adam and called him a “loser” for his interest and fascination with space, so he took any chance and opportunity he got to teach everything he knew to this man who had shown him more interest within the first hour of his speech than anyone else had shown him in his entire life. This thrilled and pleased Adam, but he couldn’t bring himself to tell Nigel any of this.

It was always difficult for him to recognize how others were feeling, let alone actually describe to them how he was feeling himself, so Adam ignored it and carried on as Nigel followed every moment of his hands and body as he talked on and on into the early night.

10:58 PM

Nigel smelled a clean scent in front of him directly before he could register what was happening. The last thing he remembered was Adam talking about his favourite constellations and their history before he began yawning and announcing that it was way past his bedtime and that he needed to brush his teeth and get ready to sleep.

Nigel remembered feeling tired himself, but he couldn’t remember what the fuck he had done about it.

He groaned and stirred. He was definitely lying down, but it wasn’t in his own bed. He rolled to his side and felt the cold hard floor of the apartment beneath him, but between it and him was a thin blanket.
What the fuck?

Nigel never liked sleeping on the floors unless it was absolutely necessary. So why was he on the floor now?

He looked up to see the couch a few feet away from him, but it only had a few black decoration cushions on it.

Where was the kid?

Before Nigel could turn to get up, he felt a warm, soft pressure against his legs.

When he turned around to face his other side, he looked down and noticed a pair of legs intertwined with his…creamy white legs with thin sparse dark hair glazed up and down until it touched the top of green shorts decorated with silvery glittered, sparkly spaceships. The shorts carefully hid creamy, yet muscular thighs, and a white shirt, half tucked in half tucked out, revealed a thin, yet deliciously chiseled and toned stomach.

Nigel turned some more until he was face-to-face with the side of Adam’s neck. Adam’s dark brown clean hair was what Nigel had been smelling.

Two small, but strong hands were woven tightly around his waist as Adam slept beside Nigel, breathing in and out like a peaceful little baby.

Holy shit…

Nigel looked down, and let out a sigh of relief when he saw that his pants were still on and his clothes were still in place.

Taking advantage of others when they were sleeping was something Nigel never bothered to try or even think of trying, and he wasn’t going to start now, no matter how adorably cute and peaceful the kid looked as he lay sleeping and curled up against Nigel’s warm body.

…

*Did I just refer to this kid as fucking “cute”?*

Nigel paled, shaking his head, trying to remove himself from Adam’s tight embrace without waking him up.

This proved to be more than a difficult task, because the second Nigel placed his hand over Adam’s arm resting across his waist, Adam turned directly into Nigel and clung onto him tighter, giving out a small content sigh in his sleep. The top of his hair rubbed against Nigel’s neck and some of his chest, as his shirt somehow was unbuttoned to reveal a bit of silver chest hair.

The hair didn’t exactly tickle Nigel, but it caused him to smile and let out half a laugh as quietly as he could. He felt his body feeling rather warm, and it wasn’t because of the warm summer temperature…no, this was a warm feeling pooling deep at the bottom of his belly and coming up to his chest and now was creeping slowly on his face…

Nigel turned and craned his neck, eager to look at Adam’s closed eyelids and thick, long dark eyelashes.

*Wow…*
Nigel leaned forward to smell the top of Adam’s mop of dark brown curls, when he heard a lock clicking.

He immediately sprung to action, causing Adam to gasp out and sit up like he’d been electrocuted; hair frizzled and splayed across the back of his neck.

“Stay there!” Nigel ordered, tearing away from Adam’s side (even though he found he didn’t want to), and making a quick break for the bathroom. He paused to grab a towel from the linen closet beside the bathroom, and slammed the door as he headed inside.

After a few seconds, the sound of the water running in the shower were heard through the closed door.

Adam didn’t understand what was going on, but he considered asking Nigel, when he heard the door open and an exhausted Darko walked in, loosening his black tie, and kicking off his shoes as he threw his briefcase down on the clean floors with a dull “thud”.

“Oh, hello Mr. Darko.” Adam said as he stood up and watched Darko turn his head to the left, then the right, and a small “crick” noise was heard as he stretched his sore neck muscles.

“Hello kid. How’s it goin’?” Darko walked forward, and paused when he noticed the white blanket on the floor beneath the couch, and two pillows that had very obviously been rested upon by two people.

Adam walked back a few steps, looking almost guilty. “It’s going…” He didn’t understand what Mr. Darko had meant, but he felt something was strange.

Darko’s eyes scanned the room for Nigel, and he narrowed his eyes when he heard the water in the bathroom running. “You two manage not to kill each other?” He asked, walking past Adam and pausing at the bathroom door.

“I’m not a murderer, and I’m standing right here alive in front of you, so no. Nigel’s alive too; he’s in the shower.” Adam said as if it were the most obvious and plain thing in the entire world.

“You don’t say?” Darko muttered.

“I did just say it.”

The water stopped running in the bathroom, and Darko placed his hands on his hips and backed away, hearing a rustling of clothes on the other side of the door.

He looked at Adam’s disheveled and rumpled clothes, his messy bed-head, and his tired, slightly puffy eyes.

Nigel emerged from the bathroom, steam billowing out from behind him, towel draped around his neck, his hair slightly wet, but it didn’t appear to be actually washed.

“Darko.” He greeted, avoiding his friend’s curious eyes, and was about to head off to his room when Darko grabbed his hand tightly and forcefully placed a strong hand upon his chest, pushing him back to stand still.

Darko sneered and leaned in close so only Nigel could hear him. “If I didn’t know any better, I’d say you two just got some nookie, frate.” He trained his eyes back on Adam’s sleepy form.

Nigel tore his hand out of Darko’s, visibly pissed off. “Don’t be fucking stupid, Darko. Now fuck
off, I’m tired.”

With that, he marched off to his room.

Darko just shook his head and turned to walk back to Adam. He stopped a few feet away from
Adam, careful not to force unwanted eye contact on him.

“You okay, kid?” He asked, not really believing Nigel’s words.

“Yes.” Adam nodded and rubbed his thigh through the top of his shorts.

Darko watched the movement before pressing a finger against his bottom lip in thought. “Had a good
time then while I was gone?”

Adam didn’t move for a second, but then spoke truthfully: “Not at first, no. First, Nigel was very
rude to me when I sat down in front of him as he was smoking and looking at a picture of a very
pretty woman with short red hair and sunglasses. But then he was nicer to me and we watched
Youtube videos about space and particularly the lunar highlands, he seemed very eager to learn more
and asked me a lot of questions about it, and I answered because I know a lot about the lunar
highlands.”

“Did he, now.” Darko didn’t want to interrogate the kid, but he felt there was a lot else that had
happened since he’d left the apartment to have dinner with his wife.

“Yes. He was sitting at that table over there as we watched and talked, and he was sitting very close
to me because he was listening carefully.” Adam answered, still standing stiff as a board and
seemingly not bothered with all the questions.

“Close to you, huh? How did that exactly feel?” Darko asked, shocked to hear that Adam had
allowed Nigel, but not him, to be in such close proximity without a fight or a fit.

“It felt nice, he was hard.” Adam suddenly admitted.

“HE WAS FUCKING WHAT?!?!?” Darko burst out, gripping the armrest of the sofa, strong
fingers digging into the cushions like a death-grip. He couldn’t fucking believe what the fuck he was
hearing!

“He was very firm.” Adam added, moving a few steps back away from the angry Mr. Darko. Had he
said something wrong or something Mr. Darko found unpleasant? Adam was beginning to panic.

“Pervers bolnav!” Darko growled out, ready to go after Nigel and bash his skull into every inch of
the walls of the apartment, when Adam interrupted with his soft, shy voice:

“He was very strong and firm…it comforted me because he was so confident and bold as we spoke
together.”

Oh…

Well...

…Fuck…

Darko calmed down and rolled his eyes so far back into his head that he swore he saw the insides of
his skull, but he was relieved that he had been confused about what was going on the entire time.

“Kid, don’t you ever fucking scare me like that ever again. I nearly had a fucking heart attack!” He
turned and made his way for his room, nearly tripping over his own feet a few times in the process.

After minutes, his bedroom door slammed shut and he uttered a long, loud, tired sigh.

“It felt nice to also sleep next to him…” Adam’s whispered confession wasn’t heard by Darko.

Chapter End Notes

Darko hasn't caught on yet, whew!!
Shower and a Phone Call

Chapter Notes

I wish I never took this trip; I'm writing and indoors all day anyway because of a small head cold -_-  
Ah well. At least I am productive :P  
Enjoy this chappie!  

*Warning!* Some very much needed smut and repressed angst from a character *give you three guesses who it is*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 9

“Oh Adam! I’m so glad you called! I was so worried!” Beth clutched a hand to her chest, right above her beating and racing heart once she heard Adam’s voice on the other end of her phone. He had called her around 12 noon, interrupting a work lunch meeting, but she was happy to hear him nonetheless, as she had been about to walk into Mr. Klieber’s office herself after her shift to have a chat with him.

Adam sat down on Darko’s large but comfortable mattress, smiling and picking at some loose bits of fabric in the creamy white stitching. “Thank you, Beth, I’m very happy here.”

“How’s your work?” She asked, looking at her watch and realizing she still had time before she had to be back.

“Oh, it’s good, but not really like I had imagined.” Adam responded, reaching forward to pick at the fabric when Darko walked in, looking for his cufflinks to put on before he had to go meet up with a potential buyer offering a damn fucking good hell of a deal for 20 kilos of ice.

He noticed Adam pulling at bits of thread in his expensive sheets and saw red.

“What’re you doin’ kid? That’s Egyptian cotton!” He hissed, moving Adam’s hand away from the sheets, irritated that the kid had to constantly occupy his mind with something.

Beth took a sharp intake of breath, indicating that she’d heard Darko’s voice. “Adam, who was that?” She asked, her heart beating a bit faster at the way the voice had spoken to Adam in such a scolding harsh tone.

“That’s Mr. Darko! He’s one of my new employers!” Before Adam could explain more, Darko’s eyes widened dramatically. He leapt across the room, dove for, and landed on the bed on his stomach, wrenching the phone from Adam’s hands and into his own.

“Hey!” Adam screeched, but Darko covered his mouth with a large thick hand.

“What? Adam?! Adam?!” Beth screamed in fright on the other end. She couldn’t hear anything except muffled groans and some heavy rustling.
“Adam! You better tell me what’s going on right now!” Beth could see some of her co-workers stopping and staring at her in concern as they walked by her, and already a small crowd began to form.

Darko listened to the panicked woman’s wavering voice, and decided to speak, knowing everyone would be beyond royally fucked if he didn’t.

“Uh…hello?” He uttered, unsure of what the fuck he was to say exactly.

Beth’s breathing somewhat regulated then, but she still was on the edge and ready to signal for someone to call the police.

“Who’s this?” She ventured fearfully, trying to hear if Adam was still there.

“This is Mr. Darko…I’m Adam’s…employer…?” He tried saying it like it was obvious knowledge and he hoped the woman named Beth would buy it.

Beth sighed a small sigh of what sounded like relief, and held up a hand to signal to one of her co-workers to back off as he asked if everything was alright.

“Sorry, hehe, I just, I sometimes worry about Adam.” She flipped her long wavy hair back now that she was sure everything was fine and Adam was safe.

“There’s no need to. I promise he’s having a good time, and he’s working very hard and meeting all our expectations.” Darko breathed as calmly and stilled his voice as best as he could.

“Beppffth!” Adam tried moving his head over so he could free his lips from Darko’s big hand, but as soon as he moved, Darko inched higher up on the bed and positioned himself on top of Adam, the cellphone still attached to his ear with one hand, and with his other hand, he grabbed and shifted Adam so both his hands were clamped together in Darko’s strong one. His legs held Adam’s down roughly on the bed. He pulled Adam’s young body up against his and leaned against the headboard, trying to drown out the noises of the movements. Adam’s back rested against Darko’s strong broad chest, and he wheezed out from the small space he had between Darko’s fingers clamped tightly over his mouth.

“What was that?” Beth asked, vaguely hearing something.

“I have to get back to work, busy day, you know!” Darko laughed, throwing a deadly glare down at Adam, praying he would be silent.

Beth laughed and looked at the time, knowing her lunch break was almost up. “Yes, me too. Thank you for the chat, Mr. Darko,” she began gathering her things to head back, "I’m glad you’re pleased with Adam’s work. He’s a very hard worker, I can vouch for that personally.”

Darko held onto Adam tighter. “He’s definitely a fighter.” He almost growled when he felt Adam’s elbows jabbing his ribs, but due to years of being tortured and brutally beaten within an inch of his life, the little efforts Adam was making seemed like a pinprick in comparison.

“He sure is! Well, thanks again Mr. Darko, have a great week!” Beth bid him goodbye, and hung up.

Darko hung up and tossed the phone on the far end of the bed.

“FUCK!” He screamed once he felt Adam’s little teeth bite his hand rather roughly.

Adam took in mouthfuls of air once Darko removed his hand. “I wanted to talk to Beth!” He gasped
out, chest heaving in and out violently, an angry red blush forming on his cheeks as he glared at the wall behind Darko.

“You talked enough.” Darko looked at his hand, and then stood, pointing a finger threateningly at Adam.

“You don’t ever talk to anyone about me and Nigel, got it?” He instructed, trying not to come off too harsh, for he knew he wasn’t talking to a rival gang member or a fucked-up druggie trying to steal from him, but a young man who was a little different than everyone else, but otherwise harmless and innocent of half the shit he and Nigel had done in less than a day’s work.

Adam was shocked as to what had caused this violent, threatening, menacing outburst, but he didn’t want to risk losing his job and getting kicked out of the apartment, so he looked down at the carpet and nodded meekly.

“I feel I have done something wrong. I feel I should apologize.” He said as genuinely as he could, although his voice came off monotone and very bland.

Darko sighed. “If only you could understand why I do what I do, kid.”

1:22 PM

Nigel closed his eyes and sighed happily and peacefully when the first spray of the warm water in the standing shower in his bathroom hit his aching body, soothing out any tension he had left over from the last few days.

He opened his eyes and moved his medium-length hair out of his eyes, gathering it behind his ears, his fingertips massaging his scalp and causing some relief for him. If he could, he’d stay in the shower all damn day.

Nigel grabbed the bar of soap on the stainless-steel shower shelf, and sat down on the shower bench built in the stall. He carefully lathered his body up and down, watching the water wash the dirt and grime off his body and push it down into the drain below.

More wet hair hung loosely in his face, and he pushed it back, pausing and frowning when his fingers slid across the rough scar on his forehead and by his temples.

He withdrew his hand as if he’d been burned, and he resisted the urge to fling the soap at the walls and break the glass doors of the shower.

He didn’t need the fucking reminder, but it went with him wherever he went.

Nigel sat for the longest time on the bench before he got up and resumed his showering. Outside, he heard the muffled voices of Adam and Darko, but he focused more on Adam’s plain, yet very interesting lovely voice.

Nigel grabbed a bottle of Men’s Shampoo, but didn’t squeeze any onto his hand.

Maybe it was the decline in action over the years, maybe it was the fact that he hadn’t been in Darko’s strip club in months, maybe it was because he hadn’t paid the cable and internet bill and wasn’t able to watch his favourite porn channel, but whatever the reason exactly, Nigel looked down to see his thick cock; tumescent, heavy with need and arousal, the tip pressed against his firm abdomen.

Nigel suddenly wished he had that picture of Gabi in his vicinity, but then he remembered that she
was probably off sucking the cock (if he even had one) of that fucking-freak-piss-bag Countryman.

Disgusted with that notion, Nigel closed his eyes as he tried to urge his needy cock down with the palm of his hand. When that didn’t work, Nigel tried picturing what a younger version of himself would have used to get off.

Two sexy blondes with large tits and dark pink nipples usually did the trick. They would start off rubbing him down, and kissing and sucking at his neck and ears before turning their attention on each other, touching and kissing in front of him.

Nigel would listen to their slutty little moans and his cock would grow harder by the second.

Holding onto that thought, Nigel opened the lid of shower gel, slid it generously over his cock, and began a slow and steady pace, hearing the moans and coos in his head and ears.

He wondered if Adam made noises like that when he was in the throes of passion and in a heated moment. Nigel imagined those baby blue eyes half open, rolled back, head tilted, that long pale neck offered in supplication ready for nibbling, biting, kissing and sucking. Adam would probably be a screamer, and a damn good one, his muscles growing taut as he shivered in pleasure as his nipples would turn hard and a bit red from being bitten and sucked lightly upon.

His voice would soon turn from low, soft moans to higher pitched whines and screams as his body moved up and down on top of a hard cock, his little tight hole taking the entire length in and out and in and out again and again until he was a small, shaking, quivering mess of sweat and cum.

Nigel wondered what kind of face Adam would make when he came. Would his eyebrows be raised high upon his forehead displaying absolute bliss? Would he clench his eyes shut together, his mouth and lips forming the perfect shape of the word “Oh” as he moaned that word out over and over as he was pounded into?

Would Adam dip his head low and stick his ass up, arching in the air like a dancer on display? Would those dark brown curls be messily thrown over his neck as he was pulled back up on his knees, having his earlobe nibbled on and his cock stroked until he came, sobbing and moaning in Nigel’s strong warm hands?

As soon as he had pictured this final thought, Nigel clasped his left hand on the tiled wall of the shower, and he groaned as he came stronger and faster, spurt after spurt, thickly all over the wall and onto the top of his thighs. He didn’t remember having an orgasm this hard and this mind-blowing in years, not even with Gabi…

Nigel caught his breath and after he had recovered, he felt his heart clenching and beating wildly.

He had just orgasmed to his first ever fantasy involving a man…

Nigel angrily turned off the water in the shower, grabbed his towel and headed out.

Angry knocking came from the other side of the bathroom door, breaking him into a fouler mood than he already was in.

“What the fuck is it now!?” He barked, drying his body off quickly and flinging the towel in the hamper.

“Tomaso is here, Nigel.” Darko said, then Nigel heard him walk away from the door.

Nigel groaned loudly, not ready and not looking forward to another massage therapy session with his
regular, professional personal masseuse.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter 10 should be very interesting ;)

Chapter 10

“Adam, I’m going to head into the basement with Nigel and Tomaso for about an hour. While we’re gone, can you draw me a diagram sketch of the space toys you had in mind for us?” Darko handed out some large white pieces of paper to Adam, and gently nudged him into the drawing room, which was formerly known as his “office”, where Darko and Nigel did anything except drawing.

Adam clutched the drawing materials and the papers to his chest and nodded, ready and eager to please Mr. Darko and Nigel with his ideas and creations.

“One hour, Adam. We’ll come back up for you when we’re done, okay?” Darko said clearly and patiently, hoping Adam would stay still enough for the hour.

Tomaso, a clean shaven middle-aged man with silver and coppery red hair looked over at Adam and smirked, wondering who the strange kid was in Darko’s apartment.

“Seems you’re recruiting kind of young, Darko.” He said with a heavy Italian accent.

Normally, whenever Tomaso came over for physical massage therapy, that also was code for “business” talk between Nigel and Darko. Tomaso used to be a private investigator born and raised in Italy, but he “retired” when he felt he was underpaid and overfucked by his colleagues and employers. He knew too well of how the drug cartels were corrupting the polizia, and taking off to Romania, he established his own private investigations; working under the guise as a masseuse for Nigel, and regularly visiting him in person to update him on what was going on in the streets and across the borders for the drug shipments and trades.

It killed two birds with one stone, and that was good enough for both Nigel and Darko.

The trio headed down to the large basement, Tomaso closing the basement door as Darko opened the door to the exercise and adjacent steam room, and set up shop for them at the far end of the exercise room.

Nigel took off his shirt, pants, and socks, and almost as if he were on auto-pilot, climbed over the soft black Master Massage massage table after he had taken off his black boxers.

He fit his head in the head slot and closed his eyes, hearing Tomaso gathering his clothing that was strewn on the floor, and folding it neatly and placing it on top of the seat of a chair placed against one of the walls in the exercise room.

Darko sat down on another chair, and took out his tablet, ready to take down some notes as their
usual discussions began.

“So who’s the bambino, Nigel?” Tomaso asked, washing his hands at a sink in the bathroom before he walked back and felt the back of Nigel’s neck for tension and pressure.

“Adam Raki. He has Assburger’s Syndrome.” Darko answered for Nigel, his mind buried in his tablet.

Nigel glared even though he couldn’t be seen. “That’s Asperger’s Syndrome, you fucking idiot.” His words were somewhat distorted by the pressure the massage table’s face slot held against his cheeks, but he ground out the words anyway.

“Sugi pula, Nigel.” Darko blurted, tapping away at the screen of the tablet with his fingers, seemingly bored already.

Tomaso laughed as he spread out some soothing oil over Nigel’s back that always made Nigel shiver and curse under his breath first until he got used to the sensation of it across his skin.

“You two are absolutely hilarious. Especially you, Nigel. Getting all worked up over a kid barely out of high school.”

“He’s 28.” Nigel muttered in retaliation, feeling his cheeks heat up and ever-so-grateful no one could see it.

"A child. He's not worth your anger, Nigel," Tomaso said in an eerily calm voice as he began at the top of Nigel's shoulders in circular motions, "...we need to find you a charming young lady, however..."

Darko snorted. “Nah, I bet that old cock of his hasn’t seen or felt a pussy in years.”

“You fucking ugly cock sucker.” Nigel argued and tried to get up on his hands, but Tomaso tsked and pressed a strong hand down in the center of his back, pushing him back down flat on his stomach.

“You have a lot of tension and knots all over, friend.”

Nigel wasn’t an idiot. He had dealt long enough with Tomaso to understand his double entendres. They had a lot of enemies behind them, namely the sons of whores Petrovs.

“How fucking bad is it, then?” Nigel asked, bracing himself for the worst.

“Not too bad; they think you’re a dead man, Nigel. I think this is the best thing that could have happened to you outside of Gabi leaving.” Tomaso’s hands moved expertly down to Nigel’s spine, massaging and tenderizing his sore muscles.

“Doesn’t sound too good.” Darko retorted, crossing his legs on the chair ahead of them, eyes still on his tablet screen.

“Think about it, Nigel. They think you’re dead. What’s better than being murdered by a dead man? Who would leave behind no trails of evidence for the polizia but a dead man? You’d gain your reputation back, and they’d never fucking expect a drop like that.”

Nigel nodded and immediately wished he hadn’t; his neck was more stiff and sore than he originally thought.
“The bloated leeches are too fucking full of themselves and too fucking high on their power to anticipate anything from you.” Tomaso’s fingers danced over and over from the left side of Nigel’s ribs to the right, and Nigel closed his eyes, imagining, and picturing his victory.

He would stomp out and squash the fucking cunt-ass Russian gang until they couldn’t even walk on their own fucking two feet back home where they belonged. He would make sure of it; he would cut off their legs and leave them as little stumps, torturing them for days on end by pouring salt on their open wounds and laughing as he pressed the tip of his lit cigarette into their skin, branding them as a permanent fucking reminder of who they would never and should have never fucked with.

He would fucking be remembered, revered, feared, respected as he once was. He would have Adam at his side, wearing fancy, fashionable suits that Nigel would buy for him. He would take care of Adam like he deserved to be taken care of.

He would cook for him, feed him, and he would walk down the streets of Bucharest with Adam tightly in his arms, holding his hand, dipping him back and kissing him on that lovely sweet little mouth…and he didn’t give a flying fuck who saw or questioned it.

“Alright Nigel, turn over, I need to make sure you’re okay in the front for your shoulders.”

Nigel turned around without a second’s thought, picturing Adam on a hot sunny day in his bed, draped over him, naked and exposed only for him to see in all his glory. Nigel could have sworn his mouth was watering.

When he turned, he heard Tomaso laughing like he’d never heard him laugh before.

“What the fuck do you find so fucking funny, Tomaso?” He growled, feeling his moment ruined and the fantasy of Adam slowly disappearing in the back of his mind.

Tomaso laughed harder and louder at this, and after many minutes of boisterous laughter, he pointed down at the towel covering Nigel’s lower half.

Darko looked up, followed Tomaso’s finger, and broke out into a hearty loud laugh of his own.

“Fuck you both, what the fuck is it?!” Nigel growled and stood up straighter on the massage table, ready to knock out both their fucking lights for laughing at him.

“Oh Nigel, I had come here expecting to gain a physical, biological response from re-awakening your muscles, but I wasn’t expecting a response from THIS!” He pointed between Nigel’s legs.

Nigel looked down and noticed the towel had been tented upward. He was aroused for the second time in less than an hour.

He got up abruptly, leaping to his feet and covering his front with the towel firmly in place, feeling his face growing red from embarrassment.

“That’s the old Nigel I remember, you’re a man after all!” Darko laughed, little tears forming in the corners of his eyes.

Tomaso began packing his things up, but laughed even louder at Darko’s comment.

“Oh, prietenul meu, you weren’t thinking of Gabi just then, were you?” Darko asked pointedly.

"That bitch is dead to me and you know it, Darko. What a stupid fucking question!” Nigel barked in disbelief at his friend, who surprisingly found this proclamation even more amusing and he tipped his
head back and laughed even harder for minutes.

“Oh, go on and keep fucking laughing, Darko. Not like you can do shit about anything anyway.” Nigel growled angrily, grabbing at his clothes, and dressing in the corner of the room behind a small folding door.

“I plan on doing something about it, Nigel.” Darko answered as he put his tablet away into his pocket.

“Like what? Laughing some more?” Nigel asked rudely, missing a few buttons of his shirt in his hurried state and angry frame of mind.

Darko stood and brushed off his clothes and straightened his tie. “No. I booked us all a weekend vacation trip. You need a rest, Nigel. A proper rest.”

“What?” Nigel asked, not really sure he had heard his friend the first time.

Tomaso smirked, almost knowingly and turned to head to exit the basement. "Ah, now that's good thinking, ragazzo."

“We’re going to the cottage you own in Eforie Nord with my wife and her sister Nadia. It’s about time I introduced you to a real woman who can meet your needs, Nigel.” Darko decided, tapping at the tablet in his pocket, and pulling it out to show their schedule had been done.

Nigel moved away from the cover of the door and grabbed the tablet. Indeed, the cottage had been marked on Darko’s calendar, and he had sent a screenshot of it to his wife, Verka, in a chat head on the bottom of the screen. They would be leaving tomorrow; Friday afternoon.

“Pizdā.” He said as he glared back up defeatedly, as Darko flashed him a big, sarcastic shit-eating-grin.

“You’re welcome, Nigel.”

Chapter End Notes

Darko's become something of a cockblocker :S
Chapter 11

Eforie Nord was one of the most beautiful vacation and spa resorts in Romania Adam had ever seen, but the car ride over to Nigel's large cottage was the most tedious, excruciating experience of Adam's young life.

Mr. Darko had ignored his efforts at showing him the drawings he had put together for plushie toys of asteroids and meteors for babies and toddlers. Each time Adam tried getting his attention while he packed, Darko waved him off and said: "I'll check it later, kid."

Adam soon gave up on trying to show his fantastic work to Mr. Darko, and instead, turned his attention to Nigel.

He found Nigel also packing two large duffel bags worth of clothes and toiletries in his room.

"Nigel, can I show you the toy ideas I completed for babies and toddlers?" Adam asked gently, eyes full of hope that Nigel would give him the time of day that Mr. Darko hadn't.

Once Adam's sweet honey-like voice hit his eardrums, Nigel automatically stopped his packing, eagerly determined to give Adam his 100% undivided, full attention.

He smiled and lead Adam to sit on his bed. "Of course, space cadet."
Nigel had jokingly conjured the nickname for Adam overnight, and when Adam's cheeks flushed an adorable pink, Nigel felt it was okay to keep referring to him with that pet name.

Adam sat a bit away from Nigel, but Nigel didn't mind as he leaned over to get a good look at the drawings. To his wonderment, he found that Adam was a much better artist than he'd thought.

With precise and such delicate fine detail, Adam had drawn a meteor with the burning little tail, giving him a name: 'Matty the Meteor', and a happy smile with wide eyeballs. Right below 'Matty the Meteor', he had drawn a similar-looking asteroid with sunglasses, flashing a big grin. Its name was 'Arnie the Asteroid'.

"These are so good, space cadet! I'm proud of you." Nigel wanted to reach up and loop a big arm around Adam's shoulders, but he thought better of it; he didn't want to freak Adam out and didn't want to risk his own old, treacherous, lust-filled body respond to the warmth that Adam was radiating.

Adam laughed a very excited laugh that sounded like a teenager full of life and youth. "Thanks Nigel. I have to get started on the toys for the middle-school kids soon. I organized them all according to age-groups because I once read in a psychology textbook that every age-group is important to the development of the whole person and every age-group is full of their own specific needs and requirements."

Nigel's eyes widened and he chuckled briskly. "That's true, space cadet. Gotta make sure the kids have a good educational and fun experience, huh?"

Adam nodded, "Yes, and I think I should definitely make some sort of a chart for the kindergarteners; a chart that has the alphabets and will represent different concepts about space per letter in the alphabet."

Nigel nodded, following along well. "Like 'A' for 'Asteroid', 'B' for 'Black Hole'"

"'C' for 'Comet'..." Adam continued, but stopped when he felt Nigel move close to him on the bed.

"I like it, space cadet. I think it's amazing."

Adam smiled bashfully and looked down at his hands and feet. "Y-you do?" He asked, wondering if Nigel really meant his comment, or if he was just trying to be nice. Adam hoped it was the former.

"I think it's fucking brilliant." Nigel said with pride and strength reflecting in his voice.

This caused Adam to slowly look up. He was going to try to meet Nigel's eyes, even if it bothered him.

He slowly looked up at the silvery brown pants Nigel wore, admiring how long and toned his legs were even through the fabric, then looked up at his shiny black belt, feeling himself blushing when he looked to see that Nigel was fit and firm in the stomach and his chest stood out broadly and thickly. Adam's eyes fluttered over to Nigel's toned, tanned muscles showing through his short-sleeved-cut black dress shirt. He nearly gasped when he looked up too quickly to see Nigel staring at him, meeting his eyes.

Adam broke eye contact from shyness and shock, and instead focused on Nigel's chin and lips. He suddenly wondered if they would feel as soft and sensual as they appeared if he leaned over and placed his own lips on top of Nigel's...

Adam's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of someone clearing their throat.
Both Nigel and Adam turned to face the doorway, and Nigel glared when he saw Darko.

"What the fuck do you want?" He ground out, feeling the back of his lower molars jamming against the top jaw ones.

"You're supposed to be packing. Verka and Nadia will be meeting us at the cottage; I barely have enough room in the minivan for all my shit, your shit, and Adam's shit." Darko looked ahead with a tired expression on his face, his eyes appearing to be slightly red in the afternoon light peeking in through the white blinds at the window.

He stopped once he took a good long look at them.

"Nigel...you took the tape off the fucking blinds?" He asked, pointing ahead at the windows.

Nigel shrugged. "I was tired of it being so fucking dark in here, so fucking sue me."

Darko was about to respond when Adam interrupted: "I don't understand why we're all taking a 'shit' in the minivan..." He stressed the word 'shit' very lightly, as if he was afraid someone was going to yell at him for cursing.

Nigel slapped his knee and laughed for the longest time he could ever remember laughing. He laughed so hard he saw little stars behind his clenched eyelids. He laughed so hard until he felt out of breath and dizzy. He didn't ever remember Gabi making him laugh this way...

Darko turned and walked out of the room. "I'll be in the fucking minivan."

Eforie Nord, Nigel's Cottage, Evening

The cottage was absolutely enormous. It almost looked like a house; two floors and a large wine cellar in the lower level easily viewed through the large windows that acted more like walls than windows given how long and large they were.

Beautiful exotic flowers sitting in bushes and shrubs littered the front of the cottage and decorated the sides.

A small birdhouse hung in the center of the front yard by a large black lamp, which was off for the time being.

The lights were on in the cottage, and a small bright red Peugeot RCZ was parked on the stone gravel of the driveway. Verka and Nadia were already inside the cottage, and Adam could confirm it.

He looked up to see curtains pull aside and away from one of the main large windows in the front of the cottage on the second floor, and he saw the frame of a tall, voluptuous blonde haired woman wearing a tight, wavy, super-short red skirt and a matching red strapless top waving enthusiastically at them as they parked and began unloading the minivan.

Darko was the second to notice her after Adam, and he laughed and clapped his hands together when he had exited the car. The blonde-haired woman ran from the windows all the way to the main floor of the cottage, and flung the door wide open and ran directly at Darko with her arms open and raised.

She squealed and leapt up into his arms, and he folded his large ones around her, hugging her tightly to his chest and they both laughed.
"Verka, iubirică mea!" He kissed the top of her head, and Adam and Nigel just stared, Nigel pulling out the last of their bags from the minivan.

The happy couple kissed passionately on the lips for a while, and then it was Nigel's turn to clear his throat as he and Adam stood by awkwardly and watched.

Darko stopped kissing the woman and turned to look at Nigel and Adam, his arm draped over the woman's waistline protectively. Her arms found their way around his neck, looped together, her red nail-polished fingernails grazing and caressing his skin playfully.

"Adam, this is my wife, Verka. Verka, this is Adam Raki." He nodded at Adam and then looked back at his wife lovingly.

Verka giggled and waved her fingers at Adam. "Charmed!" She said in a high-pitched playful voice, while Darko reached down and played with the ends of her streaked, wavy blonde hair.

She turned her dark brown eyes to Nigel and frowned as if she had seen something unpleasant.

"Nigel." Was all she said before she rested her head on her husband's strong shoulder.

Nigel scoffed and rolled his eyes. "Wanna help me get this inside, Darko?" He kicked a bag up with his right long leg, bounced it up on his knee and held it briefly before throwing it at his friend with far more force than necessary.

Verka yelped and moved back just in time before the duffel bag hit Darko square in the chest.

Darko muttered out an "oomph!" catching the bag mid air deftly before it fell onto the gravel.

"Thanks...asshole." He glared at Nigel, but turned and walked with his wife behind him.

Adam was about to follow them when he saw two beautiful green eyes hovering in the doorway.

When he moved closer, he saw a young woman in her mid-thirties standing and looking at Nigel with a small shy smile on her lip-glossed thick lips. She had medium length straight red hair, was wearing a black long sundress with the back completely removed, revealing her pale white shoulders, her collarbone sticking out a bit.

She had a healthy-looking round face, and lovely large green eyes, with smokey blue eye-shadow curtaining her eyelids. Pushed back on her forehead, were her yellow sunglasses.

"Nadia, îngeraș you look absolutely stunning!" Darko reached forward, grabbed, and pulled the red-haired woman to his chest, hugging and squeezing her tightly.

She pet him on the back, and broke away out of his tight grip, blushing a deep red blush.

"Darko, hands off my little sister." Verka said softly, but there was a mild threat beneath her words, Adam sensed.

Darko's smile fell and he nodded quickly, straightening up. "Of course, Verka."

Nigel snickered and leaned in close to whisper in Adam's ear: "Verka always has worn the pants in the relationship."

"But she's wearing a red skirt now, and it looks very beautiful." Adam said, cocking an eyebrow in confusion.
Nigel laughed a bit louder than he intended, causing Nadia to blush deeper at the sound as she tucked a straight stray strand of hair behind her ear.

Once Darko and Verka were inside, Nadia began walking right up to Nigel, her earrings and bracelets clinking and tinkling together, the shine from the sun hitting them hurting Adam's eyes.

"You okay, space cadet?" Nigel asked in concern, causing Nadia to stop mid-walk and stare at Adam with slight jealousy creeping onto her beautiful face.

Her thin red eyebrows tightened on her brow and her lips twitched slightly, but that expression was soon gone, and she smiled as warmly as she could.

"Nigel, is this your friend?" She asked, not even bothering to regard Adam and ask him herself.

Nigel fought the urge to tell her to piss off. He was going to try and be on his best, best behaviour, only as a favour to Darko for putting up with his depressed ass for nearly half a year. Plus, he didn't want Adam to think any less of him than he probably already did.

"This is Verka's sister, Nadia." He introduced her to Adam swiftly, looking past her tiny frame and catching Darko pinching his wife's ass through her tight skirt in the hallway of the cottage as she giggled.

Nigel smiled a fake smile, crooked teeth poking up from his upper lip, and he held the bags tighter in both his hands. "Hello Nadia."

"I can help with those." She offered, extending a thin arm to grab one bag.

*Your arm will fucking break like a twig before I've even placed it in your palm.* Nigel nearly chuckled at the imagery.

"No, that's okay. I've got it." He brushed past her gently and Adam waddled closely behind, stopping when he stood beside Nadia.

"Your perfume smells nice." He said dully and blankly before he walked inside.

2 Hours Later

The cottage had 4 bedrooms; 2 regular ones and 2 guest ones, all decorated generously. The beds had expensive white, red, and cream coloured sheets spread on the surfaces of the beds, with flowerpots hanging in the corners of the room, a 60-inch widescreen TV in every bedroom at the front mounted high on the wall.

On the main floor past the hallway was the kitchen, a large window facing the beach off in the distance used for many years of great tourist activities. A small breakfast nook sat to the left of the black gas-lit stove and matching black fridge.

Adam sat perched upon the white and light green striped cushions, looking out the window, and tried to follow the movement of the waves of the beach waiting ahead beyond the cottage. The swaying thick, tall green trees caught his attention next, and he tried naming the different trees in his mind when he felt a warm body next to his.

He nearly fell off the seat when he saw Nadia beside him, a small cup of lemonade in her hands. She sat, staring straight ahead in front of her.

Adam tilted his head in puzzlement at her. Was she also an Aspie? Usually Neurotypicals tried
forcing eye contact with him and tried looking at him directly, but this woman was entirely avoiding him, visually.

She reached up and took her sunglasses off her forehead, and straightening her hair with her fingers, she sighed.

"So how long have you known Nigel?" She asked, flicking the handle of her cup once she had massaged her scalp enough.

Adam thought she may have been irritated as he noticed how her fingers began tapping up and down on her cup like a spider with tap dance shoes tapping away on hard floors.

"A few days now. We met accidentally and forcibly." He answered her honestly and sincerely.

"What?" She was about to hound him more for answers when Darko and Nigel came up to the breakfast nook.

"Nadia, my beauty, I was wondering if we could borrow Adam for a bit?" Darko asked sweetly, already reaching down and grabbing Adam by the shoulder.

"Don't pull on him like that, Darko." Nigel growled under his breath, and both Darko and Nadia paused and gazed in bewilderment at Nigel.

"Eh...forgive him, Nadia; the sun's been hitting his head too long as we drove here." Darko gave Nigel the dirtiest look he could muster and he waited until Adam got up and followed both him and Nigel into the sitting room.

When they were sure Nadia couldn't hear them, Darko spoke: "Adam, you can go upstairs to the second guest room on the left hand side of the hallway. Nigel and I have to prepare dinner."

Adam was about to speak but Darko held up a hand to continue: "Yes, I brought your macaroni and cheese, don't worry."

Adam smiled. "Thank you, but I want to sit down here. Maybe your wife wants to hear about the space toys!" Adam didn't let Darko finish. He immediately headed for the stairs to grab his suitcase where he had stored his drawings. He hoped Darko's wife would find them as amazing as Nigel said they were.

"Nenorocitule." Darko sighed, but didn't argue after him.

He turned to look at Nigel frowning heatedly down at him, his eyebrows tightly set on his brow, his thin lips in a tight line pressed together.

Darko gaped but then shook his head.

"What?" He growled and made his way to the kitchen.

20 Minutes Later

Fortunately for Nigel, the kitchen's entrance directly faced the sitting room, giving him a clear view of the back of Adam's head as he sat on a forest green leather loveseat, holding up his drawings and talking to himself mostly as Verka checked her cellphone and occasionally muttered: "Yeah, mhm" to Adam, sitting on a cream, soft, cushiony chaise by the windows.

Unfortunately for Darko, Nigel's attention seemed to be anywhere except in the kitchen behind the
Calacatta Gold Marble Slab countertop, where he was standing and supposed to be cutting mushrooms, tomatoes, bell peppers, and onions over a wooden chopping board.

Nigel's cutting was absolutely atrocious and sloppy; the large dicing knife wavering in his grip, sometimes slicing at the chopping board instead of the vegetables, and sometimes slicing away at thin air.

Darko rolled his eyes but turned to try to zone in on what was causing Nigel's distraction. He followed Nigel's eyeline and looked into the sitting room at where Adam was seated, talking and pointing at his drawings, when suddenly Nadia came up behind him and blocked Nigel's vision.

Darko, mistakenly thinking Nigel was staring at his sister-in-law, grinned like the devil.

"Isn't she stunning, Nigel?" Darko poked his friend with his elbow, making the other man inch away to the side as he picked a freshly rinsed over red pepper from the basket, then placed it to the side of the chopping board.

"Sure." Nigel answered all-too-quickly, eyes still trained ahead in the sitting room.

Darko nodded, "Verka's whole fucking family is this beautiful, too. I can't believe I'm married to, and fucking the hottest woman in all of Bucharest every fucking night!"

Nigel wasn't listening to his friend; he was trying to move his eyes without moving his head and neck to alert Darko as he tried to catch a small glimpse of Adam from behind Nadia's obstructing frame, as she bent over to peek at Adam's drawings.

For once, I actually want a woman to get her ass out of my face.

Nigel’s eyes zoned in like a hawk narrowing down on its next meal, in his mind, cursing Nadia six ways from Sunday. He wanted to look at Adam and he wanted to relax and lose himself in that gentle, soft voice (instead of listening to Darko's blabber) as he explained everything about his space toys there was to explain.

He wanted to abandon his spot in the kitchen and zoom over to Adam’s side, perched on the seats by his side, ears trained on Adam for hours and hours until they both lost track of time. He wanted to suffocate in the blue, vast oceanic view that were the colours of Adam’s eyes, only to swim up to the surface and take in the breath that was Adam's physical beauty, and almost burst apart in glee and content…

“Nigel! Snap the fuck out of it!” Nigel backed away and batted Darko’s hands out of his face as the annoyed man snapped his fingers, and waved impatiently at Nigel.

“Get your fucking hand out of my fucking face, Darko!” Nigel’s face scrunched up once he smelled the leftover onion residue on Darko’s fingers. He violently shoved his hand roughly back down on the countertop.

“What the fuck’s wrong with you? If you wanna fuck Nadia so badly, just go up to her and fucking ask her!” Darko grabbed his knife and tapped the blade against his chopping board angrily. He couldn’t understand what had happened to the old Nigel! The one who had been so bold and brave that he could walk up to a hot girl in his club and chat her up into his bedroom within minutes of introducing himself.

“Ma doare-n pula!” Nigel grabbed a fistful of tomatoes and slammed them down in front of the knife. Darko couldn’t respond to that except glare.
The pair soon resumed their chopping, and Nigel, in need of calm and peace, looked back up slowly at Adam. He found that Nadia had moved to go sit on the end of the chaise by Verka's feet, hand resting under her chin, eyes on Nigel.

Nigel thanked her internally for moving finally, and breathed out softly through his nostrils as he watched Adam at work.

“It’d be nice if I could make a toy that had some sort of speakers built in, and the kids would be able to press the buttons of the letters for the Alphabet, and that would help them listen to the sounds of the words about astronomy and space.” He went on, rocking slightly in his chair as he waved his drawings up over his head vigorously.

Nigel’s eyes landed on the way Adam’s little delicate fingers gripped the papers, and he wondered how those lovely, artistically inclined fingers would feel like and taste like in his mouth as he kissed and sucked them while stroking Adam’s baby-soft skin…

It would feel serene.

It would feel ethereal.

Adam was ethereal!

No, he was much, much more…

He was…

“Gorgeous.” Nigel spoke his thought aloud, not noticing how Darko opened his mouth to form a response, but then held back and turned back to his work.

Neither of them noticed Nigel lowering the knife blade over his left-hand fingers until it was too late.

“FUCK!!”

Nigel saw the blood before he felt the cut.

The knife hadn’t gone too deeply in his skin, luckily, but it was still bad enough to cause profuse bleeding all over the chopping board, dripping down onto the countertop as Nigel brought his cut index finger to his eyes.

“What the fuck?!” Verka and Nadia stood up, running into the kitchen in fright in a flurry of blonde and red.

Adam got up, but didn’t run right away; he simply stood and held his papers in both hands in front of him.

“He cut himself like a fucking mindless, brainless idiot!” Darko grabbed a paper towel to dab at the wound, but Nigel turned away from him, still holding his cut finger.

Nadia raced ahead and pushed past Verka and Darko, grabbing Nigel’s hand in her slim ones.

“Darko, where’s a band aid?” She asked, trying to nurse the wound with a worried expression painted on her face, her blue eyeshadow slightly smudged.

“It’s fine, I’ll be fine.” Nigel hissed in pain, feeling the wound stinging and burning worse than a motherfucker.
“Darko!” Nadia cried out louder, desperate to get Darko’s attention.

“Uh…” He began, but a strong voice broke through into the kitchen.

“You can’t just put a band aid on it immediately! You have to clean the wound first before it gets infected since he was handling food!”

Everyone in the kitchen turned to find Adam moving closer to the countertop, hands outstretched for Nigel’s.

Nigel shoved Nadia aside with his shoulder, and felt immediately he had to go to his gorgeous Adam.

He almost sighed in happiness and relief when Adam grabbed his hands gently and delicately, as if he were made from fine China, and lead him to the bathroom to wash the wound.

Behind them, Darko exchanged confused looks with his wife and Nadia, but they waited silently until Adam was done cleaning Nigel’s wound with warm water first.

Adam then opened the bathroom cupboard, found a first aid kit on the lower shelf, pulled it open, grabbed Hydrogen peroxide, poured a small bit onto a cotton ball, and then dabbed it gently where Nigel’s finger was cut.

“I’ve properly sterilized the wound now, and it won’t get infected.” Adam announced to no one in particular, watching the cotton ball soak up ruby red blood as he dabbed it a few more times on Nigel’s skin, and then tossed it into the garbage bin on the floor.

Adam held onto Nigel’s finger a bit longer than necessary, and the room went extremely silent before Nadia huffed loudly and grabbed the back of Nigel’s shirt, turning and pulling him away from Adam out of the bathroom.

“Now you can put on a band aid, Nigel!” She moved in his line of vision before he could turn back to Adam, a thin eyebrow raised in annoyance.

“I have a band aid here, it’s my favourite brand I always got when I was young. My dad said I was all thumbs and butter fingers, but I don’t understand how a human being can have their DNA changed to be like butter? It sounds so funny!” Adam giggled a bit before he dug into his jean pockets and pulled out a small space-covered band aid.

He tore open the package, and revealed a black space sky background littered with tons of yellow stars and one red rocket in the middle of it.

Before he could place it on Nigel’s finger, Nadia pushed him aside and tugged Nigel closer to her, her red hair flying around wildly.

“This is silly, Nigel! I’ll get you a proper band aid.”

Nigel stared with eyes glazed over at the band aid Adam was still holding up. “I want the rocket band aid.” He said decidedly, not looking away from Adam.

“Come, I’ll take you upstairs and then you can relax.” Nadia began pulling harder at Nigel’s arms.

“I want the rocket band aid.” Nigel repeated, a bit louder.

“Maybe you should just go with Nadia…” Verka interrupted, looking between Nigel and Adam and
then at her silent husband by her side with his hands in his pockets.

“I said I want the rocket band aid.” Nigel said, even louder than previously.

“Just come with me, Nigel!” Nadia exclaimed, her small arm muscles clenching and flexing as she tugged harder on him.

“I WANT THE FUCKING ROCKET BAND AID!!” Nigel suddenly screamed a blood curdling scream, eyes wide open and his face completely above Nadia’s so she could hear him out for the last time.

Nadia gasped and held up both her hands against her mouth in shock, and Verka grabbed onto Darko’s thick muscled arm in fright.

Darko looked taken aback, but didn’t show any reaction or say anything. He just grabbed his wife, and tapped his sister-in-law’s back.

“Come, we have to finish cooking.”

The women turned and walked away quietly without looking back at Nigel and Adam.

Darko waited until they had left before he leaned in close to Nigel. “We’re going to fucking have a long talk about this later, frate.”

With that said, he glared at Adam, and then walked back into the kitchen.

Chapter End Notes

Da-dum!

Poor Adam :( He just wanted to help!
Conspirators

Chapter Notes

Please note that the word "retarded" will ONLY appear in this chapter and never again in the rest of the fic.
I hope no one will be offended!

English translations: iubirică mea= lover/sweetheart
Poliția Română= Romanian Police
Temniță= jail
Cocoș= cock

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 12

Eforie Nord, 7:56 PM

Once supper had been prepared, awkwardly eaten, and the dishes and table cleaned and cleared, Verka decided to break the growing tension in the sitting room by suggesting the group head down to the beach to check out the activities and small traveling guest musical band visiting that night.

“That sounds excellent, iubirică mea.” Darko was the first to sign on board.

Nadia flicked her sad green eyes up to Nigel as he sat next to Adam on the same forest green loveseat Adam had been sitting on before supper.

“I’ll go if Nigel attends.” She said with expectation and hope in her voice.

Nigel wanted to throw a chair out the fucking window when Darko answered for him.

“Of course he’s going, Nadia. Knowing Nigel, he’s just waiting to get his hands on all the fucking beer down there!”

The joke fell flat within the group, and luckily, Verka stood and gathered her sister in her arms.

“Wonderful, let’s go!”

15 Minutes Later
It took almost 15 minutes for them to trek over from the back of the cottage to the beach. Luckily, it wasn’t a strenuous walk; all they had to do was walk through a few paths past some other cottage’s backyards, and they’d hit the soft, warm sand of the beach before they could register the feeling and enjoy it.

Darko and Verka set up the cooler of alcohol on the only table they could find, far away from the stage that was set up at the front of the beach.

A Ukrainian band was playing a small, relaxing piece. A violinist, pianist, and drummer sat in the front row, a tall dark-haired singer in the very center of the stage, and a few dancers swayed to her mystical voice on the far right.

Behind the band, the waves of the ocean tossed and turned, as if in a hypnotic response to the music. The moon peeked out from a few white clouds already signaling the night’s introduction, and the surface of the waters mirrored the gaze the moon cast down.

The waves kissed the shore repeatedly, the waters churning and echoing in the night, as if conducting their own melody along with the band.

More than 50 tables sat before the stage, many couples, friends, family members of all ages and ethnicities sitting and enjoying drinks, small meals, and looking longingly at the band as they tapped their feet, clapped their hands, and swayed their heads and bodies in time with the rhythm of the music.

Little white, yellow, green, and orange lights were hoisted not only around the length of the stage, but along the tops of the umbrella stands in the middle of the tables, creating a magnificent unity and aesthetically pleasing light-show display into the night.

The sights, the sounds, the feelings were almost simply breathtaking to Nigel.

It would have been absolutely 100% breathtaking, if it weren’t for Nadia’s thighs pressing into the sides of his as she had hurriedly sat herself down beside him on his right side, and Darko sat to his left.

Across from them, Adam was seated beside Verka, who had her dark brown eyes trained on the dancers, humming as she clapped a bit off-beat with the steady beating of the drums.

Adam folded his hands in his lap, and really tried focusing on the music and really tried counting the lights on the tables and umbrellas, but he found his eyes (almost on their own accord) seeking out Nigel’s handsome face.

Adam felt himself beginning to blush when he looked up to see Nigel already looking at him, a goofy grin plastered across his face, little wrinkles forming in the corners of his eyes.

Adam flashed him a big smile, and lowered his head, a bit embarrassed from being caught peeking.

“Something funny, Adam?” Verka asked, though not in an unpleasant tone, still clapping away with the music.

“Uh...no...it’s just...very nice...” Adam tried covering, even though he knew he was partly lying. His father would not be very proud of him now, for he had raised Adam to never lie, and Adam never did lie...up until now.

He found it came to him almost instantaneously without him having to give it some thought, and he found he didn’t feel too badly about it either, so he thought his father would understand and forgive
him this once.

Half of it was indeed true to Adam, for he had meant that being looked at by Nigel was nice, and it really was. Nigel’s eyes did funny things to Adam’s belly and heart, and it made his belly and heart flip-flop like someone flipping a pancake over a few times in the air before catching it back in the pan.

It would have been so wonderful if Nigel would catch Adam’s heart…

“This is a new band, I’ve never seen them before!” Nadia interrupted, folding and crossing her arms up and on top of the table, purposefully making her right-hand rest upon Nigel’s right hand elbow.

Nigel gently, but quickly moved his arms off the top of the table, and down to his lap on his black summer shorts.

Nadia frowned, but also moved her hands off the table and onto her lap.

Adam stretched his neck upward. He wasn’t able to see what Nadia's hands were doing now because they were out of his view.

Verka noticed Adam fidgeting beside her, and she turned and gave him an odd look.

Adam quickly stopped moving and pretended he was fixing something on his red shorts instead. It seemed to throw Verka off, and she grabbed her cocktail and held it in her right hand while tapping her thigh overtop of her tight red skirt with her left hand.

Adam waited for a few extra seconds, just to be sure she was listening to the music, before he turned his head to take another quick peek at Nigel.

He saw Nigel glancing at him almost playfully through his peripheral vision. His head was turned to face the stage, but his eyeballs were shifted to the right-hand corner so he could look at Adam without anyone noticing.

Suddenly, Adam felt a warm pressure against his toes, almost tickling him at first. Adam thought it may have been a crab, but then distinctly felt the curved front of a flip-flop.

He looked up to see Nigel raise a hand over his mouth and cover his lips with his thumb and index fingers, as if he were deeply focused and in thought, but upon a closer look, Adam could see that Nigel had hidden a wide grin that was forming on his face.

It was Nigel’s foot!

Adam looked at the edge of the table, a little angry that the tablecloth was too long and hid what was going on under the table.

Adam soon felt the slightly nippy tips of 5 toes as they moved out of the flip-flip, poking the top of his foot over his purple sandals, then directly rested on top of his foot.

Nigel’s toes carried bits of sand, and some of it fell away off the bottom of his foot and landed on Adam’s when he rested his foot very carefully and softly over Adam’s, but Adam didn’t mind at all.

Trying to be extra cautious about it, Adam inched his leg a bit closer to Nigel’s, and felt Nigel’s ankle.

Adam looked back up to catch Nigel blushing and grinning even wider under his hand over his
mouth. Encouraged by this, Adam moved his leg up along Nigel’s, eager to try to find a ticklish spot. He felt Nigel’s soft hair and almost breathed out loud in a soft gasp. He hadn’t expected someone like Nigel to be so warm and soft.

Adam’s foot mapped out the sinew and the muscle of Nigel’s calves next, and he moved his foot up a bit more until he could feel Nigel’s kneecap.

Adam rubbed the bone with his toes a bit, trying very hard not to move his upper body along with his lower body.

Nigel’s eyes widened at this, but he didn’t move his leg away from Adam’s; he let him continue his exploration.

Adam imagined looking down under the table and finding Nigel’s strong thighs holding him up whenever he walked, jogged, and ran. He moved his leg as if it were his hands, up slowly and carefully to feel the inside of Nigel’s left thigh.

Adam’s breath hitched in his throat when he felt how warm Nigel’s thigh was, and he could have sworn he felt his pulse at a particular spot when he moved along a bit further.

Adam looked up quickly at Nigel’s face for any sign or a hint that he should stop, but Nigel’s face didn’t betray a single emotion. Adam felt it was okay to continue, so he did.

He crept his leg and toes up towards the center of Nigel’s thigh, and felt the heel of his foot touch something hard.

Adam paused, wondering if Nigel had something in his lap. Curling his leg forward, he curiously pressed down a bit with his toes on the hard thing he had discovered, causing Nigel to suddenly cough and clear his throat loudly.

A few people sitting around them at other tables glared at Nigel for interrupting and breaking their concentration on the music.

Nigel glared back ten times harder, and they soon looked away back at the musicians.

Adam wanted to giggle at the sight. Nigel now had clasped both hands over his mouth, his elbows resting on the table top, pressed tightly against each other, bone-touching-bone. He kept staring at the band, his eyeballs following the movement of the dancers. A small bead of sweat fell from Nigel’s forehead and down his nose, but he made no move to wipe it off his skin. He didn't move, not even when a few strands of his sandy blonde hair fell loose and over his forehead.

Adam pressed ever-so-gently with his toes and rubbed the hard spot on Nigel’s lap back and forth super slowly, trying to picture what it was Nigel had on his lap. Was it a surprise for him? Or a surprise for Nadia? Had Nigel gotten Nadia a gift?

Curious, and a bit envious, Adam shifted his toes to the left, then the right, then up, then down, trying to feel out a shape of what it was Nigel had hidden on his lap.

He looked back up at Nigel, barely meeting his eyes, when Darko suddenly turned his head and faced Adam.

Adam froze in place immediately, eyes widening just barely.

“Adam, let’s go get some ice-cream for everyone, okay?” Darko said evenly, and he got up from his spot at the table without waiting for Adam’s confirmation.
Verka placed a warm hand on Adam’s lower back and sipped her cocktail.

Adam looked at Nigel, but Nigel was still looking at the dancers on the stage.

Knowing he had no choice, he got up and followed Darko to the other side of the beach, walking down a dark wooden boardwalk, his little feet pattering quickly. He walked up to where a small bar and grill was set up, and spotted a few stands selling ice-cream and hotdogs just a bit further down.

Adam stopped at the stand with the ice-cream logo on the front, and he turned to look at Darko beside him, except Darko wasn’t there.

Panicking, he checked behind him, then to the left, then to the right, and then he finally saw Darko leaning up against the side of the bar, lighting a cigarette. He looked at Adam, and beckoned him over with the curve of an index finger.

Adam hung his head low and walked up to Darko and sat down at a stool by the bar.

Darko turned to look over at the Champagne bottles resting in barrels of ice, and then looked at his cigarette resting between his index and middle finger.

“I’m going to cut the bullshit and get right to the point,” he started, the wind blowing back some of the ashes of his cigarette onto his orange beach shirt with little palm trees and large coconuts hanging from the branches decorated all over it, “I like you, kid. I like you a lot.” He finished very directly and honestly.

“Th-thanks, Mr. Darko.” Adam responded, unsure of where this was headed.

“You’re kind of like the kid brother I never really had, it’s fucked up.” Darko announced into the night air, then flicking his cigarette over the ashtray placed on the bar's counter.

Adam didn’t know what to say to that, so he resorted to simply listening.

“I like you a lot, kid, but I fucking love Nigel. He’s my blood brother, and we’ve never been apart.” Darko continued, “I know he’s fond of you, and you’re fond of him.”

“I-”

“And I’ve played enough fucking footsie with Verka to know when someone else is doin’ it. I’m not that fucking stupid.” Darko’s eyes scrolled over to focus on Adam, very darkly, very seriously, very intently.

“Don’t take me for a fucking idiot, kid. You do your work well, and you’ll continue to do it even better, so long as you don’t piss me off.”

Adam didn’t breathe or move. He was pretty sure he was in trouble with Mr. Darko now.

“Your silence says enough to me.” Darko confirmed, taking a long, deep drag and then blowing it out, his lips forming a tight “o”.

Adam fanned his face, trying to get the nasty nicotine smell out of his face.

“Just know your place. You’re doing a good job, and here’s a reward for everything you’ve done for us so far.” With that said, Darko grabbed his black wallet, pulling out a thick wad of cash rolled up and held together with a red elastic band.

“Here’s $1,000 up front, kid, and that’s not even half of what else I can, and will pay you for your
Adam looked at the money, his jaw dropping slightly in shock. He’d never seen that much money up front before. This would definitely pay for the telescope he wanted! He definitely would be able to catch the yellow moon this year!

“Thank you, Mr. Darko!” Adam reached for the cash, only to have Darko pull it back and hold it against his chest. Adam lowered his hand right away.

Was this a joke?

“You can have it right now, if you promise me something.” Darko said very low and soft, a direct contrast to how he had been talking not even minutes ago, which frightened and confused Adam terribly.

Adam retreated in his mind, his thoughts scrambling, trying to piece together what he had done wrong to upset Mr. Darko. Everything seemed to have been okay at dinner! Mr. Darko was smiling and laughing while joking with his wife and Nigel, and everyone seemed to be getting along! Why was Mr. Darko acting happy one minute, then angry the next, and then later very soft-spoken?

“Promise me, kid!” Darko bit out with fire in his voice suddenly, trying to get Adam’s attention.

“Yes!” Adam cried, closing his eyes, and turning slightly away from the angry Mr. Darko. He was terribly confused! He thought he was doing everything like Mr. Darko had told him! Why was Mr. Darko speaking to him like this?

All the emotions, thoughts and questions ran through Adam’s head, but were shot dead-still when Darko laid a strong, warm hand over Adam’s shoulder, causing Adam to almost shrivel down and away from him even more, shaking in fear.

Darko’s warm breath glossed over the side of his head menacingly. “Promise me you won’t get close to Nigel. Verka’s wanted him to marry Nadia for a while now, and this was the best chance we could get for him to be around her more.”

Adam only shivered in response. 

“Leave Nigel be. Grab your money, go back to the cottage, go back to your room, and go to bed. Nigel’s not for you to play with whenever you’re bored of your space toys, do you understand me?” Darko leaned into Adam, breathing down the boy’s neck, his fingers dangerously tightening their already-too-tight grip on his shoulder.

“Okay.” Adam wheezed out, shivering more and more like a little leaf caught up in a storm. He just wanted Mr. Darko to stop touching him and leave him alone!

“Good boy. I knew you’d understand.” Darko's fingers let go, and clapped Adam on the back before letting him go, shoving the wad of cash to Adam’s chest roughly.

As soon as he had let go, Adam broke away and made a beeline as fast as his legs could carry him back to the cottage.

He didn’t even take the cash that had fallen on the wooden platform.

Darko, sighing deeply, bent down to pick it up. When he stood back up, he was face-to-face with Nigel's lean form.
“Fuck! Don’t do that, frate!” He gasped and slapped the counter of the bar.

“What did you do to Adam?” Nigel asked in an interrogative tone, looking at Adam’s retreating white-shirt slowly being swallowed whole in the night as he kept running, little patches of white sand appearing like powder as they flew into the air with each step he took.

Darko snorted and flung both hands in the air and then dropped them heavily to his sides with a “slap!”

“Nothing, I didn’t fucking do anything to him!”

Nigel grabbed Darko’s shirt collar and pulled him right up against his body strongly with a savage expression on his face.

“Don’t you start fucking lying to me, Darko. What did you say to him?!?”

The music stopped playing, and a few people began getting up and looking at the two angry men by the bar, wondering what the commotion was all about.

Darko’s hands came up to roughly tear off Nigel’s cobra-like grip from his shirt collar, and he shoved his friend with twice the ferocity he wanted to, right in the chest. Nigel was heaved back a few feet and swayed, but didn’t fall over.

“What the fuck’s gotten into you lately?” Darko straightened his shirt collar and swallowed thickly, trying to glare away at the onlookers.

“What the fucking fuck did you fucking say to Adam?!” Nigel wasn’t giving up.

Darko dropped his hands from his shirt, and walked a few feet until he was right up in Nigel’s face. He sneered with intended malice. “I told him to back the fuck off you because Verka and I were planning on giving Nadia to you.”

Nigel laughed a very dry laugh. “You planned wrong, Darko. You fucked up, as you always do.”

“I fucked up? Who sat with you in the ambulance on the way to the emergency room while you had a fucking bullet lodged in your thick skull? Who visited you for hours and days on fucking end while you were being operated on and in the hospital recovering? Who picked your sorry ass up and brought you into his home, trying to take care of you and putting up with your fucking bullshit for the last few weeks now? Who the fuck kept tabs on the business while all you did was mope around the fucking apartment? Who the fuck had your back when you decided to head balls-first into a fucking deal, when you knew it was a setup and a bust by the Poliția Română? Who the fuck arranged to pay off your bail and get your fucking ass out of the filthy temniță? Who the fuck has stitched you up and put you back together more than that fucking empty whore of an excuse you called a wife?” Darko’s voice began rising in volume, and the speed of his speech was almost out of control as he spat out the words he’d held back for so long.

Nigel bared his teeth in a dangerous grin. “You better watch it, frate,” his upper body flexed in a symbolic threat that accompanied his words, “...you’re fucking with the wrong guy on the wrong night.” He warned, waving a finger at Darko, who caught it in his hand and then shoved it down to Nigel’s side violently, causing the older man’s arm to swing from the intensity.

“No, it’s YOU who doesn’t know who he’s fucking with, Nigel! You’re so fucking obsessed with that retarded boy that you’ve fucking lost it, man!”, he continued, spit flying forth in anger, “you’re throwing away everything we worked hard for, and you’re throwing it away for young cocoș!”
Nigel only saw fury and rage right then and there. He raised his fist, drew it back sharply, and punched Darko square in the jaw harder than he had punched any man in years.

Darko stumbled back and landed on top of a stool at the bar, his hands flying to hook into anything for balance, but he tripped over his own feet and the stool’s, toppling and rolling over with it onto the boardwalk with a dull, heavy “thud” as his flesh met the cold, solid wood.

A few onlookers screamed and Nigel turned to them with his fists raised angrily, eyes wide with murder written all over them.

“NIGEL!” Verka’s voice broke through the barrier and Nigel immediately stopped.

He turned and looked back down at Darko, who sat with a bent knee raised up, and his other leg stretched out in front of him. He had draped one hand over one of the legs of the stool, and the other wiped blood from his nose, which looked almost to be broken.

Nigel felt badly for the way the situation had escalated, but he dared not to let it reflect on his face, or in his body posture. He stuffed his hands deeply in his pockets, puffed out his chest as he walked over, and bent down slightly to rest on the balls of his feet before Darko.

He craned his neck down and looked at his friend trying to stifle the bleeding, and failing miserably.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you, frate. You were always poking your nose in my business.”

He got up and was about to walk away when he heard Darko’s meek and broken voice behind him.

“My business was always your business, Nigel.” He sighed sadly, his voice slightly distorted due to the blood gushing forth.

Nigel turned to watch Verka as she kneeled at her husband’s side and gently placed a napkin over his nose to clean the blood.

“You asshole! Why didn’t you keep your mouth shut?!” She hissed miserably at him, dabbing at the blood, and causing Darko to groan in pain as he tried to avoid her hands at his nose.

“You should really listen to your wife, Darko.” Nigel said coldly, and began walking back to the cottage.

_Nigel’s Cottage, 9:36 PM_

Adam lay curled on his bed, his tears had long dried from his cheeks and onto his Planet Mars pillow, but it did nothing for his mood. Even though he didn’t have any more tears to shed, he felt he still could cry for days more and it wouldn’t be enough.

He should have known that Nigel didn’t want to be his friend and didn’t want to get too close to him when he had someone as beautiful and lovely as Nadia to keep him company, make him laugh and smile at him.

If Nigel had laughed before, he was probably laughing AT Adam; not with him. He was the subject of his humour, and he had been foolish to read further into it. No one wanted anything to do with Adam, and it was obvious the day Beth broke up with him.

Adam sat up and smacked himself in the head twice for being so careless and silly. He was here to work; not make friends with Nigel or Mr. Darko. He should have just done his work like his father told him to, and then he’d be done and get paid and just carry on with his life.
He was being stupid. A stupid little kid, as everyone had called him.

He deserved this, and he should have been fired and punished. He had let everyone down: Mr. Klieber, his mom, his father, Beth, Harlan, Mr. Darko, and Nigel. He should never have come here!

Adam threw his Mars pillow at the wall and curled up into a fetal position under his blankets, begging himself not to cry. His eyes literally were burning from all the crying he had been doing since he ran back in the cottage, showered, and tried to go to sleep.

Strong knocking soon interrupted another round of tears that threatened to burst forth from his chest and out of his mouth.

Adam stopped, and his ears zoned in carefully at whoever was behind the door.

“Adam! It’s me, please open the door!”

Adam clamped a hand over his mouth and nose, trying hard not to breathe or move.

“Adam, it’s Nigel, please open the door, gorgeous!”

When Adam heard Nigel calling him ‘gorgeous’, he threw the sheets off his head angrily. “I’m not your ‘gorgeous’! Go call Nadia your ‘gorgeous’!” He sat back in bed and tugged the sheets against his body, rolling in them and trying to hide from the night, from Nigel, from himself.

“Don’t say that, Adam! You know I’m not interested in Nadia, and never was!” Nigel pleaded in a sincere tone of voice, but it went missed by Adam as he covered his ears with his hands.

“No! I’m not going to listen to your lies! You’re a bad person! All you do is lie to me and hurt me!” He cried, feeling one tear slip down his cheek.

“Adam I’ve NEVER lied to you! I’d never do that to you!” Nigel argued back, still knocking, then he tried to turn the doorknob, only to find it locked.

I don’t blame him...

He paused for a moment and heard some shuffling, but the doorknob was still firmly locked.

“Gorgeous, please...” He begged, and then wondered what exactly this young boy was doing (had done) to him. Nigel Ibanescu NEVER fucking begged anyone, EVER. Yet here he was, almost quarter to 10 at night, standing behind Adam Raki’s door, pleading and begging as if it were an old habit of his given how easily and repeatedly he was doing it.

“GO AWAY!” Adam screamed at the top of his lungs.

Nigel sighed, not wanting to upset Adam anymore. “Alright, Adam. I will do anything you ask of me, because I really do care about you.” He moved away from the door, and began walking down the hallway to head inside his room and sleep the night’s events off, when he heard a “click” and a soft “creak” as the door opened.

Nigel stood rooted to the spot, and didn’t turn around.

He heard a sniffle behind him. “D-do you mean that? Or are you lying to me again?” Adam’s sad voice sought out the answer as he stood in the doorway, his body still trembling lightly.

His back stiff to Adam, he spoke with utmost sincerity and gentleness in his voice, meaning to comfort Adam. “I meant every fucking word, Adam.”
Nigel turned around slowly when he heard a sharp intake of breath followed by a little sniffle. He nearly let out a sad cry of his own when he looked at Adam.

Adam’s eyes were swollen, red, and puffy from crying. His hair was messy, and his cheeks were flushed red. His chest rose and fell rapidly, and Nigel could tell his heart was pounding. He watched Adam's throat tightening as he swallowed.

Nigel wished he could have done and said something right then and there to make all the pain Adam was feeling go away. For once in his long criminal life, he wanted to do something good for someone, and he didn’t expect to receive anything in return for it.

Nigel was well aware of Adam’s shortcomings, flaws, and issues, but he didn’t ever feel the need to want to take advantage of it, or use it to make himself feel superior. A younger Nigel would have probably made a fool out of someone like Adam for months on end before throwing him out into the streets to be labeled as the village idiot, but an older Nigel would sooner toss himself into oncoming traffic than lay a finger on Adam’s head. He just didn’t and couldn’t ever desire to harm Adam. He would allow someone to shoot him in the fucking face first.

He needed to comfort, care for, and protect Adam. He wanted to shield him from all the trauma, pain, suffering, and horrors the world would likely bring to someone as innocent as Adam. He was a rare treasure, and a very delicate, fragile one. Nigel would fight until he had breathed his last breath to keep Adam happy and safe.

Adam walked closer to Nigel, but still maintained a good distance away from him. “You really don’t like Nadia?” He asked, hope rising in his voice eagerly.

Nigel smiled and shook his head. “No. She’ll never be enough for me; not when I have you, Adam.”

Adam blushed and turned away to go back to his room when Nigel called out.

“No, please don’t!”

Adam stopped and turned back around. Even though he felt Nigel was a bad man, he just knew he wasn’t going to badly hurt him. Adam trusted Nigel, and he felt he was going to be safe with him.

“I really do like you, Adam Raki, my space cadet.” Nigel smiled and held up a hand to Adam’s face, but did not touch him; he just rested it in midair above Adam’s cheek.

Adam looked at the Rocket band aid on Nigel’s finger, and reached up and gently held Nigel’s big hands in his smaller ones.

“I…believe you, Nigel.” Adam concluded, dropping his eyes away from Nigel’s hands and to his chest.

“Is your heart beating like mine?” Adam asked timidly, hoping the answer was an affirmative.

“Even more passionately than I can ever tell you, gorgeous.” Nigel answered, looking deeply at Adam’s downcast blue eyes, but still not moving to touch him.

Adam smiled and shook his head. “It can’t be.”

“Would you like to feel for yourself?” Nigel asked, giving Adam plenty of time to back out if he wasn’t comfortable.

After some time, Adam answered: “Yes, Nigel, I would like to feel for myself.”
Nigel gently guided Adam’s hands to his chest, and placed them on top of his beating heart, his larger hands holding Adam’s as he rested them on top of his smaller ones, sinking in their radiant warmth.

Adam laughed and then gasped. “You were right, Nigel; your heart’s beating very quickly!”

Nigel moved a bit closer to Adam, and the movement caused Adam to raise his head a bit, but not meet Nigel’s passionate warm eyes, longing to meet his just once, even for a second.

“I’m going to fucking kiss you now, Adam Raki. Please tell me it’s okay.” His wish almost went unheard, but Adam looked up, his cute, lovely blue eyes landing on Nigel’s forehead.

“It’s…it’s okay, Nigel. I want you to kiss me…please.” Adam requested, softly and gently.

The sounds of the ocean accompanied and surrounded them, flowing in through the open windows as Nigel gently walked Adam back to his room, closing the door behind them.

Chapter End Notes

We’re sooooo close to crossing the threshold into the glorious fields of smut!
A night to be remembered

Chapter Notes

Ladies and gentlemen, I proudly present to you:
Your sex scene.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 13

The moment he had captured those sensual, beautiful, delicious lips under his, Nigel knew he was absolutely gone; lost to Adam and 100% his.

Nigel had never expected a man’s lips to feel this thick and smooth beneath his, and his body automatically sought out more, but he reminded himself over and over that this was Adam; not any other woman he had been with. He needed to be very cautious and careful, and take his time.

Normally, this would have bothered Nigel. Nigel was a man so used to taking what he wanted from others and demanding it in tenfold until he was completely satisfied, and this meant sex, too. But he knew that he would never, could never, dare to treat Adam the same way, and he put that thought of his mind immediately.

Adam pursed his lips tightly against Nigel’s, at first only mirroring what he remembered experiencing with Beth, but he felt it wasn’t enough.

Adam shyly opened his mouth under Nigel’s, and his soft, wet, pink little tongue had barely pressed its tip on Nigel’s lower lip, when Nigel growled gruffly, pressed his body forward, and began devouring Adam’s lips.

Nigel’s own tongue sought out Adam’s, and the young man gasped and Nigel pounced on the opportunity to take advantage immediately; his tongue gently prodding and sliding its way into Adam’s mouth past his front teeth and exploring the hot cavern of his mouth.

It was the most heightened, sensually seductive experience Nigel remembered having in decades. Previously with Gabi and other women, Nigel would have felt the fires of lust burning and stirring in his cock, but it had never really felt like it had left more of an emotion after that. It’d all been hot, sexy, sweaty, and messy as he’d liked it, but once it was over, Nigel had wanted to put it out of his mind and carry on with business as usual.

He knew he would be thinking about kissing Adam for months and months, never mind what he’d do and what he’d feel like if he touched him…at this thought, Nigel's tongue curled around Adam's and dipped in and out of mouth too lewdly, and he had to fight himself to stop.

Nigel almost lost all control when he felt two warm palms pressed against his chest, fingers digging into his pectorals for purchase as Adam swayed slightly and surrendered to the force and intensity of Nigel’s demanding lips.

Nigel broke the kiss, feeling his head swimming, dizzy in Adam’s heat mixed with the heat of the room.
“Lie back on the bed for me, gorgeous.” Nigel’s voice reached out to soothe and gentle Adam’s rapidly beating heart.

Adam felt Nigel’s fingers running up along his yellow summer T-shirt, as if they were tip toeing along the most rare and most delicate of crafts and treasures, afraid to corrupt, afraid to break…

“Nigel…I’ve never…” Adam began, but then silenced himself. He didn’t want to tell Nigel he’d never had sex before. Adam turned sideways, and glanced at the medium sized red oak dresser propped against the wall.

He felt so nervous, and he wished he had kept silent, because he was sure Nigel was going to ask him to finish his sentence now.

“You’ve never what, gorgeous?” Nigel inquired, careful to be mindful of his tone, despite how aroused he was, and still was growing as he kept looking at the sot white skin at the back of Adam’s neck, noticing the way some of his hair strands curled over, parting a little bit and providing Nigel with a rewarding view of the top few bones of Adam’s spine jutting out the back of Adam’s neck.

Nigel wanted nothing more than to hold the young man against his chest and gently nibble on those bones. He wanted to lick and taste the skin until it was pink and littered with love bites, but he knew he had to be patient.

Adam walked to the foot of the bed and placed his left hand down on the edge, half standing, half sitting as he began to grow red, his face somewhat distorted in discomfort; eyebrows knotted together tightly, eyes cast down onto the floor.

Nigel followed, and looked at Adam shortly before taking one little half-step back, finally catching on.

“You never?” He carried on, his large hands held clasped together, frowning as he felt his palms starting to sweat a little bit.

Adam gave a half nod.

“You’ve never slept with a man before…” Nigel finished.

Adam looked up at his lips, face still clenched up in discomfort and he barely whispered, “I’ve never slept with anyone, Nigel.”

Holy fuck…

Normally, if the word “virgin” had ever come up in the past to him (not that Nigel could actually even count more than one time that it had) before a sexual liaison, Nigel would be clearing the fuck outta there in seconds. He hated attachments (prior to Gabi); he didn’t need headaches, he didn’t need women begging him to stick around to meet their friends and family members in hopes that a relationship was going to come out of it, and he didn’t need to be involved emotionally with anyone to hold him down and weaken him.

Nigel had enjoyed many sexually experienced women over the years, and never felt the need to try something different. He preferred his sexual partners to be assertive in bed so much that they would put most porn stars to shame, already knowing what to do, where to touch, how to stroke, suck, ride, fuck.

But Adam didn’t have any of those experiences, and Nigel still wanted him. He felt his cock twitching with heavy desire, completely baffled that the young man was so pure, so lovely, so
wonderful…there was something about Adam’s innocence and purity that Nigel wanted to both preserve, yet destroy and defile.

“But what about that woman you always mention? Brittany?” Nigel inquired, watching as Adam grabbed a small fluffy pillow and held it in his hands, obviously trying to hide his stress and discomfort.

“Beth.” Adam corrected.

Nigel nodded, “Yeah, Beth. Wasn’t she your girlfriend or something?”

Adam shook his head ‘no’. “We dated briefly but we never got to that level in our relationship.”

“Why?”

“Because we were too different…at least that’s what Beth told me, but I think she was trying to be nice about the breakup.” Adam’s voice didn’t portray any feelings of sadness, betrayal, or heartbreak. If it were Nigel in his place, he’d be gritting his teeth together and cursing until tomorrow. He never had many women reject him in the past, but the one or two who had, definitely heard and saw Nigel’s disdain and wrath on full-blast. Nigel didn’t take rejection or betrayal lightly; in fact, he took it worse than a bullet in the back of the knee or a baseball bat to the back of his skull.

The heart wasn’t something Nigel fucked with, or allowed others to fuck with in regard to his own life, not especially after Gabi…

“She couldn’t meet my needs, and I know that that could mean multiple things, but I am pretty sure I can narrow it down to meaning that she was unable to tolerate my Asperger’s.” Adam was about to include that he was afraid Nigel would also grow intolerant of his Asperger’s, but quickly abandoned that thought when he looked up to see Nigel taking off his shirt and tossing it down on the floor softly.

Adam gasped and looked at the shirt. “Nigel!”

“I hope I am not making you feel uncomfortable, gorgeous, and I hope you won’t be upset at me saying this, but Beth lost something so fucking precious. I gloat, and am happy in the knowledge that I will treasure what she lost and will never gain back.”

“You mean me?” Adam asked, getting halfway lost and wondering what else Nigel could have meant.

“Absolutely, my gorgeous darling.”

Nigel began untying the black band of his shorts and was about to let them slide off his hips, when Adam turned and placed the pillow over his face, shielding away from Nigel.

“W-wait! Nigel! I’m not ready!” He cried, his voice muffled slightly by the pillow, causing Nigel to dip a bare knee on the bed, but he remained clothed on his lower body, carefully looking at Adam.

“Adam, we don’t have to do anything you’re not comfortable with.”

Adam shook his head. “No! I know you want to have sexual intercourse, but I don’t think I can right away! I want it too, but I can’t right now!” He began rocking slightly on the bed back and forth, and Nigel’s warm hands darted out to hold him and pull him against his naked chest.

“Shhh, it’s okay, gorgeous.”
Adam continuously mouthed “No” over and over as he allowed Nigel’s warm embrace to comfort him.

“There’s plenty of other ways we can enjoy each other, and I’d like to show you one of those ways.” Nigel’s deep voice rumbled up through his belly and his sternum, making Adam sigh and almost moan from the intense vibrations.

He gasped audibly, “I’d like to see, Nigel…”

Nigel smirked down at Adam, kissing the top of his head before he lay back on the bed with Adam on top of him first, gently stroking his arms up and down before placing him to his side.

Nigel’s hands held onto the bottom of Adam’s shirt, wrinkling the cotton fabric in his grip, and he looked up to catch Adam’s wide blue eyes for a brief second before the young man looked away bashfully.

“Can I please take this off, gorgeous?” Nigel asked, holding his breath and waiting for Adam’s response.

Adam seemed to think about it for a few moments and then answered softly, “Yes you may.”

Nigel gently took off Adam’s shirt and threw it down onto the floor next to his, placing a hand under Adam’s chin and bringing him close to his lips for another deep, passionate kiss. Nigel felt Adam’s little chin in his large hand and kissed Adam more intensely, a fire burning from his heart all the way to his feet as he held his gorgeous space cadet close in his arms.

Nigel moved to almost lie on top of Adam, but he was careful not to put all his weight on him and frighten him in case he wanted to stop. He curled a finger around a stray lock of Adam’s dark brown hair, pulling it gently around his index finger and sighing against Adam’s wet lips as he reveled in how soft and smooth Adam’s hair felt in his course rough hands.

Feeling his cock pressing impatiently against the front lining of his shorts, Nigel grunted and broke the kiss. He was definitely ready to carry on, and hoped Adam was too.

“Adam, can I please take off my shorts and yours, gorgeous?”

Adam turned away partly, lips puffy, red, and slightly swollen from Nigel’s pressure over them as he stammered, searching for a response.

“It’ll make you feel better, gorgeous. Please trust me.” Nigel begged, breathing heavily through his nose, wondering how the fuck he had kept his cool and maintained a held-together composure for this long without going insane. Nigel had never been a patient man when it came to sex, but he felt Adam was worth it, and he willed himself to wait until Adam was ready for more.

“I trust you, Nigel.”

Nigel nearly came right then and there when he heard Adam’s answer.

“I’ll go very slowly, darling.” He took care of Adam’s shorts before his own, easing the fabric off Adam’s pale hips and resisting the urge to lean down and bite, nibble, and suck at Adam’s hip bones peeking forward.

Once the shorts were down Adam’s long legs, Nigel, while sucking and pulling Adam’s delicious lower lip with his teeth, rested an open-palmed hand over his hardening cock on top of his briefs.
“Can I touch you, gorgeous?” Nigel asked, looking at Adam but not in the eyes so he wouldn’t make him shy away.

Adam moaned a loud moan before biting down on his lips in embarrassment. He slapped a hand over his lips and only nodded in confirmation.

Nigel chuckled, and pulled Adam’s hand away from his lips. “I want to hear it all, darling. Don’t be shy around me, ever.”

“Nigel, please touch me!” Adam moaned, eyes closed and head thrown to the left side, unable to control his small pleas and labored breaths any longer.

“Darling, I’d thought you’d never ask.”

Nigel slipped Adam’s boxers off and finally his own shorts and briefs. He stroked Adam’s cock, a slow, steady pace so Adam would get used to it and so he could draw out his pleasure for as long as possible.

Adam’s body arched up off the bed, and he turned more into Nigel’s skilled hand, his hips moving wildly off rhythm with Nigel’s stroking, but Nigel found it absolutely adorable. Adam’s inexperience turned him on more than he thought would be possible, and he kept his eyes half open, not wanting to miss a beat of this beauty he held in his arms as he kissed and licked his way up and down Adam’s neck.

“N-n-nigel!” Adam gasped breath after breath, and his cock began to release precome in Nigel’s palm.

“You’ve no idea how fucking beautiful you are to me, Adam. Look at you; your hair as dark and warm as chocolate, your eyes as blue as the ocean, your lips as red and delicious as a rose…I want to devour every inch of you until there’s nothing left for anyone to see. You’re mine, and only MINE, Adam Raki.” He whispered sweet nothings into Adam’s ear before sucking on Adam’s earlobe.

Adam nearly screamed at the feeling, clutching the sheets with his left hand as he held onto Nigel’s arm with his right as Nigel quickened the pace of his stroking.

“I can feel you’re getting close, baby, oh Christ, you’re driving me crazy!” Nigel moaned out, kissing Adam’s forehead and the tip of his nose before he gently stroked Adam’s balls with his free hand.

The second Nigel’s hands touched him there, Adam reared up and captured Nigel’s side with his left leg, rolling to directly face Nigel, hips pressed roughly against Nigel's. Adam held tightly onto Nigel’s shoulder with one hand so strongly it nearly caused Nigel to stop his movements. Before Nigel could ask what was going on, Adam grabbed Nigel’s large, thick cock, the tip almost a deep red from being hard for so long without release, and in one hand, he brought their cocks together and stroked 4 times in unpracticed but firm strokes.

Suddenly, Nigel was 14 again. He felt his head falling forward, his forehead resting in the crook of Adam’s neck as he groaned Adam’s name, cumming at the same time Adam was, spilling all over Adam’s hand, stomach, and his own stomach pressed against Adam’s.

Nigel couldn’t help but fall on top of Adam as he rode out the last bits of his orgasm. He panted against Adam’s neck, smiling a tired smile when felt Adam’s sweat and cum against his naked skin.

After clearing his throat and sighing softly, Adam untangled himself from beneath Nigel, taking in deep breaths and rolling over onto his back.
“Where the fuck did you learn how to do that, darling?” Nigel asked, eyes half-lidded, but holding nothing but passion and admiration for this lovely young man who had pleased him like he hadn’t been pleased in years.

Adam laughed and looked up at the ceiling, his face still flushed, stomach still moving in and out as he sighed. “I have watched homosexual sex in pornography before, Nigel.”

Nigel cocked an eyebrow. His darling was full of surprises. “You’re kidding.”

Adam frowned, but then resumed smiling, “No, it wasn’t a joke. I think homosexual sex is actually very fascinating. Did you know that some mammals engage in homosexual sex for pleasure as opposed to biological urges to reproduce offspring? Bats and dolphins are very well known for engaging in recreational homosexual sexual intercourse.” Adam instructed, remembering all the National Geographic videos he had watched.

Nigel draped his arm over Adam’s shoulders and pulled the young man against his silver haired chest. “You’re so fucking dirty, baby. I love it.”

Chapter End Notes

Writing this was actually a lot harder than I thought it would be.....Pun intended.
Chapter 14

Nigel opened his heavy eyelids, yawning quietly as he stretched his cramped back and sore muscles. His arms hit a warm body curled up against his, and Nigel broke into a warm smile that matched the warmth of the early morning sun rising up along the horizon.

Last night had been one of the greatest, most passionate, most amazing moments in Nigel’s life. He looked at Adam, curled into a fetal position, holding Nigel’s Daschund shirt tightly between his fingers, his nose buried in the collar as he breathed silently.

*When did I fucking pack that?* Nigel rubbed his eyes and chuckled.

Adam sighed, almost as if he were responding to Nigel’s thoughts, and he rolled over onto his back, the shirt still clutched possessively in his hands.

Nigel grinned lewdly, and craned his neck forward, rising a few inches off the bed to take a little peek at Adam’s pert cock. Adam was semi-flaccid, but circumcised. He had a few small soft brown hairs trailing on his abdomen up to his chest, but his skin was so smooth and clear. Nigel wanted to lean over and bury his nose on Adam's skin, and lick a long, wet stream up to Adam’s lips. The young man looked even more delicious that Nigel remembered in their heated activities last night.

Nigel wanted nothing more than to remain in bed all day with Adam, mapping out every inch of his divine beauty, soaking in the sights and sounds until he committed and immortalized Adam in his memory forever.

A loud buzz suddenly sounded within the room and Nigel groaned softly, rolling over away from Adam and looking at the nightstand beside the bed. He grabbed his cellphone, and saw that he had received a text message from Tomaso.

*We need to talk. Call me at 8:30 AM, T.*

Nigel looked at the time: It was almost quarter after 7. *What the fuck does Tomaso want at this early fucking hour?*

Nigel texted back: *What the fuck’s this about?*

He massaged his temple, setting the phone down beside him on his pillow. Leaning back down, he shifted his gaze on Adam’s naked body, smirking, as concupiscent thoughts began flooding his mind when he saw Adam’s pink cock fully erect.
I could take care of that for you, darling.

Nigel let a hand roam up to Adam’s stomach, ghosting across his white, tender skin, and he dipped his index finger in Adam’s belly button lightly, watching with pleasure when he saw a tiny smile break out on Adam’s lovely pink lips.

Nigel was about to lean in and kiss those delicious lips he’d never tire of tasting, when his phone interrupted again.

For fuck’s sakes, Tomaso!

He swiped his phone off the pillow before it could wake Adam, and he opened the text message.

Petrov.

The single word glaring at him across the screen told Nigel all he needed to know.

Sighing, he kicked the sheets off his body, got up, picking his clothes off the floor and headed for the bathroom. He needed a fucking cigarette anyway.

22 Minutes Later

Nigel sat down on the beach with a huff on the warm white sand, closing his eyes as he lit his cigarette and listened to the slow sloshing and splashing of the waves as they crept up to the shore, and then darted back away as slowly as they came.

He held up the small lighter Adam had purchased him the first night they went shopping, and he smirked to himself knowingly and fondly.

I’m going to cherish this fucking thing until the day I die.

A seagull flew above his head and cast a small shadow over his arm for a few seconds.

Nigel stuffed the lighter back in the front pocket of his half-open dark blue dress shirt, the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He took a puff from the cigarette, finding himself missing Adam’s warm body pressed against his as every minute went by. The morning seemed so fucking long all of a sudden.

I don’t ever remember craving for anyone else like this... Nigel drew up both his legs and rested his arms on his kneecaps after brushing some sand off his cream coloured Linen Drawstring Pants.

He stopped all movement when he felt someone walk up, and sit down beside him.

Out of the corner of his eyes, Nigel saw Darko plop himself down on the sand, his nose partly swollen at the bridge, eyes displaying no emotion, his shortly cut hair freshly washed and the tips still glistening with water in the sunshine.

Nigel reached up, pulled his sunglasses that were resting in his hair down over his eyes, and faced the ocean, trying to ignore Darko. He wanted to avoid an awkward conversation as much as possible, never being a sappy-ass guy who discussed his fucking feelings with anyone who walked by.

The two men sat side-by-side in silence for what seemed like hours before Darko took a breath and spoke gently.
“I never meant to run my fucking mouth at you, frate.”

Nigel didn’t speak; he only listened intently.

Darko continued, “I was angry…I had my head so far up my own ass that I didn’t consider what you were feeling, especially after Gabi and that fucking American…”

Nigel bit down on his tongue, a vein in his temple partially visible when he heard Gabi’s name spoken. His cigarette was held tightly between his fingers, and it dented inwards from the pressure of his hold on it, but he didn’t take a drag. He wanted to keep listening as closely as he could to Darko.

“I didn’t think you’d take the kid seriously. I’m glad, but I also really wanted us to become a fucking family. I wanted you to marry Nadia…Verka did, too.”

Nigel looked down at his cigarette, watching the smoke move in the direction of the warm summer breeze.

Darko tapped his knees as he drew his legs up and mirrored Nigel’s seating position, pulling back some sand with the movement.

“I know you fucked him last night.” He spoke calmly, completely catching Nigel off-guard.

He couldn't respond. He sometimes hated the way he and Darko knew almost everything about each other, and he really began to feel annoyed that without him having to say anything, Darko was more aware of his exploits than he wanted him to be. Still, Nigel couldn’t feel too angry at Darko; the man was like a brother to him, after all they’d been through together.

“Personally, I don’t care how you prefer it, Nigel. I don’t give a shit if you prefer cock over pussy. I don’t mind if you want to fuck men.”

Nigel finally spoke up: “I don’t want other men; I just want Adam.”

Darko didn’t meet Nigel’s eyes as he scanned the waters of the beach, slightly squinting as the sun rose higher to greet them. “I know.” He said in a soft, yet understanding tone of voice.

“Hmm.” Nigel gave a half nod, taking a puff from the cigarette finally.

Darko smirked but kept looking at the ocean. “You’ve never found me fuckable, have you?” He lightly joked.

Nigel pulled down the sunglasses partly, his eyes peeking up at Darko in an unimpressed manner.

Within seconds, both men broke out in a hearty, long laugh; Darko’s head drooping down, chin resting against his chest, and Nigel leaned to his left and prodded his friend with his elbow as he laughed louder and louder by the minute.

They finally stopped, and took a breath, sighing together in perfect unison.

“I’m happy for you, frate, I really am.”

Nigel believed him. Darko’s voice held no quiver, no pause between words, no falter to indicate a lie or a twist in any way, shape or form.

“I’m really sorry about Nadia.” He meant it sincerely and honestly, looking down at his shrinking cigarette and stubbing it in the sand beside him.
Darko shrugged. “She’ll be fine. She’s strong.”

“Yes.”

The sound of the waves churning and growing in intensity and power soothed Nigel’s headache, and he took in a deep breath, his lungs taking in the fresh, salty smell of the ocean.

“Verka’s pregnant.” Darko’s announcement made Nigel’s head whip towards him, eyes wide behind the sunglasses.

“What?”

Darko nodded. “We just found out this morning. She was in the bathroom with this stick you piss on.”

“A pregnancy test.”

Darko chuckled. “Yeah. It turned pink.”

“Congratulations.” Nigel clapped his friend on the back, still in shock at the news.

“I don’t fucking feel like I’m ready to be a father. I don’t even think I’ll be a good father.” Darko sighed, his eyes lowering briefly before they flickered over to Nigel, silently searching for an answer or any validation.

Nigel shook his head. “You’ll be a damn good father. You take care of everyone and everything, Darko. You took care of me, you took care of the business, and you took care of Adam when he first came here.”

Darko looked like a sad lost child himself, but then smiled slowly. “Yeah, you’re right. Verka wants a girl, but I know we’re having a baby boy.”

Nigel rolled his eyes, “Oh you know for a fucking fact, huh?”

Darko laughed, “Yes, I fucking do.”

“How?” Nigel asked, wanting his friend to humor him.

“Because she let me fuck her from behind for hours.”

Nigel coughed, eyes widening again as he shoved his friend roughly, but playfully. “Shut the fuck up, Darko, I don’t want to hear about you and Verka fucking!”

“It’s true! I read that if you fuck from behind, you’ll have a boy.”

Nigel decided to screw with Darko’s mind for a bit. “No, that’s if you want a girl.”

Darko’s face paled slightly. “Are you fucking sure?!?” He dropped his hands from his knees, chest raised, high on the alert.

Nigel couldn’t take the rest of it seriously. He threw back his head and laughed so hard he nearly fell over onto his back.

“Oh fuck you, frate!” Darko grabbed some sand and threw it on Nigel’s lap, trying to suppress his own laughter.
“Hey, watch the pants.” Nigel said, shifting and sitting back up when he felt his phone vibrate in his pocket.

“Adam?” Darko asked, looking at the phone, his smile still wide.

“Tomaso.” Nigel answered.

Darko frowned, “The fuck’s wrong?”

Nigel shrugged blankly, “He said something about needing to talk to me about Petrov.”

Darko growled and kicked at the sand this time. “I fucking knew that cunt wouldn’t stay dead the first time!”

“It could be nothing.” Nigel supplied, deep down knowing it wasn’t true at all.

“Bullshit, frate!” Darko brushed the bits of sand that had flown onto his own feet aside.

“It’s almost 8:25. I have to make this fucking call.” Nigel announced, getting up suddenly, he began feeling light headed. He swayed and tried to still his thudding heart, his head throbbing and spinning dizzily from having stood up so quickly.

Darko got up and held a hand against Nigel’s back for support. “Woah…you sure you’re okay to make that call?” He asked, concern lacing his tone.

Nigel scoffed and brushed Darko’s hand off his body. “I’ll be fine, Darko. Now get the fuck outta here; you have to take care of your wife.”

Darko didn’t move right away, he only stared at Nigel before he breathed in through his nose, the sound wheezing and almost whistling, causing Nigel to cringe, knowing he was solely responsible for that.

Darko raised his right hand, palm open towards Nigel. “Brothers.” He said softly, and Nigel met his hand with his own, their hands clasping together as they pulled each other, palm-against-palm between their chests, for a half-hug. Darko pet Nigel once on the upper back, a strong, but supportive pat.

They broke away from each other, laughing softly between themselves before Nigel nodded, signaling with a jerk of his head towards the direction of the cottage before turning away from Darko.

Two sets of footprints littered the white sand as the two friends walked in separate directions, but their friendship headed one-similar-way: towards their future.

8:30 AM

Tomaso picked up on the second ring, clearing his throat quickly. “Nigel.”

“Tomaso. The fuck do you want?” Nigel spoke lowly and softly, standing with his back resting against a large tree, his body hidden beneath the shade and the protective canopy the wide, heavy leaves and branches supported.

“Petrov knows you have the cocaine, ragazzo.”

Nigel felt his blood rushing to his ears, and he closed his eyes and resisted the urge to punch the tree trunk he was leaning on.
“What the fuck do you want me to do?” He asked, opening his eyes slowly and wondering why and how his day had gone from beautiful to absolute dog shit in an hour.

Tomaso answered immediately: “You have to hide it somewhere, and you have to do it quickly, Nigel. Petrov already sent Alexei over to your fucking place, and I'm sure he's tracing your every fucking move already.”

Nigel felt his grip tighten on the cellphone at his ear, ready to crush the damn thing into hundreds of little pieces.

A pause went by, and Nigel felt his heart sinking down into his stomach.

“Did you hear me, ragazzo?” Tomaso asked, frustration growing in his voice.

“Yes I fucking heard you, Tomaso, I’m not fucking deaf!” Nigel hissed, finally moving his back off the trunk of the tree, and shivering when he felt the wind blow past him, causing his skin to grow cold as beads of sweat stuck to his back.

“Hide it. They’re out for blood this time, Nigel.” Tomaso warned.

“I’m thinking, Tomaso, alright?!” Nigel growled vehemently, beginning to pace the small patch of grass he was standing on, secretly wishing the ground would open up and swallow him whole so he wouldn’t have to deal with this shit for another second.

“You don’t have much time left, Alexei’s going to finish raiding your house soon. Figure it out, fast.” Tomaso hung up after this, leaving Nigel to stand and listen to the steady “beeps” of the ended call.

9 AM

Adam heard stirring from somewhere in his room, and he sat up slowly, trying to adjust his eyes to the bright sun in the room. He yawned and then groaned when he felt how sticky his thighs and stomach were. He looked down to see dried sweat and cum clinging onto his skin. He needed a shower.

Adam stood, scratching his arms gently with his fingernails as he walked to the closet of his room, and pulled open one of the doors.

He screamed and jumped a few steps back when he was face-to-face with Nigel.

“Nigel?! What are you doing in the closet?” Adam inquired, growing red from embarrassment, and he immediately ran and grabbed a bed sheet, using it to cover himself.

Nigel smirked, brushing a loose strand of hair away from his eyes. “It’s nothin’ I haven’t seen before, darling.”

Adam blushed and looked down at his toes peeking out from under the sheet. “I feel dirty…I need a shower.” He felt his cheeks burning, and he looked back up at his open suitcase sitting in the closet.

“Nigel, can you please get me a towel?” He asked gently, his feet ready to break into a run for the bathroom. He couldn’t believe he was naked in front of Nigel in the light of the day where Nigel could see everything more!

Nigel chuckled, but nodded as he pulled out a baby blue coloured towel from Adam’s suitcase and handed it to Adam. “Sure thing, darling.”
Adam clutched the towel with one hand, the other hand holding the bedsheets, but Nigel suddenly tugged roughly on the other end of the towel, yanking him forward roughly and flat against his own body. The bed sheet fell away, and Adam was nude once again.

“NIGEL!” Adam squealed, and then let out a soft gasp when he felt Nigel’s warm wet tongue run down his neck and then back up to his chin, his lips nibbling at Adam’s chin for a brief second before he whispered in his ear.

“I can’t help myself around you, gorgeous. You taste so fuckin’ good, and you look ten times fuckin’ better in the daylight.” Nigel playfully slapped Adam’s ass when he broke out of Nigel’s arms with the towel clutched tightly to his chest.

Adam yelped, running to the bathroom, leaving Nigel with a good view of his firm, toned ass as he ran down the hall.

"Cute." Nigel was about to close the closet doors after Adam had left, when he took one curious look at the rest of the contents in the suitcase.

A white, neatly packed, and folded suit lay under a small towel and a few of Adam’s socks. Nigel reached for it, brushing aside the other items in the suitcase, and pulled it out of the closet and up to his face.

The material fell away, unfolding itself as he held it up in his arms and raised it high.

“Fucking bingo.” Nigel whispered in a dark little secretive manner, eyes flashing dangerously as he noticed the sizeable stitched-on-arm pockets of a clean, white spacesuit.

Chapter End Notes

Nigel, you freakin’ moron -- Someone stop him!
Chapter Notes

More sex!

*FYI- Alexei’s appearance is loosely based off G Man from the Half-Life games*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 15

Darko had entrusted Nigel with his apartment keys for the rest of the week. He’d stated to Nigel that he was going to spend the week with Verka and her parents due to the sudden news of Verka’s pregnancy.

“Just don’t set anything on fucking fire.” He hugged Nigel partly after playfully punching him in the side of the arm, and watched Nigel drive off with Adam in the minivan.

Adam hurried back to Darko’s bedroom, putting his laptop and suitcase in the closet for the time being while Nigel made himself some much-needed coffee.

Tomaso’s warnings rang constantly in Nigel’s ears, making him want to throw the coffee maker across the kitchen in reverent anger. He knew he couldn’t hide the coke forever, and he knew that the fucking Petrovs would track him down sooner or later, demanding for it.

Nigel watched as his coffee began pouring into the cup he placed on the holder below, wishing he could drown himself in the hot, dark liquid. He was too deep in shit and it was far too late to back out.

Two hands suddenly wrapped themselves around his waist, and Nigel snapped around to face Adam.

“Fuck! You scared me, darling!” He sighed and held Adam’s hands in his, his forehead resting against Adam’s as he gathered the young man to his chest.

“I apologize. I don’t know how you’re feeling, but I noticed you’ve been rather quiet since we left the cottage.” Adam’s voice soothed Nigel. His voice was like music to his ears, and Nigel wanted to surrender to every crime he had committed, every misdeed, every injustice and just be reborn again; be forgiven by his darling, gorgeous space angel.

Nigel envied this glorious man before him: he didn’t have a whole string of things he had to confess to or beg forgiveness of. He hadn’t been through the system, ground in the gears, and spit back out. He hadn’t had any trauma come his way from being chased by men who gambled and placed bets on how he was going to die, he didn’t owe anyone lines of debts, and he didn’t suffer the experience of dying once already.

Nigel was very envious, but he still felt that Adam truly deserved every bit of peace and happiness that had come his way. He wasn’t ruthless and brutal like Nigel. He certainly didn’t cause others harm or suffering, and he certainly was no thief or liar. He was…perfect.
“I can see you’re upset. But I don’t know what to do.” Adam sounded pained, and it made Nigel nearly buckle down and break into tears.

He’d never had anyone care so much or even acknowledge him so much to understand his suffering and his misery. Beyond that, he’d never had anyone desire to do something for him.

Nigel felt his heart swelling along with the tears that brimmed his eyes. He closed them, and felt the tears dying down. He couldn’t allow Adam to see him like this, especially not now.

“Adam…darling…” He began, but couldn’t find the right words.

Adam sighed and looked at Nigel’s nose. “Have I done something wrong?” He asked, sweetly, innocently, and softly.

“Fuck no, gorgeous. You couldn’t do anything wrong.” Nigel answered, pressing a small kiss to Adam’s forehead, which burned as he blushed a deep red.

“That’s not true, Nigel. Everyone does something wrong at one point in their lives.”

Nigel snickered, eyes still closed. “Good point, darling.”

Adam pulled his head away from Nigel’s, looking shyly at the floor, his feet shifting his weight back and forth as he opened his mouth to say something, but then only to close it and shake his head.

“What’s wrong, baby?” Nigel asked.

“Nothing.”

“Bullshit. You can tell me.” Nigel prodded, feeling his heart race just a bit, wondering what his darling was hiding from him.

“Promise you won’t make fun of me?” Adam asked shyly, the blush running up to his ears now.

Nigel nodded. “I promise.”

“I want you to…to…”

“To?”

“To take my virginity, Nigel.”

Nigel didn’t move, didn’t breathe, didn’t blink, didn’t speak for minutes. He was frozen, rooted to the spot in the kitchen.

Adam gently poked his shoulder. “Nigel?”

Nigel still didn’t move or say anything.

“I shouldn’t have brought it up, but I really like you, Nigel. A lot. More than a lot, and I know that people often reserve their first time for someone very special, and that means you are very special to me, and will always be. I want to remember my first time forever, and I want it to be with you. I know I have waited long enough for the right person, and you are my right person, beca-”

Nigel interrupted Adam’s thoughts with a strong, deep kiss. He began tearing at Adam’s clothes, and Adam mimicked the move. Soon, clothes leading all the way up to Nigel’s room in the apartment were littered everywhere on the floor. The coffee maker kept pouring hot, dark coffee, and it
overflowed, drenching the kitchen counter in coffee.

Nigel nearly broke through the bedroom door with his right shoulder, while cradling Adam in his arms and on his chest, the young man kissing him passionately as he held onto Nigel’s cheeks with his warm hands.

They tumbled back onto the bed, only wearing their boxers. Nigel rolled on top of Adam carefully, and peeled his boxers off his hips, still attacking his lips. Nigel’s teeth gently nipped Adam’s lower lip, and Adam moaned, his mouth opening for Nigel’s tongue.

Nigel impatiently shredded his own boxers off, and they both groaned in complacent unison as soon as they felt their flesh finally pressed against each other without a barrier.

Nigel kissed his way from Adam’s lips over to his jaw, tracing the strong bone all the way over to his ear. He nosed his way downward, nibbling Adam’s fine collarbone to one side, then licking and sucking his way back to the other side, earning a few soft moans and sighs from Adam in the process.

Nigel grinned into the kiss as he ran two fingers up Adam’s chin and into his warm wet mouth.

“Suck, gorgeous.” He instructed, voice thick with lust and desire.

Nigel felt himself harden impossibly when he looked at Adam’s lips and tongue wrapped around his fingers, sucking deeply. For a mere second, Nigel pictured his cock in Adam’s mouth instead of his lips, and he groaned out loud.

“Adam…darling!” He couldn’t believe how good his space angel was, practically deepthroating the fingers in his mouth as his tongue stroked its way up and down the length of his fingers, then in-between them.

Not wanting to cum so soon, Nigel gently removed his fingers from Adam’s mouth and gently pressed them against Adam’s hole. He didn’t enter; he simply traced and circled the opening to Adam’s body, wishing he could just take what he so desperately wanted right now. Nigel knew he had to be careful and gentle, however, and he circled and massaged the opening of Adam’s hole for minutes before he felt Adam’s fingers pressing down on his forearm.

“How could Nigel deny his darling what he needed?

Nigel gently worked in one finger first, and looked for any signs of distress or discomfort on Adam’s face. When he saw none, he added the second finger, and slowly began a deep, but very gentle pace.

Adam breathed in content, his own hand moving from his grip on Nigel’s over to his own cock, and he palmed his length gently in time with Nigel’s fingers inside him.

Nigel kissed Adam’s chest and stomach, quickening the pace of his thrusting fingers. Adam moaned louder, his head thrown back and eyes away from Nigel’s view.

Nigel withdrew his fingers, and opened the drawer of the night table beside the bed. He fished out a condom, nearly dropping it three times before he tore the wrapper and placed it on his thick cock.

He spread Adam’s legs, kissing him once softly before he held himself in his hand, and slowly
pushed inside Adam’s tight heat.

Nigel nearly came the second he had pushed through that tight ring of muscle. Adam was beyond tight, tighter than any woman Nigel had fucked in his entire life. He never thought he’d find the idea of a man’s ass being more pleasurable than a woman’s pussy, but Adam’s proved to be exactly what Nigel had been missing his whole life.

His head was spinning, and he placed two hands on the bed, trying to register in the feeling, when he looked down and saw Adam’s face.

Nigel stopped his movements immediately.

Adam was in pain. His eyes were clenched shut so tightly that they squeezed out tears from the corners. His eyebrows were firmly knotted together down, and his lips quivered.

Nigel immediately pulled out and sat back on his knees, pulling Adam close to his chest.

“Baby, I’m so sorry! What happened?” He pet Adam’s soft hair over and over, panicking and trying to piece together what he had done wrong. His brain scrambled for solutions and answers, but he found none.

Adam finally moved, and he gently wrenched himself out of Nigel’s warm embrace, turning away from Nigel entirely and slowly moving to the edge of the bed.

Nigel reached out, but made no move to grab Adam. It was clear he didn’t want to be touched or held.

“Baby?”

“I…I’ll be ok, Nigel. I just don’t think I can do this. I’m sorry.”

Adam got off the bed and walked to the bathroom, closing the door gently behind him. Nigel heard the shower turn on, the curtains being pulled back, and Adam getting in.

Nigel sighed and tore off the condom, tossing it into a garbage bin. He didn’t understand what had gone wrong. Normally, women were the ones coming back for a third and fourth round with him, but Adam wanted to stop before it had even begun!

Feel rejected and disappointed, Nigel stood up, feeling his erection disappearing by the second. He walked over to properly shut the night table drawer, when he noticed a bottle of lube beneath some condom packets and loose paper.

OF COURSE!

Nigel wanted to slap himself silly.

He waited patiently until Adam finished his shower, still sitting naked on the bed, facing the bathroom.

Adam opened the door, and softly gasped when he saw Nigel sitting in the same spot he’d left him.

“Nigel?” Adam wore a white towel around his waist, and Nigel stood, circling his hips over the towel, gently kissing Adam’s cheeks.

“Adam, give me another chance, darling. I know I can make you feel good now.” He whispered in his ear, kissing it warmly.
Adam looked at his feet, his head shaking slightly. “I can’t, Nigel…it really hurt last time…”

“I promise I know exactly what to do now.” Nigel spoke with confidence, and Adam looked up, meeting his eyes briefly, but it was long enough for him to know that Nigel was being truthful, and that he was going to do good on his promise.

“Alright Nigel.”

He allowed Nigel to take off the towel and push him down onto the bed softly. Before Adam could lie back on the pillow, Nigel grabbed it, and gently lifted Adam’s body off the mattress.

“What?”

“Trust me, gorgeous.”

Nigel slid the pillow under Adam’s hips, and then pressed a hand on his shoulder.

“Turn to lie on your stomach, gorgeous.”

Adam nodded, and rolled over, feeling the soft pillow resting beneath his hips, and he sighed gently when he felt Nigel’s warm hand over his cock, stroking it tenderly and slowly a few times.

Nigel kissed the back of Adam’s neck and his shoulders, his tongue poking out to taste the fresh, minty scent of the shower gel Adam had used. He licked the spot in between Adam’s shoulders and then moved back up to trace his lips from the top of Adam’s spine all the way down to his tailbone.

Adam began moaning a symphony of moans mostly consisting of Nigel’s name. He pleaded and begged Nigel, and Nigel smiled as he kissed his way back up to the back of Adam’s neck.

“This may be a little cold, gorgeous.” He explained calmly, opening the bottle of lube, and generously adding plenty onto his fingers.

Adam jumped back a little when he felt the cold substance rubbing and tracing the outline of his hole, but he moved instinctively back onto Nigel’s thick warm fingers, biting down on his lower lip when he felt Nigel’s index finger slide in much easier than it had last time when Nigel had only used saliva instead of lube.

Nigel massaged and worked Adam’s hole for minutes before he added in a second, bringing more lube with him. He stretched Adam perfectly, nearly massaging his prostate in the process, making Adam’s cock twitch in delight.

“Not yet, gorgeous.” Nigel playfully nipped Adam’s earlobe as he stroked his length in a silent promise of what was to happen next.

“I’m ready, Nigel, I’m ready…” Adam begged, his hips lifting off the pillow slightly, groaning in impatience.

“Shhh.” Nigel kissed Adam’s shoulders again, making sure Adam was wet enough before he turned to grab another condom.

Adam immediately turned around and grabbed Nigel’s hand tightly. “No! I don’t want there to be anything between us…” He blushed, his pupils blown wide with arousal.

“Are you sure, gorgeous?” He breathed as if he had been running a race, his eyes meeting Adam’s briefly, but the experience was enough to leave Nigel’s mind reeling with desire and passion for this
young man.

“Yes, please Nigel, I just want to feel you inside me.”

Nigel grabbed Adam’s face in his hand and kissed him deeply, feeling nothing but warmth, compassion, and love for this young man.

Nigel loved him.

He didn’t know when it had happened that his feelings had grown to the extent of love, but he couldn’t deny it; he loved Adam Raki, and he always would, till death do they fucking part.

Making his vows in his head silently, Nigel pushed Adam down gently with his own body heatedly, and gently guided only the tip of his cock inside Adam, pausing and checking for any signs of discomfort or pain.

Adam let out a loud, long: “Nigel!” His head falling face-first into the sheets, and his hips rising up against Nigel’s hips.

Nigel only moved when he felt Adam’s wet hole open more to accommodate and allow his entire length inside. He moved, inch-by-inch, pausing and allowing Adam to adjust to his girth and size before he buried himself to the hilt.

“Ohhh Nigel!” Adam screamed suddenly, bucking up on his knees.

Nigel guessed he may have hit his prostate, and he slowly and very carefully circled his hips as he thrusted, aiming to hit that sweet spot once more.

“That feels, that feels! Oh!” Adam cried and sobbed but in a manner indicating that Nigel was doing nothing short of pleasing him, and he lifted his hips to allow Nigel’s hand to wrap firmly and entirely around his cock, stroking him as he fucked into him gently.

“I know, baby.” Nigel closed his eyes and only felt. He stroked Adam as he would himself, only taking more time and more care, making sure his space angel was feeling like he was on cloud nine.

It didn’t take too long and too much effort before Adam came, rearing up on his knees, his back pressed into Nigel’s chest. He came with a passionate cry, coating Nigel’s hand, and dug his hands and fingernails into Nigel’s arm.

Nigel quickened his pace, but only slightly, not wanting to hurt Adam as he felt his angel releasing all over his hand. He kissed Adam’s neck once more before he felt his balls tightening, signaling his own impending release.

He grabbed Adam’s chin in his free hand, and turned his neck over to face him.

“Adam, I love you.”

He saw Adam’s eyes widen, and they aligned almost perfectly with his own.

That was it.

Nigel came with a sudden gasp, still looking deeply at Adam. He collapsed on top of Adam, still holding him, releasing load after load, most of it seeping down along the insides of Adam’s thighs.

Gently pulling out of him, Nigel held Adam and softly pressed him down onto his back to lie down beside him. He played with the hair on the back of Adam’s neck, eyes half closed, breathing starting
“Did you mean it?” Adam asked, voice shy and eyes looking at Nigel’s neck.

“Mean what?” Nigel asked, cleaning Adam’s thighs and stomach with the bedsheets and tossing them down onto the floor.

“When you said you loved me.” Adam reminded him, nearly choking on the word “love”.

Nigel paused. He didn’t feel he was making another mistake. Gabi had been a mistake, but Adam most certainly was not. He was ready to learn everything new from Adam, and he was ready to really start his life over. Adam had instilled that hope for him, Adam had breathed that breath of life in his lungs.

“I absolutely fuckin’ meant it, my love.”

Adam smiled and wrapped his tired arms around Nigel, who held him tight, and rolled him on top of his body, pushing back some of the hair that had fallen over his eyes.

“I think I love you too, Nigel.” He professed, kissing Nigel’s chest and closing his eyes as he rested his head above Nigel’s chest, ear pressed against right where his heart beat.

Nigel could only offer a large smile as he kissed the top of Adam’s head, wrapping the sheets around them and closing his eyes to submit to the most peaceful slumber he’d had in half a year.

Tomaso was right; Nigel’s place was trashed. When Nigel entered his house in the wee hours of the morning while Adam lay curled in bed back at Darko’s, he had almost leapt in shock when he turned on the lights.

The entire main floor had been thoroughly searched. Paper was torn up and almost around every corner of the house. Nigel’s TV had been broken, and the cushions and seats of the couch had been burnt, and torn open with a knife. The cotton and feathers of his furniture was hanging off tables, in the carpet, and sticking onto his shoes as he moved around.

Dishes had been tossed and broken in the kitchen, making Nigel’s shoes crunch away on them as he checked out more of the damage.

His cupboards had been searched, the shelves broken. Not much else in the kitchen was touched, thankfully.

Nigel quickly made his way up the stairs, and noticed that someone had taken a knife and dug the blade up the wall along the handrail, chipping the paint and leaving a long, thin scratch mark all the way up to the hallway.

Nigel sped his way to his office at the end of the hall. He pressed the palm of his hand on the dark oak door, and breathed as softly as he could before he pushed the door open.

He had barely stepped in the room when someone slammed him on the back of the head. Nigel fell on his knees, feeling blood seep down his head and onto his shoulders under his shirt. He had been hit so hard he nearly saw stars, but once his vision cleared and the lights turned on, he saw Alexei Petrov sitting on the black office chair a few feet in front of him in the center of the room.

The door behind him closed, and Nigel turned weakly to see two large men dressed in black
clothing, matching black ski masks covering their faces, as their black beady eyes peered down at him. One of the men held a gun, the butt of the gun dripping with some of Nigel’s blood.

“Still a coward, Alexei.” Nigel scoffed, wiping some blood from the back of his head and looking at his red, blood-covered hand under the lights.

Alexei Petrov, a thin, tall, lanky man with almost no muscle mass, stood from the chair. He had very thin, very grey hair, which was gelled back, revealing his large shiny forehead. His eyes were cold and green. He had deep lines and scars over his face, and his laugh lines were quite prominent. His face was more pale, gaunt and sunken in than the last time Nigel had seen him, and he looked very much like the fucking angel of death.

He wore a white two-piece suit with a small red tie, and matching white dress shoes. A small handgun was held in his hands over black gloves.

“Hello Nigel.” He didn’t even blink as he stared down at Nigel.

“Nice to see you too, Alexei.” Nigel fought the urge to throw up once he felt his head throbbing where he’d been badly hit. He breathed sharply through his nose, trying to hold his composure.

“How long has it been? 3? 4 years?” Alexei pulled out a black cloth from his pocket, and began wiping the gun with it, eyes still on Nigel.

“Not long enough.” Nigel answered sarcastically.

“No matter. It’s not important. What’s important is the market value, Nigel.” Alexei cleaned the gun almost methodically and thoroughly before tucking it back in his shirt, behind at his back, then straightened the overcoat of his suit.

Nigel began seeing double, eyes burning now, but he didn’t speak or move.

“What you have, I can sell, for three times the profit. I want the cocaine, Nigel. I know you’ve hidden it.” He held his gloved hands together and folded them in front of his lap.

“Where is it?”

Nigel spat at his shoes, some blood glittering the pearly whites of the expensive dress shoes.

Alexei sighed. He looked up at his lackeys.

“I didn’t think you’d tell me easily.” He nodded at one of them, and the man grabbed Nigel by the back of his shirt collar, turned him over, and punched him hard in the face twice.

Nigel fell onto his back, laughing as he opened his eyes and recoiled in the bright lights above on the ceiling.

“Is that the best you’ve got, Alexei? I fuck harder than you fight.” He laughed harder, his sides aching, but mostly from the pain of being thrown onto the floor by a gorilla of a man.

Two thick gloved hands grabbed him and pulled him up again, and this time, the lackey headbutted Nigel. Nigel's head flung back with a thick ‘CRACK’ as the man's thick skull met Nigel's forehead. Nigel's nose and mouth oozed out fresh blood, and he fell back on the floor, almost like a puppet. His limbs felt heavy, and they simply lay at his sides, his fingers twitching a few times before they stopped all movement.
Alexei sighed. “I’m going to give you one last chance, Nigel. Tell me where you’ve hidden it, and I promise I’ll make this as painless for you and your lover as possible.”

Nigel then felt his blood freezing in his veins.

Adam.

He’d take one thousand years of beatings and torture to keep Adam safe. He couldn’t let this fucker get to Adam!

Nigel roared, leaping up to his feet, eyes burning with rage and fire, but Alexei stretched out a long leg and pressed it against Nigel’s chest, but not roughly, surprisingly. The soles of his shoe gently met with Nigel's chest.

“Tsk tsk tsk. So much anger, Nigel.” He pressed until Nigel sat back on his knees, looking up at him with blood pouring out of his nose and caking his thin lips.

“Alexei, if you touch him, I swear it’ll be the last fucking thing you ever do.” He warned, his voice laced with fear, although he tried his best to hide it.

“You shouldn’t be so serious, Nigel. You’ll live longer if you relax.” Alexei flashed him a disgusting toothy grin that held nothing but malice and danger.

“Just tell me where it is.”

Nigel looked up at Alexei, feeling defeated and very worn out. He knew that if Alexei didn’t have his henchmen with him, he’d be a dead man by now. This fucking coward didn’t dare fight on his own, and Nigel felt really stupid for walking back into his house without any backup.

Suddenly, a gun was pressed against his forehead, and the safety clicked as it turned off. Nigel’s eyes shifted up and met the gun halfway.

“I guess there’s no point in keeping you and the brat alive anymore, then.” Alexei breathed in a mock exasperated sigh.

Nigel held up a hand. “I’ll tell you, just please don’t hurt him!”

Alexei lowered the gun, barely.

The room was silent for minutes, Nigel’s breathing being the only audible noise.

Alexei’s eyes widened slightly, waiting for Nigel’s answer.

“It’s in a white space suit costume. In the front arm pockets. I have hidden everything there.”

Alexei smiled coldly, putting his gun away. “I knew you had a fucking heart after all, Nigel.”

Nigel didn’t feel any of that was true, but he didn’t argue; he stared blankly and emptily out the window at the dark.

"Bring it to me tomorrow by noon, unless you want a bullet buried into the boy's brain."

Chapter End Notes
Nigel. You and your big mouth.
Nigel limped back all the way to Darko’s apartment, not wanting to call a cab or risk exposure to himself. He stuck to shadows and small alleyways in the early light of the dawn until he reached the front door of the apartment.

He had until noon, as Alexei warned. Less than a few hours for him to figure out what he was going to do, and he was alone, only by himself, battered, broken, bleeding.

Where the fuck is Darko when I need the bastard?!!

Nigel unlocked the door with the spare key, and gently walked in. He didn’t want to wake and worry Adam at barely half past 7 in the morning.

He took off his shoes and walked up the steps, careful not to trail blood everywhere. He made it to his room and grabbed a change of clothes, pausing to put pressure over the gash in his head and groaned when he felt a large bump already forming.

I’m going to fucking kill that Russian prick!

Nigel closed his eyes and breathed out deeply, but cringed when he felt the pressure against his ribs whenever he breathed too hard. He sighed, lowered his hand away from his skull, and turned back to head to the bathroom.

When he turned, he was face-to-face with Adam.

Wearing light blue shorts and a white t-shirt, Adam’s hair was slightly messy, but his eyes were wide with fear and alertness. Their beautiful blues were trained on Nigel’s bloody, bruised, battered features, and he looked Nigel up and down a few times before gasping softly.
“See something you like, gorgeous?” Nigel drawled, groaning afterwards. It even hurt him to fucking talk.

“What happened?” Adam ventured, walking a few steps forward, but stopping and making no move to touch Nigel.

Nigel shrugged, “Nothing I can’t handle.” He let out a puff of air to show he was alright, but his eyes brimmed with tears when he felt the pain shooting down his back all the way to his legs when he tried breathing regularly and standing up straight.

Adam shook his head, and this time gently raised his hand to Nigel’s bruised forehead and the caked blood running over it and up to his head, but he still didn’t reach out to touch him.

“This doesn’t look like ‘nothing’, Nigel!”

Nigel held tighter onto his clothes but didn’t move suddenly to aggravate the pain. “Trust me, I’ve had worse.”

Adam’s eyes widened more at this set of news, and Nigel almost wished he took that statement back. He never meant for Adam to see him like this, and he certainly wasn’t prepared to sit him down and explain to him exactly what he and Darko did for a living. There was no way on Earth he was going to taint Adam and drag him down with their actions. If there was some innocence left in the world, Nigel was going to do his damn best to protect and preserve it.

“Who did this to you?” Adam asked the question that Nigel was hoping he wouldn’t. He didn’t want to lie to his gorgeous darling, but he also didn’t want to tell him flat out the truth. Nigel had never felt this trapped and scared before.

Nigel really began panicking, knowing his time was short to provide an answer for not only Adam, but Alexei. He felt the world crashing down on him suddenly, and it was far too much for him to handle.

Nigel had gone through physical torture, pain, trauma, and had nearly died. None of that had really troubled him, but he knew without any doubt that lying to Adam or endangering him was far worse than any physical, mental, emotional torture or pain and perhaps even worse than death itself.

“Nigel? Who did this?” Adam’s sweet voice interrupted Nigel’s internal debates and dilemmas, and he just shrugged again and pushed past Adam to the hallway leading up to the bathroom.

“Not sure. It was dark when I went out, and I couldn’t see shit, gorgeous.”

Adam followed, his feet causing little creaks and groans in the floorboards. “But you heard their voice at least?”

Heard way more than that, darling.

“I don’t really remember, they clonked me on the head pretty good.” Nigel walked into the bathroom and turned on the shower taps, adjusting the temperature to warm.

Adam stood almost directly behind him. “Nigel, you have to go to a hospital! Your wounds need to be properly looked at!”

Despite feeling warm and dizzy from Adam’s concern for his well-being, Nigel still felt that old familiar feeling of anger and violence threatening to surface and bubble over. He couldn’t put himself at risk and end up in jail again.
He turned around as quickly as he could, and pointed a finger in Adam’s face, almost hitting his nose. “No hospitals, Adam.” His voice was stone cold and deadly, but it went missed by Adam.

Adam shook his head frantically, the curls shaking over and covering his forehead partially. “No! This isn’t right, Nigel! You’re going to get worse!”

Nigel growled under his breath and moved closer to Adam, putting on his best threatening face and voice he had used on countless punks, druggies, thieves, betrayers, and sometimes even Gabi.

“I said: No fucking hospitals, Adam. Just leave me alone.” He hissed out, teeth baring in a silent threat.

He turned and sat down on the edge of the large tub, tugging his shirt off with lots of trouble and pain, and tossing it at his feet below.

Adam backed away, eyes slightly watery, but no tears fell. He just held up a hand, and rested it on Nigel’s shoulder.

“Nigel, please, let’s just go see a doctor, then…” His voice soothed Nigel like no other’s, and Nigel felt a part of him crumbling and just about ready to give up and listen to that caring, gentle, sweet voice.

It would be so fucking easy. All he had to do was get up, take Adam’s hand, and follow him towards a better, safer path of life. All he had to do was confess his sins, his misdeeds, and walk away from misfortune and a dark life he was living. All he had to do was bare himself before the world, expose himself, his heart, his thoughts, his deepest wishes, and darkest desires…

Nigel knew he had gone too fucking far down the road he had been walking and grown accustomed to walking for years, and it was far too fucking late for him to change now.

He shook his head and tore his shoulder out from under Adam’s calm, warm hand.

“No. You can go on ahead, Adam, but I fucking can’t. I just can’t.” He held a hand under the stream of the shower taps, switching it over to “bath” so he could instead fill the tub and lie down, hopefully relieving the pain that was slowly increasing in his body by the minute.

“Why not?” Adam’s innocent voice grazed the back of his head and neck, and Nigel wanted nothing more than to hold him close, shield him away from the world and troubles, and also from himself.

Nigel felt the water temperature of the tub heating, just like his mood and internal dilemma.

“Just trust me on this one, gorgeous, I couldn’t, even if I wanted to.” He watched the water spread in two as it dripped down over his hand as he held it in a clenched fist under the faucet.

Adam frowned, “I don’t understand why you’re saying that, Nigel. It’s not that difficult! Just put your clothes back on, and let me take you to a doctor! Please Nigel, you need help!” His young voice begged and pleaded, but the last sentence really got to Nigel.

Nigel snorted, his fist clenching tighter and tighter as he began feeling his anger spiraling out of his own control.

“I don’t fucking need help, Adam.” He growled louder, but fought within himself to keep his anger in check.

“Yes you do! You’ve been hurt really badly! Just look in the mirror!” Adam cried in exasperation,
his voice breaking a few times.

Nigel roared and stood to his full height, his adrenaline pushing away the pain he was not only feeling in his entire body, but now his heart as well. He took a few paces closer to Adam, making the young man inch back towards the bathroom sink, hands slightly raised in fear.

“Oh I fucking have looked in the mirror, Adam. I’ve looked plenty, and I don’t see anything fucking different today than all the other days. How about you fucking take a good long look in the mirror at yourself? Hmm?”

Adam’s jaw fell open, “I don’t understand…” His hands gripped the edge of the sink behind him, and he turned slightly to the side, his neck still facing Nigel.

Nigel took a few steps closer, almost feeling Adam’s body heat mold into his aching bones and muscles. He took a breath, trying to clear his head from the “spell” Adam had put him under, seemingly without any effort at all.

“Of course you don’t understand. You wouldn’t fucking understand anyway, even if I explained it to you for days and weeks on end, Adam.” Nigel spat out venomously, and a voice at the back of his head told him to stop, to shut the hell up before he did more damage, but he knew that he had to ignore that shit and keep on going. He wasn’t about to give himself up and become undone right in front of Adam. No fucking way in hell.

Adam lowered his head and raised his hands up to his chest. “I didn’t do anything…” His palms turned in towards his chest, and he raised his hands up, as if to shield himself.

Nigel nodded, peering down at Adam through tired, burning eyes. “Exactly my point, Adam. You’ve never lived through anything. You’ve been so sheltered, so protected, so innocent, that it’s impossible for you to fully understand that there’s a whole other world outside your apartment and outside of your fantasies and dreams about space,” Nigel knew he should have stopped there, but he felt that carrying on and pushing Adam away would be the best thing for him in the end, and if that was what it took to save his life, he would do it.

“You will never understand what it’s like taking a bullet for the one you love, because of the one you love, and then being cursed with the knowledge every fucking day that they didn’t care for you and return that love. You’ll never know the feeling of living every day like an empty shell of yourself; just sitting by, wasting away, watching the world spin on its fucking axis, and have no one give a shit about you one way or another.”

Adam shook his head and raised his hands to cover his ears. “You’re wrong, Nigel. I do give a shit. I care!”

Nigel laughed, feeling the world collapsing on his skull and burying him down into the floor where he belonged. “No you fucking don’t. If you really did, you’d fuck off and get the hell outta here, before I really get angry. Maybe one day we can all live happily-ever-fuckin-after in your world, but for now, I'm stuck in this fucked up world.”

Adam looked up, tears flowing down his cheeks freely, but he lowered his hands away from his ears slowly. He made full eye-contact with Nigel.

Nigel felt his heart tearing in pieces, but he knew he had to dig the final nail in the coffin, before the situation got even more unbearable for them both.

"You’re just a little kid, Adam.”
“And you’re just a bitter asshole who is going to end up alone for the rest of his life because of his actions.”

Nigel felt his heart sink down to his feet, and he felt frozen and his breathing hitched in his throat and his chest tightened.

Adam shoved past him out of the bathroom, running for Darko’s room, and he slammed and locked the door behind him.

Nigel stood for many long minutes, hearing the water in the tub behind him filling, and after what seemed like hours, he turned slowly, and fell onto his knees. He barely felt the pain that shot up through his kneecaps, and he leaned over with his chest pressed into the side of the tub.

His eyes fell upon the clean surface of the steadily rising water, and he punched the edge of the rim of the tub with all force he could gather. Yet again, he didn’t find any comfort in the slight dulling pain that shot through his hands and bones.

Nigel clenched his fists, his breathing quickening as his heart raced, finally feeling the impact of everything he had said to Adam.

“MOTHERFUCK!” He screamed, holding his fist over the flow of the water, and he adjusted the temperature to HOT with his free hand.

Nigel watched as the boiling water poured over his clenched fist, turning the skin a dark pink and then soft red as his hand burned under the faucet.

When he could take the scolding heat no more, he pulled his hand out from under the faucet and cursed and slapped the edge of the tub.

He looked down at the water, churning and swirling with the crimson of some of his blood. He felt his mood turning fouler, and he wished he could duck his head under the water and drown himself. He suddenly felt that it wasn’t Gabi who had done wrong to him, or Charlie Countryman; he had done wrong unto himself.

Everything he had accused everyone else of, he had been guilty of. He wasn’t the best husband he could have been and should have been to Gabi. He terrorized everyone around him, he ended all arguments and discussions with threats of punishment and violence, he treated Darko more like an adversary than a friend, most days. He felt more comfort and serenity within handguns, cash, blood, guts, bruises, and drugs than he did with people. He had no redeeming qualities, and he had no faith and trust in anyone.

Nigel’s head began to pound.

Adam was right. He had gone and pushed away almost everyone in his life who had cared for him and even loved him.

Turning off the faucet before he could flood the room, Nigel stood up abruptly, nearly falling into the tub below. He swayed slightly, catching his breath, and he turned to run out of the bathroom and to the closed door of Darko’s room.

Perhaps he had fucked up with Gabi, but Nigel knew for a fucking fact that second chances never came easily to anyone. He considered himself more than blessed and lucky to have found Adam, and he wasn’t going to let Adam slip by easily. He would do whatever it took; he’d apologize until the end of time, he’d offer Adam his broken heart to repair and mend, he’d allow him all the trust he could afford to give, he’d give up smoking, drinking, anything!
Nigel reached the door and twisted the door open widely, making it slam against the wall as he charged inside the room.

“Adam? Gorgeous?” He cried out breathless, but the room was empty.

“Adam?” Nigel looked at the made bed, looked at the open closet door. Adam wasn’t in the room.

Nigel turned and leapt down the steps, two at a time until he reached the bottom.

“Adam?” He cried out for him in the kitchen, but found it to be empty.

He checked the living room, the balcony, and the main floor bathroom, but the entire apartment was empty.

Nigel ran back to the main hall, and stopped when he noticed the front door wide open.

After Nigel had yelled at him, Adam felt he was about to break into a million little pieces. Nothing had been going right that morning, and he was starting to feel very stressed out. He tried dialing Beth and Harlan when he went back to Darko’s room, but neither of them had picked up, so he left Beth a voice message.

“Hello Beth, it’s me… I wish I could come home, everything’s so bad here! I really don’t understand why Nigel got mad at me today, but he said a lot of hurtful things to me! I really don’t want to be in Bucharest anymore! I want to come home!”

He had paced the room a few times, trying to get his heart and breathing to calm down, and he stopped when he remembered what techniques usually calmed him down.

He walked over to the closet, and dug into his suitcase for his spacesuit. It always calmed him down, and it always soothed his nerves. He held it to his chest, drying off some of his tears with the fabric. He reminded himself he needed to be strong, and he would get over this soon. He just needed time and space...how he wanted to go to space right now...

He put the suit on the bed and disrobed. After putting it on swiftly, he walked down the steps and opened the front door. He was going to go for a walk until he found a park where he could sit down and think and maybe see some ducks and raccoons.

Walking quickly and proud of his choice for handling his stress, Adam passed by many streets and buildings, ignoring the onlookers and sneers as he fell deep within his own thoughts and worries.

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He was concerned for Nigel, but he knew he couldn’t help him, especially if Nigel said he didn’t understand anything. Adam felt closed off to the world once again, and he felt his father and Harlan were right. People wouldn’t understand him, and only other Aspies would be able to feel what he felt. He didn’t know why he had bothered with a Neuro-typical in the first place.

Adam frowned as he turned a right into an empty, abandoned stretch of an old street, wondering why his spacesuit felt a little heavier today. He walked on, however, failing to notice a black car with tinted windows following him.

Adam nearly collided with a garbage can, so deep in thought, but he stopped when he felt his feet hit the can and it let out a “CLANK!” as it fell over and rolled down onto the curb.

Adam jumped in fright, finally looking up and registering he was in a part of town he didn’t
recognize at all. He began to worry, but he looked around for a street sign, turning to face the beginning of the path he had walked on.

He stopped and gasped when he saw the small black car. The window rolled down all the way, and Adam found himself looking into a pair of the deadest, most cold green eyes. A second pair of eyes looked at him from the passenger seat of the car, but they were almost grey.

Adam didn’t move, hoping the men in the car would drive away, but they had stopped, the engine of the car gently purring as they looked at him through the open window.

The driver spoke very calmly and in a gentle, but not friendly, tone.

“Hello, spaceman.”

Chapter End Notes

.... well, that escalated quickly.
Chapter Notes

The one where everyone talks and freaks out.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 17

Beth pressed “replay” on her phone’s message inbox storage, and listened to Adam’s panicked, sad voice for the fifth time that afternoon as she sped through the streets in her car on her way to Mr. Klieber’s office.

“Hello Beth, it’s me…I wish I could come home, everything’s so bad here! I really don’t understand why Nigel got mad at me today, but he said a lot of hurtful things to me! I really don’t want to be in Bucharest anymore! I want to come home!”

She couldn’t begin to place herself in Adam’s situation, but many frightening thoughts flew around and swum in her head space as she nearly flew through an intersection, nearly catching the red light.

“Jesus!” She sped on, despite the fact that she knew she’d broken and violated at least three traffic laws already, and she was surprised and also very pleased she hadn’t managed to capture the attention of a police officer by now.

She honked a few cars out of her way as she drew closer to Replay Inc. She heard her tires screech as she parked crookedly in the parking lot next to a large truck.

Beth’s body was on autopilot as she flew out of her car, not locking her car doors in the state of the panic and emergency coursing through her veins and gathering in her boiling blood.

She ran inside, finding a small group of people crowding around and waiting for an elevator. She pushed up to them, looking at the floor signal lights counting down the floors as the elevator moved downwards. The elevator was on the second floor, but Beth knew it’d still be a while before it landed on the main floor.

She bit her bottom lip, turning to look at the staircase to the right side of the elevator, and made up
her mind.

“Move!” She screamed as she squeezed past a few men, toppling over one man’s coat and briefcase resting by his feet in the process.

She stumbled and tore like a demon up the steps, all the way to the third floor where Mr. Klieber’s office was located.

Beth flew hurriedly past his secretary, reaching for the doorknob with desperate fingers, making the door tear open in the process.

“Excuse me! Miss! Hey!” The secretary followed, stomping behind Beth, nearly slamming into her back as she jogged right up to Mr. Klieber’s desk.

Mr. Klieber was a middle-aged man, slightly wide, with greying short hair. He had been on the phone when Beth barged in, and he dropped his cellphone on top of his desk in shock at her brazen entry.

“Ms. Buchwald! What’s the meaning of this? I have appointment hours for a reason!” He glared over at his secretary menacingly, eyes casting blame on her right away.

“Mrs. Cooper! Escort her out of here right now!”

The secretary grabbed gently onto Beth’s shoulders, but she tore herself out from under her hands.

“Mr. Klieber! This is an emergency!” She cried, wisps of dark hair falling out from her once-neat-ponytail and covering the sides of her face and chin.

Mr. Klieber picked up his cellphone and sighed, “Take it up with Mrs. Cooper, I have a meeting in an hour.”

“IT’S ABOUT ADAM!” She screeched at the top of her lungs.

Mr. Klieber froze, and slowly brought up his cellphone to his mouth. “I’ll call you back.” He hung up, and never tore his eyes off Beth, his breathing growing shallow by the minute.

“I was actually about to call his legal guardian after my meeting…” He spoke softly, then looked at his secretary, still hanging behind Beth, wearing a confused expression on her face; brows knitted together tightly, arms hanging at her sides, fingers clenching and unclenching as she was unsure of how to proceed.

“Mrs. Cooper, please leave us.” He motioned for her to close the door behind her, which she did, albeit, hesitantly, huffing and glaring at Beth before the door clicked shut.

“What’s going on?” He asked Beth, putting his cellphone in his pocket, giving her his full attention now.

“He called me last night, but I was asleep, so I couldn’t talk to him personally.” She breathed out, finally realizing she hadn’t properly breathed since she pulled out of her parking lot. The back of her shirt was covered in a thick sheen of sweat, still dripping, and she shifted uncomfortably, trying to avoid the shirt from clinging onto her back and causing her to shiver and shake from the cool air of the air conditioning in the office.

“What did he say?” Mr. Klieber asked, frowning worriedly.
Beth laughed, “He’s VERY upset, Mr. Klieber! He’s not having a good time at all!”

Mr. Klieber was about to interrupt, but stopped abruptly when Beth pulled out her cellphone, swiped it on, turned on speakerphone, and slammed the phone on top of Mr. Klieber’s desk.

“Listen.”

“Hello Beth, it’s me… I wish I could come home, everything’s so bad here! I really don’t understand why Nigel got mad at me today, but he said a lot of hurtful things to me!” She stopped it before the rest of the message could continue and she rewound it back to play only the first part.

The message played out Adam’s frightened, distressed voice, and Beth looked up to watch Mr. Klieber’s facial expression turn dark, then he turned a sickly shade of pale.

“Who is Nigel?” Beth asked softly, trying to hold onto whatever bit of control and calm she had left before it all went out the window.

Mr. Klieber immediately frowned, his jaw dropping and he began gaping up at Beth.

“I’ve no idea, I don’t know ANYONE by the name of ‘Nigel’, Beth.” He admitted with utmost sincerity and honesty.

Beth shook her head, not really ready to believe what she was slowly starting to understand in her subconscious. “No, that must be a mistake…”

Mr. Klieber mimicked her head shake, “No, I promise you, it’s not. I’ve never worked with or associated with anyone by the first or last name of ‘Nigel’.”

“What about Darko?” Beth inquired, her fingers starting to turn white from the intensity of the manner in which she was grabbing onto the edge of Mr. Klieber’s desk.

She felt herself beginning to sweat all over again, but this time, it wasn’t from heat or over-exertion; it was from fear.

Mr. Klieber’s response made a dull chill run through her back, all the way to her toes.

“Never heard of him, Beth.”

She slammed her right hand down onto the desk, the phone flying up half an inch from the impact, causing Mr. Klieber to shut his eyes in slight shock. He swallowed thickly.

“Don’t say that to me! Adam spoke to me on the phone a few days ago, and he handed the phone over to a Mr. Darko!”

Mr. Klieber shook his head again.

“Yes! He did! I’m not lying, I’m not crazy! I heard his voice, I spoke to him! He works for you! He works for Replay Inc.!”

“Beth, he doesn’t, I’ll check my files, but I have NEVER employed anyone by the name of ‘Nigel’, or ‘Darko’. ” Mr. Klieber clicked the wireless mouse of his laptop and typed in a few words, and looked back up at Beth after a few long, painful minutes.

“Look for yourself.” He turned the laptop over, the screen facing her, and she was faced with the black capital letters reading:
Beth laughed, but it was a dry, nervous laughter. “You don’t know anyone by those names? Not even overseas? Internationally?” She asked, her heart racing unbearably in her ribcage.

Mr. Klieber shook his head, “Beth, I told you.”

“But…Adam said…”

“I contacted my associates in England. They said they never received Adam since he was due Friday morning.” Mr. Klieber turned back the laptop, and pushed down the lid after shutting it down quickly.

“England? Then why would you send him to Bucharest if he was expected to be in England?” Beth asked, backing away slightly from the desk, her hands dragging back to rest at her sides, eyebrows and lips twisting and quivering in confusion as the reality of the terrible situation slowly started taking a hold of her at once.

Mr. Klieber froze, and his eyes raced up to Beth’s, meeting them in a shocked, cold, frightened display. His mouth dropped open, lips forming an “O” shape.

“Yes, Bucharest!” Beth grabbed her cellphone in haste before he could speak up, making it spin and nearly fall into Mr. Klieber’s lap, but she grabbed it and replayed the message, this time in its entirety.

“Hello Beth, it’s me…I wish I could come home, everything’s so bad here! I really don’t understand why Nigel got mad at me today, but he said a lot of hurtful things to me! I really don’t want to be in Bucharest anymore! I want to come home!”

Mr. Klieber stood up the second the message ended, his chair rolling back to hit the radiator behind on the wall with a “thud”.

“Call the police, now.” His voice was deep and cold, making Beth begin to wring her hands in frustration.

“Why?” She asked softly, looking down at her cellphone still upon the hard desk.

Mr. Klieber moved around to the other side of the desk, stopping in front of Beth and looking down at her, breathing thickly.

“I never sent Adam to Bucharest, Beth.”

Adam hadn’t moved from the curb of the sidewalk, looking at the sides of the shiny black car seating the two older men who seemed to be waiting for him. Adam felt they were dangerous, and he suddenly wished Nigel was by his side to tell the men to go away and leave him alone. He bit down on his tongue, trying to remain calm and together.

The driver looked at his spacesuit, eyes roaming from head to toe, seemingly bored, but also on the alert, mapping and memorizing every crevice and twist or turn of the suit.

“You’re out pretty far on your own, young one.” The driver spoke in a thick, heavy accent, and Adam knew for a fact it was a Russian accent.
He didn’t want to upset and anger the probably dangerous men, so he only nodded.

“You don’t speak?” The driver hissed, looking at the pockets of the spacesuit, eyes flashing back dangerously to Adam’s face.

“I d-do!” Adam whispered frightened, but tried swallowing and burying away his fear. All it resulted in however, was a thick “gulp” of saliva.

The driver smiled a slow, scary, threatening smile that Adam had seen many murderers and killers smile in a lot of horror and dramatic films he had watched on his TV late at night sometimes when he was browsing and flipping through channels. He suddenly felt as if he were in the middle of one of those movies, and he began to fear what the protagonists usually feared when they were face-to-face with the dangerous antagonists who wanted to harm and kill them.

“Good, good. Would you like to join us for a ride, young one?” The driver asked suddenly, catching Adam off-guard.

Adam had been expecting a gun or maybe a knife thrown his way from the window, and he hunched over, still wondering if this was a trick or a trap. He looked over at the passenger in the car, and the older man briefly made eye-contact before the driver interrupted.

“You must be hungry. Let us treat you to something. As a sign of friendship, da?” The driver spoke in a drawl, and Adam felt his chest tightening and stomach fluttering in fear and sadness. He knew if he rejected, he would be in trouble, but he also didn’t want to accept, for he felt trouble would brew down the road later on anyway.

Regardless, he nodded and took a step closer to the passenger’s back seat door.

“Good boy.” The passenger finally spoke out, and his voice was much softer than the driver’s, which didn’t do anything positive for Adam’s nerves; it only made him feel more frightened, and he held back his outstretched hand that was almost upon the door handle.

The driver looked at Adam’s hands and snickered. “Tell me, what do you like to eat?”

Adam gazed up from his eyelashes, and felt for the first time in his life the need to lie. He felt his fingertips running cold and he stopped himself from shaking as he reached for the car door handle, a mile a minute.

The driver followed his hand movements, but his hands still rested on the dark steering wheel.

“I like…pizza.” Adam spoke, and offered an innocent smile briefly before grabbing the car door handle and opening it.

“I know just the place.” The driver smiled darkly, eyes set on the road, as he waited for the car door to close once Adam slid in.

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“Darko, pick the hell up!” Nigel ran through the apartment, heading straight for the closet where he knew all the guns and ammo Darko had kept for emergency purposes was kept. He tore the shoes and clothes down on the floor in a flurry of heated, set motions, the ringing tone of the phone echoing like a death knell in his ears as he held the phone between his jaw and ear, waiting, praying, hoping Darko would pick up.

The answering machine soon came on after the last ring.
“This is Darko, leave me a message, and it better be fucking good.”

**BEEP!**

“Darko! Where the fuck are you?! I need you back here, NOW! Adam’s in trouble, and I fucked up, he’s in trouble because of me, and I think Petrov is involved…I…just get your fucking useless ass over here!!!” Nigel screamed into the phone speaker as he pulled out two black handguns and three rounds of ammunition.

He set the Glock 9mm revolvers down on the bed where he tossed the phone after hanging up, hands shaking as he tried loading the weapons.

The bullets fell onto the mattress, and some slipped off the bedding and onto the carpet, causing Nigel to curse and he bent down to pick them up, but his fingers were shaking so terribly they were uncoordinated and he dropped the bullets no sooner than he had wrapped his fingers around them.

“Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!” He cursed repeatedly, trying to breathe deeply through his mouth and regulate his heartbeat. He was going to have a fucking heart attack before he even loaded the guns, and Adam would be lost forever and it’d be all thanks to him and his stupid-large-ass-mouth!

“NO!” Nigel screamed, dropping to his knees on the edge of the bed, and gripped the sides of his head in both hands.

“I need to calm the fuck down! For Adam! Now’s not the fucking time to lose my head and my balls!” He spoke harshly to himself, replaying the events leading up to Adam leaving the apartment and going God-knows-where.

Nigel saw himself approaching Adam’s shrinking, frightened form in the bathroom as he pressed the young man against the bathroom sink, pointing a large, long finger at him, eyes full of anger and threat peering forward.

He had indeed fucked up big time. He had spoken to Adam the way he promised he never would, and he had gone back on that promise.

Nigel knew he was a piece of shit. He knew he had been tempted to beat up Gabi a few times in their marriage, he knew he’d tortured Countryman in front of her sad, pained eyes, he knew he’d left her in a state of worry and panic when he’d left her side late at night only to be laid out on a stretcher in a damp, pissy, old abandoned warehouse where he’d been cut up and water-boarded by an invasive Spanish group of assassins meant to take his old ass out. He’d put everyone’s life in danger, he’d nearly killed everyone he’d been in contact with or loved…destruction and pain followed him everywhere he went, and the irony of it was that he had meant to shield and protect Adam from all that, only to have him walk right into it on his own volition.

It seemed Nigel would never be able to reverse his fate and lifestyle, and the harder he fought it, the more it pursued him with a dogged passion, as if to show him that in spite of his efforts, they were all fucked anyway.

Might as well accept it…it was fate…it was going to happen regardless…

“Fuck. That. Shit.”

Nigel stood up, gripping the handguns. He wasn’t going to just roll over like a little bitch and take it as it was. He wasn’t going to surrender to the bullshit he had created for himself.

He picked up the rounds of bullets, and loaded them carefully and professionally one-by-one,
counting each of them for the Petrov cousins. He would bury them in, divide the equally between the two fuckers, making sure they’d feel it deep in the afterlife and the grave when he was through with them.

Nigel knew there was a good chance he’d go down with the Petrovs, but he wouldn’t go down without a good fucking fight, and he wouldn’t close his eyes and leave the Earth until he was absolutely certain Adam was safe.

Nigel stood up, with the magazines fully loaded. He re-inserted the magazines, moving it briskly and firmly upward into the hand grip. He heard his internal clock ticking as he closed his eyes and imagined what was soon going to happen.

He closed his eyes, picturing Adam handsome, lovely face covered in fresh blood. But it wasn’t his blood…it was Nigel’s.

He pictured the Petrovs thin, decaying bodies in an unmarked grave, maggots and flies swarming them, their jewelry corroding and rusting in the stench of their own blood and internal organs, fully exposed and draped over and around their bullet-riddled bodies.

He saw the police dragging Adam, kicking and screaming with eyes flowing freely with thick, heavy rain-drop-like tears from Nigel’s corpse.

Adam was carefully placed into the back of an ambulance, his hands holding Nigel’s cold, lifeless ones, his head hung low to rest on Nigel’s chest, his breathing stopping as his eyes rolled up one last time to look at the man he loved, memorizing and hanging onto that last, and only peaceful, pure part of his life…

Nigel opened his eyes slowly, blinking away one single tear, feeling it turn cold before it dried off into the pores of his skin like a droplet of water being savoured by the hungry roots of a dying plant.

The gun clicked. The magazine locked in place. Nigel looked at the safety, and disengage it by manipulating the safety lever near the upper rear of the firearm. He tucked both handguns in the back of his pants, hiding them beneath his undershirt.

He tore off his undershirt and threw it to the side, hooking the guns to his belt buckle as he pulled open a drawer and pulled out his favourite blue Dachshund shirt.

For once, Nigel didn’t feel breathless or any pain as he flexed his body and straightened his shoulders to slide the shirt on.

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Alexei cringed as he listened to the young man slurp his soda through the red straw as he held the glass in-between his hands.

The pizza sat untouched in front of them in the center of the table, Vadim (his cousin), picking with a fork at the crust. Vadim sat by the window, peering at the quiet and near-empty street. He turned back to look at Alexei, his thin hair and thin eyebrows quirking at his cousin in a silent urging message.

Alexei nodded and stood from the edge of the seat, walking right up to the front of the small pizza parlour.

One of the three chefs smiled at him, clasping his hands together as his fat, round belly rested on the top of the counter.
“Is everything alright with your order?” He asked in an eager-to-please voice.

Alexei tapped at the top of the counter with a finger, then motioned for the chef to lean forward closer.

The chef frowned slightly, his thick, black eyebrows meeting almost in the middle as he peered at Alexei in a confused manner.

“Take the rest of your men and leave. You’re closing up early today.” Alexei instructed in a slow pace, his tapping slowing down almost to match the rhythm of his spoken words.

The chef laughed. “Sorry? I don’t understand you…”

Alexei rolled his eyes, looked at his watch, and then pushed back the side of his jacket, flashing the barrel of his gun at the chef.

“Do you understand this?” He hissed through clenched teeth.

The chef’s eyes widened and he held up his hands and backed away immediately from the counter, his chin quivering and his eyes darting to the back of the restaurant.

“Yes! Yes! I see!” He turned, nearly tripping into a stack of pizza boxes, and screamed at the other two remaining chefs.

The lead chef threw off his hairnet, and his long black hair fell down to his shoulders. Soon, the other two chefs, one chubby with brown shoulder-length hair, and the other with short cropped blonde hair and a numerous amount of pimples dotting his face, ran out from the back, heading to the front doors and placing the **WE'RE CLOSED** sign on the front of the door as they locked it on their way out.

Before the lead chef could exit as well, Alexei grabbed the back of his left shoulder and spoke coldly in his ear in a whisper: “Make sure you tell anyone you see on the street to leave if they want to remain alive. Don’t call the police, don’t go looking for help, as you’ll only be finding trouble and death. Understand?”

“Yes!” The chef nodded so quickly his teeth practically clicked together as he bolted out the door.

Alexei smirked, watching him run down the streets, opening the doors of various shops and crying out in panic and fear as his arms flew about. He watched through the glass as a few other small groups of people ran to their cars, bicycles, and trucks, turning them on and speeding away down the street.

When he spotted no more signs of life and movement, Alexei sat back down beside Vadim in front of Adam.

Adam was still slurping his soda, the ice within the glass causing the edges of it to fog up from his breathing through the straw, and little water droplets sliding down to the bottom and creating a circular puddle around the base of the glass on the table.

The red and white checkered tablecloth was soaked through, the middle of it sinking due to the pizza pan sitting, cooling off gradually in the center.

Alexei reached forward and picked at a dried and slightly burnt tomato, bringing it up to his lips and biting down on it as he kept his eyes on the top of Adam’s head as he bent down and continued slurping.
Vadim looked at the ice cubes in the glass, watching as the soda receded due to the slow slurping, giving the ice cubes the effect of rising in the glass like boulders caught in the middle of the ocean.

“You got a name, young one?” Alexei asked, but also demanded behind his words, grabbing a napkin from a holder and wiping at his thin, pale lips.

The young man stopped slurping, but his lips only barely hovered above the straw.

“It’s…Adam.”

“Adam…that’s a handsome name.” Alexei chuckled, his cheekbones stretching out from beneath his skin in a grotesque manner that resembled a horrific, old gargoyle more than a human.

“Thanks.” Adam fidgeted in his seat, feeling his skin starting to burn up and sweat profusely under the spacesuit. He moved his straw back and forth in his fingers, watching as it bent slightly when it moved over a thick, large ice cube.

“How old are you, Adam?” Alexei asked, resting a hand under his chin, his elbow on the tablecloth.

Adam stopped playing with the straw. “I’m…thirty years old.”

“You look much younger.”

Vadim sighed beside Alexei, looking at the time on his cellphone. It was nearly noon.

“Thanks…I guess.” Adam responded, then bent forward and sucked on the straw once again.

Alexei bit down on the inside of his cheeks, annoyance and his patience wearing thin.

“Adam, do you know why we stopped to talk to you?” He asked, his index finger moving up like it had a mind of its own as it rubbed across his bottom lip from side to side slowly.

Adam stopped slurping, but his lips rested on the straw, muffling his words partially. “To ask me what I liked to eat?” He guessed.

Alexei smirked. The young man definitely had stronger defense mechanisms and was more alert than he let on.

“No.”

He felt Vadim shift beside him.

“Oh…then I don’t know. I can’t read minds. In fact, no one can.” Adam finished bluntly, and resumed slurping, the soda almost gone now, and only ice water at the bottom of the glass, causing a loud, disgusting slurp to echo across the empty restaurant.

Vadim suddenly slammed both his hands down on the tablecloth in front of Adam, causing Adam to stop slurping.

“ENOUGH WITH THE FUCKING NOISES!”

Adam looked only mildly shocked, and he sat back and pushed the glass to the side.

“I apologize.” He stated coolly, picking at the dried-up cheese string hanging off the bottom of a slice of pizza.
Vadim roared and shoved the pizza platter roughly to the side of the table, causing it to fall off the table and onto the floor with a loud “CRASH!”.

Adam looked at the empty center of the table where the pizza once had been.

“It’s not nice to waste a perfectly good meal when some people in the world are starving.” He reached for his empty glass, but Vadim was faster, and he grabbed it and threw it at a wall behind Adam’s head.

Adam ducked, cradling the back of his head, eyes clenched shut as he heard the glass shatter into many pieces behind him.

“You have to pay for that!” He cried, eyes still closed.

Vadim turned to his cousin. “I’m growing tired of this bullshit, Alexei! Just tell him what the fuck we want, and what we came for!” He ground out, ready to stand up from the booth, but Alexei placed a strong, calm hand down on his thigh, causing him to sit back down slowly, eyes still glaring down at Adam.

“Let me handle this, Vadim. Why don’t you go check the door for our guest? I’m sure he’ll be here soon.” He suggested almost happily as he watched his cousin stand up and slide out from the window seat, heading for the doors.

Once he was gone, Alexei smiled warmly at Adam, but it didn’t give Adam the impression that he meant his smile and feelings genuinely.

“I apologize for Vadim. Sometimes he loses his temper all too quickly. Not very professional at all.” Adam shook, but didn’t say anything as he straightened out slightly and looked at Alexei’s hands instead of his face.

“You have something very special that we need, Adam. It is something that your friend, Nigel, promised to give to us.” Alexei looked at the fluffy, full pockets of the spacesuit, greed painting his deadly features as his eyes shined.

“I don’t h-have anything…” Adam stated truthfully. He knew he had left his cellphone back in Darko’s room along with his other belongings, and he wasn’t sure what else this dangerous, horrifying man was talking about.

“Nigel said what we needed would be in your spacesuit. He hid it in an odd place, I know, but he said it is there.”

Adam looked up, eyes growing wide, but then pain began to creep in their blue depths.

“N-Nigel s-said?” He couldn’t finish.

Alexei nodded. “Yes.”

Adam couldn’t believe it. He refused to.

“NO! Nigel would never do something like that! You’re lying! You’re lying!” He cried, pushing himself as far away from the table as he could, curling up with his feet resting on the seat as he drew himself into a seated, fetal position in the corner of the booth.

Alexei threw his head back and barked out a laugh in the back of his throat.
“Oh I almost envy your innocence, young one. You think the best of others, including Nigel!” He laughed continuously, placing a hand over his forehead and rubbing it gently. His fingers massaged his temples as his laughter died down.

Adam shook violently, but looked at the man’s throat as he took a breath in and out.

“Nigel is a good man...he would never put me in danger…” He whispered, still believing it, despite the creeping sensation of danger and sadness mounting in his chest and heart.

Alexei rested his hands down on the tabletop. “Oh, did he promise you that himself?” He asked playfully.

Adam nodded.

“And you believe everything Nigel tells you?” He asked, like a cat playing with a mouse before the final death blow was delivered. Alexei felt at the back of his mind that it was cruel to toy with a disturbed and childish grown man, but sadistic pleasure and drawn-out torture was something he always was fond of and excelled in, and he felt no need to feel sympathy for this young man, no matter how sad his life circumstances were.

Adam gave a half nod, his forehead and nose covered in sweat.

“You don’t look like you even trust your own response.” Alexei analyzed, and reached into his coat pocket slowly, not wanting to frighten off the young man.

“I do!” Adam cried vehemently, wrapping his hands around his knees tightly, curling deeply into a tight ball.

Suddenly, the dangerous thin man lunged forward at Adam across the table.

Adam saw the flash of a long knife blade, and he screamed out and cowered down in the seat.

The man grabbed like a hook onto Adam’s right arm, and he pulled up Adam’s arm high into the air, then stretched and slammed it down across the table.

“STOP!” Adam screamed, whining and crying loudly like a lost, helpless child.

The man dragged the knife blade over the front arm pocket of the spacesuit’s arm, and sliced it open with a ‘snit!’

Adam shut his eyes on instinct, bracing and preparing for the worst. He waited and waited for the cold blade to slice open his warm skin and dig into his veins and snatch his life away from him.

He waited, but nothing happened and the blade stopped moving.

Adam heard a rustle, and he opened his eyes and looked at his arm.

The pocket was torn open, the stitches of fabric lying on the table, but right in the middle of the pocket was a large, thick, full bag of a white powered substance.

Adam watched in horror as the thin scary man pulled the bag up to his eyes and laughed.

“What is that?” Adam asked, his voice shaking, eyes glued to the white powder in the bag as the scary thin man held it close to his chest, still laughing happily.

“That is Nigel’s gift to us, Adam.” He answered, flicking the knife blade back and folding it in his
Adam shook his head. “No. Nigel would never have that. I know that is a drug! I am not stupid!”

Alexei laughed louder, eyes wrinkling and appearing like heavy bags under the gesture.

“How do you think Nigel’s able to afford such a luxurious life? Where do you think he gets all those cars, fancy suits, clothes? This is how.” He motioned with his thin, pointy nose down at the bag he held onto.

Adam gasped and broke out in a defeated whine. “He put m-me in danger? He p-put this in m-m-my spacesuit?”

Alexei nodded, “And there it was, just as our dear old Nigel promised it would be.” His voice hit Adam’s ears like nails being hammered into a wall, and Adam screamed, thrashing his head about, and curled back into a ball in the corner of the booth.

The other scary man at the door soon came bounding up, breathless as he stood before Alexei, gaping down at him. A disgusting smile crept onto his face, and his canines flashed like a predatory shark.

“He’s here.”

Chapter End Notes

I’m a bastard for cliffhangers.
Author Note!

Greetings!

Hello everyone, I wanted to reach out to say that this fanfic is almost coming to an end :'( I have approximately 2 more chapters and then the entire fanfic will be complete :(  

I wanted to thank everyone for reading, following, commenting, supporting me, as well as leaving Kudos whenever they could. I really write for people and their enjoyment, constructive criticism, as well as ideas and such. I really do appreciate every single reader out there, even if you read 1 or 2 chapters or glanced at this. Any time is a big encouragement to me, and I thank you all!

I also have some very good news!

I have a new idea for another Spacedogs fanfic brewing around in my mind, but I have not put my thoughts down on paper (YET).  
Also I will be finishing "She Was There, Then She Wasn't" sometime within the following week, so keep an eye out for that if you're fond of that story as well.

I will be posting the next chapter of "The Necessary Recovery of Nigel Ibanescu" possibly by tomorrow night, by my estimates. (Edits were taking a bit longer than I expected, plus I had some family stuff going on for the summer).

Thanks once again everyone, I appreciate your patience, reviews, comments, feedback, and interests.
“Get up, Nigel’s here.” Alexei reached across the messy half-on-half-off tablecloth covered table to grab onto Adam’s elbow as he wrapped his hands around his head, eyes clenched shut and breathing deeply and rapidly through his nose, nostrils flaring widely as if he had run a race and was out of breath.

Adam growled and roughly tore his hands away and out of the Russian gangster’s grip, clinging onto his kneecaps with a vice-like-grip.

Alexei smirked, a thin grey eyebrow raised in a silent question as if saying: You dare challenge me? Alexei motioned up to his cousin, still posted like a guard dog at the door, and Vadim pulled out his cellphone and dialed a number quickly.

“He’s here, bring as many men and guns as possible, the Romanian bastard prick is not getting out of this alive this time around. No fuck ups this time, da?” Vadim hissed out the deadly promises and instructions and hung up, pulled out a large black revolver out of his coat pocket and leaving it hanging by his side as he trained his eyes on the empty and ghostly streets ahead out in front of the pizza parlour.

Alexei sighed and rolled his eyes, looking down at Adam’s shaking, panicked form.

“Come, Adam.”

Adam didn’t budge from his seat in the corner, feet planted firmly on the seats, back resting and almost glued to the wall behind him.

“Adam.” Alexei spoke a bit harshly, but he barely managed to get Adam to stop shaking and rocking on the balls of his feet.

Alexei, a normally very calm and collected man, soon felt his patience wearing thin, and he raised his knife, blade flicking out and he held it before Adam, raising it up slowly under the lights, and stopping with the blade pointed directly at Adam’s pert little shapely nose.
Adam stopped rocking immediately once he felt the cold but sharp metal blade kiss his nose, and he opened his eyes and looked at the blade, then up at Alexei briefly before looking at the blade again in terror.

“This is the last time I talk to you nicely. Don’t make me use this, please.” Alexei warned, waving the knife in a promise against Adam’s nose, but backing away and hiding the knife back in his coat pocket when he saw Adam finally detach his back from the wall, but he remained in his seat.

Nigel checked his phone and nearly smashed the damn thing on the concrete when he saw he hadn’t received a call from Darko yet.

He knew he had to buy time, because Alexei was sure to bring his entire fucking country with him to fight. The bastard was completely incapable of handling his own battles on his own, as their last encounter reminded Nigel all too well.

Nigel reached behind him and felt the guns behind and under his shirt still supporting his action to go forward to fight for Adam’s life and freedom. He knew there was a high possibility he wouldn’t come out of this alive, but he found that he didn’t care. He had gone beyond a regular fuck up with Adam, and he was going to pay for it with his life if it meant he could truly fix things for good with his darling. Not even Gabi had instilled this much passion within Nigel.

Nigel hurried down the empty streets, looking at the half open and some half-closed doors of the little shops and bakeries on this side of town, and he knew that Alexei and his cousin Vadim had definitely promised death and suffering to anyone lingering for a show.

This was a shit show that he had specially reserved for just Nigel, and he was certain he needed the streets of Bucharest to be cleared before Nigel’s blood spilled down the streets like a fountain glazing all over the towns and places that once held memories dear to him. It was indeed a black form of comedy to Alexei Petrov, and Nigel wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I deserve my own fucking funeral mass, Petrov.” Nigel laughed, rounding a corner and eyeing the Pizza Parlour shop sign a few feet ahead of him, and his heart immediately called out to Adam.

Nigel pushed some of his long messy sandy blonde bangs out of his forehead and away from his eyes as he ran a few steps closer, and he was about to make a long leap for the front door when he saw a shiny reflection of the barrel of a gun gleaming at him from one of the larger side windows facing the streets.

Directly across from him inside the shop stood Alexei Petrov with his silver gun raised, pointed, aimed, and ready to fire at Nigel. And fire, he did.

“There’s your lover, Adam. Too bad you two won’t be able to reunite and exchange a proper ‘goodbye’ lovers often need to do.”

Adam, still covering his ears on his head, looked up and turned his neck to see Nigel a few feet across from the pizza shop.

Adam then turned and looked shockingly as Alexei—with movements suddenly too surreal and powerful for someone of his age-pulled out a silver gun and aimed it expertly at Nigel.

“NO!” Adam lunged forward on the seat, but Alexei’s finger was impossibly faster and deadlier with
promise and malice.

He fired, and the sound and smoke was so loud and boisterously real, that Adam felt his hands involuntarily retreat back to his ears as he covered them from the intensity of hearing a gun fired in such close proximity of him for the first time in his life.

Glass shattered and allowed the small bullet to graze by the interior of the shop as it flew forward outside, some pieces of glass flying by the top of Adam’s head and onto the seat, the table, and the floor.

Adam closed his eyes and screamed out in fright, praying, hoping, wishing the bullet or the deadly glass that followed hadn’t hit Nigel to hurt him.

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Nigel didn’t know how the fuck it was possible, but it was some kind of fucking miracle. The second Alexei’s finger pulled the trigger, Nigel’s reflexes and nerves boosted by a billion percent of an increase in speed, and he rolled over to the left side to hide behind a parked car still in front of the shop.

The bullet grazed by his leg, but due to his speedy choice to spring into action, he wasn’t hurt or shot at.

Nigel rolled forward and ducked behind the car, moving his face slowly by the bumper and peeking from the corner at the windows of the pizza shop, watching Alexei flash him a dirty, predatory grin.

“So glad it missed you, Nigel. I don’t want this to be over so easily.” Alexei walked closer towards the broken, shattered window, and used the butt of his gun to smash the remaining glass down, making more room for air and a conversation to easily go back and forth between his nemesis.

Vadim stood posted by the door still, but he now had his gun raised and pointed at the car where he had seen Nigel duck and roll over behind.

Nigel poked his head out from the bumper of the car to rudely answer Alexei back, but Vadim fired immediately, the bullet making a loud “twing!” noise as it hit the car's rear, causing Nigel to retreat back in hiding, resting his back against the tires and the car door, cursing inwardly.

“Would you stop your ape cousin from firing? I need to make sure if Adam’s okay!” He yelled out in panic and anger, silently calling out to a God he never had felt the need to believe in before until today.

Alexei laughed and motioned for Vadim to back off with the firing for a moment, and Vadim raised his middle finger at Nigel when he peeked over from the rear of the car again just to be sure it was safe.

“Fuck you too, you son of a whore.” Nigel whispered under his breath, not wanting to further piss off the Russians when he still had no idea if Adam was still alive even.

No! Nigel shook his head, knowing that they wouldn’t dare hurt his Adam. They could do whatever they wanted to him, but not to Adam. That was an oath he made to himself, but more so to Adam.

“Your lover is fine, Nigel, you really need to relax, my friend.” Alexei lowered his gun, but it was still pointed and aimed for the go.
“Let me talk to him myself, I don’t fucking trust a word you say, Alexei. Not even if you told me the grass is green would I believe your fucking stupid ass.” Nigel growled, feeling his teeth grinding against each other and causing slight discomfort and pain, but he raised his eyes to roam around the dark restaurant, searching for Adam quickly, then looking at the Russian bastard again to make sure he wasn’t aiming for the center of his skull.

Alexei laughed again, but it was cold and dull and it offended Nigel’s ears. “You know, that may very well be your problem, Nigel. You can’t trust anyone, and you don’t let anyone trust you. That’s not any way to help someone get close to you and care for you, friend.”

“Fuck you!” Nigel screamed, still searching for Adam.

“Where’s Adam?!”” He all but screamed in bloody murder.

“ADAM?!” Nigel screamed, leaning down with his palm pressed against the tire of the car as he stilled his body, mind, and heart from flying into rage and panic when he didn’t see Adam anywhere in the restaurant.

“I don’t want to talk to you!” Came the small, frightened, but comforting voice of the one Nigel truly loved and wanted to love for the rest of his life.

Alexei gasped in a faux shocked manner, raising a hand to cover his mouth, but his eyes shone with mischief.

“Lover’s quarrel?” He asked, looking over at Vadim, who smirked but shook his head, appearing bored already.

“Adam! Gorgeous! I’m so sorry you got mixed up in this! I never meant for you to get involved in this, I swear!” Nigel cried in relief but terror as he wondered whether Adam would truly be able to forgive him if they made it out of there alive and in one piece.

“Yes you did! You hid your drugs in my spacesuit!” Adam screamed, standing up and next to Alexei, he faced the street and the car Nigel was hiding behind.

Nigel frowned for a moment before speaking, “That was YOUR spacesuit?” He asked in complete and real shock.

"Yes!" Adam screamed back, almost petulantly, his young facial features growing dark and red in rage and fury.

Nigel gaped, "I thought it was a costume!"

"WHAT?!!" Adam roared, his face turning beet red in offense.

"You know? A Halloween costume?" Nigel retorted back, not entirely sure what the deal with the suit was.

Before Adam could answer, a large black truck pulled up in the center of the street, and the tinted windows lowered, and a few men in dark clothing stuck their heads and guns out of the lowered windows, looking and aiming at Nigel, and they began firing quickly as if it were a shooting range.

“Oh fuck…” Nigel bolted from behind the car, standing and running as fast as he could over to the front of the car, and he dove and slid across the hood, rolling onto the other side, and covered his head with both hands as glass from the driver’s side, passenger’s side, as well as sideview mirrors shattered and flew everywhere once the bullets penetrated them.
Like violently rough raindrops, the glass bits and pieces flew everywhere and landed on Nigel’s hair, his shoes, his pants, his shirt, but he remained utterly still until the last bullet was fired.

Silence rang across the street, and Nigel removed his hands from his head, and slowly lowered himself onto his belly. He slid down across the pavement, and rolled under the car, careful to not make a sound among the bits of broken glass, as he moved from beneath the car to another one parked in front of it.

The men in the truck got out one-by-one, making their way for the now battered and completely wrecked car.

While they were distracted, Nigel moved closer to the other side of the street, making his way for an abandoned cigar and cigarette shop directly across from the pizza shop.

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Adam held both hands up to cover his mouth as a few tears poured down the sides of his eyes and onto his cheeks as he searched the sides of the car and inside the car for Nigel, hoping he had escaped and missed the array of dangerous bullets showering the car for minutes on end.

He looked over at Alexei once he was unable to locate Nigel anywhere.

“You killed him…” Adam cried in a soft whisper, and turned to watch, horrified, as he saw three men approach the wrecked car, looking on both sides and beneath it for Nigel’s body.

“YOU KILLED HIM!” Adam suddenly screamed a violently passionate anger-fueled scream, and he lunged forward at Alexei, both hands swinging wildly, knocking into the Russian’s angular jaw and long pointy nose.

Alexei roared and nearly fell onto his back, taken by surprise by the sudden deadly violent outburst. Vadim raced over, and grabbed Adam’s spacesuit by the back of the neck, and with one hand, he effortlessly tugged and tossed Adam’s young body off his cousin, and back onto the cold hard floor of the restaurant.

Adam fell back with such violent force that he knocked his head against a chair leg, and before he knew it, he was out cold on the floor.

“I’ve been wanting to do that all afternoon.”

Alexei glared at his cousin.

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One of the three men looked down at a few bits of shattered glass aligning almost in a perfect pattern leading up to the old cigar and cigarette shop closed for the day right across from the pizza restaurant. Like breadcrumbs, they were leading the way to a possible location of the Romanian’s body.

The man looked at one of his partners, and tapped him on the shoulder. The other man, taller and having more muscle mass, looked forward as he followed his partner’s elongated finger mapping out the trails of broken glass leading to the front steps of the small shop.

The first man pressed an index finger to his lips, symbolically requesting silence. The second man motioned with his head and hands to the third, who was making his way around to the other side of the wrecked car. The second man pointed up with his chin jutted forward at the cigar shop to the third partner.
The men carefully and slowly walked forward, their semi-automatics resting by their hips, held tightly and firmly in their hands.

The glass crunched beneath their doc martens and boots, their eyes peering inside the dimly light shop.

The first man walked inside and looked behind the door at the first hiding spot he could think of. When no one had been found, he turned and pointed to the left, then the right. The second man moved over to the left-hand side of the shop, and the third went to the right-hand side, which opened to lead to the back of the shop, where the dumpsters and small garden was. It was entirely possible Nigel had been hiding in the back somewhere, and they were going to leave no spot unturned and unchecked.

The second man checked the rows and shelves on the left-hand side while the first man walked all the way to the front of the shop behind the front desk, bending down to look at the floor and at a small crawl space in the floor.

He leaned down to pull at the lock on the floor, and he aimed his gun at it and shot. The lock fell away, and he pulled at it and opened the crawl space door, opening it up to find a small ladder heading down to the cellar. He looked up and checked the rest of the shop, and nodding at his second partner, he made his way down to the cellar.

The second man made his way over to the front desk, looking up at the walls and ceilings, admiring a large long row of Cuban cigars. He shifted his gun to the side a bit more, making room for his hands to be free, and he snorted, grabbing one package, and sliding it in his pants. He looked up and reached for a second when he felt a breeze behind him.

A large, thick hand wrapped its way around the gun held at the side of the second man. Another hand wrapped around his neck, and with a sudden, deadly SNAP, the man’s neck was broken and he fell lifelessly to his knees on the floor.

Nigel grabbed the goon’s rifle, and wrapped the strap around his shoulder before making his way over to where the first had gone down to the crawl space. He looked around the shop once before opening the crawl space door and heading down into the dark depths.

The first man was pacing up and down the rows of a very fancy wine cellar, looking at the large old wine barrels stacked up and all over the sides of the large thick brick walls. He kept pacing forward, then looking back behind him. Darkness met his eyes, and he walked on forward, gun raised and pointed like a flag before him higher.

It was all silent for minutes, and the man came to the far end of the cellar, almost hitting a dark oak door, and he was about to turn around and head back up and out of the cellar, when he heard a faint “drip” “drip” noise from somewhere nearby.

The man looked to the right at the barrels close to him, but they stood still and full of wine, and he trained his ears to listen close to locate the sound. It was very close by.

The man took a few steps forward away from the back door, and he suddenly tripped and fell into a small puddle of dark liquid.

The man looked down and in the candlelight, he saw the leaking liquid that he had tripped and fell into. He lowered a hand and dipped a finger in the liquid, and slowly bringing it up to his nose and lips, he sniffed and darted his tongue out to taste wine.
So there had been a leak somewhere. Big deal. He laughed and was about to stand, when he saw someone peering at him from behind him in the reflection he cast in the puddle of wine on the floor.

He turned and raised his rifle, ready to fire, but was met with Nigel’s brute hard fist.

The man fell forward, and Nigel kicked his rifle away with his left leg, and with his right, he bashed and kicked the man’s face in, the blood pouring down forth to mix in with the wine. Grabbing the rifle, Nigel draped the strap over his other free shoulder before pulling out a hunting knife, and slitting the man’s throat.

The final and third man had checked behind the shop, looking inside the dumpsters and through the alleyways and garden in the back, but he had finally given up his search and made his way back to the front of the shop.

He had pulled open the front door, his gun raised with the tip pointing at the ceiling, as he whistled a silly tune, positive his teammates had bagged the Romanian bastard, and made his way inside.

Thick heavy smoke soon hit his nostrils, and he stopped before he was a few feet inside the shop.

There, a few steps away from him, stood Nigel, leaning against a cigar stand, and holding a thick cigar between his fingers, smoking away, the dark puff of clouds flying around his head and face, and making him appear like a devil in the dark.

Nigel looked up at the man before removing the cigar from between his lips, blowing out heavy smoke from his nostrils.

“I never liked these fucking things. Too strong for my tastes.”

Before the man could ready and aim his rifle at him, Nigel pulled out a small revolver, and fired away once at the left of the man’s chest, hitting his heart.

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“The men haven’t come back…they haven’t even called…” Vadim announced, looking out at the cigar shop across the street, breathing growing rapid, brows furrowed, and eyes squinty.

Alexei sighed and rolled his eyes. “That’s because Nigel got them first, you fucking idiotic waste. You don’t think I know Nigel? I worked with him closely for a long time to get close to the pig fucker. He’s a lot smarter than he looks.” He tapped his knuckles against the tabletop, and began thinking quickly for another idea.

“What do we do?” Vadim asked openly, gaping at the street ahead of them.

As if answering the question, Adam, who still was lying on the floor behind them groaned.

The Petrovs turned and looked to watch Adam rub his aching head, turning to his side, and slowly beginning to stir and regain his bearings.

Alexei smirked back to his cousin. “It’s simple, Vadim. We keep attacking.”

Vadim shook his head. “Attack what?! The Romanian shit is made from iron, apparently!”

“We attack his heart.” Alexei stated, and walked coolly over to where Adam was starting to get up, and he gently pulled the young man up to his feet.

“Come on, we’ve got a job for you, young one.”
Nigel dialed Darko’s number again, and still reached his voicemail again. Swearing, Nigel tucked his phone back away into his pocket. It looked like he was on his own in this one, and he was sure he could handle it just fine. Somehow, Adam’s love and kindness had breathed a new kind of energy and life in Nigel’s old veins, and he had never felt so sure of himself even when he was younger and when he was with Gabi.

Sure, he had meant to fight for her with his life and heart at stake, but he had never felt so free while doing so. Nigel had never felt so alive, so free, and so open before someone so pure in his entire life. Gabi had been a stabilizing pin at one point in his life, but she knew about most of his dirty little secrets, and she didn’t know about a vast majority of more of them. Nigel felt he had corrupted Gabi right down the core, but he knew that with Adam, no matter how much he exposed Adam to his dark underworld of violence and death, Adam would never ever fall prey to the same corruption that Gabi had.

Nigel had never felt so much trust and respect for another human being in his entire life, and he knew without a shadow of a doubt that Adam would be the better half of his soul than Gabi ever could have provided to be. She had gone along with it and pretended to, but Adam had full-heartedly wanted to be there for Nigel, through the good and the bad and the worst of the worst. This was the kind of partner Nigel knew he had needed all along, and now that he had had him, he never intended to let him go.

Nigel made his way out of the cigar shop, and stopping a few steps in front of the cars parked parallel on the street corners and sides, he raised the collected rifles up at Alexei and Vadim as they peered at him from the broken windows of the pizza shop.

“I’ll need more men to take me down, Alexei, you little cowardly fuck!” He bore his teeth in a feral toothy grin, and beckoned with a hand forward for Alexei to take the next steps.

Alexei nodded. “So be it, Nigel.” He spoke more to himself than to the Romanian, and he turned to his cousin.

“Call in the rest, now.”

Vadim nodded, swallowing thickly and made his way to make the call.

Alexei grabbed a struggling Adam in his hands and moved to the front door of the shop. “Let’s keep Nigel occupied with a little something while we wait for the rest of my friends to join in on the party, shall we?” He glared at Adam, fire practically living and flaring in his eyes, causing Adam to shy away in a whimper as he lowered his head and closed his eyes tightly.

Alexei opened the door of the shop, and pulling Adam with him, he stood a few feet in front of Nigel, brazenly pointing a gun at Adam’s head.

“Any sudden and stupid moves and you’ll be the reason his brains will be all over the ground.” Alexei spoke thinly and viscously, gun practically buried in Adam’s dark brown hair.

Once Nigel looked up to the sight of the only person that mattered in the world to him being held against his will with a gun pointed at his head, he nearly lost it. If it weren’t for the gun being so close to Adam’s head, Nigel would have raced over and bashed the Russian’s face into the concrete so much it’d turn to a mush of pink and red.

“Drop the fucking gun and let him go, you fucking chicken shit piece of shit coward! Your war is
with me, not him! Don’t involve him!” Nigel cried, backing up slightly, not making any sudden movements as Alexei had instructed.

“Drop your weapons slowly, Nigel, and then kick them over to me.” Alexei sighed and held onto Adam tighter.

Nigel took off the straps of the semi-automatics without another word or protest, and they fell to the ground with a “click”.

Alexei smirked. “Good boy. Now, kick them over, but do it slowly.”

Nigel growled under his breath, but kicked the first rifle slowly, the gun making its way over past some shards of broken window glass, and stopping a few meters away from Alexei.

“Now the other.”

Nigel hesitated. He would be almost completely unarmed, and he knew that if, and when he got closer, Alexei would probably ask Vadim to grab Nigel and search his body for more concealed weapons. Soon his hunting knife would be gone, and then the other two hiding revolvers. Soon he’d be defenseless, and God only knew that the fuck they had planned for Adam.

“I said kick the last gun over to me, Nigel.” Alexei’s voice cut through his thoughts like knife across butter.

No fucking way in hell was Nigel going to surrender and give up his last mode of defense!

“No.” He answered strongly.

Adam’s eyes widened at this, and he squirmed slightly in Alexei’s grip.

“Excuse me?” Alexei hissed, unable to process what he had heard.

“I said: No. Fuck no.” Nigel growled louder and more clearly.

Suddenly, two more large trucks pulled in from the side of the street, and more men got out of the two trucks, taking cover behind the doors and guns aimed and pointed at Nigel as they all shouted and screamed in Russian.

Nigel froze and held his hands up in the air, backing away from the firearms on the ground, but the men seemed to scream louder and they began growing more panicked and agitated.

Nigel looked over at Adam, and gave a small, weak smile, knowing he had run out of ideas, and coming to terms with the fact that maybe if he gave up, they would leave Adam safe and leave him alone and out of harm’s way.

Adam shook his head and looked over at Alexei. “Please let him go…” He pleaded softly and meekly, looking at one of the men pull out a sniper rifle and lock onto Nigel’s body.

“It’ll be over quickly for him. I give you my word.” Alexei spoke softly, watching his men as they tried making their way for the sharp shooter to quickly take Nigel out once and for all.

Adam knew he had been the shy, silent, meek, mousy type for most of his life. He had let people make a lot of his life decisions for him, and most of those decisions, he’d found he’d despised and hated. He’d lost many people due to his indecisiveness, and due to his fears and inabilities to think how NTs thought. He knew he wasn’t stupid, and he knew others always took him for granted and
misunderstood him. More importantly, he knew he was damn well tired of it. He was tired of being underestimated and underappreciated, and he knew it had to stop once and for all.

Adam looked up at Alexei and met eye contact with him, but he didn’t break the eye contact for once.

“You’ll soon be free of the pain he has caused us all. What do you say, young one? Isn’t this perfect punishment for a betrayer?” Alexei asked, chuckling to himself deeply.

Adam began feeling all anger in his chest swell up and it was soon reaching the top, and ready to burst forth.

Alexei looked down at Adam intimidatingly, "Isn't this perfect, young Adam?" He taunted, jeering and chuckling deeply in his thin chest.

“FUCK YOU!” Adam screamed in retaliation, and he reached up with his left leg, and kicked Alexei hard as he could in the balls.

“BLYAD!” Alexei roared in pain, and he lost control of his fingers and hands and began shooting rapidly as his gun flew out of control. Bullets flew everywhere, and some of them hit a few of his men in the legs and the backs, and they fell forward dead, and some injured, but alive, due to their body armor.

In the chaos of it all, the distraction provided Nigel with a means to dive forward and he picked up the semi automatic he had dropped, and Adam raced ahead to a car parked right outside the cigar shop. Quickly, he smashed the window with his elbow, tore open the door after unlocking it, and flung himself inside, landing on the floor of the car, resting on his belly.

The men ignored Adam, but began shooting at Nigel, who had run back inside the cigar shop, and hid behind the front desk and counter.

“Adam! You're not safe out there!” Nigel cried, screaming at the top of his lungs, trying to be heard over the loud gunfire echoing all over the street.

Luckily, the car’s windows were slightly rolled down, and Adam raised his head and neck up to scream back.

"Like you care! You called me bad names!” Adam argued back, his nerves and senses flaring angrily, his emotions overheated.

"I know! That was wrong of me! But now you need to come in here so I can protect you!” Nigel barked out loudly, hoping Adam would come to his right frame of mind and realize what type of situation they were currently in.

“NEVER! YOU CALLED MY SPACESUIT A COSTUME!” He roared angrily, fists clenched in tight balls at his sides.

“I didn’t know it was a fucking real spacesuit, did I!!” Nigel cried back over more gunfire, and he stood briefly to shoot back at the Russians, missing most of them in his anger over Adam’s attitude displayed at the moment.

“IT IS! I MADE IT MYSELF AND IT’S NOT A CHEAP KNOCK OFF OR COSTUME, YOU ASS!” Adam yelled back defiantly.

One of Alexei’s men grabbed a grenade, and threw it over onto the front steps of the cigar shop.
Nigel ducked down behind the front desk counter before it went off with a loud BOOM!

Bits of glass and wood flew through the air, and Adam shook in fear and panic, covering his head with his hands. Some of the bullets grazed the sides of the car, but Adam soon noticed no one was aiming to attack him; they were more occupied with wanting Nigel dead.

The men looked up through the smoke and the dust flying around, and they began coughing and slowly pausing to reload their weapons. Now was the best chance for Adam to make a run for it.

“ADAM! PLEASE STOP FUCKING ARGUING WITH ME, AND GET YOUR ASS IN HERE!” Nigel roared at the top of his lungs, smoke clearing after the small explosion.

Adam looked up, and once he saw the men distracted momentarily, he tore open the car door, and ran out the passenger’s side closest to the front of the cigar shop, and he raced inside before the men started shooting again, some bullets dancing past Adam’s little feet as he ran and hopped inside, slid up over the counter, and fell behind it, landing down hard on the floor by Nigel’s side.

Nigel gave Adam a small, dopey-romantic smile. “Hi gorgeous.”

Adam only glared, but then the shooting began again.

Nigel covered Adam’s body with his own, as the remaining uninjured men began shooting quickly. Bullets ate and tore away at the desks and chairs in the shop, but Adam and Nigel were safely shielded and protected together.

In-between shots, Nigel would stand up and aim quickly to get a few men, successfully injuring most he aimed at, but it didn’t take long before some of them were already moving ahead away from their trucks and closer to the front of the shop.

Nigel eyed some still intact desks and chairs and formed his plan rapidly.

“Adam, I’m going to need your help for a few seconds, gorgeous.”

Adam looked over to where Nigel was staring and he nodded, following his plan. They got on their knees, crawled over to the desks and the chairs, and they dragged them over to the front of the shop. Stacking them quickly, they barricaded the front of the shop with the items.

The blockage provided a small shield for the pair and they ducked down on the other side, cradling their heads with their hands. Nigel draped his body flat over Adam’s when more bullets pierced through the wooden barricade.

“STOP! JUST STOP! PLEASE!” Adam screamed as he covered his ears with his hands as Nigel held him closely.

The bullets raining down hard behind them made Nigel slide into ultra-panic mode. He knew that within minutes, there would be more grenades and explosives thrown their way, and he knew they would eventually break down the barricade and come for Adam and take him away from Nigel again. Nigel couldn’t and wouldn’t allow that to happen.

He knew that for Adam to be safe, he had to let him go…but just for a few moments.

Nigel grabbed Adam’s cheeks in both his hands softly and pulled him gently up to face him. He stroked and caressed his lover’s face tenderly and slowly, meeting Adam’s lovely innocent blue eyes with his dark maroon ones.
Nigel found himself once again lost and mesmerized by those blue depths, and he cursed himself if he would die here and never be able to look into those beautiful blues ever again. Gabi had often told him in the past that he had never appreciated the little things in his life, and at the time, he had thought she was full of it and speaking out of her ass, but now he knew exactly what she meant, and he found himself wanting to just lie there and look at Adam’s gorgeous lovely eyes and ingrain them into his mind as the last thing he could see and remember before he died.

But Nigel knew he couldn’t die right now: he had to save Adam and get him out of the shop in one piece.

Nigel spoke gently and calmly, “Adam, I need you to listen real close to me, gorgeous. I know I betrayed your trust, I know I hurt you, I know I upset you, and I am really sorry, my love. I know I fucked up big time, and I know I put you in real danger, but I can’t let you go without apologizing to you properly first.”

Adam sniffled, and he reached up to wipe his tear stained cheeks and eyes, but Nigel beat him to it and wiped his tears away and cleaned his eyes gently and sweetly, looking into them deeply.

“I’m so sorry Adam, for everything. I’m sorry for hurting you back at Darko’s, and I’m sorry for saying you’re a kid and that you don’t understand anything. You do! You understand so much more than I or Darko will ever know and ever understand. All he and I understand is violence, and that's no way to go about living in this world, darling. I realize it now.”

“Nigel…” Adam began, but Nigel silenced him with a small, innocent kiss.

“Shh. You changed everything, gorgeous. You showed me so much and taught me so much. Without you, I’d have remained the same; all dead on the inside, slowly rotting away to a corpse.”

Adam shook his head, “No Nigel, you aren’t like that!”

Nigel leaned close and rested his forehead over Adam’s, his eyes still peering deeply into Adam’s blue ones, trying to hold onto the last bits of peace and calm he had ever felt from another human being.

“I hope you can forgive me, Adam. I was wrong, I made my mistakes, but you were my greatest achievement. I love you, Adam.”

Adam broke out into fresh tears but kissed Nigel softly, “I love you too, Nigel.”

No matter how many times he heard it, Nigel could never get over hearing it, and it left the same effect on him that the first time had. It was still as special a declaration as ever, because it was coming from his Adam, and because it was so meaningful.

“Adam, I need you to listen to me very carefully, darling. I need you to head out the crawl space down below the shop, and there is a large dark door at the end of the room that holds a lot of wine, and I need you to go out through that door and get help.”

Adam shook his head and folded his arms over his chest like a pouty child. “No, Nigel. I’m not going to leave you here all alone. I may be mad at you, but I’m not going to do that to you!”

Nigel kissed Adam’s forehead. “Gorgeous, you don’t have a choice. If you stay here, we both will end up dead. You have to be brave for us both and go get help. I can hold them off for a little longer, but you have to leave now.”

"No!" Adam vehemently and stubbornly argued back, looking down at his knees and curling slightly
in a fetal position.

"Adam, I wanted to make sure you got out of this mess first without being hurt. That was my number one aim and goal, and I reached it. That was most important for me, and I can now relax knowing you are safe, but you have to finish cooperating with me to ensure your safety, darling." Nigel spoke calmly and gently so no one outside could hear it on the off-chance.

Adam shook his head still, butt firmly planted down onto the floor, arms still crossed firmly and strongly.

Nigel sighed but hugged Adam tightly and closely to his chest.

Outside, another grenade must have been thrown; the ground shook violently, and some of the chairs barricading the front of the shop had their legs broken, and the wood flew and fell down surrounding Adam and Nigel. Outside, the men screamed and counted more in Russian. It wouldn’t be long before another explosion occurred.

“Adam. You have to go, NOW!” Nigel cried, unfolding his grip from Adam’s body, and gently nudging him to get on his knees and he pointed behind the counter at the back of the shop.

“Come on, gorgeous, I’ll show you.” Nigel pulled on Adam’s arm gently, and Adam reluctantly got on his knees, sobbing and shaking as they crawled quickly over and slid behind the counter.

Nigel pulled at the door and revealed the ladder headed down. “One of the Russian pigs shot the lock, and literally paved the way. It is at the far end of the room gorgeous, you’ll be fine. Just open it, and run out into the back of the streets and get help.”

Nigel placed the palm of his hand down on Adam’s lower back and he gently nudged him down.

Adam reluctantly grabbed the first ring of the ladder and turned and began heading down, but before Nigel could close the crawlspace door behind on him, Adam lunged up and grabbed Nigel’s hands.

“You have to promise me you’re going to still be here when I get back! YOU HAVE TO PROMISE!” Adam’s voice raised in both fear and anger.

Nigel offered him a reassuringly kind, loving smile. “I promise, Adam. I’ll be here. Now go, my darling.”

Adam kissed the tip of Nigel’s nose, and looked sadly at him before he lowered himself to the second and third ring below.

Nigel leaned forward once more, gently resting his large hand over Adam’s.

“Oh, Adam?”

Adam froze.

“Be careful, space cadet.”

With that, he gently closed the crawlspace door and made his way back to the barricade and settled down on the floor, counting the seconds and minutes silently in his mind.

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Adam pushed the heavy, thick door with both hands with all the strength he had, and he winced and squinted when the bright sunlight attacked his retinas and he was faced with the outside world once
From the other side of the shop, the screams and echoes of gunfire rang forth, reminding Adam he had to hurry.

He burst forward, making sure to keep to the grass, and he soon ran through the back of the little shops and made a right down a long alley. Once he had sped through the alley, he found himself at the intersection of two streets.

Where should he turn? Left or right? He decided to go right.

Most of the cars were driving by quickly, and a lot of people weren’t out walking, and the ones who were seemed to wanted to get away from the violence and gunfire they no doubt had heard.

Adam ran up to a car crying for help, but the driver sped on and rolled up his windows quickly.

In less than a few minutes, the street cleared quickly, resembling the one Adam just escaped from. If no one was going to help, Nigel was going to be badly hurt and it would be his fault!

Adam turned and ran back down the alley, this time wanting to make the left turn.

Before he could do so, he heard a loud, strong voice hit the back of his head, and reach his frightened, alert ears.

“Stop right there, kid!”

Adam froze in his place.

“Turn around real nice and slow for me.”

Adam looked at the ground and didn’t move for a long time. He felt his hands and chin quivering in fear and panic.

“Do it now!” The voice barked out impatiently.

Adam, very stiffly and slowly, finally turned around.

His eyes widened impossibly when he looked up to face the source of the voice.

“You!”

Chapter End Notes

O_o who's our mystery person?
Hey guys!

I just wanted to let everyone know (since I had a few people ask me when this fic is going to be updated again) that I am still working on the ending of this fic! ^_^

I honestly had a bit of writer's block lately, because I personally do not want to end this fic, nor do I have a strong ending yet DX

I feel this fic will be up possibly by Monday night, latest! I'm going to spend my entire weekend editing and then adding the ending, for it is the only piece missing currently.

Once again, thank you all so very much, and I adore each and every comment, support, message, kudos, and general conversation I had with you.
Chapter 19

Nigel breathed with eyes winced shut in the most excruciating amount of pain he had felt since being shot in the head. The earth beneath his feet felt as if it were going to split into two, as if the most devastating earthquake had happened, and everything was going to fall to pieces and crumble around him, and smother him in the fall of his life, his career, his name, his reputation, his love for Adam.

Nigel couldn’t think of anyone or anything else except Adam. He wondered how far his darling had gotten, and whether he was safe. Nigel’s head began spinning as he pictured a billion different scenarios regarding his love, but he kept the most positive, happy ones at the front of his mind.

He had to go on with the knowledge that Adam had made it, was safe, was likely getting help for himself, then perhaps Nigel later on. This was the most suitable outcome Nigel desired and would have preferred.

Outside the little cigar shop he had been trapped in, came more rounds of bullets blasting and eating away at the walls and windows, only managing to do minimal damage to the already dilapidated, broken, torn up shop.

Nigel watched as bits of broken glass flew up into the air when more bullets ricocheted off the metal legs of chairs and desks, missing their intended target.

Nigel dug into his pockets and beneath his shirt to find he had two last rounds of bullets left, then he’d be out clean and at the mercy (or lack thereof) of Alexei and Vadim. Suicide seemed a better option, at the moment, as opposed to surrendering like a cowardice bitch.

The men outside the shop stopping firing, which indicated to Nigel that Alexei or Vadim were about to step in and make a lousy speech. Lovely.

Sure enough, he was right, and Nigel’s ears soon found strange company in the sounds of footsteps crunching over glass as they made their way closer to him, almost in a rhythmic funeral march that sounded like a mad drum in Nigel’s mind. Every step the feet took were an indication that Nigel was losing.

“Nigel, just save whatever dignity you have left, and come on out.” Vadim’s voice was a hair above a scream, as he was fighting to keep his own nerves and anger at bay.

Nigel snorted, glad he had finally gotten under someone’s skin.

“Yeah, sure, why don’t you first put all your guns away, Vadim, and get that fucking crew of yours to back the fuck off! Then maybe that way we’d have a deal!”

Nigel rolled forward on his hands and knees, keeping a low profile, holding his guns in both hands.
as he rested his weight on his elbows.

He heard a laugh. “That would be a good deal, if it weren’t for the fact that I know you, Nigel.”

Alexei was also walking somewhere near his cousin, his own footsteps ghosting over Vadim’s.

“I know that as soon as you get out of here, that is, if we let you, you’ll only come back and fuck us twice as hard.”

Nigel mirrored the laugh he heard previously, “Well, that’s what all the women have told me, too.”

“And men, now.” Vadim chimed in.

That motherfucking asshole.

Nigel didn’t move, simply allowing the silence to be an answer enough.

“Come on, Nigel. At least die with some dignity, like a real man.” Alexei suggested, sighing loudly and dramatically.

Nigel suddenly had an idea. He knew he had to buy time, and the longer he could bait and taunt the Russians, the better off he’d be while Adam fled to complete safety. It was a shot, and he knew Alexei and Vadim as well as they knew him, so he had that on his side.

Nigel craned his neck upwards to look out the broken windows for a moment, then lowered his head once he saw a few men still pointing their guns at the front of the cigar shop.

“I’ll tell you what, Alexei; I’ll head out, if you promise not to shoot me. I want you to give me the proper death any nemesis would fucking deserve. Let me go down with pride intact.”

He heard nothing but deafening silence slice through his ears and eardrums, and he was about to call out, when intuition told him to bite down on his tongue.

Nigel knew Alexei was a man of equal amounts of boastful pride. He’d do anything to keep a tale of how he had tortured and finally taken down Nigel Ibanescu.

Nigel would let him have that…for now…

“Alexei, this is stupid, it’s an obvious tra-” Vadim interrupted, then quickly ceased.

More silence followed, and Nigel felt the minutes and seconds of his life clock ticking down, the pendulum of death inches away from digging into his flesh.

“Alright, Nigel. I accept your terms, but on one condition!”

Of course there was always a fucking catch.

“What do you fucking want?” Nigel barked out, frowning deeply.

“You fight like a man. No hiding, no running. You fight two of my best men.”

Nigel rolled his eyes, “At the same fucking time?!?” This was insane!

Nigel knew that majority of the Alexei’s men were all highly trained military assassins, and he knew in his old age and the few wounds he was sporting, he wouldn’t stand a chance. It would be suicide on a silver platter for Nigel.
“Well? What’ll it be then, Nigel?”

Nigel knew he was running out of time, and despite the war within himself raging, he knew he had little options left. He had to buy himself and Adam as much time as possible, so why not engage his enemy in a dance to the grave? Alexei would still be a coward to everyone who knew him enough to fear him, and Nigel would die with the truth and his pride at his side, with a special train set straight for hell. It sounded fun, actually.

“I accept.”

“Everyone, retreat, and put your guns away, NOW!”

Nigel heard booming, thunderous footsteps get to work on the order, and he got up to his knees, looking out the window and scanning the area before him.

Amidst the destruction and blood, the men had all backed off, leaving only two ape-like men; the same men who had bashed Nigel over the head the night he had returned to find Alexei waiting for him in his home.

Of course.

They stood tall and built like brick-shit-houses, their weapons tossed to the side, their black ski-masks rolled up so only their lips and jaws were visible.

“You can come out of your little hovel, Nigel. They don’t bite.” Alexei joked, and a few of the men behind him laughed also.

Nigel stood slowly, facing the two men and Alexei for a while before walking up to the broken window, and stepping out of it, narrowly missing a sharp pane of glass by his thighs as it stood like the tip of an iceberg.

“Ah ah ah, no weapons, Nigel.” Vadim pointed at the guns in Nigel’s hands, shaking his head as if he were scolding a bratty child rather than a grown adult man.

So much for my fucking dignity, guess that’s gone out the window too…literally.

Nigel stepped over the sidewalk past the wreckage of flat tires that had been blown apart with numerous holes as if they were swiss cheese, panes of glass, bullets, and blood. He walked closer and closer, cursing the Russians with each step until he was inches away from Alexei.

Alexei stood in-between his two giant lackeys, who proceeded to take off their ski masks and throw them down onto the ground.

The lug on the left had long blonde hair tied back into a bun, with a three-day-old-soft brown beard, and pale blue eyes, while the one on the right had a shaved head, a few scars along his jaw, and black eyes.

“It is said that gazing into the eyes of the reaper before your death will forever damn your soul. If only you had a soul to be damned, Nigel.” Alexei smirked as he backed away from being in the middle spot between his guards.

“I could say the same for you, Alexei.” Nigel clenched his hands into tight fists as he permit the Russian coward to step back to the sidewalks and gaze as a spectator with his cousin at the bloodshed that was to happen.
Alexei held his arms across his waist, fingers knitted tightly, head tilted slightly in partial boredom, and slightly in partial amusement.

“Begin.”

Nigel swallowed thickly and carefully eyed the two trained fighters advance slowly on him, circling him like sharks.

The blonde headed for Nigel’s back, while the one with the shaved head inched up to Nigel until their chests were barely an inch apart.

Nigel didn’t allow the man to intimidate him. He stood his ground, despite being inches shorter than both the men. He held his head high as if he were a magnificent creature that ruled above all else, and his chest puffed out to fan his broad shoulders. It was the absolute display of dominance.

Nigel was prepared for an honourable duel, but he knew deep down that the men had no intentions of carrying that out.

As if reading his thoughts, the blonde-haired man wrapped his hands around Nigel’s neck, and began to squeeze, holding him in place while the other man began using Nigel’s chest and stomach like a punching bag.

Each blow he delivered was like a bulldozer slamming into his body repeatedly. The fists didn’t cease, however, they kept delivering punishing blows as Nigel winced and held his breath, never willing to permit his adversary with the knowledge that he had caused him physical pain.

The man had no intentions of stopping, and when his thick knuckles hit Nigel’s ribcage severely, Nigel knew he would be beaten to death and choked. This wasn’t the way he was going to go.

He slammed his head backwards suddenly, and the back of his skull met with the blonde-haired man’s thick nose.

The man hollered, hands removing themselves from Nigel’s neck, and flew up to his wound.

Nigel turned around quickly, and grabbed the back of the man’s neck, fingers hooking onto his flesh deeply, and he ran as fast as he could towards the hood of a nearby car, and repeatedly bashed the blonde-haired man’s face and forehead against the hood of the car.

Blood splattered all over Nigel’s neck and chest, but he kept going. He wanted this to be Vadim and Alexei, he wanted this to be himself, most of all. For every crime Nigel had committed, he bashed the guard’s skull against the hood of the car.

Nigel saw the many lives he had taken with every pound of the man’s caved-in-forehead against the metal of the car, yet he continued. No one would pardon his sins, no one would forgive him, no one would absolve him. This was some sort of atonement, but it wasn’t nearly enough to feel the heaviest load he had been carrying for over thirty years dissipate.

The man began to struggle a few times, arms flailing about, scrambling and reaching back at Nigel for purchase, but Nigel’s thoughts flew into overdrive and his anger and violence fueled.

He suddenly saw these same men finding his Adam. He saw them dragging his body out into the streets, beating him, kicking him, and torturing him all to cause Nigel the most amount of suffering and pain. He saw them holding Adam against his will, and he saw them abusing Adam in every way possible.
His eyes widened and his face reddened in anger, and he screamed out a hoarse growl as he slammed the man’s head into a bloody pulp.

Nigel had been so lost in his thoughts and reminiscing, that he barely registered in the feeling of being bashed over the back of the head.

He dropped to his knees, bringing down the battered man with him, who emitted one last cough and gasp, then was out cold on the pavement. They collided against each other, and then broke apart, Nigel rolling to his side, his ears buzzing as the pain began kicking in.

He looked up to see the man with the shaved head glaring down at him, and before Nigel could locate his senses and nerves, the man raised a leg and kicked Nigel across the jaw.

Nigel’s head snapped viciously to the side, and he spat out a stream of blood, feeling his mixed saliva drip over and out of his mouth and down to his chin where it hung like a cheese-string before dripping down onto the pavement.

It had hurt more than a motherfucker, but Nigel couldn’t do anything except roll his shoulders upwards and laugh.

The guard raised an eyebrow questioningly, then turned back to look at Alexei. Alexei and Vadim wore equally shocked and puzzled expressions, their eyes and ears focused on Nigel as he threw back his head and laughed boisterously.

It was the most exuberant display of insanity, and unbreakable will, but Nigel stood slowly, not backing down from his courage.

He stood on shaky legs as he gripped the sides of the car until he could support his own weight. His laughter stretched out for a while before it finally died down due to his breath finishing.

He wiped his bloodied lips and mouth with the back of his hand, looking up at the guard with dark eyes that communicated nothing but violence and threats.

“Same old hat, Alexei.” Nigel spoke to the Russian, despite peering at the guard.

The guard roared angrily and swung his right fist quickly.

Nigel backed down and ducked quickly, thanking his already weak legs.

The guard’s fist connected with the side door of the car, but he didn’t react like any regular person would have.

Instead of crying out in pain, the guard turned and pivoted on his right leg, and positioned himself to land a few firm punches against Nigel’s side again, catching the ribs.

Nigel grunted and fell over roughly, his breath knocked out of him as he was one with the pavement.

This wasn’t a chance to rest, however, for the guard grabbed Nigel’s shirt collar, tearing a few buttons roughly out. They clattered against the hard ground as they fell down, and Nigel spat bloodied saliva at the guard’s face, aiming for his eyes in particular.

“This is one of my best shirts, you cocksucker!” Nigel hissed through the pain, his jaw feeling as if it were hinged shut and frozen in one position.

The guard wiped his face with the back of his right hand and then used that same hand to deck Nigel
hard in the nose.

Fresh blood poured out of Nigel’s nostrils, followed by the light burning sensation that escalated all too quickly.

“Nigel, just stop, you’re embarrassing yourself.” Vadim laughed, lighting up a cigarette casually as if he were at a game instead of a deathmatch.

The smoke billowed about in the air and hit Nigel’s probably-broken-nose, causing him to wince and fresh tears oozed out of the sides of his eyes.

“Dasvidaniya, fucker.” The guard’s voice was surprisingly high pitched for someone of his size and allure.

Nigel chuckled, and spat fresh blood down at the guard’s boots.

“Your voice is like a woman’s, are you sure you have a dick between those legs?” Nigel mocked, staring down at the guard’s lower half and shaking his head.

The guard’s face turned beet red, and he scooped Nigel up and held him around the waist, hoisting him high above in the air before slamming him back down hard with all his force onto the ground.

Nigel felt something in his back snap, and he couldn’t hold back this time as the pain ruptured from his tailbone all the way to the back of his skull. He threw his head back, and howled in pain until he felt his lungs turning raw like freshly butchered red meat.

“You’re only human, Nigel!” Alexei and Vadim laughed and clapped, followed by laughter and hoots from their men as they circled Nigel and the guard.

Nigel felt his eyes beginning to burn with such intense heat that he was certain they would melt away into the sockets and leave. He gulped in mouthfuls of air, his knees and legs rolling up into his hips as he rolled part-way to his side as a means to alleviate some of the pain, if at all.

This position was absolutely and horrendously uncomfortable, and he instead pushed back on the soles of his shoes and tried moving back on the pavement away from the crowd of guards gazing up at him and pointing and mocking him.

Even in his final moments, Nigel found he was unable to have the dignity he deserved. At least Adam would be safe, however. Nigel had fought only for Adam. He had put up with everyone and everything possible and necessary only to see Adam happy and cheerful. He would pass on with the knowledge that Adam wouldn’t have to face any of this torture and indignity. That wouldn’t likely be enough to repent his crimes and dastardly sins, but Nigel knew that now, in the hour of his death, beggars couldn’t be choosers. He would take this for what it was, and he would be content. He would have his peace, at least.

Forgive me, my gorgeous. I made a promise back there to you, and I was unable to keep it. Please don’t be mad at me, I did this all for you.

Nigel closed his eyes and smiled, picturing Adam the first time he had ever seen him; confused, scared, lonely, then he ended his memories with the last little kiss he and Adam had shared; Adam’s warm lips resting on Nigel’s nose for a brief moment, but bringing with it such power and hope.

This was how he wanted to die, and this was how he would die; with Adam by his side.

Nigel heard footsteps closing in on him once more, and he knew it was Alexei and Vadim without
even opening his eyes.

He soon felt the cold hard barrel of a gun pressed against his forehead, and it caused him to smile as he searched his memories and remembered the first time he had confessed to Adam of his love.

Never had dying felt so peaceful and liberating, Nigel summed up, feeling adrenaline, and will leaving his body slowly.

“How full of irony your life has been, Nigel. It is indeed ironic that you are here, yet again, with a gun pointed at you, all because you love someone too much.” Alexei’s voice was meant to be cutting and jarring, but it evoked nothing negative or fearful in Nigel’s mind and heart. This psychopath could declare anything he wished, and it wouldn’t affect Nigel at all. Nigel bore the truth and had had his chance to love and lose the love, yet he had also been blessed to have been visited by love again. Love had renewed itself to him in the form of Adam; his space cadet. There wasn’t anything lacking in Nigel’s life, and he knew that this was the ultimate winning card he held against Alexei.

“You will die with honour, Nigel, you have my word. You put up a good fight, and I am very impressed. May you seek the peace you always yearned for.” Alexei’s voice went barely heard by Nigel, as he remembered kissing Adam for the first time at his cottage…If only he could have had one final kiss…

Nigel heard the loud, resounding “BLAST!” of the gun.

A heavy, empty, dull “thud” followed, then came the gasps and screams of anger, followed by more gunshots firing off.

Nigel opened his eyes to look up at the blue sky above him, a few clouds moving to the right, as the wind pushed them gently aside, as if giving the gods and heavens above room to observe the bloodshed down below.

Nigel turned his head to the left, to find the guard with the shaved head inches away from him, a thick bullet buried snugly between his eyebrows in his forehead.

Footsteps ran, as the men scattered about, shouting frantically.

Nigel suddenly felt two strong hands wrap themselves on his shoulders, and he was pulled back. Someone dragged him back across the pavement all the way to the sidewalk and back into the cigar shop.

Bullets flew everywhere at Nigel’s feet, and he dully watched as they missed and chipped away instead at the pavement.

Nigel felt bits of dirt and glass scratching away at his clothes until he was rested with his back against the little barricade he had made earlier with Adam.

He felt a brush of air hit his cheeks, and he looked up from the floor to gaze upon the welcome sight of Darko’s face.

Darko smiled widely at Nigel, holding an AK47 in his hands.

“I’m sorry I’m late, my friend.”

Nigel reached forward with every bit of energy he left over, and he slapped Darko roughly across the face.
Darko’s eyes widened, and Nigel’s handprint immediately showed up red on Darko’s right cheek.

“Fucking ow!” Darko cried, rubbing his cheek with the top of the gun.

“What the fucking fuck was that for then?” He asked, glaring at Nigel.

“For being late, you fucking asshole. I called you maybe twenty fucking times!”

Nigel was in pain just to talk, and he felt his ribs rubbing against soft tissue and organs inside his body, and he straightened his posture, only to involuntarily cave inwards again like a shell.

He felt someone wiping some blood off his nose and lips roughly, and while frowning, he turned to his right to find Darko’s leading right hand man, Arvarg with a bloodied cloth in his hands.

Arvarg was a man in his early 30s, with soft brown short hair and soft green eyes. His freckled skin had a tinge of olive.

“Hi Nigel.” Arvarg wiped the rest of the blood off as best he could, then sat with his back against the barricade as well.

“He was all I could find on short notice! I was in the fucking hospital you know!” Darko moved to the side of the barricade and fired a few times before Nigel grabbed the ends of his blue coat and yanked him roughly down to be protected by the shield the barricade offered.

“Are you fucking crazy? You’re going to be a father! You can’t be as reckless anymore!” Nigel hissed thinly, wheezing out his words one by one.

Darko smirked with too much confidence, then fired a few more shots.

“As if that will ever stop me from saving your old ass.”

Nigel glared, then began looking around for any weapon, “Where’s Adam?”

Darko let out an exasperated sigh, and Arvarg snickered.

“He’s not with you?” Nigel asked, reaching up and placing a bloodied hand over his chest, as if to prevent his heart from bursting out of his chest and running away.

“No, we never saw him; we just barely got here.” Arvarg answered before Darko could.

“We have to fucking find him!” Nigel tried grabbing onto something to stand up, but he fell back on his ass and groaned in pain.

Darko shrugged out of his coat, tossing it over Nigel’s shoulders.

“Oh no you fucking don’t! We just barely got your ass outta there! No way in hell you’re going back!”

Darko reached into the front pocket of his black t-shirt, and placed a few more bullets in his gun.

Nigel looked at him, bewildered.

“That’s all the fucking ammo you brought?”

Darko stood and fired as quickly and efficiently as he could, earning a few more screams and yells before sitting back down.
“For the last fucking time, Nigel, you caught me off guard! I didn’t exactly have enough time to explain this to Verka, and I didn’t get the chance to bring in the whole Army with me either.”

“Great, so we’re stuck here until you run out of ammo.” Nigel said, defeatedly, reaching up and holding the jacket around his shoulders, feeling it covering his back warmly.

As if in a direct response, Darko leapt back up and dodged a few bullets that tried meeting him, then rolled to the side and fired more when he leapt back up. He kept firing expertly until he was completely out of bullets. He tossed the guns down onto the floor, but he wasn’t defeated or panicking.

He hurried back over to crouch beside Nigel while Arvarg fired.

“No, I brought the boys, too.” Darko said, smiling with eyes full of mischief as their blue depths shined briefly like little diamonds.

Nigel frowned, “The boys?”

Darko reached into his jean pockets, and pulled out two thick, dangerously heavy brass knuckles, and slid them on, bunching his hands up in fists.

“The boys.” He jabbed playfully at the air.

“Fuck me.” Nigel whispered, feeling doomed and absolutely screwed.

Darko laughed loudly, his spirits on the high end of things for someone who was being shot at.

“That’s not my job, frate!” With that, he stood up, facing one of the guards of Alexei as he came hurtling himself through the broken window at them.

Nigel watched in horror as Darko landed a nasty uppercut at the guard’s jaw, causing no doubt the man’s teeth to definitely chip off inside his mouth as he stumbled back, trying to hold back the fountain of blood that had poured out of his mouth.

Arvarg knelt down again, reloading his gun, while Darko kicked at another guard who had stepped in after the first.

They struggled momentarily, as the previous one had fallen, but was still conscious, and he grabbed at Darko’s legs, pulling on them as Darko tried squirming and twisting his way out of the vice-like-grip of the guard who held him tightly.

Nigel noticed the guard on the floor unsheathing a large knife he had been wielding in his boots, and he grabbed onto Darko’s left leg, about to bury the blade within his flesh.

Not knowing how he possessed the strength to do so, Nigel flung himself forward on the floor at the man, aiming for his hands. He grabbed onto them both with his own, pulling at the knife in a man-tug-of-war-like fashion.

He pushed down with his sternum against the man’s hands, forcing them back against his own neck, and the man struggled back, but was definitely weaker. Nigel was about to knock the knife out of his hands, and he watched it slide away across the floorboards of the shop far out of anyone’s dangerous reach.

He punched the guard as hard as he could, knocking him out of his movements.
Darko twisted an elbow back and jabbed multiple times like a hammer at the man who was still holding onto him. He delivered powerful blows to his chest, and the last blow resounded in a small “crack”.

The man backed off, hunching over to catch his breath, and Darko turned and brought down his fists on the back of the man’s skull. The brass knuckles met bone with a solid “crunch”, and then man fell down, his breathing stilling, eyes wide open in a cold glare.

Nigel roared and pulled Darko down by his side as a fresh rain of bullets and smoke poured in the windows and pounded against the barricade madly.

“You are fucking moron! That was aimed at you!”

“And you!” Darko argued back, brushing himself off and glaring feverishly at Nigel. Nigel shook his head, “Not the bullets, asshole! The man on the floor! He had a fucking knife, but you were too busy playing with the other man, and dancing around making an ass out of yourself!”

Darko scoffed and shrugged, “Unbelievable how ungrateful you are!”

“Verka would have my ass on a plate if she knew what had nearly happened!” Nigel grabbed onto Darko’s right arm and pulled him back from standing up again to peer about outside.

Darko whipped back and smirked. “I’m a big boy, Nigel, I can handle myself.”

Nigel cocked an eyebrow but then groaned in pain.

Arvarg knelt down and interrupted, “Hey lovebirds, I hate to break this lovely fucking moment, but we are still terribly outnumbered.”

“How many more are there?” Darko asked, hanging his fists loosely by his sides, as if he hadn’t just been nearly choked and stabbed to death, but instead was out on a trip with old friends.

“Too fucking many,” Arvarg began, shaking slightly from nervousness, “I couldn’t exactly count them all nicely with bullets flying past my ass and head.” Arvarg ground out angrily, brows furrowed together tightly in impatience and annoyance.

Nigel and Darko simultaneously sighed.

“Are we just going to say ‘fuck this’ and keep going?” Darko asked, looking up at Nigel, expectant of his response as more footsteps piled up around the front of the shop.

It was Nigel’s turn to present his own confident smirk, his eyes tired and red, and blood still smeared over his forehead, nose, lips, and on his hands and shirt. He had never looked more deadly, Darko thought.

“Let’s go.”

Nigel grabbed the hand Darko offered, and he was carefully pulled up on his feet as Darko leaned forward and faced the mob outside.

“Alright, fuckers! You’ve got what you wanted! We’re heading out!”

Nigel felt Darko grabbing his left arm and he wrapped it around his own neck and shoulders, while Arvarg trailed behind.
Darko held onto Nigel’s hand in his own as he supported his weight over his shoulder, and they all heard the gunfire ceasing.

“Arvarg, let’s not crawl out of this window like fucking animals. We deserve to walk out like men.” Nigel hissed as he felt his ribs hit Darko’s sides and he nearly broke out in tears from how painful it really was.

Arvarg looked at Darko, mouth gaped open.

Darko gave him only a small nod, and he got to work pulling back the tables and chairs until they had all fallen to the sides of the shop and cleared the doorway for them to walk out of.

Nigel looked at Darko, who returned his gaze, and they smiled at each other, a silent and symbolic reunion of their friendship and their unity renewed. This would more than likely be their last battle together, but at least Darko had indeed come to his aid and fought along his side.

Darko led Nigel outside the cigar shop, and Nigel squinted and groaned in pain once he felt the bright sunshine hit his retinas. Why did everything have to fucking hurt?

They were almost at the sidewalk when Arvarg gasped in shock.

“Look!”

They all looked up ahead to find every single Russian guard with their weapons down on the ground, while they stood with their hands held up in surrender.

Alexei and Vadim weren’t in view, but their goons and lackeys were held back, not firing, not aiming, not harming anyone.

The reason for that became apparent as Nigel and Darko walked closer. They stopped, both of them fearful as they watched an entire police force standing around in front of their parked vehicles, guns aimed and ready at the Russian guards, but also a few of them had pointed their black guns at Darko and Nigel.

No one moved or made a sound in the street; even the wind had stop blowing and moving natural elements with it about.

“What the fuck’s this then?” Nigel asked, looking around from side to side, eyes widening slightly when he couldn’t locate anyone or anything.

They heard a few pairs of footsteps circling around the sides of the pizza restaurant, and they shifted their bodies and eyes at who was approaching.

Nigel and Darko gasped in unison, Nigel’s heart and eyes immediately feeling reborn, and renewed relief once he saw him.

“Adam…”

He saw his gorgeous angel standing before him, hands covering his mouth in fear, the white spacesuit still on. His blue eyes looked directly at Nigel, bringing life and warmth to the soul Nigel never felt and thought he had, but one look from Adam brought him faith and hope, no matter how hard Nigel had denied he had any.

Adam didn’t approach, but he smiled a weak smile once he noticed Nigel was safe. His smile lit the fire in Nigel’s soul, and he suddenly didn’t feel any pain or discomfort, even though he had more
than likely plenty of broken ribs, and he was limping, barely able to stand up on his own. Adam’s warm smile healed Nigel’s broken heart, and he knew that was the immediate, fresh start he desired and craved. He could worry about the broken bones later in the hospital, but for now, all he wanted to do was to hold Adam.

Nigel was about to ask Darko to let him go, when he abruptly heard heavier footsteps approaching.

They circled behind Adam and the crunchy noises the feet took finally stopped to Nigel’s right-hand side.

Nigel and Darko turned and froze, taken aback in shock for the hundredth time that day, their jaws dropping open at the same time.

“Tomaso?”

Chapter End Notes

One more chapter, then we are done :(
Also, Arvarg isn't a random character, for those who paid attention, he was mentioned in chapter 7 of the story ;
Chapter 20

Nigel and Darko had been surrounded. A large police squad followed behind Tomaso, who stood before them, wearing a clean gray suit, with a checkered tie. He walked with pride and confidence, his silver strands standing out among the sea of his coppery-red hair. His face was freshly shaven, and he appeared to be in his most meticulous, organized fashion, as Nigel and Darko had never seen him before.

“Sir? Should we arrest them as well?” An officer walked up to stand beside Tomaso, and he glared at both Nigel and Darko.

Nigel felt himself about to fall down from exhaustion, but Darko strongly held onto his waist as they gaped at the situation.

“Of course; I’ve been looking for Alexei and Vadim’s comrades for a long time now.”

“What?!” Alexei, Vadim, and Darko all yelled the word simultaneously, their faces set ablaze in anger, confusion, and frustration.

Vadim spat at the ground close to Darko’s feet.

“I’ve never and would never work with this scum!”

Alexei nodded, “They’re not my comrades, you fuck! They tried to kill us!”

Every one of the officers beside and behind Tomaso aimed and readied their weapons at the Russians, which caused them both to close their mouths as they awaited their fate.

“Sir?” The lead officer spoke, still aiming for the eldest Russian cousin, then his eyes shifted over to wait for Tomaso’s orders.

“Yes, throw them in the back of the car, together.”

Nigel felt his blood freezing in his veins, and Adam audibly gasped.

Immediately, the officers waltzed towards Nigel and Darko, tearing them apart, and yanking their hands behind their backs as they slammed first Darko against the trunk of the police car, trying to handcuff him, while another office held onto Nigel as he swung his fists about in retaliation.

He glared at Tomaso, unable to believe his fucking shitty luck.

“Tomaso! What the fuck’s going on?”

Adam seemed to be sharing in Nigel’s confusion and anger, and he raced over to Tomaso, but another office stood between him and Tomaso, holding out his arms to shield Adam away from Tomaso.

“TOMASO!” Nigel roared, but he felt his blood and energy slowly seeping out of his body, the more he fought and struggled. The officers were too strong, and it was useless fighting back.
Nigel could only watch as the officer who held Darko down against the trunk of the car handcuffed him, and yanked him by his shirt collar to the passenger’s backseat door, unlocking it and throwing Darko inside the car like he were a rag doll.

Darko turned and looked out the tinted windows at Nigel, yelling and mouthing something Nigel was unable to understand over the sound of his anger boiling over and making his ears and forehead steam up.

“Tomaso! I’ll ask you again, what the fuck do you think you’re fucking doing?”

His question was drowned out as a few officers ran over, yelling at the top of their lungs, pointing their guns and shields at Alexei and Vadim, shoving them onto the ground to lie on their hands and stomachs as they searched them and discarded their concealed weapons.

They rounded up the rest of their men and team, forcefully pushing them back away from the Russians.

Nothing but yelling and frantic screaming sounded in the small street, and more officers held back a curious, nosey crowd of onlookers as they stood about, trying to record and catch some photos of the scene.

“My’re you doing this to Nigel! He hasn’t done anything wrong!” Adam cried sadly and angrily, his eyes mixing and pouring over with emotions, and it made Nigel freeze. He stopped fighting and struggling, and he looked only at Adam in the midst of all the chaos and havoc.

He could only admire how beautiful and wonderful Adam appeared, fighting for Nigel’s freedom… he was standing by his side through all this! Nigel felt overwhelmed, and he didn’t care if anyone saw him crying, because he did anyway. His eyes poured forth tears like he had never shed before, not even over Gabi. He cried as if he were a lost baby, and he sobbed and reached out for Adam, only to be held back by the officer in front of him.

“Adam…”

“Please listen to me! Nigel saved my life! He saved me!” Adam kept arguing and leaping up on his feet to be heard over the broad shouldered-tall officer, but he was ignored and held back.

Nigel began to feel more dizzy, but he reserved his last bits of energy to call out to Adam, regardless of how much like hammered shit he felt like.

“Adam, I lo-”

It was all suddenly out of his control; Nigel’s eyes rolled back into his head, and he swung forward, collapsing onto the pavement at the officer’s feet.

Everything faded to black, and his entire world had shut off.

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His eyelids opened, and he hissed and winced, feeling his retinas aching as they adjusted to the warm, bright lights of the evening sun, as it peeked in through the blinds by the left-hand window.

Nigel’s head spun and swam, and he turned his neck with great, slow effort, and he first saw before him, a large police officer, who peered down at him threateningly and menacingly; his shoulders fanning out to appear bigger and more broad, and his teeth snarling down at him.
Feeling the need to defend himself, Nigel made a move to sit up, when he was shoved back down roughly onto his back. He finally looked down to see a handcuff attached to his right-hand wrist, and that held him down tightly onto the arm of a…hospital bed?

Huh?

What the fuck was going on?

Nigel turned back, his mind and eyes more alert and more awake now, and he saw more people in the hospital room with him.

Almost as if he had stepped back in time, Nigel saw Darko sitting at the back on a blue chair, and by his side sat Verka, and Adam slowly walked up to the right-side of the bed, hands already gently resting over Nigel’s, and warming up his flesh.

“Adam? What’s happened?”

Nigel tried sitting up again, and he groaned and hissed in pain, eyes clenching shut involuntarily as his sides and back burned and sizzled with a dull throbbing pain.

“Shhh, sit back, Nigel.”

Adam pressed a soft hand against Nigel’s chest, which he found to be wrapped up in a rib brace, with pieces of gauze around his hands, lower chest, and on his sides near his hips. His lower half had a blanket draped over his legs and feet, and he was grateful for it, for he still felt cold and exhausted.

“Adam, what’s going on?” Nigel asked, and Adam was about to answer, when the door opened, and Tomaso walked in again.

Upon seeing him, Nigel glared at him, and suddenly, all his energy had returned to him, and he sat up as far as his handcuff would let him, trying to break free from the binding. The chain of the handcuff clinked and clanked against the armrest, metal against metal in a tough fight.

Tomaso moved to the side, and gently pushed his way past the officer, who backed away a few steps, and stood beside Verka. His glare was still present on his face, but Nigel was glad he wasn’t up in his face anymore.

“You took a lot of damage, Nigel, but I’m happy to announce you made it out, alive.” Tomaso pulled up a chair, the legs scraping on the floor nosily, and he sat beside Nigel’s right side, crossing a leg over the other, resting his hands in his lap.

“No shit, Tomaso.” Nigel spat venomously, fighting less against his binding, but looking viciously at the man he once had trusted and respected.

Once he was seated, Tomaso smiled gently at Adam, who refused to meet his eyes as he watched Nigel still struggling on the bed.

“Sit down, Adam.”

Adam nodded, and meekly went to sit at the only chair left in the room; a small wooden chair by the window.

“You did very well, I really didn’t think you’d make it out of there alive.” Tomaso stated truthfully, nodding appreciatively at Nigel, a warm, knowing smile crossing his face.
Nigel chuckled in frustration, “Yeah, I just fucking bet you’re creaming your pants at the fucking prospect, Tomaso,”

Verka coughed and blushed, looking down at her feet, and Darko reached over her lap and held her hands in his.

“…You couldn’t wait to arrest me, couldn’t you?”

Tomaso raised an eyebrow.

“Actually, you’re innocent and free to go, Nigel.”

Nigel’s head snapped up to attention.

“What?”

Tomaso nodded, “I had to make it seem like you were also caught, so the Russians wouldn’t find out about your situation to track you down and hurt you again.”

Nigel couldn’t believe it. He stared blankly at Tomaso, his eyes frozen as his jaw dropped and lowered more by the second. Was he imagining this? Or was he still asleep and dreaming?

“It was a ruse, Nigel! It was a disguise, an act, a show, a-”

“I know what the fuck a ‘ruse’ is, Darko!” Nigel snapped at his friend, throwing him a nasty glare, which shut the other man right up, before looking at Tomaso, and basking in shock and change of luck.

“You were…?” He asked, wanting Tomaso to answer and complete the sentence for him.

Tomaso nodded, and offered him a kind, reassuring smile, which made him appear younger and far more like his old self than what Nigel and Darko had previously seen that day.

“I have been undercover for the last two years, Nigel. I’ve been looking for the Russians the entire time, and I finally found them, all thanks to you and Darko.”

Nigel frowned and chuckled, “But what about the cocaine?”

The officer stood away from the walls, taking a large, long step towards the bed.

“What cocaine?” He asked, looking back and forth between Nigel, Darko, and Tomaso.

Tomaso’s eyes widened at Nigel, and he slowly mouthed: It’s been taken care of. He followed it with a wink.

“I instructed Nigel and Darko to plant the drugs, Officer Kline, it’s all done with.”

The officer didn't back down right away, and Tomaso sighed.

"It was the only way to draw them out, now stop questioning it!" He yelled, though he didn't turn to directly speak to the officer lingering behind.

Nigel smirked at him, and whispered, “You clever bastard.”

“These men have been working for me only for a few days, and Nigel’s just woken up, so please try not to breathe down his neck, Officer Kline!”
The officer’s face flushed and he nodded, moving back to stand against the wall in embarrassment.

“Of course, sorry sir.”

Tomaso smirked confidently.

“They’ve invited me back to the department in Italia, Nigel. They want me to become the capo della polizia now!” Tomaso could barely contain his excitement, for his knees and legs began wobbling, and he laughed heartily. His eyes shone and beamed with self-pride, which Nigel shared as he laughed happily.

“As you should, Tomaso. You’re the man for the job.”

“Grazie, Nigel,” he then turned back to look at Darko, “Grazie, Darko.”

“You two have been so good to me…I can’t thank you enough.”

Nigel suddenly moaned in pain, and the sound of it caused Adam to fly out of his seat and rush to his side, fear and concern clouding his eyes.

“Just tell me I’m not dying and I’ll be forever in your fucking debt, Tomaso.” Nigel leaned his head and neck back on the pillow and mattress now that he knew he was in the clear. He closed his eyes, thinking of the new life he had been given and blessed with, and he wondered how he could first start to make the best and most amazing memories with Adam by his side.

Tomaso uncrossed his legs, slowly getting out of his seat as he stood by Nigel’s side, leaning down to speak to him.

“You’ve broken a few ribs, Nigel, but it’s nothing you can’t handle, right?”

Nigel nodded slowly.

“I’ll be fine.”

Adam grabbed his left hand, clutching onto it like his life depended on it.

“I’ll take care of you, Nigel! I promise.”

Nigel glanced down to find his fingers and knuckles turning white from the intensity and tight grip of Adam’s hand over his own, but he found he didn’t mind at all, and wouldn’t have it any other way. His darling cared for him and wanted to be there for him until he was better, and he couldn’t focus or give a shit about anything or anyone else. He gazed into Adam’s eyes, causing Adam to blush and look away, and Darko coughed, then cleared his throat, trying to almost brush away the growing tension and passion between the two men in the room.

“Get a fucking room?” He coughed out, causing Verka to slap his shoulder.

“Fuck off?” Nigel hissed back, still looking deeply at Adam’s face.

Tomaso smirked, hands diving in his pockets, and he gently cleared his throat.

The officer turned back and nodded at him, taking his cue to leave. He closed the door softly behind him, and Tomaso walked over to where Adam stood, and he raised a hand and placed it on Adam’s shoulder calmly.

“You were very brave, Adam.” He commended him proudly, causing Adam to stand up tall as he
blushed.

“I was concerned about Nigel.”

Tomaso nodded, while Nigel practically drooled in pleasure at the words he was hearing.

“You did very well, despite the knock on your head.”

Nigel suddenly slammed back into reality.

“FUCKING WHAT?!!?” He roared, his eyes turning dark and murderous as he scanned the room, eyes accusing mostly Darko, as if he held the knowledge that Adam had been harmed, and had it hidden away from him.

“Don’t fucking look at me! I wasn’t even there!” Darko held up his hands and looked away from Nigel’s angry glare.

“It was Vadim, I’ll be okay, Nigel.”

“He hurt you?” Nigel cooed, looking at Adam, eyes flying up and down as he inspected for damages as best he could from his spot on the bed.

Adam rubbed the back of his head, “It’s just a small bump, Nigel.” He smiled softly, trying to reassure his lover that he was alright.

“I’ll fucking kill him.” Nigel hissed, leaning his head back down on the pillow.

Tomaso and Darko snorted, but Tomaso walked over to the handcuff, and he pulled out the key to it from his pocket, and unlocked and undid it.

“You’ll do no such thing; they’re already both locked away, Nigel.”

Nigel sighed in relief when the handcuff released his wrist, grabbing at where the handcuff once was, and he massaged his free hand with his left hand.

“I’ll still fucking kill him.”

Darko sighed and Tomaso shook his head, looking down at his feet and chuckling.

“Enjoy your freedom, Nigel.”

Nigel looked back at Adam. He once again counted his blessings. He had nearly died again, but for some reason, he had been allowed to get away from his fate, and he had been permitted with the chance to love and be loved by one of the most wonderful, amazing human beings to ever walk the Earth. He wouldn’t ever be ungrateful anymore, and he would cherish and guard Adam’s heart and love dearly, from now on.

“Oh, I fucking will.”

The door burst open at once, and a woman with long dark brown hair ran in, followed by a hospital staff member, and an older man with short gray hair. They all looked frightened, exhausted, stressed, and desperate.

“Adam! Adam! Oh my goodness!” She threw her arms around Adam, yanking him to her chest as she let out a hysterical sob.
“I tried to stop her, but she insisted she knew him!” The hospital staff member shouted out in a quick, rushed panic, trying to avoid Tomaso’s judgmental, angry stare.

The woman calmed down once she saw Adam, and she straightened out her long cream-coloured coat, brushing her hair back and away from her face as she caught her breath.

“Who the fuck are you?” Nigel spat at her, causing Adam to gasp and stare in shock at him.

“Nigel!”

The woman scoffed, raising an eyebrow at Nigel as she folded her arms over her chest and stretched out a leg in front of the other.

“I’m Beth Buchwald! I’m Adam’s dearest friend, and also his ex-girlfriend!”

The older man with the gray hair stepped up shyly, raising a hand in the air.

“I’m Adam’s employer…hello.”

Both Darko and Verka winced in pain at the awkward introductions.

The hospital staff member shrugged. “I tried asking them to leave.”

Tomaso smiled, shaking his head and then stretching his hand out to Beth’s.

“They can stay here. I’m Inspector Moretti, at your service.”

Beth took his hand, shaking it while blushing. She tucked a stray, long hair strand behind her ear, while Adam and Nigel looked into each other’s eyes.

“I’m so glad Adam’s safe, that’s all I care about.” She said, resting her hand in Tomaso’s, while he smiled at her, studying her features appreciatively, clearly approving of what he saw and found.

“I see.”

Beth looked over at Adam.

“Adam, it’s time to come home.” She slowly removed her hand from Tomaso’s not noticing the way his fingers reached out to hers for a moment, before his hand clenched shut tightly. He stared down at his closed fist, almost appearing regretful.

“No.”

Both Beth and Mr. Klieber gasped in shock at his answer.

“What do you mean ‘no’, Adam?” Mr. Klieber asked, unbuttoning the first button of his dress shirt and breathing deeply, as if trying to finally catch his breath.

Adam moved back to stand at Nigel’s side, and he grabbed his hand, holding it in his own and raising it up to rest on Nigel’s chest.

“I want to stay here in Bucharest.”

Nigel heard the rest of their conversation, but he was unable to register anyone else’s words except for Adam’s. Adam had wanted to stay here with him, and make a new life and a new home for the two of them. He couldn’t have asked for anything else, and he was lost, absolutely drowning in his
happiness, glee, and love for Adam. Adam was his, and he was finally home where he belonged; in Nigel’s arms and heart.

“You want to stay?!?” Beth and Mr. Klieber asked in unison, looking at each other in shock.

“Yes.” Adam said strongly and confidently.

Beth threw her hands up in the air.

“As long as you’re safe and happy, Adam! I give up!” She laughed, and she genuinely was indeed happy for her friend, and her laughter was contagious enough for Mr. Klieber to laugh in turn, and he rolled his eyes and wiped away at his sweaty cheeks and forehead.

“I’ve been handling this case from the beginning, signora, and I assure you, Darko and Nigel have taken the best care of your friend since the very beginning.”

Tomaso once again tried grabbing Beth’s attention, inching up towards her and smiling warmly at her.

“Your friend is in good hands.”

At the sound of Darko’s name, Beth stopped blushing, looking at Nigel on the hospital bed.

“So you’re the infamous Darko, then?” She hissed at him, taking a step closer to him, when Darko stood up and laughed.

“No, I’m D-Darko, miss…”

She turned and looked at him, silence his only response for a moment, then she suddenly sprang forward at him, beating him over the head with her purse a few times.

“You lying scumbag! You told me you were Adam’s employer, but it was all a lie!”

Over and over, the purse slammed against Darko’s skull, and he shielded her blows by raising his hands to cover his head, but she kept ramming her purse down over his head.

“Oh! Ow! OWWWW!”

Darko ran to the back of the room, cowering and crouching down while still shielding himself, quite poorly.


Verka covered and hid her laugh with a hand, but her pink cheeks gave her away.

“I’m glad you could do what I didn’t have the courage to do, Beth Buchwald.” She giggled, watching her husband running to the door, flinging it open, while Beth chased after him, with the hospital staff member following her, and Tomaso in hot, close pursuit of them all.

Mr. Klieber stood in the center of the room awkwardly, scratching his head while Adam stroked Nigel’s face and hair lovingly and softly, while Nigel smiled, closed his eyes, and sighed in content.

Mr. Klieber turned and sat beside Verka, folding his hands in his lap as he looked out the window.

“So how long have you been married?”
From outside in the halls, Beth’s screams and Darko’s cries of pain echoed everywhere, followed by quick-paced, frantic Italian words and phrases resonating in the middle of the commotion.

Verka sighed exhaustedly, covering her eyes with a hand.

“Don’t even ask.”

“Gorgeous! Hurry up! You’re going to miss it!”

“One second, Nigel! I’m just getting some chocolate milk for us!”

“Hurry up, darling!”

Nigel sat on the balcony of his house in Bucharest on the Saturday night that he had been released from the hospital. He wore a black undershirt, his bare arms and neck cooling off in the night breeze, as the curtains whipped and danced about in the wind behind him, the balcony doors wide open and parted to the side.

Nigel grabbed the temporary cane he’d been given by the hospital, and he tapped it a few times against the legs of Adam’s vacant chair, perched beside the one Nigel was seated in. The clanging and clinking of the chair broke through the silent night.

“You’ll miss it, gorgeous!” Nigel’s voice warned, and he heard his lover’s hurried footsteps approaching behind him.

Two glasses suddenly appeared beside Nigel’s elbow on the little round table their chairs were seated around, and the ice within the one closest to his elbow blasted harsh coldness into his body as it seeped through his skin, causing him to laugh and retract his elbow.

“Sorry Nigel!” Adam sat down quickly, sipping his chocolate milk through the green straw, eyes on the night sky.

Nigel studied Adam’s young face for what could have been nearly an hour, or perhaps a few minutes, but he wasn’t able to tell, for he felt he lost track of time anytime Adam was even a few feet near him. All he could hear was how quickly and loudly his heart practically sang for Adam, and how his thoughts and mind screamed repeatedly: I love you!

He was on cloud nine, and the first memory he was building with Adam was going to be absolutely breathtakingly beautiful, much like his darling.

Once Adam finished his chocolate milk, he began setting up his old telescope, but he had barely begun when Nigel placed his hands over Adam’s, stopping him.

Adam looked up curiously at him.

“Nigel?”

“You don’t wanna use that old one, my love.”

Nigel sat up, gripping the top of his cane, and he limped over to where a box was behind a few bags and flowerpots in the left-hand corner of the balcony.

Nigel pushed over the box with his feet and cane, and then leaned down enough to pick it up. He walked back over to Adam, and gently placed the box in his lap.
“I know this isn’t much, Adam, but I wanted to give it as a gift for you moving in with me…I hope you like.”

Adam’s arms around his neck and shoulders shoved away his words. All he could focus on was Adam’s warmth, his scent, and his body against his in their tight, passionate embrace.

“Thank you, thank you Nigel! This is just the new one I always wanted!!” Adam hurriedly set up the telescope after he helped Nigel sit back down. Nigel watched in awe and fascination as he sipped his cool drink, while Adam finally finished setting up the telescope.

“It’s beautiful, Nigel! I love it!”

Nigel smirked.

“Yeah, but you love me more, right gorgeous?”

Adam smiled and blushed.

“Always love you more, Nigel.”

Nigel leaned over the table and ruffled Adam’s hair playfully, before kissing the top of his head.

Adam gasped, grabbing the telescope and positioning it in front of them, and he arranged his chair beside Nigel’s, almost gluing the two together given how close they were.

“Nigel! I can see it!”

Nigel didn’t look up until Adam yanked him close by the strap of his undershirt.

“There!”

Adam and Nigel shared the view, both of them peering at the night sky from the eyepiece. The night sky was large, and the stars were luminous and radiant as they shone down upon the Earth.

“It’ll be located somewhere here!”

Adam pointed ahead, and moved slightly to the side, making more room for Nigel, who leaned in and gazed around in appreciation at what a beautiful, captivating world they truly lived in.

He saw it then, clear as ever: the yellow moon looming over them, large and round like a wondrous sphere. It was a planet unto itself, and it made both Adam and Nigel inhale and gasp in awe, and then laugh as they held hands and peered at the yellow moon.

Nigel then let Adam have the entire view to himself, and he massaged and rubbed his arms and shoulders, kissing the back of his neck.

“I told you we wouldn’t miss it.” He whispered over Adam’s flushed skin.

Adam raised up a hand, and rested it on Nigel’s side, but Nigel leapt back a bit, moaning in pain.

“Nigel!!! I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” Adam nearly knocked aside the telescope as he turned into Nigel, trying to soothe and comfort him, but also fearful to touch him and cause more pain.

Nigel lowered his head, then his shoulders began shaking violently.

“Nigel?!?!?!?” Adam screeched almost tearfully, and stood up to get help, when Nigel raised his
head, and laughed boisterously as he’d never laughed before. Tears streamed from the corners of his closed eyelids, and he wiped his eyes, throwing his head back and nearly choking as his laughter died down into small hiccups and coughs. He slapped his hands against his knees as he laughed a few more times.

Adam gaped at him, shaking in fear, hands reaching out to him, then drawing back a few times.

Nigel wiped his eyes again, and shook his head.

“I’m so sorry darling, but your reaction was fucking priceless!” He wiped his hands on his silver shorts, reaching out to cradle Adam’s body into his chest, kissing his head lovingly and apologetically.

“Nigel, I hate you.” Adam hissed, but allowed himself to be held in Nigel’s warm arms. His own hands slowly-and almost against his will-came up to find solace and their loving place around Nigel’s waist.

“You love me.” The deeply pleasant rumble came out, gently rocking against his cheek and ear as Adam closed his eyes and smiled a small, peaceful smile.

“I do.”

Not even the stars and the moon could brighten their mood that night, for they only required the presence and company of each other.

End

Chapter End Notes

The end :(  
I’m so happy this ended pleasantly, and I wanted to yet again thank EVERYONE for reading and supporting me throughout my writings!  
I adore all of you, and I hope you enjoy my other Spacedogs fics in the near future!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!