The Gilded Cage
by one_golden_sun

Summary

An outsider--a wife--that was a threat. A wife could be queen. Could stand by Lafayette’s side out in the world, rule with him, touch him in front of everyone.

And he was the King’s dirty little secret. A pet in a cage.

Notes

Please heed the tags.
This is not a happy story.

Huge thank you to my betas.
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it truly takes a village

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

The King was late for supper.

John and Alexander sat in front of their respective, steaming plates, piled with chops of lamb, roasted potatoes, and a selection of steamed vegetables in some kind of herbal butter sauce. It smelled divine, and Alexander was ready to dig in, but John always insisted on waiting for all three of them to be present before eating.

Right as Alexander opened his mouth to tell John he was going to eat, King or no King, the door to the inner chamber opened and Lafayette stomped in, looking flustered and harried.

Immediately, John fussed over him. “Darling, what’s wrong?”

Alex chose to stay quiet, take that first bite of his meal. Lafayette needed different things from them. His expertise was mental stimulation through heated debates, making them laugh with his sharp wit, dazzling them with his ideas. John was better at nurturing and offering comfort.

Lafayette sighed, ignored his plate for his wine glass. “I suppose I should tell the both of you.” A look of extreme distaste passed over his face. “I am being… Forced… by certain…” He paused, took in John and Alex staring back him, anxiously awaiting what he had to say. He took a fortifying sip of wine before continuing. “There are members of my court which think it is high time I took a queen,” he said stiffly.

John’s face fell, but Alexander simply shrugged. “So what?” he said, spearing another potato. “Tell them no. You’re the King.”

“Theyir concerns about an heir are not unfounded,” he said simply. “They have invited a trio of princesses--sisters--from a neighboring kingdom. A ball will be thrown in their honor, and they hope perhaps one will be to my liking.”

It did not escape Alex’s notice that John sat silently, staring at his plate, his face pinched into a frown. Lafayette was more or less refusing to look at him, guilt in his eyes. “Seems easy enough. Pick the prettiest, most pleasant of the three, marry her. Impregnate her with an heir, and be done with the whole business. Once a woman has a baby, she’s honestly less fussed about her husband anyway.”

Lafayette looked scandalized. “And should I live a lie? And drag her into it? Make her think I love her, only while my heart is in here, with the both of you?”

“I have found the most lasting marriages are the ones where love is… Outsourced,” Alex replied.

“It still seems deceitful,” Lafayette said. “I have never been good at pretending, particularly when it comes to matters of the heart.” He took John’s hand beside him, finally turned to look at him. “You have been quiet, my love.”

“Don’t mind me,” John snapped. “Do not allow me to interrupt your planning session.”

“Planning?” Lafayette cried out while Alex glared at John.

“I think I will go to bed early,” John said. Ignoring his lovers’ protests, he fled from the table.

They followed.
“John, what have I done to upset you?” Lafayette stood at the bed, where John had flung himself face down.

“You’ve done nothing! Continue planning how to woo your future bride with Alexander! I will be fine in here. I will just be in the way, at any rate.” His voice was high and strained.

“Jack, be reasonable.” Alex sat on John’s other side, laid a comforting hand on his back. “I am merely being realistic! Lafayette needs an heir, and unless you have a secret womb you’ve been hiding all this time, neither of us can provide that.”

John found he couldn’t answer properly. Didn’t they see what was wrong? So much of it was… Another person in Lafayette’s circle meant greater risk of them being discovered. A wife would expect Lafayette in their marital bed! Sharing Lafayette with Alexander was one thing, John adored Alexander, and the love between the three of them was a web, criss crossing and pulling them all closer. An outsider--a wife--that was a threat. A wife could be queen. Could stand by Lafayette’s side out in the world, rule with him, touch him in front of everyone.

And he was the King’s dirty little secret. A pet in a cage.

“My little one, my love. You must know! No one. Not any person, no matter what happens, could ever come between us.”

“I want to be left alone right now,” John said quietly. “Please leave.”

As they shut the door behind them, Lafayette looked devastated. Alexander wasn’t sure what to say, his own nature always tended towards what was practical, what kept him alive. If he were in Lafayette’s shoes, picking a princess to marry and make a child with was just another duty, something else on the never ending list of tasks he had to complete.

It was so hard to properly say that, though, sitting across from him, his eyes downcast, very spirit seeming gray in the moment.

The door wasn’t thick enough to blot out the sound of John crying.

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During the next few weeks, the topic of a wife was not broached by any of the trio, and they fell back into their familiar domestic pattern. John knew in his heart that something loomed on the horizon, a change, but it was so easy to forget with Lafayette doting on him, lavishing him with attention. Plus, Alexander was being extra sweet as well, both of them really babying him and bending to his every whim.

Honestly, then, it shouldn’t have surprised him when one evening, as the three of them were laying in bed, John’s wonderfully hazy post-loving-making mood was shattered by Lafayette’s announcement.

“You will be dining without me tomorrow, my darlings,” he said, sounding resigned. Alexander sat up slightly, looked at him over John’s shoulder. John had grown tense. In the years since he came to live in the inner chamber, he’d never dined without Lafayette.

“And what’s the occasion?” Alex said, trying to keep his voice light.

“The ball. It is tomorrow night.”

John sighed, didn’t roll away, but shut his eyes, paled a bit.
“The ball, which I will attend out of obligation, be polite to these princess sisters, excuse myself before midnight, and explain to the court that not one of them caught my interest.”

Alex yawned, snuggled against John and let his eyes drift shut. “Sound like a foolproof plan, sweetie.” When he got sleepy, he got even more affectionate, using silly pet names. Laf reached across John to pet Alex’s arm in thanks.

In contrast, John remained silent. Stewing. Storm in his heart brewing. It was so like Lafayette to just think things would work out, that it was easy to just breeze through. That these princesses, these sisters wouldn’t be eyeing him up. That it would take just a dance, a touch on the hand, the right look or laugh, and suddenly he was engaged? A wife, waiting in the wings, waiting to take his love from him.

Despite the soft sounds of of his sleeping lovers, John found his own sleep evaded him for hours.

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The next night at supper, John sent the servant away, instructed her to return with another bottle of wine, and some of the sweet honey cakes he favored, ignoring the meal of poached fish and roasted vegetables set in front of him. It was a sight to behold. John downing glass after glass of this wine, his mood growing fouler with every sip, only pausing every so often for bites of the sweet cakes. Alex said nothing, picked at his own food. He had tried earlier in the evening to offer words of comfort, but John had glared daggers at him, so he bit his tongue, picked at his food, watched John get progressively drunker and turn in on himself.

After Alex had lost count of how many glasses John had, he watched him lay his head in his arms, shoulders slumped. His first thought was John was crying, but his eerie silence and stillness said otherwise. He poked John in the shoulder, tried to rouse him, but was met with unresponsiveness.

“John?” Alex shook him, concerned when he stayed still. He continued to try and wake him. He could feel panic curling in his own gut, but for some reason his outward reactions weren’t matching. It was like his world was blurring around the edges, and his limbs weren’t responding to his mental commands. How long he sat there, feeling fuzzy and ineffective, trying to wake John, he didn’t know. It could have been hours or minutes. It could have been half the night. Either way, John never woke, but he was still breathing. Just… Passed out.

The men in hoods came for them sometime past midnight. Alex automatically responded to the intrusion, moved to shield John, still asleep at the table. He was swept aside by the larger man, the other scooped John into his arms. Alex went to protest, tried to shout and fight them off, but his tongue was fat and numb in his mouth, his hands heavy, his whole body felt like lead. The man holding John carried him out. It was the last thing Alex saw before the world went black.
When John woke up, he didn’t understand where he was. His vision was still foggy, and he supposed the bottle of wine he had consumed hadn’t been the best idea. But now it seemed Lafayette had returned to him, since he was sitting in the bathtub, hands washing him. Through the curling steam and the fog in his brain, something seemed off, but he just tried to relax into the touch, the King bathing him, the warm water, a voice talking…

His eyes flew open and he jolted in the tub. The hands on his body were unfamiliar, as was the voice, and John realized the person looming over him certainly wasn’t Lafayette, nor Alex, nor anyone he knew or had ever seen before, a man in simple servant's attire, looking cross and exhausted. Despite his body feeling heavy and slow, John tried to squirm away, the water sloshing out of the tub as he went to curl up, preserve some modesty from the man touching him, washing him in a way he was absolutely not okay with.

“Stay still!” said the man, grabbing him by the upper arm.

From somewhere deep inside, John drew on the last reserves of his strength and drew himself up as well as he could, considering he was being pushed into a bathtub. “Unhand me,” he ordered, trying to keep the tremble out of his voice. Sound indignant. “By order of the King.”

The servant man chuckled, rolled his eyes. “I think you’ll find the King’s authority means little here, especially when it comes to jurisdiction over possessions he’s discarded.”

John sputtered, unsure how to respond, but then the servant was draining the tub, tossing a towel at him. His reflexes damped, it sort of just landed on his lap.

“Someone will be in to dress you in a moment,” the servant said. “Try not to fuss too much. Trust me, it will make everything easier.”

When the door shut behind him, John heard the click of a lock. Not that he could move, something was still coursing through his veins making him sluggish and weak. Picking up the towel off his lap to try and dab the water off his skin was a herculean task, and standing seemed impossible at this point. The bath room was unfamiliar to him, a strange ersatz version of the one he was used to, the one at home.

Home.

Where was he? Who was that man?

His mind was working so slow, he didn’t have a moment to really ponder the questions. A click of the door being unlocked, and this time three servants, all larger and stronger men, one holding a cloth sack. John shrunk back in the tub, but then tried again to get some answers, his voice the one thing he seemed to have strength enough to use.
“Where am I? Who are you? Where is the King? I demand to be taken home immediately.”

A collective laugh sounded from the men. “Madison shoulda told ya,” one said, setting down the cloth bag. A clank of metal as the contents settled. John flinched. “Guess the Prince will explain. You are home, sweetheart. Your relocation was on the King’s order, so I’m guessing he ain’t too fussed about where you are at the moment.”

John’s heart fell, his stomach swooping with terror. Lafayette had ordered… Had sent him away? That couldn’t be right. He supposed he’d have to discuss it with someone above these barbarians’ heads. This new information sent his head spinning again, confused him. Laf would never send him away, and there was no Prince, just the King. None of it made any sense.

“Now look. We ain’t here to chat. We gotta get you dressed before dinner. We can do this as painlessly as possible if you cooperate.”

“I can dress myself, I’ll have you kn--” John’s protests were cut off as one of the servants hoisted him out of the tub, laid him facedown on the cold marble floor. He was shocked into an offended silence, laying in a puddle on the tile. He’d never known such crass manhandling, but when he went to sit up, to try and call for Lafayette or Alex, one of the men pressed a strong hand into his back, between his shoulder blades, and pinned him to the floor.

Instantly, John’s indignation dissolved into fear. White hot, paralyzing, all encompassing fear. It bloomed under his skin, and he drew the air into his lungs and screamed, incoherent screeches for Alexander, for Lafayette, for these men to stop touching him and let him go right this instant.

One of the men, not the one holding him down, but a different man, struck him. Hard. Right across the backs of the thighs, hard enough to cut him off, more shocked silence. “Shut up!” The man hissed. “Stop carrying on. My god, I thought the other one was loud!”

As if the man mentioning him had summoned his voice, John could now hear Alex, somewhere in the distance: “John? John! Where is he? I can hear him, where is he?” and John drew breath as if to call back, but he was smacked a second time instead.

“Scream again,” the man said, “And I’ll make you watch as I beat your little friend to pulp.”

Somewhere, muffled through doors and walls, Alex’s voice frantic and sharp. Crying out for him, searching, and John was suddenly so scared, so lost. He burst into tears. Who were these men threatening him? Hitting him? Touching his nude body? He hated every second, wanted to wake up from this nightmare, and any strength he had was suddenly sapped, and he lay limp on the floor, crying. His tears didn’t seem to aggravate the men as his screaming did, so they moved to continue their task.

“Now, what’s about to happen ain’t pleasant for any of us,” one said, and the clanking metal again. “If you’re still, it will be quick.”

John said nothing, his sobs wracking his whole body. Alex’s distressed cries bouncing around the room, despite the distance.

The men worked quick. John felt cold metal encircling each wrist, a loud click and his hands were drawn into the small of his back, bound together in the metal. He choked on his sob, tried to wrench his hands back but was met by the unyielding metal. He was cuffed like some kind of criminal! They continued to ignore his crying, and the hand holding him down pressed harder, ceasing any more of his struggling.
Next went similar metal circles around his ankles, but they didn’t attach them together. Honestly, his legs were still useless from whatever drug was in his veins.

John just cried harder.

What happened next was so humiliating, so horrifying, John could barely register… Something cold and slippery, more metal it felt like, pressing between his cheeks, up against his hole. Some kind of oiled piece of smooth, rounded metal, widening as it was pressed, his hole stretching around the intrusion. He tried to clench his muscles, stop the onslaught, but they were stronger and just kept pushing until the device settled in with a pop, his body closing around the metal, the base of the device settling again his skin. He yelped, hating the feeling, his body being intruded, the stimulation to his asshole so pointed, so maddeningly loud, it was like it was the only thing he could feel. To make it worse, much worse, there was some sort of leather being buckled around his waist, a flat panel of the material pressing between his cheeks, locking the evil implement in, pulled between his legs.

With ease, the men flipped him onto his back, the new position crushing his arms and hands painfully. With no more care or delicacy than if they were working with livestock, his flaccid cock was plucked up and fed through the slit in the harness. The belt was tightened and he was trapped, metallic click of a small padlock over the buckle. He shuddered.

They weren’t done.

More cold metal, this time some sort of device over his cock. It was quick, at least, another lock. John swallowed back his tears, craned his neck to look down at himself. Between his legs was the crisscrossing of metal and leather, that somehow he was both being sexualized and contained at the same time.

A cloth dabbing his face. “Fuck, you’ve done made a mess of your fucking face,” the man noted. John sniffled, all cried out for the moment. “The Prince’ll be furious.”

“Just wipe him up, quickly. He’s already mad he’s been waiting so long.”

John had not a clue why they kept referring to Lafayette as the prince, why he was outfitted like a pleasure slave from a harem, why he was in a different bathing chamber than usual. Thoughts of suddenly being relocated…

What exactly was going on?

He didn’t have time to ask, or to even ponder, as he was unceremoniously hauled to his feet, dragged from the baths and out the door.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! I love comments and kudos or come say hi on tumblr! Also I am aware this is 100% self indulgent dark fic and angst. <3
The doors off to the side of the dining room opened. Alex was sitting at the marble table, trimmed in gold and silver. He went to rise from his seat, but the man seated at the head of the table, the only other person in the room, gave him a chilling look, so he stayed in his seat. This man, this stranger had already threatened him through promising to hurt John if he disobeyed, so Alex had done his best to hold his tongue. He’d only been awake for a few hours, and it had been nothing but confusing. Being told to bathe and dress, wrapped in fine robes. Taken to a beautifully appointed library, allowed to sit for hours.

Instead of reading, he fretted over John. What was happening. Where, exactly, were they? And where was Lafayette? His questions went unanswered by the servant… The guard… Outside the locked door. Only when he heard John screaming, his voice muffled behind walls and doors, and he yelled back, did the guard respond. Told him to shut up unless he wanted to hear “his friend” scream louder.

Then he was taken to supper, sat across from this man, addressed as the Prince. “How nice of you to join me for supper, Alexander,” he purred, eyeing him unpleasantly.

Alex glared, said nothing. The Prince looked like Lafayette, like someone had painted a portrait but had made a few mistakes. Slightly different build, shorter and broader. Face slightly rounder. Nose slimmer. Hair falling in a different curl pattern.

And his voice.

His voice was unctuous, different accent. Slimy and cold. Alexander shuddered to hear it, to hear his name on this man’s lips. Everything about him was a cheap imitation of the King, just as the very room was a gaudy, flimsy copy.

“How do you want to know why you were brought here?” the Prince asked. Smirked.

Alex still said nothing. Then the doors opened, and the Prince looked up. “Ah, it seems our other dinner companion has arrived. Excellent. Then I shall wait to give you both the explanation. Together.”

Two men, large servants. Between them was John. John shivering. Nude, aside from some strange metal device over his manhood, and a leather belt over his hips. Gold cuffs around his ankles. His wrists pinned behind him. He looked terrified and pale, his hair still wet from his bath, shivering and looking on the verge of tears.

Laying eyes on him, Alex stood, started to say his name, but the look from the Prince and the servants handling John stopped him. Danger fizzled in the air, and he stood stock still. Waiting. He watched in paralyzed confusion as they dragged John to the Prince’s side. Instead of a chair, they shoved him onto a small cushion next to the Prince’s feet. John still seemed somewhat impaired,
his limbs tangled as he tried to get purchase, tried to stand.

Instinctively, Alex rose, intending to go to him. Could not stand to see him flailing on the floor. As he stood, so fast his chair rattled, the Prince’s hand went to the scabbard at his waist. He drew the weapon, set it on the table in front of him. The steel glinted in the candlelight.

“If you think you can threaten me--” Alex started, rage suddenly red in his eyes.

“Alexander. Sit down.” The Prince’s eyes darted to John, and he stroked the weapon almost as if caressing a lover. Without words, Alex caught his meaning.

He sat down.

“Good boy.” He turned his attention to John, a heap on the floor. Though he spoke in soothing tones, a dark current ran under his voice, made listening to him feel like being plunged into icy water. “John. My little pet. I need to you kneel during supper. I’ve provided a nice pillow for you, so I need you to be a good boy now and sit back on your knees.”

John turned to look up at the Prince, and Alex witnessed the same dawning horror he’d had just hours ago, when faced with someone who so resembled their lover, but clearly wasn’t. A changeling King.

“Don’t touch me!” John snapped, his voice loud and strong despite being edged with tears. Alex was impressed despite the terrible situation. “You aren’t the King! Leave me alone! I demand to--”

Like a viper, the Prince struck, his hand grabbing a fistful of John’s curls and wrenching him half up on his knees. To his credit, John bit back his cry, glared defiantly at the Prince. He plucked the dagger from the table, showed it to John.

“How exactly do you think this will look in Alexander’s skin?” He said, almost sing song. “The blade on his pretty face?”

Alex squinted, wanted to tell John not to worry about him, but then one of the guards was behind him, he was seized by the wrist and dragged towards the Prince, his arm pinned to the marble of the tabletop. With a careless flick, the tip of the blade nicked his inner forearm, a hairline crack seeping scarlet. Alex tried to hide his flinch, but John caught it.

“Don’t… Don’t!” John gasped, twisted in the Prince’s grip. Another cut, parallel to the first. The Prince grinned wicked. Third cut, the crook of his arm.

“You’re doing this to him,” the Prince lamented. “Disobedient boys earn consequences.”

With his face crumpling, John gained purchase on the floor, the cushion. Forced himself onto his knees, sagged in the grip the Prince had on him. Heaving breath from the force of it. Alex longed to shout. To tell John the cuts were paper thin, despite the blood, he hardly felt them, to keep fighting! But fear of the Prince turning the weapon on John next loomed, so he bit his tongue.

“There’s a good pup,” the Prince said, and let go of John’s hair. He beamed at the both of them, at Alex holding a rag to his wounds, at John trembling on his knees next to him.
“I’m so pleased to finally tell you my name. I’m Thomas Jefferson, half-brother to the King, crown Prince.”

Alex stared. Lafayette had a brother? How did this never come up in, all the months he’d lived with the King?

“I daresay my brother hasn’t mentioned me. I’m not terribly surprised, he’s not particularly fond of me, nor sharing personal information with his whores.” Alex tensed at his words, the Prince--Thomas-- just laughed. “Honestly, you should be thanking me for bringing you both here. When my dear brother got engaged the other night, well… He decided, along with the royal court, that you two needed to be disposed of, and swiftly.”

At his words, Alexander’s blood turned to ice. He could see John taking in the information, looking paler and more distant by the second. A servant appeared, set plates of steaming food in front of Thomas, then Alex. Bowed and disappeared. Thomas picked up his fork, still smirking at Alex. Speared a bite of the mutton on his plate.

“If it weren’t for me, both of you would have been executed. At dawn.” He grinned, as if telling them they won a prize. John continued to look horrified, lost, confused, but Alex shook his head.

“Lafayette would never order such a thing,” Alex said confidently.

“You must not know my brother as well as you think you do,” Thomas said flippantly. “Do you think he would just set the two of you free? A confirmed felon? A common whore who’s been an audience to his dealings and secrets for years?” He paused talking, to chew, and Alex glanced at John. The tears flowed free, as if the words of this… This stranger could undo the years of love and devotion from Lafayette. He tried to catch John’s eye, but he stared at the floor, the tears dripping off his chin. Shame seemed to settle on his shoulders, shame and sorrow. Hardly a half hour of being bound and made to kneel, and already he was starting to break.

Thomas took a swallow of wine and continued. “When I had heard that he was to discard the two of you, and so callously, why, my very heart broke from the notion, so I sent in my servants to liberate you.”

With his bonds, John couldn’t really collapse while still kneeling, so he just sort of folded in on himself, sobbing but silent, his shoulders shaking.

“You call this liberation?” Alex suddenly burst out. “Then why is John in chains? John, my darling, do not listen to his lies!” He had to get this out before the consequence descended. “None of this is true, Lafayette would never let harm befall us, befall you! He loves you, and this… This imposter is filling your head with lies to make you doubt that!”

Instead of threatening him or John, he did something very odd. He set his hand on John’s shoulder, his long fingers fanning over his clavicle. “There, there, dear one,” he mused. “I know it’s hard to hear, but you’re safe now, little thing.” John continued to shake, to cry, and while Thomas left his hand on him, he lifted his fork. Chewed, somehow still smirking at Alex. “The only thing that can hurt you now is Alexander’s disobedience,” he said softly. “You’ve seen what happened to him when you were bad.”

An awful silence descended on the table. John’s soft weeping, the sounds of Thomas eating and smiling, and Alex sitting, stewing in rage and fear. Thomas broke it, tipped his wine goblet towards him. “Is your supper not to your liking? You need to eat.” The threat in his voice. Alex sighed, lifted his own fork.
“What about John?” he said softly. “Does he not get supper?”

“Thank you for the reminder Alexander. You are so thoughtful.” Jefferson, however, didn’t signal for the servant. Simply cut off a cube of his own steak, plucked it between his fingertips. Offered it to John as casually as feeding scraps to a dog.

Alex clutched his fork. John pressed his lips together, turned his face away. Thomas sighed. Unsheathed the dagger once again, the sound of steel on marble as he placed it on the table. The ringing sound made John’s eyes pop open. He looked torn. Eyes darted from the table to the morsel of meat in Thomas’s fingers. His bottom lip trembling, he let him mouth pop open. Accepted the food without further rebellion. “My good boy,” Thomas said. Took another bite for himself.

Nausea gurgled within Alex’s gut, but he had no choice. Cut his own bite of meat. Turned his eyes down.

“Now, this will never do. We cannot dine in silence! My brother tells me you are an accomplished scholar and marvelous conversationalist, Alexander.” He leaned back in his chair. Smiling like snake. “So talk! Entertain me!”

Eyes from Thomas’s face, to the dagger, to John, his beloved, trembling at their captor’s feet. Alex had to dig within himself, find something, anything to prattle on about. He chose something readily, economic philosophy, launched into a mindless diatribe about various economic models. Thomas only half listened, busied himself with his wine, his meal, and occasionally offering John a bite of his food with his own hand. John ate every piece without complaint, but scowled through his tears.

The three went on like this for what felt like forever to Alex, his own voice filling the room, blessedly drowning out John’s tears. Then, John’s voice, breaking through his own speech, quiet but steady. He dared to stare up at Prince Thomas.

“Please,” he began. “May I have some water?”

Without a breath’s hesitation, Thomas pulled back and smacked John, twice upon the face with the backside of his hand, so quick Alex was dazed to watch it happen. Not only was it clearly painful, as John cried out and cowered after the fact, but he was obviously humiliated. To make it worse, Thomas spoke to him a clearly chiding voice, devoid of anything but maddening patience and unshaken authority.

“Pets are seen and not heard,” he said simply and returned to his meal. “Sit down, finish your supper, Alexander.”

Alex hadn’t even realized he had left his chair, but his fists were shaking. He felt helpless to this whole situation, John weeping on the floor, this man smirking at him.

“Do not make me wait, Alexander.” His snake smile didn’t make it to his eyes. “Continue with what you were saying, about the limitations of a purely capitalist model.”

The words suddenly dust in his mouth, his heart full of guilt, he forced himself to continue. Hoped he could distract Thomas long enough to keep his wrath off of John for just a bit.

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Supper lasted an eternity. Alexander didn’t know if he’d ever be able to sit through such a thing again, listening to John cry on the floor while fed scraps from the Prince, having his own narration
of such inconsequential topics serve as the backdrop. After Thomas had slapped him, John was eerily quiet, even choking back his tears.

After supper, Thomas led them to his sitting room. It was so much like the one from their own chambers, perhaps the fixtures gaudier and textiles more sumptuous, but the cushioned sofas, the bookshelf, the side table, it was all the same. Though it was only a few steps from the dining room, it took longer than expected. The dagger in the one hand, Thomas reached behind John and unhooked his wrist cuffs. John was so shocked, he didn’t move, he just remained kneeling on his pillow, looking up at Thomas with empty eyes.

“Crawl,” he ordered indifferently, and led John, with Alex at his side, horror on his face. The dagger glinted in the candlelight.

Now, in the sitting room, the one so uncannily similar it felt out of place, and wrong, Thomas in one of the armchairs. He snapped his fingers at the cushion on the floor by his side, signaling John to come. Alex swallowed his rage, eyes on the dagger. Face twisted in shame, John went to him. Settled on the pillow, frowning, on the verge of tears again as Thomas re-cuffed his wrists.

Thomas turned his attention to Alexander now, lips quirked in that sick little smile he was beginning to loathe. “Now, Alexander, I want you to select a book to read to me from. After you’ve made your selection, I have a surprise for the both of you, before we read. How does that sound?”

The playfulness of his words made Alex’s insides turn to ice. There could be nothing good here, but he felt no choice. Heaving a sigh, he went to the bookshelf. Having already noted the revealing nature of John’s attire (or lack thereof), their very purpose here was something lurking on the edges of Alex’s thoughts. Hoping to steep the atmosphere from anything erotic in nature, he selected a volume of political essays. Took his place on the couch. Tried not to look too much at John, how small he seemed next to Thomas.

A nondescript box of rose colored wood sat on Thomas’s lap. He directed Alexander’s attention to the thing, made great fanfare of opening the lid and lifting the contents. In his hands, a stiff collar of leather and some sort of gold plated metal. It was a wicked looking thing, heavy and thick, substantial rings at the front and the back. Also at the front, a silver bell that tinkled merrily as he handled the collar. Next to the bell, an engraved tag of some sort, one that Alex could not read from this distance.

Alexander had a visceral reaction to laying eyes on the device, felt his own throat tighten. His hand flew to his neck, instinctively to protect, and Thomas chuckled. “Do not worry, Alexander, this isn’t for you.”

And god help him, Alexander’s first feeling was relief, followed quickly by revulsion, both at his own reaction and realization that if it wasn’t for him, it was for John. Alex wasn’t sure if John’s inattention was a blessing or a curse, because he didn’t seem to realize what was happening until the collar was being buckled around his neck, secured with a key Thomas tucked into his own sleeve.

White as a ghost, tears slipping silently down his face, John stared into space. Seemed reluctant to believe this was reality. Thomas stroked his hair, stared down at him with ravenous eyes. “I had this custom made for you, love. And it looks so pretty! I am very pleased.” He eyed John a little longer in a way that made Alex’s blood run cold. “You have permission to speak. Thank me for your gift.”

The dagger sat on the side table. Thomas simply flicked his gaze to it, and back to John’s face.
“Thank you,” John whispered. Eyes on the floor. He had stopped shaking.

“Well done, pet. Good, good boy.” Hand still in John’s hair, Thomas looked back at Alex. “Please, Alexander. You may begin.”

His own hands shaking, Alex opened to a random essay. Every word tasted like bile in his throat.

***

After the sitting room, bedtime. Alexander had no clue the hour, just that it was late. John struggled to stay awake, his eyelids drooping, his kneeled stance growing difficult to maintain. When Alexander reached the conclusion of the third essay he read, Thomas held up his hand to stop him from starting a fourth.

“Time to retire, I think,” he said. From a table next to him, procured a leather strap, which he swiftly clipped to one of the rings on John’s collar. He reacted immediately, his eyes popping open and he flinched. “None of that, little thing,” Thomas chided, and John actually tried to pull away. “Be good for me, this will be much easier on everyone.” Reaching behind John in the same manner as earlier, he unclipped his wrists, rose from his seat and began tugging John along, forcing him to crawl. The bell at his collar jingled merrily.

Alex feared he might vomit.

Instead, Thomas gave him a commanding look, telling him he too needed to follow. A short walk to the the bedchambers, so similar to their own Alex’s heart actually hitched. On the side of the bed he usually slept, a night stand with a pitcher of water and cloths for washing. “Take some time to get ready for bed, Alexander. Feel free to wash up, there are sleeping clothes in the wardrobe.” The normalcy in his voice was unsettling, but Alexander obeyed. The dagger was at Thomas’s hip again, and he did not want to see its return.

As he was changing, though, he could hear Thomas… Doing something… Soft sounds of fabric rustling, the bell on John’s collar tinkling, Thomas’s voice low, the words blurred. Then, John crying out. “Stop! Stop! Don’t!” And Alex dropped the cloth in the pitcher, turned around and forced himself to look where he’d been avoiding.

On the other side of the bed (Laf’s side, Alexander’s brain supplied unhelpfully) instead of a nightstand or any furniture, a palette of sorts… A plush cushion, lined of velvet in a sumptuous cranberry color. The kind of thing you might see a lord have for his prized hunting hound to sleep upon. Thomas had apparently coaxed John to lay upon this cushion on the floor, the leather lead to his collar attached to a bolt in wall behind him. He’d already bound John’s hands again, something Alex supposed would be the default if John wasn’t crawling. Now, he was attempting to buckle leather cuffs around John’s thighs and pull his leg in half, to attach ankle to thigh, cuff to cuff. John kicked at him, snarled. Alex’s heart soared at his spirit, but then plummeted with fear.

“Don’t touch me!” John yelped. Alex supposed the contact Thomas had given him so far --hair, face, shoulder--was uncomfortable but bearable. His hands on his nude body, in a far more intimate spot, had awoken the anger in him. Thomas did not seem moved by the display, however, just rolled John onto his side, swatted his bottom like he was a naughty child. Alex let himself see for the first time, the harness splitting John’s cheeks, holding something cruel and metal inside of him. The bile rose in his throat.

“Stop!” He shouted, and Thomas looked up then. Glared at Alexander. “Don’t… Don’t hit him, please, sir… What are you trying to do? I can...I can help you, calm him down, just… Please do not strike him.”
Like he stumbled upon some important discovery, Thomas considered, then smiled slyly. Feral.

“Alexander. I will say it again. You are very thoughtful.” He sighed, as if belabored. “I am merely trying to bind the little beast so he doesn’t hurt himself overnight. As you can see, his hands are secured but…”

“Don’t let him tie me, Alexander,” John whimpered. Alexander was glad from this angle he could not see John’s face, but could still hear the tears in his voice. His heart was breaking, he of course had no desire to help this monster. But what choice did he have? Perhaps his assistance could mean less torture for John, if he could help steer it. He’d have to find time with John alone, explain…

“Do the ankle cuffs lock together?” Alexander asked, hating himself more with each word that left his lips. He suspected John’s panic was the feeling of his legs being forced open, the exposure with that. Ankle together would be a compromise. Thomas laughed a little at the suggestion.

“I suppose that’s an idea,” he said. “Will you listen to Alexander, pet? Ankles together?” Thomas arranged him, the click of the cuffs locking a loud, metallic sound. John was crying too hard to answer, but he had gone limp, the fight gone again. “I do need you to start adjusting, however, sweet thing. The sooner you realize that I will touch--will take--whatever I want, the easier it will be for you.” As he spoke, he ran his hand down the length of John’s body, taught and bound as it was. Paused to span his hand over John’s stomach, tug threateningly at the harness straps, ghost his hand over John’s manhood, where was it was still confined in the metal cage. John’s chest heaved with sobs, but there was nowhere for him to go.

Alexander felt like a traitor.

“Alright, sweetheart, Alexander and I are getting into bed. I hope you sleep well!” And he kissed John’s cheek, stood and stretched. Grinned at Alex, who’s stomach twisted. He realized he’d be getting into bed with this man, sleeping next to him while John lay sobbing and bound on a cushion on the floor. Thomas shed the robe he wore, dressed in white silk undergarments, his chest bare. He crawled into bed, held the coverlet up. Patted the mattress next to him, smiling like a spider at Alexander.

“Don’t worry, Alexander. I am not interested in violating your boundaries. Not only am I too much of a gentleman, but--” He paused here and chuckled, Alex’s heart practically stopping. “--it is genuinely not worth my time or effort since I have my hands full with our little pet. I doubt it’s much different than what you’re used to.”

Still wary, Alex acquiesced, slid onto the sheets and under the coverlet. Left a good foot of space between their bodies. Laying flat for sleep when his body was so tense with nerves and fear was a strange task, and he flinched as he felt Thomas’s hand twined around his bicep.

“Don’t leave me,” Thomas whispered in the dark. Alexander shivered.

***

Sleep evaded him most of the night. John’s crying finally faded into quiet whimpers and snores. Alex wished with all of his heart that he could slip out of bed, go to him, hold him close and comfort him. But Thomas’s hand was still clamped around his arm, as effective as a binding as any chain or rope.

Chapter End Notes
I love...

Kudos
Comments
Asks on Tumblr @likearootlesstree
Cookies

Love Kacie
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

You guys have been so awesome!

Enjoy, the continued torture of John Laurens

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John woke up with a start. It was morning; sunlight streamed through the small windows by the ceiling. He lay in silence for a moment, shaking off the fog of a half-remembered dream. Went to stretch, panicked when he realized he was stuck, his arms and legs bound in place. Something heavy on his neck.

Scrambled in place, memories of the day before rushing back, the cushion under him shifting as he rolled, went to call for Alex or Lafayette out of instinct, remembering too late his circumstances.

“Good morning, darling,” Thomas said, his teeth almost too white in the morning sunlight. “I see you’re finally awake.”

John flinched, twisted in his bindings. His muscles ached from sleeping with his wrists and ankles cuffed, his neck craned at an odd angle from the collar being tethered to the wall.

“I let you sleep in today,” Thomas said, sounding tired but he like he was trying to be generous. “But don’t get used it to. You have morning duties to perform.”

“John,” Alex whispered, and from the other side of Thomas, John could just barely see Alex’s worried eyes, furrowed brow, peeking out from over Thomas’s shoulder. He was looking at the bed table, looming out of John’s view, but Thomas’s hand reached for something, the slide of steel on wood.

Suddenly, John was furious, livid at this treatment and sick to his stomach at his own weakness. Found his voice, narrowed his eyes.

“You seem to have plenty of servants, surely they can assist you,” He snapped. “And I am not sure what work I can possibly do incapacitated this way.”

Thomas chuckled. “You will learn,” he said, and John saw where his hands were. One clutching the dagger, almost delicate. The other hand, under the blankets, moving over himself. “Taking care of this--of me--is your purpose, pet.”

Icy fingers of horror, on the back of John’s neck, across his shoulders. He watched, his eyes wide with frozen fear, as Thomas pushed back the blankets with one hand, returned to stroking himself. His manhood was thick and dark, threatening, and the sight of it made John feel faint. If it hadn’t been clear before Thomas’s intentions, they were now staring him in the face.

Tense silence, Alex trying to catch his eye over Thomas’s shoulder, John trying to look anywhere else but them, the threat of the dagger cold in the morning sun.

“You eyes here, little pet. Or else how will you know how to please your prince?” Thomas’s voice
was steady, even as the slick sounds of his hand on his cock grew deafening, and John wanted to vomit. Had there been anything in his stomach, he would have already been sick on the floor.

In that moment, John found solace in one thing, one thought that steadied his nerves, calmed his heart. Even as fear threatened to shake him, to overcome him, he told himself this: Lafayette and Alexander loved him. He had their love, like an armor. And this vile, horrible prince could never take that from him, no matter what came. Whatever he tried. With that simple revelation glowing in his heart like an ember, he watched Thomas, stopped shaking even. Only snapped out of his reverie as Thomas finished, his eyes on him.

“You are beautiful,” Thomas admitted. “Just the sight of you enough to stoke my lusts.” Wiped himself clean with his sleeping shorts, tossed it over the side of the bed. John could smell the stench of his seed; another wave of revulsion hit him like a ton of bricks.

*Lafayette and Alexander… Lafayette and Alexander… Lafayette and Alexander…*

Like a prayer.

Thomas sat up and stretched. Smirked down at him. “I am looking forward to sampling your famous charms later this evening. How I wish I didn’t have my own tasks to attend to, could spend the day here, with both of you.” Thomas found his robe, rang a bell. Servants at the door immediately. “Take Alexander to the library. Bathe this one, then he is to be put away until I return home for supper.”

John watched as Alex was escorted out, Thomas behind his heels, and he was left with the same men who bathed and dressed him the day before. The shock of what had unfolded before him, what was waiting that evening, had stolen his voice and he didn’t even have the energy to protest as he was carried to the baths.

The names of his lovers still a reverent echo in his mind. As his cuffs were undone, and he was lashed to a bar in room. The harness unlocked, plug pulled out, told to relieve himself like a dog in a yard. None of it could really be happening, not with the memory of the King’s love, of Alexander’s sweet voice and hands, of both of them holding him… He could pretend this was a nightmare, a cold cruel dream. Lifted into the bath, strange hands washing him. Comb dragged through his wet hair. The plug returned, cold and clean, oiled. Leather. Locks.

Lost to the ritual of it.

Carried back to the bedroom. In the corner was a cage. Did he not see it before? Was it new? Or did his mind trick him, not let him see it before?

At least in the cage there was a blanket, a pillow. They unhooked his wrist cuffs. One of the men, Madison, offered him water, in a china dish.

“I’m hungry,” John whimpered. Lifted the china dish to his lips, sipped the water as if from a giant goblet.

“I won’t say anything about how you drink,” Madison said. “But in front of the prince, I wouldn’t advise lifting the bowl.”

John nodded. Grateful for this small bit of kindness. “I’m hungry,” he repeated.

Madison sighed. Passed him something through the bars of the cage.

An orange.
John looked at the fruit, bright in the palm of his hand. So bright, it hurt.

Chapter End Notes

I love you thank you for reading!
The library again. Alex’s guard sat inside the door today, had a stool and book in hand. He refused to meet Alex’s eye or answer his questions. After an hour or so of sitting, Alex staring at the guard, the guard staring at his book, one of the other men knocked on the door, brought them a tray. They spoke in hurried whispers, Alex catching snippets of words: “Prince… Cage… Pet… Breakfast.”

The other thing he caught was his guard’s name.

“Please, Burr,” Alex said. The man snapped to attention, looked him dead on now. “Is what the prince said true? Did Lafayette get engaged? Give the order to dispose of us?”

Burr cleared his throat, his dark eyes unreadable. “You should really eat your breakfast,” he said, gesturing at the tray of tea, toast, cured meats, and sliced tomato.

“How did Thomas even know about us? Lafayette has never even mentioned him to us?”

The man named Burr sighed, came and sat across from Alex. Pointed to the tray. “You need to talk less, and actually eat something.”

“I’m not hungry,” Alex stated, glared.

“Look,” Burr said, met his gaze for the first time. “If you care at all about what happens to that other one, I suggest you follow instructions. If Jefferson sees that you haven’t properly appreciated his… Generosity, he’s going to take it out on that boy.”

Alex lifted a spoon, stirred the tea, refused to take his eyes off of Burr. “Why are you here?” Alex finally asked. Noted how Burr avoided his gaze. “What can you possibly get out of this?”

Burr lifted an eyebrow. “I really don’t think it’s any of your business.”

Alex exhaled, tried to switch tactics. “If I eat some of my breakfast, will you take me to John?”

Across from him, Burr sighed. “You know what is at stake here. Either eat your breakfast or don’t, but I have made the consequences as clear as I can.”

After a minute or so of staring each other down, Alex huffed and lifted his fork, spearing a slice of cured ham and layering it onto some dry toast. Surely this man, this… Burr… had a weak point. He had to react to something.

So Alex crammed the food into his mouth, chewed and swallowed, then launched into his tirade. “How long have you been here? And how do you know the prince? Do you know what he wants with us? There’s gotta be something I can do to get you to take me to John? I don’t even know he’s safe, how do you expect to believe anything you say?”
Alex paused to take a breath, another bite. Burr’s face was still unreadable. “Should I just assume you are like him? You get off on us being here? Is this whole place just a bunch of sick perverts, who all don’t give a shit about anyone? Are you like that, Burr? In it for just yourself?”

When Burr stood, his chair rattled. “Finish your breakfast, Alexander,” he ordered with finality. “I will be outside the door.” And with that he left, the door locking behind him.

Begrudgingly, Alex continued to eat his breakfast. It hadn’t been a complete failure, however. Burr had cracked, just a little, when he used Alex’s name. It was a start.

***

John had spent the day in the cage, watching the sun change as it streamed through the skylights. When the room was flooded with deep amber colored light, the setting sun blazing… Bleeding… The guards came back. A day spent alone in silence, with nothing to watch but the sunlight on the walls, had sapped any semblance of fight from John. And as much as he loathed the chains, and being dragged, at least he was getting to leave this room, the cage.

Supper again. John’s and Alex’s eyes met, just for an instant. Knuckles white as he gripped the edge of the table. John lowered his gaze, unable to face the worry in Alex’s eyes, and his own shame, the sick feeling of being nude and on display and weak.

“Oh wonderful. Bring him here,” Thomas beckoned. John was deposited on the cushion at Thomas’s feet again, and the guards left. John shifted uncomfortably, but was grateful, just for a moment, for new sights, sounds, scents. His stomach gurgled as the smell of their dinner reached him: Thomas and Alex both had bowls of some kind of fragrantly seasoned beef stew; John was so hungry he felt woozy from the smell alone.

Aside from the absent hand in his hair, Thomas did not acknowledge his arrival directly. He continued to eat his stew, attempted to draw Alex into a conversation. As far as John could tell, Alex was being skimpy with his answers, but John was too hungry, too scared to really follow the conversation. He sort of fell into a bit of trance, the smell of the stew, the steam, and Thomas’s hand scritching his scalp. Somewhere, he registered Alex stealing looks at him, but he was far too drowsy to really pay attention.

This went on for several minutes. Then, suddenly, Thomas’s hand went from soft and gentle in his hair to delivering a sharp yank, drawing him out of his hazy thoughts. He whimpered and looked up at Thomas, hating the hitch in his heart when his first glimpse of his captor’s face tricked him for just a moment. A desert vision of water to man dying of thirst.

“I have addressed you directly, pet. I need you to answer more swiftly.”

John gnawed his lip, terrified. He hadn’t heard what Thomas said, and the dagger was at his hip, couldn’t stand to see Alex’s blood spilled yet again--

Something like pity came across Thomas’s face, and if John had been in a clearer state of mind, he may have notice how calculated the expression was. Instead, he felt a sense of gratitude as Thomas’s face softened, his eyes almost looked kind.

“I asked if you were hungry, little thing,” he said gently. Hand softly petting his hair again. “You have my permission to answer. You are to address me properly. Sir, prince, or your majesty will do just fine.” A smile played at his lips, and John felt chilled. Like seeing the underside of a spider.

Blinking, John swallowed once. Twice. Found his voice. Funny, it sounded so small to his own ears. “Yes, sir. I am hungry.”
Smile widening, Thomas returned his focus to Alexander. “Well, sweet boy, if you are interested at all in enjoying some supper, I need Alexander to actually answer my questions.” He trilled, sounding sickly sweet.

Alex looked like he had be slapped. He sat up quickly, stole another look at John, and answered. “I apologize,” he said quickly. “Like I said before, the king saw my financial plan, and we had been collaborating on something to show the courts--”

Thomas waved his hand, stopping him. Spooned some stew, held it aloft. It glistened in the candlelight, the chunk of steak, the sheen on the broth. John’s mouth watered.

“Will you tell me what was in the plan exactly?”

John didn’t even hear Alex’s answer, he was too focused on the stew, how close… Whatever Alex said must have pleased Thomas, because he was being offered the spoon. John parted his lips, let the morsel of meat, the warm broth flood his mouth. Closed his eyes, enjoyed the flavor, the heat.

The rest of dinner lulled on, John drifting in and out of awareness. Like sleeping with his eyes open. He caught only snippets of the other two’s conversation. All of it was so unimportant; nothing seemed powerful enough to pull his attention away from the meditative ache in his wrists, the fatigue in his knees and hips, the empty gnawing in his stomach, the weight of his heart. He felt so horribly present in his body, to the point where everything around him faded and dissolved. Time meant nothing, was only interrupted by the most mundane pieces. Thomas’s laughter, silky and dangerous. The note of strain in Alex’s voice. Clatter of spoons on china.

Every few moments, Thomas would feed him a mouthful of the stew with his own spoon, using his free hand to tug on John’s curls, tilt his head back. Eyes watchful where John’s lips met the silver, his gaze caressing the planes of his face. If John hadn’t been so empty, the fear would have lodged in his throat.

He would have choked on it.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you in advance for any comments, kudos, and asks. I love my readers.
Cold of the hardwood floors under his knees and palms. The wood was alive under his hands, and John wished to lay on it, to curl up on the floor of the hallway instead of being dragged by a leash back to the library.

Pillow soft under his bottom. Thomas made a small sound in his throat, nudged the cushion closer to the sofa he lounged upon. John didn’t lift his eyes, but scooted. The leather collar bit into the skin of his neck. Thomas never unhooked the leash, just yanked him closer. Voices. Thomas speaking to Alex, Alex’s higher, more unsure voice. Words meant nothing. The rustle of a book.

A question was asked. John didn’t look up until he felt the pull of the leash again, hard enough to make tears spring to his eyes, his airway clench.

“I am beginning to see why your purpose to my brother was so limited,” Thomas noted, icily. “Your lack of any sense places you firmly in the category where pleasures of the flesh seems to be your only use.”

“Your majesty,” Alex said softly, but was silenced by the hard look from Thomas.

“Do not speak, right now.” Shifting on the couch. John lifted his gaze.

Thomas parted his robes, had taken himself in hand. Thick, dark manhood. John stared, transfixed. Shock and fear.

“I am waiting,” Thomas sneered, his eyes glued to John’s face. Alex made a sound of disgust. John was still frozen, unclear what they wanted.

“No,” he whispered, and averted his gaze. “I will not.” His voice while soft did not waver. Chains may hold him in place, but he would not, could not--

Tinkling of a silver bell. A servant appeared in the door. “Yes, your majesty?”

Thomas cleared his throat. “Please cancel any and all of Alexander’s meals. Alert the staff he is not to be fed, not by a single servant.”

If the servant was shocked by this order, or the fact the prince was unclothed with John kneeling at his feet, his face did not betray the fact. He bowed and repeated the order. “For how long, your majesty?”

Thomas’s lips twisted into an evil grin. John didn’t dare look at Alex, but the air was icy, the charge in the room slowed and froze as memories whirred in John’s mind. How Alex told them of his starvation in the village. Hungry, cold nights. How thin he was when he first came to therm. The unabashed way he indulged in every meal. How very relieved John felt, when, in the inner chamber Alex’s cheeks filled out, he lost that pinched, hunted look.
“No!” John cried out, flinching in preparation for Thomas to strike him. “No, please… Why, why--don’t--you can’t take his food!”

“Darling pet, I’m not the one doing anything.” The words oozed with false innocence. “That directive rests solely on your little shoulders and your absolute refusal to fulfill your purpose as the case may be.”

A small sob escaped John’s lips, and in front him, finally, finally, as clear as glass, that horrible awful choice. In his distant haze, he still should have realized it would come down to this, that the events of the last two days had them racing towards this very finish line, these very two doors. That he would, in the end, be forced to make this choice.

His heart hardened.

Everything made sense for a perfect second. He would do this. He could do this. He must do this. If what he had with Lafayette was gone now, the very least John could do with his meager existence was protect Alex. He loved Alex, could not bear to see him suffer. So while it might hurt, while he could never do it happily, he made the choice right then and there to submit fully to the Prince, to bow to his whims. His purpose was saving Alex, and he could live with that.

“Tell me… Tell me what to do…” Behind them, Alex cried out in disbelief, but John ignored him. Kept his eyes locked on Thomas.

Thomas smiled.

“It appears my pet has had a change of heart,” he cooed, and chucked his chin at the servant. “You may disregard my last directive. Alexander will receive breakfast, as usual. In fact, bring him any food he requests. On my orders.”

John let out the breath he was holding.

“Very good, your majesty,” said the servant. Click of the door behind him.

“Now that we have settled that nasty business, are you ready to be good, little pet?”

Dropping his eyes, John nodded. Hand in his hair. He could do this. It no longer mattered. All that mattered was that Alex was safe, fed, safe.

Safe.

“Tell me what to do, my prince,” John said quietly. Hand in his hair. Waited.

“Good boy.” Thomas pet him. Thomas stroked his hair. “After dinner, I would like to retire to the library. Alex will read to us. You will kneel on the pillow. I wish to have use of your mouth during these times. Nod if you understand.”

Blinking back tears, the warring feelings in his heart. Loyalty to Lafayette, his love and need to protect Alex, and the fear and disgust with doing something so intimate with a man he did not know, did not care to know, did not consent to his touch or his presence…

John nodded.

“Good boy,” Thomas repeated. “Open your mouth, little thing.”
John parted his lips and waited.

***

The stew in Alex’s stomach rolled around like a choppy ocean during a storm. The disgust, the anguish, the pain of watching Thomas change John, dress him down, and John finally submitting to this violation, all because of him.

Because of him.

Alex loathed the look on Thomas’s face as John let his mouth open, lips parted. Waited patiently. He hummed his approval, took himself in hand. In one quick movement, fed his cock to John, maneuvered his head so John could take the entire organ in one go. Alex’s stomach rolled again, the outline of Thomas’s cock against John’s cheek, the defeated slump of John’s shoulders, the sputtering gagging noise John made.

“So good,” Thomas mused, his hand working through John’s curls. John gagged again, but stiffened his posture. Alex couldn’t tear his eyes away, the sickening horror as he watched John relax into the position, then seem to fade out again, go under the same trance he was in at dinner, lost to the waking world.

Alex wanted to scream, wanted to rail against Thomas, and if his own safety was simply at stake he’d had never even hesitated, would have launched himself at the monster and attacked with every fiber of his strength, ripped him limb from limb or gladly die trying. But, he couldn’t stand to see John be on the receiving end of his own foolishness, the idea of his actions hurting him.

“He looks beautiful, does he not, Alexander?” Thomas purred, breaking Alex’s rage and reverie.

Alex choked on his reply, he had nothing. John was still, his mouth stuffed with cock, and he didn’t seem present, just very, very tense.

Raking his fingers through John’s curls, he pushed his head further down. John choked again, and Thomas’s eyes flashed.

“Tell him how beautiful he looks, Alexander,” he ordered dangerously.

“You look beautiful, John,” Alex said quickly, his fingers digging into his palms.

Thomas relaxed his hand, and John groaned in relief around him, but the break was only a second before he was choking again, being held down while Thomas fixed his stare on Alex, his eyes cold.

“Try again,” he suggested. “I know you are a celebrated poet, a scholar, a wordsmith. You can do better.”

Alex cleared his throat, his mind whirring. John was choking, couldn’t breathe, he had to say something, and the words sprung to his tongue like he was a mere dummy, his traitor brain the ventriloquist behind him.

“You look beautiful, John, on your knees like that, choking on the prince’s fat dick as if you were born to it.” The words a rush, and his heart squeezed. Thomas looked satisfied, relaxed his grip once again, letting John catch his breath.

Alex’s eyes stung. His voice faltered, failed.

“I’m waiting,” Thomas sang. “Go on, Alexander. Tell him how he looks. Don’t be afraid to be mean to the little slut.”

He couldn’t.

Hand in John’s hair, tangled like a fish in a net.

He had to.

Opened his mouth and spoke.

***

*Look at the little whore. On his knees. Sucking royal dick is the one thing you’re good at, gobbling cock. I don’t think a salient point has ever come out of that worthless mouth, thank the gods you are beautiful, that you can be put to some use. Keep sucking, slut, keep that dick nice and warm and wet. It’s what you’re for. It’s what you’re fucking for.*

There was no time. Nothing existed.

Nothing but the hard floor and the taste of flesh in his mouth. He tuned out Alexander’s voice as best he could, knew he didn’t mean those things, couldn’t mean them, the pain in his voice like an open wound.

At some point, Thomas stopped Alex, had him open a book instead, read aloud. John felt soothed to hear the calm creep back into Alex’s voice, and he shut his eyes, held the cock in his mouth, ignored the urge to bite, and just floated instead.

Time passed. The evening grew long. Alex read, John sat still, suckled when Thomas scratched his scalp, tried hard to be still and good, did not want Thomas to ring the bell, take Alex’s food, unsheath the dagger, spill Alex’s blood.

Thomas’s voice, lead in his stomach.

*Good boy.*

Chapter End Notes

Thanks in advance for any comments, kudos, or saying hi on the tumbles
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Alex felt sick with relief with Thomas permitted him to cease berating John and read aloud instead, finding not comfort in the words, but at least some distraction. He read until his eyes burned with exhaustion, read until Thomas held up his hand to stop him.

“That will be all, Alexander,” Thomas said simply, and lifted John’s face off of his lap. John blinked in sleepy confusion as his mouth was freed, Alex trying not to stare at his vacant expression, the drool glistening on his chin, the weary lines on his face. “Stay here, pet, mouth open. Good boy.”

Looking on with horror as Thomas wrapped a hand around himself, pumped a few tight strokes until he spent his seed all over John’s face, streaks of his landing on his cheeks, open mouth, and chin. John didn’t even flinch.

Thomas offered his soiled hand to John, stuck his fingers in his mouth and ordered him to suck. Guided his head back to his lap. “Clean up your mess, filthy thing,” he snapped, and John took his flaccid cock back into his mouth, sucked down every drop.

Tinkling of the silver bell. Servants appeared, and Thomas instructed them to take John to the baths, clean him up before bed. Alex winced, his eyes squeezed shut, could not make himself watch John, sticky and empty and broken down, being dragged from the room.

Thomas’s hand on his arm now, escorting him to the bedroom.

“Are you cold?” Thomas said soothingly, ran a flat hand up his arm. “You’re trembling, Alexander.”

“Yes sir,” Alex lied. Washed his hands, his face, while Thomas did the same. Changed into silk sleeping clothes. Did not react when Thomas wrapped him in a fur blanket, coaxed him into bed.

“You did a marvelous job, this evening,” Thomas complimented. His voice felt like a film on Alex’s skin. “You have been indispensable in helping me with our little pet. I assure you, your loyalty will not go unrewarded.”

Alex’s heart raced. His hands itched to slap, to maim, to choke, to shove this monster away from him. An arm, snaked around his hips. Snug. Candle snuffed out.

“Do not fret, Alexander. He’s receiving a lovely bath, the servants will come in and put him to bed. Rest now, he is being taken care of.”

Alex lay in the dark, stuffed his own fingers into his mouth. Bit down to stop from screaming.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this one is so short!
expect another update later this evening!
If time in small increments had no meaning, the pattern of each passing day was even less significant, an endless pattern of waking and sleeping and the hours in between, bookended by Thomas’s suffocating presence.

Waking up to the sun bleeding through the high windows. Back aching, joints stiff, limbs heavy from a night spent on the floor. Sometimes if Alex woke before Thomas, he’d steal a silent look over the edge of the bed, guilt on every line of his face, his eyes pleading for something, anything from John. They would look at each other as long as they could, John using this time to assess Alex’s wellness: how much rest he had gotten, whether his cheeks were gaunt or filled. He looked more or less the same each day, the only thing seeing to change was the scruff on his cheeks, the weariness in his eyes. They never spoke, the fear of Thomas’s wrath just too close. The sleeping beast between them.

When Thomas woke from sleep, he’d continue as he had that first morning, stroking himself where he had been aroused from sleep, watching John, often taunting him.

“Soon, my pet, when you have proven yourself trustworthy and earned the right to sleep in the bed with us, I expect to be woken by your special skills,” he promised, and John would feel sick, sick enough to sort of fade out from what was happening. The only time of day he felt real at all was those precious few moments in the morning, Alex’s silent eyes on him, and nothing else.

Once awake, he was bathed, daily, allowed the time to use the facilities. Even with the drastic reduction of his diet, only being allowed this privilege twice a day meant by morning he was often in pain. His initial embarrassment at having to use the bathroom in front of the guards faded, around the same time he realized he hadn’t heard his name spoken aloud by anyone other than Alex.

Once bathed and locked back into his bonds, he was put away for the rest of the day in the cage. Sometimes, the guard named Madison would bring him a piece of fruit, a chunk of bread. Once, he offered him a small pastry filled with almonds. They gave him water, and left him alone to his thoughts until the evening.

At first, for those hours, John’s mind was blank. The shock left him empty and raw. Once that wore off, however, he spent those hours torturing himself with memories. The silence was the perfect backdrop to this exercise. He could mull over every moment, uninterrupted. Tried to think back on the years with Lafayette, what signs he could have missed that meant they were headed this way. He was confused as to how this unfolded, what he possibly didn’t see to show that maybe he didn’t mean as much to the king as he had thought. He hoarded these memories like gems, trying to find a pattern, a clue, a sign. Every longing look Lafayette afforded him. His touch. The sound of his voice first thing in the morning. Even if what Thomas said was true, that Lafayette sent them away willingly, he did not believe that Lafayette hadn’t loved him.
That, along with protecting Alex, were the only things keeping him alive.

When the sunlight faded to dark orange and gold, the servants would come for him. After spending the day in his memory with Lafayette, being dragged to supper to listen to Alexander try and talk to Thomas normally while being fed bites of the Prince’s meal was a special kind of torture. The contrast of living in the depths of his own mind, the warmth that was the memories of those days… It was like being plunged into a bath of ice.

Worse, after supper, the library.

In the library, bad things happened. Continued to happen.

The feel of the wood under his palms and knees as he crawled down the hallway. Signaled to him. It was coming. Kneeling on the pillow. Thomas’s hand in his hair. Their voices. Alex speaking like he was underwater, saying every awful thing that Thomas urged him to. The sickening taste of flesh in his mouth. Thomas wanted him to stay that way for hours, not even moving, just a place to rest himself and keep warm, until he grew tired of the game and wished to spend himself all over John’s face. Or, even worse than that, ejaculating on his tongue and making him swallow, his seed burning in his nearly empty stomach.

John would never get used to it, but he could float on through. Float until it was over. And then he could curl up again on his pillow, his neck craned where he was chained to the wall, and sleep. Prayed every night to the gods he barely believed in that if Lafayette couldn’t come to him, at least he might dream of him that night.

***

Alex hated himself for every uncharitable thought he had. While his own position was horrible, was terrible, it was nothing compared to John’s. He was treated like a human, allowed to walk, and eat, and dress in fine clothes, read during the day, talk to the servants. It wasn’t ideal, it was a prison of it’s own, but it certainly wasn’t like John.

John…

Watching his beloved reduced to that of an object, an animal, a pet, was its own level of hell. Alex felt pained every time he thought this, that his own anguish was secondhand at best, but it was there, and it kept happening. Every night since that awful first evening, having to keep his eyes on a book, read out loud every word, while feet away Thomas used John like he was a toy. Like he was nothing.

He had to do something. Anything.

Questioning Burr didn’t seem to be going anywhere. The man was made of stone, and wouldn’t budge.

Alex approached Thomas differently every night. Tried sometimes to be cheerful, others to be standoffish. Tried flirting, being witty, being cold and absent, being sullen. Didn’t matter; Thomas played to his every mood, right until they were back in the library, John kneeling at his feet. Once, Alex even attempted to seduce him, hopes that if he gave willingly, Thomas would direct his attention away from John, just for a night.

Instead Thomas laughed. Cupped John’s jaw, swiped a thumb across his lips. Locked eyes with Alex as he slid his cock into John’s waiting mouth.

*You weren’t made for this, Alexander.*
Nothing seemed to get better, but at least it settled. It was like living with a venomous cobra, one ready to strike at any second, but being hypnotized into a state of some sort of sleepy acceptance. There seemed to be no use in fighting until Alex had a better handle on exactly what they were dealing with, and while he hated watching John being treated this way, he was afraid the wrong move would be worse than no move, at least for now.

A little over two weeks had passed. Alex kept time by turning down a corner of the pages he was reading in the book in the library. Ten corners. Ten pages. Ten days.

That night in the library, after supper, Thomas didn’t disrobe immediately. When John settled on his pillow, eyes vacant, mouth open, Thomas chuckled and patted the top of his head. “Such an obedient, good pet,” he mused. “I have something to show the both of you.”

Immediately, Alexander tensed in his chair. Last time Thomas presented them with something, it was John’s collar. Would it be one for him too? Would his own throat be wrapped in leather and steel? His knees on the cold ground? Revulsion and fear struck him like a lightning bolt, and for a terrible second he wondered why John wasn’t enough for the Prince.

Immediately, he hated himself for the thought… The almost wish, and told himself that he would willingly, happily, enthusiastically take John’s place if it meant that he’d be spared, even for a night.

He told himself that.

Instead of a box, this time Thomas reached for leather folio sitting on the side table. Innocuous looking. Unthreatening. Plain, even.

“I found something in the King’s office that might interest the both of you,” he said smoothly, opening the folio. Inside appeared to be a single paper, creamy parchment scrawled in black ink. “Interesting that he held onto this for so long.”

He stared at the both of them, as if waiting for their reaction. John looked up at him with a blank expression while Alex struggled to keep his face neutral.

Thomas sighed as if perturbed. “Did you ever wonder how John came to be in the palace? Cross the path of my brother?”

Alex pinched his lips in silence.

“You may speak, pet,” Thomas said kindly, played with some of his curls.

Eyes wide, looking confused. “My father… Sold me... As a servant.”

Thomas laughed as if John had told him a hilarious joke. “Ah, of course. A servant. And did you ever wonder why the Prince, now King, took an interest in you? A \textit{servant}?”

John dropped his eyes, scowled. Alex knew the story himself, that John had been one of the King’s personal attendants, and he and Lafayette fell in love over the course of a year when they were young, an affair conducted first through letters then secret late night meetings.

“Our father purchased you with a very specific intention in mind. A coronation gift for my dear brother, to with what he pleased. And this--” he held up the leather folder and it’s page of writing, “--was presented to him on the eve of his 21st birthday.”

Over John’s head, Thomas passed the folio to Alex.
“Go on, Alexander. Read it aloud.”

Alex felt his lips forming the words, could hear his voice. “John Laurens, purchased on the 5th of April. Classification: pleasure slave. Owner, King Michel. Ownership to be transferred to Prince Lafayette on his 21st birthday, along with all the rights and privileges of said ownership.” Under the block of writing were several signatures, that of the king, the broker, and John’s father, accompanied by their wax seals. Alex ran his fingers over the ink, the seals. He looked up.

“This proves nothing,” He said waspishly, hating the broken look on John’s face. “Even if your father did purchase John for such a thing, it doesn’t mean Laf looked at him that way, or that he even knew! He freed all his servants when he took the throne, specifically granted John his freedom before anything even--”

“If that is so, then why does he keep that?” Thomas inquired softly. “Why save such a… Memento?”

The anger flared in Alex. It wasn’t enough that Thomas had to keep them here against their will, control everything about their day, use John’s body like it wasn’t his own, treat him them both like pets. Did he have to try and cheapen John’s memory of the King, cast even the slightest shadow of doubt on their time together.

“John, don’t listen to him. This proves nothing! Lafayette loved you, loved both of us, and nothing he says will ever change that, not a piece of paper, nothing!”

Laughter from Thomas again. He plucked the paper from Alex’s grip, picked up a quill. “It is rather charming how steadfastly you hold onto such delusions about my brother,” he said thoughtfully. Dipped the quill into ink. He scrawled something onto the bill of sale, the quill tip scratching against the paper. John flinched.

Thomas held up the paper so Alex could see. He had added an addendum in small print, under the other signatures.

*On this day, the ownership of John Laurens to be transferred to Thomas Jefferson, crown prince, along with all rights and privileges thereof.* Under this statement he had dashed off his signature, along with the date.

Alex stole a look at John, whose eyes were cast to the floor. He didn’t even look back at the paper.

Chapter End Notes

I LOVE YOU GUYS

Comments
Kudos
Asks
Love

ALL A++
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

You guys. I cannot express how amazing the response to this fic has been. You guys are such fabulous and kind readers. I love all of you!

John wanted to say he didn’t care about the paper, or Thomas’s story about why Lafayette’s father purchased him, but he found that being confronted with such evidence cast a small kernel of doubt in his heart. Like a tiny bit of sand inside an oyster.

And if Thomas was right about this, was he right about everything? Was Lafayette back at home, glad to be rid of them, moving on with his life? Did he order their execution? Had he been nothing but a pleasant distraction for the King? A glorified whore?

He searched in his heart for the light and comfort that usually accompanied his thoughts of his lover, and instead felt sick. Ashamed. Confused. Later, when he was alone, he’d allow himself his sorrow. But he refused to let Thomas see his weakness.

“Now that we have settled that, I think it’s time we had a little chat about all this.” Thomas waved the contract to dry the ink, before tucking it back into the leather folder. “I’ve grown increasingly bored with your performance as of late, little pet, and think you need to... Shall we say... Work harder to spark our passions?”

John’s face grew pinched, but he didn’t dare answer aloud. Knew that this was Thomas’s way, like a cat toying with a mouse before feasting. Liked to draw out the torment, and his input wasn’t being requested. Thomas derived his pleasure from the game. John may have been floating, but he wasn’t completely lost.

“I can see you wondering how to accomplish this, dear one. And I am not surprised something so complex would confuse a simple creature such as yourself, so I will try to be as plain as possible. While you may be doing the actions as I have asked, I would find it so much more alluring if you actually made me think you were enjoying it.

“Of course, I realize this can’t be accomplished traditionally, with kisses and caresses and the like, but... You have the use of your mouth, do you not?”

Eyes narrowing, John considered. Planted an absent kiss on the patch of thigh next to his cheek, making Thomas titter.

“As cute as that was, I am looking for something a touch more passionate?” As he spoke, he wound his fingers through John’s hair, wrapping a good chunk around his hand. John whimpered as his grip tightened.

He remembered the bell. The dagger.

With a sharp yank, Thomas forced him to meet his eyes. “Tell me how much you want it,” he hissed, and behind them Alex made a surprised little gasp.

John had to wet his lips with his tongue. His voice had gone so unused in recent days, it felt out of
place to his own ears.

“I want it, my Prince,” he recited. Dug his nails into the flesh of his palms. As a boy, he had
crossed his fingers when making false promises to friends. Felt his index finger and middle finger
cross out of habit.

“Tell me what you want,” Thomas continued, tugged on his hair again. Refused to let him look
away.

“Want your cock. In my mouth.”

The third pull to his hair was hard enough to make him cry out in pain. “Is that how you spoke to
my dear brother? I know your mouth is sweeter than that, had to be to distract him enough all these
years. Talk to me like you talked to him, you little brat.”

“Please… Please…” The hand in his hair was twisting, making his eyes water, making it even
more difficult for his hazy mind to form thoughts.

“Tell me what you want, and tell me sweetly. Make me believe it,” Thomas snarled, and Alex
protested wordlessly somewhere else in the room, and that was enough to snap John out the
distraction of the pain. The pain in his scalp was nothing; his purpose was to protect Alex. That
was only use of his meaningless existence.

It was enough.

“Let me have your cock, please, Prince Thomas, please sir. I want it, want to taste you, want to
suckle you, make you feel good, as you deserve, please!”

Chuckling, Thomas softened his grip, but kept his fingers buried in John’s hair. “Better, but I still
don’t quite believe you. And I won’t let you have it until you convince me.”

John cast his mind out, tried to remember every tender moment between him Laf, searching for
something usable. Words spoken in the dead of night, at the heights of passion, loving and kind
words, words meant for his ears and his ears alone.

What he ended up saying to Thomas he could not recall, his mouth forming the words, tongue
rolling off the vowels, lips round on the constants. Whatever he said must have pleased the Prince,
because he smirked, sighed as if he was giving in, pulled John’s face down, slammed his cock into
his mouth. The flesh twitched on his tongue, leaked pre-seed, and John gagged.

Closed his eyes.

Willed himself away.

***

The next morning, as soon as Thomas was gone for the day, and Alex deposited into the library for
the day, he felt on the verge of madness. He had to see John. He had to see him, touch him, hold
him, speak to him. The night before frightened Alex, terrified him to hear John speak in that
faraway voice, the vacant look in his eyes. Like he was washing out to sea with every passing hour.
Sand eroding from the shore.

After a rushed breakfast, Alex turned his attention to Burr. Knew if he stood a chance of getting to
see John, he needed Burr’s help.
The other day, he had overheard Burr mention his daughter to another guard, named Madison. From what Alex could glean, Burr’s wife was no longer in the picture, and he was responsible for his daughter on his own. He had been complaining about not being able to afford her schooling, and was worried that while waiting for Thomas to one day take the throne (Alex filed this information away) she would fall behind until he could afford to enroll her again.

Alex knew he could use this, and today seemed just as good as any to float the suggestion.

“I used to be a teacher,” Alex said suddenly, as Burr sat down in his normal stool by the door.

“Congratulations,” Burr responded dryly. “I suppose entertaining royalty is a promotion then?”

Letting the sarcastic remark roll over him instead of firing off was a challenge, but Alexander bit his tongue. He knew what was at stake here. “You misunderstand me. I think… I have services I can offer you. You and your daughter.”

Burr tensed. “Keep my daughter out of this disgusting business, you good-for-nothing—”

“Please,” Alex said. “You are right. If she… She goes too long without schooling, she could very well fall behind. These are formative years, and if you brought her here… Even just a few hours a day, I could work with her… Tutor her…”

Where Alex expected Burr to scoff, or speak sharply, or even laugh at him, he looked suddenly… Intrigued.

“You’d do that?” he asked softly. “Even though I work for… The Prince?”

Alex fixed him with a stare he hoped was calculating. Straight forward. “I don’t think you are in the same league as him,” he said softly. “And I think… I think we could help each other.”

Lips curling into a frown, Burr returned his gaze unashamedly. “If you are asking me to help you escape, that is not something I can do. I cannot, will not, put my own life in jeopardy.”

Shaking his head, Alex smiled sadly. “Nothing so dramatic. I would never ask you to take such a risk. However, I do think there are… favors… You can do for me.”

Burr crossed his arms, but didn’t fidget. Managed to retain his calm demeanor. “Name your price, and I will decide if it is something reasonable.”

“I tutor your daughter, 3 hours every day, in the middle of the day. Any and all subjects. Mathematics, grammar, writing, literature, philosophy, politics… And you bring me to see John. Today. In private.”

Burr regarded him thoughtfully as if mulling over the suggestion.

“I will agree to this,” He finally conceded, and Alex let out the breath he was holding, but stopped himself from saying something too quick. “But we do it my way.”

“Yes,” Alex agreed quickly, waiting for Burr to continue. The man chose his words like he was picking out a weapon, testing the weight of each one before committing.

“I will bring Theo here tomorrow. You will work with her as you stated. As for today, as a sign of good faith, I will leave the door open and unattended for your to seek out your friend. However, if you are caught… I know nothing of your visit. Am I understood?”
Alex nodded, held out his hand to shake. “Done,” he said.

“I have more,” Burr said. “I am willing to perhaps give you more time with him… If and only if I think your teaching with Theo is up to par. Does that sound square?”

Not wanting to sound too eager, Alex forced himself to pause for just a beat before answering. “I think that is square, yes,” he said carefully.

With that, Burr shook his hand. “I will bring her here tomorrow. And for now, I am going to step out. You are on your own, Alexander.” And as good as his word, he stood, left the room without another word.

He left the door unlocked.
Chapter Notes

Your daily dose of pain!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had been another endless morning. Sometimes, John noticed, if he really watched the patch of light on the wall, occasionally a flutter of shadows would cross it. A flicker. Perhaps birds flying by? Perhaps the passing of clouds?

Or perhaps he was finally going mad.

So far he counted two times today the shadows blinked by, and he wondered when to expect the third. It had only been a few hours since they left him in the cage, after his bath and Madison gave him an apple. The core sat browning in the corner of the cage.

So when the door opened, John immediately scrabbled to the back, confused why they were coming for him so early, too early? What was happening?

Then Alex appeared in the doorway, and John thought for certain he must be going mad.

“Oh, Jack,” Alex exhaled, slammed the door shut behind him and rushed to the bars of the cage. “Darling, I am so, so sorry.”

Still cringing, John cowered against the far side of the cage. “Alex?” he finally squeaked, terrified at the thinness of his own voice.

“I came to you,” Alex said. Wrapped his fingers around the bars. “John, I’ve been… Been so…. I had to see you. Last night… After…”

And John wondered what this place was doing to him, to them, if Alex couldn’t find his words.

“Please, my darling,” he continued. “I have to… Have to touch you. Please.”

John’s heart was racing, terrified all of a sudden. The only touches in recent week were in anger, one-sided lust, or absent clinical efficiency. The thought of being touched tenderly, consensually…

It scared him.

How could he go back to Thomas’s cruelty after feeling Alex’s hands on his skin once more? How could he face cold night alone with Alex mere feet from him, the memory of his touch all over his flesh.

How could he not?

The look on Alex’s face, he needed this just as much, if not more, so John summoned what little strength remained in his heart, crawled towards him. Alex reaching through the bars, awkwardly wrapping his arms around his shoulders, holding him against the metal.
It felt like coming home.

***

Alex didn’t relax until John had fell into his arms, those cursed bars keeping him from feeling every inch of his beloved’s sink on his, but it was something. It was enough. John felt smaller in his arms, his already slender frame thinning out slightly from his diminished diet, muscles fading and giving way to sharp bone.

Alex just hugged him tighter.

“My darling,” he breathed, it came out a statement all its own, a quiet prayer, a confession. It was almost too much, too painful, to hold him like this, to have him this close, only for the most fleeting of moments. That precious space between, those few hours of peace John got before Thomas returned.

When John didn’t respond, Alex pulled back a few inches to look at him closer, forced himself to take him in. He trembled in Alex’s arms, eyes turned down. Wisp of his former self.

“Hey, hey, I’m here, I have you, my darling, it’s alright,” Alex said, even though he knew in his heart of hearts his words rang empty. He didn’t have him, Thomas did. Nothing was alright.

John gulped some air, still tense in his arms, quite like holding something ready to break. Put Alex in mind of fine china, porcelain, glass, icicles. When he opened his mouth to speak, he barely spoke above a whisper, his words wisps of smoke, curling through the air, around Alex. “Alex… Alex… I’m so sorry,” He said.

“What?” Alex startled, the raise in volume of his words making John flinch. “How can you say this, sweetheart, how can you apologize for anything, I am--”

Shaking his head, John continued. “If… If I never... Maybe… If the King hadn’t kept you with me… You wouldn’t… Be here…”

“No!” Voice so sharp, now John was hiding his eyes. “That’s not… Not important. I’m ok, Jack, I’m fine… I’m safe… My sole concern is you, your safety.”

John licked his lips, the saddest smile Alex ever saw blooming across his face. “I think if I’m good enough for him, he’ll let you go in a few months… When your two year sentence is up? He’s said before, your purpose isn’t here. And then… Then you’ll be free.”

The very idea fractured Alex’s heart. Leave him, leave John alone with this monster? “And what of you?” Alex regretted the words as soon as they left his mouth, because it was obvious, for John, what part of surviving meant was thinking only of now, not when. Not if. Not later.

“My purpose… I’m doing what I was meant to do,” He said with some cold formality, a hint of the old John shining through. That stubborn, slightly haughty way of his, that at one time used to infuriate Alex, then charmed the hell out of him. But here, in the cold sunlight, split by unfeeling bars of iron, it seemed like a flash of light in the dark. The real John peeking through.

“You must know that’s not true,” Alexander argued. Brought a hand to John’s braided hair, tugged gently so John would look up at him. “This talk of purposes. I don’t care what a paper, or Thomas, or anyone else said. I love you. Lafayette loved you… loves you, kept you with him because of that love, purposes be damned.”
John said nothing, what small part of himself that had flashed before quickly faded at the very mention of Lafayette’s name. He wilted again before Alex’s eyes, lips pinched shut. So pale his freckles stood out, shadows under his eyes, hair dark.

Alex spent the next few minutes babbling, trying to get John back, talked low and quiet and held him close, but he responded to nothing. Watched the light change on the wall from gold to copper, the very start of night leaking in. Stayed as long as he could. Told John he loved him, pressed a kiss to his own fingertips, reached through the bars to touch John’s cheek.

His fingers came back damp with tears.

Chapter End Notes

Your comments, kudos, asks and everything give me and this fic life. I love you all
More time passed. Time lost, a river thawing in the spring. Still, then rushing. Crashing. Every day the same. Quiet, long hours passed in solitude. Light shifting on the wall. Some small meal, born of some small kindness, resting like lead in his stomach. These few days, John took to staring at the sapphire bangle on his wrist. The gold band rested next to the cuff on his wrist, practically a matching set. Twins. The gems sparkled in the morning sun. John could spend hours shifting his wrist back and forth, watching it catch the light.

The King had loved him. The King had loved him. The King had loved him.

No matter how many times he repeated it in his mind, he was no longer sure if he believed it. The months before when he had given him the bracelet seemed like a lifetime ago. The open, brash look of love on Lafayette’s face. The tender way he held John. How passionately they made love.

Once upon a time the piece of jewelry served as an emblem of love, a token of comfort. Now weighed as heavy as the fetters he wore.

Evening and night same as it ever was. Supper. Library. Thomas. Bath. Bed. Over and over and over again.

It had been perhaps five days, perhaps six, since Alex had come to visit him in the golden afternoon. Held him for hours, talked to him. Made him feel like himself again. The days had passed, but Alex hadn’t visited again. John was not foolish enough to even hope for it.

Supper. Roast pork seasoned with sage, baked with sliced apples. Mulled cider. A sticky butterscotch pudding for dessert. Thomas was generous with his meal this evening, and John felt grateful for each bite the slid off the fork practically melting on his tongue. Thomas even let him have dessert, spooning the pudding, topped with rich cream. Scratched absent-mindedly behind John’s ear as he fed him.

Library. Grain of the wood floor a map to the room. Thomas tugged at the leash. Brought him to his pillow. Yanked the leash, spoke sharply. John had not been paying attention, had let his mind wander to the quiet place it needed to go to get through this. When he did not respond, Thomas grabbed his hair, pulled.

“Was I not kind to you this evening, pet?” he sneered, fingernails raking John’s scalp. “Was I not generous enough?”

“You were, you were, your highness,” John murmured, knew better than to twist away. Let the tears gather in his eyes, braced himself for Thomas’s rage.

Thomas sighed, as if tired. Belaboured. Disappointed. “If that is so, then why haven’t you shown me an ounce of gratitude this evening?” he wondered. Let go of John’s hair so abruptly he tumbled to the floor before he could catch himself. “It is no wonder to me that my brother rid himself of you so quickly. The only question I have left is how he tolerated your company for so many years, if you were this brainless, this vacant in his presence, it’s a horrible disgrace. A waste of time, a waste of--”

“Thomas.”

The prince broke off, looked up at Alex, stunned. His tirade cut short by Alexander speaking his name. Quietly, but firmly.
“Have you something to say, Alexander?” Thomas asked, all sickly sweet.

“Just tonight, I implore you. Be gentle with him. He’s obviously exhausted.” He gave this request with authority. Thomas looked like he had been smacked, just for an instance, before a cold and calculating grin replaced the look of shock.

Thomas nudged John with his foot. Got his attention. John refused to turn his eyes up to him, but lifted his head, showed he was listening. “Do you hear that, sweet boy? Alexander thinks I should be gentle with you this evening.”

“Thomas, your highness--” Alex began, but Thomas held up a hand to silence him.

“And I believe he has a point.”

This had their attention. John even looked up.

“It is crystal clear that you are struggling to be present this evening, and since dear Alexander claims to know what is best…” His smile widened, and he gestured at where Alex was sitting, long sweep of his hand as if offering John a gift. “Go to him.” Each word clipped, just daring to be challenged.

John hesitated, unsure what to do. Thomas told him to go to Alex. But it seemed like it might be a trick or a test.

Even Alex held his tongue; the weight of the moment felt thick. Oppressive.

“Go to him,” Thomas repeated, voice harsher this time. “Must I explain everything piecemeal? Are you really this thick?” With a sigh, he shoved John with his foot again, so John fell forward, landed awkwardly on his side. “Crawl to Alexander. Nasty little thing.”

Lower lip trembling, John climbed awkwardly to his knees. He shuffled over to where Alex sat on his usual armchair, eyes turned down.

“I am confused as to why you are simply sitting there Alexander, staring at him. How many times have the two of you done this? Or did the King not allow his toys to play with each other? Move your robes, Alexander. For a brilliant scholar you are often a slow learner.”

If John had looked closer, he may have caught the tremble in Alex’s fingers as he parted his robes, the hesitation before he pushed down his breeches. He might have noticed Alexander’s eyes on the dagger lying on the table, how his bravado faded as he watched Thomas, wary as a mouse with a cat.

Instead, all he saw was the parting of fabric, Alexander’s flesh, taking himself in hand. What was once so familiar and tender was now alien and cold. Nothing was right, and John froze, unsure what to do, the nightmares staring him back in the face.

“You are trying my patience, pet,” Thomas snapped. “Do not just sit there, staring like a cow. Use your dumb whore mouth to pleasure him! Stupid slut.”

Alex tried again. “Thomas--” he began, but was cut short.

“If he needs some encouragement, Alexander, I am sure you can direct his attention where to go. Since you were so adamant I go gentle, I await with bated breath to see you execute your own suggestions.”
By now, John had faded out again almost completely. There was the sensation of a hand (soft) in his hair, the (lightest) tug of his curls pulling him closer. In front of him, a cock. Flaccid, tan. Hand. Fingers. His own hair. Waiting.

Parted his lips. Closed his eyes.

Taste of flesh on his tongue. Hiss of breath above him. Behind him. He stayed so very still, did not want to be out of place. If he could be still, he could fade. Could feel nothing at all.


Still, he felt nothing.

***

Thomas told him to part his robes.

He did.

Thomas told him to take himself in hand, offer himself.

He did.

Thomas told him to guide John, be gentle.

He did.

Thomas told him to open the book, resume reading. Keep his voice steady. Continue to be gentle. Give the the poor boy something to suck, a worry candy of sorts. He needs it. It’s what he’s for. Take his gifts, use them, enjoy them.

God help him, he did.

***

Alexander woke the next day with his heart in his throat. Nightmares lingered, dark corridors where he was lost, could hear John crying for him, screaming, shouting, but everywhere was just the inky blue dark. He didn’t need a fortune teller to help him decipher his dreams.

When his eyes finally opened, the sight of Thomas staring down on him was enough to make his stomach roll.

“Did you sleep well, Alexander?” he inquired, hands folded in his lap, eyes fixed on Alexander as if he had been watching him sleep. He didn’t wait for Alex’s response. “You must have been exhausted. The servants have already fetched John for his morning bath.”

Never having been one to naturally keep quiet, it went against every instinct for Alexander to bite his tongue, swallow the questions that sprang to his lips.

*How was John?*

*What was he thinking?*

*How did he feel?*
Would he ever forgive him?

Instead, he sat up, rubbed his eyes. When he looked up again, Thomas pressed a steaming mug into his hands.

“My servants tell me you take your coffee black,” he explained mildly. “I had them brew you a cup. I knew you were tired and thought the drink would do you well.”

“Thank you,” Alex mumbled. Took a sip. Brew bitter in his mouth like poison.

The silence settled like dust between them. Alexander sipped, Thomas watched. Somewhere, in this maze, John was alone. Alexander was never sure what his morning bath entailed, had never asked, had never had the chance. Feared the answer.

“I feel I must commend you, Alexander. You handled yourself exceptionally last night.” His smile crinkled his eyes. “I am certain our pet will remember that time for years to come.”

Alexander sipped his coffee to keep from screaming. His skin burned with shame.

Thomas lingered that morning, coddled him a bit. Picked out his outfit, insisted on brushing his hair. When he finally took his leave, Alexander took what felt like his first breath that morning. Practically ran to the library. Seized Burr by the wrist.

“Alexander, whatever has gotten into you?” He snapped, trying to shake free.

But Alexander was a man possessed. “I have to… Today, Burr… Have to see him today… Theo can take her lesson in an hour or so… Please…” He’d been working with the young lady for a week or so now, but this was more important. Than anything.

Burr straightened up, shook Alex off of him. “Theo isn’t here, Hamilton. She wasn’t feeling well… Today. Her month time. Now what is this nonsense?”

Brushing by Burr’s information regarding Theo, Alex continued to implore the man he had started to think of less than his keeper, more like a colleague. “I have to see John. Please. Today,” he reiterated, could feel his eyes bulging. Knew he most likely looked mad, but could not bring himself to care. The edge of his own madness was the least of his worries at the moment.

With a deep inhale, Burr became still, his fingers closed around Alex’s wrist. Regarded him. Calculating. “You do not seem in the best state of mind, Hamilton, and with your reckless regard for rules, mistakes could be made--”

“So be it!” Alex interrupted, wrenching his wrist free and glaring. “If I am caught, it matters not to you…”

“It matters in regards to my daughter!” Burr sneered.

“You have my word, Burr. No matter the consequences, I am beholden to you, will continue working with Theo, as it has been. Our contract remains true, you have my word!”

They held eye contact for what felt like ages, then Burr sighed, broke their gaze. “On your head be it, Hamilton,” he said begrudgingly, went to the door and opened it. Stood aside with his arms folded.

Without a moment more of hesitation, Alex shoved past Burr, ran down the hall as fast as his feet would take him.
Chapter 12

John had spent the morning with his eyes shut, curled on the floor of his cage. No breakfast that morning, but it did not phase him, as he was certain his stomach would have rejected any food to begin with. In his mind, behind his shut eyes, in the silence, he was alone. He pictured his garden, back at the palace. The trellis crawling with ivy. The bundles of morning glories spilling over their stone pots. The rose bush heavy with coral colored blossoms. The sun streaming through the arbor, filtered green through all the leaves. Drip drip drip of morning dew falling from the leaves, pattering into the turtle pond.

In his mind’s eye, he was walking his garden. Dragged his easel out there, bare feet on the cool stone pavers. Stopped at the turtle pond, scattered pieces of lettuce on the surface of the water. Watched them poke their heads above the water, breaking the surface in perfect ripples. Chester, Sunny, Muffin and Penelope. When Alexander wanted John to practice his penmanship, he’d spend hours copying out their names on parchment, his quill steady and scratching. Could see where Alex had written their names at the top of the paper, which he tried to emulate his tight, looping cursive.

In the garden, John lifted his paintbrush. In the cage, he lifted his empty hand. Could almost feel the weight of the brush. Watercolor. Greens, browns, blues. Hand moving across the canvas. Hand moving through the empty air. The shape of Muffin’s shell coming into form, blooming emerald on the cream canvas. He paused, dipped his brush in the black. Under her portrait, he carefully painted in her name. The wavy shape of the M. The bend of the U. Two Fs, looped together. Sharp curve of the I, ending with a soft N.

“John?” said a voice, breaking him from his vision. He opened his eyes, his garden, his painting, his Muffin all disappearing. Ceiling of his cell. The metal was gold plated, mirror shiny. His reflection blurred.

John sat up, turned around to see Alex standing on the other side of the bars, staring at him. He supposed he had looked odd, laying on his side, arm waving in the air in strange patterns. But what did it actually matter? What did any of it matter? He was here, his turtles, his garden, his whole world was somewhere else. His life was here now, in this cage, or at Thomas’s feet.

Or Alexander’s.

“Darling, I had to see you, I had to come to you. John, my love, please…” Alex reached through the bars of the cage, but John was out of reach. He made no move to roll closer. He made no move to do much of anything. Just stayed silent, stared into space, eyes not focused on anything. When John did not grant him a response, Alex continued. “I had to see you. Last night, I am… I am crippled by the guilt, John. The very thought that I had to violate you, on the orders of that complete monster, I don’t know how you can forgive me, how I can ever forgive myself. Please, John, I beg of you. I need to hear your voice.”

What was there to say? He could think of a million things.

_Who do you think is feeding the turtles?_

_Do the King miss us?_

_Is he happy with his new wife?_

_Does he remember me?_
Do you still love me? Even though I am lower than garbage?

Instead, he said nothing. Just stared. Alex spoke, talked out loud, swung between berating himself and his actions to begging for John’s forgiveness. It wasn’t until John heard Alex’s voice crack with emotion that he finally looked up, his eyes focused.

“Lex?” he croaked, using that rarely-heard nickname, reserved for times when they both felt the most vulnerable. He scooched a few inches closer. With his hand in reach, Alex took it, laced their fingers together. John didn’t grasp his hand back, but didn’t pull away either.

“I am here, my love. I am right here.”

...’Lex… It’s ok… Don’t… Don’t worry so much about it,” he finally whispered. “You did what he told you. You used me… For what I’m for. It’s ok.”

At his words, Alex’s heart shattered. He clutched the bars of the cage with his free hand so hard his knuckles went white.

“John, no! No, that’s not… No! No, please don’t… You can’t listen to Thomas. He’s wrong. What I did was wrong, you aren’t… Aren’t an object, no matter what that monster says! You don’t have such a purpose!”

John ignored his words, didn’t respond directly. “I am relieved you obeyed him, ‘Lex. I am hopeful that if you continue to show him loyalty and obedience, when your sentence is complete, he will free you, as intended.” He turned his head to actually look at Alex. Between the hollows of his cheeks, the dark rings under his eyes, and his pale complexion, he resembled a ghost more than anything. Aside from the manic glint in his eyes. He looked almost excited as he spoke on this topic. “He has to let you go, ‘Lex. It’s the lawful, just thing to do!”


“If he lets you go, you have to! You have… Have to live your life. You could leave here, find someone to love, get married. Stay with them. You’re different, you have…you’re smart, ‘Lex, you’re good at so many things. You deserve freedom.”

“And you don’t?” Alex snapped. Immediately regretted it when he saw how John flinched from his tone. “Sweetheart, this whole thing… You know that it will be over soon.”

John’s lower lip trembled. “When he does let you go, will you go check on them?”

Forgetting he’d already promised never to leave, not without John, Alex humored him. At least John was talking. “Check on whom, my love?”

“Turtles,” John whimpered. “Sunny needs his lettuce cut up and Chester can’t sleep if the pond water is too cold. Penelope’s rock needs to be cleaned, and Muffin… Muffin…” He hiccuped back his unshed tears, trailed off.

“I promise, Jack. When we get out of here, we will check on them together. Why, I’m sure Lafayette is taking good care of them.”

John froze at the mention of the King’s name. “He’s not,” he said flatly.

“He is. I know he is.” Alex found comfort himself in the image. Wanted to draw John into it, to try and entice him into the warmth and solace found in such a fantasy. “I’ll bet he makes time to care
for the turtles, and your garden, when he’s not busy looking for us.”

“He’s not,” John repeated.

“Of course he is,” Alex argued back. He could see it in his mind, Lafayette in the garden, spreading lettuce into the pond. Wiping down the rocks. Trimming the ivy back. Missing John, missing both of them, wanting them back desperately. “Every moment he’s not looking for us, meeting with Washington or his guards, following every lead, he’s in the garden. Not only does he know how much you love those turtles, Jack, but it is the best way to feel close you to, to us!”

“He’s not. He’s not looking for us. He’s not taking care of the turtles.” John unraveled his hand from Alex’s started to scooch away. “He probably gave them away, too.”

*Just like us.*

John rolled away from Alex, showed him his back. Alex was struck by how his ribs stuck out.

“John, please come back. We can talk about something else. I’m sorry I brought it up, I’m so sorry.”

As far as John was concerned, Alex’s words meant nothing. How dare he bring the King’s name up in this place? He was wrong, the King had moved on. Sent them away. He wasn’t wasting a second of his time on them, because he didn’t need to find them. As far the King knew, their bodies were in an unmarked grave. If he knew they were here, his only anger would be for the fact his orders were never carried out properly. That they were allowed to live at all. And the turtles… He hoped if they hadn’t been found a new home, then their death had been swift and painless. They at least deserved that.

Alex cast his mind about, tried desperately to think of anything to bring John back closer, to pull him into his orbit. On a normal day, in a normal life, Alexander took immense pride in the sharpness of his mind. But these days, this place, had dulled his capacity for thought, had made quick-thinking almost impossible. There once was a time he knew the exact right thing to say to John, to get him to laugh, to smile, to sigh, to melt into his arms.

That was before.

Before John was skin and bones and paler than moonlight. Before the light had gone from his eyes and his smile was but a ghost. Before his laughter was silenced.


Had there ever been a more beautiful word?

Alexander opened his mouth to say this, to utter this one, magical word that he thought might bring John back. Instead, he needed to be direct. Simple. Tell him what he wanted, what he needed. “John, please… I am so sorry, just… I just, we don’t have to talk. Can I hold you, darling? Hold you, comfort you?”

“Do you truly think you are helping him, Alexander?”

Not even their captor’s taunting voice was enough to rouse John. Alex was startled enough he fell ungracefully from the crouch he’d assumed, into a tangle of his own legs. But he’d be damned if he didn’t have enough courage left to at least stare defiantly up at Thomas. Eyes pinched in a glare, hands clenched into fists.

“It might be sweet if it wasn’t so pathetic,” He lamented, voice oily.
Alex knew if he didn’t say something, try to deflect, he’d never forgive himself. “Thomas, while the both of us are… Grateful… For the trouble you went through to assure we’d be spared the executioner’s block--” God, even speaking these lies felt like poison in his mouth! “--John… You can see he is struggling. He’s hungry, he’s so thin and weak. I needed to come in and check on him...”

“And comfort him?”

Alex said nothing, but held eye contact.

The silence went on. Thomas smiled, entered the room proper. Stepped to the cage, unlocked the barred door with a key he took from a metal ring at his hip. There jangled several keys, in gold and copper and silver. They caught the light and Alexander’s eye.

*Perhaps key was a more beautiful word than before?*

Thomas snapped his fingers as one might call for a dog’s attention. His heart in his throat, Alex watched as John roused himself, quicker than Alex ever imagined he could. He crawled to the opening of the cage and paused at Thomas’s feet. Didn’t even look up.

Ever ready with the leash, Thomas reached down to hook it to John’s collar. Led him out of the cage, over to the other side of the room, to the giant bed. When John didn’t move, Thomas tugged at the leash.

“Up, pet,” Thomas said gently. Almost kindly. John stared back up at him blankly. He’d never been invited into the bed. Thomas repeated the command, patiently. John’s puzzlement faded back into stoic apathy, and he climbed into the bed, made himself as small as possible, tucked into a tiny ball there at the foot of the bed. Thomas looked over his shoulder and grinned at Alex.

“Please, Alexander, come join us.”

What choice did he have?
Chapter 13

Alex perched on the edge of the mattress, too nervous to get close to John. It felt as if every cell screamed at him to touch him. To wrap his arms around his frail body, shield him from whatever was about to happen.

Thomas called for a servant. Burr entered, and Thomas gave him some terse, clipped orders. To his credit, Burr didn’t even steal a look at Alex. Just nodded, strode out of the room. Returned a few moments later with the items requested. A sumptuous, upholstered chair for which Thomas to sit. Observe. Some lengths of leather straps. Burr laid them on the bed, bowed once to Thomas, then exited. The doors shut with heavy finality behind them.

The silence in the air hung heavy. A curtain. Thomas rose from the chair. Took two steps to the bed. Picked up what Alex initially thought was a strap, but actually sturdy leather cuff. “I find it interesting, and perhaps a little humorous, the way in which you were attempting to comfort my little pup,” Thomas mused. He stood in front of John. Without even looking up or fighting it, John’s hands went to the small of his own back so Thomas could secure them in a practiced, familiar motion.

When did this happen? When did it become so automatic? At what point had Thomas programmed John, and why hadn’t Alex noticed? Guilt, red hot and painful, bubbled in his stomach.

John kept his eyes trained to a spot on the floor. Went practically limp, allowed Thomas to arrange him on the bed, against the pillows. John frowned. This was new and unfamiliar, but he knew better than to ask questions.

“To be clear, you were going about it all wrong.” As he continued, he wound a cuff around John’s thigh. A repeat of their first night, back when John still had some fire in him. When he bent John’s leg, had his ankle meet his thigh, Alex noted the slightest change in John. He froze, his eyes darkened. He still allowed himself to be maneuvered, but he didn’t like it.

That look in his eyes gave Alexander some hope.

“There is only one way to comfort a creature such as this.” Metallic snap as his clicked the lock into place, securing John’s ankle to his thigh. He moved on to the other cuff, the right leg. “And since you are so eager to offer such comfort, I can help guide you.”

With both legs bound this way, and how he was propped on the pillows, John was strangely exposed. Of course, the ever present harness and cock cage obscured his more sensitive parts. But, even the glimpses of his inner thighs and curves of his buttocks seemed so intimate, Alex wanted to avert his gaze. Places he’d touched hundreds of times, and yet….

Thomas sat back down on his makeshift throne. An unkind thought occured to Alex in that moment. Was that the meaning in all of this? Having been denied a kingdom of his own, Thomas could at least rule over the two of them?

“Go on, then,” Thomas coaxed. Fixed Alex with his calculating stare. “Comfort him.”

Alex did nothing, said nothing. Did not want to play this game.

“I thought he needed it? He is right there, Alexander.”
Alex cleared his throat. Crawled neck to John, averted his eyes. Hugged him round the shoulders.

Thomas roared with laughter, so loud it made both Alex and John jump. He even slapped his own knee in amusement. “For a learned, brilliant genius, you are often slow on the uptake, Alexander,” he chortled. “Whores don’t need hugs! Touch him, you fool. Not there, my god, his arm? Why do you think I arranged him like that, the aesthetic value? Do you need a map?”

His heart pounding in his throat, Alex dragged his hand down John’s stomach. He felt so sick, tracing paths of a body he knew so well, all without invitation. Was it worse when John flinched from his touch, or silently accepted it?

Alex longed to shut his eyes. To pretend not to live in this moment. This horrible, long moment where his hand was on the inside of John’s thigh, stroking the soft skin, feeling nothing and everything all at once. He owed it to John to do this with his eyes open, to live it with him.

“Like this, Thomas?” Alex asked. Hoping beyond hope he’d met the criteria, and this could end. He wished for a moment for John back in the cage, away from him and his weakness. If he wasn’t ruled by fear, he could have fought back. Refused. If it was his own safety solely at stake, he would have in a heartbeat. But he couldn’t bear--wouldn’t bear--the dagger in John’s skin.

“Much better. Do not be afraid to go lower, Alexander. That plug in him is pretty sturdy, he might enjoy you pressing on it. It’s been some time since he’s gotten that sort of attention.”

Alexander’s throat had gone from pounding in his chest to thundering in his throat. He tried to be gentle and light as possible. Caressed his thighs. The soft curls above the cage. His stomach. Thighs again. Deeper between his legs. Tapped the base of the plug in its network of leather straps and chains. Felt sicker with every passing second. As he pressed on the device, John’s face finally changed. He clenched his eyes shut, paled, turned his face away. Looked as queasy as Alex felt.

“The best way to comfort a little whore is to touch him the way he craves,” Thomas lectured lazily. “He appears to like that, Alexander.” And even though he wanted to protest, Alex couldn’t deny what he noticed… As his hand explored between John’s legs, he was flushed and biting his lip, face screwed up in mortification. His body betrayed him. Beneath the cruel metal cage, his cock stirred.

Alex pulled his hand away as if he’d been burned. “I can’t,” he choked. “Please, Thomas.”

Thomas cocked his head in curiosity. “What are you asking me for, Alexander? Am I not giving you exactly what you came in here to do? Comfort was your word, not mine.”

“This… This isn’t--”

Teeth glinting in the lamp light. Snake smile. “It’s exactly what he needs Alexander. Now, you can resume touching him, as I have so kindly suggested, or I will take over, and it will not be gentle.”

Through this exchange, John had looked away, focused on a spot on the floor, a tangle of his curls falling over his eyes. The only response when Alex placed his hand back on his thigh was the quietest whimper, sharp and soft, a thorn right to Alexander’s heart.

“Higher,” Thomas called. “Tease that slut’s hole. Make him wish for what he really wants. Whe he can’t have, not today, because I own every inch, yes?”

“I’m sorry,” Alexander whispered, so low John probably didn’t catch. A tear slipped down his cheek.
John lay still. A lamb before the butcher.

***

Fingers. Fingers between his legs. Poking. Spreading. Exploring. Deeper. No, didn’t want it. Wanted to say stop. Couldn’t. Wouldn’t. The dagger… The dagger was there. The dagger would be there, be there in their skin, and the blood… His voice was gone. Blew away like dust in the wind. It wouldn’t matter anyway no one would listen no one could listen it would just go on go on go on until he let them stop.

The hand moved. The touched his thighs. The creases of his hips. Pet him softly, gently. It would have been tender if they were alone, if this was months ago, and they were alone, just the two of them. If John shut his eyes, he could pretend for just a moment. But that pretending was dangerous, like a path leading into a dark wood. It turned. The hand drifted, stroked his skin. Thomas said something, but John blocked him out. It didn’t matter. Nothing did. All that mattered was the leather in his flesh, the bed beneath. The hand touching him. Gutting him. He was fruit split open. Pomegranate. Seeds, seeds everywhere. Spilling.


Alexander spoke. John noted the pleading in his voice. He didn’t care, he wasn’t angry at Alex, he didn't want him to touch him but he knew why he had to, why he had pantomime their love making. John knew it was what he was for, a breathing doll, skin and hair and dark places that were for others to touch. First the King. He had been a gift for him, a bribe. Then the Prince. He’d taken him, fair and square. Found him. Lost changeling.

Saved him.

More conversation swirled around him. It ebbed and flowed like the tide. Thomas’s voice, loud and oily and sweet like milk that had turned. Alexander unusually low, as if John were a horse to be gentled. There was no startling him, and even if there was, where could he go, tied as he were? It almost made John mad Alex would bother to even care. It wasn’t worth all this. He wasn’t worth all this. Just get on with it, do as he says, so it could be over, and he could be off this bed and back at the Prince’s feet where he belonged.

The hand on him stilled.

“I think he’s had enough,” Alex offered. Palm hovered over the inside of John’s thigh. John stared at the ceiling. Wished his body would calm itself.

“That so? Then tell me, Alexander, why has his sorry little cock grown so hard, then?” A jingling sound, silver on silver. Something was tossed and landed on the bed. “Unlock him.”

Alex inhaled sharply. “Please, Thoma--”

“Unlock him.” Even though he didn’t raise the volume of his voice, his words bounced around the room. “I will not repeat myself a third time.”

It took a few tries for Alex to fit the key in the lock, his hands were shaking so badly. John didn’t even bother watching, what was there to see?
Here’s what he missed:
The silver lock lifted open and away.
The latch of the cage catching the light as it hinged up.
The metal peeled back.
The device set on the bed sheet next to his hip.
His cock standing at attention.
His skin flushing from tan to rose to scarlet.
His cock being taken in hand.
Fingers wrapped around his length.
An endless pause, then finally movement.
The hand moving up and down and up and down.
His hips lifting, chasing the touch.
John shut his eyes.

***

Is that how you touched him when you were alone? When you were with the King? I know it must have been better than that. Show me how you did it, how you did him, in front of my esteemed, wonderful brother. I doubt such a boring performance would be enough to distract him as he so often was. The things he’s told me, about you, both of you. Your tight little body. How they would share you, pass you back and forth, use you up until he was tired of you, tired of both of you. What a nice distraction from his real responsibilities, his real life. I almost wish you could see how happy he is now, with his beautiful bride. That is quite alright, though. You are here, safe with me, being used for exactly what you were born to do.
When it was over, when John had finally spent himself in Alex’s hand, he looked to Thomas, his hand dripping with seed. Willed himself not to cry, not to let Thomas or John see his weakness. Thomas chuckled, gestured for Alexander to wipe his hand clean on John’s stomach. Instructed him to fit the cage back onto him. He tried to be careful as he lifted John’s cock, still sticky with drying cum, and placed the cage over it, but he didn’t miss the way his breath caught, how he squeezed his eyes shut. Clenched his jaw.

“Untie his legs now, Alexander. Quicker than that, I want the dirty brat out of our bed.” Thomas had left his chair where he had watched, seized John’s leash and yanked him over the side of the bed, where he landed in an ungraceful heap on the floor. Alex caught himself getting ready to rush forward and help him, but knew that would make everything so much worse.

“Thomas--”

Alexander was ignored. Even though it was barely even supper time as far as Alex could tell, Thomas went through the motions as if readying for bed. Kicked the thin blanket that he had given John over him, clipped the leash to the hook in the wall. “Nasty little thing,” he spat, loomed over John with a sort of menacing power Alex had yet to see from Thomas before.

For a moment, Alex expected Thomas to disrobe, perhaps force himself upon John on the floor. Instead, he kicked him in the side, not too hard, just to grab his attention. When John’s eyes didn’t leave the spot on the ceiling he stared at, Thomas’s anger visibly swelled. “Disgusting runt. Ugly little brat. Getting ready to sleep in your own filth. You laid there and enjoyed every second, like the dirty slut you are.” Sighing, he turned his back on John, joined Alexander on the bed. “I am not even sure why I keep such trash around. Perhaps…” His eyes glinted as he slung an unwelcome arm around Alex’s shoulders. “Alexander can show me your worth. Hmmm. Something to talk about, perhaps in the morning. Right now, I am famished. Burr!”

Buried under Thomas’s arm, Alexander listened to him order their supper be brought into the bed chambers. Initially the contact made his skin crawl, but the longer he sat under Thomas’s arm, he caught himself finding the warmth kind of nice. With every passing second, he felt dirtier and dirtier, longed to run the bath as a hot as it would go, sink under the steaming water and hold his breath. Scrub himself with a cloth until his skin was raw and red. But perhaps he wasn’t as dirty as he thought, not if the Prince deemed it acceptable to hold him close, to touch him without flinching.

“You did so well, my darling,” Thomas cooed, pulled him against his chest as he lounged back against the pillows. “It pleases me so much when you help me handle our charge. And I think he enjoyed it too, wouldn’t you agree?”

“Yes, Thomas,” Alex answered wearily, his voice muffled against Thomas’s shirt. He wished fervently that the arms around him were John’s or Laf’s, or practically anyone else, that he could be safe and warm against someone kind.
“Did the King ever hold you like this?” Thomas mused, shifted him a bit closer, and Alexander realized with a jolt that…

No…

Not in his memory.

That his relationship to Lafayette had been built on respect and attraction and companionship, but cuddling and touch, that was between Lafayette and John, or himself and John. And that perhaps, perhaps…

His mouth would be the death of him. “Not like this, no,” he whispered before he could stop himself. His own mind and memories screamed at him, that this man, this monster was casting a shadow of doubt on what he shared with the king, with both of them. And to what end? Tenderness was not something he craved from his lovers before, that he would give, surely, but that was ok, that was what he wanted, what they all wanted—

“What a shame.” Brought his hand up Alex’s back, tangled his fingers in his hair. “You deserve to be held like this. Cherished. I am not surprised, my brother failed to see your true worth. Your beauty, your brilliance.”

Heart hammering his chest, as swirl of memories engulfed Alexander. The look of jealousy in the King’s eyes the morning after he first kissed John. The hesitant, almost timid way he touched him in bed. The stiff conversations. The tone of surrender in his voice as he made love to John, calling him every pet name under the sun, while Alexander looked on from the other side of the bed. Waiting his turn. The absent kisses. The empty promises.

The King loved you. He refused to look at Thomas, studied the embroidery on the duvet. But did he love you as he loved John?

In his mind’s eye, he slammed that door shut. He had one job, and one job alone. That was to keep John as safe as possible while living here. And if playing into Thomas’s fantasy kept him happy, well…

“Let’s not talk about him,” Alexander said, hitched a fake smile. Stilled his hands. “I am here with you now.”

Hand in his hair. Tilted his head back, forced Alex to look up at him. “You are here with me now. Someone, I hope you realize, sees the real you. Treasures you, Alexander.”

When the Prince finally kissed him, it was softer and stranger than he expected. He whispered that no matter how pretty ‘the other one’ was, nothing could distract him from Alexander. The real prize. Beautiful, brilliant, darling Alexander. Thomas’s lips were soft, his tongue tasted as if he had been eating honey candy. Alex was stiff at first, but warmed to it, kissed Thomas back. Kissed until the servant brought their supper, laid the china out on trays.

“Forgive me,” Thomas said, cutting his meat into perfect cubes. “I know after such an amorous confession, perhaps it is expected that I make love to you.”

At the suggestion, Alex blanched, but he kept his composure. Kissing he could stomach, and the embraces. But the thought of Thomas touching him, or inside him, made his stomach turn.

“Do not worry, Alexander. I have told you, I respect you too much. You have made your boundaries clear.” He speared a cut of the steak, held it to Alex’s lips. “We don’t hurt those that we cherish, my love. This is why I keep that around.” He cocked his head to where John lay. “If
my lusts must be quenched.”

Over Thomas’s shoulder, Alex chanced a covert look at John. Two empty, sunken eyes staring at the pair of them on the bed. Looked right at him. Right through him.

***

From his place on the floor, John could see everything on the bed. Watched the Prince hug and pet Alexander. Watched them kiss. Watched supper come, the Prince cut up the steak into little squares, feed Alexander every other bite. At first jealousy swirled in his heart, that cutting up the food and getting fed from the fork was something the Prince did for him, it was special. Plus, he was hungry, his empty stomach gurgled.

But then he remembered who he was, what he was for, and why he had to be on the floor and Alex got to be on the bed. Alex was good. A good, beautiful, brilliant boy. Smart and kind and important. The Prince liked Alex. So had the King. They laughed at his jokes, listened to him speak, asked him for his opinion. Alex was meant to be on the bed, to be taken care of. John was where he belonged, on the floor. His wrists ached and his head pounded and his skin was itchy where his own fluids were drying. He was disgusting.

After they finished eating, the servant took their plates away. They kissed again, this time with even more energy and passion. John watched every second, every little sigh and touch. Again, he was jealous, remembered what it had been like to be kissed and held, but he knew now he never deserved such a thing. That those years had been a mistake. Things were right now. The King would be married to a lovely queen. Alexander would have the love and affection of a man worthy of his attentions. And he would kneel on the floor, wait until he was needed for his true role, his purpose.

It came later that evening, after they kissed on the bed for what felt like hours. John’s hunger had subsided, and he grew weary, but knew better to fall asleep before he had permission. Not while the candles still burned. Thomas pulled out of a kiss, gazed upon Alexander with awed tenderness.

“Your kisses have aroused something in me, Alexander,” he purred. Rearranged himself so his legs dangled off the side of the bed, turned towards where John lay. Kept Alex snug against him. Kissed him again. Prodded John with his foot to gain his attention. “On your knees,” he ordered briskly, pulled away from Alexander long enough to watch John comply. Alex wouldn’t look at him. Looked down at his own hands. With one hand, Thomas pulled his cock out from his breeches. Thick from arousal.

John knew what to do.

Normally, in the library, Thomas was absent with him. Mostly still. Tonight, he pumped his hips, kissed Alexander sloppily. Took John by the hair and propelled him up and down. Held his cock deep in John’s throat as he came, Alex’s name on his lips. John felt as if he might vomit as his seed slipped down his throat into his rolling stomach. Tears on his cheeks from choking.

When he pulled off, he looked at Thomas, laying back on the bed, eyes practically glazed. John felt a little proud. He did what he was supposed to do, and he did it well. He at least had that. And Alexander was safe and happy, which was what really mattered. The only thing that mattered. It made sense that Thomas would love Alex. Alex was special.

“Your majesty,” John rasped. His own voice always surprised him. Thomas propped himself up on his elbow to stare down at him. Normally he would snap if John spoke without permission, but with pleasure coursing through his veins he was much more lenient.
“What is it, little pet?” He cupped the side of John’s head absently, rubbed his ear.

“Alexander has enjoyed your time together,” he said. “Might I take care of him, too? With your permission?” He licked his lips. This he could do.

Thomas’s face broke into a genuine smile. When he truly smiled he looked just like his brother, and the sight made John’s heart clench, just for a moment, before he shoved the feeling back down.

“I think that is an inspired idea,” Thomas agreed. Slid his hand down, found Alexander hard and waiting. Alex looked away, but didn’t fight or protest his pants being pushed down.

John parted his lips. Waited patiently.
New pattern to the days. Waking up wrapped in Thomas’s arms. Kissed until he was fully awake.
Breakfast in bed. If Alex was extra attentive to the Prince, John would get a scrap of toast, perhaps
a piece of fruit. After breakfast, Thomas would often use John, come deep in his throat or on his
face. Alex rarely took part in this, did not have the energy in the morning. Knew better to refuse
Thomas’s generosity if offered, however.

After his thirsts had been quenched, Thomas would ring the bell. The servants would come, take
John to the baths. Thomas wanted to bathe with Alex now, they’d soak for a while. Alex’s back to
him, Thomas washing his hair, scrubbing his back gently with a sponge. How the same man could
be so callous and rough with John but so kind to him was a mystery.

They would dress. Thomas would walk him to the library, kiss him goodbye. Disappear for the
day. Alex would spend the next few hours with Burr and Theo, working through their lessons. He
did not even bother to ask to see John again. Not only did he no longer deserve it, and he was too
full of shame to ever face him, he worried it might do more harm than good.

Supper was the same as always. John on the cushion. Thomas feeding him. Alex engaging him
with conversation. If they retired to the library after, for Alex to read to Thomas, he would have
John warm his cock as usual. Never finished with him. No, that came after, back in the bed. Alex
near him, kissing him. Thomas always came first, used John until he was done. Loved to watch
Alex take his go with John, eyes blurry from the afterglow. He was often soft and pliant after such
activities, liked to lay in the pillows, cuddled up with Alex, talking low and soft.

They would sleep. Morning would come. The wheel kept turning.

During these times, Alex oscillated between shameful acceptance and outright horror. On one
hand, every positive feeling, no matter how small, he eked from Thomas’s actions was a betrayal.

(But then that voice in his head, hissed at him. You don’t owe the king anything. He ruined your
life, ruined everything. You were a prisoner.)

On the other hand, everything was better for everyone this way. Thomas was in higher spirits,
which meant he treated John better. He gave him more food, never raised a hand to him. Spoke
kinder. Called him less names.

It was always in Alexander’s nature to just survive. He’d do what he had to do, just to live.

What helped was if he looked at John less.

***

While everything changed outside the library, inside was no different. It became apparent to Alex
after about a month of working with Theo, the girl was precocious and was going to need
something beyond him to reach her full potential.

They had just finished reading a novel that Alexander had picked out, one he thought might amuse
a girl her age.

“I am sorry, Professor Hamilton,” She sighed, slammed the book shut with a sort of exasperated
finality. “That book was absolute drivel.”
Alex hid his smile, fixed her with his gaze. With Theo, working on something other than protecting (tormenting) John, he felt like himself. His whole self.

“I won’t agree or disagree, Theo. But I will need you to defend your position.”

Theo tapped her fingers on the table, rolled her eyes. “Well, where to start. Perhaps the fact that the romance was a complete after thought, and undid what little agency the female protagonist had? Or the fact that her best friend was defined completely by her jealousy, which is such a blatant stereotype that it makes my stomach turn. And do not even get me started on the oversimplification of science and magic, and they were a fantastically lazy plot device.”

Alexander picked up his quill, and a fresh sheet or parchment. “I truly apologize, Theo. I thought this would be something you would like. I did not have much to go off of from our initial meetings, but perhaps if you told me more of your interests.”

It was like she had been waiting to be asked this from the outset, and Alexander mentally kicked himself for not anticipating it. “Anatomy. Biology. Alchemy. Chemistry,” She rattled off, Alex scribbling down the list, growing curious.

“Some of the purer sciences,” He observed.

“What of it?” she snapped, definensive. “If I want to attend Northstar Academy, I need to be studying now.”

“Northstar?” Alexander repeated. “I did not know you were planning on applying.”

His words seemed to shake Theo for a moment. “Oh. Well, I was. That was before father had to pull me from preparatory school.” She shrugged.

But the gears in Alexander’s head were already turning. He was friends with the deputy Headmaster at Northstar, had studied with him.

That evening, before supper, Alexander sat in the corner of the library. Drafted two letters.
Chapter 16

In John’s head, there were two kinds of days. The first kind of day was a long cage day. On a long cage day, he would get some breakfast. Sometimes, it was even delicious. Crispy bacon glistening with fat. Airy pastry dusted with powdered sugar. Once the Prince even set down the bowl of his half eaten oatmeal, swimming in cream and molasses. John didn’t even hesitate, lapped it up like a stray dog, without a speck of shame.

On a long cage day, after he ate, he got his bath. Once he got used to it, he liked his baths. If he stood still, the guards were gentle with him. The warm water soothed his sore muscles. Whoever was bathing him was careful, gentle. They never hurt him. Didn’t scrub too hard. The worst parts were the plug being taken in and out. Mostly because when it was there he was used to it, was starting to feel like it was a part of him, but hated the act of it being inserted. They were always quick with that part, though. A few times, when they took off his cock cage and harness to clean him, his body responded, grew hard from the attention. At first he was embarrassed, but eventually he learned to ignore their jokes and taunts, accept that his body was hardly his own anymore. It didn’t matter.

After the bath, he got to sit in his cage the rest of the day, until it was supper. John liked his cage. In his cage he was alone. No one touched him, no one bothered him. He was away from Thomas’s hands, Alex’s pitying gaze, and both of their cocks.

On a long cage day, he got to be alone, until the end. Supper, library (Alex would read, he would service the Prince, everything was as it should be), bed. In the bedroom, he could usually be quick on a long cage day. A few sucks, the Prince, first, then Alex. Then he could sleep.

He preferred long cage days.

On a short cage day, Thomas lingered. He’d feed Alexander in bed for an hour or so. Listen to Alexander read poetry. He often forgot to give John breakfast. He’d pull John up to his knees, fuck his mouth and his throat. It would be too late for a bath. Thomas would put John in the cage for just a little bit while he attended to whatever business was around their compound. John didn’t know or really care. He was not a creature for thinking. He had one purpose. That purpose always came sooner rather than later, where John felt he’d be engaged for hours, privy to their activities from where he knelt on the floor, watching them kiss and fondle until Thomas was ready for him. Alexander often worked Thomas up into the kind of state where was rough with John, would jam his dick down his throat.

Thankfully, short cage days were rare.

This day started as a long cage day. John had eaten a bit of breakfast, some flat griddle cake drizzled with honey. Thomas even cut it into tiny bites, fed him from his fork. Petted his head absently. John liked that, it was nice. After breakfast, his bath. Then the cage.

John laid in the cage perhaps an hour, before there were footsteps outside the door. He sat up, puzzled. It was still light in the room, and Thomas had left for the day.

“Thomas, your majesty, I implore you--” Thomas threw open the door, strolled in front of the cage, Alex close at his heels. Despite his calm demeanor, rage seemed to seep out of his pores. He glared down at John, held up his hand to silence Alexander.

“It has grown increasingly risky to keep him here,” he said. “My intelligence has informed me
there is a chance someone close to the King may have found out the execution orders were not carried out. I could be held culpable for harboring a fugitive.”

“So you’ll let us go?” Alexander asked, hushed.

“You’d leave me?” Thomas whispered. “No, nothing so disastrous as that, Alexander. I am able to keep up the secret, keep you both hidden and safe.” He turned away from John, looked at Alex now. It was obvious how tall he was in this moment, tall and foreboding. “The question is, why should I go through all this trouble for him? His mouth is decent, but is it worth all this?” He turned back to John. “No, I think it makes more sense, much more sense this way. I will have one of the guards take him out to the edge of the woods in the morning. It will be quick. His body in the river, it won’t be found.”

“No!” Alexander screamed, so loud John sat up. “No, Thomas, you can’t, I beg of you--”

“I do so hate the theatrics, Alexander. I told you, he will feel little pain. Madison knows right where to cut, he will bleed out quick.”

“My Prince, Thomas, I am begging you, do not do this, you can’t, you…”

Thomas whipped around, glared at Alexander. Surveyed him for a long second, then his face broke into a smile.

“Perhaps… Perhaps there is a way…” Still as a snake. Cupped Alexander’s cheek, smile widening. “As I said, I am fully capable of continuing to hide you both. But the effort, and the expense… I am not sure if it is worth it…” He trailed off.

John looked at Alex. Hoped he could read in his face and his eyes. If they wanted to kill him, so be it. Alex had a life now, he didn’t want Alex trading anything away, just for his sake. He wasn’t worth it.

“Tell me,” Alex pleaded, eyes wild. “Tell me and I will do as you ask, my Prince.”

Thomas stepped to the cage. Fingered the keys at his hip. “So far I have enjoyed the gifts of my pet’s mouth. However. I think I would like a demonstration.” He unlocked the cage, snapped his fingers. John crawled to the door of the cage. “Show me the full advantages of keeping him around.” His smile widened. “I want the full of use of him. Show me this is all worth it.”
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

TRIGGER WARNING FOR NON CON AHEAD

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Alex felt as if he maybe misheard. Then the weight of what Thomas was requesting settled over his shoulders like a yoke of lead.

He stood at the foot of the bed. John lay out in front of him. Thomas had unlocked him completely; harness, cock cage, leash all gone. Even though he left the ankle and wrist cuffs on, he unlatched them. John lay naked, save for the cuffs, his collar, and the plug stuffed inside him.

“Strip, Alexander,” Thomas requested lazily. Sitting on his temporary throne again. Legs crossed, eyes on them.

Refused to look at John. Couldn’t look away either. Alex shed his tunic, stepped out of his shoes, pulled down his breeches.

“My, aren’t you beautiful... Join him on the bed, Alexander.”

Alex knelt, still wouldn’t touch John. John, who looked thinner than ever. John staring at the ceiling. John, lovely but fragile

“Please don’t make me do this, Thomas,” Alex implored. One last ditch attempt. “He’s... I can’t.”

Thomas’s eyes narrowed. “I am not making you do anything, my dear. If you have no wish to engage in such a display, and we are wasting our time, I can arrange to have him taken care of as early as this evening.” He shrugged. “It’s your choice, love.”

Alex swallowed once, twice. Wished he had the words to tell John how horrible this all was, how guilty he felt, that he had to do this to save him. It was the only way to spare him. There were two letters tucked into a book on the shelf. He just had to convince Burr to take them, just a bit longer, and perhaps, if John could hold out…

This could all be over.

“I’m sorry,” Alexander whispered. He descended, laid his body over John’s.

***

Alexander on top of him. On him. Every inch. Lips on him, on his face. On his mouth. He didn’t kiss back. That was odd. Someone was laughing. Alexander’s lips on his ear. He said something. Quiet. So quiet. It didn’t matter. His breath fluttered his hair. Tell him. Talk to him. Hands on his body. Soft hands, surprisingly gentle. A kind, familiar touch. Running parallel paths down his chest, his stomach. His hips. He didn’t like that, but he couldn’t say. His fingers twisting in the sheets. Hands on his thighs. One hand, between his legs. Soft, searching. Something hard at his hip. He whined. Wished he was back in the cage, or on his pillow on the floor. Didn’t like this.
Hand between his legs tugged the plug out.

He found his voice.

***

When Alex worked the plug free, as gentle as he could, it was like he’d burned John with a hot poker.

“No!” he shrieked, at a decibel Alexander hadn't heard from him ever. He tried to twist away, but Alex seized him by the hips. There was no use holding off the inevitable. “No, no! Put it back, put it back, put it back--”

“Shhh,” Alex tried to soothe him. Kissed the side of his head. John trembled in his arms. “It’s ok, honey, I got you.”

John burst into tears, was heaving with them. Alex looked up at Thomas, who gestured as if telling him to ‘get on with it.’ Stomach in a hundred knots. He slipped one finger inside of John. John screamed this time, threw his head back and howled.

“I sincerely doubt that my brother stood for such theatrics,” Thomas narrated. “Don’t be so selfish, Alexander, please him a little bit.”

Winicing, Alex slid in a second finger, pushing past John’s screeches, his protesting sobs, his body tight with tension. Dug around for a familiar spot inside John, one that he knew to cause a lovely bloom of pleasure.

His screams grew louder. Somehow, both of their bodies awoke.

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John’s sobs subsided.

Alex slid inside, to the hilt.


“Just relax, sweetheart,” Alex soothed. Rocked his hips, dug a little deeper in. John moaned. Squeezed his eyes shut.


***

When would it end? When would it stop? Inside him was being torn up, torn to bits, shredded,
gutted. Emptied. He would have preferred a blade on his stomach, cutting him into a thousand pieces, letting the wind scatter them across the earth. Anything but this. Anything but the taste of bitterness on his tongue, every place where they touched burning like acid, and everything moving inside him. He heard his own voice, quiet tiny whimpers. Pathetic. He felt the tears on his face. Useless. He saw the light on the ceiling change. Nothing. He smelled Alexander’s hair. He tasted every protest on his tongue. It didn’t matter. It didn’t matter. The fire burns the whole forest down. He tried to shut his eyes. It still wouldn’t end. The apologies fell like shooting stars to deaf ears. It didn’t matter. Hand on his cock. He shouted one last time. More laughing. The hand moved. Stroked him. You gotta do this. Come on baby. Come for him. Show him how much you like it. He does like it, doesn’t he? Look at him, look at his sad little cock. Pathetic. He loves this, loves the way you touch him. Harder, go faster. My turn won’t be this gentle, get him ready. Not today, no, but later. Soon. Did the King do this? Did my brother fuck him this hard? Harder, then? I thought so. You watched that, didn’t you? Had to always wait your turn. Show him who owns him now. Show him.

Mine. All mine.

***

John’s sobs had finally subsided. The little cries of “no” were harder. Like grabbing the stem of rose to be pricked by a thorn. Alex kept at, tried to imagine they were alone, this was a game. Anything to keep his cock interested. It did feel good, John’s body yielding like ripe fruit. It was so wrong. But what could he do?

Alex paused for a moment to catch his breath. Kissed John’s shoulder, pumped at his cock. John’s face was wet with tears; they dripped into Alexander’s hair. “Please, honey, I know you can do this. Please come for me.”

The lack of reply was worse than anything. Alex knew what he had to do, prayed John’s body would cooperate.

“We’ll do it together, sweetheart. Like before.”

Hitched his hips, moved again. In and out and in and out. Hand up and down. Squeezed him on the down stroke. John’s face had gone blank. Another tear slipped down his cheek, backwards behind his ear. The pillow was soaked.

***

Dirty. Dirty boy. Look at the mess you made. All over yourself, all over Alexander’s hand. Disgusting, wretched thing. Did you finish too? Show me. Movement. Bed creaked. Third person. More weight. Another finger inside him, sharp and mean. Didn’t bother to cry out. Why would it matter, no one heard him. No one cared. Excellent job, Alexander. Finger poked into his mouth. Suck it clean, slut. That’s a good pup. So sweet. My word, watching you together has convinced me. Well done, my dear. No, we’ll leave him here. I’ll send someone in to take him to a bath and change the bedding; he’s filthy. The cuffs clicked together. Footsteps. Door shut behind them.

John was alone.

***

Thankfully, after, Thomas had other business to attend to. “You have my word, Alexander. Our pet is safe. I am eager to use him fully, as you have so enthusiastically demonstrated.” He kissed Alexander goodbye, left him at the library.
As soon as the door was shut behind him, he ran for the wash basin in the corner. Ignored Burr’s probing questions. Vomited up his breakfast.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry :(
Chapter 18

After his bath, John was allowed back in his cage. Madison looked at him with pitying eyes, noted the bruises, the way he looked at the floor.

Came back with a tray holding a bowl of soup, a hunk of bread, a shiny green apple. John ignored the bread, let the soup sit untouched. Grabbed the apple and squirelled it away in his blanket, piled in the back corner of the cage. Curled up and shut his eyes. Drifted into a dreamless nap.

Prince Thomas was kind to him that night. Led him by his leash gently. Fed him bites of his roast turkey, spears of asparagus. Each chunk of food in his mouth tasted of sawdust. Gave him sips from his water glass. Pet his hair, pushed him to lay his head on his lap. Let him have a whole cookie to himself. The bits of chocolate in the cookie were the sweetest thing he had tasted in months. It brought tears to his eyes.

Later in the library, Thomas didn’t even make him kneel on floor, didn’t take his cock out. “Not tonight, pet,” he said. “Not only did you have a taxing day, but I want to save this up for a bit. For our first time.” John blanched, but followed Thomas’s directions. Got to lay on the loveseat with Thomas, head in his lap. Thomas played with his hair while Alexander read. A book of fairy stories. Dragons, and knights. Princesses in towers. A witch cast a spell and everything changed.

“How did I not notice this before?” Thomas interrupted. He sounded curious. Reached behind John, unhooked his hands. Slid his bangle off, held it aloft to examine it. “Where is this from?”

When John didn’t answer, Alexander filled the silence. “A gift from the King. From… Before.”

The sapphires caught the light as he turned it back and forth. It glinted brilliantly. “How sweet.” He slipped the piece into his robes. Reached back to redo John’s cuffs.

Alexander resumed reading.

***

The time had come. Alexander could no longer wait. After the previous evening, after what he had been forced to do to John, then seeing the repercussions…

John, quiet and still as a statue at dinner.

John, weeping with joy over the small kindness of a chocolate cookie.

John, laying with his head in Thomas’s lap, being pet like a prized puppy, eyes empty and staring.

John not even protesting when Thomas took his prized possession. Didn’t even look up as he slipped the bangle off his arm.

He had to try something.

“How did I not notice this before?” Alexander said. Looking puzzled, she shut her book, gathered her skirts and stepped outside of the library. With a similar expression on his face, Alex was suddenly struck with how much Burr looked like his daughter. He cleared his throat.

“If this is regarding another visit with the prince’s toy--”

Alex held up his hand. “First off, he has a name. It’s John. Secondly, no. I do not wish to talk about
John right now. I want to discuss your daughter.”

Burr widened his stance and folded his arms, already on the defensive from being spoken to so curtly. “I’m listening.”

“Theo’s progress has been incredible. However, I fear we are reaching an impasse where her needs surpass my expertise.”

“Hamilton, if you back out of our deal, I swear to you…”

“No, you misunderstand. I have no intention of not teaching her, but I worry she may need something more challenging. She mentioned Northstar?”

At this, Burr’s face fell, just for a moment. The mask slipped, and beneath the cool, collected demeanor Alex witnessed the fragile man beneath.

The man who would do anything for his daughter.

“Unfortunately, such a goal is firmly out of reach,” he said stiffly. “Our financial situation has changed, and it is simply not feasible.”

“Theo is gifted, Burr. She has a passion for the sciences, and my talents lie elsewhere. She should at least apply, they do have scholarships for students who excel academically; I assure you they would accept her after one interview.”

Burr’s face tightened, and leveled his gaze. “Please tell me you haven’t been discussing this with her, getting her hopes up.”

“Not so much, no. Would her applying to Northstar be something of interest to you both?”

“Obviously, but as I said, it’s not possible.”

Alexander slid the folded parchment from his under his jacket. Set it on the table. “I am old friends with the deputy headmaster at Northstar,” he explained. “I have written a very strong letter of recommendation, as well as a request for Theo’s admission and a full academic scholarship.”

The silence lay thick in the room as Burr stared at the letter. He didn’t move to take it.

“He owes me a favor,” Alex added. Burr looked up at him. He thought long, and hard, and silently for a good few moments.

“Name your price.”

Hands shaking, Alex brandished the second letter. Burr read the name on the front, looking surprised.

“I need this delivered,” Alex said. “As soon as possible.” Tapped the name on the front. “I want you to place it in his hands.”

One crisp nod, and Burr plucked both letters off the table. “Understood. You have my word.”

“Thank you,” Alexander said, clasped Burr’s hand briefly. He nodded again, went to fetch his daughter.

***
Long cage day. Three in a row. They were good days. John got to lay in his cage. John took naps. John had breakfast everyday. Madison brought him lunch every day too. It was always tasty. Thomas would feed him dinner. Sometimes, he even got to sit on Thomas’s lap, just for a few minutes, so Thomas could give him some of his supper. He liked that quite a bit.

In the library after supper, he got to lay on the couch. Thomas gave him pets. His hair, his shoulders. He never had to give him his mouth in the library, and he got to listen to Alexander read. He liked that. He missed Alexander. He missed when Alexander used to teach him, in their own library. Not anymore. Stupid boys don’t need to read or write. Thomas said so.

Bedtime was nice. He got to sleep on his pillow. He even had his own blanket now. Before sleep, when Thomas would kiss Alexander, John knew to wait. Kneel by the bed. Alexander was always gentle, and quick. Would let John lower his mouth over his cock. Moaned when John sucked, but would stare at the headboard, at Thomas, shut his eyes. Anywhere but him. John didn’t blame him, he knew he was ugly. At least his mouth felt good. Alexander always came very fast, would lay down. Touch Thomas while John sucked him. Thomas was rougher than Alexander, liked to hold his hair, push in and out, make him choke. John didn’t mind. He knew he was doing a good job, making the Prince feel good. Thomas would even say “good boy” before putting him to bed. He didn’t even care that Thomas liked to tie him up different ways at night now. Hands and ankles bound together behind him. Ankle to thigh. Hands behind his neck. Spread eagle. Thomas liked it, that was what was important. He was always tired enough to fall asleep in any position. Sometimes, if he was extra good, Thomas would kiss his cheek, play with his cock behind the cage for a minute or two. Say sweet dreams, then goodnight.

The fourth long cage day in a row. Lunch was very good that day, a nice meat pie with potatoes. Madison even let him use a fork. He had to promise to give it back. John did. What would he do with a fork?

At dinner time, Thomas didn’t take him into his lap, but that was ok. He got a few pieces of the roast duck just the same. He never cared for duck, but he still ate it. There was berries with cream for dessert. One of his favorites.

They went to the library. Alexander read some essay on religion, John didn’t really pay attention. John was sleepy, his body felt heavy. Thomas scritched his scalp. Twirled some curls in his fingers. Pulled on one curl, watched it coil back into place. The touches felt lovely, made him even sleepier. Alexander read and read, and when he finished he shut the book.

“Thank you, Alexander,” Thomas said. “Little pet, do you know what tomorrow is?” Thomas smiled down at John. His eyes crinkled when he smiled.

“No, my prince,” John said clearly.

“That’s alright, darling. Tomorrow is a special day. Tomorrow marks the anniversary of the day I rescued you from my brother. Exactly one hundred days have passed.”

“One hundred?” Alexander repeated, but Thomas did not respond to him.

“I have something very special planned to commemorate it. A surprise.” He scratched behind John’s ear.

John liked the sound of that. John loved surprises.

“I think you will love it, little thing.”
John smiled, closed his eyes. That night in the bedroom, he was allowed to go right to sleep. Thomas didn’t make him suck, which was a nice break.

He was *so sleepy.*
Chapter 19

The very next day was special. Not a long cage day or a short cage day. No cage day. John got his own breakfast, all by himself. Madison brought it, brought him a plate that had bacon and sausage, a flaky pastry stuffed with almond paste, and some cut up exotic fruits. It was all delicious. He sat on his pillow, was allowed to eat by himself, just Madison sitting in the chair. He even had a cup of tea with one lump of sugar.

After his breakfast he got a nice long bath. They took off everything, even the cuffs and his collar. Washed his skin, scrubbed his hair. Combed his curls with some nice smelling cream. He liked the way it all felt, felt himself get a bit excited, but it didn't really matter. No one seemed to care or notice.

When the bath was done, a servant with soft hands rubbed perfumed oil into his skin. Every inch of his brown skin glowed and glistened, soft as silk. He smelled like roses and jasmine. They used a small brush to wash his teeth. Every inch of him cleaned.

Around his neck went his collar. They polished it, rubbed the leather with oil. The cuffs they locked around his wrists and ankles were brand new. John held his hand up to his eyes, looked at the cuff. Bright yellow gold, polished to a mirror-shine. Studded with blue sapphires. The gems caught the light, cast blue spots on the wall.

The cuffs were very beautiful.

They put back the plug, the cage. Traded out the harness for one made of delicate gold chain. It tinkled like a bell when John moved.

Today was extra special because John actually got a to dress in real clothes. His chest was mostly bare, a pretty and delicate top made mostly of criss crossing ribbon and chain. Over the harness and his cock cage went some complicated garment. His manhood and bottom were covered, tucked behind what looked almost like a codpiece. A gauzy skirt flowed from the the front and back of the garment. Despite wearing more layers than he had in months, he felt exposed.

When he caught sight of himself in the mirror back by the Prince’s dressing table, he was shocked. He looked pretty and tired and small. Very unlike himself.

Madison brought him to the Prince’s bed. All the blankets were gone, just the pillows and crisp white sheets. Madison made him sit in the center, a long gold chain from his collar to the bedpost. Told John to sit up straight, kneel with his ankles together. Wrists, too. Before he left, he lit some candles. John sat by himself, in the bed. It was quiet. He wondered when supper was. He wished the chain wasn’t so taut, that he could lay down for a bit. He was very sleepy again.

The hour ticked by. The candles burned. John watched the flames dance. Smell of roses and jasmine. Like his garden. He stopped feeling sleepy. He started to feel funny. Like there were bees buzzing under his skin. The blood in his veins heated up. He felt his cheeks flush. The clothes he was wearing suddenly felt very tight.

The chains and cuffs jingled as he shifted, tried to find a way to rest where he was still in position but some of the pressure was off his hips. John was suddenly very, very aware of everything under his skirts, the chain harness, the cock cage, the plug.

He was so distracted, he hardly looked up when the door opened, and Thomas and Alexander came
Alexander peered over Thomas’s shoulder. In the center of the stripped bed knelt John, looking more alert than he had in weeks. He was chained to the headboard via his collar, and dressed in what Alex could only call lingerie, layers of gauzy, flimsy lace and satin ribbon, adorned with more gold chain that glinted in the candle light. He was sitting up, but his eyes were open but glassy, as if he had been sleeping.

Thomas circled the bed, examined his prize from every angle. A lion considering a meal.

“They did a fantastic job with him,” he mused. Leaned in for a closer a look. John shifted, looked directly at Thomas and made a small sound. At first Alexander took it as sound fear, but when he whimpered a second time, it wasn’t fear. It was a sound Alexander had heard from him before.

He sounded needy.

“What is happening?” Alex asked. Thomas climbed into the bed, shrugged out of his outer, fur lined cloak. Tossed it to the floor.

“Please don’t play coy, Alexander, it is unattractive,” Thomas replied. Eyes crawling all over John. “Have you not done this countless times with my brother? I am anticipating that you will want a turn with him after?” He stepped out of his breeches, stood before them in his white silk undergarments. It struck Alexander in that moment how handsome their captor was. Beautiful things were often the most dangerous. Sirens. Thunderstorms. Oleanders.

Thomas joined John on the bed. Immediately, John turned to him, as best as he could with his collar and leash. He whimpered again.

“Oh, my pet, look at you. You are very pretty for me today.”

Alex watched in confusion as John licked his lips, nodded. “Thank you, my prince,” John hummed. Thomas cupped the side of John’s head, his cheek. John’s eyes fluttered shut and he leaned into the touch.

“I think you are ready to become mine completely, yes?” He trailed his hand off of John.

John looked panicked when Thomas stopped touching him. “P-please…” He was trembling and sweating and pale.

“You will get exactly what you want and need, sweet thing,” he said. Turned his smile to Alexander, who was watching flabbergasted. John whimpered yet again, tried to get closer to Thomas, but the chain snapped him back into place, held him fast.

“What did you do to him?” Alex glared at Thomas. “What did you do to him?!?”

Thomas chuckled. Stroked John’s shoulder, drawing a loud moan from him. “Gave him a little something to relax. Oh, don’t look so scandalized, Alexander. I must admit I was concerned that the increased dosage might have some adverse effects, but after witnessing how he behaved with you, it was a necessary evil.”

“What did you give him, Thomas?” At the sound of Alex’s voice, John turned to him now, whined.

“‘Lex? ‘Lex, p-please, touch me…” His voice broke.
Thomas’s soft, amused laughter filled the room. He traced his hand over one of the ribbons crossing John’s chest. John’s eyes lit up and he smiled, appeared to be enjoying the attention. “Alexander will have his turn, pet. After me. I get you first.”

John seemed content to let Thomas explore his outfit with his hands, touch every inch of silk and ribbon. “I will say it again. They did a fantastic job. Of course, the only thing we had to go off of was my brother’s description of that night. Oh, yes, he loved to tell me about your first time with him. The perfect shade of blue you wore. How you waited for him on the bed. How his first night as king, you surrendered completely to him. Begged him to conquer you. Begged for his cock. Well, I might not be king yet, but that will not stop me from sampling his very favorite.”

He pulled at one of the bows on John’s outfit, unraveling and untying. He smiled.
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Thomas went slow with him. Too slow. John whined, wanted Thomas, Alex, anyone, to just touch him. His blood was vibrating, and the only thing that made him feel still was a hand on his skin. Thomas pulled him into his lap, ignoring how the collar choked him as he adjusted. He didn't care, he just needed hands, fingers, anything. Thomas stroked his hair. Thomas touched his throat, his shoulder, his chest. Thomas pulled off each layer of his top, trailed his fingers over every inch of skin he revealed. John wanted him to go faster, he begged for it, said "faster, my prince, please," because every second he wasn't being touched was agony. Another's touch was the only salve to calming his buzzing skin, from keeping the panic of his racing heart at bay.

Instead of listening to him, Thomas just laughed. Continued to touch him at his pace, his speed. It was maddening. At least he unhooked the chain on the collar so John could come closer. John liked that, liked getting to curl into Thomas’s lap, feel even more square inches of skin on skin. Could feel where the prince grew hard, his manhood pressing into his hip.

That sensation snapped something in John. For a moment, things felt clear, and he tried to pull away, tried to stop it. Knew somewhere in the back of his brain, behind the fog, that this was wrong. He didn't love Thomas, didn't even like him, didn't want to do these things with him. But the thought of not being touched, of Thomas stopping, made him want to scream. He didn't want it but he needed it.

As Thomas made to unclasp the belt around his waist, John lunged in for a kiss, desperate for any sort of affection, anything to make this feel better, make the swirling tempest inside him calm, even for a second. Imagined that maybe if they kissed, it could feel something like love. But Thomas turned his face away, laughed low and sarcastic. "Oh no,” he chided, slid the belt off John's hips. Toyed with the lock on his harness. "I know where that mouth has been. I don't kiss dirty little pups.” And that made sense to John, he was dirty, he was a bad boy, and only good boys like Alexander got kisses. But it still hurt, it still made him sad. He wanted to be kissed so bad.

"No, no, don't cry, my dear," Thomas soothed. "I might not kiss you, but I will give you what you want. How does that sound?"

It sounded very good, very nice indeed. Through his tears, John sniffled. Nodded.

A key slid into the lock. Everything came free.
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Alexander could not believe his eyes. John practically crawling into Thomas, rubbing up on him like an attention-starved cat. Gone was the shrunken, touch-averse shell of himself. He looked
desperate, strung out. Even dove in for a kiss from Thomas at one point, started crying when he was refused. Whatever Thomas had given him was working as intended, because John presented like a dog in heat, didn't even flinch as Thomas undressed him, unlocked him, unplugged him.

"Isn't he just gorgeous, Alexander?" Thomas purred. Poured oil into his hand, coated his fingers. With his other hand, flipped John on to his stomach, hitched him up by the hips. John pressed his bottom back, looking for contact. Chuckling to himself, Thomas stroked over his hole, amused by the desperate sound John made. "Be patient, lamb," he said. John fell silent.

What did he hope to gain from this, Alexander wondered. Did he not own the two of them completely? Did he not have their attention, their time, power over every part of their day? Their very thoughts? Did he so need this from John, complete invasion of his body, the one piece that still mostly belonged to him? He shut his eyes for a moment, sent a prayer up to every god he didn't believe in that Burr had delivered that letter.

"Open your eyes, Alexander. I need you to watch."

Alex opened his eyes.

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Thomas's fingers inside him. He cried for it. Begged for it. Touch me, please, my prince. He touched his thighs. His balls. The head of his cock. You feel so tight around my fingers, princess. The way he called him that name made John's throat tight. It was a mean joke. He wasn't a princess, not anything special. He was a dirty little pup. He needed Thomas to touch him, to scratch the vibrant itch deep inside him. His whole body was on fire. Please. His body and skin cried out for it. His mind was in the clouds. His heart--his heart didn't know what it wanted. Part of him felt, knew, that this was wrong. Thomas was touching him in a special, secret place that was supposed to be for only those he invited in. Those he loved. The King. Alexander. But the King had thrown him away like trash and moved on to an actual princess, a beautiful girl worthy of his love, time and attention. Alexander had found something special with Thomas. It made perfect sense. They never actually loved him, and they were right not to. He was nothing but a whore, and didn't deserve their love. He had been stupid and delusional to think that they had ever, ever loved him. Wanted him.

Thomas didn't love him, but he did want him. That was evident in the way he sighed as he pulled his fingers away. How he stroked John's rump. Beg me for it, little one. Tell me how bad you need it. John wailed from having to wait, his body was burning from the inside out, the longer he wasn't getting fucked, wasn't being touched, was infinite torture. Please, Prince Thomas, I need it, I need you, please please please. His cock lined up against him. A voice in the back of John's brain, saying no, not this, anything but this. The wind in his ears roared louder than the voice. His whole body shook. He didn't want it. He needed it. He cried into the sheets. Did you beg my brother like this? No? Tell me, Alexander, is this how he sounded under my brother? Little cock slut, addicted to it, isn't he? Here, stay still. Want you to feel every inch. John cried out as he was invaded; it had been a while since he had done this, and the prince was larger than Alexander, larger than the plug. It hurt, like he was being ripped apart at the seams. The pain was good, it made that itch go away, it was better than that thirst that had been consuming him.

Harder. It hurts. He was torn between these two feelings, the feeling of it hurting and it needing it to hurt more. The prince fucked him for what felt like hours, too long, not long enough. God, you're tight. How is a slut so tight? Is this your allure, what distracted the king for years? Your tight little hole? Better than some virgins I've had, I'll say that. He reached around, fumbled with John's dick. It wasn't until it was touched the first time that evening that John realized just how hard he
was. He was sloppy with pre-seed. God, he's leaking everywhere, what a disgusting little beast. He's hard up, yes? Squeezed his cock to feel John clench around. Fuck, that feels good. Harder. Harder.

The first time John came that evening made his vision go out, just for a moment. He stayed hard, though, felt like that first one simply whetted his appetite as opposed to quenching it. He cried harder, begged Thomas to keep touching, but he took away his hand, made a sound of disgust at his hand being covered in John's cum. Nasty, filthy thing. He wiped his soiled hand in John's hair. Pounded into him harder.

John whimpered, continued to cry. His cock was so hard it hurt. He found no relief in his orgasm, no relief from Thomas fucking him. It went on and on and on, and when the Prince finally finished inside him, he breathed a sigh of relief and collapsed face down on the bed, while Thomas sat back, watched him. God, look at him. Horny little thing, isn't he? He laughed. Pathetic. He's rubbing himself off in the sheets now. Come, Alexander, looks like he needs you. Needs more cock. I won't be ready for another round for a half an hour or so, but he so needs it. Don't you want to help him? John chewed on the pillow now under his face, yanked at his cuffs, growled and whimpered. Wished his hands were free, wished he could touch himself. His cock was so wet it was dripping. 'Lex, please. His voice muffled by the pillow. Please, 'Lex, need your cock. Need you to touch me. Don't you dare touch his stupid prick, Alexander. He wants relief so bad, he can come on your dick, like a proper whore. Go head, Alexander. Your turn.

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Alexander was exhausted. It didn't seem to matter how many times they passed him back and forth that evening, John just cried out for more, more, more. It sickened him. It was well past midnight when they finally put him to bed. He sobbed for an hour at least, begged someone to touch him, until Thomas snapped at him, told him to be silent.

The next day dawned bright. It looked like snow outside. The light had that bright blue quality. Alexander never had much use for snow, but wished that he could see it, be out in it, feel the cold, clear air. He asked Thomas if he could have some time alone, his own bath. Thomas kissed him, said "of course, sugar. You had a long night." Alex fled the room as fast as he could, spared hardly a glance at John, who was already awake, and quietly squirming in his blanket on the floor.

Alexander bathed. Alexander choked down some dry toast. Alexander went to the library. Alexander listened to Theo recite the Periodic Table.

Alexander waited.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

The thrilling conclusion

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The morning after. Thomas pulled him into the bed. John cried and cried until Thomas sat him on his cock, finally felt like he might not burst into flames. Up and down, there ya go baby, just like that. It was hard without his hands, but he managed. Even sat in Thomas's lap for breakfast. Thomas fed him from his own bowl of oatmeal. It tasted sickeningly sweet, but he didn't care. The faster he was done, the faster he could get touched again.

I am so, so sorry, little pet. I have business to attend to. I wish I could stay here all day with you, but alas.

Bath time was quick. They couldn't get the cock cage back on him; his erection would not flag. Oh well, just cuff his hands again. He can't touch himself, the Prince's orders.

In his cage he was alone. He cried by himself, felt like he was going to jump out of his skin. His manhood ached. His balls felt tight and heavy as lead. His hands were bound, and he couldn't find any relief, even when he rubbed himself against his blanket. Tears of shame burned his eyes, but he couldn't bring himself to care. Every inch of him screamed to be touched. Even when Madison came in with his lunch, fed him bites of carrots and bread from his hand through the bars, John tried to get his attention. Anything, I'll give you anything, whatever you want Mr. Madison. I'll suck you, let you fuck me, please just touch me, undo my hands so I can do it myself, please.

But Madison just looked at him pitying eyes, told him to be quiet.

Supper was too long. John asked to skip the library, wanted to be in the bed with Thomas and Alexander, was desperate for relief. Thomas said no, but let John suck on his fingers while Alexander read; that little bit of contact was enough to calm him, at least for the moment.

In bed that night, Thomas fucked him three times, Alexander twice. It wasn't enough. He asked, begged, cried for more. Even tried to bargain and barter. He'd do anything they want, just touch him, please. Thomas slapped him across the face, told him to be quiet, he was annoying them, they were tired. John cried silently into his cushion, curled up in his blanket, his whole body aching, his cock throbbing. He didn't want to be like this, he honestly missed the quiet and the emptiness. Before he could just float, could go back into his mind, where nothing mattered, where he could just watch this happening. Now, that emptiness was filled with an insatiable hunger, a desperate desire for contact, for affection, for relief.

Every day after that was hunger. He was a starving man in a famine. Dying of thirst in the desert. Every time he felt even remotely normal was the moment or so after his release, after each orgasm, until the hunger came roaring back. The hunger kept him up at night, tossing and turning in a cold sweat. He hadn't slept in probably three days, had spent the night crying, twisting in his blanket, trying to get any sort of contact on his cock or his ass, from the blanket, the cushion, even the floor.
Alone in his cage. Madison had brought him lunch, then left in a rush. John felt funny, felt exhausted and keyed up. Like his brain was a machine running low on fuel. He'd managed to flop over onto his stomach, was thrusting into his blanket. He missed having his hands. They hadn't unlocked the cuffs in days.

There was a commotion outside of the bedroom. Men yelling. John didn't like it. Everything was too loud, moving too fast. John felt like the world was going blurry, like he might faint. Which didn't make sense, he wasn't hungry, had actually eaten quite a bit in the last few days.

The sound of glass shattering.

More yelling.

Booming voices. A door slammed.

John thought maybe he heard Alex.

The sound got louder, then softer. The buzzing in his ears increased.

Despite the insistent, almost painful fullness in his manhood, John felt like he could use a nap. He shut his eyes. Just for a moment. The room felt very warm. He was sweating.

Footsteps. Running. Down the hall. Towards the room.

Popped one eye open. The room was blurry. Fuzzy.

On the other side of the door, Thomas laughed.

Open the door. Open the door now.

Alexander's voice. Couldn't hear what he was saying. Blood roared in his ears.

He wished he could tell them to be quiet, he was tired. For the first time in days, he might sleep.

The door opened. They entered.

The last thing John saw before the world went dark was a pair of shiny leather boots, standing in front of the cage.

He slept.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for your support during this fic! It's been a wild ride.

Part Four, the Empty Garden, has been outlined and I hope to write it very very soon!

Love all of you

--Kacie
End Notes

Please comment. I need it. I am thirsty.

Also come say hi on tumblr: @likearootlesstree

Works inspired by this: Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow by Cant_We_Just_Dance, Tarnished Gold by That_Would_Be_Enough

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!