| Rating:     | Mature                                      |
| Archive Warning: | Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death |
| Category:  | M/M                                        |
| Fandom:    | Hetalia: Axis Powers                       |
| Relationship: | America/Canada - Relationship, America/England (Hetalia), Canada/France (Hetalia), America/Russia (Hetalia), Canada/Russia (Hetalia), Germany/North Italy (Hetalia), Finland/Sweden (Hetalia), South Italy/Spain (Hetalia) |
| Character: | America (Hetalia), Canada (Hetalia), England (Hetalia), France (Hetalia), Germany (Hetalia), North Italy (Hetalia), Russia (Hetalia), Prussia (Hetalia), China (Hetalia), Japan (Hetalia), Spain (Hetalia), Finland (Hetalia), Sweden (Hetalia), South Italy (Hetalia), Sealand (Hetalia) |
| Additional Tags: | Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Brotherly Love, Alternate Universe, What Have I Done, Misunderstandings, Revenge, Crimes & Criminals, Assassins & Hitmen, Why Did I Write This?, Survival, Sad Ending, Out of Character, Dark America (Hetalia), Dark Canada (Hetalia) |

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## They Lived for Chaos

by [WhiteLuna](#)

### Summary

When the North American twins aren’t raised by society, but instead survive in the wild, history does not go according to plans. Now, the two are considered the world’s greatest threat as they target and kill any and every world leader of the world. Its up to the personified nations to locate these brothers and capture them, before they turn their interest onto them, in their goal to bring chaos and the destruction of mankind.

### Notes

Italics symbolize thoughts.

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.
Meet the Twins

Meet the Twins

Somewhere in Canada – 1:30 p.m.

Deep in the uncharted lands of Canada, a white polar bear prowled in the bushes, searching for a meal. From above, Kumajiro heard the vicious shriek of a raptor, followed by the strangled cry of a dying song bird. Leave it to that damn eagle to tease him and his fruitless endeavors at finding a decent snack. Was it his fault that he was more adapted to hunting in frozen waters, rather than a God-forsaken forest in the epicenter of wild Canada? As if in response to his mental thoughts Kumijaro noticed from his peripheral vision, a few bloody feathers innocently landing onto his shoulders. If it wasn’t for the eagles wings, Kumajiro wouldn’t mind chewing on the remains of a decapitated raptor. Ahh…but then he would have to face a very pissed off American. And then Matthew would make it worse by letting him starve for a week. That arrogant oversized bird irritated the polar bear on more than one occasions but his death would bring too many consequences. So, without further thoughts, Kumijaro abandoned the bushes, swallowed his pride, and padded towards the inviting cabin behind him; all the while, ignoring the intense stare of a bald eagle feasting on a mangled corpse.

My God! How long could these guys sleep in a day?

Nudging passed a miniature kitchen and a cozy living room, Kumijaro barged open the door that hid two identical blonds from the raging world and the chaos that consumed it. Heavy sleepers huh?

Since Kumijaro was a 2 ton polar bear and the door weighted less then 50 pounds, the sound of wood crashing into wood was equivalent to a stick of dynamite blowing up.

Looks like direct contact with his owner was needed, when the sound of their door blowing up, was not enough to even rouse the young men. A few steps passed splintering wood and Kumijaro languidly approached the bed and placed his head on his masters face. Again, size really matters in these situations. A really big bear placing his compact furry throat on the boys face, at some point, forced the peaceful sleeper into full out panic as he woke up to utter darkness and no oxygen. Arms flailed wildly in every direction before the brain registered that the hands could serve useful in removing the obstruction of air to his lungs. One forceful push and Kumijaro’s head landed on the lap of the panting blond, his eyes searching his owner’s eyes for any indication of lunch coming soon.

“Mattie!” Lean bare arms fretfully shook the slumbering twin. “Your bear tried to kill me again!”

Ops. Wrong person.

Still suffering from his panic attack, Alfred failed to realize that the force of his “nudging” was sending Matthew towards the end of the bed.

Until he fell.

A timid yelp was heard from below before Matthew’s head peaked from the opposite side of the bed, hand gingerly rubbing the spot where his head met the wooden floor.

“Alfred! Whad ya do that for?!”
Gosh, when people say identical, they really mean, IDENTICAL! Ok, take mental note! Owner sleeps on the left side of the bed.

“Your bear started it Mattie!” A long pale finger was pointed accusingly at Kumijaro lounging his head on Alfred’s lap. “He tried to smoother me in my sleep. AGAIN!!”

A pointed look from the Canadian was sent in the bear’s direction, eyebrows crunching together in thought.

Am I getting lunch soon?

His hand stretched forward and patted the bear, as Matthew’s face broke out into a grin. “Good boy, Kumijara. But next time, make sure you leave enough pressure to where Alfred can’t remove your head.”

His twin gawked in horror.

“How could you!? If you really wanted to kill me, why not just put a gun to the back of my head when I’m enjoying your pancakes? I’ll never see it coming! Or even the pancakes themselves can kill me! Just plant a pretty piece of cyanide in there and I’m on my way to see death.” During his rant, Alfred used multiple gestures to convey his hurt feelings, frequently stabbing his index finger towards his head and using an invisible fork to eat nonexistent pancakes.

“Alfred! Calm down! It was a joke. I was kid-ing!” Matthew removed his hand from his pets head and made a grab for Alfred’s self-destructive hands. His twin really could be dramatic sometimes. Refraining his hands from implying anymore creative ways of dying, Matthew used Alfred’s weight as an anchor to drag himself back into bed.

Like Alfred would get over that joke so easily.

He pouted childishly and glanced his eyes away from his brother’s worried gaze. “I don’t believe you...”

Alfred and his games...Might as well act his part.

Leaning more closely towards his brother, Matthew lightly touched his lips near his twin’s ear and whispered playfully. “Oh, come on Al. Can you really stay mad at me?” Trailing down his jaw Matthew halted near his lips and gently pulled his twin’s body towards him, aiming to get his mirror within lips reach.

Damn! Did Mattie know how to play him well, or what?

Pout shifting into a grin, Alfred turned to face the blonde and allowed him to leave a quick, yet sincere peck on the lips. Matthew tightened his grip on his brother’s hands before pulling him into a full out bear hug, arms almost squeezing the life out of the American. The atmosphere became solemn with his actions.

“Al.” He mumbled. “You know just as much as I do that if anything ever happened to you, and you had to walk the road to death’s door, that I won’t be far behind from you. And you would do the same for me...”

“Of course I would!” Alfred wrapped his arms around his brother’s figure and strengthened his side of the embrace. “Why else would we have made that blood oath so long ago?”

No response came as both brothers stood in their embrace for a minute, enjoying the presence of
each other. That is, until a low rumble to their side reminded them of a very hungry and sadly ignored polar bear. His eyes glared at them silently.

*Food now. Cuddle later.*

Both of them broke out into uncontrollable laughter, their bodies crashing into one another in joined amusement.

*You people are inhumane. Laughing at me as I slowly starve to death…*

The sound of crunching wood brought back their attention to the bear exiting the room. Both brothers stretched their heads in the direction where the door used to be. “What? …Seriously Kuma-whata? You broke the door…again.” Alfred crawled over his twin to get a better look at the heap of leftover wood pieces, then proceeded to slip out of bed. Matthew just stared at where the door once was, now just some feeble hinges swayed back and forth.

“Hey Matt! I think you should consider designing a doggie door for Kuma-whata. That way, I don’t have to build a new door every hour.” His hands rummaged through the leftover pieces, his brain trying to comprehend how wood could disintegrate so readily in his palm.

Not sure if it was his brother’s voice or his growling stomach that shook him out of his trance, Matthew closed his eyes and sighed. “Let’s deal with that later Al. Right now, I’m hungry for breakfast.”

“But it’s 1:45 in the afternoon.”

“So?”

“So?! Let’s have hamburgers instead!” A brilliant smile from the wooden floor prevented the younger twin from disagreeing with him this time, and submitted to the suggested choice of menu. He left his older brother to whatever scheme he was planning with their dead door and ambled into the kitchen where Kumajiro eagerly awaited his appearance.

*Finally! Food!*

Opening the door of a tall white fridge, Matthew buried his head in the top freezer, hunting down any sign of meat. “Hey brother?” Came the muffled voice of the blond in the kitchen. “I think we’re going to have to go hunting again. There’s no meat left.”

In reply, blurred curses echoed from the boy’s bedroom.

“-uck this shit!” Stomps came from the bedroom and stopped when Matthew closed the freezer’s door to find his brother’s upset hidden behind.

“Are you angry at our non-existent door or the fact that we’re not eating hamburgers today?” The calmer twin raised his eyebrow in confusion.

“Both!”

“Oh Alfred. What’s the big deal? You love to hunt, remember?”

“No! No more moose meat! Or caribou. I want my favorite! The one you can only find down south!”

Eyebrows knitted in slight annoyance. “Brother. I don’t think that’s in our best interest when-”
“But Maaaatttie. I DON’T WANT THE MEAT HERE.”

Well…here came the arguments again. The American’s twin narrowed his eyes and took a defensive stance, arms crossing his chest and preparing for a long battle. In a strong voice he chided. “Alfred.”

“Don’t Alfred me! I’m not a kid, ok? I’m an adult so start treating me like one!”

“Well, you sure act like a kid! Throwing tantrums when you don’t get your way... Adults don’t DO THAT!”

“I think any sane ADULT would do that if they were stuck eating the same food for a month now.”

“You said you liked eating my pancakes!”

“Yeah, I do. For a week. But a month!? Come on, bro! And have you seen that we’re running out of supplies? We need to-”

“Why is going down south your sole purpose all of a sudden?!” Doesn’t he realize that it’s not safe over there!?

Alfred’s eyes widened and his head turned to the side, his voice lost temporarily. He hesitated before continuing in a hushed tone. “…I’m home sick.”

Matthew had to choke back on any bitter remarks lingering on his tongue, regret flooding through him for not noticing Alfred’s longing. How could he be so heartless to not see his brother silently suffering? And he was right. Any sane person WOULD start to get sick of the same food everyday…

Hoping to make amends for his thoughtless opinions he embraced his downcast brother. “I’m sorry Alfred. I was being an ass and had no right to attack you like that.”

The hug remained one-sided.

Alright, time to use the last resort. “And you were…right. About eating the same meal everyday. We’ll go down south tomorrow for a short vacation.”

Arms shyly wrapped around the Canadian and reassured him that he was forgiven. Stifled mumbles crept into his ears. “I told you so.”

It was a miracle that Mattie had learned how to understand his brothers muffled replies, since his reply would have sounded like “Eye ‘old ou o”, to any other person. Finally remembering why they were in the kitchen the brothers released one another and found Kumajiro raiding the fridge.

How could the world’s greatest threat be these two idiots when they were constantly hugging one another like emotional girls?! Thought Kumajiro. It baffled him how these two had survived for so long when one of them was constantly breaking down every hour and only hugs could make it better. Psh! Assassins these days.

Kumakiro. Are you hungry?”

Yes!! For fucks sake, YES! He was losing ten pounds every minute when he was devoid of nourishment!

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Kumakiro. Are you hungry?”

Yes!! For fucks sake, YES! He was losing ten pounds every minute when he was devoid of nourishment!

“Hmmm. I think you should put you bear on a diet. He’s looking a little chunky there.” Alfred
pointed a finger near Kumajiro’s gut.

A murderous stare was sent at the childish young man.

*I’ll kill you in your sleep tonight. I really will.*

“See? His eyes are just begging, **Feed me more veggies and less meat**”

*How in the hell could this stupid blond understand an incompetent eagle, yet, not understand when a starving polar bear was sending him homicidal vibes?*

“Umm. Al? I think you should leave Kumaro alone. Your sort of irritating him.”

*Your DAMN right he’s “irritating” me!*

Shoulders shrugged in a carefree manner. “Whatever you say bro. I’m going to start packing our stuff.” He started walking towards their bedroom.

“Ok. But I’m going to make pancakes!”

The retreating twin slowly turned his head sideways and blankly stared at him.

“Today is the last day! I promise. After this, no more pancakes!” Matthew crossed his arms in an X shape to emphasize the absence of pancakes after today. His brother just dropped his eyes in boredom and pouted before disappearing into their doorless bedroom.

“Gosh, that was close…” His eyes searched the kitchen until registering his blurred vision. Whether by twin connection or mere coincidence, Alfred materialized behind his brothers back and silently placed his glasses into his open hand.

“Thought you might need these.” He walked back to their room to continue packing, completely unaware of Matthew’s silent heart attack.

*Damn him and his stealth!*

**In the Living Room – 2:30 p.m.**

Sometime after Matthew had finished cooking and both brothers were fully clothed, they sat in the living room eating pancakes while ignoring the world news of BBC network. It’s not like they didn’t know what was happening right now.

“Hey bro. Wouldn’t life be better if we could just walk around in our boxers? You know, like when we go to sleep.” Alfred grinned awkwardly after he stuffed half his mouth with pancakes.

“Al, that’s unsanitary.” His grin grew, only to reveal bits and chunks of pancakes, before Matthew shoved his face away with his free hand. “Your such an idiot.”

A couple more chews and Alfred swallowed his food, eager to respond. “But you love this idiot!”

His brother rolled his eyes. “Well, they do say love is blind…” However, his twin silenced any further speech as he shoved a fork full of maple-drowned pancakes into Mattie’s throat. “Yeah, yeah, yeah. If it floats your boat.” The hackings of a suffocating Canadian stirred little interest in Alfred as he smiled innocently at his changing colors. He then slammed his hand onto his brother’s back once he noticed that Matthew was desperately clawing at his throat.

With the pancakes mission over, they dislodged from his throat and safely cruised on down to his
stomach, never to be seen again.

“A-A-AL!” His voice was hoarse and strained. “You fucking asshole!! You could have killed me there!” His brother smiled stupidly.

“Your alive, aren’t you? Like dying by pancakes hand is the worst death ever. I thought it was your dream to die that way?”

Enraged by his brothers insensitivity, Matthew rose from his couch and grabbed his shirt collar. Insults and inflammatory comments failed to rustle the boys attention. Alfred’s eyes were unexpectedly trained on the flashing TV, ears keenly attuned to the sounds from the box and perfectly blocking out any death threats.

“We are back on the scene in Barcelona, Spain, where just last night, the world welcomed the nation’s newest leader, only to witness his assassination on live television. This heinous assault on a world leader is just one of many brazen attacks on all figure heads, by the unknown team of two assassins. We start off-”

Anymore information was distorted by Matthew’s rage as he fiercely shook his brother for attention. “Listen to me, DAMN IT!” The shaking increased until Alfred could almost feel his brain rattling against his skull, common sense making him cry out Uncle.

“O.K! I’m, sor-ry! Now-watch-the-news!” He said in his broken speech.

“I don’t give a shit! The news is always talking about us!” The shaking had stopped but Matthew did not release his grip on his brother’s shirt.

“I know that! But there’re talking bout last night! Don’t you want to see how things are going?” Interest clicked onto the Canadians face, hands dropping his dizzy brother back onto the couch and head turning to watch the new reporter. He settled back onto his seat as if any anger had never been present.

His brother was bipolar, Alfred was sure of it now.

The leftover pancakes stayed cold and abandoned, both brothers occupied with the chattering box.

“- its with this recent assassination on a political leader that the international bounty of these two has been raised to an unthinkable 3.5 trillion euros.”

“Are they serious? Their wasting their time trying to encourage our capture with rewards.” The younger twin stared coldly at the telly, arms crossed and frown carved onto his face. Alfred snorted at his brothers stern expression.

“I know, right?! We’d sooner kill each other than allow any dumb ass nation to capture us!” Matthew’s expression wavered until he smiled softly at his brothers jovial laugh.

Yeah…no matter what happened, they would always be there for each other. Until the very end…when death came to take them to the fiery pits of hell…they’ll still be together. Holding hands all the way.

Exiting his mental thoughts Matthew turned to his twin and was surprised by the dramatic changes in his posture. He had stopped laughing and had his hands balled up tightly. His legs and arms were stiff. His jaw, locked like nothing in the world would be able to open it. Matt shifted his attention back to the new caster, sensing it as Alfred’s main source of discomfort.
The scene had changed to the main reporter at their headquarters, he was currently discussing their latest stunt to another fellow on the phone. Judging by his accent Matthew would say he was…

Australian? No, no. It was more pronounced, like…British? Yes! He was British! But what other reason did his brother have to react to the voice so aggressively, as if preparing to attack?

“Can you evaluate more on the precautions that the British Intelligence are planning to take after the recent assassination?” Hesitation rang on the other line before the voice responded.

“I am sorry to say I cannot very well disclose that information at the moment.” More hesitation.

“…But I can say this to the two assassins who committed this crime. Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, I promise you this, that one day, both of you will be caught and will be held accountable to the highest court, for your crimes against humanity.”

Silence from the brothers.

“Do not believe for a moment that one death committed by the both of you, shall be forgotten, or that the chain of events unleashed by both of you shall be seen as mere coincidence. Only luck has been on your side this far, but soon enough, Fate will bring your world to a horrific end, and finally, the world may rest and be at peace with your eradication.”

A crunching sound distracted Matthew from the TV, his eyes traveled to Alfred where a helpless remote control was caving in on itself from the added inhuman pressure of his grip.

“Is this your opinion Mr. Kirkland? Or are you speaking for the agency?”

“…It’s neither.” Came the cold reply. “I am simply speaking for the whole world and the atrocities it has faced in the past decades because of these assassins.” At the word “assassins” the voice spat it out like it was hemlock. Back to the main reporter, he thanked Mr. Kirkland for his “opinion” and was about to continue with other news when an airborne object hurtled passed the television, barely impacting the top edge and colliding with great force, the wall opposite to Alfred.

“This is BULLSHIT! Matt! We need to find this guy and silence him for good. Its people like him, with their idea of proper justice that need to be found dead near the sewers!” Body prepared for action, Alfred was standing up and searching his person for his hand gun. All he needed was one bullet and that arrogant voice to appear in person, so he could send the bastard on his way to meet death in person.

Matthew quietly stood and stretched towards the TV, his hand finding the off button and silencing the incessant squawks of new voices mindlessly sharing how they agreed with the previous speaker and why. It was time for Matthew to be Alfred’s voice of reason.

“Brother,” He placed his hand on his shoulder in hopes of quelling his fury  and distracting him from finding his gun. “How do you plan on finding one person who just shared what the rest of the world is thinking?” Alfred slowed his actions, long enough to glance at his brother.

“Easy! I’ve got you to help me with that. You can locate anyone in this world!”

“Al, I’m not going to waste my time looking for a nobody. And why are you so determined to find this specific person?”

“Because!” He halted his movement and considered his true reason for this unnatural loath of somebody he’s never met. Why did he need to find this person?

He looked his brother in the eye and spoke in a hushed tone. “There’s…there’s something about
that voice. Something I don’t like…” Sense finally kicking in, Alfred dropped himself onto his couch, energy long gone with his temper.

“Alfred? Are you ok?”

“…Yeah.” Alfred weakly smiled up at his standing brother, thankful to any God that hadn’t damned them, for giving him such a caring, kind brother. *Leave it to Matthew to be the voice of reason.*

He lazily patted the seat next to him, indicating that his brother should sit next down next to him. Obediently sitting on the directed cushion, Matthew moved to face his brother…who then pulled his chin towards his face to meet their lips. Caught off guard, the Canadian twin didn’t have enough time to reciprocate the kiss. As quickly as it started, Alfred broke the kiss and held his brother at arms length, a silly grin on his face.

“You **really** put a lot of maple in your pancakes. I mean seriously! It’s like, I might as well have smooched a bottle of maple syrup!”

*Alfred really knew how to kill the mood right away…*

“Idiot.”

“I love you too Mattie!”

In the corner of the living room, sat a mass of white fur, intently observing the twins and their previous interactions.

*If I were a human, I’m positive I could make millions off of these two. Maybe sell the footage to people in Japan. I heard rumors that there’re into this kind of stuff.*

*Oh look! There’re finally not molesting each other anymore…*

The two boys in question were currently trying to figure out where their cold leftover pancakes had disappeared to. “Did you eat all my pancakes Alfred!?”

“What!? No! I still had some on my plate too!”

As if Kumajiro would allow those fluffy clouds of heaven go to waste. He unconsciously licked his muzzle before drifting off to sleep, hunger sated and mind taking a break from the twins mischief.

*In the bedroom – 3:10 p.m.*

Their necessary items were packed and ready but both blonds stood silently staring at the motionless baggage.

“What are we forgetting Mattie? I know it’s something…but WHAT!?”

“Your guess is as good as mines Al.” They both searched their clothing and pockets, hoping to silence the tiny voice in their heads that warned them of skipping something important. The taller of the two turned his head towards the wall opposite to their bed, his blue eyes trailing to the only door left in their room. Alfred’s eyes widened, his hand enthusiastically grabbing Matthew’s while pointing to their answer.

“That’s what we forgot! We forgot to update our schedule!” He beamed at his brother like a dog who had just brought a shot duck to his master. He skipped passed the door he flung open and
dragged his brother along into the room. How excited Alfred appeared as he continuously bounced on the balls of his feet. Matthew, on the other hand, strolled passed his brother and sat calmly at his computer chair.

All around the room hung maps upon detailed maps of every nation, certain areas circled and others crossed out. Lining the three walls were tables buried under multiple computers, countless papers and unlabeled flash drives. Graceful fingers danced over the keyboard and typed a series of codes into the current program, meanwhile, Alfred grinned at his brothers back. Head tilting left and right, almost childlike, the louder twin placed his hands onto Matthews shoulders.

“Did you put it in yet?” A few more typed numbers and the chair spun around once Alfred released his grip, a smirk planted on the seated figures face.

“Yes Alfred. I take it you want to do the honor-” Arm lunging passed the twin, his brother pressed the usual key that recorded the death of, yet, another figure head.

“Now comes the fun part,” said the calmer twin.

“Right you are bro!” And like that, Alfred dashed to the map covered walls, taking delight in examining every nation and the targets they offered. His index finger skimmed through the world map, slightly lingering on the lands below Canada, before returning to his search.

“Greece! How bout Greece?” Matthew who had returned to his computer scrolled through several bright pages, eyes scanning for Greece’s current situation.

“Nope. Sorry, but they still haven’t even started to bring up elections, let alone mention any candidates.”

“Awww. Fine!” He continued to move his finger through the map and passed by Italy who had a bright red circle around it.

Italy…

His eyes narrowed while his mind drifted to darker thoughts. *Oh, how he will enjoy the day he sees the Italian country fall under anarchy.* Out of all the nations, the twins constantly targeted their religious nation the most. They still had no leader in the government either. The only reason they managed to maintain some sense of order was because the church was always there to pick up the remains and cry out that God would save them all. *Fucking Italians and their religion!*

“Hey, I got an idea. How about we promote ourselves to a greater variety of figure heads?” Matthew leaned his head back and peeked at his brothers face from his seat, smile barely visible.

“Let me guess. Your thinking about religion huh?”

“Well yeah. Religion is the next best target-” Suddenly, an idea hit him as Alfred recounted the BBC news from earlier. Why hadn’t they thought of this before!? Using all his discipline to remain calm, which wasn’t much, Alfred turned his brother around to face him.

“Matthew!”

*Oh…he called me by my full first name.* His American counterpart had something to propose and Matthew had a feeling he was going to enjoy this new “project.”

“When we get the chance, lets take out the United Kingdoms monarchy!”
Yup, his brother sure shot for the stars...

“The whole family! Leave nobody behind!”

And flung himself into a black hole.

“You sure your up to this?”

“Only if you can keep up.”

So it was a challenge he wanted, huh? A chuckle escaped from Matthew, his legs turning the chair back to his computer and clicking away at the keyboard. Despite his brothers mocking chuckle, Alfred grinned fondly at his nerdy brother.

Hasn’t this always been their assigned roles? Since their childhood, Alfred was the brawns while Matthew was the brains. Any computer in the world would easily be hacked by his brother, The only thing Alfred could ever claim to be good at was placing a hole in someone’s forehead. And practically anyone could do that with sharp eyes and maybe a little luck.

“Looks like…” Alfred leaned over his brothers chair to try and decode what he was reading. “Yup. The British Intelligence members have “secretly” added extra protection to the Queen and their family.”

“How much we talking?”

“Let’s just say this. We have better luck of tripping into a pit that leads straight to hell then even getting within the perimeter of her room.”

“Aerial attack?”

“They’ll shot us down before we pass the city.”

A whistle from Alfred emphasized the sheer danger and life-threatening situation that came with this suggested task.

“You ready to infiltrate the United Kingdom Mattie?” At the word “United Kingdom” Alfred pointed his nose into the air in a mocking manner of the British and their culture. His twin just giggled in reply before speaking. “Just try not to slow me down.”

“You are SO on!” Italy could wait till later.

“Oh! But…”

“What do you mean, But!?”

“We are going to have to give this mission some time. You know, assess the situation, obtain blueprints to their dwellings; all the usual.”

A sigh left the American’s lips who looked back to the maps. “Alright then. Can we do a side mission while we wait?”

“If the country has a leader, than sure.”

A small smile returned to Alfred’s face and then stared at the maps determinedly. He closed his eyes, spun around three times and slammed his finger onto the wall that hung a world map. He opened his eyes to the chosen nation. “Australia?”
A few taps before, “They’ve had their prime minister for about a month already.”

“Great! Than Australia it is!”

The key board chattered lightly. “Ok. It’s official now.”

Alfred beamed when his twin spun around to greet him with a peck on the cheek, yet, he nervously itched his head when a question came to mind.

“But…the mission is after our vacation…right?” Uncertainty laced his voice.

*How cute,* though Matthew. He slung an arm around his brother’s shoulder and led him out of their Fun Room.

“No brother. I’m just going to send you straight to Australia, naked with a sign that says, *I’m one of the assassins.*” Alfred pouted in return at his brothers chuckling.

“Not funny.”

A slight wipe of his eye and the younger twin calmed down. “Yes. We’re going AFTER our vacation.” Then another important idea crosses his mind. “Oh, right!”

“How?”

Seriousness depriving his brothers face of any previous happiness, he turned to face Alfred.

“Another thing we need to look more into is the existence of personified nation and exactly what we can do with them.” Alfred stared at him before grinning.

“Right. If we can take them out, maybe humans will die with them. The only problem is how can you kill a nation?” Both of them stopped in thought at the doorless side of the room, until it was silently accepted that the question was best answered another time.

As Matthew strolled towards the kitchen and began to clean the dishes, Alfred glanced at the closed door before re-entering the room. He walked up to the map of Canada and stared dimly at the lands below, face empty of expression.

*Mattie had a good reason to question my longing to go south. In these times, it was especially dangerous to go south, but I’m pretty sure our latest mission should be enough to keep everyone busy and distract the usual hordes of criminals. And its not like anyone knew we were the assassins, let alone has a picture or ID to us. For all anyone knows, me and Matthew are just your regular criminals trying to survive off of everyone else’s misery. His brother and he could take care of themselves despite the environment.*

*And he did know the land like the back of his hand. Just another advantage to their trip down south.*

Mind set at peace, Alfred slowly placed his hand on the map and, at last, smiled. He was finally going home. To the lands of what was, at one time, known as the United States of America…
Calling All Nations

Chapter Summary

There’s a long annoying explanation of how the world sucks. We then get a small glimpse into the life of England, France and Spain. France, fed up with their situation and how the nations have to live in fear, makes the decision of calling everyone together. Meanwhile, Alfred and Matthew have a brotherly moment.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

Calling all Nations

London, United Kingdom – Inside a phone booth – 2:40 p.m.

The sky was overcast above the city, people running around doing their respected business, with the occasional robbery at gun or knife point. Inside a bright red phone booth, England scowled at his environment and slammed the phone into the receiver. For what seems like the tenth time that day, England mentally repeated a recurring thought. *Bloody Hell! How could my country have gotten this bad?*

In today’s society, it was practically the norm for crime to occur out in broad daylight, and people would ignore any cries for help as victims were robbed for their possessions. England’s police force tried their best to contain the crime rate, but…without a Prime minister around to call the shots and create new laws; his officials were constantly outnumbered to waves of criminal who saw their country as every man for himself.

England mentally sighed when he thought of his deceased Prime Minister. The man was likeable enough. He was quite young and held naïve ideas of saving the country. England would secretly smile whenever discussing with him changes in government and placing more trust in the people; something most of his bosses would laugh at in these times. But time had claimed this life so suddenly and right under England’s nose, when the assassins took notice of him. The devastation the green eyed nation experienced after finding his hopeful leader dead was unexplainable.


Why?! Why couldn’t his own government protect the best leader he had not seen in so many years!?

Coincidently, England was walking to his boss’s room where they were going to share a cup of tea, when he noticed two tall shrouded figures slip out of his room with their tea in hand. The Briton quickened his pace when an awful feeling became lodged in his stomach and his heart rate increased at an alarming speed.
Slamming the ajar door wide open, his eyes were met with the sight of his bosses body slumped over the table, his eyes glossed over. He had bloody bubbles pouring out of his mouth, leaving the island nation to deduct that he had died from cyanide, most likely slipped in his tea after-

Body projected out the door, England had dashed in the direction he had seen the two unknown figures slink off, his fury yearning to rip out their wretched throats. But not one single trace of their existence was left and no one had them. The assassins had easily escaped…

England had ignored the nagging feeling, for the passed month, that something was wrong, that his leader was not as protected as he thought. He paid dearly for underestimating the enemy and his country suffered the consequences of being deprived a brighter future with their Prime Minister. Of course, at the moment, the British government was conducting another election, the candidates putting on a brave face. But they knew they were scared. Everyone knew the chosen candidates were scared, despite their calm demeanor. Whoever got the misfortunate ticket that called them the next Prime Minister, England knew there would never again be a moment of peace for the chosen leader. And the nation. They would always have a trained ear to the telly or the radio, making bets about how long this one would last or murmuring silent prayers to the doomed Briton.

A sigh finally escaped the Briton inside the phone booth who put his thoughts to rest and got back to his original business. He reached for the phone for the third time.

“Bloody prats! Where do they get off telling me to keep the news network busy?!" Honestly, England admired his justice system and the effort they made to establish some semblance of order, but why had they ushered him out of their building and told him to “keep the networks from asking too many questions” after the incident in Spain. Sure, they had good reasons to call by phone booth. It was the best way to ensure the assassins didn’t have the lines tapped, but were they so disorganized that they had no answers to people’s worries or were they being hush hush about a new operation. Either way, they should have their proper nation inside with them, discussing and participating in the matter, not out in the cold London streets making up rubbish to distract a news network! Like a child left out of an exclusive club, England grumbled and called the BBC network, his last thoughts lingering on Spain’s condition and the vile people who had attacked him.

Paris, France – Streets of Paris – 2:50 p.m.

It was frosty in the streets of Paris. The numerous civilians that drifted through the city would stare at the mundane sky, its menacing color promising more rain by tomorrow morning. The capitol of France was grey and lifeless. It was no longer nicknamed the tourist city as most of its elegant and extravagant art pieces had been locked and sealed behind bank vaults. Or at least, the remaining pieces that made it to their safe haven. A selected few priceless pieces by artists long dead had been robbed during the riots in the 1950’s.

As France strode passed his colorless environment and empty museums he grunted in disdain at recounting how his home became so dreary.

*If only we could have prevented that war with the United States and Canada…* He sighed in defeat and continued on his way to the current house he was staying at, a petite grey house on the outskirts of Paris. In today’s economy, France did not have the luxury of beautiful homes keeping him sheltered. In fact, a majority of his fellow nations didn’t have that luxury. Sure, some had some decent dwellings, like the Italian twins and Finland and Sweden, but that was because they shared their place. North and South Italy lived in various cathedrals. Finland and Sweden…well, they shared a home for “personal” reason. Any other time, France would have smirked devilishly at the thought of the two Scandinavian nations living together, but his current situation robbed him of that joy.
“Mon Dieu! Finally!” cried France. He quickened his pace as he neared a disheveled looking cottage. The door groaned loudly when he opened it and rattled dangerously after he carelessly slammed it shut. Inside, France winced when he recalled how old the house was. It had been 30 years old already after WW2, providing a great safe house to secret rebels during Hitler’s occupation of France.

Passed the 20th century, it was constantly questioned how the place still stood with its crumbling brick walls and leaking roof. Turning to the left, then the right, France heard no noises within the antique house. “So I’m alone…”

Hurrying up the stairs to the side of the living room, France entered a small room and rummaged passed a sea of boxes packed with government files. He took a mental note to remind his few government officials to reorganize their “work place” and continued towards a petite tan drawer.

*It should be in here*…His hand shifted through various belongings. Clothes, a necklace…

“Ouch!”

A sharp dagger. Memorizing where the weapon was, he crammed his hand further in, until at last, he found what he was looking for.

“This Prussia have stashed you so far inside this wretched drawer?” *Although safety and secrecy DID come first.* Free from the furniture, France held a collection of numbers inscribed upon aging paper. There were no dramatic alarms, solid bank vaults, or even vicious guards ready to protect these specific papers. They appeared like an ordinary list of phone numbers, perhaps for a very popular friend, but very few people knew how important these numbers were.

Every recorded number provided a connection to any nation in the world.

And yet, these papers were merely stuffed in the back of an old drawer, its only line of defense, its appearance of normalcy. Papers in hand, France concealed them within his purple cloak and made his way back downstairs. He exited the house and sped back towards the city, all the while, trying to remember where his rendezvous was where he was to meet his newest “companion.”

Anytime France went somewhere he always had a person accompany him. His government may be missing a leader, but his officials took care to leave a bodyguard with the Frenchmen. They always took on an appearance of a friend or an acquaintance so as to not draw attention. It was sheer luck that France had managed to convince his officials that going to his current home wouldn’t take long.

Exactly why he needed to go to the house, France did not specify. As a nation, he was responsible for his people and obligated to listen to his leader, including officials who became his temporary bosses. However…even nation’s hid things from their people.

So, what was France’s secret? Well, his government and every other government in the world were vaguely aware of the nation’s existence. Contact with one another was usually kept to a minimal though.

Now came France’s little secret. It was a joint secret really, between most of the nations. The numbered papers he hid were unknown to his officials and politicians.

The idea itself started after tensions between governments reached a dangerous level many years ago.
Greece had given Japan the first paper, completely blank except for his number. Along with the first paper came a separate note telling the island nation that should he ever need someone to talk to, his number was there to call. Touched by Greece’s bravery in secretly defying his government’s orders of no nation contact, Japan wrote his number down on the same paper and sent it to Italy, who then sent it to Germany after. Germany hesitantly copied his number down and sent it to Austria who sent it to Hungary and so forth. Eventually, this underground way of communication grew until every nation had a number to their name. With a complete list, the nations were able to finally meet one day and decided that the papers would remain in the care of a different nation every year.

It was that chosen nation who would be given the duty of protecting this secret and given the power to communicate with any other nation. Of course, whenever a call was made the nations all had the same coded response to a call that signaled it was safe to talk. Their governments could never find out that they had links to each other.

France stopped on a corner street and looked to a café where a man was staring intently at him. Taking that as his signal, France followed the now departing man and silently joined him in his car. Once seated on the passenger side, France dully looked out his window as the car started and took off, headed solemnly towards the border between France and Spain.

Currently, the distrust between countries was waning and allowing more interaction between people, which explained why France was given permission to visit Spain in the previous days and now. It was, however, a miracle that France could convince his boss to give him permission to visit his neighbor nation, ALONE, once he was dropped off at his place.

Since the last leaked scandals, governments had scrambled in panic when information and documents had suddenly been released about secret hits on other officials. The documents had included that the infamous assassins had been hired for these “jobs.” After years of threatening wars and invasions, leaderless nations and the public finally accepted the notion that the assassins were presently working on their own without government employment.

Now if they could just figure out who they were and how many people were involved in the endless assassinations. There were speculations that it was an agency that ran these murders, starting since 1953, but there was never any proof or evidence to back it up.

France exhaled through his nose as he held back a snarl.

Just who WERE these people, these murderers?! Was it an organization and if so, how many were involved? How could 50 years pass by and yet, no one person could identify these monsters, let alone bring any evidence to their existence besides the bodies they left behind.

*sigh* Too many questions but never an answer…

Outside the window, France could see the scenery changing as they drove closer to Spain. He resignedly closed his eyes, his mind replaying the traumatic event of last night’s slaying.

Last night – Spain, Barcelona

The people of Spain crowded the streets in surprising jubilation, eager to see their newest leader. They had gone 2 years without a President so their excitement seemed perfectly appropriate for this event. Prancing children and gracious adults greeted France while he squeezed through the lively crowds. He grinned and waved at random citizens. Apart from the public, France could spot the extra protection quite easily. In fact, they did little to conceal themselves from the people, yet the public didn’t seem to mind. The Frenchman could almost say that the strolling snipers and alert
soldiers only spurred the people’s spirits, many of them thanking the extra protection and offering them food or gifts.

The people of Spain held faith that these men would send any assailants packing back home…in body bags.

France continued through the streets until he reached his destined location: a small fashionable restaurant with a bright red tiled roof. From inside the perky building France could see an impatient Spaniard anxiously searching for his “slightly” late friend.

“Best not keep him waiting,” said France to no one in particular. He entered the building, a quaint bell chime signaling his arrival, as he strode over to his seated friend and placed a hand on his back.

“Gah!,” squeaked Spain at the sudden contact on his back.

“Mon ami…are you alright?” How…peculiar. It wasn’t normal for his Spaniard friend to be so startled be a casual touch. Recognizing that voice after his initial surprise Spain turned around from his table, his posture relaxing at the worried look he was receiving from his old time friend.

“Ahh…mi amigo. Por favor, sientate.” (Ahh…my friend. Please, sit.) He gestured towards an empty seat across from him.

“Very well but…what is the matter Spa- I mean…Antonio. You did not answer my previous question.” Seated across from him, France could not help but notice subtle details on his friend that belied the all too forced smile on his face.

His eyes did not hold their usual luster. His voice was a few notes lower and his lips kept constantly shifting between hidden pain and fake happiness. And at random intervals France could make out a slight tremble to his movement. Despite the years being apart from his friend, France could still recognize a change in Spain’s demeanor.

“Francis no te preocupas. (Francis, don’t worry) No más tenía miedo que algo ha pasado contigo. (I was just worried that something happened to you) You DID take a long time getting here, verdad (true)?”

So, he was trying to divert the attention to his prolonged absence, was he? His eyes stared accusingly at the Frenchman but the stare was weak.

“Antonio, I have known you for a very long time. I know when something is wrong with you.” He placed his hand on the Spaniard’s shoulder as a sign of support. “S’il te plait. (Please) Tell me what is bothering you.” The jig was up. Antonio looked away in embarrassment, hesitation visible in every action, before he sighed.

“Dios mio. (My God) Francis, I was not lying about my worry for you. I was scared that…some “people” had targeted you.” France raised his eyebrow in question, urging him to continue. “…Estoy contento (I’m happy) to see you safe and…I’m happy for my people too. My country has stayed hopeful in awaiting our new leader.”

“If you are truly happy, why don’t you show it?”

“I am.”

“No! You are not! The Spain I knew would be practically singing about a better future. New hope! All I see here is a man who looks like he just returned from a war! Is that what you call happy!?”
No one paid much attention to the irritated Frenchman and his dejected Spanish companion. The restaurant stayed loudly abuzz with busy waiters and ordering customers.

“Perdón. (I’m sorry) You’re right. I would more than love to be out there,” he glanced out the window at the merry civilians, “and celebrate with my people. But…I can’t! I don’t understand why! Why…” The hand on his shoulder tightened in console.

“What is preventing you Antonio?” A sad smile crossed Spain’s face, his eyes lowering in defeat.

“I met my boss. I-I met him today. He’s such a nice guy, and my people…there’re so eager to follow him.” He almost started to tear up. “It…It almost seems like…it’s too good to be true. I really am happy! But! But…I don’t want to turn around and…find out that this is all just a dream.”

“A dream?”

“Si. I’m scared to close my eyes because…eventually I’ll have to open them. And when I do…it’ll just be another dream…”

“Mon ami…this…this isn’t a dream.” France rose from his seat and walked around the table to give his crestfallen friend a hug from behind. “If this was a dream then could you tell me that you couldn’t feel my hug? Could you say that my grip was just another fabricated dream?”

There was silence as Spain tried to gather his thought together. Finally, he lifted his head up and lightly chuckled.

“Are you sure this isn’t just an excuse to feel me up?”

France mock gasped at the scandalous idea, his arms returning to his person as he broke the hug. “Mon dieu! How could you accuse me of such a crime?” Spain continued to laugh, while France just smiled at his companion’s returning good nature.

“Haha…ha. Vamanos. (Let’s go) I heard Lovi might visit me soon. We should go buy some paella before he comes.”

“Ho ho ho~! Do I sense a hidden agenda here?”

“Shut up Francis.” Both men departed from the roaring restaurant in better spirits and headed towards the main plaza, packed with vendors of all kinds. Seeing Spain in a better mood had quelled most of France’s worry, as both nations spent the remainder of the late evening catching up on lost time.

Night quickly approached with the stealth of a cat. People and security alike bounded into the plaza, news spreading like wildfire that their leader was going to meet the public in 5 minutes. By then, Spain had introduced France to his newest leader and was proudly following the man through a government building.

“Todo está preparado? (Everything is ready)” asked the President.

“Si! Tu país te espera!” replied Spain.

On the third floor, the Spanish President strode towards a balcony, followed by a horde of officials, Spain and a strange Frenchman.

“Are you sure I can accompany you this far Spain?” whispered France to the nation next to him.
“Of course!” smiled Spain. “I ask for permission and they gave it to me. Now stop worrying and enjoy the best seats you have on the house.” Unwillingly to stand directly behind the new President, France lingered within the building, Spain and he watching from a distance as the Spanish leader greeted and addressed his people.

Nothing seemed out of the ordinary. Spain was just being a mother hen and this ceremony would not end as another dream.

No…

Both nations never predicted that a dream would have been much preferred over the next passing events.

Spain’s eyes widened fearfully and his breathe hitched as his world became a living nightmare. No one saw anything or heard any sounds. It wasn’t until the last moment that people screamed at the black helicopter that zoomed rapidly over their plaza. The officials behind the President immediately shielded his body and tried to lead him into the safety of the government building. Snipers and military men fired fiercely at the fading threat, spot lights unable to get a good shine on the helicopter, as it hovered silently over the panicking civilians. With all the protective guards surrounding the President and the retaliating military members, Spain truly thought that his boss would make it to him, safe and alive.

That was until he became crippled with a vengeful heart attack, his eyes racing towards his leaders now falling dead body.

One shot.

Despite the bullet proof vest under his clothing and the added human protection, just one shot was needed to kill Spain’s leader. Before he could make it inside the building, a precise sniper shot had been fired from the fleeing helicopter and entered the President’s back skull, the bullet exiting through his forehead and killing his instantly. The last thing Spain saw before losing consciousness was the terrifying fear imbedded in his boss’s glossy eyes as blood splatters decorated his head and face.

He didn’t pay attention to the gaping hole in his forehead or the way his body lay limp in the hands of screeching officials.

None of it mattered. Not even France’s trembling hold on his fading conscious. His world was deathly silent and his vision fading. But he never took his eyes off of his boss’s eyes. His eyes held fear not of a man who was about to be assassinated but rather, they held a look of someone who knew nothing BUT fear.

How did Spain see hope in those once bright brown eyes when only fear seemed to have been the only resident? That was his last thought before he blacked out and fell limp in France’s arms.

Passed the Spanish-French border and nearing an old building – 4:07 p.m.

“…eting there…”

France could still feel the violent tremors that racked the body of his unconscious Spanish friend.

“…anything else…do?”

So many people screaming and crying. Not even a day of government lasted in Spain as the
country was thrown back into a leaderless state.

“‘Excusez-moi…”

France had never felt so helpless as he sat there on the floor, cradling his suffering friend and trying to provide any sense of comfort in this cruel world.

“Monsieur!!”

Oh! Someone was talking to him. Broken out of his train of thought France looked around at his surroundings. It seemed like they had passed the border quite a while ago and were casually parked in front of a somewhat neglected building.

Wait…how did his chauffer provide the border patrol with his ID without informing him first? The perplexed look the chauffer was receiving from his current charge proved to him that the Frenchman had not heard a single word from him since they left from Paris.

“We have arrived, Monsieur.”

“We have?” France took a few seconds before recognizing the infrastructure as the same place his fellow nation had been rushed to after the assassination. “Right! We’re here!” He exited the vehicle promptly, barely giving his thanks to his driver as he made his way inside the place. Since last night, France and a handful of top officials who knew about Spain brought him to this place where he would be “safe” from any further attacks. No physical injuries were present on Spain though. A majority of nations who had their leaders killed usually suffered some form of a heart attack. The more sensitive ones however, would experience internal and external damage when attacked through their people or leaders.

The building atmosphere was tense and stuffy, but France was relieved when no movement was heard within the place. *Looks like Spain managed to get rid of all the people here.* Spain himself couldn’t move much with the paralyzing pain in his chest, the most he could manage was lie in bed and listen quietly to whoever asked him stupid questions about how he was feeling or if he could move yet.

*Nooo….Spain was just lying in bed motionless because he wanted to be lazy and his newest leader hadn’t just been murdered last night.* How was it possible that people could be so stupid at times?

To the top of the third level of the building and at the end of a claustrophobic hallway France wavered at the door. A million questions swirled in his mind about the assassins but as quickly as they came a calm touch of the papers in his cloak put them to rest. He turned the knob and peeked inside. Everything seemed clear.

The room was bare except for one “concealed” window, a bright blue rug on tiled floor, an old fashion dresser and a single bed currently occupied with what France wished to call, a dozing Spain. He took another mental note to scold the idiot who chose this room that gave any sniper a clear shot to the Spanish nation himself.

A few paces to the bed, France looked down on his friend who seemed to be reliving last night’s events with every twitch of his body. Unable to let him suffer any further emotional damage, France gingerly shook Spain.

“Mon ami. Wake up. I’m back.” Eyelids fluttered tiredly to reveal dull green eyes, recognition taking a while to register who France was. Lowering his head closer to the incapacitated man in bed, France spoke softly.
“It is alright to talk. No one is here. So it is safe to…” His hands shuffled in his cloak before withdrawing the papers. “…to take action.” Upon seeing the papers in the blond’s hands, Spain gasped silently in shock.

“France! What…what are you…going to do…with them?”

“Isn’t it obvious Spain? I’m going to call every nation out there!” He pointed determinedly at the covered window.

“…Porque?” (…Why?) That question alone seemed to have triggered France’s bottled up anger.

“Why? Why!! I can’t take this anymore, THATS why! The assassinations! Us fearing for our leaders! Our own SAFETY!! Its about time we took action! If we don’t, whose to say these MONSTERS won’t find us next? Then WHAT!!?” One look at Spain wincing in pain and France immediately regretted snapping on his old friend. Yelling at an injured man…France could almost hear the cackles of the silent killers, laughing at the mess they caused. He turned his face towards the window in shame.

“Please…forgive me for my outburst. I’d never be angry at you Spain. You’re the victim here! I’m angry at the bastards who did this to you!” growled France, his hands curling up into tight fists.

“E-Está bien. (Its good) You’re angry. A lot of people are. But…but do you know…what you’re going to do? When you call everyone?”

“Yes. When everyone can meet up with us we’re going to start our own personal man hunt for these assassins. We can’t just sit back and wait for another one of us to be attacked.” He turned around to find the brown haired nation feebly trying to get up from bed.

“Spain! Stop! Your still injured!” He tried to ease him down but, somehow Spain found the strength to push his hand to the side.

“Don’t worry about me France. I can handle this.” He eased himself into a sitting position before facing France’s concerned gaze. He grinned as best as he could through the burning pain in his chest.

“Mira? (See?) I told you I could handle this. I’m not weak France. I want to be there when everyone meets up. …I NEED to be there! I used to be the Spanish empire you know.” France stared at him a bit longer then smiled.

“Of course you’ll be there.”

“Glad to hear that! Now…can I see those papers?” He grabbed the offered papers and scanned the list of numbers. So many nations…There were no names written down with the numbers but any nation would easily decipher which numbers belonged to who.

The military style numbers belonged to Germany. The dainty yet childishly cute style came from Italy. Simple but eloquent numbers identified England. Every different style pointed out who was who. And the list just continued…

“Una pregunta France. (A question France)” France who had been searching his clothes for a missing item stopped.

“Oui? (Yes?)” He received a puzzled look from his bedridden friend.

“Did you lose your communicator again?”
It took a lot of self control from France to not laugh nervously. “What? No. No I didn’t. I’m simply checking my clothes for any misplaced items.” Spain continued to stare blankly at France.

“Was that really your question because I’m going to need those papers back.”

“Ah! No!” Spain’s eyes lit up. “About calling the nations…Are you going to include other continents or just ours?”

_Wow. What a good question._ France momentarily stopped while Spain handed the papers over. A glance at the ludicrous amount of numbers listed on the papers imposed a lot of time and work for him. “You have a good point, mon chéri,” mumbled France.

He skimmed the numbers before deciding his next thoughts. “For this meeting, I will include a majority of Europe, any willing Asian nations, Australia, and maybe Russia if we can find a goal to agree on.”

“And the others?”

“Most of Africa is out of the question. They have their own problems and it seems like the assassins ignore them. The same goes for South America.”

“And North America…”

Both men stopped and shared a moment of silence for the fallen continent. It was known by the whole world that both the U.S. and Canada had crumbled because of countless misunderstandings and misguided foreign policy. It helped some nations to know that the USA and Canada had no personified nations to represent them. At least this way, the nations wouldn’t have to stand by and helplessly watch the destruction of two fellow nations, as they died with their country.

Hands shuffled once again under clothing, France anxiously looking for his communicator. The cell phone like device was only available to people of high importance or status. Technological advances were very slow, what with the eradication of a once prosperous society in the U.S., so this device, called the communicator, served well for its time.

Basic functions gave the user the ability to call anyone in the world, anywhere, anytime, with a walkie talkie pattern to communication. So long as the connection remained active as many as three people could converse at a time, but besides that and signaling the current time, the communicator did little else.

“I finally found you,” exclaimed France. The blasted thing was hidden in a secret pocket, usually the one France always forgot existed.

_Qué te dije? (What did I tell you?) You did lose it!”_

“Such a lie! I did not lose it. I misplaced it.” France ignored the Spaniard who shook his head in disbelief and looked to the papers in hand. It was time he called together all the nations who had suffered long enough from endless assassinations.

_London, United Kingdom – London streets – 4:20 p.m._

After his “pleasant” discussion with BBC, England had returned back to the building that kicked him out and decided that he would get more information from his people, one way or another. He had tried to reason with them why they should allow him to be involved in their discussions.

They talked.
That didn’t work.

Then they started to bicker, England threatening to inform his top officials how they were refusing him access to significant information. In the end the angry Briton was victorious, grumbling agents and officers giving in to his demands. Turns out, they were planning on taking protective measurements for their royal family, since they had encountered suspicious activity in their computer programs and files.

Once told, the green-eyed Briton grew more furious at having been denied this vital information. He argued a bit more with the agency, exchanged a few lovely words and punctually stomped out of their building. Currently he was walking through London’s streets, allowing the cooling temperatures and frosty breeze to calm his temper down.

“Fucking arses! How could they assume that the Queen’s safety was none of my concern!? Me! The bloody Brit-!” His angry rant was halted at the sound of vibrations coming from inside his coat pocket. “I swear to God, if its those prats again with more hidden “information” I’m going to-”

He answered the call.

“Am I talking to an American or a Canadian?”

It was the code! He also gasped at the familiar voice of a certain Frenchman. He quickly looked for cover and ran into another phone booth, being the only place of little noise and attention.

“No. There’re all dead.” It was safe to talk.

“Ho ho! Its so wonderful to hear from you again England!”

“Yeah…I wish I could say the same for you.”

“Quick to be rude? Tsk tsk! And to think I was going to ask if you wanted to join me and the others in an important meeting…”

“Shut the hell up Frog and get to the damn point! You know, just as well as I do, that these calls are for important business.”

There was silence on the other side before France replied in a completely dead serious tone. “We’re going to discuss how to deal with these assassinations. And how to capture the perpetrators. Alive or dead.”

England almost choked at the blunt reply, quickly regretting his previous mocking comments. “France, you-”

“Its alright, mon cheri. Your still invited.”

England faltered before, “D-Did you call anyone else?”

“Non. I was going to call Italy next and continue from there.”

“Very well. I would be more than happy to attend this meeting France.” Both nations further discussed plans for the meeting. Who was coming. Where to meet. How long it would take. Their end result would call every affected nation together to attend a meeting that neither Alfred or Matthew would see coming, as both brothers ended their day with a clean house and peacefully retired to their bed.
All around them, bodies were falling and people were screaming. The battlefield was no place for children. Both twin brothers had been separated from their faceless caretaker and were lost amongst the ocean of bodies that littered the once quaint forest. Matthew did everything he could to ignore the people dying all around him. A punctured heart. A severed head. Pitiful gasps of air escaping from people whose lungs had been pierced. He cowered in the middle of it all, curling up into a little ball and pretending that a mutilated man did not just land inches away from his body. His bloody hand reached towards the sniveling blond before another child ran towards him and kicked his hand away from his brother. “Leave me brother alone!!,” yelled the child. His hand dropped from the impact and he died. Matthew, who was coaxed by Alfred into standing up was soon running behind his brother who kept a tight grip on his hand. “Don’t worry Mattie! As long as you’re with me I’ll always protect you!” Yelled Alfred over the chaos of the battle. Sprinting across the forest and dodging clashing men, the brothers distanced themselves from the fighting and disappeared into the forest. The only trace they left behind were two ripped red ribbons. The ribbons flowed with the dying wind and landed near a pair of boots, where a shaking hand gingerly picked them up…

“WAIT BROTHER!” Screamed Matthew as he woke up from his nightmare. He sat up from bed, panting slightly, while movement shuffled to his side.

“Mhm…What the hell Mattie. I was having a good dream…” From under a mass of blankets and pillows Alfred’s head peaked up from his pillow, his eyes sleepily staring at Matthew.

“I-…I’m sorry Al.”

“‘Nother nightmare?”

“Yeah…”

“Same one?”

“…Yes,” replied Matthew tiredly.

“Dude, what is wrong with you? The only nightmares you should be having are ones about soul sucking ghosts. Not about pointless battle back in the dinosaur times.”

Once his heart beat was under control Matthew grabbed a pillow and tossed it at his brother’s face. “You jerk. I can’t help it if I have nightmares about people almost killing us. It just happens!”

“Well…” Alfred removed the pillow blocking his face. “Think of it this way. We’re already the bad guys Mattie. So that means that no one can hurt us.”

Matthew thought about what his twin just said.

“Alfred…Your logic makes no sense whatsoever.” From the side of his peripheral vision Matthew could see a 1000 watt smile on Alfred’s face, despite having the full moon as their only source of light.

“I know.” Grinned Alfred. “But it helps you go to sleep, doesn’t it?” He wrapped his arms around his brother and fell back onto the pillows, he weight dragging his quieter brother along with him.
He was truly blessed to have such a good brother, thought Matthew while giggles escaped his lips. It seemed like the nightmare was nothing but a faded thought now.

“You always know what to say to calm me down Al,” whispered Matthew. His brother, meanwhile, was getting comfortable again in his nest of pillow and blankets.

“…I…” Mattie stopped then continued. “…Thank you brother. For everything…” Passed all the intricate bed sheets Matthew watched Alfred’s grinning face emerge from his second home, his arm stretching to throw a stray blanket over Matthew’s head.

“Hehehe! Sure thing sis! Now go to sleep.”

“Hey…” It gave the Canadian some satisfaction when he heard Alfred yelp like a girl, after finding his receding arm and pinching it. Both brothers chuckled lightly in the poorly lit room, their bodies shifting before Matthew finally found an entrance into Alfred’s cocoon.

Quite quickly, Alfred fell back asleep, his arms wrapped protectively around Matthew, who was warmly nestled in his twins embrace.

Time passed by with the pace of a handicap snail. Between the dropping temperature and the funny noises Alfred was making, Matthew had yet to fall asleep. Matthew would admit that he was accustomed to his brothers sleeping patterns.

Alfred had earlier broken their embrace and was asleep with his arms and legs spread, eagle style.

Yup…definitely used to his brothers sleeping patterns.

At moments when the whole world was silent, Matthew could hear his brothers heartbeat; strong but steady. He snuggled closer to his brother when he noticed something wet drip onto his hair. Up near Alfred’s face, Matthew saw a thin river of drool running from his mouth and staining the pillow he slept on.

And you wonder why your pillow is wet every morning, thought Matthew, his hand reaching up to wipe the drool away with Alfred’s blanket. Maybe he could save the pillow if Alfred would wake up and stop drowning it.

“Brother. Are you awake?” Whispered Matthew. He received a few sleepy moans in response.

“Alfred?” Still nothing. Looks like Alfred was dead to the world right now. Probably dreaming about home and hamburgers, pondered Matthew. As if in response to the thought, Alfred emitted childish giggles and mumbles.

“S’nuff for now…” Then drooled more.

“How are we even related?” Questioned Matthew. He halted the drools flow by stuffing another pillow close to Alfred’s face then returned to his brother’s side, arms wrapped around his waist. Soon, the room quieted again, giving the Canadian a chance to think out loud, to his sleeping twin.

“Alfred…why is it that I’m usually the one waking up from nightmares? We both had the same childhood so why aren’t you reliving that same day? In the battlefield…” Matthew paused in thought before continuing.

“I’m sure it’s the start of our childhood but…” He smiled sadly. “For some reason, you don’t seem to have any recollection of our early past.”
He tightened his grip as if he was afraid to lose him. “I’ll always have some vague memory brought up again but you…its like…any memory of that day is non existent in your head. I…I feel so lonely when I’m the only one who remembers.”

He gazed up at his sleeping brother.

“Everyday, the memories get more fuzzy and every time I tell you…you just smile back. Doesn’t it bother you that you can’t remember your past? Every time I look at you…I feel the memories slipping more. Are you always grinning because you can’t remember?”

He buried his head into Alfred’s shoulder.

“Maybe…your waiting for me to forget. Is that it? Your smile and your laughter…it makes the nightmares go away and…and I feel better. Every time.”

He yawned.

“Is it really ok for us to ignore our past? To erase where we came from and forget how we survived?” He closed his eyes.

“I guess…I can’t stop myself from forgetting. Not if it means you have to stop smiling.”

He snuggled closer to his brother and began slipping into a blissful sleep, mumbles ending his lingering thoughts.

“Don’t stop…smiling… …Alfred.”

Tomorrow both brothers would wake up and leave for the territory down south. The United States of America.

Chapter End Notes

It’s a weird code but its basically a tribute to the fallen nations. Normal people who answer the phone wouldn’t guess it’s a code because they think the person on the other line is either a nut or just called the wrong number. And if a nation can’t talk at the moment he/she can just say, “Wrong caller.”

Thank you for reading!
What He Called Home

Chapter Summary

Welcome to Alfred's home! Alfred and Matthew visit the U.S. on their "vacation" before getting ready with their next plans. Italy is stuck at church and France can't seem to contact 2 specific nations.

Chapter Notes

I did warn people that there was some torture in this story, right? If anybody wants to skip that part then avoid the "Behind a Trash Can" scene. Warnings of language and some torture.
Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia.

What He Called Home

Next Morning – Canada – 6:15 a.m.

The next morning came peacefully. Kumijaro decided not to suffocate Alfred in his sleep so the brothers woke up without any incidents. The day commenced quickly. They got dressed. Alfred and Mathew donned their favorite outfits dating back from WW2. There was no need for disguises in the US. No one knew who they were either. They ate some breakfast. Matthew with his pancakes, Alfred, surprisingly, nothing. Said something about saving himself for the best meal of the day. They gathered their stuff and exited their home, Kumijaro following behind.

"Alright Kumajara, me and Al are going to be gone for a while so please watch over the place for us." Matthew and Alfred walked around the house and passed a small field of growing crops before halting near an interestingly large shrubbery. Alfred started to remove the branches.

"Make sure to deal with any suspicious people, ok?" lectured Matthew. Kumijaro gave his master a bored stare. Like he hadn't dealt with any trespassers before.

"Al, aren't you going to say a few words to Liberty?" Above the trees was a large bald eagle, looking down on Alfred and Matthew. Alfred grunted with disinterest, too busy working on the large bush.

"What for? HE doesn't need any orders from me. And don't call him that either! He already hates the fact that I won't change his name." It was an accident! How was he suppose to know that his pet eagle was actually a male...

"I swear, you and your eagle are a VERY weird pair. You get along and then you don't." Matthew shook his head. He joined his brother, working on the bush, until the last branch fell away. In the absence of all the foliage stood a sharp P-51 D Mustang along with another large shrub behind it.
These two had to make themselves more adept at reaching their targets after all.

"Hahaha! There's no better way to travel then by air!" proclaimed Alfred, hugging his trusty plane. Matthew rolled his eyes.

"Yeah, yeah. Don't forget that we have to pick up our newest order from our…generous friend later on. I still can't believe that a bullet managed to damage something on my helicopter…" Matthew grumbled. With his brother at the piloting seat and items stashed inside, Matthew boarded the plane and glanced one last time at the remaining large shrub. Engine roared and tires rolled onto a long, narrow path of grass before flight lifted them into the sky. They flew towards the south east, leaving behind their home in the Yukon Territory and aiming to reach New York City by late afternoon. Passed the forests of British Columbia and entering the states of America, Alfred grinned at the familiar lands below. Washington, Idaho, Montana, and North Dakota. Not much had changed with these nature dominated states. Closer to major cities though, Alfred and Matthew could see where bombs had been dropped. Major cities like Detroit had been smeared off the face of the world. The only reason why New York survived was because people actually returned back to the ruins and made a "living" from there. Nonetheless, Alfred could care less about the past war with Russia and China, so long as his lands were intact. The people be damned.

Seven hours later, the plane began its descent into a sparse forest not too far from the city where flaming smoke lashed at the sky.

"Is the city on fire again or is it just another gang war?"

Alfred laughed at his brother's question. "Neither. Its their welcoming signal to us!" They landed carefully some distance from the city in a forest, the plane coming to a halt within the shadows of dense trees.

"I'm serious."

"Alright, if you need to know, it looked like another gang war, but judging by how big the fire was, I'm gonna say the mafia was involved in this one."

"Really?" They disembarked from the plane with their packs and started walking towards the burning city.

"Pretty sure. Probably those annoying rival gangs in Chicago trying to claim some territory over here. God knows how there're like cockroaches. You bomb the shit out of their city yet they STILL manage to rebuild some system up there."

"New York's the same way." Retorted Matthew.

"I know. But I'm used to these cockroaches." That and he had a stronger connection to the criminals here.

Into the city, its surroundings rotted with tension and misery. Many stores and shops laid broken and abandoned, the few surviving businesses armed to the teeth in case any "customers" had ulterior motives. The few people who wandered the streets were aimless, most of them on drugs. Others were hopeless. The rest of the people in the city were criminals, prepared to attack anyone for what they had or working for the mafia and other gangs. The environment was like how Hollywood had dramatized so long ago in the past. Ruins and rubble.

Up ahead, a raging fire caught the brother's attention, smoldering bodies sprawled on the floor while cars burned in the middle of the street.
"Yup! Definitely the work of the Mafia," muttered Alfred. *Every gang knows that the Mafia own New York. Why they keep coming back...I don't even know anymore.* He nudged a charred body, the person's mouth open in an endless scream that only death could hear.

"You do realize we can't go further into the city until this fire dies down...right?" Alfred kept nudging the dead sizzling body.

"Alfred! What ARE you doing?"

"Huh? Oh...nothing~!" He turned away from the body. *What a way to go. Haven't seen a body like this since...WW2... Oh look! A bar! *Well, that's fine! Once this fire is gone we'll go buy our supplies.* HAMBURGERS!*

He started walking towards the nearby bar, a merry bounce to his step. *For now, lets just celebrate our vacation with a drink!"

Matthew shook his head in amusement. *Your such a dork Alfred.* He followed after his twin.

Inside the murky bar, Alfred ran straight for the counter, already ordering their usual. Matthew lingered behind, staring at a young man cornered by two rugged Americans. He slipped by the quivering Canadian and whispered near his ear.

"If you don't clean up your shit and act like a REAL American, they'll eat you alive out here," Then left for the counter. From behind, it seemed like that did the trick as he heard harsh swear words leave the mans lips. Then he heard an exchange of punches and a table crashing. If the poor Canadian could survive this "initiation" he might survive in the U.S.

Matthew sat next to Alfred who was already finishing his second drink.

"Another Canadian?" he whispered.

"Mhm." Hummed Matthew.

The country had no government or authority, besides the Mafia. American's lived off of pure instincts. Survival of the fittest. Any Canadian left in their country always had a hard time blending in the US, whether living there or just passing by. If they wanted to survive they had to do their best to pass themselves off as an American since they were constantly sought out by their neighbors, who saw them as easy prey.

"Hehe! I think this one might live," commented Alfred, nodding his head back at the Canadian. "I think he just killed one of my guys." Sure enough, there was one guy on the ground, blood seeping from a fatal head wound.

"Heh. Don't underestimate Canadians," mumbled Matthew, hiding a smirk behind a long swig from his drink. They joked about his chances for survival, even placing bets on whether he'd last a day in NYC. Matthew for his survival, Alfred against. It's not like they cared for their people. They were merely entertaining.

It was the sound of their laughter, a sharp contrast to the dead atmosphere of the bar, that attracted...unwanted attention.

They were aware of four robust, dirt men eying them. Slowly, they all got up from their stools and sauntered over to the twins.

"Hey! What's so funny over here?" One man teased, his left eye proudly revealing a nasty scar
slashed across, leaving him blind in that eye. The other 3 nameless men nodded dumbly in agreement. Scarred eye was definitely their leader. When the men began to place their ugly hands on the brother's shoulders, they both instantly knew that they were asking for trouble. They silently glanced at one another, mentally conveying one thought through mischievous, unnoticeable smiles.

*Let's play with these idiots.*

Alfred feigned naivety as he turned to the four men, a silly smile on his face. "Oh, hey! I was just telling my buddy here a funny joke!"

The men smirked, thinking how lucky they were to stumble upon these poor Canadians. "Oh really? You mind telling us the joke?" asked scar eye, his hands lifting the boys from their seats. Matthew looked "worriedly" at his brother and asked in an "uncertain" voice, "Umm…where are we going?"

"Don't worry friends," scar eye chimed in a pleasant tone. "We're just taking a trip outside and away from this dump. You know dangerous people hang around here?"

"No! Really?" *OK Alfred…I think you're overacting now.*

The 4 men led the twins outside, said twins bringing their drinks along.

"Can't be wasteful these days," chirped the blue eyed one.

At the end of an unsightly alleyway, the thugs stopped and pulled out their weapons. Two semi-revolvers and two knife wielders.

"Alright, pretty boys! Take every valuable item you have off your person and hand them over." The leader smirks evilly. "And…maybe we'll make your deaths painless."

Alfred huffed and crossed his arms, completely ignoring their "life-threatening" situation. "Aw shit! I totally forgot how the joke went!" To his right, Matthew rolled his eyes in annoyance. The leader scrunched his eyebrows, unaware that he was lowering his gun in confusion.

"What the fuck is wrong with you two? Don't you know this is a stick up?"

The more talkative of the twins shrugged before exclaiming, "Wait! I know magic tricks! You like magic tricks?" Alfred grinned at the bewildered faces staring back at them.

"Are you some kind of stupid or what!" Matthew could see that his brother's antics were beginning to test the thug's patience.

"Look! Nothing in my hands!" Minus the drink the blond had forgotten about.

"Kill them boys!" Ordered one eye.

In the moments the thugs rushed the brothers, Alfred pulled out a hidden gun, stuffed in the sleeve that held his drink. Before the gun wielding men could shoot, Alfred pulled the trigger two times, killing the arrogant boss and one of his nameless men.

He turned to his counterpart, who was already standing over a lifeless body. While his brother was taking out the gun wielders, Matthew had grabbed a knife heading towards Alfred and reversed the weapon onto the thug, forcing the man to take his own life. The last thug trembled on the alley floor, having been tripped by the Canadians leg when he attempted to attack the blue eyed twin.
"Ta-Da~! Two dead bodies and a gun!" Alfred bowed to the nonexistent, invisible audience that cheered him on.

"Alfred! There's still one left." Stupid delusional idiot.

"Oh?" The thug was staring at him like he was insane. Alfred crouched onto his hind legs to get a better view of the fallen guy.

"Awesome trick huh?" He took a sip of his drink while his other hand twirled his gun playfully and very close to the lads face. The thug on the floor, on closer inspection, was actually younger than he appeared, his fearful brown eyes glancing at his dead comrades. Ignoring common sense the 19-ish boy destroyed any hopes of a quick death when he tried to stab his knife into Alfred's grinning face.

Inches away from his nose, the knife never penetrated skin, as Matthew's angry grip on the boys arm, ceased any harm to Alfred. The squatting twin chided the boy with a wave of his index finger still holding the gun.

"Shouldn't have done that," he said in a sing song voice. His other hand occupied with his drink revealed a thumb that pointed back at his brother's figure. "Now you've gone and upset ma brother." He placed his gun wielding hand on his heart in a dramatic wounded fashion, as if upsetting his brother hurt him emotionally.

"Alfred? Shut up." Said Matthew, surprising calmly despite his crushing grip on the frantic man's arm in front of them. Alfred snickered and deposited his gun into his sleeve. His quieter twin handed over his drink to his now free hand.

"Hold this, will ya? I have to teach someone here, why you should NEVER attack family."

"Fine, fine. But don't forget that I'm still here...waiting for you!" It was always safe to remind Mattie that he didn't have enough patience waiting for him while he "played" with their victims. He walked off to the alley entrance to keep guard. Nobody needed to find his brother when he was… busy.

Dragging the screaming thug turned victim behind a nauseous trash can, Matthew easily jerked the knife away from him and decided to play his favorite game. Uncle.

Behind a Trash Can

One arm holding the struggling human against a mucky wall, Matthew glared at his brother's assailant.

"Here's the problem kiddo…" The Canadian mentally cursed at the word "kiddo." His brother's vocabulary was very contagious. "...When you attack my brother, I'm always his shadow who comes to his rescue, whether he likes it or not. And I really don't like to think how life would be without him." There is no way I could go on living if Alfred wasn't around with me…

"So as punishment, we're going to play a little game." The captive lad increased his struggle at the mention of a "game." These were the people who surpassed every criminal in their dying city! They weren't human! They were demons!

"The rules are simple. I cut you until you cry Uncle. Then I stop."

The boy yelped in response. "Uncle!"
The Canadian shook his head in disappointment. "We haven't even started yet." The knife dug deep into the boys arm and ran up his shoulder.

"That's going to result in a penalty." Spoke Matthew through piercing screams. Once the game properly started, a pattern seemed to echo from the alley's mouth.

Uncle, then a scream. Uncle, then another scream. Five minutes later, Matthew paused in his game to observe his handiwork. He had done such a wonderful job on the boys face! Flaps of skin hung limply from his mutilated face, his mouth pouring an endless flow of blood. His sight was no longer there when Matthew tried to copy the scar he had seen on the thug's boss. And his nose? Well, the Canadians theory that noses were unnecessary was brutally proved wrong with a gaping hole on the 19 year olds face.

Through sightless eyes, the young man trembled with pain as stinging red tears dripped down his tattered face. He attempted to mumble out Uncle again when suddenly he was dropped onto the germ-infested ground. Matthew neatly cleaned the red knife on the boys blood soaked shirt when an interesting thought came to him.

"Whoops! I forgot to mention that you're suppose to say Uncle in French. Sorry about that!" Grinned the blond.

His victim sobbed brokenly in reply.

Alley entrance – 4:35 p.m.

The sound of clicking footsteps caught Alfred's attention when his brother emerged from the shadows of the dank alley. His eyes held such a peaceful look…

"No one's ever going to hurt you brother."

Alfred smiled. "Is he still alive?"

"Barely."

"Mkay…Let's see what you did this time…" He handed his brother two empty glasses and vanished into the shadows.

"Alright but- HEY! Al, you jerk! You finished my drink!" Yelled Matthew, sprinting after his brother.

"S'not my fault I was thirsty! Besides, you're the one that was taking forever too!" Echoed the bodiless reply. Back at the end of the alley, Alfred was squatting on his knees and was lifting the bloody chin of the sightless boy.

"Damn Mattie! You really did a number on this guy!"

"He deserved what he got," growled Matthew. "Did you already forget that he was going to do the same thing to you?"

A gurgling sound came from the man's mouth, followed by blood that stained Alfred's fingers.

"Al! Don't touch him! He's dirty!"

"Calm down, calm down Mattie! It's not like I'm going to get AIDS or something." Ignoring his brother's complaint, Alfred withdrew his gun and tightened his grip on the chin of the sightless
"Hey kid! I can do you a big favor right now, but in return you got to answer me one question... What do you see in front of you?" More blood dripped from his mouth as the boy moaned out his reply.

"M-M...Mon...sters..." Alfred cocked his gun and firmly placed it on the victim's forehead.

"Good enough!" he cheered.

And pulled the trigger.

**Rome, Italy – Inside a cathedral – 4:47 p.m.**

"It should be clear in here..." Treading passed rows or pews, a small Italian creped through a poorly lit cathedral, a heavy book under one arm. He looks around aimlessly, hoping to see nobody inside, while heading towards the alter. Everything was silent and still, numerous saints looking down on the Italian nation who quietly sat behind the alter. Placing the textbook down on his lap, Italy sighed in relief at finally finding some secluded area, away from everyone. He knew he wasn't very useful as a nation to his government which is why he allowed his brother, Romano, to handle the work. However, constantly worried for the boy's safety, his officials gave the red haired nation a very busy position in the church. They had solved one problem. Italy was useful. They figured killing two birds with one stone was best when they made the cathedral and various other churches, his new prison. What was left of his government could not afford to lose their nations too so the church became the next best shelter for the boy.

But with such a demanding job, Italy would admit to missing earlier days. Times when he could go outside without hidden escorts and times when he could contact his friends. He would even go as far as to admit that he missed working with Japan and Germany during WW2. He especially missed Germany...

Somehow he would have to find a way to contact his strict friend again; maybe beg an official? Italy looked down at the book resting in his lap. If anybody knew he was hiding here, he would be in a load of trouble for skipping his clerical duties. The book he carried with him would evoke a completely different punishment if officials discovered that he had it.

Countless years of being denied contact with his fellow nations, at last, caused Feliciano to learn a thing or two about how to secretly do things behind his governments back. It was nothing drastic really. Italy had simply borrowed a world history book from a library collection. The only real problem he faced was that his government officials didn't want him reading that stuff. Why exactly, Italy wasn't sure. Even his twin brother, who worked with their officials, was limited to knowledge of the outside world. Romano usually summarized that their officials did this for their best, although Italy knew his brother secretly missed Spain.

Pages turned near the glowing alter as Italy searched for the beginning chapter of North American history. Before the Italian twins became isolated they were vaguely aware of what was happening in their international community. Last they remember, around 1953, there was increasing tension between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Someone important had been killed and a new war started. In the end, they heard that China and Canada were dragged in, along with various other nations before the losing party became mainly the U.S. and Canada. Ever since then, life got worse with the start of political assassinations. Besides the minimum basic facts, Italy and Romano knew nothing else about the chain of events that created the world they lived in. They still couldn't figure out why Russia didn't rule the world.
Thus, came this textbook for further explanation to the disastrous past.

"Ve~ Here it is." He found the beginning chapter, consisting almost half of the book itself. Right about to dive into the past of North America, Italy stopped upon hearing the cathedral doors rumbling wide open before slamming shut.

"Feliciano! FELICIANO! I know your in here!" Yelled Romano.

"Eep! He found me already?" mumbled Italy. Yeah...besides avoiding the church members and his officials, Italy also had to hide from his furious brother. He tended to get very angry whenever his twin went missing or couldn't be found.

"FELICIANO! ANSWER ME NOW OR I'LL-!" There really was no point to staying hidden because eventually Romano would find Feliciano and the consequences would be so much worse.

A flimsy hand waved from the alter as Italy squeaked out a reply. "I'm here fratello…"

Already, Italy could hear the angry stoms getting closer to his hiding spot. Maybe the church atmosphere would help lessen his brother's wrath? Italy clasped his hands together in a silent prayer.

"Feliciano! What are you doing hiding in-?" Romano halted in mid sentence when his eyes landed on the open textbook. Specifically, he was staring at the chapter title.

Before he could snap at Italy for disobeying their government's orders, the younger twin lunged forward and covered his mouth with his hands; the textbook spilling onto the marble floor.

"Shuush! I'm sorry fratello, but I couldn't let anybody find out," whispered Italy.

Ripping the invasive hands off his mouth, Romano growled at his brother and grabbed the fallen textbook.

"Not only did you do this behind our governments back, you did this behind MY back!" He shook the heavy book for emphasis on the betrayal. "Are you fucking brain dead or what?"

"I'm sorry! I thought you'd be against this…" mumbled Italy.

"I AM!"

Despite his brothers rage Italy calmly reached for the book, a sad smile plastered on his face. "Romano…I know I'm not very useful and I can often be a burden but…I don't want to be sheltered anymore."

"Who said you were shel-!"

"You know its true! ...Aren't you tired of being left in the dark? I'm not the only sheltered one. And, I really miss my friends…"

"You just want to go with that potato bastard, don't you?"

"Don't you miss Antonio?" That set off the last trigger in Romano, who threw the book at Italy.

"I DO NOT MISS THAT TOMATO BASTARD!"

"I heard he misses you-"
"Like I give a damn!"

So even the church couldn't stop his brother from swearing. "…Weren't you going to visit him? Someone was kind enough to inform me that Spain's new leader was killed two nights ago." Romano froze immediately at having been reminded of the Spaniards condition.

"I'm sure it would cheer him up to see you after the loss of his leader…" The older twin crossed his arms and looked away but Italy could see worry written on his face.

"And what the hell does this have to do with you reading a forbidden book?"

"Ve~ I'm going to start doing what I think is right for my own people. It's not right for us to not know what happened in the past. And every time our leaders get killed one of us suffers but we're never told anything else." His twin brother remained silent.

"I'm tired of not knowing brother…Of not being allowed contact with my own kind," started Italy. "I'm going to start reading these books. And I'm going to find a way to meet the others. Fratello, it would make me so happy if you'd join me…" Romano grumbled some incoherent words and then turned to his brother, a scowl on his face.

"Tch! If I left you alone for even an hour I'd probably hear from officials about how they caught you at the border hiding in the front passenger seat of a stolen car."

"Romano! I would never steal a car."

"I know you wouldn't! It doesn't mean the driver will tell you the cars stolen though."

"Fratello…I'm not-"

"Be quiet already! Are you going to read that damn book or what?"

"Aww! Thank you Romano!" Cheered Italy as he tackled his twin into a bear hug.

"Ack! Get off me you idiot!" Both brothers rolled around on the church floor, one clinging on as he giggled, the other vigorously trying to remove his twin while he yelled swear words that sane people would never consider saying in a church.

The cathedral echoed with their voices until a third noise interrupted their surroundings. Feliciano and Romano froze in place when their communicators vibrated inside Romano's uniform. They weren't suppose to receive calls. Their own people didn't even know the brothers were given the device before isolation cut their ties to the other nations. Both nations lifted themselves from the floor and gave each other confused looks. Italy withdrew the little gadget from his brother's pocket and answered the call.

"H-H-Hello?"

"Am I talking to an American or a Canadian?"

The code?

Listening to the familiar French accent on the other line, Italy eagerly replied back, his other hand motioning for his brother to make sure the doors were locked.

"Ve! No, there're all dead. I'm so happy to hear from you France! Romano and I were just talking about you guys and…"
New York City – After Three Weeks – 3:47 p.m.

Nimble hands rummaged through various items stashed in the plane, before retrieving a red book and opening it.

Matthew's Diary

(You better NOT dare read this Alfred!)

**Entry: April 21st, 2003** – We made it to Alfred's home. Had a nice welcoming party. A pretty fire show, met a fellow Canadian, than got ushered outside a bar by 4 thugs. Needless to say, we took care of them quick. We left an alley and saw that the fire was finally dead. Alfred was so excited; I was practically dragged by him down the streets as he ran through the road, looking for his usual stores. We left a store without any beef in its inventory. It's a times like these that I wish I had a camera to take a picture of the lady's face when Alfred said he’d buy all her beef. (Note to self: Ask Al to buy a camera) Sucks that I had to carry most of HIS purchase. (Stupid Alfred!) Alfred is so careless… I swear. He grabbed what looked like a glob of meat and started cooking the stuff in a burning trash can. Then, God knows how, he made a couple of hamburgers using ingredients that I was sure we're in my pack. (How did he get them without me noticing!) They were pretty good though. I think I'll tell him to cook them in a more sanitary fire next time. We were suppose to go back to the plane and camp out there but Al though it'd be nicer to "stroll" by the alleys. Me carrying all of HIS stuff and him just cuddling a hamburger to his face! Interestingly enough, a kid, maybe around 8 or 9, tried to snatch his hamburger away. Typical urchin. They fought over it until the kid kicked Al in the shin and ran away, empty handed. Should have seen that one coming, Al. Once he was done yelling obscene curses at the sky, he dragged me, yet again, to find the kid. And we did. Along with his little brother. I really pitied the two, struggling to survive in this hell hole. The look on Alfred's face pretty much said the same. Now we're going to sleep in our makeshift camp with the addition of 2 kids. Oh Alfred…you're such a sucker for little kids.

**April 22nd, 2003** – Woke up to a pair of bright green eyes staring at me. It was the younger brother and he looked like he was about to wet himself. Then HIS older brother came and shoved him behind like I had rabies. Am I that scary when I wake up? Al cooked us all a fine breakfast of hamburgers. (Although I miss my pancakes…) Over breakfast, Alfred managed to get the boys talking, although the older brother keeps glaring at us. Figures; older brothers. But secretly, I want to laugh at his protective nature. He reminds me so much of Al and me, when we were younger… Like a happy little family (well maybe not the older kid who STILL glares at us) we explored the city. Avoided the crazy people, threw ourselves to the ground when the usual drive by's occurred. Tragically, Al and I found the decaying body of the Canadian guy from the bar yesterday, a few bullets lodged in his chest. Looked like he didn't duck when a drive by happened. And Al won the bet…which SUCKS because I lost half of my spending money. Was it really hard for the guy to duck on time!

**April 23rd, 2003** – Alfred left early in the morning today. That idiot didn't even TELL me! Just left a stupid note saying that he was going to buy the rest of our supplies which is stupider because he has more money now, after our bet! He better buy some useful items and not useless crap! He knows, as much as I do, that our money is limited! We don't do anymore hired hits and selling secret government documents is getting harder to access with the extra security I'm finding on computers and their programs. Besides our limit on spending…I can't stand not having Alfred around. He's out there alone, without me there to back him up if anything bad happens. What if someone tries to hurt him again? That idiot better come back quickly! …For now…I guess I'll try talking to these kids again…
April 24th, 2003 – Alfred finally did it. He managed to bait the boys into telling us their story. Haha! Alfred has always been good with kids. (Mainly, I think it’s because he acts like one more than half of the time.) How else would he have managed to care for me when we were little…? Anyways! The boy’s story seems common enough. They have no parents. Their dad was a dead beat father and mafia member before he walked out of their lives. Their mother…a struggling alcoholic before she committed suicide. No better way to say “fuck you” to your kids then to leave them homeless, hungry and helpless in a city that could kill a grown man within an hour. As much as Alfred likes kids, I know he doesn’t want to see anymore future births in his land. The population IS dwindling but, we still see scurrying children, so many suffering from malnourishment. Alfred always struggles to look away, but its hard for him. It pains me even more to know that the kids usually remind him of me, in our younger days… Alfred…why can’t you see that one day, these kids will grow up and try to hurt us in the end? They all do.

April 25th, 2003 – Al and I went to meet with the mafia today. Since those two boys trail Al like he’s their new mother now, I had to be the “party pooper” and told them that they couldn’t be seen with us. Not only does it make us look like easy targets with kids following us around, but also, for Alfred’s sake, the boys would be in danger too. We went our separate ways, until I noticed Alfred whisper something into one of the boy’s ear. (I just KNOW we’re going to see these kids again!) Well…we’re off to mingle with the mafia. Listen for any good info and possibly find an opportunity to sell some government documents I “stumbled” upon in France.

April 26th, 2003 – Al…why are these kids still following us? And WHY are you so WORRIED about the gash the younger kid got on his head? People get hurt here all the time. ALL. THE. TIME! I swear, you’re like a mother hen, fretting over the kid! My God! And thanks to these kids, we’re not going to meet the head boss today. Instead we’re- actually let me rephrase that. ALFRED is stuck here, treating the kid. Just great!

April 27th, 2003 – I think Alfred is much happier today. Last night, I heard him cursing under his breathe how someone was going to pay for hurting one of the kids. And now, I’m convinced that Fate helped him today. It seemed like more than a coincidence that we found the guy who did it. He was a member of the mafia and he was talking loudly to his 2 friends. He was laughing about how he almost killed a kid over a petty coin that he found and was stupidly showing off his "prize" when Al walked up to him and asked him why he did it. The hoser then retorted how he could do whatever he pleased because he "owned" the streets and "no little brat" was going to take what was rightfully his. And then the NERVE of this piece of shit! He SPAT at Alfred’s foot, his spit barely missing Alfred’s shoe. I really wish Al let ME deal with this scum, but alas, that option died when Alfred drew his gun and shot the sneering man point blank in the temple. His two startled companions, two familiar mafia members we knew, stared dumbly at Al, silently asking why he killed the guy. Al’s response: "He was starting to get on my nerves." XD

May 1st, 2003 – We’ve been back and forth a lot. Our camp, chatting with the mafia and their boss, or just blending in with rival gangs. I don’t understand WHY the mafia's boss keeps trying to recruit us for "help" involving drug cartels or stealing junk. We’ve already told him a million times before, Al and I only do assassinations when we feel like it or sell off valuable information to governments or enemy nations. Crimes like stealing and narcotics are so below our standards. And besides, if there’s one thing that never changes in these lands, it’s that you can always trust on criminals to betray you one day. My only reason for sticking around with the boss and his organizations is because they provide a good connection to plenty of interesting things. Al…I think he sticks around for the danger. That or he’s just too stupid to realize the benefits of staying close to them…

A few pages were flipped in frustration.
"Stupid, retarded Mattie! I am NOT stupid!" Better hurry reading his diary before he comes back from fetching water.

May 17th, 2003 – Its interesting to know that when Alfred and I kill a member of the mafia for whatever reason, the head boss won't order our heads on a silver platter. Even the man is smart enough to realize our usefulness. It's the only reason why the members can't mess with us. Yet. But this time...even I have to question how useful he finds us. Turns out, that remaining boy me and Alfred killed at the bar...well he was the only son of the head boss. Gossip spread quick that the 19 year old adolescent distanced himself from his father. Apparently, they quarreled so much that one day the son left and vowed to build a bigger empire than his old man. They broke ties and the mafia boss hadn't heard from his kid since, until some members finally discovered his rotten body near a trash can. It had decayed enough to hid Alfred's bullet but...I'm still a little worried. The organization doesn't suspect us. I truly hope they never find out the truth...

A few more pages turned until they reached the latest entry.

May 19th, 2003 – It's the last day of our vacation here. Alfred was practically bawling when we said farewell to the kids. I'm pretty sure they'll survive. They managed to get this far, so why not? It's strange how he still doesn't seem to remember anything from our childhood. Last night, I had a different dream. I'm not sure but I think I got a better look at the face of our caretaker in the past. And then there was another man there too. They were arguing over something, despite the battle raging all around them. I think I should tell Alfred that during the dream something really important happened. Something that really could help him remember a bit about who...

"Aaaaalll-Freed!"

"Shit! He's already here?" Alfred slammed the diary shut and stuffed it back inside Matthew's belonging. His brother trotted up to him, both arms carrying pails of water.

"Hey! Why did you tell me that the river was close by? It was like, a freakin MILE away!"

"Oh really? Sorry bro. It looked closer from the sky." Alfred grinned, mentally cheering that he got away with reading his brothers diary. "Oh well. Lets go already! Australia awaits us!" They both boarded Alfred's plane and were off towards South America, where they could find a private ship that would take them to the island nation. Money spoke wonderfully over there...

Paris, France – Old cottage – May 19th – 3:29 p.m.

So much work...France wished more than anything to be able to pass out now on his currently messy bed. He had left Spain about a week ago, after the Spaniard nation seemed fit enough to go about his own business. There was still some emotional damage but France was sure a visit from Romano would fix that. Before he left, he heard that the Italian was on his way.

As for himself...he had talked to every nation but two.

Russia and China.

"Sacre bleu! How many more times do I have to call these two irritating nations before I get a blasted reply!" A dramatic sigh was heard in the empty room. With every door locked and the Frenchmen assured that he was utterly alone, he stared at his communicator before dialing China's number again.

Sydney, Australia – Through busy streets – May 19th – 6:59 p.m.
Matthew's Point of View

"Hahaha! You stupid Aussies! Why don't you go wrestle some crocodiles or some crazy shit like that?" Alfred roared in laughter at his own comment. Matthew glanced at him before slightly shaking his head. *Idiot.*

Currently, both brothers we're running from the law. Literally!

Passed startled civilians and screaming spectators, the brothers ran through the streets of Sydney, a pack of Australian police running after them. *Now why didn't they use their cars? Because Alfred thought it would be funny if they made the police force run by blowing up their cars with explosives.*

Now, the North American twins were sprinting anywhere, hoping to find a temporary hideout or at least lose their new "friends."

Winging the whole mission was also Alfred's idea.

"Are you flippen happy Alfred?" growled Matthew through the mask he and his brother wore. "Not only are we…running from these Aussies but…" He panted heavily as the police force seemed to be getting closer. "…But I'm pretty sure one of these guys are eventually gonna land a bullet on us!"

Yeah…most of their bullets seemed to be missing them too. Zig zags were their best friends right now.

They ran until Alfred headed for an alley. With his brother anxiously trailing him, Alfred yanked a locked door open and ran inside the apartment complex. Up, up, and up they ran, the police force close behind.

"Al! Where the hell are we going!" It was a good thing they were far enough away from the angry mob to hear them talking. But on another note, this will probably be the last time I EVER listen to Alfred again.

"I don't know! I'm just trying to lose these guys!" Scratch that. This WAS the last time he was EVER going to listen to his idiotic brother. EVER!

They continued their mad dash until they reached the top floor and slammed the door behind them. The roof? Really Alfred?

"Do you think I can find a key somewhere around here?" Panted Alfred heavily, his thumb pointing back towards the door behind them.

"You idiot! Forget that! We have to get out of here! They still know that we're here!"

"Hmmm…I guess it doesn't help that we killed their boss too huh?"

Matthew face palmed. *OMG! How are we going to get away from this one!* He looked around desperately, a stampede of footsteps echoing from behind the door and getting closer to their current "hideout." *SHIT! SHIT! Can we jump from the roof maybe!*

His brother slowly backed away from the door, pulling his twin along. "I think we have visitors Matthew…" *No shit Sherlock! "Well, I'm ready to shoot them when you are Mattie!" They took their stances…"
The doors slammed open. "STOP!" The masked assailants were no longer there though. "Wha…?"

In their place, was a helicopter, quickly flying away from the roof covered with raging policemen and hidden government officials.

**Helicopter - ?**

Wow…*did Alfred have this planned out the whole time?* Matthew glanced at his panting brother, kneeling on the copters floor. He looked just as surprised as he did. *No. But if he didn't plan this then who…?*

Both masked brothers turned their heads towards the end of the copter, where a tall man remained seated, his hands and legs crossed. "Privet. Did you enjoy your little trip through Australia?"

*His voice…he's Russian.* The brothers slowly stood up and glanced at each other. *Who the hell is this guy? And why did he save our ass back there? As if being trapped on a roof was bad enough, now we're "miraculously" saved by some passing helicopter? This is WAY too good to be true…*

"Not really. Although I did have fun blowing their cars up," replied Alfred. The white haired man smirked at Alfred's comment. *This guy…I don't like him! Even if Al is wearing a mask to protect his ID…I feel like this guy could jeopardize Alfred's safety! The look he's giving Alfred is too unnerving. Like a predator about to reap his prey…*

"You two are infamous…assassins? I am not sure if there are more of your kind but…you do hired jobs, da?"

"Nope! We're done with that load of crap. We just do what we feel like." *Al…you're in no position to talk here…*

"So…you won't do job for me?" Matthew tried to answer the stranger when his obnoxious brother interjected. "No way, dude! If we even considered it, we'd have to do background checks on you and see if the job was worth while."

Purple eyes narrowed threateningly. "Very well. Allow me to rephrase my offer. You do job for me and I try not to throw you out of MY helicopter and over Pacific Ocean."

Before Alfred could retort with an insult, Matthew shoved him to the side, silencing him as he mumbled something about rude partners.

"What's the job?" Asked Matthew. *Either we take the job, or I jump after Alfred as he gets his ass thrown out of this damn helicopter.*

"Ah! I see my offer is accepted, da?" Matthew nodded. "Good. Now the job shouldn't prove to hard for you. Or at least I hope so…” He directed the last comment to Alfred who glared at him back through his guise. "And while we're at it, why don't you two remove those horrendous masks. I'd prefer to see what pretty faces you two have."

"Like HELL! We'll gladly jump from this heap of junk rather than take our masks off!" *Actually…I'm gonna have to agree with Alfred on this one, for once.* Their new client frowned. "Fine. I'll let this little exception pass…” *Thank God!*

"Moving on. You see, I have a friend. He lives in China and as of late, he has not returned any of my letters…"

*China eh? Well, as long as I can keep Alfred quiet, we should be able to do whatever this guy…*
wants us to do.

"Oh and another thing? You two can address me as Mr. Braginski." The tall Russian giggled creepily, his helicopter taking them towards Europe.
Chapter Summary

Alfred and Matthew, after handling their newest job, infiltrate the Royal Palace but are met with a surprise. England “meets” the assassins while France joins him in an unusual way. The Frenchmen also stumble upon something…strange.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

Down London Street

England ...

“Engwand…?What’s gonna happen to us?” Questioned a little blond boy, his sky blue eyes peering up at his caretaker. England looked down at the young child, his face softening at those curious eyes of his. “Don’t worry, America. I’ll do everything in my power to protect you. No matter what...”

The child continued to stare before breaking into a wide grin. “I know you will!” From behind him, a shy child, similar to America in everything but his eyes and a defiant stray curl, nudged his brother. America turned around, his brother whispering something into his ear. “Oh! Canada wants to know, what about him?” England had to hold back a chuckle, in case he offended the dear little child. “You too Canada. I will do everything it takes to keep you two safe. Even if it kills me.” Both boys widened their eyes, terrified of the idea of “death.” England mentally cursed himself for mentioning the damned word. “Oh! Please! Don’t pay heed to that idea though. No one is going to...get hurt while I’m around. I promise.” The two young nations looked at one another before turning to England. “Promise, promise?” Asked America. Canada nodded his head in agreement with his brother. England smiled. “Promise promise.” He cared for these two as if they were his life. However...with the continuing skirmishes that occurred in their lands and the constant work that his job demanded back in his own country, it was always a difficult decision to leave behind the two young nations. The children, content with their answer, ran off into a nearby meadow, giggling all the while as stray rabbits bounded away and long strands of grass tickled their faces. England stood by and watched, pleased that in this moment, there was tranquility in this cruel world...

“-ello?...-cuse me…”

Stirring from his place at an office desk, England jumped at having realized that he had dozed off on the job. “Oh! I am terribly sorry! I didn’t -!”

Up above his desk area was a young man, dressed in a crisp uniform of some sorts, his black eyes observing the Briton. He gave England an apologetic smile. “No. Its alright. I just wanted to know
if you were…busy.” England blushed at the last part.

“No! No no, not at all. I should know better then to fall asleep at such a horrible time. If you don’t mind me intruding, what business did you have with me?”

The young man’s eyes lit up. “Yes! I came to welcome you to our agency! I’m sorry that everyone was a bit…cold, when you asked for information. But now you’re a part of our force and we…or at least I greatly appreciate the help.”

_Hmmm…what a peculiar man._ England tilted his head. “Again, I am sorry if this seems a little intrusive but…are you native to these lands?”

The man looked a bit surprised. “Um…no. How could you tell?”

England smirked. “Your personality perhaps? Where are you from?”

The man looked away, almost ashamed. “From North America…”

“What?!” Blurted England out loud. Various office workers looked at him questioningly. He lowered his head in apology. “I beg your pardon. That was inappropriate of me.”

The black haired man turned to England. “That’s alright…ummm…What’s your name?”

“Kirkland. You can address me as Mr. Kirkland” _I don’t really have a first name to stick with anyways…_

“And you? What’s your name and where exactly did you come from? The upper regions or the lands?” Asked Mr. Kirkland.

“Scott! Scott Blake! I’m a detective and…I came from the lands.” Replied the man hesitantly.

_The lands huh? So he came from that God forsaken nation? The United States… At least he acts civilized enough. I guess this means that no one lives in Canada anymore. How else would anyone survive on the Upper regions anyways?_ Glancing at the waiting human, England rose from his seat. “Is there anything else you’d like to say Mr. Blake?”

Glad to see that he was not being classified as one of those “Barbarians” from the lands he nodded his head. “Yes sir. I came to give you information about the safety precautions that have been placed for her Majesties safety. And also, to tell you that our agency is doing everything in our power to find some clues as to WHO these assassins are.”

_The man seemed determined enough to catch these serial killers… I think he’ll make a great ally in this case._ England patted the officer in the back and strode away.

“Good job then. I expect to hear great things from you.” Said England before leaving the department.

London, United Kingdom - Outside the department – May 26, 2003 – 2: 12 p.m.

Aimlessly walking passed vague buildings England looked up at the grim sky. “Why can’t it ever be sunny in my city?” With a sad expression on his face, England recounted the dream he had previously had, paying no attention as to where he was going.

_Those two…How I wish I could have saved them._ His hands angrily clenched into fists.

_But I couldn’t! I couldn’t damn it!! By the time I got there…they were already gone. And that_
dream…I didn’t even know that that memory was still alive. He sighed tiredly.

I guess that memory will never die. So long as I breathe, I will always live with the burden that I could not save America and Canada. Those poor boys…Killed by their own lands.

At some point in their short lived life, England had searched for the missing boys but had only been rewarded with the discovery of two small remains. Nothing was left from them except their blood stained ribbons that he had chanced upon in the battlefield.

I hope you suffer the same way I do France. He stopped in his tracks. No…you can NEVER understand my pain. You can never understand how I suffer. You only lost one child that day. I lost two… He examined his surroundings before his eyes landed on a telephone booth. He mindlessly started walking towards it.

No…I can’t hold that incident against France anymore. He and I agreed to let the past rest. We were doing what nations always do. Fighting. And we paid dearly for our actions. There is no point in holding the past accountable for the life we live today. America and Canada are in a better place now. And we…we still need to live. If not for ourselves, then at least for those two innocent nations…

Once inside the booth, England finally took notice as to where he had halted his current journey. “What the…?” Staring at the phone in confusion, England had a sudden idea.

Ah! I think I’ll check up on her Majesty. Make sure that all proceedings are going as planned. He swiftly contacted her, asking if any appointment was possible before hanging up.

“What’s up Mattie? You don’t look too happy there.” Alfred raised one eyebrow in question.

“Your damn right I’m not happy,” whispered Matthew. “These files are something I didn’t even know existed before. And there’re not good news for us either.”

“Really? What do they say?” Creeping towards the door that he and Matthew had locked once gaining entry to this office, Alfred peeked through the small window, straining his ears to hear any movement.

Nothing… Looks like I did an awesome job knocking that guard out then!

“Well, for one…it looks like China’s government is considering preparations of claiming some territory in our lands.”

Remembering that he and his brother were still in dangerous territory, Alfred managed to contain
his shock to a hushed, “What??”

“Yeah. Apparently, our lands are “uninhabited” and therefore they have “jurisdiction” to fucking invade our lands and act like they own it!” Growled out Matthew. The computer screen continued to buzz with heavy information.

“And…oh!? They also seem to have some strained relationships with Russia, I see.”

The American twin continued seething at the previous news. *Who the fuck do these chinks think they are!? There’s no way in HELL that we’re going to allow some damn foreigners to come and steal our lands! Not again!*

“I suppose this will be interesting enough for that damn Russian, don’t you agree brother?” Matthew clicked a few buttons, making sure that he received a copy of all the downloaded files before turning to Alfred. “Alfred?” *He’s still angry I see…*

The blue eyed blond lifted his head up. “Yeah. I heard you…” He remained still near the door, his twin casually rising from his seat and walking towards him. Matthew gently placed his hand on his brother’s shoulder in comfort. “Don’t worry Al. We can take care of a few foreigners. And do you REALLY think they can come over to our lands when they have 5 other nations angrily pointing their guns and bombs at them?” Alfred slowly grinned, his arm nonchalantly slinged around his twins shoulder in a one arm hug.

“Yeah…your right! I guess I’m just being a worrywart. These assholes don’t know who there’re messing with. But they’ll find out soon enough…” Alfred smirked in the dark silence, the computer screen dimly lighting the room. *Let’s see how they like another war…preferably WW3.*

“Looks like we’re pretty much done here We better get this stuff to that crazy bastard.” Said Matthew, strolling back to the computer. Alfred remained at his position near the door. *Oh God… we actually have to go meet that nutjob Commie again?! Narrowed blue eyes glared at a nearby wall, Alfred reliving the events following their “rescue.”*

~ Flashback~

He tapped his foot impatiently near the helicopter door, every once in a while, peering outside and wondering how badly he’d be hurt if he jumped now. He didn’t have to worry too much about leaving behind his twin. If Alfred chose to jump out, he would do so, completely aware that his brother would undoubtedly follow him.

“Must you continue making that bothersome sound on my helicopter? I really am considering throwing you out right now.” Russia gave Alfred a dark smile, assuring him that he was dead serious.

“Get off my property and away from me!” Alfred retorted, although he halted his foot tapping. *I was getting tired anyways! Stupid ass Commie telling me what to do! I’ll gladly jump without his help! And Mattie would follow me too! That is… if he’d STOP fraternizing with the psychopath! Alfred glared at Mr. Braginski, before giving a smaller glare to his brother. Who the hell plays chess at a time like this ANYWAYS?!

A chess piece moved 2 spaces, Mattie calmly glaring at the Russian in front of him.

“Your turn.” He spat.

“Hmmm. You have some great moves here, sad one. Do you enjoy seeing others suffer?” Asked Russia. He couldn’t help calling Matthew “sad one.” Both assassins refused to give him a name to
address them by. And seeing as how their identities were viciously concealed by their hooded
clothes Russia had to resort to calling them by the masks they wore. The one playing chess with
him was wearing a mask of tragedy, the other one sulking near the helicopter door was wearing a
mask of comedy.

Trailing his purple eyes towards the happy one, Russia’s grin grew, his thoughts wandering to
more curious ideas of this very upset killer.

“I said YOUR TURN!” Growled Matthew, angrily trying to distract the white haired mans
attention from his brother.

“Right, right.” Taking his time to turn his head away from the glaring happy one, Russia lazily
moved a chess piece, all the while, the sad one stared death at him.

A few more pieces move and a conclusion had arrived. “Check mate.” Said Matthew, his arms
crossed impatiently. Even though Russia could not see the sad ones face, he was 101% sure that he
was cockily smiling at his defeat.

“Well played, sad one. I do hope that I can come to you and your…partner, for help again. I think
you two would make handsome allies in just about anything.” Commented Russia.

“Go to hell!” Snapped the happy one from his corner.

“Hehehe!” Giggled Russia. “I see that the sad one can play a good game of chess.”

Matthew nodded in agreement. “Chess is simple enough if you recognize the objectives and
organize an enemy’s weakness. They all fall eventually if you know what your doing…” Trailed
Matthew.

Russia nodded, then turned to Alfred. “Now…what are you capable of doing, happy one? Are you
only good at throwing pitiful insults because if you are then-.”

“I can “happily” show you what I’m good at, Mr. BRAGINSKI! Allow me to demonstrate to you
what I can do!” Started Alfred. Whipping his gun from his coat, Alfred was about to shoot the
Russian when his brothers figure blocked the way.

“What the hell are you doing Ma-!? I mean…partner!”

“Don’t do something stupid, you idiot. We have a job to do, remember?” Warned Matthew. His
defiant stance pretty much told the American one thing. Don’t go starting shit if you can’t finish
it properly.

“Ah…Interesting. Your own…partner actually defended ME. I see you two are not seeing eye to
eye then.” The tall Russian smirked at the grumbling assassin who grudgingly placed his gun back
into his coat.

“So you are a sharp shooter I take it?”

“No shit, Sherlock.” Muttered Alfred.

Despite the various attempts on Russia’s part to interact more with his newest companions, he got
no more information from the two. The happy one seemed to have finally shut up from whatever
silent statement his partner gave him. The sad one, however, just seemed to flat out ignore him
now. Probably jealous that he was giving his partner more interesting glances. The helicopter
eventually came to a stop near some fields on the edge of Australia, the Russian handing the sad
one a small note. Inside, they would find an address that gave them directions to a meeting place, where they could hand over their findings to the Russian client. After that, they were off, heading towards the nearest ship that took them to China…

~ End Flashback ~

*click click click*

_Huh? Someone’s coming?!_ Alfred, broken out of his flashback, turned to his brother who was already removing his flash drive from the computer. “Someone’s coming!” Whispered Alfred, as he unlocked the door.

“There’re still a bit off but either way, we have to hurry!” Alfred made haste to exit the room without making too much of a ruckus, his twin quickly following behind. In the nights darkness the two sprinted down hallways, once government officials had discovered the unconscious body of one guard near an important room and gave the alarm.

“No point in being discreet anymore, right Al?” Panted Matthew.

“Eh! I don’t really care to start with!” Replied Alfred. The twins saw a door rapidly coming into their view, paying no attention to all the alarms that vibrated throughout the building. Bursting it wide open, they continued their dash, making a safe get away once they placed enough distance between themselves and the panicking officials of the Chinese government.

“Can I ask why you were playing chess with that psychopath?” Alfred inquired, both he and his twin walking within darkness’s blanket.

“Easy. It helped me get an idea of how he is, strategic wise.”

“And you learned what…?” Continued Alfred.

“Hehe! I’ll tell you later Alfred. After all, can’t have my pawn knowing all my secrets.” Matthew could not help but tease his brother. Oh…how much he loved chess…

“Hey! I am not a pawn! Or at least, I’m not one because YOU say so. I CHOOSE to be a pawn, thank you very much!” Crossing his arms and pouting to the side, Matthew gave up trying to hide his laughter and quietly chuckled at Alfred’s childish attitude.

“Oh come on brother. Hehe…Do you really think I’d let my pawn be used so carelessly?” Matthew leaned close to his twin. Close enough to cause Alfred to support him somewhat clumsily.

“You’re my most important piece! I only use you when I KNOW the rewards are worth risking…” His pleasant smile did very well in breaking Alfred’s guard down. With a twitching of his lips that eventually revealed a smile, Alfred pushed his brother off of himself. “…If you say so. Just make sure that you take good care of me, bro.”

“Always Alfred. Always.” They quietly disappeared into the darkness.

~ Inside the Chinese Government Building ~

“We’ve been infiltrated!” Screeched a black haired man. He frantically searched around the otherwise clean office, looking for some clues as to the perpetrators whereabouts. His brown eyes stared accusingly at the computer the spies had earlier used. Everything seemed in place but…he knew better. Of all people, China KNEW when his computers had been used. And the wretched thing was still warm too…
Who...who could have pulled off such a feat?! I had all of my best guards defending the place! The Chinese nation kept his back to the flooding group of Chinese officials, many of them swearing out loud and asking numerous questions of their predicament. He, however, was too far concerned about WHAT exactly the spies had downloaded from his computer.

Quickly typing in passwords and codes into the program, China investigated the most recent activity found on his computer.

*Buzz....Buzzzzzzz...Ding*

“Nothing...NOTHING?!” He couldn’t believe it! There was nothing on the most recent activity file. The spies had effortlessly wiped out all traces of their tampering with his computer! And China was left with no idea as to WHAT they found.

Who could have...?! He froze suddenly, staring at the screen in apprehension. Russia! It was HIM! It had to be! All those letters he sent me...I never ONCE responded to him. And now...now he knows...The Asian nation turned to his government people.

“Listen! Find ANY clues to who did this! We can’t let these people escape. They stole valuable information. Information that can jeopardize out very nation!” Demanded China. The people in the room, meticulously straightened up from their initial frenzied panic and uniformly ran out of the room, calling orders left and right. As quickly as China had been deserted in the office, his communicator rang.

“Aya! This dang thing again?” He reached into his pocket and glared at the devise. For about a week, someone was constantly calling him. His government officials had been curt in telling him no international communication, but at this point, China decided he might as well answer. Like things could get any worse. “…Hello?”

“Mon dieu! About TIME you answered your miserable communicator!” Scolded a Frenchmen on the other line. Stress seemed to have driven the nation mad at some point.

“What do you want France? I’m busy at the-!”

It seemed like France had forgotten something important… “Oh! Am I speaking to an American or-?”

“It’s safe to speak France. What do you want?”

“Merci.” Replied France. “I loath having to repeat myself. Anyways, I’ll be quick. All the nations are ready to meet but we have yet to hear from you. Are you-!”

“Yes.” Interrupted China. Might as well attend this meeting. I’m sure everyone is upset if not furious that I have kept my connections closed for so long.

By the time China had garnered enough info about the international conference, he hung up the devise and brought a tired hand to his forehead. “At least during the meeting I can confront that intrusive Russian and find out myself, whether he hacked into my government files.” He walked in the hallways, planning to go home and drink a soothing cup of tea. There wasn’t much else he could do but wait for his people to report back on their findings anyways.

“Aru…I’m getting to old for this stuff…” He headed home early in the morning’s light.

“So early in the morning…and yet I am still awake.” France sighed having spent all last night trying to contact China. But at last, his efforts paid off and now there was only Russia to call.

“Why me?” He took a quick look outside his room window. The sun was far off from rising, but he could tell that today was going to be one of those days that he did not get any sleep, period. If he was lucky, he would reach Russia today and have enough time to take a trip to the United Kingdom by tomorrow. At least a surprise visit to England’s home would give him some joy.

Lhasa, China – Empty streets – May 27, 2003 – 7:30 a.m.

“Damn it! How long does this stupid Commie plan on making us wait?!” Exclaimed Alfred, his arms crossed in annoyance. Ever since they had arrived in this rendezvous Alfred and Matthew had patiently waited for Mr. Braginski’s return. He had been VERY specific in the address. Meet in a quiet area close to the empty streets of Lhasa to be able to blend in with passing crowds, but also far enough to stay hidden as their transaction occurred. The time and date were detailed too, asking the two brothers to be at their meeting point by this time but now…Alfred’s temper was starting to build up. Twenty minutes late seemed long enough for the American’s patience.

“That’s it!! Let’s go already! This stupid-!” Alfred grabbed his brother’s wrist, ready to leave when a tall figure blocked their way at the mouth of the alley they currently resided in.

“Nyet. I am here as I promised. Impatient, are we?” Braginski grinned at the two masked assassins that stared at him. One of them shifted through his dense clothing before producing the flash drive that had been given to him by Mr. Braginski.

“I believe you asked for this.” Said the sad one. Walking up towards the smiling Russian, a gloved hand was raised in a halting motion.

“Nyet. I want HIM to give me the flash drive.” Spoke Russia, pointing a finger at the happy one.

“No. We did the job now-!” Started Matthew, a threatening tone to his voice. You’re not going to touch my brother!

“You did job, yes. But how much did he help in the mission?” Mr. Braginski tilted his head in Alfred’s direction. Matthew was about to give this client a piece of his mind when his brother interjected.

“Hah! You got guts, Commie! Fine. I’ll hand you the freakin’ flash drive.” Alfred ambled towards Matthew and grabbed the small gadget, pretending not to hear his brother’s disagreement.

“Here! And don’t EVER bother us again.” He handed the flash drive to Mr. Braginski, expecting to be done with all business when, unexpectedly, his hand was yanked in the Russian’s direction.

“Brother!!” Yelled Matthew. He withdrew his knives, prepared to slit this client’s throat. But before he could reach Alfred and his oppressor, Matthew collided with his brother as he was thrown back towards his twin.

“Hmm. How disappointing. I didn’t get a name. But you two are brothers? Very interesting…” Grinning with delight, Russia backed away from the alley entrance, as the brothers fumbled around, and easily faded into the crowds of people that were hurriedly passing by in start of their morning.

Left alone with his brother, Matthew checked his twin over. Looks like he’s not hurt. Good...

No injuries didn’t stop Alfred from trembling in anger though. “That bastard!”
Ok…I will have to admit, being tricked like that wasn’t exactly something I expected. Argh! I need to be more careful next time! Trust NO ONE! Matthew turned to his brother, who still seemed to be on top of him from their crash.

“Alfred…come on. We should get going. Forget about this. Next time we meet him, we’ll kill him. Kay?”

The blue eyed twin untangled himself from his brother and warily got up. “Fine. We’re done with this shit anyways.”

Matthew gave his twin a concerned look. He wanted to question him a bit more, but his worry was gently put to rest with Alfred’s next response.

“Do ya think you can access the rest of your “plans” from the middle of nowhere like this? Or should we break into another government building?”

Matthew shook his head in amusement. Oh Alfred...already moving on to our next mission, eh?

“Hehe…Naw. Let’s just find a suitable computer that no one should be able to trace.” They retreated further into the alley, not trusting the Russian from before to remove their masks.

As soon as they found a suitable computer to “borrow” the brothers would make haste to reach the United Kingdom next.

It was about time they got to executing the Royal family. Starting with her Majesty…

Within the crowded streets of Lhasa

So much fun those two will be… Russia giggled to himself, several passing strangers staring at him bizarrely before deciding that their safety was best assured if they kept as far away from this strange foreigner as possible.

The tall Russian had done well in losing the brothers and admittedly, he wanted to follow them; just so he could see what they hid under their masks. However, even he knew that that opportunity would reveal itself again at another time. For now, he had more important business to attend to. Such as, finding out what exactly his dear neighbor, China, had been hiding from him this whole time.

“My, my. It must be something fairly exciting if I had to hire two assassins to get the job done, China.” In truth, Russia had not hired the North American brothers. Rather, it was more like bargained with them. If they did the job for him, he wouldn’t throw them into the middle of the Pacific Ocean…

He smiled maliciously, heading towards a remote empty field where a plane waited. Just before boarding the aircraft, his communicator rumbled.

“Ah! That must be France!” He answered it with as much enthusiasm as he could muster. After all, things were about to get interesting.

Airport – London, United Kingdom – May 28, 2003 – 8:12 a.m.

In the midst of all the people scurrying to and from their flights, France strode by various shops. He was finally in the United Kingdom! After he had spoken to Russia he had spent the remainder of yesterday recalling every nation to confirm a date appropriate for them to meet. 3 days from now, in a lonely German town, they would all meet. He felt so thrilled to be done of that business.
Hmmm…should I find England first? Or should I enjoy the “pleasant” people of England instead? He smiled around at unhappy Britons, some scowling at him, others almost hissing in irritation. Yes…your people are very nice England.

The scent of a nearby pastry shop caught his nose, leading him to a pretty shop within the airport. The best part was that it was a French pastry shop. My people should show the Brits around here what REAL food is. France grinned, taking a camera out of his coat. In case he decided to come to this airport again, he would take a photo of the place so he could find it next time. And his trusty camera was always helpful in lifting his spirits.

When you were once famously known to the world as a nation of art, you tended to miss the majesty of it all. France loved to take pictures of anything that caught his attention. It was the last link he had to art besides painting, and God knew he was very limited to that hobby now these days.

His camera clicked abruptly, the frenzy of the crowded airport causing him to search around for the person who pushed him to the side. Stupid people! They caused my shot to be off!

Peeved at the person who got away, France turned to head inside the bakery when his eyes landed on a pair of teenage boys, walking towards the airport exit. Although France didn’t often take pictures of people, if they appeared “perfect” enough, he would break the rules every now and then. He sped walk after the two, interested in getting a good shot of them without being noticed. These boys…twins! They look so picturesque! I MUST get a picture of them. The two blonds halted near a bathroom, one of them, with bright blue eyes cheerfully laughing at his twin. His brother, on the other hand, looked embarrassed about something his twin probably said.

Such sweet looking boys… France grinned. Dodging the numerous people passing within his frame while hiding behind a bulletin board, France took aim and snapped their photo. A clear photo of their face, figure and all. A very good shot I may add.

Eager not to get caught taking random photo’s of people and be labeled a pedophile or a stalker, France hastily made his way back to the pastry shop. He was still hungry after all.

Once inside the pastry shop, France and anyone else in the world were unaware of a pair of twins that walked inside a bathroom and came back out with stark red hair, black sunglasses and low hats with flowing coats. No one cared how you looked, so long as you kept to your own business.

Inside Buckingham Palace – 9:00 a.m.

England held in head in his hands, walking towards her majesties room. It wasn’t something he wanted to admit but since the last time he had tea with her, which was two days ago, he had stupidly left some important documents within her room. How shameful of me to disturb her Majesty with such troubling news. Mentally promising himself to get his head checked to see if age was finally dimming his memory England knocked on her Majesty’s door, before being allowed inside. He hoped he could find a good explanation for his careless actions. God, I hope she doesn’t find me incompetent…

The Queen’s Room – 9:10 a.m.

Ok. Maybe things hadn’t gone all according to plan. …What went wrong, one may ask? Well, the twins had cunningly infiltrated the Palace, as they did in China’s government building, and they had avoided any direct confrontation with agents, doing quite well in reaching her majesties room. But…
For starters, the twins hadn’t expected the Queen to have a visitor, in her room. Second surprise, was that this person had a gun on him. Within 1 second of making eye contact with the assassins that had barged through the door, the Briton tackled her majesty behind her lavish furniture and shot a few rounds at them. The twins had enough experience though, to jump out of the room and take shelter behind the walls, bullets nearly hitting their arms. “Shit!” Cursed Alfred out loud. On the opposite wall from him, Matthew quickly whispered. “Al. We need to abort this mission. It’s gotten too out of our control!”

“Tch! Our first aborted mission…” His brother nodded tersely before running off in an unknown direction, his mind recalling their best escape route. Alfred chased after him, passed the open door when…

Back inside the Queen’s room, England quickly assessed her majesties condition while keeping a vigilant eye over his shoulder, in case the two came back. Pleased to see no wounds on her he reached into his pocket and alerted the institution of the infiltration through his communicator. He warily peeked his head over the bullet ridden couch and turned to his Queen. “My dearest apologies, your Majesty for rashly pushing you like that. But for your personal safety, I must insist that you stay here.”

“England, dear. Don’t worry about me! Just go and stop those two and their senseless killing spree!”

“But-!”

“No buts! This is an order from your Queen! The rest of the agency should be here in 1 minute, flat. Now GO!”

Turning his head back towards the vacant doorway, he saw, at that moment, one of the assassins flee passed the entry. Hand already raised with a loaded gun, he shot the figure’s head, but grazed his sunglasses instead. They shattered from the impact, but otherwise, the assassin's eyesight was not impaired. His pace did not slow either, but increased his dash. Besides the broken sunglasses left behind in the doorway, England was left with a very pleasant, “You bitch!” ring to his ears, before pursuing after the two.

*They could attack me anytime with any curse or weapon, but when they attacked my Queen?! … THEN it gets personal!* 

The two fleeing assassins were quite agile because no matter how many times England shot them, everyone of England’s bullets missed their intended target. *Bloody Hell!* All this time, he had wanted to confront these two and now that the opportunity presented itself, he was failing miserably at even harming one of them. Following their assumed escape route, horror seized the Briton when a thought occurred to him.

*They knew the structure of the building!*

He jammed his hand into his pocket and grabbed onto his communicator, yelling out orders.

“Close off the exits in every wing! The assassins are escaping and they know the infrastructure!! I repeat!! THEY KNOW THE INFRASTRUCTURE!!”

The two boys running side by side groaned in unison. “Great! The bitch just yelled out your little secret to the whole damn building.”

“Doesn’t matter.” Matthew glanced at Alfred and smiled. “We’ll just take a small detour.”
Alfred returned the grin. “You can be so arrogant sometimes.” And with that last comment, Matthew suddenly turned right, yanking his brother’s arm in their new direction. Hallway after hallway, they ran where Matthew directed them, with the occasional slumped bodies of freshly killed British agents, on the way.

“Do you have to kill every agent we pass? We originally planned on just killing the Queen. And you know I hate adding more anonymous deaths to our log.”

A still warm gun rested between Alfred’s teeth as he reloaded the case with his free hand. Once done, he tested his reloaded gun on the cursing Briton that was still chasing after them. Luckily for England, the bullet flew by his leg without making contact on flesh.

“YOU BLOODY WANKER!!”

Alfred roared in laughter as the British man stumbled and nearly face planted on the marble floor. He happily turned to his brother “Sorry, Mat. I’m just secretly hoping that one of these agents turn out to be Mr. Kirkland from the news report.”

*He was still with that?*

How ironic that the boys kept far enough of a pace to prevent England from overhearing their discussion, while Alfred never realized that the man currently chasing them was *the* Mr. Kirkland whose cold voice disturbed him back home.

Now, England was desperately trying to slow them down with continuous gun shots; all of them missing. He was also busy calling the two assassins every colorful word in the English dictionary. But it was his angry that unknowingly protected his human identity as it contrasted to the dead cold serious tone Alfred heard before.

“How much further till your “detour” Mattie?” They turned left into an open room and quickly shut the door behind them, anxious to lose the angry Briton hot on their trail.

“We’re here!”

*In an empty guest room?*

Matthew dragged his brother to the open window of the room and pointed outside. “We jump on 3!”

“What!?”

“One.”

“But aren’t we on the 3rd floor!?”

“Two!”

The door behind them slammed open as England appeared with an army of agents at his back.

“THREE!” Out the window they went as Alfred glanced back at the startled army and caught the eyes of England, before vanishing from gravities pull.

*So, one of the assassins has deep blue eyes…* Breaking himself from his mental thought, England dashed to the window and peered down below…Where the would be killers were still fleeing on foot!
How could they survive a fall from the 3rd floor!? He turned to his men and yelled, “There’re still alive! Capture them!!” Before following the two through the window.

Any nation could handle a drop from the 3rd story, but humans?! How could fragile humans handle the impact so nimbly? And without a broken bone or other injury!!

Up ahead, England noticed that the two clothed figures were swiftly unlocking a red Ferrari F40 that practically screamed, “Look at me!!” They quickly got inside the vehicle, the blue eyed one at the wheel. Aiming his gun straight at the tires, England pulled the trigger multiple times.

But nothing came out... “Fucking Hell!!” He was out of bullets! At that instant, the red car came to life and zoomed by the Briton, the blue eyed figure sticking his head out the window and loudly laughing at his misfortune.

THAT ARSE!! There’s no way I’m going to let them escape! Not when I’m so close!! Green eyes frantically searched his surroundings before landing on a police car with a stunned Briton inside, who had watched the whole scene unravel. Racing to the car, England yanked the door open and threw the young officer onto the brittle sidewalk, taking the keys and starting the ignition.

“So very sorry, but I’m on direct orders from her Majesty!” Was the last thing the bewildered officer heard as his car sped off in pursuit of the fleeing red car.

Red car

“Woohoo! Man, it feels great to drive one of these again!” Currently driving eradicatly through London’s streets, Alfred laughed insanely when remembering the homocidal look on the Englishman’s face. He had his glasses on sloppily, having been rushed to place them on. Matthew calmly turned on the radio and searched for decent music until he settled for a Beethoven classical. He looked out the window and saw through his sunglasses that Alfred wasn’t bothering to avoid pedestrians, as he continuosly switched between road and sidewalk. Oh...I can already feel a headache coming on just thinking about all the nameless people I’m going to have to add to our records.

“Alfred! We’re not on a killing spree, so stop acting like we’re in the U.S. already!” His twin frowned and swirved the wheel back onto the street, making rash 90 degree turns through the rapidly changing streets.

Some Street in London

Placing an empty cup back onto the table, a certain Frenchmen turned to a waiting waitress and gave her a seductive smile. “Thank you very much for the exquisite tea, mon cheri.” The seated man got up, placed a deep kiss on the startled waitress’s hand and walked away, his bill already paid for in cash and on the table. Ahhh...how much I miss my wine. But France had decided he could handle a few days without his sweet nectar if it meant having more time to bug the green eyed nation of the UK. Pausing at a street corner, France waited until a sign signalled to him that it was safe to cross. He leisurely took a few steps into the long street when a roaring noise caught his attention.

Red car

Speeding through the streets at an unsettling and dangerous speed, Alfred zipped and zoomed passed many cars driving at more safer limits. He crained his neck towards his rearview mirror and recognized a police car in the distance, sirens loudly warning the whole city of their high speed chase.
“Well looky here, that Briton’s still chasing us.”

Matthew checked his mirror to confirm his twin’s statement, then clicked his tongue in annoyance. “Why didn’t you kill him earlier, like you did the other agents?”

“Hey! You always get to play games with your victims. I thought maybe I’d give it a try as well…”

“Alfred. You don’t know how to play with the targets. You always just kill them right away. Whether on purpose or on accident.”

His twin grumbled to himself, “This guy is still alive isn’t he?” His hands coolly leading the wheel between the lanes. Down hill they raced, when a crossing figure in the street was rapidly coming into view, the cars speed accelerating.

“Alfred…” Warned Matthew.

“Hey! I’m driving in the streets like you said! It’s not my fault if this lady can’t get out of the way in time!” Like a deer caught in the headlights, the “lady” froze in fear, legs refusing to move and eyes widening at the sight of the incoming red car.

“Alfred!”

Before running over the person, Alfred swirved the car to the right, into the vacant sidewalk and completely missed the person, who let out a girlish scream.

“Happy!?“

Matthew smirked at Alfred in their momentary silence. Then…

“That was a man, by the way.”

“What!? Are you serious dude!?” They drove on.

Police Car

England was furious. Not furious like it would fade away soon enough. He was furious like, he was going to kill someone sooner or later.

These bloody buggers! They have to NERVE to drive through my country and run over my citizens as if I’m not here?! Oh my God! They almost ran over that lady! He skidded the car to a halt, as his vehicle barely tapped France’s face. Upon seeing the person’s face up close, England realized his mistake.

“France!?“

“Mon Dieu!! What are you doing!?” Yelped France, trembling from his near death experience.

“I don’t have time to explain! Get in the damn car! NOW!” Climbing into the police car, France was jolted into the passenger seat as England accelerated the engine and they took off, after the fleeing red car.

Rural town – Bacharach, Germany – 9:15 a.m.

“Bruder! What do you want me to do with these?!” Heaving a heavy load of books left on a table that would soon suffice as the world meeting table, Prussia looked around for his absent younger brother. Come on Germany! Do you seriously expect the awesome me to do all of YOUR dirty
Slamming the old books onto another smaller table nearby, Prussia searched around the house that Germany and he had been allowed to use for their break time. Their government hadn’t been informed that they were going to use this place as a meeting spot but…eh. Little details were meant to be left out. Prussia smirked to himself, opening a door to the back of the small house where his younger brother was working on a “project.”

“Hey Ludwig! Are you going to tinker with that piece of junk all day or are you going to come inside and help me move all the crap you’ve been ignoring all day?”

Germany’s eyebrow twitched in irritation. Maybe if he could just add a few more adjustments to this engine then maybe...

“Hey West! The awesome me is talking to you! Show some respect and reply back!”

Looks like I won’t be able to finish this today. The blond nation carelessly threw a blanket over the engine laying out in the open yard and turned to his obnoxious brother.

“Why are you always such a handful, Prussia?” Said former nation smiled wickedly at Germany.

“Come on bruder. If I wasn’t around to bug you, then who else would?”

Germany looked Prussia straight in the eye, about to say “Italy” when he cut himself off immediately. Both Prussia and he knew that Italy hadn’t been able to visit the German nation in a very long time...

Sensing the sudden change of mood in Germany, Prussia approached his sibling with a straight face. “Germany. I threw away some documents you left on your desk. They said Review all over them but I thought you might need a break so I-”

“YOU WHAT!?” Screamed Germany, his previous mood all but dead with this new info. He lounged out to strangle his older brother when Prussia swiftly jumped away from his grasp, a mischievous grin on his face. The white haired man turned around and ran back inside the house, cackling madly as a red faced Germany chased after him.

It was a good thing they had 3 days to prepare for the world meeting...

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: Car chases, secret spies and heated debates. All the nations are to meet in their first world meeting since 30 years. And Alfred and Matthew are starting to see opposition from an unlikely enemy…
The Meeting

Chapter Summary: England and France give chase to the fleeing North American twins, hoping to catch them. In the 3 days that pass the remaining nation are finally ready and the meeting commences with one topic in mind: the daunting task of capturing these mysterious assassins. An innocent question is asked and suddenly, an old secret is thrust out into the open. Then, there's a spy lingering around who might pose a threat to Matthew’s hacking abilities.

Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Meeting

"Damn it! He's still on my tail?" Steering the wheel in sharp directions through London’s receding roads, Alfred F. Jones and Matthew Williams were currently fleeing the raging police car that blared its violent siren behind them. Glancing at the speed the driver of the police car was going, Alfred knitted his eyebrows together in worry. "Fuck! This guy isn't going to stop anytime soon, huh Mattie?"

His twin brother, through the rapidly swaying motion of their speeding car, removed his sunglasses and gave his brother a minor glare. "It’s your fault, idiot. You should have killed him earlier, but nooo...You had to go and toy with him." He huffed annoyedly, having long lost interest in the classical music that drifted through their radio. His head turned back towards the speeding police car, his dyed red hair falling in his face and took notice of an added body to the vehicle. The "lady" from before was now sitting in the passenger seat, desperately clinging onto the seat for dear life. The driver, however, was clearly intent on capturing him and his brother, a deranged look to his green glowing eyes. Damn, you really pissed him off Alfred...

"Hey! Do you have any brilliant ideas left bro, or do we get to wing this again?" Alfred threw his twin a sloppy grin before turning his attention back to the road in front of them. "It’s not like this bastard is going to suddenly stop and give up this chase."

"Hmmm. Well..." Matthew placed his sunglasses back on and smiled. "Maybe we can play a little game with these guys, non?"

Alfred frowned slightly. "Mattie, you know how I hate when you add that French shit to the end of your sentences."

"But you know what I'm talking about." Protested Matthew.

"I know I do! That just makes it even worse!" Growled Alfred.

"Do you want to play this game or not Al? You already let that annoying Briton live!" Retorted the Canadian.

"Hmmm..." The driver of the red car nonchalantly placed a hand to his chin, his other hand snug
underneath his arm, in a thinking pose.

"AL YOU IDIOT!!! YOUR STILL DRIVING!" Matthew lounged at the wheel of their car, steadying it before they could careen into any nearby buildings. Alfred merely laughed in amusement.

"Alright Mattie. I guess a game will be fun. We haven't played with anyone in a LONG time after all." He smirked at Matthew's angry expression, gently nudging his trembling hands that caused the wheel to swerve erratically and took control of their car again.

Police Car

"Bloody Hell! Those wankers are going to destroy my city if I don't stop them!!" Screeched a furious Briton at the wheel. His French counterpart was still trembling from the shock of how fast this Briton was actually driving. France was most definitely convinced that this Briton had not lost his wild side, despite the long decades of time.

"Mon dieu! England! Why are we driving at such a suicidal rate? Have you finally grown tired of living?"

"Shut it frog! In case you should like to know, I'm going to capture these ingrates no matter what!" Yelled England.

"These ingrates? What did they-"

"They tried to kill her royal majesty!!"

The Queen? France was puzzled but interested nonetheless. "Do you mean...that..." Non. It couldn't be. The assassins?

"Those bastards are the assassins!! I've waited for so long to meet them. There's no way I'm going to allow them to escape under my watch!!"

Up ahead of their police car, France and England stared in astonishment as the red car abruptly turned into an alley. An actual alley! And they perfectly made the fit too!

"No!" Both nations screamed. Seething with fury, England pressed the gas and mentally started to recount the layout of his city. Don't even think for a second that you can make it out of MY city, you bastards! I know this place like the back of my hand!

France's eyes frantically wandered around the cramped vehicle, trying to recognize any landmarks that would indicate that England knew where he was going. How could...How could they have made such a feat? Turning into an alley and not even crashing the car, let alone leaving a scratch!

Various violent turns and swerves later and the police car ended up at an empty street, devoid of pedestrians and decorated with broken stores and shops. "Where are they-" England rapidly scanned the surroundings for the two males. France, just as determinedly, craned his neck towards the front window, hoping to aid in their search.

Right there!

"Quickly!" The police car skidded to a loud halt, near the abandoned red car, as the two nations hurried out of their car. The heat from the red car radiated dangerously close to their bodies, indicating that these two criminals had indeed pushed this poor vehicle to its limit. Their heads snapped in every direction, trying to locate where the assassins had run off to.
"Over there, mon ami! I hear their footsteps!" Pointing towards another dark alley, France took the lead of their wild chase, England quickly catching up with him. A musty stench assaulted their nose, both nations forced to bring a hand to their face. Puddles of rancid liquid splashed under their feet, a similar sound echoing up ahead. Any moment now and the assassins would be cornered! England could feel it!

Suddenly, the echoing steps stopped. What? Where could they have...? The two running blonds made haste in their chase and quickly stopped as well.

"Hey there! Having fun so far?" Waved one of the would be killers, his blues eyes shining behind the frames of his glasses. His partner leaned casually on his shoulder, his sunglasses reflecting what little light came into the dark alley.

"You two! Under the authority of her royal majesty, you are under arrest for attempted murder!" Ordered England, drawing his gun and pointing it threateningly at the brothers. France, unarmed with nothing but a simple camera, directed a deathly glare at the two cornered men, his mind trying to determine if they were the ones responsible for harming his old friend. Deciding that this was possibly the best thing that has happened to everyone in the world, France drew his camera and lifted it up.

**Click**

"How wonderful for everyone that has wished for a normal civil life. Whether you two are innocent or not of all previous assassinations I only think it appropriate for me to take a photo of this momentous event." Smirked France, ignoring the disappointing fact that he didn't look as dangerous as England with a loaded gun.

"Eh? What the hell makes you think that you've captured us?" Questioned the leaning figure, his hat dipping mysteriously over his red hair. "For all you know, perhaps it is US that have captured you." He continued. His blue eyed partner chuckled maliciously through the piece of black cloth that concealed most of his lower face.

"Shut the fuck up! Now put your hands in the air where I can see them, or I will not hesitate to leave a couple of bullets in you!" Threatened the British nation. The two clothed figures lifted their hands slowly towards the sky. Yet...something about the way the blue eyed one stood...his eyes were begging to say something.

"Try anything funny and I'll-!!" England growled, his eyes glancing up towards their open, lifted hands. Nothing in them. So why... He whipped his gaze back towards the face of the blue eyed one and noticed him mouth "Bye bye" under the black cloth. *What?*

The next thing he knew, he heard France's shocked scream as he was tackled to the side of the alley, ducking near a fortunately placed trash can as an explosion erupted from their side. "-the hell!"

Taking a few seconds to gather their bearings and calm the ringing that buzzed in their ears, France and England promptly rose from the filthy alley floor, stumbling slightly before looking towards where the explosion came. Two things immediately caught their attention. One, there was an abnormal amount of stream evaporating from the side of the alley, another trash can having been blown to smitherings. Two...the assassins they had been chasing so persistently were gone...

"Damn it!!" Screamed the green eyed nation, his fist punching the alley's wall. They were so close too! Only to have lost them to some freak explosion. Actually...
"France! What the hell were you doing, you useless wanker!" He accused. "Taking fucking pictures of them? Was it SO bloody important for you to keep a memento of them!" France looked taken aback for a moment, before anger took over his facial expression.

"Useless?" He repeated angrily. "How dare you call me useless! I just saved your miserable life from a very ugly fate. Did you WANT me to leave you behind and be blown to tiny little bits!"

England glared murderously at him. "The assassins are gone," he stated simply. His body shook violently, his face trying to mask the deep failure that vibrated within his chest. Because he couldn't even catch these mad men when they were literally cornered. He let them escape...

Seeing this suppressed reaction in the stubborn island nation, France sighed tiredly, bringing one hand to his face while the other reached for England's shoulder. "Je suis désolé...England. I'm sorry. Please remember this though, mon cheri. They will not get away next time. Eventually...they will be caught." He offered the trembling Englishman a small smile.

England shook his head. "No. Eventually is not good enough. This year, no matter what, we are going to capture those two! All of them if there's more!" He lifted his head up, a determined look imbedded in his face. "No matter what."

Away from the explosion - Small restaurant/cafe - 10:49 a.m.

"Oh Mattie! Did you SEE the look on his face? There's another memory I hope never to forget!" Chuckled Alfred, his brother and he swiftly making their way towards a quiet restaurant quite a distances away from their last interaction with their pursuers. They casually opened the door to the tiny cafe, heading straight towards the bathroom and avoiding the glance of the returning owner who eagerly sought out her newest customers. They briskly made sure that all the bathroom stalls were empty before removing all forms of protective clothing from their bodies.

"So Mattie...how exactly did you know that that nasty water was actually flammable?" Alfred slipped out of his flowing coat, neatly folding it before stuffing it into the corner of the bathroom. Various other materials like his hat and the face cover followed.

"First off Al, water is not flammable. And second, it was sort of obvious with the stench and all." Matthew treaded back towards the bathroom door, making sure that it was locked and that the material did not allow too much noise to resonate through it. He looked back to his brother who was vigorously rubbing water into his hair, trying to wash away the red dye that concealed his naturally blond hair.

"Hey hey hey. I'm not a brainiac like a certain someone." He replied, his blue eyes peeking up from under his water drench hair. "Although I will admit, that was pretty awesome how you timed that explosion so well."

Matthew smirked. "Of course it was awesome. Don't ever underestimate me Al. Half of the time, your probably not even aware of how often I save your ass from the background." Alfred pouted at his brother.

"Sure...Keep believing that your half as badass as me." He grumbled. He headed into one of the stalls, grabbing his black cloth and drying his now blond hair with it. From the outside he could hear the water running again, his brother following his previous actions of ridding themselves of their annoyingly disguised hair color.

"Whatever you say Al. Just don't forget that it was MY idea of lighting that piece of paper on fire that set off that explosion in the first place. If I hadn't placed everything so perfectly well and in
order, chances are we would have been captured and jailed in England." He heard Alfred scoff from within the stall.

"As if! We're too awesome to be jailed." Both brothers continued with their change of physical identity until they were finally unrecognizable as the mysterious assassins that most of England was probably patrolling for at the moment.

"Al?"

"Yeah Mattie?"

"Aren't you angry that this was our first aborted mission?" Matthew gently held his brothers back from exiting the bathroom. "I know how much you hate failure."

Alfred glanced back at Matthew with a betraying cheery glint to his eyes. "At first I was but, then you made it fun again."

"I did?" Matthew was confused.

"Hell yeah, Mattie! You are the one who called out our games." He grinned brightly. "Chances are, we'll see those guys again. I just know it. And when we do, we'll have fun then. Believe it or not Mattie, I feel like Luck is still smiling down on us." With that last part spoken, Alfred energetically pushed open the door and smiled at the cafe's owner, a blond young lady with an eager look to her face.

"Hello there! What can I do for you today?" The young lady asked.

"Hmmm..." Alfred approached the counter with a spring to his step. "I'll take this, this and that," he said, pointing out various meals on the menu behind the owner. "And my buddy here will get the same but replace the coffee with tea." The quieter twin crossed his arms, amused that his brother was so quick to push away important information to the back of his mind. It was a great thing that Matthew was the brains behind all their tasks and jobs. Well, at least we're not in jail. Or dead.

Matthew mentally sighed, his brother rambunctiously leaning over the counter and pointing out more orders to their growing breakfast. Poor woman. Anyone could easily tell that she was struggling to keep up with Alfred's endless order.

"Do you want eggs with that sir?"

"Eggs? Of course I want eggs!" Demanded Alfred. "Can you believe this lady?" He grumbled over his shoulder towards Matthew. The lady furiously typed a few buttons onto the cashier box and waited for the bill to stop rolling out of the machine.

"Will that be all sir?" Her voice quivered slightly as if she regretted wishing for customers to come.

"Eh? Is that all?" The American asked his brother. His twin gave him an exasperated look and nodded mechanically. "Yeah. I guess that's it then."

With the lady busily distracted preparing their large meal, the two wandered off to a table in the corner of the small restaurant. Bowing their heads as if they were in deep yet casual conversation they whispered to one another their next plans. Their failed attempted left a sour taste in Matthews’s mouth, that was for sure. He wasn't one for making mistakes and if anything, he really wanted to do a few things before they departed for home again.

First, return to the scene of the crime. From a distance, of course. Second, they needed to find a
decent computer somewhere far away from the main city. They couldn't stay around long, in case the police started screening people or something. Perhaps a town a few miles away would be fine. As long as the computer they found was untraceable and worked well enough for Matthew to hack. Then, Alfred added a few extra ideas such as exploring the surrounding countries in the EU. His boredom back home really brought the adventurous side of him back to life. As their meals were brought out slowly by the plateful Alfred grabbed his fork eagerly, all their plans having been thoroughly covered.

"Yup. Sounds good to me Mattie!" Beamed Alfred. So much work to do!

London Airport - 11:02 a.m.

"What did you say?"

Near the exit of an airport terminal, a frustrated Englishmen stomped his foot onto the floor, his day just getting worse by the second. He and his French companion had chosen to search the area a bit longer, looking for the escaped assassins before deciding that indeed they were no longer locatable. Disappointed deeply, England and France had gone back to their police car when the sight of the disheveled red car the two criminals had used to flee in brought another task to their attention. Admittedly, England was annoyed in having to track down where this car came, so sure that the criminals had stolen it. However, imagine his surprise when he found that the license plate was not reported as missing but rather it was registered at a nearby airport as a rented car. A rental!

Glee and hope was his main fuel, driving him towards the airport where it was registered, thinking in his mind that for a second, the assassins had slipped up, or had been stupid enough to think that maybe no one would bother to look up the cars license. At least, that’s what he thought at first.

"I'm sorry sir but that’s the name the car is registered under." Replied a lanky fellow, his bushy hair swaying in fear at the angry client in front of him.

"Are you serious! The car is registered under Arthur Kirkland?" Screeched England, various civilians slowing down in their tracks as they watched the ruckus that was coming from the rental counter. The Frenchman turned away, a bit embarrassed to be near the angry Briton that was doing a swell job in creating a commotion. Did he really think that these trained killers were stupid enough to let one little detail slip them?

"I a-already told you sir, that’s the name that car was...r-registered under." The fellow stuttered. He was starting to back up into a crevice of his working area, hoping for the wall to engulf him into its solid bonds. A sigh was making its way out of his mouth when two hands slammed loudly onto his counter, causing him to choke it back. "Ah!"

"Are you bloody stupid or what? If you have this damn car registered under that alias then you should at least be able to provide a decent description of how the client looked like!" Green eyes stared down the fearful employee menacingly. "Am I correct?"

"Why am I the only one who has to deal with all these problems?" Asked France to himself. Steering himself over to the quivering lads rescue the Frenchman attempted to coax England into leaving this poor establishment alone. It wasn't really their fault that they were not paying attention to the people whom they rented their cars out too, let alone taking the time to get the proper information from them. It was best if no one knew that some very wanted criminals had slipped through the cracks of society. As the two nations finally released the business of any interrogation and were headed outside France turned to England, a sly smile on his face.

"Mon ami, I have a proposal for you. Will you listen?"
England grunted in reply, anger still seething inside him.

"As nations, we all must have human names to our identity as well. Mines simply fits with Francis but you? You've always changed names every year and have never lingered long enough on one name that you could stick too."

England raised a brow in question. Where is he going with this...

"I apologize if this unsettles you in anyway or if it seems inappropriate of me to say, what with the day we've had today, but if I may make a suggestion..."

England’s eyebrows came crashing down onto his eyes, not liking what France was hinting at.

"No. I will not take the name Arthur! You hear me! I am perfectly fine with everyone addressing me as Mr. Kirkland and that alone!"

"But mon ami-!"

"I said NO!"

"Despite who the creator is the name fits you very well! Why can you not see passed its origins and just stick to this name?"

A growl came from the island nation, warning Francis to shut up. "Fine. If you do not like the name I will not force you to use it."

"Wonderful. Now, lets get back to her majesty and assess the situation."

"As you wish...Arthur."

A merciless fist imbedded itself nicely into France's stomach, forcing him to lose all oxygen in his lungs. It was fine if England didn't use the name Arthur, however, that didn't mean that France wasn't going to use the name himself in addressing the violent nation. Eventually England would learn to accept the name with a grudge.

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~ 3 Days Later ~ Bacharach, Germany - Rural town – May 31, 2003 - 8:02 a.m.

"Prussia! Don't touch that!" A hand curtly slapped away Prussia's invasive hand that was within reach of the sole computer that this rural village could afford to use.

"Ow! Not cool West." Grumbled Prussia. He grudgingly took a few steps back and watched his sibling go to work in his task.

Inside a small cramped room, Germany was occupied in gathering the remains of notes that held important topics regarding the world's current problem. The assassinations, of course. So far, many nations had already arrived at this location, a majority of them having lively conversations in the other room that was large enough to serve as the meeting room. Their voices drifted clearly through the wall that separated them from Germany. Angry, happy, joyous, teasing and somber voices mingled with one another, every nation content in displaying their emotions after having been separated from one another for so long. Now if only Italy would come already...

Grabbing the last note crammed in between two heavy textbooks, Germany nodded his head in silent agreement that this was indeed the last paper needed for their discussion. There wasn't any hurry on Germany's part to get the meeting started right away, even though it should have technically started 2 minutes ago. Everyone, including Germany himself were aware that there
were still some nations that needed to come. Maybe if they took their time in thoroughly discussing
this topic then the present nations could fill in absent nations on the meeting at hand.

"Any day now West. Come on already! I want to go socialize with the others!"

Germany glared at his brother, papers in hands, and marched towards the door that led him to the
world's nation. "I didn't ask you to come and baby-sit me, Prussia."

The door opened, allowed the German nation to join his fellow nations and promptly closed on
Prussia's face.

"Hey!" The door was yanked open and carelessly slammed shut, Prussia rushing after his brother
who was immediately being swarmed by various nations eager to get the discussion started.

"Monsieur Germany! What a pleasure to see that you have acquired such a lovely place for our
meeting! Not too close to society but not too far from civilization! Surely we shall have the
necessary privacy in this place."

France enthusiastically shook Germany's hand, perhaps lingering too long on the hand shake as Germany was the one to initiate a halt to their greetings. As co-host
to this meeting, France being the main creator of this plan, Germany mentally debated on whether
France's comment was a compliment or an insult. He dismissed both choices, moving on to more
important thoughts.

"Have you, per chance, seen any sign of Italy arriving yet?" Asked Germany. France raised a
perfectly styled eyebrow in mischief.

"Oh? Have you missed him that much, mon-?"

"You better believe West has been pinning for that innocent little Italian since the end of WW2!"

Interjected Prussia, wrapping his arms around Germany's neck. "Do you know how LONG my
little bruder here has been depressed not having Italy around to yell at?"

"Eh? Depressed? I have suffered from no such symptoms Prussia!" The German held a light blush
to his cheeks, his hands working hard at removing his cackling brother. "Would you leave me
alone! We have a meeting to begin here. Your distracting behavior will not be tolerated if you
cannot control yourself bruder!"

"Hola amigos! How is everyone here? Having fun, yo creo?" Spain cheerfully joined the German-
French group, smiling widely at his old friends.

"Ah Spain. How are you doing? Did your little nurse heal you back to normal?" France gave the
Spaniard a devilish smirk, guessing from the vibrant aura that he gave off that things were doing
somewhat better for the Spanish nation.

"Hey Spain! Your looking good today. Mind lending me your nurse some time soon?"

A grin graced the brown haired nation as he turned to the albino. "Prussia, go to hell." He then
turned to France. "Si! I am doing much better now France although I would not call Lovi a nurse if
I were you. He was kind enough to visit me in my times of mourning and sadness. Just seeing his
lovely face was enough to brighten my despair filled days." He nodded his head as if to confirm his
last statement.

"That is good to here Spain." Germany, finally having removed Prussia from his neck, added. "I
am sorry that you had to endure what chaos ensued in your country because of the assassins."

Instantly, the atmosphere darkened, spreading around like a raging fire as nations sensed the
sudden drop in joy and cheer. From lively chit chat to worried whispers, nations started to head for
the grand table that adorned the large room, taking their respected seats. While France and Germany remained standing, another figure stood out from the receding crowd, going towards their direction.

"France, I know you and Germany went to a great deal of setting this meeting. You, with all the phone calls and having to deal with...uncooperative nations." A glance was sent in Russia and China's direction. While Russia giggled and smiled back at England, China simply gave the Briton a minor glare. "And Germany, going to the trouble of finding such a place for us to meet..." Germany nodded.

"I know you two are in charge with this meeting but if I could just-"

"Mon ami, do you really have to ask me about having a moment to talk to our fellow nations? I would have expected a more bold move from you, like perhaps hearing you say that you will have a moment to speak to the nations and no one will argue against you." A slender index finger was waved in disappointment. "I expected more from you Arthur. Tch."

England's eye twitched for a mere moment before pulling himself together again. "France...can we just start this meeting already?" He had to control his anger after all. Ignoring the puzzled look Germany was giving France in question to the human name that he had addressed the island nation with, England chose a spot next to Germany and waited for the room to quiet down. Some nations were still missing, but in time, they would come soon.

The meeting was about to begin.

"Is this really what we have been reduced to? We were all once great nations. I like to think that maybe we still can be those nations we were...But...but as long as we have these assassinations occurring..." Germany took a moment to stare at the nation that were present. Most of them were here, minus the Italian twins, Poland, Ukraine, and Lithuania. "...We are unable to pick ourselves up. We are unable to pick up our people...our society, because there is no order. Little government for those of us that are lucky. We have endured this torture long enough. That is why France has called for this meeting, and why I support his actions completely. Does anyone have any objection to this meeting?"

Many heads shook in rejection, others taking to more vocal thoughts.

"Fuck no!"

"Let's capture these damn bastards already!"

"What's the plan?"

That last quiet comment silenced everyone, the riled up nations settling into their seat.

"Yes, as Japan has graciously reminded us of, this meeting has been convened for the purpose of discussing the matters of this assassins. Unfortunately, none of us have had the luck of finding any clues as to who they are or how many are there to begin with. The most we are able to garner from past incidents is that the assassinations are always carried out by 2 persons. And that they always target our political leaders or anyone who is of equal value to their status."

Growls and angry expressions washed over the seated nations. Continuing from where Germany took a pause, France stepped forward from the front of the room.

"Oui! In fact, three days ago, had Fate not finally given us a break in our endless streak of no personal encounters with the assassins then I would not be standing up here with my dear friend
England, asking that you all listen to our story. Leaving the rest to mon cheri, I think this recent news will provide some form of hope for all of us." France gave a curtsy bow and stepped back, giving England room to approach the nations. By the end of France's introduction, every nation was leaning forward in their seats, anticipation glowing in their faces.

"Hello everyone." England's eyes roamed over all the nations. Japan, Russia, China, Finland, Sweden, Greece, Spain, Belarus, Austria...many others spread around the room. Turning his view up to the sound of an opening door, England and the rest of the room turned around to stare at the entering nations. A sniveling Ukraine accompanied by Lithuania and Poland halted at the entrance, bowed politely in apology and sped on over to any open seats. England cleared his throat to gain everyone’s attention.

"Well, I see that just about everyone is here then. I would like to start with how my people are working to detain these killers..." So began England's recounted story of how his royal majesty was almost murdered to the reckless car chase that ensued in his city's streets. He spent extra time on describing how they had fled the scene when cornered in the alley. By the end, many nations held looks of shock and dismay.

"Did that truly happen, France?" Asked a skeptical Spain.

"How could you two idiots have gotten so close to these assassins and not even have shot them!" Switzerland stood up, a gun already in his hand. "I bet any sane person would have just planted a few bullets on them already! Isn't that the most reasonable choice?"

England scowled at the spreading idea that was becoming accepted by many of the others. "Listen here everyone! Yes it did happen. I'm just as determined to capture these bastards as everyone else, but just because they were crafty enough to escape us this time does not mean that they will get away next time." His glare dared anyone else to protest. No one said much else about the escape, although many upset mumbles and whispers vibrated around the table. The room door creaked open again, one head peeking in on the nations.

"Eh? What are you doing just standing there Italy? Get in here already!" Ordered England. Behind him, Germany's eye lit up as he watched the nervous Italian and his brother enter the room. "As I was saying before, these assassins are obviously quite skilled if they were able to evade capture this long. But there is one thing that has caught my attention that perhaps we can use as a clue. One of these men has blue eyes and we also have a photo of them." He eagerly passed around France's developed photo of the assassins cornered. Many nations gawked in amazement at the actual photo though some still grumbled about preferring to see their dead bodies instead. Comments immediately started flying all over the room.

"Wow. They're pretty tall!"

"You should have shot them with bullets! Not take their damn picture!"

"God damn! You let these guys get away?" It was a deep shame to the nations that they could not decipher so much as the assassins facial features because of how closely concealed they had dressed.

"Blue eyes and a photo? That's it?" Russia tentatively asked, turning the photo around in his hand. He smiled mockingly at England, content with himself that he knew a bit more than the rest of the nations. However, that added detail would be kept to himself for later, when it was decided that he could use this extra information to his advantage.

"You ungrateful... Hmph! Its not like you have any better information to add!" Oh, how wrong
England was on that statement. "For the time being, none of us are sure how many of them there are, or if there is an organization of some sort, but we can most definitely agree that we need to take direct actions against them and any clues we have to their identity will help narrow down the search."

"Any further encounters or interaction with these dangerous men should be immediately reported to us as soon as possible." Spoke Germany. "If possible, any nations who run into these people should try to capture them alive, but if force is not successful then capturing them dead is acceptable too."

Italy and a few others cringed at the idea. Then, Finland raised his hand. "Um, hey England? You said that the assassins knew the infrastructure in your royal palace right?" England nodded. "Ok, then is it possible for me to see those plans myself?" England tilted his head in thought before cautiously nodding his head.

"I...suppose you can. But I must ask you that you limit your search of the program." Taking his leave after gaining the code from England, Finland walked towards the back room where Prussia had been poking at the only computer in this village. Sweden made to follow after the blond nation but was hastily told to wait behind with a halting hand. He obediently remained in his seat at Finland’s order.

Italy, having silence as an aid at being heard, spoke next. "Ve. I'm confused about all this...I mean, what has been happening in the past few decades...?" To his side, Romano groaned in annoyance, distraught at the idea that they were defying their governments orders at this very moment, by attending this meeting and asking questions about the past. It was a short of a miracle that they had slipped passed their people to begin with. Stupid Feliciano and wanting to know shit!

"What? Do you truly not know what has been happening to this world in the past 50 years?" A confused look was all Japan got from his ally. Confusion confirmed.

"My my. I didn't know you and your brother were that sheltered." Russia giggled as Romano shot him a glare. "Does the truth hurt?"

"It hasn't been an easy life for any of us." Came the bold response and unusual response from Ukraine. Russia's smile faded away as he stared worriedly at his sister. "Some of us don't even have governments anymore. Our people just live by basic instincts..." She held back a sob, her head downcast. All the nation besides the Italian brothers knew that she was a victim similar to the North American region. She no longer had a government, although luckily her country had not been destoryed. It was just government-less.

"How can you two allow yourselves to be so...protected. To be hidden away from your own kind." China was speaking now. "As nations we have our duty to our people, that much is obvious, but to some extent we need to know when to take charge for our own people's sake. Allowing your people to hide you from all the violence that engulfs the world does not help anybody."

China's comment received a threatening growl from Romano while Italy bowed his head in shame. He did have a point though.

"China, they are not completely at fault." Japan countered.

"Oui. You are being too harsh on them." China merely turned away from the protective stance France was taking on Italy's behalf.

"Italy...do you want to know what has happened?" Asked Germany, offering the Italian a hopeful small smile. He nodded his head hesitantly.
From the front of the room, England watched wordlessly as the nations were beginning to get off topic in their attempts to educate the naive nations. The conversation gradually transitioned from talks about the assassins to the history of the war that caused the destruction of the North American region. **Why is it that we always manage to get off topic so easily?** With a heavy sigh, England sat down at a vacant chair and listened in on the occurring history lesson. Eventually they would return to the subject at hand.

"Hmmm. That’s strange." Keys clicked elegantly on the computer, the room glowing lightly with the computer screen flashing various codes and programs. Finland cocked an eyebrow in surprise as he a found a trace of unknown activity on England's program. As long as Finland had the passwords that allowed him to access the blueprints of the royal family's palace and England's permission to check it, he scanned the program for anymore suspicious trails. How crafty these people were... They erased their tracks very well but then again, Finland wasn't one to give up so easily either.

He typed in a few codes where the infiltrators had accessed England's program and watched as the screen blinked positively back at him. "Yes! Now, lets see where this bug takes us." He wasn't hoping to actually find the exact location of where this hacker came from. If anything, he didn't even expect so much as a signature to give him a trail to follow back to the hacker. The most he hoped to do was slow these assassins and/or hackers down a bit. A virus or two seemed like it might do the trick.

Loading onto an unfamiliar page, Finland looked on with wide eyes as the computer was barely giving him a glimpse of what could possibly be the hackers program. There were so many things listed and numbers crammed onto the first lines of the loading page. Before the Scandinavian nation could begin reading the contents of the blurred page, the computer screen went pitch black. "What?"

It seemed like the virus he tried downloading onto the hackers program was rejected and access to the program itself was shut off completely. Finland blinked a few times, trying to process what had just happened right now and whether it was a good thing or bad. He smiled happily as he placed it under the good category. Whether the hackers were getting worse at covering their tracks or maybe Finland was getting better at uncovering any erased leads, it was still good news to him.

"Watch everyone. We're going to catch these culprits soon." He turned the computer back on, destroyed any of his lingering activity on the computer and England's program and turned the thing off. Content with the small progress, he gathered his disks and was going to return to Sweden when a neglected thought occurred to him.

Sealand. **Oh...where ever did you wander off too?** That boy was always blabbing on about how he was going to be a nation one day. It worried Finland endlessly to have his boy missing. All his work as an undercover spy did nothing to help locate Sealand, regardless of how many computers he could hack for hidden information. "Oh well... He'll come home when he feels like it." Until then, Finland would return back to Sweden in the other room and wait patiently for the return of his adventurous child.

"So...after the war with Russia and China, the continent of North America was destroyed?" Italy and his reluctant brother had done well in understanding the history lesson so far. The war that was sparked between the USA and the USSR during the Cold War eventually dragged in the nations China and Canada, raging over a mess of misunderstandings and lies. Thankfully for the whole world, no nuclear bombs were used, due to the looming fear of MAD or Mutual Assured Destruction. However, the fighting nations did not hold back the violence they directed towards one another in the war. "No, only the nations the United States of America and Canada were
destroyed. Mexico managed to evade destruction by staying neutral during the war although he did sustain some damage over that time period.” Said Germany. Mexico was eventually discovered in supporting both sides of the war which earned himself a few bombs in certain territories.

Still...There was one thing that was bothering Italy.

"Ok. I understand that part but...all that time, even before that war, there was WW2 and others before that..." Germany raised an eyebrow, trying to figure out what the Italian was asking. Other nations who had added to the history lesson watched with interest, meanwhile England continued to stare uninterested at the wall. This history lesson seemed dragged out long enough for his liking.

"...All that time, when we were able to interact with one another...where was America? And Canada? I never once met those nations myself and I know you all say that they don't exist as personification but, can someone tell me why? There's Mexico. Why isn't there America and Canada too?"

Silence strangled the room of any answer, England finding it the most hard to breathe in the tense atmosphere. Why did you have to ask that question? Suddenly, a million eyes were looking in England's direction, some wandering over to France too. Everyone knew about those two as well. Looks like somebody forgot to fill that story in for the Italian twins. From the curious brown eyes of Feliciano to the interested expression on Romano's face, England and France looked away.

"The reason why...America and Canada don't exist...is a consequence of being an empire." Spoke France slowly. He didn't dare look up, knowing that every nation would be judging him and England for their sins. Many nations held a past of atrocities and horrible deeds but, out of them all, they considered France and England's the most unfortunate one.

"Fighting with your own kind...getting too involved with your goals..." England's voice trembled slightly. "France and I fought. Too much. I had America and Canada...under my custody when..."

"We fought again. We brought our people into this and in the middle of our skirmish-

"We lost the boys." Interrupted England. How this meeting changed from being about the assassins to dragging out the wretched past, England didn't want to think about it too much. It was painful enough talking about how two nations were gone because of their careless actions.

"Gone? How?" Continued Italy.

Does he have to make this harder on me? "Gone! Dead! France and I lost America and Canada!" Yelled England, anger and sorrow controlling his small frame. France's presence behind him, his hand gently being placed on his back did nothing to soften the painful memory that dwelled in his heart.

"After the skirmish, when Angleterre and I stopped trying to murder each other and realized that the boys were gone...we looked for them everywhere. We thought that maybe...they were scared away by the violence or that..." He shook his head. "It didn't matter in the end. We found...remains. Two decaying remains near the end of the woods, most likely killed by the wildness." France's eyes were full of despair, his mind in another time where he and England had set their hate for one another to the side in order to find the boys. England, desperately clutching a pair of bloody ribbons the boys had always adorned, lost all self control as soon as they stumbled upon the site of the corpses. And France...lost his meal and every other meal before that to the side of the disturbing scene. Two innocent tiny bodies lay torn and tattered to pieces on the forest floor, the bodies so mangled that neither France nor England could confirm which body was which nation.

"America and Canada...died at a young age then." Stated Italy numbly, his eyes trembling at this
"The past is the past...as painful as it is, we must move on and...continue living. Even if America and Canada survived, chances are, they would be dead in our time now. Their nations were destroyed in the last war after all." The glares France was receiving from Russia and China went unnoticed as he headed towards the exit of the meeting room. "Now, if I may have the relief of doing so, I think now is a prefect time to take a break from our meeting." With a wave of his hand over his shoulder and not pausing to hear if anyone agreed with his decision, France was out the door. Some mummers traveled around the room until it was hushly agreed that a break seemed suitable. No one liked the tense atmosphere that was still hanging the room.

As nations exited the room in groups and individually, Italy neared where England was still seated and nervously looked for a chance to speak, although no one was really preventing a conversation with him. Germany and Japan glanced at one another, standing behind Italy in case he needed support for any reason. Their group grew with the addition of Romano who came to check on his idiotic brother’s actions, Spain quietly hanging behind his favorite Italian.

"Ummm...England?" The island nation did not lift up his head but answered nonetheless.

"What." His voice sounded so dead, lost in suppressed memories.

"I...I'm sorry! I-I didn't mean to upset you so please! Don' be sad... or angry with me." A comforting hand landed shyly on Italy's shoulder, his German companion trying his best to ease the Italian's nervous feelings.

A sigh escaped England. "Don't apologize. You didn't kill America or Canada. Besides...France is right. The past is the past. No point in allowing it to drag us down." He finally lifted his head up, his emerald eyes observing the group behind Italy with a dull interest. "Would you all stop worrying and go take your break. We still have a lot to discuss you know."

Gaining a few nods from the others, England was soon alone again. The sole person left in the meeting room, he relished the mournful silence that greeted him with open arms as it respectfully listened to his most inner thoughts. If anyone deserved to die, it should have been me. Those two had only started their lives...They didn't deserve to suffer because of my stupid selfish actions.

A chair screeched against the floor and was slowly pushed back against the table. With the door left wide open, England made for the exit but turned his head back towards the room one more time. As if the two lost nations could hear him from another world, England whispered, "I'm sorry...America...Canada..."

Then left.

Henschhausen, Germany - Some random house - 9:15 a.m.

"Eh? What...what the hell!" Blurted Matthew as he stared in astonishment at the computer he and his brother had "borrowed." Fortunately for the family in this house, they had left at a perfect moment, leaving the house empty for Alfred and Matthew to break into. Its not like they would mind the mess anyways. People broke into each others house all the time.

"What’s the matter bro?" Alfred peeped his head around the door entrance, his eyes landing on his brothers back. He had been pretty distracted in petting the unconscious guard dog that laid sprawled in the living room, enjoying how soft the fur near his very sharp teeth felt on his fingers. No need for the family to worry about coming home to find a dead dog. Luckily for this family guard dog, Alfred and Matthew were very attached to animals and rarely wasted bullets or time in
killing them. They mainly preferred to incapacitate them if they tried to do them any harm. Drugging the defensive dog with a tasty piece of meat sprinkled with sedatives, Matthew and his brother had snuck into the house easily.

"This...this can't be!" Matthew was still making no sense from Alfred's point of view.

"What's not making any sense? Speak in a language that I can understand Mattie." Whined the American.

"This...Someone was trying to give me a virus!"

"Like STD's?"

"You idiot, stop messing around." Scolded the Canadian. "I mean a virus for my programs!"

"What? Are you serious? Haha! Look like you losing you touch Ma-" A swift punch was directed into Alfred's gut before he could finish his last comment.

"O-ow...Damn bro...that...HURT!" Clutching his stomach in pain, Alfred glared at the back of Matthew's head.

"Serves you right for insinuating that I was losing my touch, hoser!" Various codes and passwords were typed into the program, the screen flashing rapidly before purple blue eyes. "I don't lose my touch Al. Make sure to remember that."

His twin was beginning to lower himself into the floor, curling in on himself. "Damn. I think...you broke a rib..."

For a split second, Matthew's eyes widen in worry but quickly returned to their normal size as he sighed in annoyance. *My God, you are so dramatic Al!*

He nudge his brother’s grounded body with the tip of his foot and then started to prod at his gut. "Al, you pansy, get up! I didn't punch you that hard."

"Nope. I'm positive that I'm bleeding now. Eternally." Alfred groaned into the carpeted floor.

"You mean *internally* dumbass and you are so NOT bleeding internally. Stop your bitching and get up already!" Matthew momentarily returned to the computer screen, waiting for a specific page to load up but had to turned back to his bothersome brother who was whining from the ground.

"Alfred F. Jones! Get up this instant or I swear I'm going to break some real ribs with a good kick!" It seemed like that did the job.

Grudgingly rising from the floor, Alfred threw himself over Matthew's back, his head resting over his shoulder where he could get a good view of the computer. "You ass. That really did sting a bit and- Oh? What's that?"

On the screen were bright words with numbers following them. "They're viruses. And looks like whoever was trying to send these viruses to me were trying to infect these many files..."

"Damn! 200 files? That’s a lot of files Mattie!"

"Sheesh. Tell me about it."

"Can you do anything about it? Or are you going to punch me again for questioning your authority?" A mischievous grin broke out on Alfred's face, daring his brother’s patience.
"Do you like being beaten Al?" An eyebrow was arched in question, Matthew slightly worried about his brothers mental state. Maybe he's finally taken too many hits to the head and is showing signs of this through irrational behavior.

Alfred's grin grew. "I don't know. I DO have you for a brother, so maybe you can answer that question yourself." Pushing himself off Matthew's back, Alfred strolled on over to the kitchen where he was going to raid the fridge for food. Fortunately for him, Matthew finally understood what his brother was hinting at but chose to stay seated where he could yell at his brother.

"Alfred you bastard! Just because I'm a sadist doesn't mean I turned you into a masochist!" A chuckle echoed from the kitchen.

"Tch! You idiot..." Matthew mumbled. He glanced back at the computer and went to work on erasing his activity. Removing his trail did not ensure that the family wouldn't come to find their house broken into. Alfred was doing a great job in showing the family that someone had indeed broken in, what with their missing food, but he couldn't risk leaving anything behind. Chances are, the family would just think that a homeless person got lucky and broke into their house to steal their food. Smirking to himself, Matthew had to hold back a chuckle at the mental image of Alfred dressed in hobo clothes. He could probably fit in with them too. He definitely has an endless hunger that homeless people suffer from living on the streets. Oh well. Better hurry up with here and get going soon. I guess I'll let Al wander around this area a bit longer before we head home. Gosh, I feel like I deserve a break from him sometimes but then again... The quiet blond turned his eyes towards the kitchen area where he could hear his brother rummaging around for food. God, you know I can never leave him behind. He's an idiot but he's my idiot. Nothing will ever change that. A smile graced Matthew's lips as the computer beeped for attention.

"Al, grab whatever you care to carry yourself. We're done here."

"What about that little bug that was bothering you? Are they going to be a problem in the future or..." Alfred skipped back into the computer room, carrying a handful of edibles in his hand, a majority of them junk food or snacks. Matthew casually swiped one away from his brother's full hands and opened the bag of chips.

"Hey! That's mines!"

"Was. And yes. I think whoever this person is will pose a threat to our missions and plans in the near future if we don't deal with them quick." Nodding towards the back door, the brothers exited the house. "Don't worry though Al. Have faith in me. I'll trace them next time and when I do, we'll deal with them personally." The sinister grins shared between the twins showed how frightening alike the brothers looked to one another as they departed on another exploration of the German region.

Bacharach, Germany - Rural town - 9:17 a.m.

"Ve~! Germany, Japan! Do you guys want to hear what Romano and I did last week?" Strolling back to the meeting room, Germany and Japan were content in watching the Italian nation excitedly flail his arms around as he told them stories after stories of his adventures in the cathedral and the numerous other churches that he was assigned to tend to. Should either Japan or Germany get the urge to say something to the other they would simply talk behind Italy's back as his cheerful nature caused him to be oblivious to the inattentive nations behind him.

An hour seemed excessive, break wise, but ending the break within the old 30 minute time limit would most likely go ignored. There were too many nations distracted with catching up with one another so an hour was appropriate for them this time. Now if Japan and Germany could get rid of
one last annoyance, then this reunion would be picture perfect for the former Axis members.

"Keseses! Oh Italy, you can be so innocent...sometimes I wonder if your hiding an evil demon somewhere deep in your soul!" Laughing hysterically at the terrified reaction he got from the Italian, Prussia glanced back at Germany. His angry expression did not promise good things.

"Bruder, leave Italy alone this instant! You've been nothing but a handful all day today! If you're not going to help us find a solution to our problem then I respectfully ask that you leave the remainder of us to attend important business."

"Huh? Like I'm going to miss out on embarrassing Austria or pissing off Hungary! I got to-"

"Prussia!" Came the curt reply. "Do not make me repeat myself. Are you going to help us or not?"

Frowning from having his fun ruined Prussia scoffed at his brother. "Fine! I'll leave! But when you guys are done with your boring meeting make sure to come and get me! Just because the meeting will be over doesn't mean that everyone has to leave. Maybe I'll devise a get together party after your lame meeting." He grinned wildly and dashed off into a distant road heading who knew where. Germany and Japan looked to one another, relief flooding over their face at finally have privacy to their little group.

"Germany, where is your brother going?" Asked Italy, his head tilting in curiosity.

"No where important Italy. Probably off to terrorize some of my poor civilians, knowing him." Germany groaned, bringing a hand to his head. "Well, at least we can catch up on any last moments before the meeting starts."

"Hai. Italy, if I may ask, where did your brother go? Judging by his clingy attitude towards you, I'm honestly surprised that he didn't accompany you during our break."

Italy smiled. "Oh? I saw Spain dragging fratello off somewhere. He said something about seeing a romantic restaurant on the way here and said that he wanted Romano to see it."

Japan and Germany stared blankly at their friend. Oh Italy... They thought unanimously. Not sensing the atmosphere, Italy went back to describing his tale of finding hiding spots within the church where he could avoid his angry brother.

"So Germany, during our time of separation, how has your life been going for you? Do you have anything to keep you busy?" Whispered Japan to his ally from the side.

"I work with engineering on most of my free time. It keeps me busy and gives me a reason to not have to deal with Prussia, although he usually finds a way to harass me regardless of what I am doing." He glanced around where his brother had ran off, making sure that the Prussian had left them for sure.

"I see. Interesting." A sly smile crossed Japan's face but was quickly dismissed before Germany could see it.

Dissolving their small conversation back to listening to Italy they continued on their way to the meeting house, ready to continue their discussion of the assassins.
Next Chapter: Alfred and Matthew coincidentally run into a person of great interest and importance meanwhile in the meeting house, tensions start to flare up regarding past incidents and conflict. Going back home, the twins return their interests to the whereabouts of the nations. (Warning: Next chapter gets a little dark...)
Chapter Summary:

Meetings are not fun when people do not get along. Or cooperate. Turn around quickly or you might lose one...
After having a little fun in Europe, Alfred and his brother are heading back home, estatic with their miraculous luck in finding something very interesting. Now, they move on to finding the nations. One by one...

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia

So it Begins

Bacharach, Germany - Rural town - May 31, 2003 - 9:34 a.m.

"With the commencement of this meeting it is agreed that we are to discuss only the sole topic of how to rid ourselves of these rampant assassinations occuring everywhere, regardless of who is responsible for them or who is leading them." Many nations nodded in Germany's direction.

"Very well. Than I would like to discuss how we can work together to capture these assassins. It has been unanimously agreed that, in the process of hunting whoever and how great their numbers might be, these assassins may be captured alive, or dead."

Despite the uproar of support for this measurement rumbling with the room, a hand defiantly stood out as it wavered within the crowd of heads and bodies.

"Yes. Italy?"

"When did we unanimously agree that the assassins could be captured dead?" As soon as the remainder of his question left his lips, the room had gone deathly quiet, many eyes wide in shock and mouths hanging wide open in disbelief at the Italians question. Did'n't he know that practically every nation wanted to return to normal funtional lives? WITHOUT the assassins still walking the earth.

"I-Italy..." As the current main speaker, Germany was suddenly finding it hard to answer the Italians "innocent" question. His mind frantically raced to find any excuse that could explain Italy's previous statement. It was an innocent question, right? That resolute look in the Italian's eyes said otherwise.

"Would you shut it Italy! How in fucks hell could you ask such a stupid question like that!" Barked Romano from across the table where he sat near Spain. "Its only common sense that these bastards deserve death! For everything they've done!"
"But...! What about...looking for forgiveness? Can't they perhaps..." Romano's counterpart struggled to find the right words to defend these assassins. It wasn't that he thought they didn't deserve to be punished. They had done horrible things to his own nation plenty of times. More so than the other nations. But...some where along the lines, whether it was the religious part of him or just his personality that yearned for peace, Italy did not want to see people be put to death. Their world had already seen enough death with the crumbling society.

"Forgiveness? FORGIVENESS!?" Repeated Romano ludicrously. "Ha! Whoever these people are, they deserve worse than hell! Let them die horrible deaths! The church is still doing its job if these murderers are sent to be judged by his holiness anyways!" He wanted to yell more obscene, harsh words at his stupid twin but was quickly restrained by Spain who insisted that he calm down.

"But..." Under the angry and upset looks he was getting, Italy could definately sense that he was losing this fight very quickly. All he wanted to do was help. Help the nations capture the assassins, for sure. But alive. Was that so much to ask for? With no one coming to his aid, even Germany and Japan hesitantly standing to the side, Italy defeatedly lowered his head and said not one more word, feebly blocking out the resentful whispers roaming around the room.

A nervous cough from the front of the table surprisingly got everyone's attention again as Germany retook his place as the speaker. "As I was saying before, we need to cooperate together in order to apprehend these people. First, we need to learn more about who they are as none of us are aware of how many there are or why they are doing this. All that is clear at the moment is that these carefully carried plans have been occuring for so long, its to our greatest theory that these assassins are most likely a group. An organization perhaps." All around the room, the present people listened attentively. Towards the end of the table, Russia smiled inwardly, pleased with himself that at least he met two of the assassins, of this supposed "organization." He quietly mused to himself whether any other members were as fun as the first two.

"...been agreed that a certain amount of rules can be established in this joint meeting, we must then find the means to communicate with one another without the strains and limitation that our governments have placed on us before. Does anyone have anything to say in support or opposition of this movement?"

"I won't work with Russia." Answered China from his seat, his arms crossed in front of his chest.

"Eh? Why not comrade? I think we make a lovely team when-"

"No! With the way you always try to control people through fears and weaknesses...no! I won't allow myself to be pushed around by you any longer!"

"China, what on earth are you going on about?" England inquisitively furrowed his brows at China's unusual outburst.

"Its really nothing of your concerns England. But if anyone is curious to know the basic problem I have, Russia has been a bit prying these past years and refuses to leave me in peace despite my obvious distance from him. THAT is my problem!" Huffing in anger at the thought that others still thought that he could be pushed around easily, China leveled any nations that dared stare at him too long with a deadly glare. It wasn't common for the eastern nation to be so unnaturally riled up but then again, these weren't normal times to begin with.

"It hurts me to hear such horrible accusations from you comrade. I always thought that you and I had the strongest bonds amongst most of the nations here, but if you truly believe that I am meddling in affairs that do not involve me, then please, show me evidence of these actions." With a sly grin hiding underneath his scarf, Russia took to staring at China with a childish glint to his purple eyes. "Well?"
"You should know that I can't do that! You had your spies erase all activity in my computers!"

"Oh? I didn't know I had spies." Russia giggled. My oh my. These assassins are much more skilled than I thought. Next time I "run into them" I must personally thank the sad one. Only he seems intelligent enough to have been able to accomplish the task efficiently. The happy one however...

By then, several nations had risen from their seats, forcibly restraining the screaming asian who claimed that the winter nation was plotting against him and everyone else in the room if they didn't watch their backs.

"China, would you calm down! We planned on holding this meeting for the purpose of solving our main problem. Not cause more of them!" Scolded France as a ruckus was starting to spread around, the tension in the air rapidly becoming contagious to enemy nations.

"If China doesn't have to work with Russia than I don't want to work with Greece!" Added Turkey.

"My feelings for you are the same." Retorted Greece, a deadly glare to his face.

"Why the hell do Lichestein and I have to get involve in all these damn affairs? We're still neutral. Call me when you actually catch the killers!"

"What good can anyone be, if they refuse to cooperate in this joint mission? Its obvious that we're going to need everyone's help in this hunt, regardless of their status." Austria indirectly hinted his remark towards a fuming Switzerland.

"Do...do I have to contribute any...money? My people...my government is..." Ukraine stuttered from her corner, her worried eyes lined with plump tears ready to fall at any notice.

"No Miss Ukraine, I don't believe the others will force you to give something that you do not have." Replied Lithuania from her left. He intended on placing a comforting hand on her shoulder but halted his actions when he could feel a deadly aura emanating from the end table. Where Russia was.

"Like, what the heck are these people after anyways?" Poland idly stood by his seat, having grown tired of sitting down. "Can someone, like, please tell me that at least?"

No answers were given. As the commotion started to disipate with the aid of France, Germany and England personally calming the most vocal nations in the meeting, the nations settled down long enough for the question to be asked one more time. Distant stares and blank looks were shared amongst the nations for a few oddly quiet seconds.

"...I don't know." Came Spain's reply. "I...yo pienso que...these people..." He placed a hand to his chin in thought, slightly wincing from the pain in his chest.

"So...if we don't know why these people are killing all our officials...can we maybe leave them alive in order to ask them that question?" Italy was seriously risking his tail in bringing back this foolish idea once more. He earned himself a few hard stares from several nations, but found some relief in the eyes of a few who actually considered his thought for a moment.

"And if we do leave them alive long enough to ask them why...then what?" The timid question came from Japan, his black eyes glancing over in Italy's direction.

"We kill them!" Switzerland loudly slammed his fist into the table, causing some nations to physically jump from the surprise outburst. Numerous mumurs quickly followed.
"What is up with you and wanting to kill everything...?" Muttered England from his seat although he did admit that if anything, he'd be more than happy to join along in the nations vivid support of ending these assassins once and for all. But alas, he did have a reputation to keep up as the United Kingdom. He would join in the mad mindless chant of death for these mysterious killers some other time, perhaps when the nations were too caught up in their own search for justice to realize that the Briton had joined their angry mob.

"Quiet everyone! As Poland brought up, it is a very interesting question regarding the assassins motives. As we have seen from numerous past years, these people have done one of two things. Either kill our officials and politicians, or stolen valuable information and used it for their own purposes..." Commented Germany. From his vantage, he saw how various members of the meeting threw each other suspicious, wary glances, having recalled points in their own history when their governments were at each others throats. Occasionally, even the nations themselves got physically involved with one another when leaked documents uncovered lies and betraying intentions. But, that was in the past now. Or at least, that's what they greatly hoped for.

With an angry scowl on his face, Romano lifted his hand up, his thumb pointing down towards the table. "Why does it matter what these bastards do their shit for! They kill our people. Its about time we repay them!" Again, some nations were nodding their heads in agreement while Italy frowned slightly at the returning threat of immediate death for these killers.

"Can't we just focus on capturing these monsters first? We don't even know where they are, who their next target is, or WHO they are! I believe the most we can do at the moment is return to working on a plan for their capture. Not ponder useless thoughts like motives." An annoyed huff from England's seat and he was done with his remark.

"Ah, mon ami. If only it was that simple..."

"Aru. Your sadly mistaken if you think I'm going to bother working with Russia."

"Oh China. Why are you being so mean to me when I didn't do anything wrong?"

"Big brother, are we going to do something about these people?"

"No Liechtenstein. Thats not our main problem right now. We have greater things to worry about, like restoring your government..."

"We'll when you guys decide to organize yourself better, Su-san and me will be ready anytime to aid in this hunt. You have our number."

More voices and opinions flirted through the nations while an upset German stiffly sat in his seat, watching with great irritation as the main discussion fell away into irrelevant chit chat. With Japan hesitantly making his way over to his area and Italy timidly dodging arguing nations, the former axis members soon occupied the front of the room. They watched silently as England and France joined them as well, decidedly ignoring their last members as Russia and China tried to have a civil conversation to the side of the room.

"Ve...Germany? Are we really going to kill the assassins? I mean, I know their bad people but...maybe they have a reason for doing what they do. Can we...listen to them first?"

"Italy, I-"

"Why are you insistent on protecting those monsters? Don't you know that monsters don't have reason like we do. They do these horrible things because they aren't human!" Italy trembled
slighting at England's voice, scared that at any moment, the island nation would begin to verbally attack him like his brother had done earlier.

"England, please try to see this from Italy's point of view." Japan reluctantly rose a hand in Italy's defense as the green eyed nation appeared to have inched himself closer to the Italian. From behind, Germany absent-ly nudged Italy to the side and stared down England.

"Can you refrain from intimidating Italy? You know he doesn't like confrontation." With a warning tone, Germany waited tensely as England lowered his hackles.

"Tch, whatever. No matter what though, we ARE going to catch them. And when we do, whether they are barely breathing or at deaths door, they will be prosecuted if not executed on the spot!" Spat England.

"Such a lovely determination you hold my dear Arthur, non?" The forgotten French nation casually patted the Briton on the head, unaware of the nervous twitch that passed the nation at the mention of his new human name. "But he is right, Italy. These people need to be held accountable for all their crimes. Whether they have numerous members or whether they only admit to a few assassinations, in the end, they will be judged." The sudden seriousness that enveloped France's features, left the former axis members with no counter arguements.

Silently, they all glanced back towards the ignored nations; a majority of them busily arguing amongst themselves more fiercely. For their first meeting in about 50 years, they all supposed that it could have gone worse. Just 2 days lay ahead for discussion.

Henschhausen, Germany - A local bar - 10:59 p.m.

"Those ungrateful...*hic*...pricks. How dare they forget the...awesome me and not...call me back over...” Through slurs and a blurry vision, Prussia stumbled on over to his table, sloppily pulling his chair out as he dropped himself onto its hard surface. His head lolled to the side and then the other, one hand carefully cradling his precious beer. Inside the local bar, the atmosphere was desolate; most rural folks having gone back home for the night. With the prospect of work awaiting them the next day, they did not have the time and sometimes even money to get smashed like the Prussian was doing at the moment.

"Ugh...stupid...people. Like someone as awesome as me...should bother spreading my...my...” He mind briefly stuttered on the same word 3 more times before his gaze started to unconciously wander around the small bar. No one was really here. Just him, the bartender who was cleaning his mugs...

"Eh...?"

Oh, there was one guy sitting over in a corner booth, lazily jabbing a fork into a popular German dish. *Tch! The nerve of this...guy. Not even bothering to finish such a... delicacy.*

Propping himself off the table top, Prussia slowly ambled towards the occupied booth, his mind mentally reminding him how to walk normally. Once at the booth, he casually sat across from the bored individual and gave him a wide grin. Maybe if he talked smoothly enough, he could swindle the man out of his meal.

"Hey there!" Surprisingly, his voice did not waver once, revealing how great he was at sobering up when he needed to. "Do you know what you got there?"

The man from across shot him a dirty look, mercilessly stabbing his meaty dish with the metal
fork.

"Nope! Mind telling me why I should care though?" Replied the person, his blue eyes narrowing down into slits.

It took a lot out of the Prussian not to break out in laughter. It was scary how similar this person's glare was to Germany's. Whether from the haze of the large amount of alcohol he had consumed earlier or perhaps the enticing thought of a yummy meal waiting as his reward, Prussia failed to notice the dangerous aura that emanated from the young man as he placed a casual hand on his shoulder.

"Well my friend, that dish there is very special. You see, people who are unfamiliar with it...well they don't tend to eat it right. And when they don't eat it right they regret it deeply later on in the day. Allow the awesome me to do you a big favor and take that big burden off your shoulders. How bout it?" He smiled mischievously at the blond, observing how his glasses reflected some dim lights from a distance.

The person in question looked unimpressed, his glasses lowering enough to exude a "Does it look like I care" expression.

"So your not amused? I see how it is. Well then, its your funeral if-" Before he could finish his white lie, another figure was approaching from his peripheral vision, for a second, he thought he was suffering from the alcohol in his system as he saw a copy of the person seated across from him.

"Who are you?" Asked the new person. He stood by the seated individual, Prussia swearing that he was losing it now because there were two people who looked exactly the same. Or maybe it wasn't the alcohol...

"Umm...what?" With the Prussian distracted with the new arrival, he did not catch the seated people actions as he slipped a powdery substance onto his dish and patted it down with his fork until it blended away into the meat. With his free hand, the blue eyed person pushed the dish away from himself and gave the albino a funny look.

"Hey, you said you wanted this crude right? Have it. I'm not hungry anyways..." As Prussia whipped his head back to the original person he had targeted, the standing person shot his brother a gaping look at his last statement, before realizing that his brother had other intentions. He silently smirked.

"Really?! Great!" Stealing the fork from the blond and ignoring his strange look-a-like, Prussia happily dug into the dish. Movement from across caused him to lift his head up, watching as his company was leaving him behind and walking away with the other person.

"Huh? Where are you two going?" Grabbing his plate, the albino took off after them, determined not to lose the only companions he had all day. "Is there a party you two are headed too or what?" He asked, quickly jamming himself in between the twins. It was late, but the ex-nation didn't have any obligations to return home anytime soon. He wasn't the one in charge of the country anyways. That was Germany's job.

"Eh? Aren't you going to finish your meal first?" Pointed Matthew at the dish in hand. He watched with utter shock as the Prussia shoved the remainder of the food into his mouth and had to hold back a gag, disgusted with the man's manners. He ate just like his brother! From the other side, his brother held back giggles, having seen his reaction to the albino's hurried actions.
"Stupid..." Mumbled Matthew under his breath.

"What was that?" The plate had disappeared from existance now, the albino grinning at his two newest friends while he fished his arms around their shoulders. "Where ever we're going, your treating!"

Both brothers groaned in irritation, wondering why in hell the drug hadn't kicked in yet. Maybe they needed something to activate it...

"How bout we stay put here instead and enjoy the place? Its empty and has all the alcohol you can drink. At least here, you can do all the shit you want in the world." Chirped Alfred. He grinned at the bartender who shot him a murderous look, daring him to try any of the suggested thoughts in mind. In response to his idea, Prussia pouted for a second, disappointed that they weren't going somewhere with more life. He then wiped the frown off his face and lunged towards the counter of the bar. Free beer was free beer! Alfred quickly followed the man's actions while his brother stared in disbelief at his brothers back. Maybe his brother should have taken some of that drug himself...

Another hour later and the brothers had succeeded in earning themselves a bunch of endless rants and comments from the albino. It still stumped them how after 10 rounds of beer the albino was still coherent. Or that he was still concious. Why wasn't that damn drug kicking in?! Pulling his brother to the side, Matthew spoke in a hushed voice, counting on the white haired man to keep himself busy long enough with the one sided conversation he was having with the bartender.

"Al, what the hell! You slipped the drug in right?!"

"Wow. You actually have the nerve to ask me that? Of course I slipped it in!"

Matthew glanced towards the albino who was thankfully still talking to the bartender. Back to Alfred, "Damn it! This guy is annoying me. More so with you around! For sure, next time I go to the bathroom your coming with me, no discussion!"

His brother pouted. "I'm not a little kid bro. I think I can handle talking to strangers. Unless you don't think I'm old enough for that."

"Tch. Your such an idiot, I swear." Groaned Matthew. "Once that drug kicks in, we dump his body a couple of blocks away from here. Let the town folks find him if they care long enough to poke him."

"That's if the damn drug decides to kick in anytime soon. I know I did my part. Maybe you didn't-"

A finger was curtly jabbed into Alfred's ribs before he could finish.

"What did I tell you about questioning my work?" Warned Matthew. Alfred would have retorted with a snappy reply if the obnoxious albino didn't crash into their private party so rudely.

"Hey guyss...!" He slurred slightly. "Are we bonding over here?" Some time into the hour the twins spent with the Prussian, he had deducted that the look-a-like guys were actually twins. And if the world decided not to mess with his head too much, chances of them not being related were very low.

With a fake grin, Alfred jumped up from his seat. "Not at all buddy! We were just wondering where we were going to take this party to next!" He purposely ignored the relieved sigh that escaped the bartender as he overhead the not so private discussion between the blond and the drunk albino.

"Oh...I know this place...that pretty awesome. Its over in..." Placing a mug of beer to his head in a
ridiculous posture of thought, Prussia scruntched his eyes shut. If only his brain wasn't so fuzzy!

"It doesn't matter. Lets go already before someone decides to personally escort us outside."
Whispered Matthew. He made sure to avoid eye contact with the seething bartender who had a
mountain high pile of empty mugs to clean now. He already had one problem with this clingy
nobody, he didn't need another.

Placing their money at the counter and leading his brother away, the twins left the bar, the albino
clumsily following behind. He wasn't going to be ditched that easily. From above, the moon shined
coldly onto the German country, guiding the three remaining people along a forlorn brick road. It
unnerved the Canadian how the white haired man would not leave them alone, meanwhile Alfred
continued to give the man a fake smile as they chatted about random topics, secretly chanting for
the drug to finally knock this idiot out.

"You know...you guys are pretty awesome. Not as awesome as...me...but cool enough for me
to...hang around you." From the way he was beginning to lean on Alfred for support, the twins
could see that the drug was taking affect, but it still didn't prevent Matthew from glaring at the
Prussian.

"Really? I feel so honored." Mocked Alfred, grinning at the Prussian who couldn't understand the
sarcasm in his current state. He continued with his rant.

"Su-re... You...whatever your name is..." Oh, they never did tell the man their names. But he didn't
bother doing the same either so they were even. "I...I think you'd...get along with my brother.
"He...umm...what?"

Alfred could no longer contain his amusement and allowed a robust chuckle to slip past his lips.
Yeah, the drug was definitately causing some of this entertainment. Now to dump the body
somewhere. "Don't worry dude. You can tell me some other time. For now, let's get you
somewhere comfy where you can crash." Leading the man towards a distant lonely building,
Alfred smirked at Matthew who gave him an annoyed look. He wasn't very pleased watching his
brother practically carry the blasted drunk to some remote area. He didn't like anyone touching his
brother, even if Alfred was the one making the physical contact. Seeing no point in arguing, he ran
after his brother.

"Ok! How do you feel here?" Asked Alfred as he placed the albino against a wall.

"Greeeaat. You guys gonna watch me sleep or what?" He smiled stupidly at the brothers, his vision
twisting as he started seeing 4 blonds instead of 2.

"No."

Hoping to cover for his brothers terse answer, Alfred added, "We're going to call for a ride. We'll
be sure to take you wherever you'd like. Just say the place!" His brother, however, grimaced at his
cheerful tone. Even if it was fake, it sort of infuriated him to hear his brother sound so happy
towards anybody else besides him. Only he should be able to enjoy Alfred's cheerful nature.
Nobody else!

"Awesome. For a while there, I thought you guys were going to...rape me." He smiled devilishly.
"Then again...maybe I wouldn't mind. Its not called rape if I consent." He attempted to wink at
Alfred but ended up shutting his eyes longer than he should have. By then, Alfred had to
physically extend his hand out towards Matthew in order to prevent him from beating the groggy
man. The guy was annoying, for sure, and it would have been funny to see his twin beat him up but
for some reason, Alfred felt generous today. His first intentions were to ditch this man the minute
he fell unconscious from the sedatives. No more, no less. The drugs they used were quite useful in
knocking out persistent, unwanted company that refused to leave the twins in peace.

"...Hehehe...if only West could see me now...having fun without him..." Prussia chuckled slightly
to himself, unaware of the twins who were slowly backing away from him. "All he ever
does...is...rave about Italy this...and Italy that. Always...forgetting about me..."

For a moment, Alfred and Matthew had assumed that this man was succumbing to the effects of
the sedative when addressing someone as "West," continuing their retreat from him. But as soon as
the slurring man mentioned Italy, instantly their interest were perked.

"Eh?"

"What? What does your brother rave about again? Something about Italy?" It was a long shot to
assume that this man was referring to a person, especially when he was going to become
incapacitated any moment, but Alfred was always one to assume the craziest coincidences.

"Yeah. Everytime I hang out with him...he's always like, 'What is Italy doing today' or...'when is he
going to get here.' It gets annoying after a while when you..." His head drooped onto his shoulder,
having lost his train of thought. "Uh...yeah. My brothers..." He stopped talking.

Briskly striding over to the albino, Alfred along with Matthew, assessed his condition. He was out
like a light.

"Well Mattie? Do you still think I shouldn't talk to strangers?" Lifting one slumped arm, Alfred
laughed at the incredulous expression on his brothers face. This was just too great for him to ever
let his brother live down. He aimed on lifting the other arm next, when his hand was immediately
slapped away from it. "Hey! What are you-?" He turned around to find a dark look on his brothers
face.

"Your not going to carry him Alfred. I am." There was no further argument.

With one American casually whistling and his Canadian counterpart carrying an unconscious man
on his back, the brothers headed towards the outskirts of the rural town where Alfred's plane lay
hidden amongst some abandoned buildings. Luck was most definitely on their side today.

Bacharach, Germany - Meeting room - June 1, 2003 - 1:39 a.m.

The nations did not get much discussed for the remainder of the day, yesterday. Now there was
only 2 days left. Surrounded by an empty, desolate room, it was almost hard for Germany to
believe that in another adjacent room slept Japan and Italy, having had the honor of staying at his
place. The remainder of the nations, unfortunately, had to locate their own place to retire, seeing as
how there was barely any room in this house. And the last thing Germany wanted was to have a
few dozen sleeping nations sprawled throughout the meeting room. It was called a meeting
room for a reason.

Glancing out the window, the white moon gave no light to the whereabouts of his missing brother.
In fact, Germany was pretty certain that the idiot had gone off in a fuss, upset that he had to
reprimanded for plotting a disturbance in their meeting. He rolled his eyes in annoyance at his
brothers childish behavior. It wouldn't surprise him if Prussia decided not to show up for a week or
two. He always tended to do something like this when he got upset.

At the door that lead outside into the backyard, Germany carefully turned the knob and walked
over to the blanket covered engine, swiping a few tools from his tool box to the side. Removing
the cover, Germany absently started tinkering with the machine, his hands knowingly working on their own accord while his mind wandered off to other thoughts.

*Italy...what is your government doing to you?* He had heard from amongst the mummers of the departing nations that the Italian twins had gone through a lot of trouble to attend this meeting. That N. Italy had been the one, insistant on coming. And that their government wanted nothing to do with other foreign nations...

Germany sighed tiredly, glancing one more time at the moon before deciding that now would be a good time to go to bed. As he checked over his progress on the engine, he did not sense a pair of black eyes peeking from the back of the house door, the unknown figure slowly receding into the shadows until they disappeared into the darkness of the house.

"Mein gott. Today is another day." Maybe if he was lucky, the nations would get more done than yesterday. Hopefully. And perhaps, later, he would confront Italy about the problems he was facing in his country. Just because every nation had their own business to worry about didn't mean that he couldn't bother to lend an ear to a friend. And only God knew how much trouble the Italian was in, having defied his governments orders to stay within the confines of the church.

Back inside the house, Germany entered the room where his two companions were fast asleep and settled himself down onto the dainty blankets he had managed to unbury from the horde of items stashed inside the closet. Jumping from topic to topic in his head, the last thought that lingered within his mind was the unreachable dream of living in a normal world where the nations could live in peace.
"Alfred's eagle harrass you endlessly?" The blank stare neither confirmed nor denied any of the questions, leaving Matthew to conclude that his pet was hungry.

"Alright. I'll feed you soon, just wait. I need to...relax for just a..."

A few groans were barely heard from the floor though no movement followed. *Oh crap! I forgot about him!*

Flipping himself off the couch, Matthew was going to run for the door and call his brother back, but halted by the entrance as his brother strolled back in with an eagle on his shoulder.

"What's up Mattie? You look pale. Are you-"

"Hurry up and grab some rope or whatever! We need to tie this guy up before he wakes up!" He commanded. His brother laughed in reply.

"Gosh Mat. Is there ever a moment where you're not panicking? Chill dude. We have plenty of time to-"

Suddenly, there was a jerky movement coming from the fallen man's chest, both brothers staring in horror as a lump struggled within the confines of his shirt. It almost looked like there was a parasite within his body, struggling to break free from its captivity.

"Oh my God..."

"What the hell..."

And before any of them could throw up, the lump emerged from under the shirt.

"Its...a chick?"

"How did he...I mean..." Matthew was busy trying to understand how a chick could be stashed inside a person shirt so well, and survive.

"Whoo! What the heck Liberty!" Snapped Alfred, his hands forcefully restraining the raptor by his talons as his wings beat forward in an attempt to reap the trembling prey in front of him. "Stop it! This little guy isn't your next meal! He's a friend, not food!" He yelled. The bird refused to listen.

In hopes of quieting the overall racket coming from his brother and his pet, Matthew scooped up the little bird and hid him inside their Fun Room, returning to find a much disappointed eagle and his panting master.

"Damn bird...thinking that...he can eat whatever he likes..." Huffed Alfred. The eagle curiously ambled into the bedroom, over to the Fun room door and tapped on it a couple of times with his beak. "No dammit, you can't go in there, Liberty!" Scolded Alfred.

Watching with amusement, Matthew rolled his eyes and returned to lifting the unconscious man. "Its your pet Alfred. You know what they say, all pets take after their masters." Then started dragging the body further into the living room.

"What's that suppose to mean?" Threatened Alfred, his eyes narrowed at his brothers back.

"Nothing Alfred, nothing. Now get your butt over here with some rope and be useful for once." Replied the Canadian.

Alfred huffed at the insult. He was useful dammit! Refusing to allow such a petty remark to upset
him he then turned back towards the kitchen where some rope was bound to be stashed somewhere.

Once the man was safely restrained with chains, because Alfred argued that he couldn't find rope, the brothers withdrew to their bedroom. The polar bear was fed, the eagle was banned to the outside for bad behavior, and the brothers were tuckered out from the journey back home. They slipped under the sheets of their bed and relaxed, content that their new acquaintance was secure and still asleep, giving them plenty of time to rest for a bit.

~Three hours later~

A loud noise from the living room abruptly awoke the North American twins, one falling out of bed from the sheer volume and another quickly pulling out a knife from under his pillow.

"Wha- who?" Stammered Alfred, poking his head up from the bed side.

Realizing that the noise was actually the now awake albino yelling in panic, Matthew stuffed his hand back under his pillow before reaching for his brothers hand and hauling him back into their bed. "So...he's finally awake eh? And I thought we were going to get a good nights rest too..."

Alfred grunted in annoyance, he and his twin fumbling around in the darkness before they found their discarded clothes and proceeded to make themselves decent.

"WHAT THE FUCK! WHERE AM I?! HOW DID I GET-!"

Through a doorless doorway, Prussia craned his neck as far as the chair he was tied to would allow him, and slightly relaxed at seeing the familiar faces from the bar. His red eyes searched the twins nervously, assuring himself that they weren't going to hurt him. This wouldn't be the first time he woken up in a bad situation before.

"You sleep well?" Questioned the blue eyed one, his head tilted slightly to the left.

"Hey! Why am I tied up? And with CHAINS too? What the hell man!" Prussia could feel a swell of panic build up inside him slowly as he noticed that neither of the twins were taking actions to come foward and untie- er, unlock him.

"Sorry about that. We had no rope so chains were the next best choice." Alfred smiled innocently at Prussia.

"What! Are you- No. This is a joke, right? Yeah...thats right. Hahah...funny guys, funny. I barely know you and you decide to give me a heart attack by tying me up. Good one! Now untie me and we can-"

"Whats your name?" Interrupted Matthew.

"Eh? Is that seriously all you can do right now, when you can be untying me from-"

"My buddy asked you a question. Don't be rude now." The scary stern look in Alfred's eyes hushed the Prussian immediately from his previous comment.

"Umm...its...Gilbert. But why does that ma-"

"Gilbert? Wierd. Anyways...do you like games Gilbert?" Matthew inched his face closely to the albinos face, his brother smiling wildly to the side.
"Games? What kind of- Oh! Is that what this is? A game?" The panic from before ebbed a bit, but Prussia could still not shake off a dark feeling coming from these two brothers.

"Hmmm...you can say that." Grinned Alfred.

"Oh. Games huh? Is this some kind of kinky stuff or maybe..."

"Just games." Replied Matthew.

"...Like what?" The chained up man tried to smirk but felt the scary feeling come full force when the blue eyed twin spoke.


He frowned for a minute, confusion and some secret fear causing him to question whether this was truly a joke, or something much worse. "...Where are you two going with this?" He asked warily, his arms unconsciously fidgeting under the restraining chains.

"Oh brother. Ok, I'm already bored with this." Turning towards Alfred, Matthew tugged lightly on his shirt. "Let's just start the interrogation already."

"Interrogation? What!" The retrained man started to full out panic, completely alert to the danger that these two seemingly innocent strangers posed to him. He really shouldn't have gone and said anything to the blue eyed one in the first place. During his initial panic, he halted abruptly when he heard a small peep coming from another room. "Gilbird? Gilbird! What did you bastards do to my Gilbird!"

The brothers turned their heads in the direction of the peeping sound, coming from the Fun room, before Alfred casually walked on over to the door and opened it. Immediately, the yellow chick flew towards the tied up albino and settled itself on his white hair.

"See? We didn't do anything bad to it. My eagle thought he would make a nice snack but I made sure to grab him before he ate the little fella." The blond smiled cheerfully at the yellow chick, then smirked at its master. "I can't say we'll be so generous towards you though."

"What the hell! What did I do to piss you two off!? I don't even KNOW you guys!" He frantically squirmed under the chains, trying desperately to loosen himself from its grip but nothing budged.

"Tell us what you know about the nations." Came the automatic reply from the Canadian. He towered over their captive, his arms crossed while his eyes laid trained on the man. He narrowed his eyes at Gilbert who nervously glances all over the strange room.

Oh fuck! Did I say something about them? He coughed a bit, then dared to look up into the Canadians eyes, a brave face planted on. "Um, lets see there's Italy. I hear that place has great pasta, although the people are a bit strange. There's France who also has awesome food but the people freak me out a bit. And then there's..."

Matthew stared blankly at Gilbert, no emotions displayed whatsoever. The albino calmed slightly, taking this as a good sign. Maybe these freaks were actually buying the false info. He continued to list the basic facts of various countries.

"...And uh...theres also...Oh! I heard that there were these nations called America and Canada back before the wars." At this information, the Canadians eye twitched ever so slightly. Prussia paused
for a second, nervous about continuing but commence nonetheless when he saw no further reaction. "Yeah...Canada and America. Canada seemed like a nice place. The people were very friendly I hear. America, however, was like the exact opposite. Always looking for a fight with other nations. Then the nation had to go and lose a war with Russia, and then that place became the Lands. I think its kind of stupid though that a nation as strong as America could go and perish so quickly like a-

Prussia never got to finish his sentence as an angry fist collided with his jaw and squarely cracked something, as hinted by the unbearable pain that followed.

"Don't talk about America like you know the place so well." Hissed Matthew. "Nobody knows America as well as I do, so don't think for a second that you can pull a fast one on me. Now, tell me about the nations. The personified nations."

With his head hanging to the side of his shoulder and through the blinding pain focused on his most likely broken jaw, Prussia's eyes widened in fear. These people knew about the nations!

~ 5 Hours later ~

Five ruthless hours had passed. Five hours of interrogation. Five painstakingly murderous hours of Prussia being tortured by the twins. Well, actually just one twin. From numerous gashes and bruises that littered his body to the bone deep stabs that decorated his arm, Prussia had endured the torture that Matthew Williams called "fun" interrogation. From the smile on his face to the dancing knife in his hand, the Canadian joyfully proclaimed that he was the "good cop" in this interrogation. Meanwhile, his brother Alfred F. Jones lazily sat on a pile of firewood, watching with mild amusement as his brother played with their captive outside, in the front of their house. Before the two started the interrogation they had stated that they didn't want to stain their wooden floors with "red ink," and thus dragged their tied up "friend" outside where only the dark night of the forest could hear the Prussian's agonizing screams.

Through the sounds of wandering forest creatures to the moans that came from Gilbert, Alfred took the liberty to speak his mind during a pause in his brothers work.

"Hey bro? The dumb ass hasn't even cracked once, yet. Can you take a break and let me talk to him?" A wary Matthew stared at his brother strangely, before waving a blood covered hand on over to Prussia.

"Fine...But don't play "bad cop" with him!"

"B-bad cop...?" Lifting his head where blood colored his hair crimson, Prussia whimpered in pain up at the face of his new interrogator.

"Do you wanna know why I'm the "bad cop?" Alfred grinned wickedly at the trembling albino. "Its because I-"

"He kills his victims right away." Finished Matthew.

"Tch! What the hey man! You stole my spotlight!" Whined Alfred, throwing his brother an annoyed look. His twin just shrugged innocently, then moved his eyes over to Gilbert.

"If I were you, I'd talk now. At least with me, I'm gracious enough to give you a chance to speak. But my brother? He's really impatient. He doesn't know how to pull a persons strings right"

"You know I'm still here bro! Listening to your every word!" A frown now took center spot on Alfred's face, scowling at his brothers words. "Shit! You sure can be an ass sometimes. And you!"
He turned back to Prussia. "What the hell is wrong with you? How can you tolerate being tortured by my sissy brother? I can barely stand him when he "accidently" nicks my finger during our meals, after I say something "disagreeable" to his face."

"Don't go telling him about our private life! You idiot!"

"Wow. Nice come back bro." Alfred gave his twin a light glare, forgetting about the Prussian who seemed to be reveling the small amount of time he had to absorb the absence of a knife digging into his flesh. "Should I go and tell our good friend Gilbert about how we sleep together, nearly naked, or how we've never had the chance to lo-"

By then, Matthew had lounged at his brother and knocked him onto the forest floor, attempting to shut him up by strangling his airway. "You stupid hoser! Do you want me to play with you instead?" He yelled angrily as his brother tried to push him off.

"W-would...y-you sh-shut up!" They tumbled and fought for a few minutes on the ground, completely unaware of the stunned Prussian who watched his kidnappers roll all over the place, trying to strangle one another. God...how could I let these dysfunctional bastards capture me so easily? He sighed weakly, wishing that he could be home right now and that his Gilbird could be with him again. Leave it to these people to grab a hold of his pet and lock him inside their house. But then again, by the looks of that giant eagle on top of the forest trees, Prussia gulped nervously, thankful that his pet was no where in sight.

"-and after all the shit I go through with you I still have to save your ass and you still never say thank you or even appreciate what I do for you!" Matthew was on top of Alfred, straddling him as he grabbed a hold of his arms aiming for his neck.

"I said GET OFF!" Now the Canadian was flipped onto his back, Alfred trying his best to keep his brother down while dodging a few swift punches. Distracted with avoiding some dangerous jabs at his ribs, Alfred lost his balance on his brother and was pushed off, landing a few inches away from the Prussian's chair.

"You mother fu-" The insult died quickly on his lips, as Alfred glanced up at the injured man tied to the discolored chair. His stared up at Gilbert for a while, his mouth wide open, and ignored the inflammatory remarks that left his brother, his eyes soley focused on Prussia's wounds.

Some of them were gone.

"Wha-..." Was all he could muster up to say. From a distance, Matthew watched his brothers unusual behavior, worry overcoming his anger as he considered the thought that perhaps, he had actually injured his brother. Jogging over to where his twin laid on the ground, Matthew looked down at his shocked expression.

"A-are you ok? Did I hurt you?" He cautiously reached an arm towards his brother and carefully pulled him into a sitting position, panic building up as Alfred still refused to answer him. He just kept staring at that damn Gilbert...but why! He whipped his head over towards the now trembling Prussian and gaped as well.

"Huh? How...how did you...?"

"They're gone bro. Some of the wounds you caused...they're gone." Whispered Alfred.

Possibly in a worse situation then was even thought possible, Prussia yanked at the chains tied around him, his strength returning full force as fear drove him to find any means of escape. Screw
the fact that he was most likely in the middle of nowhere, lost in some damn forest, he needed to
get out of here. NOW!

"You...your not human..." Mumbled Matthew, his eyes roaming over some areas where he knew he
had at least dug his knife close to the bone.

"Of course I'm human! What the hell could I be if I wasn't!" Yelled Prussia as an attempt to save
himself from a worse fate.

"A nation." Replied Alfred, his blue eyes narrowed dangerously in the albinos direction. Suddenly,
the chair started to rock back and forth violently, as Prussia hopped and strained wildly at his
chains. All he needed was to loosen one hand and maybe he could fight off one of these lunatics,
maybe even kill one of them if he fought valiantly enough.

Without a seconds notice, both brothers started to grin madly at one another.

"What did I tell you bro? I had a feeling that luck was on our side!" Alfred jumped up from his
spot, overlooking Gilbert and his vain attempt to escape from the chains grasps.

"You know, at this point, I don't even care anymore whether fate or luck was on our side."
Matthew quickly followed after his twin.

"Alright! Now we can start the games!" Cheered Alfred. To the terrified nation in front of him,
Alfred clapped his hands together and smiled. "Seeing as how you're our first catch ever, I think I
will give you the honor of choosing the game. What'll it be? Tag your it, hangman, or nap time?"

"What the fuck is wrong with you two! What do you want with me!" Screeched Prussia, yearning
to free himself at any moment.

"Answer my brother or maybe I'll have to go and play with you instead." Chirped Matthew, tracing
a pattern with a sharp knife lazily in the air.

"Fuck! Nap time! I- Ju-Just let me go already! I promise never to speak about this to anyone!" He
bargained, his eyes frantically switching between the twins.

"Yay! He chose Nap time! What do you want with me!" Scruffled Prussia, yearning
to free himself at any moment.

"Fuck! Nap time! I- Ju-Just let me go already! I promise never to speak about this to anyone!" He
bargained, his eyes frantically switching between the twins.

"Yay! He chose Nap time! Perfect timing too! I was starting to get tired again, seeing as how I only
got 3 hours of sleep so far!" Alfred happily skipped into the house behind the Prussian and took
about 1 minute before running back to his brothers side.

Matthew slyly smirked at his twin, then smiled contently at Prussia. "Remember, you chose Nap
time, not us. Unless...you have second thoughts about telling us about the other nations. Me and my
brother can be very understanding with cases like sudden amnesia." The defiant glare that came
from the white hair nation clearly stated that he had no intentions whatsoever of speaking about
any nations to these two.

"Awesome! Okey dokey then. Open wide so we can all go to sleep now." Chimed Alfred, a small
little pill held tightly between his fingers. One look at the pill and Prussia instantly clamped his
mouth shut. Well, shut it tighter than thought possible. Like hell was he going to take that pill!
Through the times he spent WW2 with his brother Germany, Prussia knew the sight of cyanide
anywhere!

"Oh come on! Open up already. You chose Nap time yourself Gilbert. Its not my fault if your
having second thoughts!" Whined Alfred. He tried to stuff the pill into the mans mouth but could
only go as far as his lips would allow before he could feel his teeth underneath.
"Here, let me help." In a fluid movement, Matthew stabbed his knife into Prussia's arms but rose an eyebrow when the man still refused to open his mouth, even when it was obvious that he was in immense pain.

"Twist it bro!" And Matthew did as he was told. It worked like a charm as the albino cracked his mouth open wide enough for Alfred to stuff the pill into his throat. He hacked and coughed violently but it was all in vain. Taking affect within seconds, the last thing Prussia remembered was seeing the twins laugh at his gargling, both of them waving childishly at him before departing into their house. Then with his last breath Prussia's world turned dark and he stopped moving.

"That was fun brother..." Echoed in his head silently.

Inside the cottage - 5:12 a.m.

"Hahaha...My God! We did it Mattie! We killed one of the nations!" Jumping carelessly into their bed, Alfred squirmed all over the sheets before settling onto his messy side of piled blankets and pillows. Looking back at his brother, Alfred dropped his smile and tilted his head in curiosity. "What's the matter bro? Something bothering you?"

Gently sitting down on his side of the bed, Matthew glanced up at his twin, a small frown on his face. "Yeah...something is Al. What we did just now..."

"Was fun!" Finished Alfred, his returning smile trying to spread itself to Matthew, but failed, as the Canadian did not return the emotion to his American counterpart. "No...its not that Alfred. Its just...well...Can it really be that easy to kill a nation?"

"Umm, yeah! Did you not see him choking? He's dead Mattie! Dead people don't come back to life. Unless their zombies. Then that's a different story."

Matthew sighed, bringing a now clean hand to his face where it rested for a few moments. "Right...If you say so Al. He's gone, got it. But tomorrow, we have to see what his death brought to the world. Maybe the news will say something about Germany being destroyed. Or worse."

"Kaboom!" Laughed Alfred, his hands reaching for the ceiling. At last, Matthew smiled at his dorky brother and slipped under the sheets, shaking his head at his brothers childish nature.

"Time for bed Al. And...I'm sorry. About what I said ea-"

"Go to sleep Mattie. We fight. It happens. And no matter how many times you say sorry, sooner or later, we're gonna fight again and start this whole routine all over again. Don't you understand our schedule?" A lone finger poked Matthew check before retreating back under the sheets, Alfred chuckling and Matthew smiling. They may not have found out where the other nations were but at least they managed to kill one of their kind. It was a slow process, that much they had to accept. However, by the next morning, surprise and utter shock would be their unwelcomed guest for the day as the twins would wake up to find an albino tied up outside of their house. And said albino would be glaring and insulting the brothers all the while as they stared dumbly at him.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: With the slow passing of days, the nations complete their meeting, Prussia is under the authority of the North American twins, and the twins? Well, they decided to tell the international community a couple of secrets that should best be kept hidden. When they are done having fun at the expense of others, they receive word from...an old friend. Meanwhile, the sloppy handiwork of another can lead to more trouble than ever thought.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ripple in the Community

Yukon Territory, Canada - Old Cottage - June 2, 2003 - 11:32 a.m.

"I don't get it!" Grumbled a young American, his feet pacing back and forth on wooden floor. "You saw him swallow the cyanide, didn't you Mattie?" Alfred gave his brother a questioning look, halting in mid step, as he waited for a reply.

"Yes brother, I did." Sighed Matthew as he rested on the living room couch. "Didn't I warn you that something about killing that idiot seemed too easy?" Too busy caught up in his mind trying to find a logical explanation for finding the white haired idiot from last night, still alive, Matthew's ears registered the sound of boots on wooden floor begin again. Lifting one eyelid open, the Canadian watched his twin begin his pacing again.

"Al, stop that already. You're starting to give me a headache."

"Mattie...everything gives you a headache." Retorted Alfred, although his pacing had slowed down until he came to a complete stop. "Well...any bright ideas? Because I think right now would be perfect to throw out any thoughts."

The quieter twin remained silent.

"Mat..."

No response.

"Mattie?"

Still nothing.

"Matthew!" By now, Alfred was waving a hand in front of his twins face, trying to gain any
reaction. Anything was better than silence. Because when Matthew was silent, that was never good news for either of them. Realizing that the sensation of a small breeze passing his brothers face wasn't going to be successful, Alfred drew his hand back and began to prod his brothers cheek. "Come on Mat! Tell me something! Anything!"

"How bout shut up?" Answered Matthew. Slowly rising from the comfort of the couch and still feeling Alfred's prodding, he growled a small warning. Taking a few steps away from the grumpy Canadian, Alfred held his hands up in defense.

"Hey, I'm not the one your angry at. Besides, you weren't telling me anything. Not even a theory! Do you seriously not have ANY idea why that idiot is still alive?"

A defeated shake of his head was Alfred's only answer.

Groaning in annoyance, Alfred walked towards the kitchen in attempts to find something to keep himself distracted. Throwing a nervous glance towards the side window, the blond could just barely make out a blob of a figure, viciously trying to escape from the confines of his chains. Despite not being able to get a clear view of their guest, Alfred and his brother could very well hear his angry wails and curses directed at the brothers. "Damn...if thats how...I mean...we..."

A quick grunt from the living room direction caught Alfred's attention, turning in time to see his twin approaching. "Al, don't even presume anything of the sorts." Warned his brother. "...We barely know what he and his kind are capable of enduring."

They shared a moment of silence, perhaps trying their best to replay their unexpected encounter just an hour ago. It seemed like the day held so much promise as the sun shined so brightly through the blinds of their window. Taking their time to get ready and eat a small breakfast, they casually opened the front door of their house, expecting to find a body to dispose of. Or maybe even nothing, as they assumed that nations would simply disappear when killed. Instead, they found a living Prussian, glaring death straight at them before breaking out into furious curses and colorful swear words that damned their very existance. Needless to say, the boys were beyond surprised. Surprised enough that they withstood about 5 minutes of endless insults before silently returning back into the safety of their cottage.

"Everything has its limit."

Such a sudden break in the silence caused Alfred to whip his head up at his brothers comment. Blue eyes lowered slightly, trying to hide any emotions that may leak out for everyone to see. Particularly any sign of fear as the American voiced his next thought. "Even us?"

The question received a deep frown from the Canadian. "I can't answer that brother. Just remember though, we're not like them." He turned towards the concealed window, his eyes narrowed and his fists held tight. "...We're not like them..."

The dark atmosphere felt tense, both brothers taking their time in absorbing the troubling thought of life, death and nations. The bubbling idiot outside was the best example of an immortal being, but how could someone like him be erased from this world?

"If thats so then..." Alfred shook his head, as if it would rid himself of any lingering depressing thoughts, then approached the door. "Would you like to do the honors and go talk to our new guest? I'm pretty sure telling him sorry about last night isn't something he wants to hear." He smiled mischievously, spreading his contagious smile to his brother.

"Thanks Al. I REALLY love it when you give me the dirty work." Said Matthew sarcastically
before chuckling lightly. He quickly joined his brother.

Before Alfred could open the door, Matthew interrupted his actions by placing his hand over his twins. "I don't have much to say on why he's alive Al but, I can say this: We'll find a way. Some experiments are most likely going to ensue, but for sure...at some point, we should have a pretty good idea on how a nation dies." The hand over Alfred's tightened softly, in assurance of their task.

"And once we find out how to kill off a nation..." Lingering on a developing thought, Matthew looked up at Alfred and smiled.

"...We'll be sure to break their way of life. Once and for all." Out the door he went, leaving his twin behind with those last words. There was much work to be done with the unwilling nation in front of them.

Bacharach, Germany - Outside the meeting room - 1:15 p.m.

How quick the last meeting had ended.

The backs of retreating nations, all going their separate ways kept Germany rooted to his spot near the door of the meeting room. By the end of today's meeting, two things were certain. One: The lasting effect of being separated from one another for so long had not eased the tension that emanated from various nations. And two: They were going to need another meeting in order to make all these secret alliances more solid.

The only thing that seemed certain about what the meeting accomplished was that there were a few nations determined to help. England, France, Spain and Germany himself were eager to take action and bring these criminals to justice. The rest...were questionable. If it wasn't for certain conditions that were preventing them from lending their support then it was some nations that flat out refused to work with one another. China, being the best example as he rejected any ideas of working together with Russia and continually blamed him for stealing government information, despite having no evidence against him. Australia and Hungary seemed more willing to try and work with their schedule while Japan quietly agreed to lend a hand should Germany ask for it. Italy...was more reluctant to say much by the end of their discussion, staying close to the exit of the doorway.

A exhausted sigh left Germany as he listed down the status of other nations and their ability to help in their efforts.

Ukraine: Unavailable, for good reasons.

Poland and Lithuania: Need to discuss further actions with each other.

Switzerland and Licheinstein: Debating on changing their neutral status.

Finland and Sweden: Open to any action.

The list went on for a while in Germany's mind until a timid finger tapped him on his shoulder and halted his mental notes.

"Ve...Germany, are you ok?" Brown worried eyes stared up at the German, hoping to get a good response.

"Italy...Yeah. I'm alright. Just thinking." Germany glanced up at the remaining nations leaving, before turning to his right in time to catch Japan's presence; his black eyes waiting patiently for any further instructions.
"Japan, how long will it be before you can create something that will aid in our search for these assassins?"

Tilting his head to the side in calculation while Italy and Germany stared at him, Japan nodded once before stating, "I should have some basic outline by next month, although it may take me a while. My people and I may be the most advance in technology, but its really only because we are persistant in finding and developing any devices we can get our hands on. Persistance can only get you so far before you realize that your limits have been reached."

A curt nod from Germany urged him to conclude his thoughts. "Recently, we have been working on the abilities that a computer is capable of, besides storing files and allowing quick communication, but I am limited in that area as well. You can't be quite sure with computers when the assassins have been known to hack government files with ease, so I'll send someone over to your place with a message."

"Alright." Answered Germany. To his left he noticed that Italy was slowly walking away. "Where are you going Italy?"

"Oh, yeah. I should get going Germany. My brother is going to get angry with me again if I don't hurry up." He smiled cheerfully, although something about it seemed off. Almost like it was strained.

"Wait! I need to talk with you Italy." Stretching out towards the retreating Italian, Germany caught hold of his wrist and warily pulled him back, as he noticed a flash of fear in his brown eyes.

"Eh? But...I need to go. And I..."

"Please, it'll be very quick. And its very important." The worried look in Germany's eyes did little to quell the uneasy feeling in Italy's stomach, as he pulled away weakly.

"But..."

Seeing that his allies were in need of aid, but not wanting to hinder any efforts on Germany's part, Japan anxiously interrupted the two nations. "If you want Italy, I can go ahead and inform your brother that you will take some time before joining him back home."

He recieved mixed reactions from them both. Italy stared at him, slightly betrayed while Germany's face lightened with a hint of hope. So it seemed like he helped one and let down the other. Mentally chiding himself for possibly making things worse, he decided that letting down one person wasn't as bad as letting down two and quickly took action in looking for Italy's brother, leaving the two nations alone with each other.

Watching Japan depart from their company, Germany turned his attention back to Italy and spoke. "Italy...Is everything alright with you? I mean...you seem a bit...off. If anything is bothering you then you can-"

"Ve? G-Germany, please, don't worry. Everything is fine!"

"But you seem like-!"

"Really! I'm ok..." With a lowered head, Italy's overall appearance said otherwise. The grip held on his hand loosened a bit, allowing Italy to pull away slightly from his ally, but before he could escape, he was held back once again by his inquisitive friend. "Germany?"

"I've been hearing a lot of rumors, Italy. Rumors about how your government doesn't want you
interacting with any of the other nations. And I know that a lot of our governments are doing the same but...yours...They seem like they don't even want to leave you out of their sight. What's going on with your officials? Are they content with leaving you oblivious to the rest of the world? Things are happening out here everyday! Are you even aware of half of them...?"

"..." The Italian looked away, his voice quivering as he began to speak. "I...I don't know why my government is acting the way they are. I guess...maybe they're just worried that they might lose me too if they're not careful..." Germany nodded his head in understanding, releasing his hold on the Italian as he assumed that he wouldn't flee this time.

"I...I mean, Romano and I aren't kept completely out of our own business. Our government makes sure to keep one of us- well, actually Romano...always Romano, informed about what's going to be done within our country. Sometimes though, I wish that they would include me in too. Everytime Romano comes back from an important meeting, I would ask him what they talked about and he would always throw me the same answer. 'It doesn't concern you Feliciano.' Do you even know how much that hurts me? To hear that I am not important enough to be told what is happening in my own government..." Leaving off his words at a prolonged silence with his head turned away, it wasn't hard for Germany to see that the smaller nation was trying his best not to cry in front of him. His shoulders trembled for a minute before he wiped a sleeve across his face.

"Italy, you're not useless. I don't know why your brother is keeping government business away from you but...he does care about you. Maybe...this is his way of protecting you."

"Bu-But!" Italy whipped back. "I don't need protection. Can't I at least be protected when I ask for it? If I can stand on my own two feet then why can't I be involved in my own country? I don't want to be a bother to anyone but..."

An uncomfortable atmosphere dominated the two nations, one trying to be supportive while the other glanced around nervously. Soon it was dispersed with an honest question.

"What do you do in your country Italy? If your people refuse to involve you in any political affairs then what do you occupy your time with?"

"...The church, I guess. They always send me off to various churches in the country and tell me to go spread the faith, or something like that. I don't mind doing the work, but lately, when I ask even the simplest question about what's happening outside, everyone scrambles around to hide the truth from me. And asking Romano is pretty pointless anyways, so I'm left in the dark. Are they afraid that I might mess things up if I'm told of their plans?"

All these sensitive questions from the brown haired nation were doing well in making Germany uncomfortable. But he did plan on lending an ear to his troubled friend, if it would help. Mentally shaking his head, the German nation straightened up and gave Italy a pained smile in hopes that it would reassure the Italian that he wasn't alone. "Have you tried being serious with your people and brother?"

"Yes! I have, but no one cares to listen to me. That's why, I'm not going to stand by and let everyone talk behind my back anymore. If I have to, I'm going to find out the truth about what's happening with my officials, one way of another. Because..."

The determined tone in Italy's voice took Germany back a bit. It was a deep contrast to the Italy before who was close to breaking out in tears. And he mentioned about finding out the truth too. "Wh-what are you going to do Italy? Its not something I should be worried about, is it?"

Oh! He had already said too much about what was happening with his people! Although it was
kind that his long time ally was worried about him, Italy couldn't risk getting anyone else involved in his own problems. That heap of mess was solely meant for him to deal with.

"Ve~! N-no, of course not. Do you really think I'd do something drastic, or scary? I can barely handle listening to my brother yell at me. And besides, I'm just going to ask my officials to take me seriously for once. See? Nothing to worry about!" He chirped.

"Italy, you said that you were going to find the truth, 'one way or another.' Isn't that something that-?"

"Oh! Ummm, I think I should get going now. I think I can hear Romano screaming my name. Sorry Germany!"

"Wait!" The Italian was too quick for Germany this time. Running off towards the direction where Japan had headed before, Italy was soon out of Germany's sight. Back to his own country...

"Italy...don't do anything stupid." Whispered the tall blond. Returning back to the meeting room, he occupied himself with cleaning up the area, however, his mind barely wandered passed anything involving the nations and their next plans. At least everyone was aware that they had to address this issue.

Trelleborg, Sweden - Outskirts of the city - June 4, 2003 - 8:26 p.m.

"Swe? Where are you?" Walking around a small house, resting on the foot of a small hill, Finland glanced all around in seach of his partner. "Swe?"

Night had long settled in for the day accompanied by a wisp of frosty air as the tiny city in the distance was beginning to retire. Shivering from the temperature, Finland wrapped a hand around his shoulders and called out for Sweden one more time.

"Sweden?" But no reply came. "Oh gosh. What am I going to do now? First I lose Sealand, and now Sweden?" He glanced up at the sliver of moon that dared to shine in the dark night and sighed out a puff of air.

"St'y 'nside, or you'll c'tch a c'ld."

"Eh? Swe?" Glancing over his shoulder, Finland could make out a figure coming from the side of the house, until he recognized it as Sweden. "Oh, there you are! Thank goodness! I thought that you'd disappeared too."

"G't 'nside." Gentling urging the Finnish nation inside the warmth of their house, Sweden quietly closed the door behind him, unaware that Finland was directing a worried look in his direction until he turned back to face him.

"How come it took you so long to get here? Do you know how worried I was?" Finland mumbled. Still suffering from the effects of the nights cold weather he went into their small kitchen, Sweden following him all the while. There, he poured himself a steaming mug of water, mixed some strange powder into it and watch with mild interest as the colors swirled with the liquid. "Well? What happened?"

"We t'lk'd."

"And?"

Hesitation. Or was it thought? Sweden looked towards the entrance of the kitchen before turning
back to Finland. "Th'y 'greed."

There was surprise on Finlands part as he stared wide-eyed at his fellow nation. "They did? But, I thought that they wouldn't...Or was it..." He slowly put his warm mug onto the table and gave the taller blond a skeptical look. "Swe...what did you do?"

"Did wh't I h'd to" He replied.

"Dear Lord... And what exactly does that mean?"

"Tlk'd"

By now, Finland was getting quite upset at the secretive approached Sweden was taking in covering any bad behavior he may have displayed at an important joint meeting between their governments. The goal was simple enough. Convince their governments that lending full support to the nations in capturing the assassins was of great significance. Of all the nations, Sweden and Finland would perhaps be the only nations who openly shared their nation-based secret meeting with their officials. They had faith that their people wouldn't take any offense to the reason behind leaving their country secretly. If they had that much faith, why not risk asking their people for direct help rather then do everything behind their backs? And if they said yes, then perhaps the governments could convince other governments to join along in the effort. It was worth a shot.

"Are you seriously not going to tell me exactly what you and the officials "talked" about?" Finlands pointed glare did nothing in convincing Sweden otherwise that he should come out with the truth. He did his job and thats all that mattered. Their long staring contest ended abruptly as Finland sighed tiredly, reaching for the warmth of his drink. "I knew I should have come with you to that meeting."

With an end to that topic, Finland took a sip of his drink before handing it over to Sweden. "Here. It'll warm you up. With weather like this, its a miracle that rain hasn't scattered the streets yet."

A grunt of thanks was sent in his direction as Sweden took a long sip from the mug. In the muffled silence of night, Sweden and Finland enjoyed each others company for the time it lasted before an unsettling thought occured to Finland. "Sealand... Where do you think he could have ended up this time?"

"D'n't kn'w" Was Swedens solemn answer. It was such a troubling idea...being nations of great importance, yet not being aware of where your own family was at. But what could one do when they had a young adventurous nation like Sealand for a son? Not much really. No matter how many times Finland would punish the boy, he would eventually wander off again to some distant region, or even country, in search of whatever came to his young mind.

Well...maybe if they were lucky, some nation would send the boy back home with a note saying that they found him playing around in their backyard. But for now, Finland and Sweden could only play the waiting game until his eventual return. That curious boy would always return home.

Yukon Territory - Outside of cottage - June 7, 2003 - 11:42 a.m.

"Hey Mattie."

"Yeah Al?"

"Make me a hamburger." Came the casual order from the American. Outside of their cottage, in the growing light of morning, the two brothers sat leisurely on a pile of wood, watching a "dead" nation. However, any minute now they would witness his revival proving, yet again, that they
couldn't eliminate the albino. After various "tests," many consisting of finding entertaining ways to kill the nation in their possession, the two brothers could conclude this: This guy was definately a nation and not a mere human. That would explain why he wasn't dying!

"Make your own damn hamburger." Scowled Matthew. "Are you so lazy that you can't even go inside and prepare your own food? Or is it that you prefer to have your little servant, ME, make you food?"

His brother sniggered in reply. "Oh, and make sure that you add plenty of cheese too!"

"I'll show you cheese, you-!"

With intentions of smacking him brother up-side the head, Matthew halted his actions as the lifeless man in front of them started to move. "Eh?"

Snuggled nicely into his usual coat of chains, tied to his favorite chair, Prussia began to awake from unconsciousness and looked up straight into the curious faces of his captors. "You fuckers..." He growled out hoarsly; the noose of rope around his neck swaying ever so lightly.

"Look! Its the miracle of life!" Cheered Alfred. To his side, his brother rolled his eyes in mild annoyance.

"G-Go die...in a ditch..." Growled out Prussia as his head hung low over his chest. Although he was alive yet again his body lacked the energy to throw any more insults passed that. He just wanted to sleep for a while; peacefully. No games or anything that resembled one. No more...

"You tired?" Asked Matthew, his glasses gleaming in the light as he observed any change in this "test." If he could just get a different result this time then maybe he wouldn't have to deduct that nations couldn't be killed physically. It frustrated the blond to think that there was a missing puzzle to this mystery that he couldn't locate. The only thing he seemed to be able to do was simply rely on a hypothesis. A flimsy stupid guess.

"What d-do you...think?" Snapped their hostage, although his reply came out more close to a whisper than anything. Despite the warm sunshine cascading from above the tree tops, he refused to look at the twins, his body trembling every 5 seconds. He remained completely unaware of the cold stare he was receiving from the Canadian twin.

"Tch. Same results, eh?" He crossed his arms in disappointment. "Well Al, what do you-?"

Still sitting on top of the logs, Matthew found his brother with a pout. "What's wrong?" He asked, puzzled.

"Where's my hamburger?"

"...Are you serious?" There was a hint of anger in Matthew's tone although Alfred failed to notice it. Walking up to the front of their house, Matthew calmly passed his brother, smacked him up-side the head, and went inside.

"Ow! What was that for?"

"For being an idiot!" Echoed the angry voice from inside.

"Psh. Stop being such a girl already." Mumbled Alfred.

"I heard that!"
Jumping off the logs, afraid that they might spontaneously combust, Alfred threw one last look towards his old cottage, assuring himself that Matthew's rage would not rush out of the front door. When nothing happened, he sighed a breath of relief before approaching the limp body that stood tied to his seat in the middle of their "yard."

"Wake up sleepy head. I know your not asleep so stop trying to pretend." Inspecting the albino and making sure that he wasn't truly unconscious, Alfred grinned as he saw the man lift his head. "Good. Now, how did you like our last game? Personally, I think you could have guessed the answer right away, but maybe I give you too much credit in thinking that you can beat me and my bro at one of our own games."

Receiving no answer from the albino Alfred pouted before lifting the mans head himself; attempting to get his full attention. "Hey, I asked you a question. Its rude to ignore people and..." He halted his words as he stared straight into Prussia's deathly glare.

"Just what the hell...makes you think that I...want to talk to you...after the shit you put me through." He growled out despite the trembling in his voice. To emphasize his hatred towards the blond in front of him, Gilbert tried to spit in his face but ended up hacking up a nasty cough instead. "Damn..."

Unimpressed, Alfred wiped away some residue spit from his bomber jacket then proceeded to pinch the nations cheek playfully, although there was a hint of annoyance in his voice. "Dude, I don't think your in any position to do stupid crap like that. And besides..." He turned away for a second, failing at hiding a sadistic smile. "I thought it was kinda cute how you couldn't guess that the answer was "Don't look down." Man, you fail at hangman!" He chuckled heartily, feeling the skin underneath his finger tense in anger.

"W-what! You bastard!! What kind of fucked up answer is that! Mein gott, you two are sick a-"

"Brother? Do I need to go over there and shut that idiot up myself or what?" Came the sudden question from inside.

"Oh shit!" Whispered Alfred, as he quickly muffled the albino from speaking, or rather, yelling another word. "N-no! Its alright Mattie! I got it. Just make sure that my hamburger doesn't taste like crap!" He suppressed a chuckle as he heard a few colorful swears in reply.

Loosening his hold on Gilbert's mouth, Alfred turned back to him with a pointed look. "Don't yell so much idiot. Do you WANT my brother to come back out here and "talk" to you instead?"

Keeping his voice to a low whisper but refusing to exclude any insults, Gilbert retorted, "You dumb ass! Do you seriously expect me to be fucking calm when answering a question that literally lead to my death!"

"Oh, just get over it already. Its not our fault you suck at Hangman. And the rules were so simple too! Get a right letter and we don't remove a peg from that chair you were standing on. Get the whole answer right and you don't fall. Isn't that easy enough?"

"Really! So, besides the fact that you and your fucked up bro- urk!"

With the blonds fingers returning back to Gilbert's face, his words were cut off as the blond roughly jerked his cheek, all signs of playfulness replaces by a dark atmosphere. "You can insult me all you want, but you don't insult my brother. Got it?"

Pulling away from Alfred's hold, Gilbert warily nodded. "Y-yeah. Whatever..."
"Hahaha...Now, what were you saying again?" As if he hadn't just threatened the nation in front of him, Alfred was back to his cheerful personality, although he did not hesitate to give the man one last yank on his cheek; this one playful again.

"You think its funny to force someone to play this "game," which by the way isn't a game even in someone's sickest mind, and give me rules that are near impossible to not break."

"Like?"

"Are you-! God! You have me stand on a chair, tied up, with a loose around my neck and to the tree and tell me we're going to play hangman! THAT isn't how hangman is played! Then you only give me, at most, 3 tries to guess the right letter!"

"Why are you complaining about that? You got 4 tries, didn't you?"

"Only because I had to balance myself on that last peg of a chair leg! How is that even possible!"

The American sighed boredly, running a hand through his blond hair. "So, you didn't have fun then?"

A blank stare was his sole answer, the Prussian refusing to even comprehend how this man could be considered a human. Leaving the conversation for dead, the two sat in quiet, allowing the forest to serenely spread its music without disruption.

"Hey..."

"Hmm?" How unexpected that the albino would be the first one to initiate conversation again. Alfred curiously glanced at him, noticing how his head hung low again, preventing him from seeing his face, or any expression for that matter. He only had his voice to go by, which sounded tired and almost empty.

"...What are you guys going to do to me now? Play another game...?" He choked slightly on the word 'game,' whether from fear or attempting to hide any sorrow at his own misfortune.

"Nah. We're done with you."

With the speed of a bullet, Prussia snapped his head up. "What? Are you serious? Your going to let me-?"

"Eh? Don't get the wrong idea now, buddy. We're not letting you go. That would be pretty bad for us if we allowed a victim to escape. Then you'd go straight to your little nation friends and tell on us. We don't need trouble like that. And plus, we're still going to kill you. We just haven't figured out how you can die permanently, is all." Replied Alfred casually.

Any hope that had managed to well up in Prussia's stomach, in the few five seconds he had before hearing the complete truth, was completely swallowed up by the darkness of despair. Even if he had lived for hundreds of years, Prussia wasn't utterly sick of life to that point that death seemed promising. There was still so much to look forward, even if the world was becoming similar to a bowl of crap. There was the other nations! He hadn't seen so many of them in a long time. And his brother Germany had worked so hard to get everything prepared for their meeting. Was it successful? And did he get to talk to Italy? God, he didn't want to die! He hadn't bothered his little brother enough! He hadn't embarrassed everyone he had planned to in the future! He hadn't even seen his brother get together with Italy in the end either...

"Why me...?" Returning back to reality, Prussia noticed that the blond twin from before was no
longer in front of him, but a bit off in the distance, talking animately with his brother. In his hand, he held a plate with some sort of sandwich on top although half of it was gone, most likely eaten. Turning his head back in Prussia's direction, the albino tensed as both twins were studying him intently. The happy one named "Al" was smiling at him, while the other one called "Mattie" was glaring at him. Unable to hear exactly what they were saying, Prussia saw Al point in his direction excitedly before ambling towards him.

"You hungry?"

"Why do you care." Replied Prussie darkly. How could this blond expect anyone to have an appetite after being told that they were going to die in the end, either way? He dared to shoot the American a harsh glare, but shrunk back the moment his Canadian brother approached him as well.

"Alfred. I made that hamburger for YOU! Not him!" Spat out Matthew.

"Doesn't mean I can't share!" Chirped Alfred.

"Why would you offer me food if your going to kill me by the end of the day?" Whether these brothers were sadistic people or what, Prussia couldn't help but ask why they would even bother to offer him food in the first place. Was this like a last meal or what?

"Your not hungry?" Alfred tilted his head in question. The man in front of him sighed in irritation, giving him a moment to decipher what he was truly asking. "Oh! Thats what you- Hey. I already told you, we're done with you. We're not going to play anymore games."

"But if you behave bad, then we might have to change that." Interrupted Matthew who gave the nation a warning glance.

"Hehe..." Chuckled Alfred nervously. "Look. Just because we're going to kill you eventually doesn't mean we're going to let you starve. If anything, thats one of the few things that me and my bro won't do. So, are you hungry or not?"

Wow. He didn't get it. These two...psychopaths...Prussia just did not get them. Unconsciously nodding his head, fueled by the unusual emptiness that attacked his stomach, Gilbert conceded to his hunger. He remained caught up in his own thoughts long enough to block out the small squabble that broke out between the brothers; this one about who was going to feed the captured nation and why. He couldn't say the meal tasted like something he would normally eat, but it didn't taste like complete crap either. And it was better then starving. Although it was strange having to eat out of the happier twins hands, watching him watch him in return with a cheerful smile on his face. Such an unnerving experience for the albino.

Inside the cottage - 12:47 p.m.

"You didn't have to go and knock him out Mattie." Grumbled Alfred as the two brothers entered their living room.

"Oh yeah? Then how 'bout next time, I feed him and if he decides to bite me, I'll show him exactly what I can do when my hand is inside his mouth." Retorted Matthew.

"Sheesh, I'm pretty sure it was an accident though." Replied Alfred. When trying to feed the albino the remains of his hamburger, by accident, he bite onto his finger. As the blond yelped out in shock, it was his brother who immediately rushed on over to Alfred's aid and gave the albino a good whack on the head; knocking him out cold.

Or so he thought...
Damn it...that HURT like a bitch!! God, why do you hate me so much? Keeping as still as possible, Prussia had endured the punch to the head pretty well, provided that he was knocked out cold for about 5 seconds before coming to. However, it was his skills in feigning an unconscious state that may very well have spared the Prussian from Matthew's wrath as he kept utterly still as he was examined by the brothers, both checking to see if he had truly blacked out. It seemed like the many years in the past he had acquired this skill during WW2 did not make him rusty in any way. Yet back then, in the battlefield, his ability to fool soldiers into thinking he was already dead truly meant the difference between life and death, whereas here, he had just avoided a protective brothers rage. Or at least, he'd like to believe that the one called "Mattie" wouldn't go as far as to kill him if any harm came to his precious twin.

Back to keeping his act up, through the darkness of his eyelids and his "limp" head, Prussia could hear the boys shuffling inside the house, having lost interest in a lifeless body sitting nicely tied up, outside, in the front of their house. Before he could consider making some form of movement, Prussia started to catch specific words through the walls of the cottage, causing him to stay still in hopes of being able to hear their conversation better.

"....do....time....later?" .... He strained his ears till the sentences finally started to come together. 
"...Have...looked outside? Its...getting cloudy and kinda cold."

"Yeah...I have. So?"

"Well, do you think the weather will hold up for a while?"

"Hmmm. I...I don't know Al. Hopefully it will. I don't think I can tolerate another storm right now. Not when things are starting to get interesting."

Silence until...

"Brother, don't worry. If its a storm, you'll be there to take care of me. Right?"

"...Yeah. Don't worry bro. Your big brother's got your back!"

"Of course you do. If we didn't have each other, who knows how we'd survive all those nasty natural disasters." The voice trailing off into a whisper, just barely caught by the Prussian.

"Shit, don't remind me. Remember that one time a forest fire broke out in one of the territories?"

"Forest fires? Oh come on Al. I got a burn but at least I wasn't crippled. How about that one time those massive earthquakes rattled the states like no tomorrow?"

Earthquakes...Fires...? Prussia knitted his brows together, forgetting that he was suppose to be "out cold" as he stared at the brown earth underneath him.

"...As long as the storm isn't too rough then I guess you should be alright. But if your seriously feeling like your ready to kneel over, then just tell me bro. If you want, we can postpone any plans and..."

"Calm down you idiot... I'll be fine. And we're not stopping any plans either. If anything, its probably just going to rain, but if it makes you feel better, we can take it easy until the weather gets better. Maybe..." By now, Prussia lost the remain of the words under the sound of loud shuffling in the house, followed by the sound of the door preparing to open. He quickly closed his eyes and willed his heart to slow down its rapid beating, hoping to feign the state of unconsciousness one last
"Is he still out?" From a short distance, Gilbert silently prayed that his slumped body would fool them. Feeling a hand lift his chin, his head lolled to the side.

"He looks out cold." Commented Alfred.

"Doesn't mean he is..." Replied Matthew. Just as his index finger was about to lift the albino's eyelid, he was interrupted by Alfred yet again.

"Oh come on Mattie! Lets go already. He's out like a light! Or did you already forget that you socked him pretty hard in the head?"

"How was I suppose to know that it was an accident?"

"Um, maybe when he was trembling at your sight should have said otherwise?"

There they were back to bickering. Losing interest in the "unconscious" nation, the brother's voice started trailing further and further unto the distance until only the sounds of the surrounding forest could be heard.

In the company of the abandoned cottage, Prussia hesitantly lifted his head. He took a look to his right, then left, realizing that he was truly alone. He sighed a breathe of relief. "Shit. That was close. Imagine if they found out I was still awake..." Spoke Gilbert to no one in particular. He looked up to the greying sky and frowned.

"But...what was all that about...fires and earthquakes? I mean...could it be...? But...well, that would explain why they know about the existance of nations but still..." He shook his head in doubt. "No...It couldn't be...could it?"

Forest in Canada - 1:22 p.m.

The sound of trodding feet on the soft plush moss of the forest floor sounded muffled, a pair of twins walking under cloudy skies. They hadn't said a word to one another since leaving their guest behind, allowing the rhythm of the forest to distract their thoughts long enough, until they came to an abrupt halt.

"Are you feeling ok?" Asked Alfred. He gazed at his twin with worry embedded in his blue eyes.

The Canadian shrugged. "I'm fine Alfred. Its going to rain, but its not a storm." He smiled gently at the small flowers growing elegantly around the trunk of a tree, his fingers running pass the vibrant petals. Grasping one blossom in his hand, he held it tightly before releasing it again.

"I hate to think how all of this could have been ruined if people got further into the land, don't you agree brother?"

Alfred chuckled lightly, shaking his head in wonderment. "Sure I do. Now, do you mind telling me what's really on your mind? Whenever we take these sort of walks through the forest you always have something to announce."

"Always to the point, eh brother? If you insist..." The Canadian's smile grew into something more dangerous, his legs taking a few steps back from the flower infested tree. "I think its about time we planted the seeds of mistrust in every nation out there. We can start with simple documents sent to enemy and rival nations. Their already present tension with one another could possibly become the cataylst to causing WW3 if we play our cards right."
"And after that?"

"After that, we'll go back to hunting for the nations. At some point, when WW3 occurs, we're bound to run into some nations and I think it's then, when they are weak, that they will become easier to kill. Whether they are running in fear for their life, or they are merely hanging on to the last threads of life, in that fragile state, my theory should prove true that they will become mortal enough to harm fatally. Then finally, we'll see society break down into nothingness. Just like we've dreamed of brother..."

Lost to his own ideas of no society, Matthew did not hear his brother nearing him until he felt an arm wrap around his shoulder. Pulling him close, Alfred nuzzled his head into Matthews neck and chirped happily, "What are we waiting for then? Let's go ruin mankind!"

The Canadian could find no words for his brother, merely resorting to a poorly surpressed chuckle. Walking on an invisible path back home, the brothers took their time reaching the cottage, even when they felt the first drops of rain come down onto their heads.

**Cottage - 2:13 p.m.**

"Ok...and that...oh, don't forget that one too!"

Flawless fingers moved elegantly across a keyboard, typing in codes and sending various documents to their appropriate targets. With his brother slung over his back, Matthew's eyes scanned the computer screen, rapidly reading the documents and mentally organizing which ones would best suit which nation.

"Hey, don't forget to send the UK some files regarding their ally France. I've noticed that their governments have been getting on friendlier terms lately." Pointed out Alfred. The keyboard clicked loudly in response, until the screen transitioned to a dark background.

"Are you done?"

"Yup. All the files have been arranged and are ready to be sent. Would you like to~" Before Matthew could finish, his brother eagerly pressed the "enter" button, causing the screen to go pitch black before a notice popped up saying "Files sent."

"...Never mind then." Sighed the Canadian. "What else should we do now that that's over with? It's clearly raining outside so a lot of options are out of question."

"How about we let that albino back in here? He's getting drenched you know?" Alfred rose an eyebrow in question at his brothers refusal to let the man inside for the first 30 minutes they spent arranging these files.

"...Fine. Drag him in here...I guess." The Canadian lightly glared at his twin, upset that he had no problem being kind to the nation. Weren't they suppose to kill him eventually? All he needed was for his idiot brother to go soft on the nation or even feel pity for him! At least they had managed to sent a little surprise to the rest of the governments of the world.

**England**

"Sir! We've received an unknown file containing documents from France! Apparantly, their government has considered a secret alliance with Russia's government. They have denied having any close ties to us and have gone so far as to state that should they have to choose between allies, that they would side with Russia!"
"W-what!?" Was England's sole reply.

France

Ringing violently in his pocket, France withdrew his communicator and answered it. "Ello?"

"You bloody frog!! What is the meaning behind this secret alliance you want with RUSSIA of all nations!?" Accused England's vicious voice.

Germany

"Germany. Come here." Came the grave voice of one of his officials. Puzzled by the cold attitude, Germany cautiously approached his temporary boss.

"Yes sir?"

"What is the meaning of this?"

"What exactly are you-?"

The official pointed to a shabby computer screen, displaying in bright lettering, various comments and discussions held by ally nations that condemned Germany's strict stance on the economy. Some called him a fascist while others accused the nation of monopolizing the markets to their advantage.

"How did...?"

Russia

"What do you make of this Russia?" Asked a tall man, dressed in a neatly pressed suit. He glanced over his shoulder at the winter nation, expecting a creepy giggle to be his sole answer. Instead, the Russian approached the man in question and leaning over his shoulder to get a better look at the computer screen, he smiled.

"So they've finally made their move, da?"

China

"Aiya! Why is this happening now? And who the hell sent this?" Yelled China.

"There appears to be no signature back to the original sender. But, why is this a bad thing? We have evidence that Russia has had some bad intentions aimed at our country. Isn't that good for us?" Reasoned a young official.

"No! Its NOT good! If I got this, then if anything, chances are that some of our documents got sent to neighbor nations as well!"

"Are you positive?" Asked the doubtful man. The glare he received from the nation silenced him immediately.

Japan

"Hai. I have received some files as well." ... "Domo. I will not take any rash actions however..." ... "I see... Ok. I will do as you say. Alright, may you have luck talking to the others Germany."

Hanging up the communicator, Japan sighed tiredly. These files had single-handedly destroyed
most of the work Germany had endured to establish some base of comradeship between the stressed nations. Before he could stash his communicator back inside his pocket, it rung a second time. "Hello?"

... "Its arrived? Oh, good. Ok, I will notify the clients at once." Shaking his head, Japan briefly wondered how someone his age was still up and running. He held back a frown and went about looking for a hidden number on his communicator. "I suppose our meeting is to be expected very soon."

Italy

"Fratello! Did you hear the news!" Cried Italy as he ran looking for his brother. Catching his figure in a distance, Italy quickly ran in his direction and launched himself at Romano.

"Waaahhh!! Russia and China have considered taking over our country! What are we going to do fratello?"

"What! How did you find out about that Italy?" Yelled Romano, his eyes widened in surprise.

"Its the church! They've been talking about it all day!" Replied Italy as he wrapped his arms tightly around his brothers midsection. "I don't want to be invaded Romano!"

Germany - 8:54 p.m.

"Damn it..." Grumbled Germany. Bringing a hand to the bags under his eyes, he groaned in annoyance, having spent an endless 4 hours talking to various nations about the massive outbreak in top secret files and documents being exposed to the international community. He wasn't even half through talking with all of them either.

"Damn headache!" He massaged his temple, having deduced that the pain had been due to the stress of planning the meeting about a week ago and now having to deal with this new crisis. Under all this new stress, it had completely slipped Germany's mind that his brother was still missing. With his pains starting around the time his brother disappeared, Germany simply blamed it all on the stress. He glanced over at the back door of the old meeting house and yearned to work on the engine he had put a good deal of work into, again. However, that little project had been completed a day ago and was now happily in the hands of the client who had ordered it, quite abruptly, a month ago, asking that it be completed within a time limit. Sure, that didn't help with his stressful schedule, but at least he could relax a bit and lose himself when tinkering with the engine. Alas, now he would have to face every problem head on, without any distractions or breaks...

Yukon Territory, Canada - Cottage - June 8, 2003 - 7:49 p.m.

"Alfred, your not asleep yet, are you?" Clicking away at his computer from inside the "Fun Room" Matthew looked over his shoulder and saw his brother slumped over their bed. "Al! Wake up! You have to come and see this."

"Bu- I wan- slee-p!" Whined the blond from his side of the bed.

"Just get over here already!"

"Goosh!" He exasperated as he rolled his eyes. "What is it now? Can't you tell me what happening in the world later on? I'm tired!"

"Quiet. Look." Pointing to the computer screen, Matthew and Alfred gazed at another "virus"
trying to infect their computer and various other files listed as important.

"Someone is trying to piss me off again." Said Matthew coldly.

"And? Why should I care Mat? You haven't tracked them down yet, so it doesn't mat...ter...?" The icy look Matthew was throwing him effortlessly hushed the American long enough for Matthew to continue.

"Idiot. I tracked their trail down this time. It appears that they're located somewhere in Sweden."

"...Really?" With an incredulous tone, Alfred stretched over Matthew's shoulder to get a better look at the virus. "But how...?"

"I'm a hacker Alfred. Do you think I'm going to let another hacker outdo me?" With an unusual cocky grin planted on his face, Matthew leaned back on his chair with a smug air about him. "Oh and also, we got a call from our old friend. We're to meet him tomorrow somewhere in California. He gave me the coordinates so I figure it shouldn't be too hard for you to find."

"Oh! So you finally got your order?"

"Yup!" Cheered Matthew. "I'm finally getting my copter fixed again! That new engine should definately be worth the trouble of going down south."

"Oh but what about Gilbert? We can't just leave him alone."
"And we certainly can't take him with us either!" Retorted Matthew.

"Sheesh, then what do we do with him while we're gone?"

"It shouldn't take that long Al. We can leave him in the basement until we come back. He shouldn't be able to cause too much trouble in our absence."

"Did you feed him yet?"

Grumbling in annoyance, Matthew glared at the ceiling. "YES! I fed him Al. Its not the end of the world if he's hungry for a day!"

"Tch." Retreating back to their room and grabbing his favorite jacket, Alfred gave his brother a side glance. "Hurry up then. I don't want to reach the states too late into the night. I'm still sleepy by the way." He ignored the teasing smile Matthew had and approached the front door, where outside, stood a lone chair with a tied Prussian. With a warm summer night and no more rain, he lay perfectly asleep.

Twenty minutes later of waking up a tired nation, explaining to him that they were going to place him in the basement for a while for their personal reasons, and then threatening him with the danger of Kumijaro ripping him to shreds should he try any form of escape, the brothers prepared to leave.

With the plane engine roaring so early in the night, Matthew cupped his hands to his mouth and yelled at the basement door, "Oh, and if you DO manage to escape from the chains wrapped around you and open this locked basement door, I should warn you, I didn't feed Kumijaro yet so...yeah! Have fun!"

Promptly after that comment, Matthew boarded Alfred's plane and they flew off into the night, following the coordinates scribbled onto a piece of notebook paper.
Rusty red doors creaked loudly, slowly allowing a lone figure to enter the old building as his black eyes scanned the place for any sign of life. Piles of old moldy hay littered the floor and corners, giving off a musty stank that almost caused the man to pause in his tracks. He hesitantly took a small breathe of the air, had to surpress a cough and reluctantly continued on his way further into the dark and poorly lit building. There was most certainly no sign of people having cared for this farm in years, dust clearly flying all over the place, working fiercely to clog up his lungs.

A few more steps into the building and he heard a small shuffle, as if someones foot had scraped the floor. Looking ahead, trying to make out any figures, the black haired man had to hold back a gasp as a match was suddenly lit, revealing two occupants in the farmhouse.

One person held an arrogant proud smirk, his sky blue eyes shining brightly with every flicker of the match he held. His companion was similar to the previous man with wheat colored hair, except his eyes were tinged with a light purple and his stance was more modest; his hands casually passing an unlit lantern to his reflection.

"Ya got the goods, right?" Asked the proud one as he lit the dead lantern.

Nodding politely, the small man approached the twins. "Yes. I believe your order for an engine suited for a helicopter was secured by my men and is waiting for you just outside." The two brothers grinned.

"Good, good. And may we ask where you acquired the engine?"

"Ah, of course. My men have assured me that they obtained the engine from a very distinguished mechanic. This product will no doubt prove worthy of the cost."

"Cool! Lets get a good look at this baby and then we'll pay you off. How does that sound to you?" Asked the one with blue eyes.

The timid man nodded in agreement and turned to leave, but was halted by an arm that wrapped around his shoulder. Soon, he was trapped between the two blonds, one eagerly giving him a one-sided hug and the other one smiling softly.

"Dude, its great seeing you again Kiku! How have you been bro?"

The man in question tried shrugging away from the uncomfortable hug, while the two blonds started to laugh at his usual discomfort with physical contact. Placing some appropriate distance from the two but not fully escaping from their reach, the man glanced back at them with a strained smile.

"Well, I could be better...Although I appreciate you asking Alfred. You and Matthew always seem excited to see me whenever we decide to meet."

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: As the nations are scrambling to make sense of all these secrets that have leaked out, suddenly, the threat of the assassins hits home as another nation is captured. With nothing else but a simple taunting letter left behind, its up to England
and France to deduct where it came from. Finding the location is easier than expected but now comes the hard task. Finding these faceless assassins within a ruined country while avoiding any confrontation with unstable citizens. Once an encounter has occurred and passed, Alfred wanders around the city alone, only to find a strange person of interest.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: Alfred and Matthew are feeling pretty swell right now. They have a nation under their control and they’re on there to way to have a lovely chat with a rival hacker. What could possibly make things better? Maybe those two blonds from before can tell the brothers a thing or two about how luck runs out. Or are they in over their heads...?

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Gone to New York (Part 1)

Trelleborg, Sweden - Outskirts of the city - June 12, 2003 - 8:47 p.m.

On top of a quaint hill, overlooking a small petite house, two figures quietly examined the house in the cover of darkness. No movement vibrated; creatures of the night keeping their tones and screeches down, as if they sensed a dangerous confrontation approaching soon. Watching a few lights flick on and off within the confines of the home, the two figures withdrew into the surrounding foliage above the house, their path carefully chosen to avoid any of the hidden camera's concealed around the surrounding area.

"..." Outside, glancing up above the hill that sheltered their home from the elements, Finland stood near the door for a few seconds before quietly closing the door behind him and climbing up the hill. There was just something about tonight...something uneasy that bothered the Finnish nation more than he'd like to admit. Reaching the top of the hill a little exhausted, Finland took in his surroundings, listening for any noises that didn't belong. Anything that could tip off an intruder. He took a tentative step into the foliage, taking a nervous note that the environment was deathly quiet. Not a noise or sound of movement.

A gloved hand withdrew a pistol from behind a hidden pocket, as Finland cautiously approached the bushes ahead of him. If he could just reach his camera's that laid hidden all around the perimeter of his home, then maybe he could see for himself if any unwanted strangers had wandered too far into private territory.

He took a few noiseless breathes, took a step forward and leaped lithely into the bushes. Amidst the smell of wet earth and all the branches that scratched his face, Finland searched around the area, disbelief present in his eyes.

Nothing.

He frowned slightly, taking slow steps further into the leaves that surrounded him. His eyes darting
all around. Left, right, behind and forward, up…down.

…

Down.

Halting in his step, Finland crouched down to the earth, his fingers smoothly tracing over the ground. Passing limp leaves and twigs, the nation knitted his eyebrows together. Why aren’t there any tracks?

**Snap**

The distant sound of a branch like object snapping startled the Finnish nation into a defensive stance, his pistol raised as his index finger waited to pull the trigger on any intruders. Straining his eyes to see passed all the darkness, Finland saw a tall shadow coming closer to the bushes he was currently investigating. Counting the seconds down till they were close enough to be within attacking distance, another sudden sound caught him off guard.

The forest.

The exploding sound of all the forest animals and various nocturnal creatures assaulted Finland’s ears; nightly wails and rustling trees echoing everywhere. It was as if the foreboding atmosphere he had sensed earlier had all but dissipated into nothingness, leaving Finland with very confused thoughts about his earlier assumption. Focusing back to the pair of legs that stood mere inches away from the bushes he lay hidden in, Finland questioned whether grabbing the person legs and pulling them under would be to his advantage or not. He carefully pushed his arm through the branches, hoping to catch the person off guard, a determined look to his face.

Until his arm was grabbed from above him, the larger hand encircling around his wrist with a deadly strength.

He yelped out loud, his body yanked out from his cover as he came face to face with his supposed attacker.

“…Su-san?”

“…” Sweden stared at the nation in his hold, recognition flashing in his blue eyes, before gently placing him back onto the earth. Although he loosened his grip on Finland, he did not completely release his hold on his wrist.

“F’nland, why do you h’ve a g’n?” He stared coldly at the mentioned weapon in the smaller nation’s hand.

“Shouldn’t I be asking you why you’re out here in the first place? You know, I could have shot you if you got any closer!” Retorted Finland, his eyes traveling from Sweden’s glowing blue eyes to the hand that still refused to let go of him. He lightly tugged on the clinging hand.

“And am I not allowed to have a gun on me? I thought you always considered it a good thing that I could defend myself with a weapon when need be.”

With swift ease Sweden grasped the weapon with his other hand and pulled it away. His actions did well in distracting the Finnish nation who tried to retrieve his missing gun before being consumed in a giant hug.

“Wh’n I’m h’re, you d’n’t ne’d th’s weap’n.” Answered the tall blond. Surrounded by the sounds
of nightly activity, the two nations stayed silent for a few seconds until Finland was the first to break the embrace. He gave the blond a sad smile, shaking his head in disbelief.

“What am I going to do with you?” Only the crickets nearby answered with their rueful melodies. “Fine, if you say so Su-san. But…I have to check something first, so unless you want to follow me you should…go…” His voice dwindled towards the end as he noticed his companion nearing him quickly. It seemed like his question was already answered.

Walking deeper into the gaping forest, the pair diligently retrieved any camera’s that were within their houses range and returned back to home. In the distance, they could vaguely make out the sound of strong wings lifting some creature up into the sky, the beating of their wings fading more and more into the cold night.

Finland and Sweden’s home – June 13, 2003 – 9:17 a.m.

Inside their home, Finland was busily following Sweden around the house as he gathered some documents and other items, and placed them within his suitcase. “Swe…are you sure you don’t need me to come? I mean, its not that I don’t trust you with our officials but…maybe I can come and be a witness to the agreement or something.”

He paused near the entrance of their bedroom and waited for Sweden to be done with all his gathering. The taller blond nation wordlessly grabbed the last paper he was looking for and glanced back in Finland’s direction.

“Its ‘lr’ght. I g’t ‘t.” With that answer, Finland lowered his head in disappointment.

“I still can’t believe that there was no one on my cameras last night. I was positive about it too.” He stared at the floor in annoyance, his teeth chewing softly on his bottom lip. “I guess since you’re not taking me I can study them one last time. Maybe find a human who strayed too far from the city…”

Heading towards the exit of their house, Sweden handed the smaller nation the gun he had confiscated last night, before reaching the door. “If th’s m’kes y’u feel b’ttier.”

The alleviated smile on Finland’s face confirmed Sweden’s thought. He softly patted the blond on the head and exited the house, assured that he could take care of himself while he was alone.

“I’ll see you in a couple of hours then, Su-san! Make sure you don’t forget to include my opinion in there too!” Watching the retreating nation wave back with a lone hand, Finland’s smile grew faint. Listening to the sounds of the bright morning, he concluded that perhaps his imagination was just running wild with paranoia and decided to linger outside. Today’s weather looked too good to pass up anyways.

The nation wandered around the perimeter of the house, taking note of all the small flowers that yearned to break passed the numerous weeds that controlled his yard. “Oh…I really should get back to gardening some time.”

He bent down to tug on a few easy looking weeds when he noticed a shadow pass over his head. “Huh?”

He lifted his head and saw no one within sight. Was he going crazy? Imagining things that weren’t there? Seeing shadows that didn’t exist? He reluctantly stood up and warily searched around his home. Again, there was no one. And the sound of the morning…Was it waning?

He felt that horrible feeling in the pit of his stomach return. Like, there was someone hanging
around his home that didn’t belong. He lifted his head back towards the hill that overlook his home and frowned at the seclusion that contradicted his gut feeling.

“Why in the world is...?” He nervously turned around aiming to get back inside, his fingers wrapping around the door knob when another shadow crossed his own. Withdrawing his pistol with breaking speed, Finland whipped around and pointed it towards the unknown shadow that had been taunting him.

In surprise, he lowered his gun at the stranger.

It was just an eagle.

“Hey…what are you doing in a place like here?” He slowly approached the raptor who sat inconspicuously on a small fence that ran halfway round the front of the house. The bird tilted its head at the approaching man, allowing him to get within inches of his resting area before rustling some feathers in agitation.

Taking that as a sign to respect the creatures personal space, Finland smiled and halted his progress. “Oh, I get it. Sorry.” He studied the bird from his spot, taking notice that it wasn’t any bird he had seen in his area before. In fact, it looked a bit familiar. Like he had seen this bird in symbols before. But where?

“Are you lost, by any chance? I haven’t seen any of your kind here and it wouldn’t be the first time foreign animals have wandered into these territories.” The bird stared at the nation for a few moments, then started shuffling towards the edge of the fence.

“You have to leave already? Oh well. I guess I’ll just have to wait for my friend all by myself then.” The eagle paused in his actions, turning his head back towards the blond. “Do you want to hear about my friend? He seems intimidating at times but he’s actually really nice. I’m waiting for him to come back from an important meeting.”

Daring to trespass into the bird’s personal space once more, Finland approached the bird, gazing at the finer details of the bird’s anatomy. The border of white feathers and brown feathers around the raptors neck seemed ruffled, every individual feather giving off an unusual shine.

“Wow! For a wild animal, you sure take good care of yourself, don’t you?” An expression of surprise passed the Finnish man as the eagle in front of him almost appeared to be grinning at his last comment.

“You don’t, by any chance, understand me, do you?” The short connection that human and raptor shared lasted mere seconds until Finland tentatively reached his hand out. “Wait until Sweden hears about this. An actual eagle that understands human speech. If only his meeting would end before two. Then I could…”

He only managed to brush aside a few feathers near the creature’s neck. In a rushed motion, the eagle propelled himself away from the nations touch and took to the sky. The airborne eagle circled around the perimeter of the house, glancing down at the nation below then, with a steer of his left wing, his new direction drove him towards the protection of the forest. No longer in sight, Finland sighed.

“Well, at least I know what those shadows were now.” He mumbled, before heading back inside where he would try to find something to keep himself busy with until Sweden’s return.

Forest – 10:04 a.m.
“Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” With his arms folded across his chest, keeping a watchful eye over the entrance of the forest, Matthew couldn’t help but voice some doubts about Alfred’s latest plan.

“Yeeesss…Gosh! How many times do I have to tell you: I got this.” He brushed passed Matthew’s shoulder and was about to whistle when a hand was shoved over his mouth.

“Don’t even THINK about calling him Alfred! If your plan is as fool proof as you said it would be, then we’ll wait.” Growled Matthew. He kept his hand firmly over his brother’s mouth, refusing to trust his next actions until he felt something wet and warm on his palm.

“EW! Alfred you dumbass! Why’d you lick my hand?” He stammered as he wiped furiously at his clothes.

“Tch, it’s your fault to begin with.” Reasoned Alfred, although the amused grin he kept on his face implied other intents for his previous actions. It was the sound of a loud screech that brought the boys attention to the sky as their eagle landed near their cliff’s edge.

“Awesome! Ok boy, let’s show Mattie that his lame idea of using the recorder again stand no chance against you!” Pulling the eagle towards a dirt spot, Alfred pointed to the earth. “Although we don’t know which person is the hacker we know that this person has a friend living with him. Are both of them still there? One for yes, two for no.”

The eagle scratched lazily on the dirt two times.

“What?” Came Matthew’s shocked response to the bird’s actions.

“I told you Mattie! My eagle is smart! Watch this! Tell me, did you find out what time this person’s friend comes back to the house?”

Two more scratches on the ground.

Ignoring his brothers gaping mouth, Alfred asked one last question. “How long do we have?”

At this question, the bird glanced up at his master, peering up at his sparkling blue eyes. He ruffled a few feathers, pecked at some nearby grass and then scratched the earth 3 times.

“When did you teach him math…?” Whispered Matthew in a daze.

“There you have it bro. He said we have 3 hours till that other guy returns. My eagle beats your recorder any day!” Grinned Alfred who rubbed his pet affectionately on the head.

“…Alfred, just be happy that these people weren’t the type to shoot large intimidating birds on sight.” Mumbled Matthew. “And don’t forget to give my recorder idea SOME credit. At least we know that they call each other “Su-san” and something along the lines of “Filan.”

“True, I guess. Now to find out which one we’re going to end up running into.” Alfred smiled happily at the eagle that flew ahead of them, both twins walking carefully through the small maze of the forest.

Finland and Sweden’s home – 10:41 a.m.

“Ohhh….why can’t I find some lead into this damn hacker’s files?” Grumbled Finland. His eyes roamed over the screen of the computer that rested on his work desk while his fingers danced over the keyboard. A few more clicks and again, no entrance to any significant files.
“Damn it.” He brought a tired hand up to his forehead and rubbed it, hoping to think of some new method that would gain him access to invaluable files held by some very wanted criminals.

He glanced up at the window that allowed a few rays of sun to filter through the blinds, expecting to be greeted with some sunlight but…there was that same shadow at his window instead!

“Ah, did you come back out of boredom?” Smiling with delight, the Finnish man rose from his seat, mindlessly stacking a few papers into a pile. “Just wait there! I’ll see if I can find some cooked meat for you.”

Placing the papers neatly on his desk, Finland turned to go into his kitchen. Passed the dining table, he opened the refrigerator and looked around for something edible, moving some snacks and other food to the side until he found a nice piece of cooked chicken. Closing the door, he turned around.

“He prefers raw meat.” Stated a tall blond with glasses who suddenly appeared behind the now closed refrigerator door. He leered down at the smaller man then quickly backed up as the Finnish man aimed a few jabs at him.

“W-who are you! What are you doing here?” Demanded Finland, his eyes wide and flashing with alarm.

“I thought you were going to feed my eagle? He is kinda hungry right now.” The strange blond intruder brought a gloved hand to his chin, giving the tense nation a chance to flee into his room.

*My gun! My gun!* It should still be in his room, kept in his desk. Swerving into the hall way and running back towards his office, he halted suddenly at the front door.

“So you really ARE the one whose been trying to hack into my files eh?” Spoke the same person from before, although he had his back towards Finland, his face analyzing all of Finland’s precious work as he leaned over the computer screen.

“How…how is it possible that you…” He stuttered, fear beginning to seep into his tone as he considered the mans words. Was he the very person he had been trying for so long to out hack?

And his gun! He threw a quick glance at his desk’s drawer before the intruder’s voice regained his attention.

“You’re not looking for this little thing, are you?” With his back still towards the nation, the blond at the computer dangled Finland’s pistol on one finger, almost in a teasing manner.

“My gun…” Choked out Finland.

“Well well. We don’t want to cause too much of a mess here, so you won’t be needing this.” And with that, he chucked the weapon out the now open window.

Feeling his last hope dissipate with the loss of his gun, Finland felt panic seize his throat as his mind replayed a key word. “We.”

As swiftly as he turned to exit his room, he came face to face with the previous blond from the kitchen. “Hi there!” Came his cheerful greeting. His dark smile promised horrible things if he didn’t put up a fight soon enough.

Directing a fist towards the fools face, Finland did not expect the blond to grab his fist before it met his face. Nor did he expect the intruder to pull him forward and knee him in the stomach. Falling
towards the floor in agonizing pain, clutching his stomach, Finland coughed violently, a few specks of blood splattering the floor.

“Is that it? Man…you’re no fun.” Said the blue eyed intruder as he lazily adjusted his glasses. “Hey, you find anything interesting bro?”

“Plenty.” Was the Canadians sole answer. Reading the various files saved on the computer caused the frown on his face to deepen more and more with annoyance.

“Looks like someone has a secret admirer!” Chirped Alfred. Nudging the fallen nation with the heel of his boot, he smiled down at the vicious snarl that decorated Finland’s face.

“Don’t be such a sore loser now. It’s not my fault you suck at fighting.” Pleased with how their raid was going so far, Alfred failed to catch sight of Finland inching closer to his legs until it was too late.

Giving the blond a good yank of his legs, the nation brought the young man down effortlessly; giving him the advantage of a surprise attack. Throwing himself on top of the grounded American, Finland began to punch at Alfred’s body, aiming to hit every vulnerable part he could find.

However, his attack was short lived as he was abruptly grabbed by the hair and yanked off the fallen intruder. Yelling explicit words in his native tongue towards the two intruders, the Finnish nation struggled and writhed in the unrelenting grip that Matthew held on him from behind.

“Are you alright?” Asked Matthew as he watched Alfred wipe a stray dribble of blood that fell down his jaw. There didn’t appear to be too much damage on the idiot but for some reason he was still smiling.

“Hahah! Well what do you know? He can fight after all!” Teased Alfred. With the nation still in his brother’s hands, Alfred stood up and sauntered over to their target. He grabbed the hacker’s chin with one hand while the other planted the mouth of his gun near his jaw.

“But we really should get going soon, so I’m afraid we’re going to have to end this quick.” He prodded the man’s jaw. “Let him go dude.” Challenging his brother’s irritated frown, Alfred grinned when Matthew complied.

“Gladly.” He muttered as he shoved the man onto the floor. The twin with the gun wasted no time with placing a sturdy foot on the mans back, preventing Finland from picking himself up off the floor.

“What are our next plans of action bro? Burn the place down or just dispose of the body?” He could feel the hacker under his foot flail around, desperately trying to escape from them. Back to his brother, Alfred watched his brother typing away feverishly at the computer. “Yo, did you hear me?” He yelled out loud since the Finnish man underneath was resorting back to yelling and screaming insults and incoherent words.

“Shut him up already! There are too many things on here that require some work and quite frankly, I don’t want him attracting any unwanted visitors.” Chided Matthew.

Alfred sighed in exasperation before bending down and using the butt of his gun to knock out the smaller man underneath him. Instantly, he fell limp, his last thought swirling around whether or not he’d wake up again.

2:12 p.m.
The car door slammed shut, a tall blond waving farewell to the driver as he drove back towards the city. Beginning his short stroll towards his home, Sweden began slowing his pace as the surrounding environment emitted no background noise. Just a disturbing deaf ring to the usually active area they lived in.

Up ahead, he saw something glinting on the floor, near the window of Finland’s study room. Trotting over to the object, his breath hitched in his throat as he picked up the discarded item. Finland’s gun.

Immediately fearing the worst, he dashed through the front door, his ears listening for any movement. Any at all.

No one seemed present in the home as the Swedish man ran from one room to the next, scanning them all for any signs of his partner. Finally reaching Finland’s study room, Sweden’s eyes widened in shock.

A few drops of blood splattered the floor; papers disorganized everywhere while the computer on the desk had its screen smashed in. Besides that, no sign of Finland. Just those ominous spots of drying red blood indicating that the confrontation had taken place a few hours ago. He hesitated in wiping some of the drops off the floor, cringing at the texture of the solidifying stains. Clutching his fists tightly, he withheld an angry scream, his eyes catching sight of a paper purposely placed near the blood stains. He carefully lifted the slightly crumpled paper and read its contents.

*You might want to find a new roommate.*

Just those simple words sloppily scribbled on the paper with a smiley face at the end of the message.

**Yukon Territory, Canada – The Twin’s Home – June 14, 2003**

Around 2:13 on the afternoon, the brothers were animatedly attending to chores around the house; Matthew cooking some pancakes while his brother tried having a civil conversation with their albino guest. Most of it was one sided though, the Prussian having refused any discussion whatsoever when he saw the brothers come home with a new friend in tow.

In his silence, Prussia frantically mulled over how Finland had been captured by them. At least with him, the twins caught him by sheer dumb luck, but Finland? How? They had no leads to the other nations and Prussia would make Germany proud if he found out that he had not cracked under the cruel games the brothers played with him.

“Alfred, just leave him alone. If he’s not going to talk, then he’s not going to talk.” Matthew flipped a fluffy pancake into the air then caught it in the frying pan. “Besides, foods ready.” He looked up from his cooking to find Alfred pointing dumbly at the tied up albino. “I know, I know. I made enough for him too…” He groaned. Piling a few stacks on separate plates, he handed one to Alfred and then took a seat next to the albino where he nudged a fork full of gooey pancakes towards Prussia’s mouth. He ignored the man’s refusal to accept any food, continuing to prod his mouth till he forced the fork into his mouth.

The Canadian could not resist smiling along with his brother as Alfred laughed heartily at his twin’s determination to feed their guest.

“So…so…what are you going to do with our new friend? And what’s this BIG secret you still haven’t told me?!”
“Before I tell you, turn the TV on. I want to see if any war has progressed yet.”

“Leave it to you to beat around the bush.” Alfred slowly walked over to the television and turned it on, the screen immediately lighting up on BBC where news reporters were having a lively discussion with various people, all who seemed to represent their countries that were listed below them.

The brothers, plus Prussia, listened intently to their words, hearing the different nationalities argue amongst themselves about which nation was at fault for intensifying tensions tenfold and who should concede to the demands of readjusting government interests first.

“No wars yet.” Stated Alfred plainly. Between the secret smile on Matthew’s face and the look of relief flooding over Prussia’s face, Alfred placed his fork down with a huff. “Well?” He never was one for being kept out of secrets.

“Let’s go talk somewhere else brother. Perhaps go check on our new friend?” Placing a stiff hand on Prussia’s head, Matthew halted his incessant wiggling. “I’ll be back to feed you later…”

And with that, the brothers headed outside, towards the basement that rested a bit further away from their house.

Basement – 2:30 p.m.

“What’s your secret Mattie? Why did we bring this guy back home, alive? And why are you still smiling like a creeper? It’s starting to scare me.”

In the poorly lit area that was the twin’s basement, Matthew shuffled over to where they were keeping the hacker from Sweden, tied up but without a seat like their albino guest. The unconscious male had the misfortunate of being tied up and bound so tightly, it would be a miracle if he could even move an inch.

“I found some fantastic information on his communicator Alfred. Something that’ll make both of us very happy.” The grin never left Matthew’s face as he proceeded to bring out the hackers communicator and he pressed a button. In the seconds that followed, Alfred listened to a previous conversation that the hacker held with another person. The part that made his heart skip a beat came when the communicator ended with, “Thanks a lot France. Sweden and I will do anything we can to aid in your efforts.”

“Is…is this…for real? Ma-Mattie….how….I-I didn’t know communicators could…record conversations….!” With his mouth gaping open in complete shock, Alfred struggled to find words for the whole discussion he had heard about the nations gathering together in hopes of working on a personal manhunt for them.

“They can’t. At least, not normally. And yes, it is real. All I needed was a few moments for you to babysit the guy while I reorganized a few wires and done! The most recent calls sent and received could be replayed at anyone’s will.”

Unable to contain his ecstatic, Alfred jumped on Matthew and crushed him in a powerful hug. “Matthew Williams, you are a complete genius!!” Sensing his twin pushing against his chest in an effort to gain some breathing space, Alfred loosened his grip.

“Al…” He huffed. “First… don’t call me by my whole name. You know I don’t like that. And second, I already know that. Any other compliments you want to throw at me?” There was a small arrogant smile on his lips, present even when his brother placed him in a headlock in a playful
“Is that your secret Mat?”

“No. There’s more. Three things actually. But we shouldn’t talk about it here. After all, there’s no point in hanging around here and playing trivia with this guy when he’s still out cold.”

“So then, why did we come here in the first place?” Questioned Alfred.

“I was hoping to play this evidence in front of him when he was conscious but I guess I won’t share that joy right now.” Said Matthew. The wooden steps that lead outside creaked, both twins heading up the stairs and leaving Finland alone again.

Outside, a few leaves fluttered with the passing of a breeze, giving the brothers a refreshing scent of pine needles and some other familiar vegetation. Seeing Matthew take the route back home, Alfred followed after him.

“Ok. Continuing from before, with the guy’s communicator and a little more time, I can possible find a lead as to where the signal from “France” originated from. Besides that little point, I also found a lot of handy files that this hacker was storing as well, so it’s safe to say that I shouldn’t have anymore worries about a rival challenging me.”

They paused outside the door to their house, Alfred tilting his head in question. His brother had one last thing to say but he hesitated, a grim atmosphere shrouded him before he spoke.

“This coming week, we should go check some of your gangs down south.”

“Huh? Why?”

“There…there appears to be some sort of a mess occurring between your gangs and some foreign nations. I can’t say exactly what but, judging by some of the reports I read on the hacker’s computer files, it seems like some nations are actually considering these “uncivilized brutes” as a possible threat.”

“A threat? Are you serious? Hah! That’s pretty funny, considering that all they do is extort as much money as they can while trying to reign the most power through all the territories they own.”

“And you don’t consider that a threat?”

”’Nope. Governments do that too, so what’s the difference between them and gangs?’”

The Canadian had no answer to his brother’s question as he considered the good point that Alfred made. Wow. I never thought of it that way…

“Anyways…we have to go down south again? Fine with me, but I’m taking our masks with us.”

Here, Matthew gave his twin a puzzled look. “Our masks that we use for our missions? But the mafia and every other gang out there knows how we look. They don’t know who we really are so they’re not necessary.”

“I know.” Entering the house and going straight to their bedroom, Alfred smiled brightly. “But I want to show some of the kids what we wear.”

Matthew stopped near the front door, ignoring the shuffling Prussian tied to his chair. “Alfred…” He spoke in a suspicious tone. “You didn’t make any promises behind my back, did you?”

“Idiot.” Mumbled the Canadian.

Still shuffling a bit, Gilbert stopped and glanced at Matthew. “I can’t feel my ass.”

“Shut up.” Growled Matthew.

“And I’m still hungry.” Eying the plate of cooling pancakes, Gilbert wiggled his shoulders forward, trying to inch closer to the food.

Matthew stared at his efforts for a few seconds before grumbling, “I have half a mind to let you starve…” But he still relented in returning to feed the captured nation, nonetheless. Maybe when he was done feeding the albino he would try asking him questions about the new assumed nation they had in their control.


“Mon ami, do you not consider this a bit…how should I say this…pointless?” The Frenchmen that accompanied England towards one of his agencies, quickly held his hands up in defense as England shot him a deadly glare.

“Shut it frog! Consider for a moment that some mental angel is sitting on your shoulder because if anything you should be dead right now.” Seethed England. “Some ally you and your government turn out to be! The moment I turn my back on you, you’re out wandering Europe, looking for the next best ally. Pathetic!”

Muffling a tired sigh as they continued on their way, France dropped his head in distress.

“Angleterre…can you not let go of some little difference of interest between our governments? It was by orders of my officials, not mines! Our governments already have too much conflict between each other. S'il vous plait, let’s not follow in their footsteps. Can you not see that this is what these perpetrators expect us to do? Fight amongst each other like rabid animals!”

“Stupid twat. If I was blind to that obvious fact, you’d be buried in some uncharted lands where no one will be able to find your remains. Now shut your trap and don’t speak a word while I talk.” Threatened the Briton.

“But England, why must you insist that your people are the best at finding anything that has no lead? Everyone has already given their informants a try and none have been successful. Why-?”

France’s words ended at the tip of his tongue as England spun around rapidly and held up a finger in warning, “Keep fucking talking frog. I’ll be more than happy to remove that tongue of yours if you think I’m not serious about my threats.” Seeing the Frenchman go deathly silent, England continued.

“And what if everyone’s informants have failed? That does not mean that my people are doomed to repeat their same mistakes. If no one can find any leads to this letter that those damn kidnappers left behind then we might be missing a crucial opportunity at finding Finland if my people, indeed, can find some leads that others have failed to see.”

No words dared to leave France as he nodded dumbly, fearing the Briton wrath if he pushed him any further. They both entered the agency but found the building to be mostly empty, save for a few employees running furiously to and fro from various jobs.

“Where is everyone?” Asked England to no one in particular. He checked to see if France fell for
the bait but ended up giving the blond a light glare as he merely shrugged in confusion.

“Everyone’s off trying to complete about a million tasks that keep pouring from the government officials.” Answered a bodiless voice. The two blond nations turned their heads in all directions, trying to locate the owner of the unknown voice. “Where?”

“Ummm….down here sir. To the right.” Exactly following the voices directions, France and England stopped their gaze on a unusually large pile of papers that appeared to be moving. Almost in a comical manner, the head of a familiar man poked out from around the pile, a nervous smile on his lips. “Hello? Oh, Mr. Kirkland!”

The black haired man pushed himself away from the disorganized papers and halted in front of England. “What can I do for you sir?”

“Mr. Blake, correct?” Asked the Briton. His answer came in the form of an eager nod of the man’s head. “Lovely. I came here to ask about what your people can do about finding any leads to a piece of evidence I have. However, I don’t want too many people involved in this investigation as it’s very personal.”

The man held a worried expression, his eyes darting around before landing back on England. “Excuse me sir but…I must follow the protocols of our agency. If you have any cases you want us to investigate, they must first be submitted to the higher ups before they are assigned to the group that will work on them. I wish I could help you myself but I cannot defy my orders, sir”

England narrowed his eyes, mentally cursing the ones in charge of this agency as he recalled the last time he had a “disagreement” with them. If he could, he would ask her Majesty himself for support, but in this case, the fact that Finland was missing, most likely kidnapped, England could not risk allowing anyone outside of the nation’s community to find out. He wondered how the others managed to get their people to examine the message himself. Most likely private investigators…

“Is there really nothing you can do?” Frustration laced the Britons voice once he realized that perhaps, his people would not be of much use either.

Hesitating once more, the investigator glanced at England then France. Understanding the silent question, England grimaced. “Please don’t worry about him. He’s French so he doesn’t understand English. It’s safe to continue if there’s more you’d like to add.”

The insulted look on France’s face may have said otherwise, but the investigator put that thought to the side, as he leaned in and spoke in a hushed tone. “Sir, I should warn you about who you talk to in this agency. At the moment there are two factions working here. One that works for the government and the other that seeks to influence the government for whatever reasons they have. Please be careful.”

Taking a moment to consider the man’s warning, England hastily withdrew a plastic bag from his pocket, a messily crumpled paper safely zipped inside. “Dear God, I cannot thank you enough for the warning lad. Taking your words into consideration, I suppose showing this to anyone here besides you is not in my best interest then.”

The young investigator grabbed the plastic bag, turning it around in his a few times. “Yes sir. This piece of evidence would not be safe if submitted to the…wrong…hands?” He stopped turning the bag in his hands, bringing it closer to his face in examination.

“Eh? Is something wrong?” Asked England. Both he and France edged closer to the curious man as
his emotions transitioned from confusion, to disbelief and then surprise.

“This paper…under what circumstances did you find this and where, if I may ask.”

“W-We found the paper in Sweden. I don’t want to reveal too much but…it’s a message from someone we’re currently looking for.”

The man gave England a hard stare. “Impossible. This paper isn’t from there to begin with. It’s from the United States.”

“What?” Exclaimed both England and France before they realized the odd stares and attention they were receiving from passing workers. England quickly pulled the investigator some distance away from the rest of the building, France following closely behind.

“Are you completely sure about this fact Mr. Blake? You’re not just throwing some unstable assumption in our direction?”

“Yes sir. I’m sure about where this paper originated from. Before I managed to move over here, living in the former U.S, I remember wandering around New York and finding this paper in some of the stores that barely survived. This kind of paper looks exactly like common paper anywhere else but, you see this?” The plastic bag was opened as the man withdrew the paper and without asking for permission, he proceeded to rip the paper on the side.

“What are you doing!” Yelled England. He reached out to take the paper from the black haired man but was stopped when France intercepted his hand.

“Mon ami…” He whispered, his eyes discerning the differently colored yet barely visible sheet of paper that lay hidden underneath the ripped section.

“See? This kind of paper…it takes on the exact same physical features of common paper here in Europe and anywhere else. Its looks the same, feels the same, and even weighs the same as ordinary paper but, in the U.S. they add a secret layer mixed in with the rest of the paper. I know it’s a bit hard to distinguish this paper from common paper but, when you live in the former U.S. or as everyone likes to call it, the Lands, you eventually learn to tell the difference between the two.”

“And this came from New York? New York City?” The stifled tone that England spoke in contrasted to the glint of hope in his green eyes. Equally as excited, but refusing to keep it secret, France flashed a bright smile towards the investigator.

“Yes Mr. Kirkland. If you need any leads as to where this message came from, going to New York City is your best choice.”

New York City – June 21, 2003 – 11:09 a.m.

Waiting outside a local bar for his brother, Matthew tapped his foot impatiently, his arms crossed in front of his chest. Near his foot rested the brother’s bag where they kept a few belongings, leaning on the Canadians leg. In a bustle of loud shouts and unintelligent barks, Alfred casually strolled out of the building, his hands tucked into the pockets of his jacket.

“Alfred, what did you do? And why am I hearing yelling? It wasn’t like that before.” Matthew got a simple shrug from his twin who continued on his path away from the now chaotic building where windows were shattering with the sudden addition of stools and people being thrown outside.

“I didn’t do anything stupid. I was just asking around about where the Mafia’s boss was at the moment. Is that too blunt of a question?” He replied.
“And?” Pushed Matthew. Grabbing their belongings, he chased after his twin.

“I guess there were some rival gangs hanging out in the same bar, but they didn’t realize they were in the same room until I accidently mistook one gang for another. So after that everyone got up from their seats and started punching each other.” Reaching up towards the sky, Alfred stretched his limbs, then placed them behind his head; slowing his pace enough for Matthew to catch up.

“Are you serious?” Asked Matthew incredulously.

“Yup! Can we call this a day and go back to the plane already? Or better yet, let’s go visit some of the kids around here. I pro-.” He froze in mid-sentence, sensing his brothers stare behind his back. “I-I mean…I probably should say hi to them. After all, it’s been a while and…”

The American felt something prod his back where his brother was poking him with their masks. He stared at the item before glancing up at his twin.

“Just hurry up you idiot. Those kids aren’t going to wait all day.” Mumbled Matthew.

“Dude, thanks so mu-!” Cutting off his words again at such a random interval, Matthew tilted his head in worry as his brother’s face went from exuberance to complete shock. Before he could voice any concern or turn around to catch what Alfred was seeing, he was grabbed viciously by the arms and yanked behind a nearby building where Alfred pressed them up against a wall. He brought a finger up to his lips, motioning for silence, then peeked his head around the corner very cautiously.

He rashly ushered Matthew further away from the corner. “Mat…don’t get too riled up but…it seems like those guys back from London are here sightseeing.”

“What? Are you su-?”

“Yes!” Interrupted Alfred. He leaned his shoulder towards the wall, trying to hear any footsteps echo on the pavement. None so far, which assured Alfred that the two blonds were still quite some distance off.

“Alfred, why are you panicking? They don’t know who we are so there’s no need to hide.” He pulled the American away from the edge but was met with some resistance as his twin hung onto the edge. “Alfred, stop clinging onto the edge and get over here!” He whispered. Just because the men from before didn’t know who they were didn’t meant that they should bring attention to themselves.

“Wait bro…I’m trying to see what they’re doing!” Replied Alfred who pulled himself away from his brother’s grip. Giving Matthew the cold shoulder, Alfred strained his eyes to see what these foreigners where doing. Just when Matthew was about to join him in his spying though, Alfred pushed him away from the edge, all the while, a huge grin decorated his face.

“Hehehe…it looks like they got my letter Mattie.”

“Your…letter? When did you…” Matthew gasped as realization dawned on him. “You freakin hoser! You just gave this bastards the only clue to where we work! Are you mental or what? Oh wait, I forgot, YOU ARE!” He was about to continue with his angry rant until Alfred shoved a hand over his mouth.

“Hey, calm down! Do you want them to come over here?” Still seeing that angry fire in Matthew’s eyes Alfred sighed in defeat. “Ok, I’m sorry! That was a dumb move on my part but…” He stretched over to the edge one last time and cursed as he saw the men walking in the opposite direction away from them.
“Ok, listen up bro! I know I did something stupid with leaving them that message but think of it this way: Maybe we can make this work in our favor.” He hastily removed his hand away from his twins face and jumped on their bag, digging around until he pulled out Matthew’s mask of tragedy. Bringing their two masks together, Alfred grinned from ear to ear, willing himself not to laugh at his brother’s dumbfounded expression.

“Let’s play a game with them.”

The streets of New York City – 11:32 a.m.

“Fucking barbarians! How dare they target us just because we’re “foreigners.” Hell, half of them wouldn’t even exist if it wasn’t for foreigners populating this God forsaken shit hole in the first place!” Hollered England while a quivering France hurriedly trailed after him.

“Arthur, would you please hush your voice? We’re getting some angry, life threatening looks sent in our direction. I can’t very speak for you, but I certainly do not want to be on everyone’s hit lists just because you cannot keep your mouth shut.”

“Hah! Your already on everyone’s hit list Frog! At least, you will be once I tell everyone here how you called their food inedible slop!”

“Mon dieu! How could you be so cruel Arthur!”

“Damn it! Didn’t I tell you to stop calling me that name! And does it look like I give a damn about whether you’re attacked by a mob? While everyone rips you limb from limb, I’ll be happily defending myself with this!” He flashed his gun from his pocket, throwing his companion a dirty look over his shoulder, before smiling darkly.

“At least if I die, I’ll die with a fight. You on the other hand will most likely die as the coward you’ve alwa-.” The insult he wanted to slap France with next never made it out of his mouth. In a loud resounding pop, England yelped in shock, dropping his gun as he pulled his hand towards his chest.

“Aw, I missed.” Uttered a masked tall blond, further up the street. From behind the man with the grinning mask, another person stepped out, his mask set in a permanent frown.

“You bloody wanker! Do you realize who you’re picking a fight with!” Screeched England. Seeing that his hand was not injured when the stranger shot his gun out of his grip, the Briton immediately swiped his weapon off the dirty street, despite the fact that his assailant still kept his gun trained on him.

Behind the green-eyed Briton, France searched around his cloak, looking for his own revolver. Wrapping his fingers around the handle, he looked back up in time to see the two strangers leaning over each others shoulders, whispering some private exchange.

“Hey…Mattie. I got the limey. You take care of rainbows behind him, ok?”
“Why? We’re going to split up? But-.”

“You two fucking bastards better grow a brain if you think that I’m just going to stand here and let you have a nice chat over tea!” Now, the fuming Briton was stomping his way towards the twins, his gun held tightly in his hand, while France warily chased after the Briton for back up.

“Fine!” Grumbled Matthew. Taking their stances, side by side, the brothers silently counted down to the perfect moment when they would split up, by Alfred’s signal.
Bringing a hand up to his chest in a mock expression of hurt, Alfred exclaimed, “Would you look at that! Brainless limey over here doesn’t even remember us from London! And here I thought we made a good impression on you too!”

Recognition flashed like a wild fire across the Briton and Frenchman’s faces. Raising his gun and pulling the trigger multiple times, England cursed at the bullets that fled passed the brother who took off in opposite directions.

“Fuck! Francis you go after the other git!” He hollered over his shoulder before chasing after the one twin with the grinning mask. No other words were necessary on France’s part as he diligently pursued after the twin with the sorrowful mask.

Alfred

The fleeing American turned his head slightly to his left, grinning widely behind his mask as he saw the figure of a furious Briton running full speed after him.

“What wrong old man? Is that as fast as you can go?” He teased. The blond laughed robustly to himself, enjoying the lovely insults of “fucker” and “wanker” spewing from the green-eyed man’s lips. Turning back once more to peek at his progress Alfred had to suppress a yelp of surprise as the man had suddenly increased his pace tenfold.

“Shit! How the hell-!” In hopes of returning some distance between each other, Alfred began making sharp turns on the corners of every building that came within his distance, officially taking the Briton on a personal tour through a ruined city.

Footstep after footstep, the two ran, jumping over crumbling brick walls and avoiding any collision with wandering lost civilians. Curious eyes and blank faces followed the two running men, wondering what had transpired to cause such an unusual event. Most often, events like these would never occur as a bullet to the head always solved anyone’s problems before escalating to a wild chase across the city.

Nearing the edge of the city, Alfred halted behind a brick wall for cover, took aim and once again, succeeded in shooting the gun out of England’s hand. This time however, he drew some blood as the Briton let loose a string of curses, clutching his hand in agony where a bullet had nearly lodged itself on the side of his palm.

“Well, ta-ta for now, lobster back! I had fun playing with you! And make sure to check the news daily for reports on how I killed her royal majesty, kay?” It took all of the Americans will power not to break out in laughter at the mortified expression on the Britons face. Turning on his heel, Alfred sped on his way towards the forest that bordered New York, gleefully aware that the injured Briton was taking the bait.

“Lobster back? Did he just…!” Gripping his injured hand to his chest, England scooped up his gun with his left hand and continued in his pursuit of the American. He growled at how much distance had been placed between them, urging his legs to quicken their pace as he entered the forest.

“Damn it! Where did he go!” He yelled, looking around and seeing that he had already lost sight of the American. He cautiously searched around, suspecting every bush and branch that moved of housing the fleeing assassin. Even in the broad daylight of late morning, this damned forest did little in providing the frantic nation with any visible clear light. How was it even possible that an environment could make day closer to night?

Damn it, damn it, damn it! How can I always be so close and yet never get within reach of
He stopped, listening intently for footsteps of crackling twigs. Anything that would give him a lead to-

“Behind you.” Whispered a childish voice. Unable to do much else but attempt to face his assailant, England felt a hard blow to the side of his head, effectively knocking him to the forest floor, but not completely knocking him unconscious.

Losing his hold on his only form of protection, England watched his weapon sail a few distance away from him. No weapon certainly cut his chances of surviving an attack by half but leaving your back to an enemy sealed ones fate in death. England quickly twisted around, ready to face the worst that the tall shadow had to offer as it hovered over him.

“You coward! You must feel so threatened if your resorting to such cheap tricks!” Accused England up at the masked figure who tilted his head to the side. Only glowing blue eyes peered back at England. All of a sudden, he crouched down to England’s level, a snigger echoing from within his mask.

“What’s the matter? Was I playing too rough with you?” He lazily pointed at the injured hand that cradled England’s stomach. “Did I do that?” He asked in a mocking tone.

“You son of a bit-!” The punch that England aimed on hitting the man’s mask succeeded in grazing only air, the assassin having taken a step back before catching his good arm. The grip tightened significantly the moment England tried backing away.

“Where are you going limey? I’m not done talking to you.” If it wasn’t for the stupid mask, England would have been sure that there was a cocky smile on the American’s lips. The next choice of action was something that not only stunned England but instilled some form of fear in his being as the mask suddenly came a lot closer to his face. Actually, the masked blond in general had basically cornered England towards the ground, their bodies pressed close together.

Those blue eyes again. They seemed so…hypnotic.

“Hey, if you don’t want to play, how about I tell you a story?”

“Get the fuck off me now, you bloody twat!” He growled out, yet it sounded a lot more hoarse then he thought it should have sounded.

“No. I think you’ll like this story. Its about people who tend to chase me. Like you! You see…” With his free hand creeping up towards the injured hand he tugged it roughly, causing the Briton to cringe.

“The story goes like this. Long time ago, there used to be some people who had some interest in me. Why exactly, I still wonder today but they seemed persistent enough. Even when I threatened to dump their lifeless body in the nearest river, they would continue to follow me. At some point, I guess I started forming some curiosity about these people. So, when I got the chance, I would take the time to meet these people. Talk a little, maybe go out and eat something. It was nice I suppose.” He paused in his story, staring at the Briton who writhed under his body, his arm struggling to be free of his hold.

“Hey listen up! Or else we’ll go back to what I should have originally done.” Threatened Alfred.

“What in God’s name makes you think that I want to listen to your damn story!”
“One reason only. And it ends with a bullet.” This silenced the Briton immediately giving Alfred the chance to continue.

“Well damn if your not interested in my stupid story then I’ll just get to the good part. These people who I would bother to see...they got in the way of something very important that no one should ever do.” He gave England a hard look.

“They got in the way of my work. And you know who noticed?”

Biting his lips, England simply glared at the grinning mask. When there was an opening he’d be sure to take it the moment it revealed itself, of that, he was sure of.

“My partner noticed, limey. My partner started to see that I was gone when I shouldn’t be and one day he followed me. Followed me straight to the guys that chased me all the time. He wasn’t happy, that was one of the many things I’ll never forget.” Still holding the bleeding hand that belonged to England, Alfred pulled it up to the Briton’s face, against his will, and began to brush a few strands of hair away from his face.

“One of the guys that chased me also had blond hair like you. Although his eyes were blue, not green. And he was Russian.” Here, he paused to chuckle.

“That day, after I left my admirers, thinking that I would make it home without being found, I was dead wrong. Because when I got home...I found blood greeting me at the front door. And inside, there was my admirer.” Together with the bloody hand in his grip, Alfred began to trace a small red trail across England’s cheek, while he shifted his weight slightly so he wouldn’t be completely crushing the Englishman. He had to be conscious after all to hear the end of the story.

“This right here...his cheeks which were once so lively were permanently stained in blood. And his eyes. His blue eyes weren’t even there anymore... My partner had done a good job in gouging them out.” Their hands traveled further down until they reached England’s neck.

“And his neck. Hehe...I still wonder how his head didn’t simply roll off his shoulders. So much blood that day. You’d seriously have to see it to believe it Brit. I could give you millions of details about how I found my partner standing angrily over the body of someone I could have cared for if I spent enough time with them, but that was...no. It shouldn’t have been something new to me. It was all just a matter of time before they all end up dead. Because no one can chase me. Not even you. Not as long as my partner is around.” Despite the dark story that had been told and ended, England could not conceal the tremble that rocked his body. Nor could he ignore the lack of remorse or even emotion that the masked assassin seemed to express during the story.

The sheer insanity of these people was something passed his understanding, that was for sure.“My God...” He whispered.

“Oh but that’s not the true end yet. My partner also has had some...flings in the past. And every time I followed him somewhere, whether to the store or the park, if anyone ever got too close to my partner, I’d be sure to deal with them quickly. After all, I’d be awfully lonely if my partner spent more time with someone that wasn’t me.” Those blue eyes that watched England’s own gleamed for a second, giving the island nation the impression that only madness could be seen through his eyes.

“You’re not even human.” Stated England in a matter of fact tone. The response that he received was unexpected as anger laced Alfred’s voice.

“And what do you know about being human?” He growled out. Releasing the bloodied hand, he
grabbed England’s chin firmly. “Huh? Do tell. I’d LOVE to hear your idea of what it means to be human.”

“For starters, I wouldn’t have a partner as insane as you do.” The twisted rage in the American only seemed to build with every word that England spoke. “And also…” He glared darkly at Alfred.

His chance had finally arrived! Even with a bleeding gash on his palm, England curled up his injured hand and, putting as much strength as he could into it, punch the American on the side of the head. It did the job in knocking the man off of him, giving him the opportunity of scrambling away from the blond. Next came the urgent task of locating his missing gun before the grinning fool got up and pinned him to the ground again. Or even worse.

He had thought too soon though as the feeling of a figure looming over him returned. The green eyed nation spun around, taking a few quick steps away from Alfred who merely shook his head.

“No more story time huh? Fine. We’ll play a game then. How bout it Arthur?”

“Arthur?” England began to cautiously take small steps away from the American, vaguely aware that he was doing so until his back bumped into the rough surface of an oak tree.

“Oh right. I forgot to ask. Do you like the name I created for you? The people back in England certainly thought the name fitted me well, although I think its more to your taste. Don’t you think?”

“Like I’d accept a bloody name from a twat like you!” He spat at Alfred. “And just because I’m at a disadvantage here doesn’t mean for a second that you’ve won anything.”

It slightly disturbed England when all he could hear in the forest was the chuckle of the mask vibrate. Nothing but that strained chuckle.

“I never said I won Arthur. On the contrary, you have many chances to beat me. At hide and seek that is.”

“Hide and…what?” So many questions floated around in England’s mind, a lot of them debating whether this assassin was more than just insane. Daring himself to remove his eyes just once from the assailant, he tried glancing to the side, in search of his weapon.

“The rules are easy. You hide and I seek. But…If I find you, I’m going to shoot you. Once that happens, you better run like hell towards base or I’ll just keep shooting. As for where base is…I think I’ll keep that secret to myself, so good luck guessing where it is. If you manage to find base before I get you, then you win. Easy, right?” Now for sure, England could say without a doubt that the grinning mask became more a part of the assassins face then thought possible.

“Are you bloody serious?”

“I’ll count to ten so you better hurry and go hide or else you’re going to lose right away.”


“One…” The grinning American carelessly pointed his gun in the Britons direction, hoping to engage enough fear in him to take his game seriously. And it did.

In the split seconds it took for England to recognize the serious tone that the assassin was using in his countdown, he whipped around in the opposite direction and sprinted away from him in a rapid pace.
Behind his mask, Alfred simply smiled. *This should be fun*

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: Hide and seek in New York? England’s choice of coming to find the assassins alone with France will most likely not be one of his brightest ideas. Perhaps France is having better luck with Alfred’s twin. Only after the twins have had their fun for the day, do they decide that getting back to work will be in their best interest. Unless Alfred has something to say about it…
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: Everything seems to be going fine for Alfred at one point, until his original game is changed. Things don’t seem to be going better for Matthew either. Back home, a certain albino has just about had it, being an unnoticed hostage while across the sea in Europe, the nations struggle to meet with few comrades as their governments threaten each other with invasions and war.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gone to New York (Part 2)

New York City – 12:12 p.m.

Alfred

Continuing his frantic sprinting and occasionally risking a quick glance behind him, England rushed through the forest like a wild animal. Any moment, around any random tree, that maniac could appear again. And if he did, England knew he would suffer a fatal wound. No weapon on hand only left him with the option of finding cover from the assassin until he could safely assess the risks and consequences of his next actions.

“Come out, come out wherever you are Arthur~!” Rang the childish voice from behind.

“Shit!” Whispered England, forcing his tiring feet to quicken their pace. No matter how far he ran, the trees seemed to show no end; no exit! He wasn’t lost. He couldn’t be! Before he could silently curse to himself again, his foot was snagged by a jagged root, bringing the British Empire face first into the moist, soggy ground.

“Artie! Was that you?” Continued the assassins voice, although he sounded closer than before. A lot closer. Scrambling madly through the bushes that grew within the perimeter of the jagged root, England jammed himself deep between the foliage, making sure to still his ragged breathe and fruitlessly trying to calm his speeding heartbeat.

With footsteps coming within reaching distance of his hiding spot, a sense of tension and fear welled up inside the Briton’s stomach as the masked assassin began laughing in an eerie way. “Oh man…Look at you~! So good at playing hide and seek.” Alfred halted, glancing down at a root near his foot. “My only question is…can you beat me?” Following that question were three guns shots vibrating within the surroundings of the forest, causing creatures to scatter away from the perimeter.
It astounded France beyond reason how a flurry of actions could dramatically change one's situation. One moment he was chasing a wanted assassin and the next, he was lying on the ground, his targeted enemy crushing him into the pavement with his hands wrapped tightly around his neck.

How exactly did he end up like this again? Underneath the terrifying mad assassin who seemed too eager in strangling the Frenchman's last breath.

“Come on now. Are you seriously this easy to take down? And to think, I was imagining a much more exciting endeavor from you.” The Canadian released a disappointed sigh. “Oh well. I guess I should have expected this from a Frenchman.”

At this comment, France halted his frantic struggles and stared deep into the mask that hid the face of his assailant. “Finally decided to give up huh? This is exactly what my partner always likes to lecture me on. Albeit, he usually relies on absurd stereotypes to determine how one would act…” A lopsided smile graced Matthew’s face. Such a shame. I bet Alfred is still fighting with this man’s partner…

Watching the Canadian’s lips turn downward in a frightening frown, Francis concluded one thing. He wasn’t happy. And whether it involved their scuffle or not, one thing was for sure: This spelled trouble for him.

Heaving his legs forward, France managed to catch the masked blond off guard as he was suddenly lifted up and thrown to the side. Now it was the Frenchman who was on top of Matthew. Coughing slightly as oxygen rushed back into his lungs, France was quickly forced to counter Matthew’s grasp again, as the two wrestled to get their hands around each other.

“Heh. Have you’ve been holding back this whole time?” Grinned the pinned Canadian. “Or is this your last desperate measure to save yourself?”

“My…You’re…quite full of yourself, aren’t you?” Growled France, who shook as he began to lose ground in his contest of strength with the assassin. Pushing with the last of his strength, France made the immediate decision that this was a battle lost and promptly jumped off the assassin, taking a few safe steps away from him. No gun was present on Francis, having lost the weapon during an earlier scuffle with the assassin when he had been ambushed from behind.

He silently questioned how this assassin managed to elude him so quickly without leaving a trace and then boldly attack him from behind. Another pointless question that plagued France as he frantically thought of another mode of offense he could present towards the assassin.

In his current position, both were evenly matched, as France had succeeded in disarming the masked man as well. Unfortunately, that gun that they fought over earlier had slipped carelessly into an open sewer, forever lost in the slim of the murky city of New York. Standing his ground defiantly, France gave Matthew a hate filled glare, daring the man to make his next move.

“Wow. I’m surprised to see that you’re not considering running away. You could have escaped while I was still down” Offered Matthew. His mask rattled slightly as he chuckled, remembering the man’s surprise when he caught him off guard.

“Tch! Don’t underestimate me or I’ll truly make you regret ever having had the wretched thought of being invincible.”
“Threatening me eh? And here I thought we could manage a civil conversation with one another.” Matthew grinned under his mask as he saw the blond man twitch with irritation, his muscles yearning to take rash action. “And how kind of you to call me invincible. I’m just a simple man really. Nothing special about me.”

“How dare you! How dare you compare yourself to simple people when the obvious truth is that you don’t even have a soul! You’re closer compared to monsters, if anything!” With hands balled up tightly and jaw clenched in aggravation, Matthew marveled at the anger he was stirring up within the man. All he needed next was for the man to make some hasty move and-

An angry grunt left the Frenchman. “If I am having this much of a challenge dealing with you, then I can only imagine that the Briton has already accomplished his goal.”

“Goal? You two actually had a plan when you came over here?” Sneered Matthew. “Hard to believe non? How its enacted matters not because the end result will always be the same.” France paused, trying to suppress a dark grin. “I only hope that when meet up again, he isn’t dragging you companions bleeding, limp body behind him. I do prefer to take in criminals alive if possible, although my friend can get a little carried away if you push his buttons right. And- Oh? What’s the matter? Did you not like what I’ve said so far?”

The man across from France stood still, his head dropped low, but still keeping a silent eye on his target. He reached slowly into the sleeve of his arm and withdrew a small knife, smiling inwardly as he noticed his target cringe at its sight. “Is that so? Well, if your friend is as dangerous as you so kindly stated then perhaps I should just finish you off now and find my partner before he gets himself into any trouble.”

Rushing towards the blond, Matthew brought his knife forward, aiming to Pierce the man’s heart. When the Frenchman swerved away from his attack, Matthew promptly followed after him, turning to his left and hoping to catch him from the side. It worked, partly. A pained growl escaped France who held a hand to side where a bloody gash contrasted his brightly colored clothing.

“If you don’t want a quick death, then I’ll be sure to drag out every second and make this a painful as possible in the shortest amount of time.” The knife switched hands, Matthew preparing himself to jump at Francis again.

Interpreting his next actions, France braced himself. It was a huge surprise to him, however, when the assassin didn’t act according to what his body language was displaying. Instead of pouncing on him, Matthew hurled his knife at the blonds face, forcing him to focus on its direction and avoid it, leaving him open to the assassin. Turning his head back in Matthew’s direction, it was too late for him to dodge the assassin who brought him down.

On the ground once again, Matthew withdrew a second knife from his other sleeve, keeping a firm pressure on the Frenchman underneath while he swiftly restrained the man’s arms above his head. “Déjà vu. Although this will end differently, that I promise you. How about I try to improve your face? It could use a bit adjustment here and there.” Giggling madly, Matthew brought the knife down on Francis’s face.

Bacharach, Germany – Meeting Room - 12:46 p.m.

Standing around a table, reviewing a few files that had just arrived from some of Germany’s messengers, a handful of nations whispered amongst themselves. Only these nations had somehow found a way to evade their governments gaze, allowing them to slip into Germany’s homeland where they discussed their current situation with Finland being kidnapped. To the corner of the
room stood Sweden, an anxious atmosphere surrounding his person.

“Poor guy…just what are we going to do with him? He hasn’t said much ever since Finland was kidnapped.” Whispered Spain.

“He doesn’t even say much to begin with.” Muttered Romano. His comment received a curt nudge from Spain. “What! I’m just saying the truth! You have a problem with that tomato bastard?”

Sighing in mild annoyance at Romano’s lack of sympathy for the Swedish nation, Spain threw one more worried glance at the isolated nation before returning to the paperwork in front of him. “Lo siento, but we have bigger problems on our plate, such as, how are we going to calm our governments? According to the reports we got from one of Germany’s subordinates, some nations are barely holding their armies back from going to war. And others…” He shot a dirty look at Russia and China. “…Seem more than eager to invade certain nations.”

The winter nation giggled lightly. “Oh Spain, I do hope you’re not talking about us.” Grinning widely, Russia turned towards China. “He’s just upset that certain nations aren’t capable of protecting themselves, don’t you agree China?”

The black haired nation crossed his arms and huffed in irritation. “Russia, I prefer if you’d refrain from pairing us up together whenever our interests seem to cross by chance.”

“What the hell! You’re not even going to apologize for your previous plans of invading my damn country?” Accused the angry Italian.

“My government and I have our reasons for making such drastic decisions, although if it is of any peace to you, we have reconsidered our actions.”

“Only because you got caught.” Came Spain’s mumbled remark.

“Spain, in the condition that you are still recovering from I really do think its in your best interest to stay quiet.” Warned Russia. “Or else-.”

“Just because I allowed any available nations to come over to my country to discuss our predicament does not mean that I will tolerate any acts of violence, do you hear me?” Towards the room’s sole door, Germany stood, giving the four bickering nations a hard glare. “Now tell me, what have we covered in discussion regarding the state of our governments?”

The four mentioned nation gave each other mixed looks, all of them trying to find some ground to use as an answer. It was Russia who spoke up first as he pointed in Sweden’s direction. “We’ve confirmed that he doesn’t want to get involved in any of our discussions.”

“The four mentioned nation gave each other mixed looks, all of them trying to find some ground to use as an answer. It was Russia who spoke up first as he pointed in Sweden’s direction. “We’ve confirmed that he doesn’t want to get involved in any of our discussions.”

“And?” Asked Germany, although he could pretty much assume that these nations hadn’t accomplished much besides idle chitchat.

“And?” Russia tilted his head before an idea sparked in his head. He cheerfully glanced at Romano. “And…why don’t you go try talking to Sweden?”

“What?! Are you fucking kidding me? That bastard looks like he’s going to ripe somebody’s spine out!”

“No. I think he’s saving that for the people who did this in the first place.” Said China.

“Is this seriously all we’ve managed to cover today? Even with the addition of the reports I allowed you to review, this is all you’ve got?” The way Germany’s voice strained itself towards
the end signaled to the others that if they didn’t respond with some good feedback soon, they were all going to face a very aggravated Germany.

“Besides the reports mentioning mobilization of nations like Austria and Hungary, no further actions seem to have been taken. However, I’m more curious to know what France and Britain plan on doing on their relationship as allies. If your reports are correct, then it seems like trust between those two idiots is going to be really hard to rebuild.” China calmly sat on a nearby chair, his eyes examining the German’s reaction to the information just conveyed to him.

“Is that so? Well then…” Germany paused as he brought up a hand to his chin in thought.

“Where are those bastards anyways? I thought of all people, they were the most impatient to handle business with finding the assassins! Don’t tell me they’re dealing with sexual tension again!”

“Lovi! Don’t say something so appalling. I assure you that France no longer shares such a relationship with the Briton. Such feelings died long ago. Around the time you were a cute little thing and-.” A cruel punch to his side silenced Spain from spilling any further details of the Italians life as a young nation.

“Knowing those two, they’re probably tearing each other apart as we speak,” said Germany. “If only Japan could have slipped passed his government. Then perhaps progress would have been more successful.” The side comment seemed to have irked China a bit as he glared at the German nation.

“Owww….Lovino…you should really stop being so mean to me.” Whined Spain who was recovering from the jab to his stomach. He eyes scrunched together as a curious thought came to him. “Actually, now that I think about it, France is most likely fighting with England but…where’s Prussia?” He whispered. Returning his attention back to the others, Spain watched China confront Germany, their vibrant discussion easily drowning out his lone question.

“Why do you prefer to have Japan here again? It still hasn’t been made clear whether we can trust you or not, after all.” The Chinese man took a defensive stance against the German. Even if his past with Japan had been stressed, China still couldn’t help but see the island nation as his little brother. Even if their relationship was said to have faded years ago.

Germany sighed tiredly. “What I mean by that is, I feel more comfortable working with my usual allies in situations such as this. Japan is currently occupied with some government work while Italy is…well, his brother is here anyways.”

“Your damn right I’m here potato bastard! Like I’d allow my idiot brother to come and work with you by himself! He’s safer at the church!” Yelled Romano. He rose from the chair he occupied and was about to approach Germany but was held back by Spain. “What the hell!”

“Calmate Romano. We’re here to help, not hinder.” His serious tone left no room for debate, as Russia and China silently nodded in agreement. Grabbing a few papers from the table top and dragging a sullen Romano behind, Spain handed the papers back to Germany.

“We’ve mostly just skimmed the reports but it seems like the general task we have is trying to stop the other nations from going to war. England and France shouldn’t be of any worry. Those two always fight. It’s the others that we need to make sure hold their armies back. Dios mio…Europe is not ready for another war. Not again.”

Silence enveloped the room. It was the sudden sound of clicking footsteps that caused the nations
“Let’s go st’p th’ war. Th’n we go f’nd Finl’nd.” Not stopping to hear the others response, Sweden promptly left the group and exited the room.

Venice, Italy – Inside a local church - 12:50 p.m.

“Unbelievable! How is it possible that nations without leaders are mobilizing for war? It’s unthinkable! Unfit leaders making rash decisions!” Exclaimed a clergyman who constantly paced back and forth inside a cramped room. He stopped then glanced over to his one man audience. “Don’t you agree Feli?”

Shuffling in an uncomfortable manner, Italy meekly nodded in agreement. Seeing the fellow clergyman share the same opinion, the clergyman continued his one sided rant of nations, war and how the church would handle all this in the end. Pausing to take a breathe he noticed the Italian mumbling something to himself. “What is it? Speak up Feliciano or you’ll never be heard.”

“Oh…umm, I was wondering…why are you telling me all this? Won’t you…get in trouble for letting me know what’s happening outside?”

“Oh right…that. Well, I’ve always wondered why the higher ups always order us not to tell you anything. But in this case, I’d truly be surprised if you haven’t heard anything about what’s happening in the world, so I assumed you already knew.” He raised a furry eyebrow. “You DO know what’s happening outside, right?”

“Ah? Uh, yes! I do! Someone let me know earlier so this isn’t new to me.” Fibbed Italy to the older churchman. He placed a hand over his heart, willing it to stop beating so fast from sheer panic of getting caught in the lie.

“Ah, good! Saved me some trouble there. Although I still don’t understand why we must keep everything hidden from you.” Whispered the clergyman to himself, although Italy still managed to make out what he had said.

“By the way, where is your brother? There are some papers that we need reviewed but we haven’t seen him since this morning. Do you kno-?”

“Romano! H-He’s busy! Somewhere else. He said he’ll be back once he finished some business with other government officials so don’t worry!” Whether he was visibly sweating or not, Italy silently prayed that someone would come and distract this man quickly before they discovered that his twin had escaped their watch in order to help the other nations.

“Is that so? Well, when you see him, tell him that we’re waiting for him to look at these papers. I will see you at the cathedral later on.”

Alright.” Italy nodded, watching the man depart from the room. Once alone, he let out the breathe he didn’t know he was holding and slumped slightly on the wall behind him. “Oh Romano…why didn’t you let me go to Germany’s place instead?” He pouted for a minute, thinking of various excuses to give to the clergyman in case they asked more questions.

“Oh, it’s no good. Eventually they’re going to find out and when they do…” He sniffed a bit, holding back the tears that threatened to spill over. “Why don’t I just pretend to be fratello? At least that way he won’t be missing and our temporary bosses won’t get angry at…” Brown eyes widened.

“Wait…that’s it! I’ll pretend to be fratello! And maybe I…” A large smile grew on the Italian
nation as he plotted out his escape. If his twin could evade their governments watch, then why couldn’t he do the same? “I know Romano’s going to be very angry with me but…”

Dashing out of the room and running down a long corridor, Italy spotted his temporary room in the distance, its large door colored a deep depressing grey. Safely making it inside without anyone noticing, Italy hurriedly removed his church garment and searched through his drawer, his hands wrapping excitedly around his twins uniform. “I can do this! I know you told me to stay here Romano but, I can’t do that anymore. Things are getting worse and…and just maybe, you’ll need my help.” Piece after piece, Italy donned every article of clothing he could find that his brother would wear until finally the last accessory was fitted.

Examining himself in a mirror, checking the clothes and making sure that everything came together, Italy smiled brightly. “Wait…this isn’t right. Something’s missing.” He frowned, then got closer to the mirror. “Oh.”

Pulling his lips downward, Italy tried scowling. It felt so…abnormal on his face. “Oh maybe I will have a problem here. Then there’s how fratello talks too…” Walking towards the door, his hands wrapping around the doorknob, Italy forced himself to keep his face in an unusual scowl as he stared at the door. “Umm…hey you, bas-tard…” He brought a hand to his face in embarrassment. It surly would be a miracle if he made it out of the building posing as Romano, let alone the country itself, but he had to try anyways! Here was to hoping that God was on his side today.

**Yukon Territory, Canada – Inside the twin’s cottage – 12:52 p.m.**

It was quiet. Isolated from civilization and possibly any human being, Prussia groaned for many reasons. Tired. Bored. Held here against his own will. Indeed, there were many reasons for him to hate the twins that held him hostage, even though no damn nations were aware that he was even missing.

Wiggling within the confinements of the chains that bound him to his familiar chair, Prussia growled in anger. “Damn it! I’m really getting tired of this shit you know! When the hell are those two bastards going to get back here! I’m not a fucking pet!” He shuffled in his chair a bit more vigorously before he started tilting forward. Pushing his weight back into the chair, he let out a panicked “No!” as the chair fell back.

Lying on the floor at an odd angle, still perfectly tied to his seat, Prussia let out a frustrated yell.

“Screw this! The awesome me is no longer going to be a damsel in distress any more! I’ll show everyone how far my awesomeness exceeds any average nations abilities. I’m going to bust out of this fucking prison and when I get home…Oh when I get home…” The albino could not resist a few cackles as he imagined the flawless escape plan, involving numerous explosions and countless nonexistent minions sprawled all over the land.

“Just you wait you two. When I get out of here (alive) I’ll be sure to repay you, tenfold! May the fucking German army fall upon your asses!” Now came the arduous task of finding a way to get himself out of the chains. Three weeks. Three long weeks it had been since Prussia had arrived at the twin’s house and no one…NO ONE! Had noticed his disappearance. Just showed how much everyone cared about him. Even in that long period of being held here, any and all attempts at trying to free himself ended the same…

With a tired Prussia who would nod off and not wake up until one of the brothers cheerfully woke him up with an obnoxious scream to the ear. Admittedly, it was always the blue eyed brother….Alfred. Their names had to stick in his head eventually as he promised revenge on them for every little joke they played on him for entertainment. Ranging from Alfred’s scare tactics to
Matthew “accidentally” slipping something non-edible into his meals.

“Stupid pricks.” He mumbled as the memories flooded through him. From their extravagant meals to their interesting conversations, those two were quite a pair. Even if Matthew continued glaring at him whenever he was involved in a conversation with Alfred, the intensity had actually dwindled quite a bit. Enough that the Prussian would interpret it as a warning and not a death threat. And besides the occasional surprise in his food, the quiet blond did not feed him bad food. On the contrary, he feed him the same thing Alfred ate, which was delightful to his taste buds.

Alfred wasn’t so bad either once you got passed his humor. He loved talking a lot. So much in fact, Prussia almost forgot that he was a captive at their home, as the conversations traveled from what properties of a plant could numb a person instantly to what weather was perfect for flying a plane without problems and why. Unlike his twin, Alfred was quite affectionate, going as far as to patting him on the head whenever Prussia decided to agree with him on an idea. If only he would realize his brother would shot the albino ugly looks whenever he saw that sort of interaction between the two.

“Gah! What the heck am I thinking! These two are the same people that kidnapped me from my awesome home and dragged me out to the middle of nowhere. Not to mention that they kidnapped Finland now! I need to get out of here!” Rocking his weight up and down, he willed his chair to defy the laws of gravity and lift itself back into an upright position. It failed miserable.

Panting from exhaustion he searched around the living room for anything useful that he could use in his escape. Nothing useful presented itself. “Argh! Why does thi-!” He stopped as the floor underneath him started rattling. Was it an earthquake?

Peeking over his shoulder he could make out some big white paws slowly opening the front door and entering the house, the door making a resounding click as it appeared that the lock fell into place. “Oh no…”

Coming closer to the fallen nation, the white furry beast leaned towards his face, watching fear well up in his eyes. “Uh…good K-Kumi…jaro. I-If you’re…looking for Matthew…he’s…outside. N-Not h-h-here.” Trembled the words passed Prussia’s lips.

Opening his mouth widely, Prussia screamed loudly as the polar bear clamped down on his…chains? “W-wut?” Before he could assume that the creature was going to aid him in his escape, the bear started dragging him deeper into the cottage, passed the living room and kitchen where he dropped him off inside the twin’s bedroom. “Oh God! Please, don’t turn me into an unawesome surprise for your owner and his brother! I taste bad, seriously! More than half of my weight consists of beer! Ah!”

Freezing in his frantic rant, Prussia held his breathe as the polar bear sniffed his neck. Quickly rising his nose from the nation, Kumajiro turned towards the door labeled “Fun Room” and prodded it open, allowing a frightened Gilbird to swoop into his owners fallen figure. “Gilbird!”

The two reunited buddies cried and chirped happily until the polar bear garnered their attention. “Umm, thank you?” Spoke Prussia, uncertainty lacing his tone. Shifting his eyes over to the door that was slightly ajar the white haired nation strained his eyes to identify what decorated the walls of the room. “Charts?” No. Maps of every nation in the world.

Any further clear view of the room’s contents became obscured with a mass of white fur, Kumajiro having languidly strewn himself between the nation and the room. Bringing a large paw on top of the grounded man, Kumajiro yawned lightly then dozed off. Despite the small fear that lingered in Prussia regarding the wild animal sleeping so close to him, the more disturbing thought of how
organized these two brothers’ were plagued his mind.

New York City – 1:03 p.m.

Matthew

“Stay still or I won’t be able to make clean cuts idiot!” Warned the Canadian that rested on top of his French opponent. Even when he held the Francis’ hands and had him pinned to the earth, Matthew struggled to keep his balance on the man as he suddenly seemed to have found some hidden strength. The most damage he had accomplished on the man’s face was a few nicks near the check and eye.

“I told you not to underestimate me!” Yelled France. In one strong jerk, he freed one hand and punched the assassin on the face, causing the mask to turn unevenly. Revealing pale lips that pulled back into a feral growl, Matthew jumped off the man, dodging any further wild swings that could succeed in knocking his mask off.

“Lucky break hoser, but don’t think you’ll get lucky a second time!” Yelled Matthew as he straightened his mask. “Tell me, what do you choose to be your final words, as I assure you, you won’t be able to speak again once I slit your throat.”

“My final words you ask? To appease your curiosity I’ll give them to you. But only because I won’t be dying today.” He wiped away some blood that dribbled down his face and frowned, his eyes growing slightly faded in thoughts. “How I came into this world and how I left it matters not. Only the satisfaction that I lived my life to the fullest cradles me gently in death. I bid the world adieu.”

Matthew stopped smiling. Slowly lowering his knife to his side he choked out a quiet, “W-what?” Those words... Somewhere...he had heard those words before. From somebody very important. But how was that possible?

“Do these words resonate within your soul? And I was so certain you did not hold one either. Surprises lurk everywhere I see.”

“No! Such petty words mean nothing to me. And you know what else Frenchman? I frankly don’t give a damn what happens to you from here on out. I have somewhere else to be…” Taking cautious steps back and away from the blond, Matthew watched the man frown deeply at his attempt to flee their conflict.

“Disappointing. You boasted so loudly about how you would see to my demise and yet, here you stand, retiring like the coward you are. Don’t you find that pathetic in any way?”

“Like you’re one to talk! I’ve wasted too much time playing with you. And no, I don’t find this pathetic!” He spat out. “I call this common sense. Before I leave you though, answer this question seeing as how you enjoy talking. Just who the hell are you?”

“To an enemy such as yourself, I ask that question myself. Who are you? Monster, demon, or human?”

Matthew chuckled humorlessly, placing more distance between himself and the blond. “Stupid.” He muttered before whipping away from the Frenchman and sprinting into the maze of New York. From behind he could hear the man giving chase, his footsteps carrying him with an unbelievable speed. Tch! Time to lose him.

Within 5 minutes and passed numerous streets and alley’s, a furious France rested near a crumbling
wall, cursing to himself for having lost track of the assassin. He looked up to the graying sky and scowled. One criminal was gone. How was England faring with the other? Did he have any better luck? If the assassin he fought earlier was serious about his reason for leaving so abruptly then he had to find England, and quick! Even if it was a nation versus two humans, there was no telling how badly things could get if those two got together and overpowered the Briton.

“How strange. I’ve haven’t voiced my final words to anyone in so long. Not since…” He paused, thinking back on old memories of a blond little child whose big bright eyes always looked up to him.

Flashback

“Ohhh! You got me! I breath my last breathe. Against the mighty Canada, I stood no chance!”

Silence commanded the room before a quiet voice spoke up. “…What do I do now?” Asked a curious little boy who timidly held a tiny stick in his hand, acting as his choice of weapon against his opponent. He shyly glanced at France, confused about his next lines. It was the man’s idea after all that they play a little game of sword play, although he had never got this far into the game. It usually terrified the child to even hold something that could harm anyone.

“Oh mon sweet Canada. Don’t fret mon cheri. Just repeat after me. ‘Speak your final words vile pirate!’”

“Um..sp-eak yu-your final wor-words…Pirate…” The Frenchman chuckled at the boys absence of the word “vile” but accepted the statement anyways.

“Remember this Canada, if a pirate had any honor to begin with, he’s words would not sound like the screeching caw of a raven but lets say I wasn’t such an uncivilized brute. Lets say I actually understood etiquette and humility These would be my final words.” He dramatically placed a hand over his heart.

“How I came into this world and how I left it matters not. Only the satisfaction that I lived my life to the fullest cradles me gently in death. I bid the world adieu.” He grinned at Canada, his head resting on the floor of his house while he watched the boys reaction.

“You look funny…” Whispered the child, a giggle escaping him as the Frenchman refused to rise from the floor.

End Flashback

“Canada…”

Alfred

“Argh!” Tumbling on the forest floor, Alfred and England viciously clawed and grappled each other for control of the only present gun. According to Alfred’s previous plan, he had intended to flush the Briton out of hiding by shooting random shots into the sky. What he didn’t expect though, was for the Briton to be hiding right in front of him, planning his retaliation well as he tackled the assassin’s legs and started their present scuffle.

“You little-! Who the hell do you think you are breaking the rules of my game!” Barked the masked blond as he planted a few hard jabs to England’s head. Refusing to give up the fight despite the burning pain in his hand, England blocked a fourth punch and reflected the attack with a kick to the chest.
“I never once agreed to play such demented games with you! I’ll show you what a bloody Briton is capable of doing, you stupid git!” Jamming a hand around the assassin’s mask, England gave a violent tug. Sensing his disguise being ripped away from him, Alfred hastily released his hold on the gun and quickly grasped the hand that held his mask.

“Aha!” Letting go of the mask, England flipped the gun and pulled the trigger at close range, smirking as the shot rang out loud and clear in the forest.

“Fucking bitch!” Screamed Alfred as he jerked away from England. Backing away from the fallen man and taking shelter behind a tree Alfred hissed in pain as he held his arm tightly. Before Arthur could gain all his bearings, Alfred swiftly dashed away from the nation, managing to avoid a second bullet hole as various shots followed him.

“Get back here you wanker! I’m not done with you!” Screeched England who sped after him. Vines and branches greeted England’s face the further he ran into the forest, the sound of footsteps ahead becoming more faded. “Damn it!”

Finally he stopped, wildly whipping his head in all direction for any signs of the fleeing criminal. He couldn’t stop. He couldn’t escape! Not again. He ran into the closest pathway and continued his pace until he started to see a light streaming fourth from an opening. An exit. Exiting the forest with exhaustion racking his body, England looked up ahead into the distant city.

“I got you this time!” Narrowing his eyes at the figure that continued to head in the direction of the civilization, England followed in hot pursuit. Passed drunken unconscious people, over purposely knocked over trash cans, Arthur finally accomplished what he had sought to do so determinedly.

He had cornered the assassin in an alleyway with no alternative exit except a wretched dead end. “You’re finished! Its about time you faced justice for all your crimes!” Ordered Arthur, a wicked grin set on his face. “How about we start your punishment by having you remove your mask? After that I want you to put your hands behind your head and wait for further orders!”

Alfred shifted from one foot to another, still clutching his bleeding arm before breaking out in a loud laugh. “Haha! Really? So your going to send me to jail officer? Oh, whatever should I do? Won’t you please forgive me for my crimes?” Mocked the American.

“Follow my orders or I won’t hesitate to leave another bullet in you! I’m sure her majesty won’t be too displeased if I give her good reasons for turning you into a live shooting target.”

“As you wish, Arthur~!” Rang the American, his hand coming up to the mask where it lifted it high enough that his lips could be seen. Keeping his hand in place, mask barely revealing his mouth, Alfred threw a taunting smirk in Arthur’s direction.

Ready to shoot the assassin again, England suddenly felt a horde of people behind him and turned around just in time for someone to strike him bluntly across the back of the head with a bottle of alcohol. Shards of glass lacerated his head and a part of his cheek, yet it didn’t do much to earn a reaction for the English man as he was already out cold from the impact.

“Just our luck! Finding foreigners in these parts of the city. How ‘bout you come with us nicely and we’ll be sure not to leave too much of a scar on you like we did your friend here.” Asked a mobster who boldly approached Alfred. “Or would you rather have us get rough on you?”

“Man you guys are stupid as fuck! Do you seriously want to consider taking me for a hostage?” The American blatantly ripped his mask off and scowled at the gang. Recognizing the blond’s face instantly, the thugs backed away quickly, fear present in some of them who tried to hide a tremble.
Just one criminal bravely stood his ground, an arrogant glint in his eye. “Hey, why you guys so scared of this scrawny blondie here? Its just him versus all of us. And he’s injured too! Maybe the mafia will pay some good cash for his safe return.”

“No! Leave him alone! Even if he’s injured…no!” One man retorted.

“Yeah! He looks like any average criminal but he’s looks are deceiving. He’s a demon! And his brother…! Do you want a knife sticking out of your back?” Added another gang member. “We already got this foreigner here! Lets just go and see how much he’ll fetch back with the Europeans. God knows they always piss themselves whenever one of their buddies gets caught over here.”

Reluctantly obeying the majority’s opinion, the lone gang member backed away from the alleyway and followed after the men who carried the unconscious Briton off to their hideout. Alone in the alley, Alfred quietly scoffed, “Idiots. Be thankful that Mattie wasn’t around or you’d all have been dead by now.” Exiting the area that meant to trap him, Alfred grinned to himself. Even he wasn’t dumb enough to allow himself to get cornered so easily. Why take such a dangerous risk when minor gangs were known to roam around the area at this time? Some would sooner or later take interest in the British accent that stood out amongst the environment, and come to inspect the individual for possible value as a hostage.

“Damn…I still need to take care of this bullet though.” Grumbled Alfred as he glanced over at his wounded arm. The bleeding seemed to have ceased although it didn’t give the blond any good feelings to see a hole near his elbow. Thankfully it didn’t hit the bone but still… It hurt!

Suddenly remembering that the Briton had his gun, Alfred trotted over back to the mouth of the alley where his weapon lay discarded for anyone to find. Depositing the weapon into his jacket Alfred was just considered looking for his twin when his attention drifted over to a pack of kids that were inquisitively approaching him. “Big Brother!” Exclaimed some young children while the older ones simply smiled at him.

“Hey, what’s up everyone? Looking for some poor cat to terrorize today?” He asked, laughing as some of the kids grumpily kicked him in the leg. Keeping a firm grip over the wound in his arm, Alfred clumsily pulled his undershirt over the hole in his jacket, hoping to hide the blood from the younger kids. They didn’t need to know that they big brother could get hurt. They looked up to him.

“Hey Al? What were the gangs doing just now? We saw them carry away some man. Did another struggle break out?” Asked one of the older boys who was aware of the chaos that reigned within the city.

“Nah. They just got a hold of another foreigner. Some annoying British dude. Nothing new.” Chirped Alfred, chuckling lightly. He strode towards a bench that barely supported itself and sat down, ignoring the violent creaks it made. None of the kids seemed to be laughing with him though. “Huh? What’s wrong? Why are you guys upset?”

Giving each other worried looks and mumbling quietly amongst themselves, the kids slowly pushed a quivering girl forward to face Alfred. Murmuring something under her breath Alfred furrowed his eyebrows. “What did you say?”

“Big brother…can you please…go save the British man?” She mumbled. By the way Alfred’s eye twitched at the sudden request, the kids knew he had heard the quiet girl. She nervously twiddled her thumbs, a few tears lingering in her eyes.

*Ok…calm down Alfred! There’s clearly a logical reason for these kids wanting me to…save? The
Briton? Oh God! Clearing the internal conflict in his head, Alfred held back a frown and struggled to hold the smile on his face. “Honey…can you please tell me why you want me to save the annoying British man? It’s perfectly fine if he gets kidnapped. That supposed to happen to any foreigners that come over here.” He said in a strained voice.

“That man…he was nice to us…” Responded the little girl.

“Yeah! He gave us food and told us a few stories, although they seemed a bit outdated if you ask me.” Spoke another older boy.

“He’s a little grumpy but he’s not a bad person.” Several little heads nodded in agreement.

“What? Are….are you guys serious!” He asked them, an incredulous look on his face. “Th-that…that British guy is NOT a nice person! He shot your big brother!” Indicating towards the arm he held Alfred refused to show them the detailed result of their fight but staunchly stood by his proclamation. “And besides, he’s a hostage. Someone will pay for his safe return. No need to go save his a-!

“But big brother! What if no one pays for him? Then those guys will kill him!” Cried the little girl. The tears no longer rested in her eyes, freely flowing down her face. “He d-d-didn’t mean to sh-shoot you…Maybe he was aiming for someone behind you…”

“Did you piss him off?” Asked a young lad. “He threatened to kill the guy dressed in rainbows so maybe you just got him angry.”

Before he knew it, Alfred was surrounded by a bunch of little children crying, the older ones frowning at his refusal to help. “I thought you said you’d always be there to help us Al…” Came a soft voice that stood out amidst all the crying and sobbing. The original owner of the voice could not be located in the group but his small words…they stung.

An exhausted sigh left Alfred as he slowly rose from the bench. “Aww man…why do you kids always find a way to guilt trip me into these things? I only promised to help you guys out, not adults!” Stated Alfred although few, if any children, stopped crying. “Fine! I’ll go save the annoying limey! Just stop crying!”

Immediately their faces lit up, many jumping towards the American and hugging him. “You’re the best Big Brother! The best!!” Cheered many little voice, faces smiling brightly up at Alfred. He held back a groan and smiled weakly.

“Sure I am…” Patting some of their heads and wiping stray tears away Alfred reluctantly withdrew his mask from the inside of his jacket.

“What’s that Big Brother? A disguise? Are you a hero?” Asked the children, awe evident in their tone. “You’re a hero, aren’t you!” It was too late to quell any further speculation as the kids started jumping up and down in excitement. “Our brothers a hero!”

The blond laughed nervously. “What will you kids come up with next?” Down the streets of the city, gun shots and screaming people could be heard, gang activity climbing up particularly high for today. Nudging the group of kids towards cover Alfred gently shushed them and turned back towards the direction where the noise had come from. And where Arthur had been taken.

“I’ll go save the foreigner but the rest of you stay hidden. Don’t wander too close to the gangs and behave, alright?” Placing his mask to the side of his face, not prepared to wear it yet, Alfred turned back to the kids one last time. “Oh, and when I get back, you guys owe me! On my next visit, no
favors for a week!” He pretended to glare at the kids who laughed and giggled at his threat but eventually broke out into a grin before departing for the open streets.

“Be careful Big Brother. And beat up all the bad guys! That’s what a hero does!”

Gang Hideout – 6:54 p.m.

“What the hell do you think you’re doing dumbass! That’s not how you write a ransom. You need to make it sound serious. We’re deadly criminals, not 5 year old girls!”

“Would you shut up? I got this!”

Squabbling amongst one another on how a proper ransom should be written the thugs could not see the homicidal glare present on England face as he watched their argument escalate. Handcuffed by the hands and feet, he growled through the cloth in his mouth. How did he not see these people coming? It was that assassin! He must have planned all this, pretending to be caught before his backup came to his aid. But how could someone be that prepared to have support waiting for them whenever in need? These assassins seemed a lot more dangerous than previously thought.

Struggling to squeeze his hands out of their handcuffs from behind, England kicked against the wall to his right, repeatedly, in frustration until one of the thugs quickly approached him with a snarl on his face. “What the fuck are you doing? Do you want us to kill you right away? Don’t temp me foreigner!” He kicked the Briton once in the stomach, then grabbed him by the scruff of his shirt and dragged him into a dingy room on the side of their hideout.

“If you can’t behave like a good hostage then I’ll leave you here. Have fun with the rats!” He cackled, closing the door loudly behind him. The room radiated with a pungent smell of urine and feces, making the Briton gag despite having the wind knocked out of him. Adjusting his sight to the poorly lit room, England sat up and examined his new prison, desperately trying to ignore the muck that was smeared on his face when he was thrown face first into the room.

*Why? Why can’t I break out of these handcuffs! Is my country so weak that I’m unable to break free? And where is that bloody Frenchman! Damn France! Good for nothing*- To his right, a cracked window allowed a faint breeze to drift in the room, moving the smell around rather then dissipating it. Holding back another gag, England studied the window, wondering if he could escape through there if he could remove the handcuffs first. Once he got out of here, he’d make sure to repay the assassin for getting him into this situation. A little bullet hole in the arm seemed like a mere slap to the hands. No, the bastard deserved more.

He looked around the room again, noticing a large wooden box in the corner. Nothing else could be made out leaving him to conclude that the room was bare. Without warning, the room became a lot darker, causing England to fumble around in surprise until he registered the appearance of a shadow at the window.

*France? Did the frog actually find me?* On closer inspection England felt the color drain from his face as he recognized an all too familiar grin of a pale mask. *No!* He scrambled away from the window, vigorously shaking his head in refusal to accept what he was seeing. Hadn’t the assassin created enough trouble for him already? What worse could he possibly do!

Slipping into the room noiselessly through the window he opened, Alfred stopped in front of the bound Briton. “Surprised? I am too.” He leaned down to pick off a stray shard of glass that rested on the man’s head, discarding it carelessly onto the ground. “You ready Artie?”

The nation furrowed his eyebrows in hate and suspicion, questioning the assassin’s motives while
still inching away from him. Breaking the silence was a loud crash and multiple gun shots echoing from the next room over as men shouted and bodies hit the floor. “Looks like that’s my signal.” Muttered Alfred who effortlessly lifted Arthur from the floor and sped back to the window where he threw the man outside, following swiftly after him.

Landing gracefully next to Arthur’s fallen body, Alfred scooped him up and slung him over his shoulder, hissing lightly when he had to move his injured arm. He suppressed the irritation he felt as Arthur violently kicked against his hold, struggling to be released, and continued to sprint away from the bustling hideout. From behind, a man who fled from the war inside the building yelled, “He’s escaping with our hostage!”

“Damn! I could have sworn that rival gang would have kept those bastards busy long enough!” Cursed Alfred. He quickened his pace, struggling to avoid any shots fired in his direction while balancing the man on his shoulder who refused to stay still. “Fuck! Would you stop moving? Keep it up and I’ll just let those bastards have you!” Threatened the American. Surprisingly, his threat worked as Arthur stopped moving, bewilderment taking hold of the man.

He’s…saving me?

The trampling sound of footsteps increased. England’s eyes widened as more men joined in the chase of the assassin. About 10 to 15 thugs seemed to have taken notice that their target was escaping, their arms raised as they took sloppy aim at the blond. A few lucky shots grazed the American and Briton although none punctured deep in the skin to be considered wounds. Through the streets, Alfred sprinted into an abandoned apartment huffing tiredly as he dumped Arthur behind the door then quickly shuffled under the window.

Confused voices and angry remarks could be heard outside the apartment, the thugs swearing at having lost their hostage until their presence finally faded away from the blonds’ hiding spot. Taking a cautious peek out the window, Alfred sighed in relief and turned back to the man he had saved. “What’re you staring at?” He grumbled.

Returning the question with a mild glare, Arthur wiggled in his restrains and growled. “Oh right, you can’t talk. Ha!” He grabbed the green eyed man and lifted him once again onto his shoulder. “Sucks that I’m not done with this crap yet. And just to make it clear, I’m not removing your gag. I like the silence.”

Walking out of the empty apartment, Alfred took cover under the shadows of the night, resigned to accepting all the kicks and muffled screams he received from Arthur. As soon as he found the kids he could dump off the Brit with them, as proof that he kept his word, and leave for good. God only knew where Matthew was, or what he was doing. “Tch. Probably panicking because I’m not with him.” Whispered Alfred.

A long hour later, Alfred had finally found the group of children around a small fire set up by the older kids. Arthur had eventually drained himself from the constant kicking and screaming, falling unconscious on the assassins shoulder despite his instincts warning him to stay awake and aware.

“Whoa. You did it! You saved him!” Cheered some kids who eagerly surrounded Alfred. “Did you beat the bad guys?” Asked the smaller ones. If by beat they meant pitting rival gangs against one another as a distraction in order to break Arthur free from their pathetic prison then yes, Alfred beat the bad guys. He silently nodded, dropping the Briton on the ground where the kids could examine him.

“Oh, he’s hurt.” Stated one boy as he prodded the mans face.
“He’ll be fine.” Mumbled Alfred. Rubbing his face with his guise still in place, Alfred sighed. “You kids take it from here. Play nurse with him or something. I have to go.”

The children adamantly held onto the American, some thanking him, others asking him to stay for the night. “Sorry, but I really have to go. You know what’ll happen if I leave my bro alone for too long.” Reasoned the blond. He smiled softly at the kids that pouted.

“What do we do with the Briton when he wakes up?” The little girl from before sat next to his resting form, picking out any remnants of glass that refused to fall off.

“Oh yeah…Do you remember seeing a weird guy dressed in some brightly colored clothing following him around?”

“Rainbows?”

“Yeah, that’s the one. Find Rainbows. If you find him, he’ll take the guy home. Oh, and one last thing. When he wakes up, if he starts asking too many questions about me don’t answer them ok?” He directed the order more towards the older children, expecting them to lead the younger ones away if they started talking too much.

“Of course! You can count on us Al.” Answered the oldest boy of the group.

“Good.” Leaving the kids behind, Alfred waved farewell to them. “Tell’m I said ‘Your welcome’” He added, laughing lightly at the kids who giggled in return. Wandering around the city, hoping to run into his twin somewhere in the shadows, Alfred swore. “Shit! I hope Mattie didn’t kill Rainbows!” Then hurried on his searched for the Canadian.

Yukon Territory, Canada – Old Cottage – June 22, 2003 – 7:30 a.m.

Disembarking from Alfred’s plane, Matthew and his twin quietly grabbed their belongings from the aircraft. It had been a rough night for both of them. As soon as Alfred found his twin the first question that left his lips was whether the man dressed in bright clothing had kicked the bucket. Matthew in turn curtly ignored his question and grabbed his arm, coldly inspecting the wound that had caked over in dried blood, before assaulting his brother with millions of questions about the injury.

After calming the Canadian and allowing him, by no choice, to treat his wound with a temporary bandage Alfred intended on asking his brother if he would mind flying the plane back home but was interrupted when Matthew stated that he would drive the plane. Offering a smile in his brother’s direction, Alfred felt his mood falter as his brother didn’t return the emotion. Instead, the Canadian said that they had much to talk about but reasoned that they would wait until they got home.

The flight back home was tense, neither brothers speaking. While one lay slumped on his side, sleeping away the fatigue of yesterday’s events, the other kept a steady hold on the control of the plane, blood shot eyes burning as his mind refused to dismiss the Frenchman’s words. They arrived home under the light of early morning.

“What’s on you mind Matthew? You’re never this quiet…” Asked Alfred when his brother removed their last belonging from the plane. He unconsciously held his bandaged arm waiting for a response.

“Al…there’s a lot we need to talk about. But not yet. I still need to clean your wound. I’m fairly positive that the bullet is still lodged in your arm and if I leave it alone, it might get infected.”
Worry lined Matthew’s eyes although there was a flash of anger in his eyes that grew rapidly. “If we ever run into these people again, I promise to deal with the Briton personally. For every scratch lining your face I’ll be sure to replicate them on him.”

“Mat, I already told you he didn’t cause the scratches on my face.” Groaned Alfred.

“Then how did they get there?” Retorted Matthew.

“…I fell?” Offered Alfred as an answer, refusing to let his brother find out that he had actually received them when rescuing the man.

“Yeah…good excuse Al.” Heading towards the cottage, the twins halted at the door. “Once we get settled I need to ask you some things Alfred. About…certain memories…” He whispered. His twin reluctantly nodded before opening the front door.

“Wh-what the…heck?” They both gaped. “How the hell…did he get like that?”

From the entrance of the brother’s bedroom, Prussia simply moaned in reply, silently begging that the twins remove the giant polar bear sleeping on his chest.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: Not everything can be predicted. People greet and farewells are spoken. What lies ahead for the twins when new goals are formed? And why do France’s words haunt Matthew? Eventually, everything comes into a horrible, chaotic collision that may very well change the tides of fate.
Falling Pieces

Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: As buried memories are begging to resurface, the twins try getting any extra information out of the hacker before finding themselves back in Europe. With ambitious goals of finding out who the nations are, the brothers celebrate what success they achieve back home with a new addition. But does it last?

Chapter Notes

Author Note: Hello everyone! As a heads up to those reading this story I would like to explain why there have been a good amount of updates in chapters. This fanfiction was written about 6 years ago. And honestly this story has been an on/off project for me. Considering the enthusiasm I first had writing this idea out to the motivation I have now, its easy to say that I’ve lost some steam for the ending. But the main point I would like to get at is, this story will not remain unfinished. The ending has been written out, scratched out and re-written plenty of times. The dilemma I now face since I last stopped updating this story is connecting all the in between pieces to the ending. So there are just a certain amount of chapters that I will add to this story before it goes quiet. And at that point, the readers will have to play the waiting game with me so please bear with me as I try to write this out. Until then. Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Falling Pieces

Yukon Territory, Canada – Old Cottage – June 22, 2003 – 7:59 a.m.

“Why does your bear have to be so damn heavy?” Muttered Alfred, having earlier spent about 15 minutes trying to remove Kumajiro from the fallen albino.

“Alfred, its not like Gilbert was dying from suffocation. Now stay still or I might prick the wrong tissue.” Lectured Matthew. Adjusting his brother’s arm so that it openly displayed the closing wound near his elbow, Matthew slowly used his knife to shift through the tissue, trying to locate the bullet lodged inside.

“If you couldn’t help me then explain why you had to throw the guy in the basement with that hacker. Does it really matter that he listens to what you have to sa- OW! What the heck Mattie!” Instinctively trying to bring his arm to his chest from the pain that sprouted from where Matthew inspected and prodded, he was met with an equal strength that firmly held him in place.

“I told you to stay still Alfred.” Warned Matthew as he narrowed his eyes in annoyance at his brother’s constant mention of the albino.

Holding back a frown, Alfred turned to look in the direction of the front door, aimlessly speaking
his next poorly chosen words. “Geez, if I didn’t know any better, I’d say you were taking out your anger on me. Although I don’t see why you’re being such a jerk. Is it so wrong of me to want to talk to someone other than you?”

With that final thought spoken, the room dropped a few degrees colder, tension permeating every corner of the cottage.

“Is that what you really think Alfred?” Started Matthew slowly. He stopped working on Alfred’s wound, placing his knife down as he gave his twin a hard look. “Do you even remember that we’re going to kill all of these guys in the end once the wars start?”

“What? Of course I do-!”

“NO! No you don’t Alfred!” Snapped Matthew. “You freakin think its ok to go and try to befriend these damn nations even though they loath us with every fiber of their being! Tell me, would you have the guts to put a gun to Gilbert’s head and pull the trigger when the time has come! Could you actually do such a thing to someone you might consider a friend?”

The remains of Matthew’s outburst vibrated within the room, leaving Alfred stunned and speechless. He closed his eyes before muttering a quiet “Yes.”

“Alfred, don’t lie to me! I know that-!”

“If I said yes then I meant it.” Interrupted Alfred calmly, opening his eyes again with an unnatural seriousness to them. “Don’t start thinking that I’m going soft on you Mattie. How could I when I’m the one who thought of this plan in the first place?”

“But…but you…your so friendly towards him. Why?” Mumbled the Canadian who couldn’t help but stare at the floor.

“Why not? It gets lonely sometimes. Not talking to anyone…”

“But you have me!” Retorted the quiet twin who sharply lifted his face from the floor. It pained Matthew greatly to hear that his brother got lonely at home, even though he was always present. Never once had they been separated since the end of WW2, so why? Why would Alfred be lonely now of all times? “Am I…not enough for you?”

He watched Alfred smile softly, a twinge of pain blossoming in the pit of his stomach. “It’s not that Mattie. I talk to Gilbert because sometimes I think…you get tired of me. I know I can be a handful at times and sometimes…you refuse to talk to me, or maybe you’re angry at me for whatever stupid thing I did that day. It’s on days like those that I leave you alone so you can take a break from me. But…” He paused.

“…Sometimes its gets lonely. Not talking to anyone for a whole day. Or even a week, like that one time we got in a bad argument.” Matthew stared at his brother’s downcast face, willing the memories of that miserable week to fade back into nonexistence.

“That’s why, ever since Gilbert came here and even that hacker there are more people to talk to. Now if we ever fight again, I can leave you alone without being lonely for too long. Because there are others to talk to. And talking to someone is a lot better then facing silence. So I-.” Alfred stopped talking the moment Matthew surrounded him in a warm embrace, his eyes widening in worry as he felt his twins shoulders tremble.

“I’m sorry Al. I didn’t know you were that…lonely. Every time we argued or fought…I just thought you weren’t as affected by it like I was. You always smiled whenever we’d cross paths in
the house, or outside. That’s why I’d refuse to talk to you because…”

“Did you actually believe that I was happy whenever we fought? Heh, I guess I’m a better actor than I thought.” Joked Alfred, carefully pulling away from his twins hug. “But you know…even if we’re not arguing, you should go and try talking to someone else besides me. It’s a nice change of pace from the regular talks I bring up.” Alfred grinned when Matthew rolled his eyes, happy to see his brother in a lighter mood.

“Alfred... There is another reason why I threw Gilbert in the basement though.” There was that solemn tone again. So much for staying happy.

“Oh right! That thing you wanted to talk about earlier. What is it anyways?” Tilting his head in a curious pose, Alfred tried relaxing his arm as Matthew returned to removing to bullet.

“Al…what do you remember…about our past?” In spite of diligently staying focused on locating the bullet in his brother’s arm, Matthew could feel his twin narrow his eyes, all happiness from him evaporating instantly with his lone question.

“Matthew, why are you asking me such a stupid question?” The Canadian cringed at his brother’s words for two reasons. One, he didn’t use his nickname. And two, Alfred never called any of his questions stupid before.

“Brother…please don’t get angry. I just want to know. Don’t you ever-?”

“No. I don’t ever think about our past Matthew. I burned those memories a long time ago.”

“But Alfred! How could you just carelessly forget where we came from? Who we once were? Have you truly erased all of the memories that lingered from before?”

“Listen here! I’m not going to go and bring up some fucked up memories about how we lived before we started living on our own. We got to be the way we are because of the guys who carelessly abandoned us in the forest! If you have any second thoughts about those bastards then fine by me! But don’t go dragging me into pointless thoughts like that!”

“But you don’t even remember how they look! Neither of us remembers…” Silence engulfed the brothers, neither wishing to continue the forbidden topic. Finally locating the bullet in Alfred’s arm, Matthew carefully removed it, depositing it on the kitchen table before leaving to find some disinfecting alcohol and bandages for the open wound.

Returning from the bedroom and quietly seating himself as he continued the task of cleaning the wound, Matthew stopped when he heard his brother whisper something. “What was that?”

“I said…just forget about our past, ok? There’s nothing there for us. All we can do is keep moving forward, no matter what haunts us. Forget that…Canada and America ever existed…” Glancing down at his twin, Matthew watched a bitter smile mar Alfred’s face. Preferring not to continue upsetting his dear brother, he nodded in submission.

Basement – 8:14 a.m.

“Finland...hey...Finland!” Whispered Prussia towards the direction where he thought he could make out the nations body. He thrashed along the ground, wishing more than anything that the twins would accidently loosen his restraints or something! “Damn it’s dark in here!”

Why did those infuriating twins have to act so erratically? One moment he was being saved from a horrible fate of asphyxiation and the next, he was being thrown in the basement. A damp dark
basement that only offered the bleak hope of exchanging a few words with the new prisoner the
brothers dragged home.

“Finny! Mein gott. I swear it’s like I’m talking to the walls here.” Feeling the ground shuffle near
his head, Prussia had little time to duck the foot that came at his face, forcing him to absorb the
brunt of the impact. “Argh! What the fuck! Watch where you’re kicking! Pure awesomeness down
here you know!”

Miraculously, he managed to dodge another poorly aimed kick, growling a dark warning at the
captured nation in German before movement above his head ceased. “That’s better. Now, seeing as
how I’m not hearing a word from you, I take it that you can’t talk huh?” He held back a snort when
the sound of vicious breathing could be heard in response.

“Ok, check. Then this is how it’s going to go: I’ll ask you yes or no questions and all you do is
stomp the ground, NOT my face, in response. One for yes, two for no. Got it?” A single stomp
echoed back to the albino. “Awesome! Let’s start with what the hell those bastard nations are doing
that’s keeping them so busy from rescu- I mean, helping me escape from this damn place! Not that
I really need help but you know…it might be beneficial to have them around in order to get you out
safely.” That stifled deep breathing could be heard again, except this time, it was accompanied with
some fierce thrashing from Finland.

“Aww man, I know Finny. I know you want to get out of here badly and get back home where
your hubby is waiting but first, you need to be patient while I enact my super awesome, can’t-fail
plan that will surely bust us out of this god forsaken shit hole in the ground.” This time, a sharp
kick slammed against the albino, sending him a good few inches away from the Finnish nation.
“Hey! Save your kicks for the asshole that locked us up in here Fi-!”

“I do hope you repeat yourself to my face.” Echoed Matthew’s sudden voice in the darkness of the
basement. Biting down on his tongue, Prussia clenched his eyes shut as light flooded the prison
with the opening of the basement door. “And don’t worry about keeping your friends identity a
secret anymore. Al and I already know he’s the personification of Finland.”

Prussia gaped in shock, as he watched the approaching blond. “How...How did you find out?” The
cheerful smile that spread on Matthew’s face belied any kind intentions he directed towards Gilbert
and Finland who urgently tried backing up towards the wall.

“Easy. You can’t keep secrets from me. Now shut up and behave. Alfred and I have a couple of
questions for the two of you.” He said, reaching forward and grabbing both struggling nations
before exiting through the basement door and closing it with a resounding thud.

~5 HOURS LATER~

Panting deeply while unsightly bruises littered his body, Finland weakly lifted his head up and
gave the brothers the darkest most hate-filled glare he could muster up. If only glares were capable
of killing people, the brothers wouldn’t be standing before the nation, wicked grins planted on their
faces. “Still not ready to talk about the nations huh?” Asked Alfred.

Turning his head over to the left, he smiled at Prussia who had the honor of being a spectacle to the
whole interrogation. Not a lick of a wound or bruise spoiled his pale skin, having earned the
privilege of not enduring the ordeal again as the brothers agreed that he had already suffered
enough on his first visit to their house. The Prussian directed a similar glare at the blond, hating
every second he was forced to hear the pain filled wails of the Finnish nation.

Sighing in disappointment, Alfred leaned forward on his baseball bat and leveled Finland with a
frown. “I’m getting bored of this pretty quick and you’re an idiot for not talking. Do you want to take a crack at talking to him again Mattie?” Flexing his hands and arms, Matthew shook his head.

“For once, I’m going to say no. I think my hockey stick has taken enough punishment for today. Look how this hoser bent it right here!” Exclaimed Matthew who worriedly pointed at a small dent on the side of his hockey stick. He frowned deeply as Alfred laughed in response.

“Should I just put him to sleep for a while then?” Asked Alfred as he pulled out a gun from the pocket of his bomber jacket.

“Naw. You’ll just waste your bullets that way. We still need to wait for the news to tell us if any wars have started yet. That should definitely be the nail in the coffin.” He said. He started walking towards their cottage but halted, headed back towards Finland, and lifted his chin so that he was staring straight into his glowing eyes. “Consider yourself very lucky my friend. You just have a few bruises to brag about. Nothing even comparable to what that poor bastard over there dealt with on his first days here.” He muttered, pointing a thumb in Prussia’s direction.

Curtly dropping the man’s chin, Matthew strode passed his twin and towards the house, his hockey stick lazily resting on his shoulder. “Believe me, you deserved a LOT more for all the trouble you gave me and my precious files.” He added his voice quickly absorbed into the house as he closed the door behind him.

Left alone with a beaten nation and the albino, Alfred sulked in irritation, resting his chin on the tip of his bat. “Man…I totally wouldn’t be wasting a bullet on you. I got enough cash to buy more.” He grumbled. He couldn’t help but feel a smile spread on his face as he saw the sheer terror in Finland’s eyes at his words. Carelessly allowing his bat to fall onto the ground, Alfred stood before the nation who rested against the trunk of a fallen tree, his shallow pants shaking his body. He idly grabbed the man’s hair, tracing a few locks of hair between his fingers.

“You know…we weren’t even really trying to hurt you that much.” He spoke in a low tone. “If we’d gone and done that, then your pretty hair would have blood all over it. Although I really wouldn’t mind putting a bullet between your eyes.” This time Alfred chuckled lightly as he heard the nations breathe hitch.

“Geez, it’d sure be nice if you mumbled a word or two. You don’t have a gag this time so I don’t know what’s holding you back.” Standing up, Alfred emotionlessly glanced down at Finland who had raised his head and mumbled something out in his native tongue. Regardless of whether Alfred could understand it or not, anyone who heard the foreign words could easily have deciphered that the nation had used an explicit curse at the blond.

“Is that so?” Asked Alfred. He withdrew his gun again and pointed it at Finland’s forehead, grinning madly as the gun clicked but no bullet came out. “Wow. Mattie was right. Today is your lucky day. It looks like I forgot to put a bullet in this time.” Pocketing his weapon and ignoring the rebellious struggle that Prussia threw upon seeing the American trying to kill the bounded man, Alfred turned away from his 2 man audience.

“Still…there’s something about you that I don’t like. Like I’ve seen you somewhere.” He shook his head in dismissal, abandoning his bat on the ground and hiding his hands in his pockets as he followed after his brother. “I’ll be sure to tell Mat to get you two some food and water.”

Finally alone with the Prussian, Finland sighed tiredly. “Man hunt.” He whispered, loud enough for the albino to hear. No further words were spoken, both having decided that it was safer to communicate at a better opportunity.
Innsbruck, Austria – Outside a mansion – June 28, 2003 – 2:12 p.m.

“Are you sure this is the place?” Asked a figure who wore a business suit and carried a brief case in his hand. He adjusted his tie, a nervous jerk well hidden in the movement as he offered the kind tourist guide a gracious smile.

“Yes sir. Any business you have with officials of this city can be handled there.” Giving a quick nod of his head, the tourist guide returned to her group, leaving the businessman to himself. He turned back towards the gates that barred him from entering and whispered something into his hand, disguising it as a weak cough. “Ready?”

A few static crackles replied from his hand before the businessman waited for the gates to open for him. Slowly proceeding forward with the case in hand he passed several cameras in the garden that failed to follow his progress, giving him satisfaction that his partner did well in disabling the areas security so flawlessly. After all the leads that they had to follow they started in Germany where the last signal from a communicator had been traced causing them to stalk some high status people for about a week before any significant information, regarding where their people of interest had gone next, surfaced.

Halting at the front door of the mansion, he waited for his next signal before jamming a small metal wire into the lock, casually fitting the wire inside until the lock clicked. “Bingo.” He turned the shiny door knob and grinned as the door opened, letting him inside an empty hallway where he swiftly remembered where the bathroom would be located in the first floor.

Inside the restroom he locked the door after thoroughly checking all stalls for any unwanted company and quickly went to work creating a small hole in the tiled ceiling. When it was deemed secure enough to contain the suitcase without being noticed, he slid the tile back into place and unlocked the restroom door. By then, he had already sent his partner a short but understandable message. “10 minutes, back door.”

Peeking out the door, he scanned the area to make sure no people were present to question him for whatever reason, as he hastily sped down the hallways, making rash choices of entering certain rooms when he thought someone would be coming his way. Eventually he found what he was looking for. The perfect disguise.

Hallways – 2:22 p.m.

“Are you sure that the whole perimeter is secure? Our progress cannot be hindered by any meddling from anyone. I expect the utmost precautions for this meeting. The treaties cannot be placed in jeopardy.”

“I assure you Germany, we have taken the highest precautions possible. With the best security we could afford and guards around the watch 24/7, you and your allies should be safe enough to sign this agreement without threat from nations or people alike.” Answered an official. Walking to Germany’s left side, he nodded his head at some passing guards who faithfully saluted him before continuing on their watch. “Do you approve?”

Germany curtly nodded his head, continuing on his way towards the designated meeting room where Austria and Hungary were waiting to sign a treaty with a few other European nations whom they had held tense relationships with. Placing a hand on the handle of the door, Germany could already hear a ruckus of loud arguments and livid discussion vibrating from within. Roughly yanking the door open, he wasn’t surprised to see England and France squabbling like usual while others barely seemed to show any interest in current matters like Greece, Spain, and…Italy?
Taking long fast strides towards the Italian, Germany felt perplexed as he came upon two Italian twins dressed exactly alike, save for one who was ruthlessly smacking his poor twin around while yelling unpleasant insults at him. “Italy? Why…how did you get here? I thought…you were supposed to stay in Venice and help the church out?”

“HE WAS! The little bastard snuck away from our damn government just so he could be here! Just wait till we get back home you stupid cry baby! I’m gonna make sure you’re deprived of pasta for a year! Teach you to go around and ignore your role you-!”

“Wahh! Romano, please stop hitting me! I came because I wanted to help you guys! The church doesn’t need me for anything important unless it involves an old lady coming for prayer and even then, they just need me to wake her up in case she falls asleep. Please! Don’t make me go back to Venice!” Begged Italy as his brother continued to shake him by the collar.

“Like hell am I gonna let you stay here! You need to-!”

“He can stay.” Came Germany’s calm response. Dropping his brother in disbelief at what he had just heard, Romano viciously turned on the German nation. “What do you mean he can stay! He has to go back to Venice! Our governments going to kill us when they find out that not one, but BOTH damn representatives of their nation are missing! Are you stupid or what, potato bastard!”

“Why must everything end in an argument even with the simplest tasks?” Asked Austria who watched the ruckus from the center table, carefully trying to review the whole agreement before signing it on behalf of his nation. “What do you mean he can stay! He has to go back to Venice! Our governments going to kill us when they find out that not one, but BOTH damn representatives of their nation are missing! Are you stupid or what, potato bastard!”

“Why must everything end in an argument even with the simplest tasks?” Asked Austria who watched the ruckus from the center table, carefully trying to review the whole agreement before signing it on behalf of his nation. Hungary stood behind his chair, smirking at the lively nations who refused to stay quiet. “Don’t worry Austria. Shouldn’t this be the biggest sign to you that the nations aren’t doing so badly despite how the world is doing? Besides, I’d rather see everyone arguing then have them somber and lifeless.” She smiled at the strange look that the Austrian nation gave her.

“If you say so.” Back to the agreement, he read the last remaining paragraph, signed the paper and handed it to Hungary. “Once everyone signs this, we should be able to call the more volatile officials who refused to allow anyone to sign the agreement and show them that their nations have already signed it themselves. Let’s pray that this halts all ridiculous thoughts of invasions and wars.”

Preparing to sign the agreement next, Hungary stopped as the meeting door opened and the nations quieted long enough for a young woman to relay her message. “To all the representatives here, there has been a change in plans. We are to sign the agreement in a room on the west wing. Not the east. We have to move to the other room as it has been declared by top officials.” She held a professional demeanor, pretending not to hear the complaints that some nations voiced as they slowly filed out of the room.

While Austria held a perplexed look on his face, hesitantly leaving the room with Hungary, England and France ran ahead of the small group, declaring that they had some personal matters they had to discuss in private and that they would wait for everyone’s arrival at the new room.

That left the room with just the Italian twins, Spain and Germany as its sole occupants. “I will arrive in the next room soon enough. The rest of you should hurry up and join the others as I’m sure Austria will require your signatures before mine.” Overlooking the glare that Romano shot at him, Germany turned towards the table where a few forgotten notes lay discarded.

“Wait! Can I stay with you?” Chirped Italy. Glancing back at the nation he saw Italy pulling against his brother’s hold, breaking away from him and eagerly taking a spot to his right. “Go
ahead without me Romano! I want to help Germany out very quick.”

Content that for once Romano consented to his opinion, albeit grudgingly as he growled out a few insults under his breathe, Italy beamed up at Germany. “What can I do to help Germany?” He asked brightly.

Scratching at the back of his head nervously, Germany glanced at the few notes on the table and then back at Italy. “I actually don’t have much to do here. I’m just collecting a few notes and then following everyone back to that room in the west wing.”

“Oh? Ok… Ah! How about I collect all the notes and you go to the room instead? Maybe I’ll find some hidden notes that somebody forgot. Then nothing bad like misunderstandings will happen if everyone has their notes!” It was quite hard to look the Italian straight in those glimmering eyes and think about saying no.

“Are you sure Italy? I could wait for-.”

“Nah, really! I can do this. I want to help too. I’ll catch up quick. Just you watch!” He cheered. Nodding silently, Germany was about to exit the room when the Italian spoke up again. “Ah but… if you want…maybe…can you get me some pasta for lunch? I’m kinda scared that Romano will keep his promise and ban me from eating pasta for a year.”

Smiling at the nervous laugh that left the Italian Germany smiled. “Sure.” Then exited the room, heading downstairs where the kitchen would hold food and snacks for the nations once the treaty was signed. Passed numerous hurried officials, security guards and even the occasional server, Germany reached the kitchen and located a decent bowl of pasta in the back of the room, resting conveniently near some bratwurst and other well prepared meals.

About to leave the kitchen, he paused as he overheard a loud outburst from one of the servers. “I swear! I left my uniform right here! I did!” Peering over his shoulder, considering whether he should interfere with whoever the man was yelling at he reconsidered his thought as the receiving party was properly dressed in the clothes a head chef would wear.

He dismissed their argument quickly, heading towards the exit while trying his best to ignore the men’s discussion as they continued in his same direction. “Oh really? Then why isn’t your uniform where you left it? Uniforms don’t just up and walk away on their own.”

Reaching the door, Germany made room for another server who carried a large tray of appetizers, watching him to make sure he didn’t accidently trip. “Did you check the new guy? I think he took your uniform.”

Turning to leave the men to their own conversation the next uttered words caused Germany to freeze in his tracks as his blood ran cold. “New guy? What new guy? I didn’t hire anyone recently.” The men snapped their heads towards the door, surprised by the bowl of pasta that lay spilt on the floor while the doors swiftly swung open and closed.

Running at a rapid pace, going up the stairs two, even three, steps at a time, Germany sprinted towards the room in the east wing, his mind replying the sight of a server pushing a clothed food cart towards the room, his head intently kept down and face well hidden from view.

Reaching the room, Germany slammed the doors open and felt the color drain from his face.

“Oh, hi there! Do you want to take a seat somewhere? Lock that door behind you and we can start talking.” Spoke Alfred in a cheerful voice. Held in a chokehold was Italy, whimpering from pain.
and fear as Alfred repositioned the gun on his head when the German hesitated in following his orders. Overcoming his initial shock, Germany mechanically closed the door behind him, locked it and took a seat across from the blond, his eyes never wandering too far from Italy.

“What do you want?” Asked Germany boldly, his voice devoid of emotion. The last thing he needed was to show the intruder how much leverage he had against him.

“What do I want? Oh nothing big really. I’m just curious to know about the identities of all the nations here. Perhaps throw in a few absent nations into the list.” Alfred grinned at Germany when his eyes widened in astonishment. “Oh and please don’t leave out any details. If for any reason I feel like you’re lying or holding out on me…”

Alfred swirled the gun near Italy’s ear and smiled wickedly. “Bang. You’ll have to hire someone to come and clean up the nasty mess I’ll leave behind here. Neither of us want that, right?” Seeing the German tremble as he roughly nodded in response, Alfred took a few steps away from the table, dragging the Italian along with him.

“Good. Before we start, tell me, who am I holding right now?”

“N-o…p-e-a-s-e…don’t….L-u-d-w-i-!” Tightening his grip on the Italian, Alfred clicked his tongue in admonishment, ignoring the stray tears that started to stain the sleeve of his server uniform.

“Now now, no talking. Good hostages don’t talk, got it?” Responded Alfred into Italy’s ear, enjoying the shiver that ran down the nations back. “Please continue.” He said, waiting expectantly for Germany to speak again.

“Italy. That’s Italy you’re holding.” He whispered. The fear that strangled him…how incomprehensible it was. Any moment now, if he made one wrong move, a nation could possibly die; permanently. God knew the Italian twins barely had a nation stable enough to support them both, despite missing a leader for their government. Vulnerable and susceptible to physical harm, under the right circumstances, a nation would not have the strength to recover from such an injury. Especially a bullet to the head.

“Italy? …I suppose this is what I was expecting from such a weak nation like yours,” muttered Alfred. “Continue with his human name and then move on to the rest of the nations here.” He added.

“Feliciano Vargas. And I am Germany. Ludwig Beilschmidt…” From there, the German nation continued to list off nations and their human names, his resolve to not endanger the others completely tossed to the side as his main objective revolved around getting Italy back to safety and as far away as possible from the gun that threatened to end the existence of his very nation.

While the names flew by Alfred’s reaction to each and every one of them varied by so many degrees. Some he didn’t care or have a clue who they were, others he rose a curious eyebrow, but one…one name caused his face to darkened considerably, almost causing Germany to halt in fear before progressing again when the blond slipped his trademark grin back on.

Barely ending the list at most of Europe, Germany stopped. “Look…I’ve listed so many names already. Can you at least lower the gun from his head?” Asked Germany, trying not to make his voice sound like he was begging. He needed to be strong. For Italy!

“I don’t know. How about you answer a few more questions? Like…how many nations exist in total? Does every continent have a nation? Or just specific ones?”
Conceding to the man’s demands, Germany unwillingly answered his questions before pausing again as he thought he heard commotion somewhere downstairs. The sound of orders being yelled and people running vibrated into the room, until Alfred caught Germany’s attention again as he took the safety off the gun. “Is that it Germany? Or should I convince you to keep talking?”

No smile was present this time, the American giving off an air of impassiveness. “I guess not.” He simply stated. Terrified by the blond’s words but puzzled by the frantic look on Italy’s face as he tried speaking through the hold he was strangled in, the German could not react fast enough as he heard someone moving behind him. He turned just in time to feel the overwhelming force of a baseball bat colliding with the back of his head, effectively knocking him out cold.

“Germany!” Screamed Italy the moment Alfred released him. Before he could run to the nation’s aid, he stopped in his tracks the moment the blunt end of a gun made contact with his head. He never hit the ground as the blond caught him and threw him over his shoulder.

“God Mattie…Hit the guy harder why don’t you? I’m seriously amazed I’m not seeing brain matter all over the place.” Commented Alfred watching his twin carelessly throw the bat under the center table before reaching back into the food cart he had originally hid under and withdrawing the same suitcase Alfred had earlier. Matthew rolled his eyes, his hands working diligently at typing some sort of code into the brief case. He promptly shut the case and joined his brother. “Let’s go! We got 5 minutes.” Crossing the room with the Italian on hand, the brothers halted near Germany’s fallen body. “What about him? He’s already seen my face so…”

“He saw because you were acting cocky again Alfred! And no. We’re not taking him. He’ll only slow us down. I wouldn’t worry too much about him remembering your face though.” He smirked at the blood that slowly dribbled from the nations head onto the floor. The brothers quickly jumped over Germany and fled out the room with Italy, successfully missing the nations who came upon the aftermath of their meeting in horror.

“Oh God!” Screeched some nations as their eyes landed on the only figure who lay sprawled in the room, his Italian ally now where to be found. While some nations immediately tended to the fallen blond, others madly spread in all direction, seeking out the intruders who had committed such an attack on a nation. Only when they were preparing to carry off Germany to a safer location did one nation notice the briefcase resting on the table.

“What’s this-?” Asked France before his eyes widened in alarm. “Everyone get out of here!!” He ordered, flying out of the room and dragging along any stragglers out with him. Within moments of screaming out the warning, the room was engulfed in flames, the building rocked as the explosion rattled its very foundation.

Outside the building, Alfred and Matthew gleefully broke into a car, hot wiring it and using it to escape the disaster that was unraveling at the mansion. With no sign of anyone chasing them or giving pursuit, the brothers were able to relax halfway through their escape, arriving at the area where Alfred’s plane waited for them. Once safely in the skies, the brothers were content with all the work they had accomplished today, gaining a nation, a perfect recording of all the revealed nations identities, and causing some more mischief with the international community.

Yukon Territory, Canada – Old Cottage – June 30, 2003 – 7:41 a.m.

“…All agreements have thus been dissolved. Although it is not clear whether Hungary and Austria will pull back their armies from the nations of Italy, Greece and France, one thing remains clear…” Watching the report with mild interest, Matthew threw his head back onto the living room couch and closed his eyes. “…the possibility of a cease fire between nations is not foreseeable in the near future. We conclude today’s reports.” Finished the television.
Nothing in the room stirred. Finally deciding that the repetitive news had lasted long enough, Matthew rose up from the couch and turned off the television, then lazily returned back to his seat. Normally, he would have been thrilled at hearing the news that nations were tearing at one another, accusations flying everywhere that the sudden attack in Austria had been the doings of a neighboring nation, however, his ever spontaneous brother had ruined that celebration quite well this morning.

In his hand, Matthew unfurled a crumpled note and reread what it had to say.

_Had to go find something down south. I’ll be back soon! Don’t burn the house down while I’m gone. Or the nations!

Love, Your awesome brother!_

Scoffing at the ridiculous notion that he’d do something so rash without reason, Matthew folded the note into a tiny square and deposited it into a crevice in the couch. “Stupid idiot…leaving without even warning me!” He crosses his arms in irritation, contemplating what he could do to punish his brother on his return. Giving up the thought faster than expected, Matthew gazed out the window, suddenly realizing how lonesome it was living out in the forest, miles away from civilization. Ideas of what he could do to occupy his time while Alfred was gone came next.

Water the crops and tend to them? Work on his helicopter? Nothing too interesting. Just mindless chores. He stopped, his head recalling Alfred’s words a week ago. “Talk…to the nations?” He scowled at the words that unconsciously fell from his mouth but found himself exiting his house, heading towards the basement that held the 3 nations they had captured so far. Entering the dark room, he calmly sat down at the top of the stairs, allowing the door to stay open and allow a few breathes of fresh air and sunshine to flow inside.

Besides the quiet sobs that echoed in the room and the rampant thrashing from two other nations, the occupants of the room did not notice Matthew at the top of the stairs, looking down at them as they flailed and yanked wildly on the floor against the chains and rope that bound them. From a shadowed corner where he sat, the blond coughed, catching everyone’s attention at once.

“For a while there, I thought I was invisible to all of you.” He mumbled, slowly descending down the stairs. Besides the angry stares he received from Prussia and Finland, he stopped in front of Italy and briskly slapped him across the face. “Stop your whimpering. I don’t care how weak you are. You never show weakness to your enemy.” Satisfied that the Italian had stopped crying, instead replacing his tears with a morose expression, Matthew went to Prussia next and started dragging him out of the basement, refusing to stop as he struggled madly in his grip.

Throwing him outside, he removed the gag on Prussia and sat down on the grass, listening quietly to every horrible dirty insult and curse the Prussian wanted to attack him with. After 20 minutes of endless insults Prussia stopped, narrowing his eyes in suspicion at the strange behavior that the blond was displaying. “What the hell is wrong with you? Why aren’t you stabbing me? Or telling me to shut up or you’ll remove my tongue? And your brother too! Where is he?”

Idly giving the albino half his attention, the blond responded simply to the last question. “He left.”

“Is that why you’re acting so stupid? I mean seriously! I have every right to yell my heart out for everything you’ve done. For capturing…” He bowed his head, refusing to finish his sentence. He was taking quite a risk insulting the brother but at the moment, his anger had complete control of his actions. He couldn’t help but forget that he was a prisoner to the twins.

“Prussia…keep talking. I really don’t care what you have to say but…keep talking. It’s a good
distraction.” Answered Matthew.

“What…are you talking about? You freakin’…Oh. I get it. Your lost without your bro aren’t you?”
Hitting the sensitive topic on the bull’s eye, Prussia flinched as Matthew whipped his head back in
his direction, his expression badly mixed between sadness and a crumbling mask of indifference.

Fear finally snapping Prussia into using common sense, he timidly mumbled an apology. Awaiting
any repercussion from the assassin he furrowed his eyebrows in confusion when nothing came.
Daring a chance to see what the Canadian would punish him with, Prussia glanced at him and
jolted back when his eyes met blue purple ones. Trying to hide the tremble that begged to rattle his
body, Prussia watched Matthew reach a hand forward and place it on his head. Expecting the blond
to rip his hair off or involve him in some sadistic new game, he closed his eyes.

What he didn’t expect was for the blond to gently brush his hair as he whispered a faint “I’m
sorry.” Not quite believing what he was hearing the albino gawked for a few seconds then stuttered
out, “What?”

“Nothing. Just know this: My brother is very important to me. When he’s gone I’m not myself.”
The Canadian held a distant look in his eyes, grazing over the trees of the forest as if any moment
now, he would find his brother ambling back home with a stupid grin on his face. His hand slid
away from the albino’s hair, the Canadian rising and bringing along the Prussian with him. No
words were further exchanged between the two as Matthew silently placed him back in the
basement with the others and left, withdrawing back into the old cottage.

Boston, Massachusetts – Crumbling city streets – 11:17 a.m.

There never seemed to be enough time whenever the American was busy trying to find something
meaningful. Wandering around the streets of one of America’s oldest cities now faded with
groaning buildings and broken landmarks, Alfred stretched his arms towards the sky then placed
them behind his head. “Damn. Over 20 different shops and still no sign of that perfect gift.”

He took a peek at a shady looking shop in the corner of an ash dusted street and warily walked
inside. Sooner or later, he was bound to find the right item. He could just sense it was near.

Waving a hand at the store owner in greetings, Alfred resisted the urge to stick his tongue out at
the grimy looking man who sneered at his arrival. Shifting through trinkets and toys, mementos
and treasures of all kinds, Alfred paused near a box that held a variety of fireworks. His eyes lit up
as they landed upon something buried within the box, eagerly lifting the crate and bringing it to the
store owner. “How much for this?”

“How much you got?” Replied the man. Eying the insides of the box, the man grinned. “Oh wait.
Are you buying the fireworks or…”


“How…for you, I’ll sell it for 100. You think you go the cash?” He taunted. Willing to pick at
the blond a bit more, he felt his mouth go numb when Alfred easily pulled out the exact amount
from his pocket. “You wanna raise the price any higher?” Retorted Alfred, an unimpressed
expression on his face.

The man said no more. Quickly taking the money, vaguely regretting his jabs at the blond the man
watched Alfred exit his shop.

Besides the rude reception he received from the man, Alfred felt euphoric that he had finally found
the item. Carrying the crate on his shoulder, he easily reached his plane and placed the container inside. All he needed now was to find some form of gift wrapping paper and he was set to go! He turned back towards the city but halted as he noticed a kid running towards him, a terrified look on his face.

“Hey mister! Please! I need your help, quick!” The kids jumped up and down in worry, adrenaline driving him all over the city in search of help. Alfred nodded immediately, agreeing to whatever emergency the blond boy needed him for as they swiftly ran where the boy pointed towards. Reaching a desolate building, its second floor having collapsed onto the first floor long ago, Alfred cautiously entered the broken doorway and followed the boy, wondering what he was getting himself into this time.

“This way mister! Quick! I don’t know what to do with him! Please help him!” Cried the boy, furry eyebrows crashing down onto his eyes as he tried holding back his tears. Coming closer to a poorly made make shift bed in the corner of the building, Alfred held back a gasp as he found an old man breathing faintly under a few scarce blankets. He was devoid of color, his eyes refusing to open as his chest heaved up and down slowly. He was dying, that was obvious to Alfred.

But how could he explain that to the boy? And what could he do for the elderly man? If only Matthew was here! He was always better at interacting with older people. Cautiously placing a hand on the man’s shoulder, Alfred gave him a weak push trying to rouse him for any reaction. A few muffled words rumbled from the man before he turned around with a tender smile on his face.

“Oh Peter, who did you bring to the house this time?” Slowly picking himself off the bed, the old man forced his droopy eyes open and examined Alfred. “Young man, why have you come here? To witness my departure? Or to rob me of what little I have left?” The soft smile on his face never faltered, as if the man was enjoying what few moments he had left on earth.

“What? You don’t have anything I want grandpa. And even if you did, I wouldn’t rob you. I’m above robbing old men.” Explained Alfred. Glancing around the home, he sighed. “Hey, is there anything I can do for you though?” He nodded his head towards Peter’s direction. “He’s worried about you and called for my help.”

“Ah Peter…such a kind lad you are. Worried about a useless old man like me.” He brushed some of the boy’s blond locks away from his face, patting him in reassurance that everything would be alright.

“You’re not useless! You helped me so much when I got lost here! And…and you said you were going to help me find my way back home. Please…don’t go Grandpa!”

The old man held back a cough then laid back down on his bed. “What is your name young man?” His dull eyes studied Alfred as he fidgeted in his spot. “Alfred. Alfred F. Jones sir.”

“Alfred. It has such a nice ring to it. Would you care to listen to an old man’s final story? Young Peter has heard everything I’ve had to offer. Will you listen?” His smile grew when Alfred nodded.

“Wonderful. How I lived is something that would take too much to describe. And alas, time is something I don’t have enough of anymore so I will go straight to what’s important.” He relaxed his body then continued. “Never in my dreams would I have ever thought that my home would ever have befallen such a fate as this.”

“Why didn’t you find another place?” Asked Alfred. “There are plenty of other houses to-.”

“I’m not talking about a material house.” Responded the old man. “I’m talking about the United
States of America. My one and only home. How could she have been destroyed so easily? All the
work that previous generations put into her…building her up and making her the beautiful nation
she was.” Caught in the memories that washed over him, the old man failed to notice the light tinge
of red that dusted Alfred’s cheeks. “Yes…From the day I was born to the last breathes I swallow,
I’ve seen the best moments our country had to offer, and the worst tragedies she’s experienced.
Even now…she cries. She cries because her people are suffering. But even if I pass, there is always
hope. Because the generations that follow after me…they inherent this land. And although she is
war torn and barren, she can still rise again, from her ashes and become something great again.”
He trailed off for a few seconds, taking the time to think.

“Why are you telling me all this grandpa?” Whispered Alfred. His fingers hovered over the man’s
fingers until they were snatched abruptly by withered hands.

“I tell you this because I see something great in you Alfred. If you would needlessly follow a child
when he asks for help then you are not like the criminals that remain in this land. You are the
future of this country. And you are never alone either. There are others as well. Families that hide
from the worst of society and friends that huddle near small fires. They’re scattered across this
lands but they all wait for this nation to rise again. To be free from the fear of being terrorized by
criminals and gangs alike.”

“Your wrong old man…I’m not the future of this nation.” Muttered Alfred. He tried pulling away
from the elder but furrowed his eyebrows as his hand did not escape the man’s hold. “W-Wha-?”

“I’ve seen everything Alfred. I know hope when I see it.” Dropping his hand from Alfred’s, he slid
his eyes shut. “If you refuse to listen to these words I speak then please…heed my last requests.”

“Requests?” Wary of the man, Alfred took a step back. “What kind of request?”

“Alert as usual. One day, you will learn to relax without worry or doubt. If it isn’t too much
trouble, I ask that you take this boy with you and help him find his way home. He seems to have
wandered too far and doesn’t remember his way back…”

“I will.” Answered Alfred immediately, somewhat confused about the large smile that graced the
man’s face. The blond placed a hand on Peter’s shoulder in promise. “And…your other request?”

The old man chuckled softly then pointed a trembling hand towards a worn cabinet. “Despite the
fact that no one in these lands considers this a title anymore, for me I was born an America and I
will die an American. But it would break my heart to see my only treasure fade away with me.
Please take what I have left in there and take good care of it.” Timidly opening the cabinet, blue
eyes widened for a second before dropping down in a faded haze. He pulled out a discolored cloth,
rubbing his fingers over the dust that covered the item. Wordlessly, he placed the item inside his
jacket. “Are you sure about this?”

“I’ve never been so sure in my entire life. Please…take Peter and leave me in peace. My last
moments should not be something that the boy should witness at such a young age.” Alfred
watched Peter reach forward and embrace the elder man, tears staining his blankets. He grabbed
the boys shoulder again and led him away from the fading man, giving him one last glance before
leaving. In the air, he thought he heard a whispered “Thank you” but shook it off as just his
imagination.

Walking towards a sparse forest, where Alfred’s plane rested, Peter wiped away stray tears and
quieted any sobs that shook his body. “Its ok kid. He seemed happy and at peace. Most likely
because you were there.” Whispered Alfred. He patted Peter on the head and stopped, giving the
kid a gentle smile when they arrived at his plane.

“…Did you drive that over here?” Asked Peter. Even though his chest hurt from the loss of the old man, he felt some awe at seeing the aircraft.

“Sure did.” Chirped Alfred. Heaving the kids into the plane, he jumped in after him and started it. Flying back home, however, Alfred still felt an uneasy atmosphere lingering by.

“Cheer up. Just tell me where you came from and I’ll get you home, no problem.”

Peter sniffed. “Well…I remember that I live somewhere in Sweden.” He jumped as Alfred whistled in exclamation.

“Whoa! Are you serious! How the heck did you end up all the way over here then? Didn’t you have to cross the sea or something?” He raised an eyebrow in question when Peter tried to hide a growing smile.

“Well…it wasn’t easy. I had to do a lot of things to find a boat first and- hey. What are all these fireworks back here for?” The boy poked at a lighter quickly pulling his finger back as Alfred gave him a light warning. “Hey hey. Be careful now! Light one of those puppies up and we’ll become the first ever mobile live fireworks show.”

“Fireworks? What are they for?”

“Nothing big. Just going to set off some of them tomorrow. Oh, but I guess I should tell you ahead of time that you might have to hang out with me and my brother for a while before I take you back home. That’s…not a problem for you, is it?” He felt a relieved when Peter affirmed that he had no problem staying with the two brothers, a hint of cheer and excitement present. It was good to see that he was coming to terms with the old man’s death however…it still perturbed the American that someone could be so…strange. For the standard of people he generally met, the old man was the type of person who didn’t exist anymore in the country.

He was proud about whence he came from. And he still loved his home, despite it becoming nothing but ruins and ash.

It just confounded Alfred the more he dwelled on the elderly man’s words. And it drove him mad. To put himself at ease, he banished the words into the darkest corner of his mind, hoping to see it decay into nothingness like all his memories of his childhood before he took on the task of taking care of Matthew.

But then there was still the bothersome treasure he had inherited that he felt through his shirt. Somehow, he would have to find a way to get rid of it, without feeling guilty afterwards. “When we get home, I need you to do some things for me ok Peter?”

“What sort of things?” He asked curiously.

“What do you like surprises?”

Old cottage – 5:22 p.m.

Matthew didn’t like surprises. Ever. They were sudden and unpredictable; elements that he loathed to encounter in any mission or occasion. It was unbelievable how he could stand his brother who had an insane obsession with catching people off guard whenever the chance rose. And it seemed like today was no different.
Whether by sheer luck or just chance, Matthew did not have any nations hanging around their cottage or outside, giving him the ease of not having to flee in panic and toss anyone in the basement when he noticed his brother’s plane landing with an addition head inside the cockpit.

When Alfred exited his plane with a giant grin on his face there was a lot of explaining on his part why a child was riding along in the plane with him. Then there was a lot of convincing he had to do next, trying to convey to Matthew that there was no other choice he had but to take the child with him, although the risk of the boy stumbling upon the nations was too much stress on them, causing them to establish immediately that he would not play in the forest unless one of the brothers was present. In return for the surprise, Matthew assigned a mission for the them to accomplish in the next days, although for some reason Alfred stubbornly refuse to do another job by the next day, giving Matthew no choice but to change the day for the day after tomorrow.

Content with the punishment, Alfred went to fetch Peter from the plane while Matthew sprinted into the cottage where he grabbed the albino’s pet and took off into the forest, carefully placing the wiggling bird inside the basement before returning back to the house. Didn’t want to risk letting the boy play too rough with the creature. Thankfully, Kumajiro was not present at the cottage, leaving the initial shock of meeting a polar bear inside the house out of Peter’s formal welcome into his temporary shelter.

When everything was settled, the twins got to asking the blond many questions. What did he like to eat? How did he travel so far from home? What games did he like? The list went on. And while Alfred got along wonderfully with Peter, it wasn’t until Alfred pulled Matthew to the side during dinner that the Canadians previous distant behavior towards Peter changed. All Alfred needed to mention was how the child didn’t see him as the younger brother of the twins but rather, saw him as another older brother.

Matthew never got to play the role of older brother with other children. With that thought in mind, Matthew joined his brother and Peter in their jolly games, allowing himself to entertain the lovely idea of being the fun loving twin for once and not the serious kill joy twin that he imagined all the other children saw whenever they chanced a meeting with them.

At some point in their games and conversations, Alfred wordlessly left Matthew and Peter to continue without him as he stole away some extra food from dinner and went to feed the nations, happy to see that Matthew hadn’t noticed. Only when he was done with the last task did he approach his plane and remove the keepsake he had forgotten about in his jacket and placed it under all the fireworks, making sure not to damage the gift that had come with the box.

When he went back inside he spent the remainder of the early night entertaining Peter, both jumpy blonds pouting in disappointment when Matthew became the voice of common sense and advised that they go to sleep. They did eventually listen. The next day would bring a different surprise that Matthew had all but forgotten about.

July 1 – 8:03 a.m.

“Happy birthday Mattie!” Screamed both Alfred and Peter as they popped out from behind the kitchen counter, the moment Matthew wandered out of his bedroom, an uneasy frown on his face as he had awoken to an empty bed again.

In his hands the American held a vibrantly decorated large cake, laughing at Matthew’s speechless reaction while Peter clung to his back, giggling along in joy. When Matthew was, at last, able to find the right words to speak he broke out in a brilliant smile. For the rest of the day, Alfred spent it all dedicated to his brothers needs, never once talking back to him and happily complying to his every wish. It was a pleasant day for Matthew. Especially since his birthday had completely
slipped his mind. He would surly have to repay his twin on the fourth of July.

“Wait until nightfall bro! You’re gonna LOVE what I brought from the south!” Exclaimed Alfred. And indeed, Matthew did enjoy the second surprise of the day. By the time the summer sun sunk into the horizon and night shrouded the land in darkness, the private fireworks show began. Displays of colorful hues and splashing sparks ignited the skies, painting it in dancing lights and rocketing screeches.

The three blonds enjoyed the spectacle until the late night when Alfred informed them that the fireworks ran out. Grateful for the wonderful surprise that his twin had thrown him, Matthew spoke to Alfred in private, telling him that they didn’t have to go back to Europe if he didn’t want to. They could stay home for a while and relax with the addition of Peter. “It’s almost like we’re a real family with Peter around.” Whispered Matthew. He shared a small smile with his brother.

“It’s ok Mattie. If you want to catch another nation tomorrow, then alright! We can do it! I have to accept my punishment after all for leaving you all alone.” He grinned brightly. “After that, there’s one more thing I want to give you. When we get back home with a nation in tow, you’ll get your real present, although I still have to help Peter find his home back in Sweden.”

“Of course. I wasn’t exactly fond of you making choices without my consent at first but…I suppose this one wasn’t so bad. It’s a nice change of pace from our usual lives.” Glancing back at the cottage the brothers could see Peter through the living room window, animatedly waving back at them.

“Now how do we explain to a 12 year old that we’ll be gone for a while without telling him the exact truth?” Alfred waved back, expecting Matthew to reply with a good idea.

“He should be terrified of leaving the house once I introduce him to Kumajiro who will be spending the next few days outside for safety purposes. And to be on the safe side, we’ll lock our bedroom door and basement that way he doesn’t find anything he shouldn’t be getting himself into.” So it was settled, the brothers returned to their home and secretly prepared for another trip to Europe, one twin gathering their necessary items while the other explained the house rules to Peter while they were gone.


“Fucking Russian! I had a feeling he’d be a threat to us later on!” Growled Matthew as he ran through the station with Alfred by his side. Slung over his shoulder was the Frenchman from before, having been knocked out when he was on his way to meet up with his fellow nations again; this time in a well hidden building in the city. Despite the armies that were facing each other in combat, certain nations had somehow evaded their officials control and decided to meet up in Italy in a desperate attempt of forming some ceasefire or new agreement.

Thinking they had kept all their plans behind closed doors, they expected another attack during their meeting. What they didn’t expect was for a nation to be kidnapped ahead of time. Or that they would receive an immediate call from Russia telling them that he could see the assassins carry off France.

“Don’t worry. I’ll be more than happy to wipe that smirk off his face!” Spoke Alfred through the clothes that covered his and Matthews face. He pointed his gun back in Russia’s direction and shot at him, pleased that he managed to hit him on the side. It was a shame that it did nothing to slow him down one bit in his pursuit of the brothers as only a few unnatural giggles left the giant man.

“Fuck! This commie must be a nation! And I bet I can guess which one too.” Abruptly halting
before a stair case Alfred threw his hand out to the side, stopping Matthew as well so he wouldn’t trip down the flight. He was already occupied with trying to balance the unconscious nation on his shoulder without putting too much pressure on his rib. During the brother’s capture of France, they hadn’t realized that Russia was watching from a distance until he suddenly appeared in front of them and slammed down a lead pipe on them. Alfred was able to avoid it. Matthew, not so much.

He remained persistent in carrying the Frenchman though, refusing to allow Alfred to carry him as they fled through the station, trying to find their next ride out of danger.

“Well shit! How much longer till we reach our escape route?” Exclaimed Alfred when they quickly continued down the stairs, a growing commotion of people joining in their pursuit echoing off the walls of the area. “There!” Shouted Matthew.

Lights flashing and mechanical gears preparing to start a metro forward, Alfred and Matthew increased their pace, their lungs burning for rest as they heard gun shots cracking behind them.

“Stop your reckless shooting! You’re going to shoot the frog!” Rang out a familiar British voice.

“Damn, if only we could have got him too.” Muttered Alfred darkly. Throwing a quick look over his shoulder he saw the Briton in front of a party of 7 or more people, possibly nations, chasing after them. His looked positively livid.

Coming so close to the metro, just a few meters away from its open doors however, the worst thing happened to the brothers. Matthew tripped. Having forced too much pressure on his most likely broken rib, his body had made the sudden decision to cause his feet to give way, bringing the Canadian and Frenchman down. Hard.

“Fuck!” Shouted both brothers, one in pain, the other in panic. Frantically trying to pick himself back up and the nation, Matthew slid back down onto the floor, a burning sensation seizing his abdomen. “No no no!” He cried out dreading that all their plans were falling apart.

With a helping hand from Alfred, Matthew rose again, this time with France on Alfred’s shoulder, but behind them the pack of nations was nearly upon them. “Hurry!”

Running towards the metro, its doors slowly closing in preparation for departure, Alfred and Matthew could feel the nations hands reaching forward for them, angry curses and labored breathes flaring upon their necks. “We’re not going to make it!” Cursed Matthew, damning himself for getting them into this situation.

“Oh yes we are!” Retorted Alfred. As the metro door was closing, Alfred yanked its doors open wide enough and threw France onto Matthews back before kicking his twin inside the metro. All too aware that the nations had already trapped them, Alfred ignored the people behind him and ripped the scarf like material from his face. Gazing through the window of the metro as his twin frantically turned around in alarm, relief flooded Alfred’s features when the door made a solid click. Content to hear it jerking forward, Alfred gave Matthew a sad smile as he mouthed one single word.

Sorry.

By the time Matthew found the strength to stand up and reach the window, his fists hinging hysterically on the pane, he could only look on in horror as the nations grabbed his twin from all angles and pulled him back from the departing carrier. “Alfred!”

His brother didn’t even put up a fight. His blue eyes kept following him, his smile never fading
even when the nations seemed to be tearing at him in anger and hatred. It wasn’t until the nations
had Alfred on his knees in submission that Matthew felt his world crumble as he watched a lead
pipe swing down on his dear brother’s head. Like a rag doll, he fell forward. Right into the
enemies arms.

That was the last thing Matthew could make out of nightmare in front of him, the metro cart
placing more and more distance between them until nothing but flashing lights replaced the
scenery. And then, darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: He’s alone for the first time… Interrogations, they occurred on both
side before some form of a bargain is reached.
Thanks for reading!
Chapter Summary:

Both sides appear to be even. It’s up to Matthew to find a way to get his brother back but first comes bothersome discussions with his past. In the company of his enemy, Alfred is not kindly welcomed by his captors, yet he doesn’t seem to mind the consequences too much. Desperate to have his twin back, Matthew accepts a deal with the countries. Italics are generally memories.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The Exchange

“Mattie! What are you doing? Don’t go near those people!” Yelled a tiny child, his vibrant blue eyes swirling with anxiety. “Don’t you remember what England told us? We can’t go near strangers.” Before his quieter twin could voice back a thought, Alfred yanked him by the arm and dragged Matthew back under the cover of bushes and foliage. “But Alfred…I’m hungry.” Whined Matthew. He glanced back at the tavern where men were laughing loudly and stumbling about. From within the building, a savory smell wafted out causing the twins to drool. From the pleading growl that came from Matthews stomach to the way his eyes continued gazing at the rowdy edifice, Alfred sighed in resignation. “Fine...Stay here Mat.” He began crawling through bushes until he felt a hand hold him back. “Wait! You said that England told us not to go with strangers! Why are you...?” He loosened his hold on Alfred’s leg when the blond grin brightly at him. “Don’t worry Mattie! I never listen to England. If he finds out that I disobeyed him, I’ll probably miss a meal for about an hour before he changes him mind. Besides your hungry, right? I’ll be back! Promise!” Making his way over to the tavern as stealthily as a bubbling child could manage, Alfred dodged slurring men and disappeared into the building. For an hour, Matthew sat in the bushes, trembling with every horrible thought that came to his mind regarding his brother and what was taking him so long. Only when he was preparing himself to run inside the tavern and drag Alfred out of whatever mess he got himself into, did Matthew hear a loud uproar come from the tall ominous structure. Sprinting frantically away from the place was Alfred, a few loaves of bread in his hands as drunken men angrily chased after him. Ducking into the burly bushes, ignoring the thistles that jabbed at his face, Alfred pushed Matthew out from the other side and urged him to run as the men were dangerously on their tail. “Alfred! What did you do?” Cried Matthew, fretfully trying to keep up with his twins fast pace. “I bit one of the guys who was messing with me!” Replied Alfred. He paid no attention to the shocked look on Matthew’s face, giving more focus to the men whose drunken daze seemed not to deter them from running properly after the blond boys. He suddenly felt his grip on Matthew break as the smaller twin tripped over a bulging rock. “Brother!” Whimpered out Matthew, before his face became buried in dead leaves and soggy twigs. Promptly running back to the fallen boy Alfred yanked him off the floor, his eyes widening in apprehension when the two men chasing them were not far from catching them. “Here!” He tossed the loaves of
bread into his brother’s hands and curtly pushed him into an empty den that rested under a tree’s roots. “Don’t move!” Ordered Alfred. He didn’t wait for any reply from the Canadian as his tiny bare feet immediately took off in another direction, followed loudly by two pairs of booted feet. Left to wait again, Matthew felt a huge relief wash over him when Alfred returned to his shelter within a few minutes. “Ah, why did you do that?” He demanded. His lip quivered as he balled up his hands into little fists. “Look! They...they hurt you.” Matthew brought up a trembling hand to Alfred’s face, passing over a purple bruise that felt warm under his touch. He held back a sob, pulling back when he saw Alfred flinch. “Mattie, you worry too much. It doesn’t even hurt that much. It was worth it in the end.” The blue eyed twin snatched the abandoned loaves behind Matthew and cheerfully placed them back in his brother’s hands. “You’re hungry right? Eat it. It should still be warm.” It pained Matthew to see Alfred smiling despite all the trouble he went through to get the small meal. Glancing down at the bread, then at his twin, Matthew handed one loaf to Alfred, forcing his hand to wrap around it. “I’ll only eat this if you eat some too.” Refusing to take no for an answer, Matthew frowned as Alfred giggled at him. “I’m being serious Alfred. You have to eat too! You can’t just keep giving me all your meals! It might be a while longer before we find England so you can’t starve yourself for my sake. And another thing! Stop being so reckless! I don’t want to go home without you!” He rubbed his eyes of any stray tears, wishing his brother would to stop and listen to him for once. “Mattie…I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to make you upset. But...as long as it’s just me and you, I’m always going to do crazy things for you. Because I’m your brother! And it’s my duty to protect you!” Declared Alfred with a brilliant grin. Matthew struggled to hold back a smile, choosing instead to teasingly nudge his brother away with a pout. “Why do you have to be so dumb?” He received more laughter from his twin who pulled him closer to his side as they both sat down on the floor of the den. “Calm down. If it makes you feel better, I promise not to do it again.” Offered Alfred. “Promise promise?” Asked Matthew shyly. “Promise.” Chirped Alfred pleased to see his brother eagerly dig into the bread, content with their promise.

~End Flashback~

“You fat liar.” Came Matthew’s whispered words. He looked out the metro window, expecting any moment now for the underground lights to flash back on as the tracks hummed underneath him in a soothing fashion. If only it was possible to lie back and let the constant rhythm lull him to sleep. But such a thought was inconceivable at the moment.

Alfred was in enemy hand.

All that mattered now was finding a way to get him back, in one piece. Growing frustrated with how weakly the lights flickered in the tunnel, Matthew yanked the unconscious Frenchmen by the collar and began dragging him through the cart, thankful that miraculously there were no passengers on board. Once he reached the head of the metro he ran his fingers over the gears in a meticulous manner, eyes narrowing.

“Damn it.” Growled out the Canadian, teeth gritting as he found it impossible to think straight. Carelessly tossing his captive to the side, Matthew searched around the control room until his eyes landed upon a thick wrench lying in the corner. Grabbing the item and measuring its weight with a few short tosses into the air, Matthew swiftly brought the wrench down on the control panel of the metro’s mainframe, watching as static and loud buzzes screeched forth from the destroyed machine. Suddenly, the breaks started squealing in protest, the momentum of the metro jolting back as it started slowing down to an unauthorized stop.

“I promise I’ll come back for you Al...” Mumbled Matthew. Whether he forgot about the pain in his ribs or simply ignored it, Matthew threw Francis over his shoulder and kicked the door of the metro open, jumping out onto the tracks as he raced back where he had originally departed from.
For whatever reason his idiot brother had, Alfred hadn’t put up a fight when the nations surrounded him. That really riled up the Canadian the more he lingered on it, but regardless of the excuses it still remained clear: Alfred had sacrificed himself in order to ensure that he would escape. His sacrifice should not be taken in vain if he foolishly waited for the metro to take him to the next stop. Only an ignorant moron would believe for a second that they had truly escaped from their pursuers so easily.

Sprinting down the tracks, Matthew was satisfied to see that his eyes had not deceived him when he thought he had seen a door somewhere in the tunnels as the metro had made its steady progress through its poorly lit surroundings. Taking no precautions for how much his body was capable of achieving under strain Matthew brashly kicked the locked door once, quickly entering the dark room as he blindly made his way into the smaller tunnel that stretched ahead him.

Slamming the door open at the end of the unlit tunnel, Matthew was met with a sudden rush of fresh air swarm around him, the sun from the city grazing over his head. He dug into his pocket and pulled out his communicator his mind contemplating calling for help. “No…I can't call Kiku…” He jammed his communicator back in his coat and looked around trying to recognize any landmarks around the field he ended up in.

He was far from civilization apparently. Continuing his pace, he stopped in the middle of the field recognition flashing over him as he saw a familiar bundle of trees to the corner of the land. Hurriedly making his way over to the trees he removed a cluster of rope from Alfred’s plane choking for a second before quickly tying up the Frenchman, making sure that there was no possible way for him to move a muscle.

As he slid inside the plane aware of how freighting it was without his twin there to fill in the extra room as he’d cheerfully pilot his plane, Matthew lowered his head hoping to push away the current crisis in his mind to oblivion. Removing the cloth hiding his face he took a deep breathe and rapidly flipped switches, starting the aircraft and refusing to look back at the receding setting behind him as the plane took to the skies.

Rome, Italy - Metro Station – July 3, 2003 - 1:20 p.m.

“Execute him!” Yelled various furious nations as they dragged Alfred away from the metro station. Lifting the drooping assassin by the scruff of his shirt, Russia smirked back at the chaos that loomed behind him, voices demanding to kill the assassin on the spot while others called for order as they feared that their large crowd would attract attention to the otherwise isolated station. It was England angry yell for silence that stifled any opinions that were still ringing in the air.

“Everyone shut the hell up!” The nations stopped fighting instantly. “Romano, Switzerland and Spain, get to the next station where that blasted metro is supposed to stop and apprehend the bastard that kidnapped the frog! Russia, stop grinning like a madman and go get a god damn car over here and take China with you! Do you really think Italy’s public won’t be startled to see a bunch of us carrying this fugitive around in broad daylight?” With just a few mumbled complaints the nations scattered, each going to their assigned destination, leaving England alone with an out cold American and two other nations.

“What about you England?” Questioned Austria, his arms crossed over his chest.

“You and Hungary are going to help me keep an eye on him.” Directed England towards the slump blond on the floor. Tossing a gun into the Austrians hands England placed his hands under Alfred’s arms ready to start dragging him and glanced at the two nations. “Well? What are you two waiting for? Hurry up and help me!”
“Wait. Let me handle this.” Offered Hungary as she took the gun away from Austria. “You shouldn’t have too much of a problem helping ol’ England here with the assassin.” She smiled brightly at Austria’s annoyed expression. While England lifted Alfred from the front, Austria struggled to lift the blonds’ legs, both nations steadily taking him over to the exit of the station where Russia happily waited with a car parked behind him.

Rome, Italy – An Empty Government Building – 2:13 p.m.

“Heh heh. A nice place to keep a prisoner.” Offered Hungary as she turned the doorknob, allowing Russia and the others to enter. She noticed the Briton’s glare and immediately ducked behind Austria. “Sorry.”

“Why aren’t we reporting this to our officials?” Standing outside a large door England massaged his temple, growing frustrated with how things had progressed since they brought the assassin to an old government building. Considered one of the areas in Rome that was evacuated in case of invasion it was a good thing the place contained a secure one room prison where Alfred was currently being held.

“Look, Austria as much as I’d love to report this to her majesty and every other official, we still have to deal with the problem of the kidnapped countries. It’s bad enough that the governments without their nations are growing unstable. Before we alert our people about this capture we need to confirm that there is no leverage we have with this criminal.” The Briton checked his watch then grunted in annoyance when he saw the remaining nations walking towards their way.

“Damn it! How could you lose track of that bastard and France?” Questioned England. He received a few glares but shook them off easily. He raised an eyebrow when he noticed Germany following behind them in a wobbly gait.

“Perhaps you should go back and rest Germany. Are you well enough to think straight?” The stern look in the Germans eye verified his answer. “Very well.” He breathed. “To summarize the situation for you while you were…out, Italy and now France have been captured. Our last meeting building burned to the ground after the explosion, and a few battles have broken out between the nations when accusation spread that the attack was planned. Overall, we’re on the brink of utter disorder and the only promise of changing all of this lie with the wanker we just captured today.”

Coughing into his hand, Germany straightened up and nodded. “I called the others. Sweden should be here any second along with Greece, Poland and a few others. Japan said he may be here by tomorrow.” He glanced at the door where Alfred was supposedly held. “Is he awake?”

“We’re not sure.” Answered China.

“We’re about to find out right now.” Added Russia. He was already turning the doorknob until he was stopped when England placed his hand over his. “You best behave Russia.” Warned England.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Smiled Russia. Humming in irritation, England allowed him to open the door as he and the others filed inside the small dank room. At the end of the room, Alfred rested against the wall, handcuffed to the wall with his head lowered and away from their view. Stopping in front of the blond, England rudely kicked the mans’ legs. “Wake up git! We have a few questions for you.”

Alfred lazily lifted his head up, his blue eyes peeking through blond locks with a scowl firmly on his face. “Shit, can you scream any louder? I swear it’s like I’m listening to a banshee yelling bloody murder.” He dropped his head again, ignoring any angry remarks from the Briton.

In one fluid movement the Briton reached forward and pulled the blonds hair up, forcing him to show his face to the rest of the nations. “It’s an attitude like that that gets you front row seats to the execution chair.” Threatened England.
“Does it look like I really care?” Muttered Alfred, a bored expression on his face. His lips pulled up as he gave the island nation and his companions a cheeky grin. “I bet you guys don’t even have the balls to bring out a pistol and pull the trigger on me.”

He watched Switzerland swiftly pull out a pistol and plant it on his forehead. “Do you really want to test us that badly?” He cocked the gun with a dead serious look.

“Maybe? Kill me though, and you’ll never see your friends again.” He released a loud chuckle when the nation shakily lowered the gun away from his head. Caught up in his own small victory, Alfred could not react fast enough to Hungary’s advance who came forward and punched him roughly on the cheek. He clicked his tongue, spitting out a few drops of blood onto the tiled floor and forcefully ignoring the swelling pain in his face. “Bitch.”

“That’s what you get for disrespecting us...” She said her eyes narrowed at his clear defiant stance. “And for blowing up Austria’s place.”

“What have you done with Italy and the others?” Demanded Germany. Alfred silently shook his head.

“What are your motives?” Asked China. Alfred shrugged indifferently.

“What don’t you fucking talk!” Yelled Romano. “Tell me where my stupid brother is!” The American simply laughed.

“We’re not getting anywhere with him! Let’s just execute him!” Insisted Switzerland. By now Lithuania, Poland, Greece and Sweden had arrived, promptly followed by Ukraine and Belarus who lingered behind where Russia exchanged a few quiet words with them. Silently striding towards the assassin was Sweden who about to question him next when someone interrupted him.

“This is getting us nowhere! We should each have a few moments with him and see what we can get out of him instead of pointlessly wasting our breathe as a group.” Proposed England. He turned back to the nations ready to discuss who would start the interrogations.

“I’m only going to talk to one nation here.” Said Alfred. His unwavering stare roamed over the countries that watched him until he halted his eyes on England. “You.”

A few nations exchanged looks before England stepped away from them. “Fine! The rest of you can go wait outside and talk to this arse after I’m done with him.” The nations that were reluctant to leave had to be ushered outside by the Briton who assured them that he would make quick work of the assassin. Returning to the restrained blond England crouched down to his level.

“Pitiful, aren’t you? You acted cocky and now look at you. Captured and in jail. You can also forget about receiving any mercy from me just because you got me away from those gangs. It was your fault in the first place for putting me in that situation!” Accused England.

“Wouldn’t dream about it. One of my stupidest mistakes ever.” Alfred muttered out loud. “It would have been much better if I just let them hold you for ransom. At least that way, I would finally be rid of you England.”

The Briton scoffed. “I cannot believe that German carelessly revealed our identities to someone like you. Unforgiveable.”

“Better than the shit you’ve committed.” Uttered Alfred.

“What was that you bloody wanker? You of all people have no right to judge my character

With a feral grin and burning sapphire eyes, Alfred leaned as far as he could towards the nation. “I bet you wouldn’t be saying that if I was free, now would you?”

“Like that matters. A criminal like you has no right to freedom. For every crime that you have committed you-!”
“HA! Again, you go accusing me of something I never did. If anyone is to take the blame for all the dead political figures, it should be you!”

“What! Preposterous!”

“No really, it is your fault.” Added Alfred. He strained the chained handcuff as far as he could, watching England smirk as he heard the solid click of the restraints reaching their limit. “You don’t even know how long I’ve waited to see you again…England.” The blond spat out the Britons name, a dangerous and threatening aura surrounding him.

“We’ve only met a few times assassin. Why do you talk like we’ve known each other longer than that?” England narrowed his eyes at Alfred. Why did he look like he was ready to pounce? The idiot probably forgot that he was bound from behind.

“Fucking asshole. Of course you wouldn’t remember. Doesn’t my face ring a bell to you?” He paused, pulling back a few inches as he studied Arthur’s rigid and tense stance. When no valid answer was received Alfred let out an unnatural growl then continued. “I never once forgot…my hatred for you.”

Confounded by the assassin’s words and the downright murderous look on his face, he barely caught the blond’s next whispered words. “It’s about time you paid for everything…”

Without warning, Alfred jolted forward and broke the restraints on his hands, effectively catching England off guard as his hands wrapped around the man’s neck and threw him to the floor. “You bastard. You’re the reason why I’m like this!” Growled out Alfred as he lifted the Briton by the neck and slammed his head back onto the hard unforgiving floor.

“This is for everything you put me through!” Despite the clawing nails that dug into his hands, Alfred refused to relent his attack on England, continually crashing the Britons head against the cement. “You fucking good for nothing bastard!” He yelled.

“Ar-Ugh! St-stop!” The choked out response did nothing, only further fueling Alfred’s rage as he began tightening his hands around England’s neck, halting all oxygen to his lungs.

“NO! You deserve this! You deserve this!!” No amounts of kicks to his stomach deterred Alfred from his purpose. To end the life of the man in front of him. Even if old memories had been banished from his mind, he could never forget or forgive the man in front of him. All he needed was an assured validation that the Briton was indeed his former caretaker and suddenly his vow for revenge was revived. Old promises reawakened. His hatred would never die until the man in front of him died with it.

“DIE!” Roared Alfred. By now, the loud ruckus of their waging fight had garnered the attention of the others waiting outside the prison. Quickly falling on the wild assassin, they could not seem to pull him away from England. “As long as I live, I’ll never allow you a day of peace!”

Finally, a nation came fourth with a blunt object and swung it at Alfred’s head.

“Consider this my last goodbye as Am-!” The interference of something large and heavy meeting
the back of his head halted any further words as his hold on England’s neck relaxed immediately. Eyes became dilated then hazy as Alfred fell limp on top of a nearly lifeless England.

Dragging the unconscious man off of the Briton, nations surrounded him, gingerly helping him sit up while he struggled to bring air back into his body. “A-ugh…” Wheezing out erratically, England flinched when he felt someone touch his head.

“He’s bleeding!” He could vaguely hear someone yell. Watching Sweden and Lithuania lift Alfred from the floor he pointed a trembling finger at the vicious blond, his vision growing foggy by the second.

“Ch-Chain…him…up…” He meekly mumbled before darkness overtook him as well.

Some nations carefully supported the Briton out of the room while others went to find new chains to restrain Alfred. Just China and Russia remained in the room, watching Alfred’s slumped form. Walking over to the handcuffs that were connected to the wall, China furrowed his eyes in disbelief.

“He…he broke through the handcuffs…”

Yukon Territory, Canada – Old Cottage – July 4, 2003 - 4:23 a.m.

Through the cover of a dark morning Matthew landed his brothers plane. He glared at the Frenchman who glared back then proceeded to disembark from the plane as he hurriedly made his way to the cottage. Opening the door, he was met with the sight of Peter sleeping on the living room couch, most likely awaiting the brother’s return. It was a relief not having to deal with the inquisitive child, so he quietly locked the front door from the outside and returned back to the plane, yanking the muffled Frenchman out and taking him to the basement a distance away from the house.

Upon cracking the wooden door open he ruthlessly threw the Frenchman down the stairs. “You’re the fucking reason why my brother is gone.”

The door then slammed shut the loud sound of something being locked echoing within the ears of the nations startled to see France join them.

Turning back towards the cottage, he almost jumped back when he could see Peter peeking out from the front door of their house, slowly trying to rub the sleep out of his eyes. Sprinting over to the house, Matthew led the boy back inside the house. “Peter, what are you doing? Shouldn’t you be asleep?” He struggled to keep a hint of hysteria out of his voice.

“Yeah…” He mumbled. “But I thought I heard something. I wanted to see if you and Alfred came back.” He looked up at Matthew, tilting his head in confusion. “Where is Alfred anyways?”

Closing his eyes for a second Matthew took a deep breathe, than gently patted Peter on the head. “He’s…he’s busy in Europe right now. He’ll come back home later.” Lies, all obvious lies in his ears! But he could never dare speak a word of what had truly transpired. Lest the child find out the truth about what the brothers did for a living.

“Yes…” Peter stopped holding back his tongue as he nervously ducked his head. “Uh, forget I said anything.”

“What? What thing? Peter…” That look Matthew gave him; it almost scared Peter into hiding. He pouted to the side, walking slowly to the door with his arms crossed.
“Awww…I hope Alfred doesn’t get angry at me for ruining the surprise…” Exiting the house the blond child went around the back of the house trailed by Matthew as he dug into some bushes near the side of the house and pulled them apart, revealing the crate that held the remain of wasted fireworks inside. Tentatively stepping forward Matthew reached inside, his hand digging until he touched something hard and polished. Carefully pulling the item out Matthew choked back his surprise as he came face to face with a little box.

A music box to be specific. Lifting the lid of the precious item, the silence of the forested area suddenly became filled with a quaint lullaby, its peaceful melody flowing like water through the air. “It’s pretty right? Alfred kept raving about how you’d love it and-Hey! Are you crying? Why are you crying? Don’t you like the present?”

Sniffling and rubbing vicious at his eyes Matthew tucked the music box in his coat and gave the boy a sad smile. “I love it. I’m just…upset that my brother isn’t here right now.”

“Oh, that’s good. I really have to question why Al decided to leave you alone so suddenly.” He held back a yawn, his lips rising into a small smile. “Maybe he’s getting you another present!” He brought a hand to his face, trying to stifle another yawn, but to no avail.

“Go to sleep Peter. It’s still too early to be up and moving.” Whispered Matthew. He ushered the child towards the cottage, hoping to have a moment of isolation. “But what about you Mat? Aren’t you going to sleep too?”

Matthew shook his head, lightly nudging the kid back inside the house. “Not right now. I want to take a walk around the forest. You, however, need to get some sleep, you hear me? No peeking outside again.” Content to see the boy reply with a slow nod of his head the Canadian shut the door and locked it one more time. He made his way back to the crate ignoring the tears that silently made their way down his face.

Reaching back into the wooden box, he rummaged around, confidant that he had felt something else within its contents. Wrapping his hands around something soft, he pulled it out gasping at the next surprise he found. “What…is…?” He unfolded the cloth, his eyes narrowed into slivers as he tried making out the faded colors. “It’s…an American flag?” Why would there be an American flag within the crate as well? Was it included in the purchase by mistake?

“Alfred…just what are you thinking?” He asked the pitiful flag. He gnawed on his lip before placing the cloth back in crate. His question would have to wait until later, when Alfred was home. Where he belonged.

His gaze wandered over to the trees beyond the cottage. The only hope he’d ever have of getting Alfred back was by asking questions. Questions that only the nations themselves could answer.

Basement – 4:56 a.m.

“Tell me how I can contact the nations. If you refuse, I’ll won’t even think twice about making you reconsider your choice.” Warned the Canadian. He sat in the middle of the basement, watching Finland, France, Prussia and Italy squirm under his intense gaze.

“It’s your fault for thinking you and he could get away with-!” The Frenchman was instantly silenced when the end of a gun met his face, knocking him onto his side. The rest of the nations who were tied up jumped at the Canadians rash action. They could practically sense the madness radiating off of him.

“You.” Matthew pointed a knife at Italy. “Tell me, how can I contact them?” He got closer to the
whimpering Italian bearing down on him. His knife hovered over the sobbing nations shoulder ready to plunge down when France spoke out.

“Wait! Don’t hurt him! Interrogate me instead!” Declared France. Pretending not to hear the Italian whimper out his name, France glared at the Canadian. “Come on. I know a lot more than he does.” Sitting back up hoping to break the rope behind his back, France stood his ground, even when Matthew stabbed his knife into his shoulder.

“Urk!” He choked out. He pulled back immediately, throwing the Canadian off balance as he stumbled to catch himself. In the dim lighting of the basement Matthew swore when he felt his lovely music box slip from his coat and clatter on the floor, its lid popping open.

“You hoser! Look what you did!” He ripped the knife out of his shoulder and promptly bent down to scoop the gift off the floor.

“That song! Where…” Questioned France in a strained voice, blinking away the pain in his shoulder while he studied the frozen assassin before him. Mechanically turning back towards the Frenchman Matthew stared at him for a few seconds. “France. Am I correct?”

The injured nation nodded in reply distrustful of the man while his ears continued to follow the familiar lullaby humming within the room. Finland, Prussia and Italy simply moved their heads from France to the assassin and back, confused by their awkward and tense silence.

“Why…do you remind me of someone? That song. It’s…” France stopped, trying to finish his thoughts.

“It’s an old French lullaby. A gift from my brother.” Finished Matthew not caring for a second that he had bluntly told the captives his relationship with his partner. Curtly closing the music box, Matthew stuffed the present in his coat more securely then approached the nation one more time, leaning forward towards his face.

“I know who you are. But do you know who I am?” No mask, no cloth concealing his face. Just glossed over eyes meeting France’s own as the two blonds studied one another. Finally Matthew broke the staring contest, disappointed in not getting the response he was looking for as he turned his back on the Frenchman.

“If you cannot answer me than I see no point in bringing up what is long gone. Why would you know a Matthew anyways?” He glanced back at France, seeing him crestfallen at hearing his name. Like he was expecting him to reveal a different name.

You can’t even once think about the impossible, can you? You can’t entertain the thought that maybe…I live? Banishing the petty question, Matthew lifted the nation’s colorful uniform and wiped his bloody knife on it, waiting for any reaction or exclamation of surprise. Again, nothing came. Was he lost in thought? Or simply refusing to believe all the clues that were pointing to an unthinkable discovery?

Turning his knife and examining it for any stains, the expression of indifference lingered on Matthew’s face. He was tired of the silence. Of getting no answers. Every second he wasted trying to get the damn bastard to revive dead memories was a second longer that Alfred spent in the company of nations. Nations that could be hurting him.

He lifted the knife once again, aiming for the back of the Frenchman’s neck and swiped it down.

“STOP!” Yelled Italy. Mere inches away from piercing skin, Matthew stopped and glared at the
trembling Italian. “Please…don’t hurt Brother France anymore… I’ll tell you who you can contact.” Sobbed Italy.

Matthew withdrew his knife and pulled out Finland’s communicator, anxious to call the nations as quick as possible. Straining to hear the numbers fall out of the Italians mouth Matthew memorized the numbers and fled from the basement, swiftly locking the door as he receded into the security of the deep forest.

Rome, Italy – Government Building - 5:14 a.m.

“Is he still not talking?” Asked Spain when Romano exited the prison. His growl was enough confirmation for the Spaniard who nervously tried placing his arm around his shoulder in comfort. “Lovino…”

“Shut up! I don’t want to hear word from you!” Retorted Romano. He indignantly walked back to a room a few doors down the hallway where the others awaited to hear his progress. After the incident with England, the others had secured the assassin with chains, making sure to lock him behind bars for their safety. Quiet discussion buzzed throughout the room, questions on how to deal with their captive the main topic.

Any idea of alerting their people of the capture had eventually dwindled, even with the benefit of halting the impending war that raged in the continent if they blamed all the attacks on the assassin. They couldn’t waste the man on fruitless hopes of ending the strife between governments. Not after what China informed them all about him.

“He’s not human.” Wandered the repeated statement between nations. “He broke clear through the handcuffs! What kind of human can do that!”

At the center of the discussions was Germany adamantely listening to everyone while making sure to keep the order. The people that followed after England in their own interrogation of the blond assassin came back with the same results. No information. Just pointless rants or infuriating taunts from the idiotic American.

“Like, I already asked him what the hell is he. Can you believe he told me that he’s totally a freakin demon.” Said Poland. Lithuania to his side furrowed his eyebrows in confusion. “A demon?”

“Yes. He gave me the same answer.” Added Greece.

“What…what if the assassin really is a demon?” Came Ukraine’s quivering question.

“Don’t be ridiculous! He’s only saying that so he can cover up the truth.” Retorted England. He kept a firm grip on his head where bandages rested, furious that he allowed the assassin to get an upper hand on him. He was really close to breaking his neck too. If it wasn’t for the others…he might not be present in the meeting room, discussing what to do with him.

“I have not had the chance to talk to him yet.” Spoke Russia. He rose from his seat and smiled. “It is my turn now.” Walking towards the door, he was intercepted by two people.

“Remember what I told you Russia. Behave yourself! Even though we haven’t decided whether we’ll hand him over to the officials that still doesn’t give you the right to torture him, even though I’d love nothing more than to let the wanker get what’s coming to him.” Russia grinned darkly at the Briton then shrunk his grin to a nervous smile when he turned to the next person.

“Brother, let me come with you! If that assassin makes the foolish mistake of hurting you I want to
be there to end him permanently.” Ordered Belarus. She did not pay any attention to England who heatedly yelled, “What did I just tell you!” Unable to deny his sister Russia and Belarus left the room.

Alone to grumble about inept nations England gave the door one last glare until he felt someone tap his back. “What is-?”

It was Liechtenstein. The Briton bit back any cutting remarks he had and lowered his voice, hoping not to scare the young girl. “Mr. England? What did you do to the assassin to make him so angry?” Before he could get a word out he heard someone call the girls name, both nations turning in the direction where Switzerland was approaching them.

“Liechtenstein. What did I tell you about wandering off?” He scolded.

“I’m sorry brother. I just wanted to ask Mr. England a question.” She answered back softly. Switzerland glanced back at England. “And what was that?”

“She asked me about my earlier encounter with the bastard that tried killing yesterday. Honestly, I don’t understand his reason. Or motives either. But he’s a criminal regardless, and whether he was just trying to kill another person or whether he held a personal grudge against me, he will still face justice for everything he and his associates have committed.”

“Well, we have no other leads and the man isn’t talking. We should move on to tougher actions.” Responded Switzerland. Remembering that his sister was still there, Switzerland began leading her away from their discussion. But he threw the green eyed blond one last look, clearly indicating without words that the tougher actions would involve unorthodox methods. England sighed tiredly, watching the occupants of the room move around. China explaining his theories to Spain and Romano, Sweden listening intently to Poland and Lithuania discussion, and Germany leaving the room with his communicator to his ear.

Prison – 5:27 a.m.

“Welcome friend! It’s a pleasure to finally see your lovely face up close. I really have to question why you wore such a ridiculous mask wherever you went. I mean, if you were ugly I can understand you decision, but with you personally, that is not the case.” Russia smiled down at the blond who immediately grew tense the moment he walked in the room, a silver haired girl closely behind him. "Are you comfortable?” He asked rubbing his thumb across the blonds’ check through the jail bars.

“Let go of me you fucking Commie!” Barked Alfred, twisting his head away from the man’s grasp as he backed away. “Just listening to you is making me sick to my stomach.”

“Let go of me you fucking Commie!” Barked Alfred, twisting his head away from the man’s grasp as he backed away. “Just listening to you is making me sick to my stomach.”

“Oh how cruel of you. I only meant to compliment. You act like I’m violating you.”

“You ARE violating me asshole!”

“Nonsense. I am merely being casual.” The Russian stepped to the side allowing his sister to get a better look at the locked up blond. Making eye contact with the assassin Belarus glared death at Alfred. “Meet my sister. She seemed insisted upon coming to see you today. Won’t you say something nice to her?”

Alfred scoffed at Russia refusing to stare any longer at his sister who held a crushing grip on his cell. Without a second though he spat near Russia’s boot sending him a rebellious scowl. “Here’s
what I think about you right now Commie.”

With the speed of a snake, Belarus swiped out a knife and threw it passed the bars of Alfred’s cell where it trailed a nasty gash on the American’s cheek. “SHIT! What the fuck! You psycho bitch!” He screeched, not expecting an attack so suddenly and within the confines of a jail.

“Do not disrespect my brother in front of me. Next time I’ll aim for your neck.” She threatened as her eyes glowed with the intensity of a true demon.

Shrinking back towards the wall behind him, Alfred hissed at the pain. Yesterday he got a nasty bruise and today slashed on the very same cheek. He directed a feral growl at the wild girl and her brother who apparently found the whole incident funny as he giggled childishly.

“Let’s play Interrogation, da?” Proposed Russia. Once Alfred had gotten passed the feeling of blood dripping down his face he replied. “Interrogation? No thanks. That’s sounds like a shitty game. I don’t wanna play.”

“Then it’s a good thing you have no choice.” Smiled Russia. Just as he was placing a hand on the door of Alfred’s jail cell someone unexpectedly came into the room. “Russia! Come back to the meeting room! We’ve received a call from the assassin who kidnapped France!” Exclaimed England.

From the excited clap that Russia held to the shocked look on Alfred’s face, England shot the blond a dirty look, waiting for the winter nation and his sister to meet him outside. He tersely overlooked the wound on the assassins face, secretly pleased to see him receive an injury himself.

“Serves you right.” He grumbled, the door closing behind him and leaving Alfred alone in the dark.

**Meeting Room – 5:40 a.m.**

“What do you mean you can’t answer that!” Yelled Germany at the communicator in his hand. “If you- No! We didn’t. …At what-…” As England, Russia and Belarus entered the meeting room they saw all the nations crowding around the German, attempting to catch any part of the conversation waging between him and the assassin’s partner on the other line.

“What’s going on?” England asked Austria. The man adjusted his glasses, looking over the situation with a grim air. “The assassin is not conceding to any proposal that Germany has offered. He keeps asking what we’ve done to his partner.”

He stopped his explanation as he and England watched Russia push his way to Germany where he wordlessly took the communicator from his grasp. “What are you-!”

“Privet. It’s a pleasure to hear from you. You’re partner is a very important piece to you, da? Why else would you bother to call if he wasn’t of any use?”

“…Mr. Braginski. How inconvenient to find out that you’re a nation too.” Replied Matthew coldly. “What have you bastards done to him?”

“So mistrustful. He’s ok, as far as I can tell. My only question to you though is, how important is he to you?”

“That’s none of your business you son of a bi-!”

“Nyet. On the contrary, it is my business. You have three of out allies with you and we have your
partner. Perhaps his value is worth all 3 of the nation’s lives.” People behind the Russian held
looks of astonishment at his words yet no one stepped forward to contradict him. He seemed to be
getting somewhere with the assassin as his furious voice could be hear vibrating from the
communicator.

“Do we have a deal? You return 3 of our friends and we give you back your pawn.” The
communicator emitted a few static sounds until, “...And if I refuse?”

Russia giggled, unaware of the mortified nations behind him. “Hehe! Don’t lie to me. I know you
want him back desperately. But by all means, if you prefer to leave him in our care I have no
objections.” He smiled at the crackle the communicator echoed and how the German and Briton to
his side stopped their advances, riddled by his statement.

“Accept the trade. Or else, your little pawn’s true identity might slip out. Wouldn’t want the others
finding out that he’s really a king disguised as a pawn.” Whispered Russia into the device low
enough that no one could hear him.

“You twisted fucker.” Retorted Matthew.

“Have you reconsidered your previous words? I assure you…your brother misses you.” Announced
Russia loudly for everyone to hear. A wave of shock and surprise washed over the occupants of the
room. The assassins were brothers?

“We’ll meet downtown in Seattle in the former state of Washington, the Lands. Tomorrow at
3P.M. sharp! I’ll bring your damn nations, you bring my brother. If I find any serious
injuries on him, I can’t promise that I’ll return your allies all in one piece.” The communicator
briskly went dead with the last of Matthew’s words.

“Wonderful. He likes bargain” Chirped Russia even though the line had obviously ended. He
handed the device back to Germany, making his way out of the room as his sister persistently
followed. While the room erupted in discussion and plans, Russia felt a hint of annoyance when he
came face to face with another country outside in the hallway. Japan.

They exchanged silent insults through the looks they gave each other. Accustomed to showing a
dislike for one another dating back to when Russia’s government tried invading the island nation,
the two kept their distance, Russia mockingly stepping to the side so the Japanese man could go
inside. At the last moment, Russia said, “The assassin is waiting a few doors down in the old
prison, if you’d like to meet him.” Then cheerfully continued on his way out of the building.

Jail Cell – 6:02 a.m.

“Oh God…What am I gonna do when I get back home? Matthew’s going to kill me! Like its bad
enough that I ruined all of our plans getting captured. How else was I suppose to get close to him
though? England…” Alfred strained the chains that held him down disappointed that he couldn’t
tear through them like he had with the handcuffs. Too thick. He released a heated sigh, feeling his
temper grow as the thud of a closing door bounced off the walls of the prison, alerting him to a new
visitor.

“Oh great! Who could it be this time?” He complained tilting his head to get a better sound of the
person’s foot steps. They stopped apparently. Bravely inching his way towards the front of his cell,
pulling as far as the chains would let him, Alfred scrunched his eyes into small slits at the person
who waited near the door. They had a small figure and the clothes they wore looked white, if his
eyes weren’t playing tricks on him. They almost looked conflicted, like they were considering
running out of the room.
Irritated with the person's reluctance to show themselves, Alfred took the initiative to call them out. “Hey! What're you waiting for? A personal invitation?” He grinned when the person jumped at his voice but soon felt the color drain from his face with the person’s first word.

“A-Alfred?”


Leaving Peter alone at the house again Matthew cleverly distracted the boy with a new friend. Kumajiro.

After the child got over his initial fear of a live polar bear prowling around the brothers property and learned that the beast mostly lazed around the area he quickly took to finding a way to engage the pet in playing a game or two with him. With Matthew’s strict rule that he stay inside with Kumajiro no matter what, Peter nodded eagerly, wishing the Canadian good luck in finding a gift for his twin down south.

Now he was in Washington. He glanced one last time at his helicopter concealed behind a large cluster of trees and bushes, then gazed down at the paper in front of him. If his previous reports on the gangs in Alfred’s lands were correct then the building in front of him should be perfect for his plans. It was time to get to work.

Lair of the local gang – 9:43 p.m.

Inside a musty room, a few dozen men were animatedly discussing business and local news. They were quite involved in their talks oblivious to the sound of someone entering the room until a sudden cough caught their attention. They all turned towards the entrance, mouths going agape when they saw a tall blond man dressed crisply in a large tan coat, goggles resting on top of his head. His glasses flashed brightly in the glare of the room’s light, giving him a menacing look.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing here? Do you want to die?” Snapped one of the gang members.

“No, not really. I’m here for some volunteers for a mission and I won’t take no for an answer.” He answered emotionlessly.

All the gang men broke out in wicked laughter, some even spitting in the blond’s direction in mockery. “Look boy, we don’t take kindly to intruders and unfortunately we take care of anyone who isn’t invited so it looks like you won’t get to see the age of 25 then. Blame yourself though.” Standing up from their seats, the men started approaching Matthew.

“Ok. Let me rephrase this then so your microscopic brains can understand what I’m saying. You guys come and help me out on a mission and I promise not to blow your place up. For example…” He withdrew a small device from his pocket.

“What the hell is that?” Questioned one gangster.

Pressing a small red button on the device a large explosion vibrated from within the building, the tremble causing most of the men to loss their balance and fall face forward. “Shit!”

“Oh look. There goes you food supply. Should I test your ammunition next? I’m pretty sure some residents of Washington would love to see a firework show tonight. How long has it been since anyone here has celebrated the Fourth?”

The men immediately backed away from the man, frantically searching the room for any visible
bombs. “What do you want!” Yelled an older man who stood at the front of the room.

Studying the man for a second, Matthew tilted his head. “Didn’t you hear me? I’m here for some volunteers. I just need 3 guys to come with me. I’ve saw that you had some really nice cars around the back of the building so I thought they could come in handy for transportation.” His eyes darted over to a muggy gang member that was slyly making his way around the side of furniture aiming for a hidden exit.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” He warned. Ignoring the Canadians words the man dashed towards the door and ripped it open, instantly blown back onto the table of the room as an explosion rocketed forward. His neck was bent at an odd angle, half his body burnt from the scorching blast of fire. The man’s comrades slowly glanced back at Matthew, eyes wide with shock and fear.

“It’s not my fault if he can’t listen. Didn’t even let me finish.” He took a few steps forward while he juggled the detonator between his hands. The men cautiously kept their eyes on the device.

“This whole building is rigged. Touch any object the wrong way or open any doors and you might just find yourself like your friend there.” Nodded Matthew towards the burnt dead man on the table. “Who knows, maybe your own chairs are rigged to explode. Best be careful where you move.”

He kept a bored expression on his face, watching the gang break out in panic as they frightfully stared at every corner in the room with suspicion. “Dear Lord!” Cried some of them.

“I’ll happily give you the detonator after you complete the mission I have.” He pointed the detonator at the main leader and two other members. “You guys will come with me. Follow my every order and you’ll come back here safety. Understood?”

Rome, Italy – Prison – 10:38 p.m.

Everything was set. Select nations were going to fly over to the Lands and meet the assassin. Their trade would occur. And hopefully, everything would go according to plan.

Strange tension could be felt everywhere but for the wrong reasons. Alfred no longer ridiculed anyone who came to see him, refusing to speak a word regardless of the person. And Japan declined to go back into the prison, a blank expression on his face every time England or Germany would ask if he’d like to accompany them to the jail.

The blond still posed some threat to the people around him though. The moment they’d release him from his chains, God only knew he’d attack the closest country although many held a strong suspicion that he would jump on the Briton again. As he’d stand next to Germany outside the cell, talking about how many crimes he would be placed under trial when the time came, anyone could certainly see the assassin giving England the vilest look ever. Like he abhorred the man with all his being.

Thus came the wise decision of placing him under a sedative. The first one England applied. But it failed miserably as it didn’t even calm the man down, his nostrils flaring while he ferociously pulled against his taut chains.

Then came an innocent idea from Russia. A few debates against England and it was decided. They would allow the man to choose a sedative of his own choice and allow him to apply it with the restriction that someone would be present. How unfortunate for them that Russia preferred to disobey their chosen time to drug the assassin as he quietly slipped away from the countries and
entered the prison without their knowledge.

Pulling out a syringe from his pocket, Russia gleefully swung the item on the tip of his finger, enjoying the fear that spread on Alfred’s face. “You don’t like needles?” He asked, giving the man a sympathetic smile. “Don’t worry. You won’t even have to look at it.”

He entered the jail, stopping before the blond who tried pushing himself deep into the wall behind him. Gripping Alfred’s neck firmly and halting any struggle from the panicking blond, Russia stuck the needle to the side of his neck, pushing the syringe until of the liquid inside was completely emptied into the man’s blood stream. It brought a snigger to his lips listening to Alfred choke in shock, his words failing to form on his lips as the drug quickly took effect. Taking a step back, Russia smiled, feeling the blonds’ neck stiffen for a second before he fell limp in his hand. He wasn’t out yet though. The drug took effect in stages, causing the person to lose their strength, feeling and eventually consciousness.

“Now that you’re a little tamer, I can finally take these off.” Unlocking the chains that held the American close to the wall, Russia caught Alfred as he slumped towards the floor. He glanced down at him, smiling at blue eyes that stared widely back at him. Never in his life had Alfred ever felt this vulnerable. This defenseless. Attempting to move his lips Russia leaned an ear closer towards him, listening patiently until he heard a faint “What?”

“Oh, are you surprised that you can’t move? It would have been wonderful if you had your strength right now, wouldn’t it? You’d finally have a proper chance of escape if you could manage to overpower me. However…” He leaned towards the blond once again, his lips brushing against his ear. “…I wouldn’t be that stupid to allow someone like you to leave so easily.”

He smiled against the man’s neck, hesitating before biting down on the skin. Underneath him, he felt the blond jolt forward from the sudden bite, choking back the pain that sprouted around his neck. Pulling back to examine Alfred, Russia tilted his head, an impassive expression on his face. “So you can still feel? Strange. You should have been near unconsciousness by now. Perhaps there’s more to you than you let on.” A twisted smile slowly formed on his face, his hands moving swiftly to adjust the limp blond so that he was held against his chest.

“If you have the stamina to resist the drug than I’ll take advantage of this opportunity while it lasts. I only have so much time until the others discover that I am gone. And it’s not everyday that I’m allowed to hold anyone. When others label you as a monster, you tend to lose the right to touch anyone. They always shrink away the moment you approach them. It’s a sad life, really.” Tracing a gloved finger down Alfred’s jaw, Ivan halted at his chin, gripping it in his hands and bringing his face forward. Ghosting pale lips over his forehead he pressed down, then smiled as he felt the American react again, this time with a shiver.

“Am I too cold for you? Everyone always says that about me. Permanently cold. No matter who I touch, it’s always the same reaction. Even you prove me right.”

Moving his hands over to Alfred’s locks of hair, he paused, taking the chance to remove his glove before relishing in the feeling of his soft hair. How long had it been since he played with someone’s hair? Too long, if he could ever try remembering. “It makes me a little upset to see that I’m only able to touch you because of the use of a stupid drug. Will the day ever come that I’ll be able to feel someone else, by free will? Truthfully, I have the option of taking whoever I want. But if I did that, then I would be in trouble. And everyone would call me a monster all over again.”

He frowned, his eyes growing dark. “I wonder how you’ve survived living the life of a “demon”. It’s because you’re not alone, isn’t it? You have your brother with you, constantly there to embrace you without haste or holding your hand whenever you’re by yourself. Unlike me, with only winter
as my sole companion.”

Gripping a stray lock of hair in his hands, Russia glanced back at Alfred’s face, watching the torrent of emotions that swirled in his eyes. Hurt, anger, fear. But the last one, the one he hated the most. Pity…

Narrowing his eyes, Russia continued his one sided conversation, however his voice changed tone holding contempt in every word.

“If it isn’t my coldness that people prefer to avoid then it is the fact that everything I touch is destroyed that keeps them away. Everything I touch I destroy.” He repeated slowly, dangerously giving a sharp tug on Alfred’s hair.

Those blue orbs swirled again, this time fear dominating yet no reaction came. The drug had finally numbed him and more. The blond seemed to be fading, his eyes growing dim and his head lolling to the side more frequently. “Ah, the drug is at its last stage. Good. Allow me to leave you a small gift. Consider it my thanks for allowing me to pet you regardless of whether you were willing or not.” Lifting Alfred up from the floor Ivan positioned him against the prison wall and grinned darkly at him.

“It’s very unfortunate that we couldn’t apprehend your brother as well. I would very much have loved to see his reaction if he had watched our interaction here. But I am sure he’ll enjoy seeing the pretty mark I’ll leave on you.” His eyes gleamed at the thought. “For that reason I do not want you to forget the conversation we held here. Your only responsibility when you leave here is to find out where it is. Good luck, happy one.”

Watching the blond’s eyes slide shut, but knowing that he was still aware for the few remaining seconds that lingered, Ivan giggled.

“Do not forget that we are the same. Even if you have your brother, we are still the same…” whispered Ivan. Then Alfred could no longer hear anymore words.


Dull clouds that drifted in the sky gave the day a dreary feeling while the former Allies and Axis members anxiously waited in the center of the abandoned city. In the middle of their group was Alfred laying slumped on the wheel of the car the nations brought him in. Despite the difficulty of finding some form of civilized business in the wasted territory, the others had managed to pull through. The exchange that would occur within the next minutes was strictly known to the personified countries. It was their problem for letting the assassins target them. They would surely fix this affair away from the eyes of their people.

Growing frustrated by the second, England aimlessly bent down and adjusted Alfred so he wouldn’t slip under the wheel of the car. There wasn’t much to worry about the blond escaping. He was tied with thick rope although it was the added use of an incapacitating drug in his system that removed the dreadful thought of him going wild again.

Grabbing him by the sleeve of his jacket, England straightened up the blond glancing down as his arm when he lifted the sleeve. He crossed his eyes, ignoring the assassin’s slurred words as he pulled his arm closer to his face. “No scar? But how can that be? I…” England whispered to himself. Out of curiosity, he peeled the bandage on Alfred’s cheek and held back a gasp when the wound he received yesterday had already healed, barely leaving a thin white line.

“I…uh…ha…ate…yu…” Mumbled Alfred. Why was it so difficult for him to keep his head from
lolling to the side? And why couldn’t he talk right? The endless questions swam around his head, his eyes attempting to explain to him why England was gawking at him. “Bast…ard…” His head drooped forward, mind fading into some foggy world.

“England. They’re here.” Interrupted Japans impassive voice. He still said little else to anyone else, responding wordlessly with a nod or shake of his head. It concerned the Briton for a while but now…the blond in front of him…he almost had to question whether making this trade was the best choice. Who is he…?

He turned around, noticing a sleek car pull nearby as some men got out and dragged along Italy, France and Finland. Coming forward from the grimy men was the blond from before, his face hidden by his usual frowning mask. “Send my partner forward.” Directed Matthew, his reluctant accomplices sending the three nations forward as well.

The Canadian turned a blind eye to the very familiar face of Japan, choosing to focus his attention on Alfred only. He had to hold back a growl when the blond had to be supported by England as he stumbled forward. Choosing to make their tense trade even, Matthew followed after France, keeping a steady glare on the Briton as they were finally about to trade hostages.

Stopping in front of each other, Matthew held onto the back of France’s collar, reaching his other hand out towards Alfred. “On three.” He snarled.


“Two.” Spat Matthew.


A shadow flew over the countries below, a small item falling from the sky as chaos broke out.

The moment England yelled out three Matthew angrily reached forward, the wrath of hell burning in his eyes as he watched England pull Alfred back and away from him. “Fucker!” He screeched, still lounging for his twin.

The Frenchman, Italy and Finland had already been thrown forward towards the Briton, the waiting nations rushing fourth to help England who had made the split decision to betray Matthew in their bargain. In the madness of their struggle cracks rang out from England’s side, bodies falling to the floor.

Their shots became obscured instantly when a foreign small object crashed in front of them, smoke bursting from it and effectively confusing everyone but Matthew. Even with the smoke suffocating and blinding everyone, the Canadian snaked his hand around someone and pulled away, dragging them out of the smoke and away from the enemy.

“No! They’re…getting away!” Shouted China in between coughs.

Vigorously shaking the cloth over his mouth off, France choked violently from the smoke, yelling out, “They still have Prussia!”

“What!” Exclaimed Germany. The smoke dispersed slowly leaving holes in its thick screen where the others could gather the results of their conflict. All the gang members that had accompanied Matthew to the exchange were lying on the ground, bullets well placed in their chest and head but no sign of the assassin, or his brother.

Scurrying to see if he could still locate the fleeing assassins, England cursed himself for not
holding on to the drugged blond tight enough but froze at the head count of his group. “No! They got Japan!” He yelled, realizing that the Japanese man was no where to be found either.

Yukon Territory, Canada – Outside the cottage – 3:20 p.m.

Kicking a stray pebble along the ground, Peter watched it go a few distance before sighing in boredom. He turned back towards the polar bear that slept inside the cottage, his huge frame nearly blocking the entire door. “Sheesh. Why can’t you be more active?” He asked, knowing that the bear wouldn’t stir.

“This is what I get for petting you too much.” He mumbled, wandering aimlessly into the forest. He just needed a bit of fresh air. It wouldn’t hurt anyone if he disobeyed Matthew just this one time. The blond boy eyed a hidden trail where he could have sworn he had heard the rumbled of cars arrive late at night.

It was weird enough that the Canadian had returned back to the house, stating that he had forgotten something but was it necessary to emphasis that he stay inside? Peter pouted, wondering what exactly had Matthew so busy down south. Walking passed large bushes and vibrant flowers, he felt his breathe hitch in his throat when he came upon an aged wooden door built into the ground.

“Whoa…” He cautiously approached the concealed basement, noticing a large lock on it. Tentatively stepping on the wood, a jolt shook him when he heard a soft tapping inside the underground room. Swallowing back any fright he held he knocked on the frame lightly, curiosity getting the best of him. “Is anyone in there?” He called.

The steady tapping sound ceased. Then it came back louder and stronger, like someone was demanding to be let out. What compelled him to release what was inside the basement, the boy would never understand. Peter quickly searched around his surroundings, finding a heavy brick like rock that he snatched up and swung it brashly on the lock. A few forceful slams and the lock snapped, allowing Peter to tug on the latch and gain entrance to the basement.

He froze, staring wide eyed at the person who stared back at him. In the next seconds, the blond boy swiftly ran to the tied individual, tearing off the cloth over his mouth.

“Prussia, what are you doing here?” Gasped Peter.

“Sealand! I’ll explain later! Untie me first!”

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: It seems like everyone is fleeing. And while some appear to abandon former allies, others are making a break for freedom. “Let me tell you a little story about 2 kids who got lost in the forest.” Started Alfred.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: The twins escaped, but they have company. While their new ally’s loyalty is always in question, the nations receive help from a certain albino. Accepting the fact that their little prisoner is no longer with them, the brothers are forced to sit back and watch Europe flounder. Until a bold idea comes to mind.

Chapter Notes

A/N: Sorry for delays in updates.

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Of Tales and Truths

Seattle, Washington (Lands) - Downtown – 3:22 p.m.

Running away from where the Briton and his cohorts were flailing around in the remains of the gas that blinded them, Matthew dragged Alfred along, glancing back nervously every second. “Come on Al! Pick up the pace or they might see us!” Pleaded Matthew. Tripping over his own feet and stumbling frequently, Alfred suddenly crashed into his twin as he came to an abrupt stop.

“Huh?” He mumbled out. Without warning, he felt his feet lift of the ground as Matthew carefully threw him on his shoulder. “Mat…stop. I can run.” Complained Alfred weakly.

“No you can’t idiot. Those hosers drugged you.” He snapped, returning in his mad dash to find cover or any form of safety away from possible pursuers.

“But Mat…I’m slowing you down…and…and…hey. When did you…get here?” He questioned, his mind working hard to clear his blurry vision and stop the spinning in his head.

“Shuuu…don’t talk brother.” Warned Matthew. Having spotted an adequately dark corner between two tall buildings, the blond quickly pushed his twin under its cover, following behind as he crouched down low to the floor. He withdrew a small hand gun from his coat and watched for anyone who would dare to search their hiding spot. They waited.

But no one came. Refusing to let go of the breathe he was holding, Matthew tensed at the touch of someone poking his rib but relaxed immediately when he remembered that Alfred was safely with him. He turned to his brother, ushering him further into the crevice of the building. “Alfred, oh thank the Lord your ok.” He whispered. He tore his mask off carelessly, burying his twin in a deep huge.

“Mattie…you worry too much…” Mumbled Alfred although he enjoyed the embrace, tilting his
head in confusion when Matthew pulled away. He then let out a whine as his brother diligently started to turn his face, lift his arms and even prod his ribs, looking for any sign of distress or concealed injuries. “And you call me a mother hen.” Teased Alfred with a sloppy smile.

Halting in his search, Matthew furrowed his eyebrows but then returned the smile, pulling Alfred towards him as he planted a few kisses on his cheek. “Be quiet already. I have every right to be like this.” He reasoned. “Do you think you can walk on your own?”

“Of course I can.” Offered Alfred although the way his legs trembled as he stood said otherwise. With one arm wrapped around his stomach, Alfred could stand better, his brother supporting him while they cautiously made their way away from their cranny. No people were around and the minutes that had passed offered the brothers hope of fleeing without further problem, both leaving the two buildings behind.

“You’re leaving?”

Matthew froze, his grip on Alfred tightening when that voice spoke up. He slowly turned back in the direction from whence he came and narrowed his eyes. “Kiku.”

“Matthew. Alfred. If only you could understand my surprise when I found out that the assassins were you all along. Every time I aided you with purchases and obtaining parts for your inventions…” Japan trailed off, looking sullenly to the side. It was still difficult for him to accept such a shocking truth.

“Perhaps I can. You’re not human, are you? You’re just like the others. A nation.” Replied Matthew coldly. The last thing he wanted was to show his former friend that he held any grief over this news.

“Yes. I am formally known by my allies as Japan.” Admitted the nation. He tentatively stepped forward, stopping when Matthew held up a gun against him.

“No. Take another step Ki…I mean, Japan, and I’ll shoot. You’re no longer a friend to me.” The frown that fell on Japan’s face wasn’t expected. But neither was Alfred suddenly pinching his arm.

“Ow! Alfred, behave! I’m doing this for our own sake! If I don’t-!”

“He’s coming with us.” Answered Alfred blatantly.

“Wha-?” Wide eyed, Matthew whipped his head back in Kiku’s direction, his body tense as the Japanese man slowly walked up to them. “But…why? How can we trust him?”

“I invited him.” Replied his brother.

Silence from Matthew. He studied his brother very hard, trying to decipher whether it was the drug talking but grimaced when Alfred appeared to be very aware of what he was spewing out to him. Adjusting his brother so that he supported more of his weight, Matthew frowned. “Alfred, do you have any idea what you’re doing? He’s with them!”

“He was also with us too.” Mumbled Alfred. “I already talked to him. If this is his choice, then he chose it as our friend.” Matthew stood for a while, wondering whether he could get away with knocking out Alfred and fleeing home without extra companions but eventually sucked in a unsteady breath, shaking his head in irritation. “Fine.”

Turning to the Japanese man, Matthew leveled him with a calculating stare. “Don’t do anything that’ll make me shoot you.” Then started to walk towards the exit of the city. He felt the back of
his hair stand on end when he felt Alfred’s weigh get lighter. To his side, Kiku had wordlessly placed the blonds arm around him, aiding the Canadian in supporting Alfred as they walked. Matthew held back any words that begged to leave him, mildly aware of the content smile on Alfred’s face as he remember his discussion with the island nation.

~Flashback~

“Al-Alfred?” Came Japan’s shocked voice. Every fiber in his body wanted to scream that this was a lie. That this was some horrible understanding and that the countries had captured the wrong person on accident. But he couldn’t. He couldn’t keep such folly thoughts in his head for long. It was the truth, whether he wanted to accept it or not. Alfred was the assassin that had plagued the world for so long, executing politicians and leaders needlessly.

“…No. It’s…” Silence before the Japanese man heard an audible “Damn it” echo in the solid prison. Tentatively stepping deeper into the room, Japan felt his breathe hitch as he came upon Alfred, restrained in numerous chains and held firmly to the wall, like a mad convict. Japan stopped in front of the jail cell, grimly looking at Alfred.

“So it was you…all along…” He whispered. “And you told me that you and your brother were simple pilots. What else were you lying about?”

“That wasn’t a lie. We are simple pilots.” Answered Alfred. He kept his head low, refusing to look at his friend in the eye. It wasn’t something he was expecting to say the lest. To discover that Kiku was a nation as well. “What about you? You lied as well! Never telling me and Mat that you were a nation. What nation does everyone call you?” He muttered.

“…Japan. But to my human associates, I am simply Kiku. Kiku Honda.” The island nation lowered his voice, not trusting it at its normal frequency to sound strong without cracking. He jumped, surprised by the sharp click of chains straining against one another as Alfred drooped his body, forgetting about breaking free. The chains they used on his this time were really meant to hold metals together, something that he couldn’t tear apart unfortunately.

“I guess I can’t ask you to free me then, huh?” Dared Alfred. He flinched when he caught the sound of something shaking his jail cell bars abruptly.

“You really don’t have any shame, do you Alfred?” Spoke Japan. At last, Alfred lazily lifted his head up, staring at Kiku’s frowning face through golden blond hair.

“Mattie’s going to be really angry with me once he finds out why I allowed them to catch me.” Said Alfred, a small smile on his face. Unable to look at the bound man any longer, Kiku swiftly turned to leave.

“Wait! Don’t leave yet.” Begged Alfred.

“Why should I listen to you? You only speak lies. And hurt others. You are not the person I believed you to be.” Replied Japan. Regardless, he lingered behind but continued to keep his back towards Alfred.

“…Remember when me and Matthew found you? Five years ago. You were badly hurt and everyone around you was dead. There was nobody to help you in your own home land. Your own people failed to protect you from the war that came from Europe.”

Japan stiffened, cautiously glancing back at Alfred over his shoulder. “Yes, I remember. That is how our relationship began. The both of you…saved me.” Vivid memories of lying on jagged
ground as blood seeped from his body tainted his mind, threatening to suffocate him in the past that he wished to bury.

“I know this is not exactly the best situation to say this but...I like you Kiku. Even if you’re a nation. Heck, even my brother likes you and he doesn’t trust anyone easily.” Alfred squirmed for a second in the chains, trying to get rid of the knot that dug into his back. He halted his actions when he saw Kiku approach his cell again. Keeping each other’s gaze, neither said a word until Kiku was the first to look away in disappointment.

“Where are you going with this...?” He mumbled softly.

“What I’m trying to say is...join us Kiku. You’re very reliable. Who cares if you’re a nation! Mattie and I are...are more than happy to let you come with us. You have no loyalty to the rest of the nations.”

Watching the frown on the Japanese man’s face, Alfred lowered his head. “Just...just hear me out. You’re a nation, responsible for your people. Aren’t you sick and tired of the responsibilities? Make a choice for once in your life where you thought only for yourself. Make this choice as Kiku, and not...Japan.” Whispered Alfred.

Feeling his breathe getting shallow by the second, Kiku nervously started backing away from the prison, denying the idea that Alfred had just invited him to join his team of assassins. He whipped his body away, rushing to the exit.

“Kiku...” Interrupted Alfred.

Pausing near the door, Kiku shook his head. “I’ll think about it.” Following his words was the sound of a loud slam, signaling his exit from Alfred’s company.

~End Flashback~

“-fred...Al...!” Blinking continuously Alfred awoke from his short doze, searching around and thoroughly confused. “What?” Suddenly, Matthew’s face came within his view, worried purple blue eyes examining him.

“Oh, you’re finally awake. I was worried for a second that you had passed out.” He gently rubbed his thumb over his twin’s cheek, hoping to wipe off the white line that marred his face. He grimaced at its refusal to disappear. A scar. He bit his tongue but made a mental note to question his brother once they got home.

“Where’s Kiku?” Asked Alfred. His question was quickly answered when the man stepped out from behind Matthew. Alfred sighed in relief, taking note that he was leaning against something. And that they were in a small forest like area. Raising his head up, he saw the black rotor blades of Matthew’s helicopter. “How did I get here?”

“Easy. I ordered your eagle to drop a smoke bomb on the others when we were about to trade hostages. I lost the other nations during the scuffle but it was all worth it if it meant that I got you back safe and sound.” Said Matthew. Japan frowned in response to the Canadians words, shrinking back a bit when the young man turned around and narrowed his eyes at him. “Is that a problem...Japan?”

He vigorously shook his head in reply.

“Good.” Back to Alfred, Matthew knitted his eyebrows together as his twin rose from the ground and slowly climbed into his helicopter. He gingerly placed a hand on his back. “Did the drug
already wear off?"

“Sorta. I’ll be fine though. Let’s go.” Despite being a little wobbly in his movement, the American stretched his hand out to Matthew and shot him a bright grin. He graciously took his hand and boarded the aircraft, hesitating as he saw Alfred hold out his other hand to Kiku. The Japanese man was reluctant at first, glancing to his side before taking his hand as well and sealing his fate. Silently, the helicopter stirred to life and took off, flying up north to where the brother’s home lay.

Yukon Territory, Canada – Old Cottage – 3:31 p.m.

“Come on! Hurry!” Screech Prussia, desperate to be free from the ropes that held him. One last tug from Sealand and they came undone, falling feebly around him and allowing him to move for once in so long. He nearly cried from joy being able to move his arms again but had his moment of joy quickly trampled when he tried to stand up.

His face swiftly met the floor, tasting the metallic flavor of blood as he bit down on his tongue. “Shit!” He screeched. His legs didn’t want to function anymore. Had he been tied up that long? To the point where his legs had lost the ability to walk?

“Mein gott! Why? Why does stuff always happen to me?” He yelled, accusing life of simply wanting to see him fail at every corner. Sealand was quickly at his back, desperately tugging on the man and trying to lift him from the floor.

“Stop talking to the ceiling and get up Prussia!” Ordered Sealand. Losing his grip on the man’s waist, he fell back stumbling near the edge of the stairs. “Ow!”

He held onto his arm, rubbing tenderly at his forming bruise but stopped when he felt someone grab him from behind and drag him out of the basement. Immediately he was stunned to see that the albino nation had risen and was capable of walking so suddenly, furrowing large eyebrows at a yellow creature that stuck itself out of the man’s shirt. It happily chirped before withdrawing back inside. “Hey Prussia, how are you-?”

“I don’t know myself kid! But one thing for sure, we’re all getting out of here. You hear me!” He bluntly held a middle finger up to the sky, a determined scowl set as he speed away from his prison. Reaching the end of the sparse forest, Prussia froze, his eyes widening when he ended up at the twins house. He carelessly threw Sealand in the bushes nearby and followed after him when he thought he saw someone moving near the front door. Peeking through a small hole, he saw Kumajiro lazily exiting the house, his nose to the ground as he sniffed and followed whatever scent he had caught.

For a moment, the Prussian felt his throat hitch in anxiety when Kumajiro started walking towards their hiding spot, feeling the need to relieve himself when a large black nose jutted into his area. By God, he thought his heart was going to stop any moment, but at last, the polar bear slowly pulled away, heading in another direction in search of food.

When only the melody of singing birds and swaying branches could be heard, Prussia decided the coast was clear and sprinted towards the house, dragging Peter along. “Hey, why are we going back?” Asked Peter.

“To get help!” Replied Prussia. Entering the cottage, he hastily checked the living room and kitchen. Going to the bedroom next, he jerked on the door knob but could not open it. It was locked. “Damn it! Where’s a phone or communicator when you need one!” He whined.

“You still haven’t told me why you were down there.” Reminded Peter. Without another word, the
albino towed the boy back outside and around the house where Alfred’s plane casually waited in the open. It seems like someone had forgotten to hide it within the foliage, as indicated by the large gap in between the trees and vegetation.

“Should we take it?” Questioned Prussia although it appeared that he was talking to himself as he ignored Peter’s approval. The man brusquely shook his head in conclusion. “Hell no! Those bastards probably rigged it or something. Like, the moment I get in there, the plane will trap me and explode!” Quite an imagination he had, as thought by Peter who still had no idea what connection Prussia had to the brothers. In the end, he consented to believe that the brothers weren’t as nice and kind to others as they had been to him and that they were most likely bad people.

“And I really thought they were kinda cool too.” Mumbled Peter regretfully. He stayed quiet for the rest of the time that he and Prussia raced away from the cottage, heading as far away as possible from where the brothers lived.

Old Cottage – 5:47 p.m.

“...” Staring into the house, Matthew was not happy. The boy was gone. And as he safely assumed that the boy had disobeyed him, it appeared that his curiosity had led him to an unthinkable discovery.

“Gilbert’s gone too, huh?” Started Alfred while he casually leaned on his brothers back. He wasn’t particularly upset about the news like his Canadian counterpart but Kiku, however, appeared mortified, even furious if that was possible for a quiet person such as himself. Alfred easily brushed the black haired man’s anger off as he strolled inside the house. Although it was a shame that Peter was gone at least it was one more burden off his back. He pushed the sadness he felt to the back of his mind.

“Get in here Mat. What’s lost is lost. Can’t cry over spilt milk forever.” He said. Passing a mirror in the corner of the room Alfred froze instantly, a single sentence replaying in his head. But I am sure he’ll enjoy seeing the pretty mark I’ll leave on you. That bastard Commie from before!

He dashed to their bedroom, struggling to unlock the door with their keys when they kept refusing to fit inside the lock. He quickly looked over his shoulder where Matthew stared at him suspiciously and Kiku tilted his head in confusion. The American smiled nervously at them.

“Hehe, just have to go to the bathroom. Hurry up and get inside Kiku. It looks like its going to rain soon.”

A click vibrated through his hand. It opened! He slipped inside the room and promptly slammed it behind him making his way to the bathroom where he tore off his jacket and shirt, his eyes dashing all over his body in the mirror.

The Canadian still at the front door massaged his head and groaned in annoyance. Alfred was hiding something again. He strode inside the house and went straight to their bedroom door. Before he entered the room he quietly said, “It’s safe to come inside Kiku. My brother invited you after all.”

As soon as the nation entered their cottage, shyly closing the door behind him, Matthew nodded then went inside his bedroom. Like a snake approaching an unsuspecting bunny, Matthew snuck into the bathroom, watching his brother frantically examine his body.

“What’re you doing Al?” He asked softly, causing his twin to jump a few feet into the air.

“Mattie! Don’t scare me like that!” He exclaimed. Realizing that his twin was in the bathroom with
him while he was half naked, Alfred anxiously ushered his twin towards the door. “Hey! Don’t you
know about privacy!” He scolded.

“Brother, you should be the last person in the world to lecture me about privacy!” Retorted
Matthew. “Now tell me what you’re doing! It doesn’t look like you need privacy to me.” He
grabbed his brother’s arm and examined it for any hidden injuries.

“Let go Mat! I’m just making sure that I didn’t get any bruises.” Reasoned Alfred.

“Right. Take you pants off. I need to make sure they didn’t leave any marks on you either.”

“What! No way! I don’t need your help with this!”

“Alfred stop being a cry baby and let me see what those bastards did to you.”

“No! I’m a grown man for Pete’s sake Mat!”

“Tch, you sure didn’t let that argument stand whenever it was me who got into trouble with
others.” Said Matthew with a hint of annoyance.

“Matthew, you were little when you got kidnapped! I had to make sure those perverts didn’t do
anything to you.”

“Are you saying that I have no right to check you myself when this whole time, I was worried with
fright that those nations were torturing you?” Replied Matthew sullenly.

Alfred stayed quiet, considering his next words carefully. “Matthew, it’s ok. I’m alright.” He
offered his twin a soft smile to confirm his statement. Gazing at his brother and listening to his
heartfelt words Matthew smiled back serenely.

“That’s not good enough for me. Take off your pants.”

In the living room, Kiku sat on the couch, patiently waiting for the brothers to join him. Why had
he chosen to come with them? The others would surely never forgive him if they found out. But…
the brothers were his friends. And they did save him in his most dire time of need. Wasn’t it proper
for him to repay them? He sighed tiredly, thinking about his next choice of action. He was in the
brothers company and they were the assassins, that much was obvious.

Maybe he could find out why they committed the acts they did? It seemed like the best choice to at
least understand their motive. From there he could talk to them and try to persuade them to leave
their old life behind. To change for the better and maybe even atone for all their sins if he could
convince the other nations to see his way. For sure, he had to make sure they didn’t leave their
cottage for any reason unless he accompanied them. Any thoughts of betraying them for the
nations conflicted him but he certainly wouldn’t help them kill anyone for whatever reason. He had
to-

“NOOOO!!! MATTIE STOP!!” Screamed Alfred from the other room.

The piercing scream had definitely caught the Japanese man by surprise as he laid sprawled on the
floor, holding his chest as his heart pounded furiously against his hand. Loud struggles could be
heard through the wall indicating the brothers fighting for whatever rea-

“Stay still damn it!” Yelled Matthew

“NOOO!!! This is considered rape in some countries!” Shrieked the American.
More fumbling resonated within the house, Kiku at first fearful for the brothers before growing embarrassed at the brothers continued loud argument.

“Stop fighting Alfred!”

“No! Stop touching me!”

Every second, Japan’s face grew more red, listening intently to the sound of crashing items and grunts while the two fought behind closed doors. Without warning, the bedroom door crashed down, the brothers flailing around in the dust that covered them. Staring at a shirtless Alfred and an angry Matthew clinging to the zipper of his twins pants, Japan was speechless.

Were the brothers always this crazy? With a hand placed firmly over Alfred’s mouth, Matthew halted his actions and blankly looking up at Japan’s pale face. “Don’t mind us. I’m just teaching Alfred a lesson.” He rashly yanked his twin by the arm back into the room and into the bathroom, an uneasy silence eventually settling over the house as Matthew had somehow shut Alfred up.

Old Cottage – July 6, 2003 – 7:28 a.m.

Besides the eventful drama of yesterday where the twins found nothing on the American, the cottage stood peacefully in the forest, the skies above promising rain soon. Inside slept Alfred and Matthew in their bedroom while Kiku rested on the couch. It was still a bit awkward for him to be in the company of the brothers for so long. Especially when it was obvious that Matthew didn’t fully trust him.

But today was a new day. Hopefully, some progress would be made in winning over the blonds trust again as they slowly stirred from their sleep, as heard through their doorless bedroom.

“Mmmm…” Mumbled Alfred into his pillow. He threw his hand on top of Matthew’s back, blissfully ignorant to the Canadians displeasure. “Go make me some food.” He muttered again.

“Go to hell Alfred.” Replied Matthew. He refused to leave the comfort of his bed, especially when there was an unusually chilly feeling crawling up his back. Better to stay where it was warm, even if his brother was loud and obnoxious. “Mattie…”

The American kept nudging his twin before he turned to using his leg to prod the young man. “Come on… Mat…” Whined Alfred. It seemed he never learned his lesson about watching his own strength. The continuous prodding and poking of Matthew ultimately edged him to the end of the bed until he realized the incoming accident too late.

*THUD*

Not a good way to start the day, for anyone. Matthew received a new bump to his head, Alfred earned a lecture and curt smack to the head, and Kiku woke up with a start. When heated words simmered down and a certain blond learned to keep his mouth shut, the morning commenced.

An animate Matthew busied himself in the kitchen, flipping pancakes and adjusting heat temperatures to the stove while Alfred dragged Kiku outside in search of berries for their breakfast. They wordlessly passed a wooden door built into the ground and continued until the Japanese man broke the silence. He had to get to the point.

“Alfred…” He started softly. “…why… why do you do this?”

The American stopped near a hefty bush and started picking the fruits off of it. “So we can have a
good, “healthy” breakfast. Or at least that’s what my bro says.” Japan violently shook his head.

“No. I mean your life style. Why do you...assassinate government leaders?” He fought to keep his voice still, boldly looking Alfred in the eyes. “Why?”

Alfred grinned. “Because we can.” He quickly turned towards the bushes, eagerly ripping its berries off and placing them in the basket on the ground.

“Alfred! That’s not a proper excuse. Tell me, please. As your friend, you can trust me. I want to help you.” Pleading Japan. He held back the urge to back away from Alfred when the blond stiffened, mechanically turning towards his friend with a frown on his face. “Alfred, you must have a valid reason.”

“Do you really want to know why we do this?” He whispered in a low tone. It almost sounded like a threat. Swallowing back any worries or disastrous scenarios that played in his head, Kiku calmly nodded his head.

“Hahah!” Chuckled Alfred noisily, his head tilted back and body shaking from the strength of his laugh. Then he abruptly stopped and leveled the nation with a dead serious expression. “It’s all my fault.”

“What?”

A sad smile found its place on Alfred's lips while his blue eyes softened. “It’s my fault Kiku. The reason why we’re like this.” Japan stood still, patiently waiting for Alfred to continue.

“Long ago, I came up with an idea. A crazy one. And although Matthew thought I was insane for even thinking such a thing, I was the one to start it all. Then...he saw how happy I was when I finished the deed and he...well, he ran with it as far as he could.”

“Ran with it?” Confusion plagued Kiku as he tried to understand what the blond was talking about.

“Yeah. When he saw that I was happy with what I’d done, he quickly joined me, proposing what we could do to eliminate more leaders and how we could make a living by manipulating government files. He wouldn’t take no for an answer when I told him that I didn’t want his help. Matthew’s kinda stubborn that way. If something makes me smile, he’ll do whatever he can to keep me happy.” Alfred gingerly picked up the basket and looked back towards home. “Let’s go. Before Mat comes hunting for me.”

Walking passed Kiku, Alfred threw him a glance over his shoulder. “Don’t tell anyone ok? I trust you Kiku. Please don’t betray me. Too many people have betrayed me in my lifetime.”

“I wouldn’t think about it.” He responded, following after him. Strolling through the forest back home Kiku mulled over what the blond had said. The only thing that perplexed him was why the young man said that he had been betrayed too many times in his “lifetime.” He was too young to speak as if he had lived more than 20 years.

“There you are! What took you so long?” Waiting at the door and tapping a foot impatiently was Matthew, his arms crossed over his chest as he quickly nudged his brother inside. “Breakfast is ready.”

Living Room – 8:13 a.m.

Would the tension ever dissipate in the house? Kiku looked up at Alfred from his plate then at Matthew. They were arguing again. This time about their encounter with the nations.
“Why are you so stupid Al? You didn’t have to go let the nations capture you!” To the brothers, Kiku was no longer in the same room as them. It was just the two of them.

“Gosh Mattie, how many times do you want me to say sorry? I said sorry already!”

“No, you promised me! You promised that you wouldn’t do this again! Idiot!” Yelled Matthew.

“I had to do this Matthew! It…it was the only way I could get close to him.” A dark flicker flashed through Alfred’s eyes. Neither Matthew nor Kiku missed it.

“…You remember then. I thought you told me to forget about-.”

“I did forget. The only thing that I can remember is my hatred for him.” Grunted Alfred into his cup. He drained his coffee then rose from the table. “I was so close Matthew. So close.”

The Canadian smiled softly, taking the dishes from the table and placing them in the sink. “It’s not too late Al. We have many opportunities. We could even go today if you wanted.” Instantly, Japan’s ears perked up, apprehensive of the twins leaving to commit anymore mayhem.

“Alfred, is it necessary for you to go to Europe? You only got here and-.”

“Oh right! You said you wanted to help.” Approaching the man from behind his seat, Alfred placed a heavy hand on his shoulder and grinned down at him. “I got something you can do. When we go back to Europe you can help me catch England! Then you’ll hold him while I-.”

“No!” Interrupted Kiku, shocking both brothers. They didn’t even think it was possible for the man to speak out. “Alfred…I don’t want to help you in that way. Please…can’t you stay here for a while?”

The cracking sound of something meeting the table jolted Japan, his gaze wandering to the opposite end. Stuck firmly in the wooden top was a razor knife, its handle deeply embedded in the material. Its owner faithfully stood by.

“Kiku, who’s side are you on? Our side or the nations?” His voice was tight, his knuckles turning pale from the grip he held on his weapon. “I thought you were our friend.”

“I…” Kiku paused. “I am your friend. But, that doesn’t excuse me from stopping the both of you when you’re about to do something horrific.” He held his hands on his lap in hopes of hiding their tremble, questioning the Canadians next move as his eyes narrowed into a glare.

“Awww, he’s just worried about us Mat! Don’t bite his head off now.” Pulling Japan into a one sided hug, Alfred smirked brightly. “Fine. Just for you, we won’t go anywhere Kiku. We can stay home and chill.” Visibly relaxing after hearing his words, Kiku uttered a small thanks when another thought can to him.

“Alfred, if you don’t mind me asking what do you have against England?” The arm around him promptly got tighter. Matthew merely shook his head at his question, like he was chiding him for asking.

“England? Hmmm, call it a grudge maybe. I call it payback.” Alfred leaned on the nations shoulder, getting awfully close to Japan’s ear. “Do you wanna hear a secret?” Flowed Alfred’s ghostly words. Kiku sat frozen to his seat, unable to swallow or think straight as it became clear to him that these brothers truly held a different side. They we no longer the kind hearted twins that had picked him off the ground and away from deaths door. They were the embodiment of Deaths’ servants.
“Brother.” Warned Matthew, a stern look sent at the American. Alfred smiled innocently, slowly backed away from Japan and held his hands up in defeat.

“Alright, not him.” He said, shrugging his shoulders offhandedly. He casually patted the nation roughly on the back and started walking towards the living room, leaving the black haired man with Matthew. Tilting his head, Matthew yanked the knife out of the table and tosses it into the sink without looking, its metallic surface clattering loudly.

“If you knew the truth, you might not like us anymore.” Muttered the Canadian, bringing a fist up to his mouth where he suppressed a cough. He quietly went to join his twin on the couch, allowing Japan the liberty to finally breathe normal again. Only the droning patter of raindrops on the roof could reach Japan’s ears. Everything else just blended into one deathly obscured cacophony of reporters talking on the television and the brothers holding tamer conversations.


“Listen to me for once England!” Scolded France. “These assassins are not what they seem. I think there’s more to them then what we believe. We can’t act rash unless we know for certain that…” The Frenchman turned away, chewing on his lip as he awaited the Briton’s next wave of livid curses.

“That what? That they aren’t people we probably don’t even remember? The only thing that I am aware of Francis is that the idiot we had in out custody was not human!” He whipped back towards the nation with a snarl on his lips. “And we could have gained a lot more information if you and the others hadn’t been captured.”

“And how would you do that? Torture him?” Retorted France as he stared Arthur down.

“If it works, then yes!” He crossed his arms, a scowl on his face as his companion reached into his cloak and pulled out a camera. “What now? You want to take a picture of our people at war? Look France, if you can’t prove useful for any reason besides sprouting bullsh-!”

“Here.” He thrust a lone picture into Arthur’s hands. In turn, France crossed his arms and tapped his foot on the carpeted floor. “Do you see that?” From the befuddled expression on England’s face to the way he continued to flip the photo around in his hand, France continued.

“It’s them. Whether by Fate or simple luck, I caught a picture of them about 2 months ago when I was at the airport. It was the same day that the assassins were in London trying to kill your majesty.”

Studying the photo a bit longer, England jabbed at one individual. “They’re…twins. Bullocks! I can’t tell which one is the wanker we had in custody.” He spat. He glanced back at France when he carefully took the photo back, depositing it into his coat. “Well, if a picture of the assassins is all you have then at least you being kidnapped didn’t end as a complete disaster. You saw the other one’s face, am I correct?”

France nodded solemnly. “Very well. Then I’ll inform the others about this. We need to show the others their photo and see whether we can still locate them. In case they truly aren’t human, we can’t risk letting the public know about our progress. Not yet, at least”

He started to leave the room when France’s voice came again. “England…”

“What?”

“What would you do if…if…America and Canada were still alive?”
The Briton was speechless. Where had that random question come from? He hesitantly turned back towards France, his face devoid of emotion. “What did you say?”

“How’s the weather?”

Such a thought… it was inconceivable! He glared at France. “Don’t speak such nonsense Francis. You and I both know that they’re… they’re not with us. We’re the reason why they’re gone. Explain what exactly were those corpses we found then.” His voice held acid, eyes burning with such an intensity.

“…” France lowered his head, thinking back to the tiny bodies they found in the wild, their endless search for America and Canada stopping there. Was it possible for the boys to be reincarnated as different people? There just seemed to be some huge connection missing in all his thoughts. The assassin appeared so similar to his little Canada. Deep blue eyes with a tint of purple. The same golden wheat hair. All he needed was a smile.

“They’re dead Frog. We all know it. No nation could survive having their country destroyed.” Murmured England.

“But… if they somehow lived… what would you do? Please, just answer me that.” Begged France.

All of England’s features softened at his question. His shoulders sagged, his eyes became glossy and his lips curved down. His tone came as gentle as when he had first met America. “I’d hug them. I’d hold them and never let go. … But we don’t live in a world like that France.” He glumly turned back to the door, turning the knob. “We nations first, and people second. Get back to your duties and return to your country.” He departed after that.

Alone in the hotel room, France held back his tears. The Briton was right even though he hated to admit it. He gathered his belongings and exited the room. Walking down the stairs, he tried his best to ignore the terrible pain in his chest. Even when he accepted the fact that no nation could survive without their country, something in his heart still reached for the implausible. That Canada was still alive.

Berlin, Germany – Germany’s place – July 9, 2003 – 12:58 p.m.

So much commotion had transpired within such little time. In the days following the nation’s trade with the assassin’s brother, they had frantically looked for the twins, trying to capture them again in hopes of having Prussia returned to them. Unfortunately, no such luck occurred. Then the startling allegations that perhaps Japan hadn’t been captured started flowing throughout the community as it was reasoned that the assassin didn’t appear capable of carrying his incapacitated brother and the nation without receiving a fight. In Japan’s defense, Yao and England offered the idea that maybe the assassin had somehow gained an upper hand on him yet some nations remained skeptical.

Today, however, ceased all of their pointless argument and debates about the assassins.

Prussia had arrived in Germany along with Sealand by his side.

Defying their government’s orders, once again, to stay away from one another, the nation’s converged one last time to garner as much information from the ex-nation that had escaped the lion’s den. How he escaped from them wasn’t revealed, nor did he state where he came from. He failed to recall which continent the assassin lived, only accounting that there were a lot of trees but at least he had other useful information as he so proclaimed. Crowding around the albino, they threw numerous questions at him. Did he fight them off? What had they done to him? Who were
“Hey hey hey! Everyone shut up! The awesome me will speak when everyone else stops talking!” Prussia demanded. Watching the nations settle down, he couldn’t help but smile as he saw Sealand happily jump into the arms of his parents; Finland and Sweden thankful to see him safe and sound.

“Now before I start, I have to ask myself this. Do you guys even deserve to hear what I have to say? I mean, shit! I stayed with those lunatics forever! All that time I was gone, NONE of you even realized that I was missing?” He gave all the nations a hard glare. “Doesn’t anybody else but me see how fucked up that is?”

“Prussia…” Started Germany slowly.

“Ve~! I’m so sorry Prussia! If I had known I would have told Germany about it!” Cried Italy.

“Italy, you were kidnapped too.” Added Austria.

Unable to listen to the Italian cry about a mistake that wasn’t even his problem, Prussia patted him on the shoulder. “It’s ok. You’re forgiven.” Grinning at the Italian’s uplifting smile, Prussia returned back to the rest of the nations. “The rest of you however, are not! Maybe if I hear a little begging then I’ll consider sharing what I obtained from the bastards that held me.”

The room shook in an uproar, people arguing that they shouldn’t been degraded to such standards. Germany ended their upheaval when he stepped forward and placed his hand on his brother’s shoulder, a grim look on his face. “Bruder…I sincerely apologize for forgetting about you. Can you forgive me?” He spoke in a low tone, his eyes downcast.

With narrowed eyes, Prussia stayed silent before smirking widely. “Aw, it’s ok West! I forgive you! You owe me a month’s supply of beer though.” Content to hear an apology from his stern brother, Prussia glanced at the others expectantly. “Well, I’m waiting.”

“Do you think it’s too late to send him back to the assassins?” Muttered Hungary loud enough for the albino to hear her.

“Hey! Do you want my help or not? I know things about them that you don’t!” He was about to challenge the Hungarian but was stopped when Germany intercepted him. “Prussia, please behave. I apologized on behalf of everyone. Now please tell us what you know about the assassins.”

“What the heck! Nu uh! I want to hear that Austrian beg for my help! You can’t do this to me West!” Earning himself a firm look from his brother, Prussia sulked as he fell into a chair, a disgruntled scowl on his face. “You always take all the fun away from me.” He grumbled.

“What you just move on already to the information you have on these criminals?” Reprimanded England. Shooting the Briton a sharp glare, Gilbert roamed his eyes over all the present people. It was amazing how every person evaded their government despite having a war raging in their lands. He took a deep breathe for dramatic effects and began.

“Is everyone ready to hear my grand tale of endurance and valor?” He asked, obviously satisfied to be the center of attention. With the echoes of a few irritated remarks he rolled his eyes. “I swear, none of you know how to appreciate me. Well whatever. Alright, the assassins that kept me hostage for so long are crazy ass bastards. They tortured me for a while, demanding that I reveal the identity of nations.”

“They tortured you?” Uttered some shocked bodiless voices.
“Yup! But I handled myself pretty well. I never once gave out a name!”

“Then how did they capture you in the first place?” Asked Russia.

“Uh…um, well you see…” Prussia stuttered to find a logical reason without revealing the truth behind his capture but failed to find one. “That doesn’t matter!” He retorted. He growled at the Russian who giggled at his response.

“Like I was saying…I didn’t talk. But I did get their names. The one you guys caught was named Alfred. And the one that I stayed with was named Matthew.”

The nameless assassins now had a name as it jumped from country to country, all trying to recall if they knew any Alfred’s or Matthew’s. “They’re also brothers.” Added Prussia.

“We know that already.” Said France. “We even have a photo of them, courtesy of moi.” He declared, gracefully passing the photo to the albino. Studying the picture, Gilbert furrowed his eyebrows.

“Well shit. What else do you want to ruin for me?” He mumbled as the photo was handed back to the Frenchman. His eyes quickly shot up as another crucial thought came to his head.

“Ah! I got it! Everyone sit down and get ready for this one because it’s a shocker!” Announced Prussia. From the annoyed looks that some held to the countries that whispered words of doubt, Prussia grinned at them all. “Alfred and Matthew aren’t just assassins.” Eyebrows rose in question.

“They’re also nations!” He exclaimed.

…

The room immediately exploded with shouts and comments.

“Nations! How can that be!”

“No lo creo! (I don’t believe it!)”

“Nations? Which ones?”

“Settle down!”

“Which nations would be mad enough to rebel against humans!”

“Which nations are they!”

“I don’t know dammit! I just know that they’re nations! They were talking about how storms and other natural disasters made them sick!”

“We need further proof of this.”

“How are we going to deal with our own kind? We can’t let the public know about the assassins being nations! They don’t even know about us!”

“SHUT UP!” Barked Germany. As voiced simmered down, he huffed in frustration. This was the last thing they needed. Even if they were getting somewhere. He sighed as he ran his hand down his face, questioning whether they would be capable of accomplishing anything else today. In as orderly a fashion as was possible for the nations, they deduced which nations couldn’t be the culprits until they ended up with one plausible answer. The brothers were newly formed nations.
Settling with the theory despite how flimsy it was, the nations eventually all went their separate ways, returning back to their disorganized governments and the chaos that they dealt with.


For 2 dreadfully long weeks, no assassinations occurred. No documents were anonymously sent to governments. And neither Alfred nor Matthew left their cottage. Instead, the brothers were stuck home, one terribly suffering from the feverish affects of a storm while the other nervously hovered around his twin, constantly asking if he needed anything.

“Are you sure you’re feeling better? You don’t want me to get Kiku to find you some more herbs?”

“Alfred…” Groaned Matthew from under his covers. “…stop talking. You’re giving me a headache.” Again, the same routine would happen. The American would stay quiet for a few minutes before worriedly asking his brother again if he needed anything. Only when the Canadian grudgingly confirmed that he needed something did he stop, anxious to care for him. Matthew would then toss Alfred a random task, as long as it sent him on a wild goose chase, and savor the few hours of rest he could enjoy before the blond returned with said accomplished task.

“Mattie…” Whispered Alfred. Matthew almost cursed himself for having such a protective brother like Alfred.

“Fine. I got something for you! Go watch the news for me for about 3 hours and then come back to report everything that’s happening. In all that time I do not want you for a second to come in here and ask for anything else, understand?” He spoke in a timid voice. He held back a cough, sniffed away some residue near his nose and snuggled deep into his pillow, closing his eyes as he listened to Alfred reluctantly leave the room.

Just as he was drifting off, he twitched in disbelief when he could hear Alfred’s footsteps slowly making their way back to his bedside. Are you serious? Right as a nasty curse was ready to leave his lips Matthew froze when he felt something soft and warm peck him on the forehead, an all too familiar breath flowing over him.

“Get better bro. I’ll be in the next room if you need for whatever reason.” Whispered Alfred lovingly. His footsteps faded from the room, a peaceful atmosphere remaining as Matthew fell asleep comfortably.

“Is he still suffering from the fever?” Asked Japan the moment Alfred joined him in the living room.

“Not as badly as before. He’s just riding out the rest of the cold.” Once the television buzzed into life, Alfred lazily dropped himself onto the couch and lolled his head back. “Nothing else to do but let him sleep I guess.”

“I see.” Commented Japan while he ran a hand over Kumajiro’s fluffy head. A few days after his initial arrival to their house, Kiku had nearly died from shock when a giant polar bear treaded into the brothers house, completely convinced that they were all going to die inside the cottage. Thankfully, Matthew had calmed the man down, telling him through a few misplaced chuckles that the bear would do them no harm and that he was pet to the brothers, like the eagle that vigilantly came to their window sill for a snack everyday. Now Kiku found the bear to be very amusing, often going to him for some comfort whenever the brothers were busy with their own tasks of finding food or tending to their own hobbies.
He almost found it unusual that the Canadian got sick around the same time a violent storm passed their house, its volatile winds scratching branches and rocks against their windows. Now that the storm had passed and simple showers lingered by, Kiku and Alfred had spent the previous two weeks caring for the sick Matthew, working hard to bring down his fever and sooth his sore throat whenever he struggled to talk. In that time, Kiku had miraculously won over the blonds trust again, to the point where he was even allowed in the brother’s bedroom where he applied an old remedy of poultice to his swollen throat. The only thing that could effectively ruin his mood was the news that channeled through from their television or radio, foretelling of escalating battles in Europe between neighbor nations.

Turning back to Alfred who was fully focused on the news ahead of him, Kiku silently wondered how the brothers could be so impulsive with their behavior. If they weren’t surrounded in an ominous aura then they were childishly playing jokes on each other, acting like nothing in the world could faze them. It didn’t make sense in a way.

“Hey Kiku, when do you want to go home?” Asked Alfred abruptly, cutting the Japanese man off from his observations.

“What do you mean by that?” Responded Kiku.

“It’s not obvious? You’ve been with Mat and me for 2 weeks already and you’ve been awesome helping me with him when he was sick but…you don’t plan on staying on our side do you?” The frown on Alfred’s face easily said that he was not happy with the conversation but he continued nonetheless, aware of what had to be done.

“You have to choose a side Kiku. Are you Japan, or Kiku? You can keep being in the middle because at some point, you’re gonna lose everyone’s faith.”

“…”

“And then you’ll be all alone. What are you going to do Kiku? Stick with us and you’ll be free to be whoever you want. Return to the nations and you’ll become our enemy. Matthew and I won’t hesitate any longer to fight you if you go with them.” The blond held no anger or hate in his tone. He was simply stating a truth. “When Matthew gets better I hope you’re ready to make a choice.”

Silence ensued after that, the continuous droning of the television the only sound in the cottage.

Cottage – July 25, 2003 – 2:12 p.m.

…the war that was waged between the US and the USSR devastated any lands that were unfortunate enough to get caught in between their battles. With the destruction in the United States, former territories were claimed by the communists while allies were forced to fend for themselves. A page was turned, black eyes focusing in on a few underlined sentences in the book.

Although leaders of the United States fled from their country and took refuge in the United Kingdom, there are speculations that a few had escaped the ruins of their capital and found safety under the Japanese government, despite the strain felt between nations after the world saw firsthand the horrifying power of the nuclear bomb.

“What’cha looking at Kiku?” Peeking over the nations shoulder, Alfred frowned when the book was curtly closed. “Hey.”

“You shouldn’t be looking at this Alfred.” Said Matthew who calmly took it from Japan’s grasp. He placed the book under his arm, blocking out the repetitive announcements of nations becoming
occupied by one anther. “It’s just a useless history book I found in Europe. Nothing important.”

Alfred and Kiku exchanged looks. “What did it say Kiku?” The man opened to mouth to answer but promptly shut it when Matthew shot him a threatening glare. “Ah…I forgot. My apologies Alfred.”

Content to see that his brother remained ignorant to the books contents, Matthew walked over to the buzzing radio, preparing to turn it off. “Brother, don’t fuss over what’s in here. If it was important I’d tell you. Now how about you tell me what we’re going to do today. I can only stand being in the same place for so long before I start going crazy.”

“I thought you were crazy…” Grumbled Alfred under his breath.

“What was that?” Spoke Matthew in a low tenor.

“Nothing! A-About where we could go…” He stuttered. The room went still as the radio went dead. As Matthew turned around he eyed Alfred with suspicion when he saw a large smile stretching from ear to ear. “Alfred…”

“Mattie…I have an idea. Although it’s pretty bold. You wanna hear about it?”

“How bold are we talking?” Asked Matthew warily. His twin slung an arm around Japan, leading him outside the cottage, gesturing him to follow with a wag of his finger. “The news keeps talking about how Europe is falling apart, right? How about we drop by and say hello? Maybe we’ll see Prussia there too. I’m positive he’s stubborn enough to have made it back home.”

It took a while for the idea to settle in, for both Matthew and Kiku. A sinister smirk spread on Matthew’s face. For Kiku, he furrowed his eyebrows in discontent but otherwise kept any other outward reactions to a minimum. He froze when the brothers both glanced at him expectantly.

“Of course, we’ll find them quickly with your help, won’t we?” The nation couldn’t do much else but nod weakly, unable to refuse the twins. He would surely speak out though, if the brothers threatened anyone.

They all stopped in front of Alfred’s plane, the blond tapping its hard surface with the back of his hand.

“Shall we?”


What an amazing relief it was for Germany when he received an unexpected call from Japan, informing him that he was coming to see him. Waiting anxiously in a room with only France and England for company, he couldn’t help but raise an eyebrow when Japan asked him what nations were with him. Shouldn’t the man be explaining what had happened to him 2 weeks ago? He sighed tiredly, alerting him that only France and England were able to meet with him as the war between nations had finally taken its toll on everyone.

From the way the Asian man meekly informed him that he would meet up with them soon to the way his words wavered, as if he had to consider his words carefully, Germany soon became worried. He had known the nation long enough to sense when something was wrong. Questioning him for any problems or details about how he had been missing for so long, he conceded to having him come meet him in person where he could explain everything himself. Now came the waiting game as he, England and France sat in their chairs around a small table, no one speaking a word as they enjoy the numb silence the room offered.
“Damn this war…” Spoke England gruffly. There was no end to the pain that traveled through their bodies, lands being occupied, armies laying siege to each other, and skirmishes occurring everywhere. Why couldn’t their governments put aside their differences for a second and focus on real problems? Like fixing their countries and restoring them back to their former glory.

A knock came at the door, the three men craning their necks in the sounds direction. “Who is it?”

“I’m an attendant under the government’s orders. I have some diplomats that want to talk to you.” Replied someone from the other side of the room.


Opening the door, a stoic man around his middle forties entered, gesturing a hand forward for the diplomats to follow. First came Japan, as the man directed him to stand before him.

“Representative of Japan.” The man tilted his head back at the door, urging the remaining diplomats to come in.

“And representatives Alfred F. Jones and Matthew Williams.” He announced the moment Alfred and Matthew walked in, a smug grin on Alfred and serious glint flashing off Matthew’s glasses. “They have some issues they would like to discuss on behalf of the North American continent.”

Turning towards the only 3 nations in the room and seeing their shocked expressions, the man fixed his tie and coughed once. “…As diplomats, they are hereby protected by the government of France. Any acts of violence towards them will result in consequences beyond average punishment. Please treat them kindly.” Warned the man as he cautiously backed away from the table and out of the room.

A devious smile spread on Alfred’s face following the back of the retreating man out the door. Meanwhile, his brother stared coldly at the Briton and Frenchman across the room.

Back towards the mortified nations, Alfred tilted his head. “Pretty neat how we can easily call ourselves diplomats and come here willy nilly. Ain’t diplomatic immunity a bitch?”

“Under what nation do you represent? Japan! What is the meaning of this!” Barked England as he rose from his seat. The mentioned nation ducked his head, unable to say a word when he had both brothers to either side of him.

“We came to talk. See how you were doing.” Came Alfred’s plain statement.

“Talk…? TALK? What could we possibly have to discuss with wretched assassins like yourselves?” Accused France, trying his best to remain oblivious to Matthew’s persistent stare.

“Your nation’s, aren’t you?” Said Germany bluntly. He carefully watched them, trying to read what they were hiding. But nothing stood out. Either the two were good at hiding behind a charade or frankly had nothing to hide. How can someone have nothing to hide yet not reveal who they are at the same time?

“Nations?” Alfred brought a hand to his mouth, physically holding back his laughter until he felt it was safe to speak again. “How about I tell you a little story instead? I know you’ll love to hear this Artie!”

“I’ll show you what I’d like to hear!” Threatened the Briton as he pivot around the table corner, his hands balled up into fists. Before he could even reach the grinning blond, he halted in his tracks, gripping his chest while he placed a hand on the wall in search of solid support. Damn the fighting!
He fought back the bile that rose in his throat and willed the swaying to stop in his head. The carefree chuckle from one of the blonds did little to soothe his rage as Matthew reveled in the man’s misery.

“Is the war making you weak? Sorry to hear that. Would it make you feel better if I rearrange some files for you?” He teased. The hateful glare he received only fueled him to continue his jabs until France stepped up to the nation to help him. That’s when Matthew stopped talking, narrowing his eyes at him.

“Well, brother? Go on with the story. I’m sure France would like to hear it too.”

“Alright! It started like this. There once was a little kid and his shy brother who lived with this horrible caretaker. He was so terrible at caring for the brothers that one day, while he was madly fighting with some Indians and another idiot, he forgot to keep an eye on the kids. And he lost them.” Alfred shot the Briton a dark grin enjoying the way he struggled to walk back to his seat with the Frenchman’s aid.

“Lost in the forest, the brothers didn’t know how to survive as readily as they had in the past. They had gotten accustomed to society and therefore struggled to adapt to the environment again.” Continued Matthew. He watched the German nation grit his teeth, unable to do much else but listen to their tale.

“So the brothers suffered a lot. They ran away from wild animals and fought with people who refused to help them. But they thought that maybe, if they found their caretaker again, things would go back to normal. They could return to society.” At this point, Alfred had placed his hands on Japan’s shoulders and was slowly pushing him towards the direction where the nations sat around the table.

“After so many brutal trails and difficult obstacles, the brothers found their way home. But…” Alfred paused, removed his hands from Japan as he pushed him towards the nations. The man didn’t resist the movement, simply accepting the fact that this was Alfred’s way of saying that he was no longer with them.

“They found out that they had been replaced. And their home was no longer there for them. They meant nothing to the caretaker.” Alfred acidly said. He could see England furrowing his eyebrows his glare still present but questioning at the same time; asking what use the story held for them. Alfred instantly masked his anger with fake glee. “But that’s ok! The brothers learned the best lesson ever!” Despite trying to appear happy, the American could visibly be seen shaking, whether from unleashed rage or something else that he refused to let go.

“Never trust anyone.” Spoke Matthew all of a sudden. He merrily wrapped his arms around his brothers back and revealed a sly smile. “The brothers could only trust each other and no one else. Anybody who’d try to interfere with their bond would immediately suffer the consequences.” He spoke his words directly at England and France before turning his gaze towards Germany. “Do you want to know what the brothers did after that day?”

From the hesitant nod the German responded with to the anxious tremble Japan hid horrifically, Matthew giggled abruptly over Alfred’s shoulder. “They vowed revenge against their caretaker. Both of them. Fifty years in the making and finally, all that work has paid off. The brothers can’t wait to see England and France fall.” Finishing the tale off for Alfred, Matthew playfully wove one of his twin’s stray locks in between his fingers. “Isn’t that right…brother?”

Gradually, his words sunk in, causing England’s glare to weaken and eventually fade into
mortification as realization overtook him. The tale. The brothers. Their horrifying similarity to a pair of nations that had disappeared lifetimes ago. Germany glanced from Alfred to England, trying to piece together Alfred’s frown and England’s terrifying silence.

“What’s that suppose to mean?”

England finally broke his silence. “…No. It can’t be…It…It can’t!” He stuttered, his figure shaking as he held onto the table.

“Awww, what’s wrong Engwand? Surprised to see your little boy still alive?” Prodded Alfred.

“No….no! You can’t be…Anyone but him…You’re not…” Continued England’s helpless mumbles.

“I see the same has already hit you too…France.” Spoke Matthew.

The German quickly turned towards the French nation, surprised to see that he was reacting similarly to England, however denial had already passed him, leaving the Frenchman sobbing uncontrollably into his hands. Only an incoherent “No” slipped passed his hands.

“Awww, they’re just upset to see that we’re still alive.”

“That’s not true!” Screamed England. With unshaken tears lining his eyes and hands clutching the table so tightly that he’s knuckles turned white, England choked back a sob. “You two…your not…not…”

“Not even a proper introduction? And I thought you were supposed to be the prime example of a gentlemen.” Continued Alfred.

“Allow us to introduce ourselves properly.” Said Matthew.

“No…don’t…” Begged England softly, tears freely streaming down his face.

“That little boy and his brother that got lost in the forest lived and became healthy adults. In fact, they proudly stand before you!” Declared Alfred.

“Matthew….non….don’t let it….” Whispered France into his hands, his eyes refusing to leave the Canadian and his twin. His eyes were already flushed with tears, his breathe coming out labored and heavy.

“And their names were…” Began Alfred.

“STOP IT!!!” Screeched England. His vision grew increasingly blurry, his strength ebbing away with every second that the American stood before him, smiling like there was no problem with the world. He didn’t want to hear it. Couldn’t hear it.

“America.” Stated Alfred calmly.

“And Canada.” Finished Matthew.

His precious America and Canada. It couldn’t be. “Long time no see, huh England?” Chirped Alfred.

England sat there motionlessly, watching Alfre-no, America smile brightly.

The world truly hated him.
Next Chapter: The truth has come out. Are England and France able to handle it? According to the rest of the nations, no. But the war is still a problem they have to resolve before they return back to the dilemma that are the assassins.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: Revenge is wonderful. Assured that England and France will never recover from the news or the war that threatens to swallow them whole, Alfred and Matthew return home and watch as the disease of war spreads to the others. However, it seems they must first deal with the Land’s unelected leader: The so called Mafia. Rule #1: Never trust a criminal.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Trouble Abroad

Nobody moved in the room.

They couldn’t move. The sheer stunning news that presented itself so boldly before them, in the form of two brothers was beyond understanding. It didn’t make sense.

“What? How…how is that possible? Your countries don’t exist anymore.” replied Germany with his mouth agape. The brothers linked their arms together, their grins never wavering.

“Eh? Who said we need our countries to live?” Asked Matthew.

“Matthew…what are you talking about?” Questioned Japan. Standing near the table where the other nations sat, the nation’s hands eventually found the end of the table, using it as a support to prevent his legs from giving way.

“America and Canada are dead.” drawled Matthew. “Only we exist in their place. You can call us nations all you like but it’ll make no difference who we are.”

“…Why are you telling us this?” Whispered Japan hurt evident in his black eyes. “What could you possibly gain by revealing this to us?”

“I see someone wasn’t listening to our story.” chimed in Alfred. “America and Canada no longer exist, but they did want revenge. Revenge against the two nations that immediately replaced them. The nation that regarded them as mere trophies to their growing empire.”

Neither England nor France lifted their heads from the table, but every word that echoed in the room stabbed them deeper than any blade could. And how the American talked… How was it possible to sound so cheerful?
“At this time, when Europe and Asia are tearing into each other and nations are too weak to even congregate for their pathetic meetings…why not come and watch? Talk a little and tell an innocent story.” Matthew closed his eyes for a brief moment, a calm smile on his face.

“Besides, you’ve already seen Alfred’s face. If he became a public enemy, then it’s only natural that I follow suit. In face, I’m surprised that reporters haven’t started plastering his face all over the place. Were all of you really kind enough to consider your actions before proceeding through?” Asked Matthew with sincere curiosity.

“Or were you worried about what we would do to Japan in retaliation?” Added Alfred. He failed to notice the mentioned nation flinch at the formal use of his title. Were the brothers truly turning their back on him?

“We have our reasons.” Answered Germany stiffly. “The two of you however, will not leave this room without my permission. Diplomatic titles can only protect you for so long.”

“Oh really? How amusing. Do you like being in our company that much?” Teased Matthew. “We really only came to see how France and England were doing. So far, its looks like our trip was not a fruitless one.”

Still no words from the two broken nations, quiet sobs their sole form of response. Shaking his head, Alfred turned to Japan with a lopsided frown. “We appreciated everything you’ve done for us but now is the point where you have to choose. Kiku or Japan?” He started boldly.

His ally stood frozen near the table, his mouth opening and closing but no words coming forth. Alfred needlessly continued. “I warned you before about what would happen once you choose an answer.” He said. The blonds’ twin raised a confused eyebrow at him, wondering what his brother was going on about.

“But I guess you’re still undecided, aren’t you?” Japan could only return Alfred’s deep stare, refusing to look back and see the expression on Germany’s face. If it wasn’t shock, then it would be betrayal, hurt. Maybe even anger. He had to speak up, quick. Who would he choose?

“I’ve decided for you.” Cut in Alfred, ripping the Japanese man away from his conflicting thoughts.

“What?” Came in the joined voices of Matthew, Japan and Germany.

“Japan.” replied Alfred in an impassive tone. “For all the times you’ve helped us, I cannot thank you enough. I will always consider Kiku a friend. But now…Kiku is gone and I only see Japan in front of me.”

“Alfred, I thought you wanted him to stay with us.” Whispered Matthew into his brother’s ear. His twin sent him a sad smile, before returning to the nation in front of them. Slowly, his smile grew into something harsh. Cruel. Wicked.

“I hope we never see you again. Me and Mat don’t want to do anymore business with you. I mean, sure, you were most likely the best man in this whole world who could quickly find the best material and machinery for any sort of project we wanted to accomplish. Without you, we would never have been able to take out as many leaders as we could in the past. And the products you bought for us…man, I swear, that German engineer sure knew what he was doing.”

The American stopped there, grinning madly at the German standing at the end of the table with his mouth hanging open. “It sucks that we won’t get our hands on top quality work like that
again.”

Oh, so that’s what he was doing. Thought Matthew. How cute. Even my own brother knows how to play his cards right.

From Japan’s mortified expression to Germany’s stricken look, everyone was thoroughly done talking. “Great discussion everyone.” Proclaimed Matthew in fake enthusiasm. “We’ll be sure to come back when everyone is ready to accept their fate.” He added with an icy smirk.

“If you’ll excuse us, we’ll get going.” Said Alfred loftily. Turning his back to the nations that remained in the room, he and Matthew were about to start towards the door but halted when the sound of a loud click resonated within the room.

“I meant what I said before.” Threatened Germany as he held a pistol aimed at the brother’s backs. “I don’t care about diplomatic procedures anymore. If shooting both of you means I can rid this world of your presence, then so be it. Don’t move a muscle.”

“Oh look, he has a gun.” Joked Alfred when he glanced back.

“Alfred, don’t make fun of this situation. He’s serious.” Replied Japan from his rooted spot, caught between the angry German and the twins.

“Don’t worry Al. I got this.” Chortled Matthew softly into his twin’s ear. Turning to his side, he stared in France’s direction. “Oh papa, won’t you kindly come help us? The mean man behind you is saying he’s going to hurt us.” He mocked as the Frenchman jerked at the title.

A pout quickly found its way onto Matthew’s face the moment Alfred broke out in an obnoxious laugh. “Oh gosh, are you serious? Man, I thought I’d never hear you talk like that again! What a riot!”

“Stop.” Rang out Germany’s harsh voice again. “I’ll give you till 3 to surrender.”

“Till 3? How about till one million?” Bargained Matthew.

The man’s deep frown perfectly denied the proposal as he adjusted his aim.

“I don’t know why you bothered asking those bastards for help Matthew. God knows they can’t even take care of kids properly.” Muttered Alfred. Apparently it was loud enough for the mentioned nations to hear though. “I mean come on. Surely they couldn’t care less about us. If we died right here, they’d practically be dancing in joy knowing that the dreaded ‘assassins’ got their just desserts.”

A chair scratched against the floor loudly then fell back. “What did you say?” Asked England softly as he wiped away stray tears.

“You heard me! Come on ‘Mr. Kirkland!’ Come and try to show me a lesson like you kept saying on TV. The whole world knows how desperate you are to stop us. Unless you don’t have the balls anymore!” He tilted his head in Germany’s direction. “Maybe he’ll be happy to do the job instead.”

“One.” Began Germany.

“Germany, please reconsider this!” Pleased Japan. “They aren’t even armed.”

“Wow, way to go letting the cat out of the bag.” Said Matthew in irritation.
Now France was worriedly turning his head from Germany to Alfred and Matthew, tension building up in every word thrown across the room. “Just admit it England! You never cared about us. You certainly didn’t find any problem treating me like crap when I was your hostage.”

“…” Whether the Briton was upset or still in shock, no one could tell. He just kept staring at the American from across the room, lost in thought perhaps. Or absorbing and memorizing every word that America flung at him.

“Two.” Continued Germany.

“Admit it!”

“Brother!”

“Amer-.” Began England reluctantly as the mentioned blond seemed to bristle at the name. Whipping his head in the Germans direction, he took off from his fallen chair.

“Three!” Snapped Germany. He never pulled the trigger though. He had been ambushed by both England and France, eyes widening in shock when the last thing he saw across the room was Japan defensively standing in between his gun and the brothers. Fumbling around in the floor with both nations, he kicked and ordered them to cease their actions, trying his best to hold off the two who viciously aimed to steal his gun away from him.

“Just who do you two side with?” He snapped.

“I’m not going to let you shoot them!” Retorted England.

“Oui! Such rash actions could lead to catastrophe!” Added France.

“What did I tell you?” Whispered Matthew slyly. “Papa ‘won’t help us,’ he says.”

“Shut up Mat.” Stated Alfred plainly. Studying the Japanese man before him, Alfred frowned. “You shouldn’t have done that Japan. You’ve only made it harder for yourself now.”

Suddenly, a shot exploded in the room, tearing Japan away from the staring contest he was having with Alfred. “Germany!”

“That’s our queue.” Said Matthew who tugged his brother towards the door. With one last glance at the lack of movement at the end of the table, Alfred scowled.

“Whatever.” They departed from the room without another word, quietly avoiding people sprinting towards the silent room in panic.

Once order had been restored, officials warily kept their eyes on the four nations before them, not a single wound on them, minus a few scratches and bruises on their arms and face. “Now what exactly caused this mess in the first place? And where are the ambassadors of North America? Ludwig?” Questioned a petite woman.

“This happened beca-.”

“We got in an argument! And- and the diplomats left! That’s what caused the whole mess.” Interrupted England. “Isn’t that right Ludwig?” He asked with a grimace. With that one look, he clearly conveyed the message he wanted to send the man. *This doesn’t involve human intervention.*

“Ah…I…yes. That’s what happened.” He answered dejectedly.
“I see. I will have to report this to your people Ludwig. Such actions of a diplomat are unacceptable.” The lady replied, striding away with an air of disappointment. When she was out of ear shot, instantly the German turned on England.

“Care to explain why you betrayed your own cause? You, out of all the nations, were the most adamant about capturing those two! Why?”

“I’m well aware of that!” He snapped. Staring down at the floor, he held back what sounded like a sob. “I just…how could it be…that he…they would…”

“Did you honestly expect us to stay still while you prepared to shoot them?” Asked France calmly, yet there was a crack at the end of his voice.

“You played perfectly into their hand!” Lashed out the German. “They asked for help and you gave it to them. Thanks to the both of you, they’re gone. And you Japan. How could you…”

“I have no proper excuse to bring forth Germany.” He answered quietly.

“As far as I’m concerned, all three of you have betrayed everything we have been striving for. Unless you make your intentions clear, I cannot say that any of you are trustworthy anymore.”

“What are you going to tell the others?” Japan dared to ask.

Craning his neck towards island nations, he watched the man shrink back from his gaze. To think, his own ally would be supporting the assassins, and with his own products too! “I will tell them what is necessary.” Sighed Ludwig.

From the downcast expression on Kiku’s face to the torn looks on France and England, Germany crossed his arms. “Eventually, they will be told who the assassins are and how they escaped before we could take any action. Japan was also returned safely to us in exchange for information that we refused to give them.” Spoke the blond.

Japan stood with astonishment at the man’s distorted story. “We still have a war to stop before any further details can be released. It would only hinder our progress if we give the others reasons to distrust our plea for peace.”

“Thank you…” Said Japan.

“We still need to talk about everything that’s happened with you and the assassin though. Don’t think I’ll forgive your actions so easily And I also want to know why you defended them too.” Reprimanded the blond.

“Of course.”

“England. France. Will you two be of any use to us in halting this war, or should I already consider your nations a lost cause?”

“You are in my capitol non? I seek this cease fire just as much as you do.”

“Call me when everyone’s ready to start talking like civilized people. Until then, I’ll be in my country.” Muttered England, turning on his heels and walking away from everyone.

“I apologize for his attitude.” Offered France with a frown. “If only you knew how much pain he is in right now.” Swiftly, he took off after the Briton, leaving behind the last two nations in their tense atmosphere.
Outside – 5:16 p.m.

“Dammit! Dammit, dammit, dammit!! Why! Why did it have to be him! Why!” Roared Arthur the moment he stepped out into the warm summer air. He slammed a fist into the building behind him, leaning his head against its rough surface. “Why God? What did I do to deserve this? Wasn’t it bad enough when I lost them the first time? Why bring them back like that?”

“Mon cheri…” Started France who gently closed the building door behind him. “You…”

“Don’t fucking talk to me France! I don’t want to hear any of the bullshit you want to lecture me with this time! Can’t you once in you damn life give me a fucking break! Leave me alone!” He snapped, green eyes livid with hate and self-loathing.

Cringing up his nose, offended, France narrowed his eyes in retaliation against the Briton’s deadly glare. “I had a feeling that–.”

“Shut up! I said shut up! I swear to God, if you tell me “I told you so” I will break your neck right here!” Yelled Arthur.

Silenced yet again, France turned away from his long time ally and rival and grunted in frustration. “You’re not the only one you know. Suffering from a broken heart. Knowing that someone dear and important to you is actually wanted dead or alive. Both those boys…do they even know what they’re doing?”

He shook his head in remorse then started walking away from Arthur. “When you’ve decided to stop grieving and want to take action I’ll be waiting in my country.”

“Bastard…” Mumbled out England.

The Frenchman stopped in his tracks long enough to toss the green eyed man a glance over his shoulders. A look of pity. “Please don’t keep me waiting.”

Finally, England was alone. Free to mourn and scream and kick all he want as he weakly treaded his way back to the airport and, eventually, home.


“Mind telling me again why we’re coming here? I could have sworn we were just going to chill back home now.”

“We’ve been relaxing too long Alfred. Just because Europe and Asia are falling doesn’t mean our work is done. Besides…I smell a bug in your country and I don’t like it.” Replied the man with a dark growl.

“A bug? What do you mean? Like, another spy? I’m pretty sure Finland got the message last time we had him.”

“No. That’s not it.” Walking down empty streets devoid of human life, Matthew and Alfred stopped in the center of the road. “I mean, there are people doing unwanted business here. And I’m going to find out who it is.” Grabbing Alfred’s arm, he yanked him towards a dead looking building and kicked the broken door open. “Starting here.”

For the next few hours, the twins spent catching gang members and drug sellers, interrogating them on the whereabouts of the Mafia’s head boss. Last Matthew had heard, he was establishing a new headquarters in the city. Following leads from terrified men, they soon found themselves at
the front of an aged building in the heart of the ransacked city, a structure that overlooked all the others. Perfect for a greedy man looking for more power.

Pushing their way through gruff, bulky men who held rifles and shotguns, Alfred roughly knocked on the door of the boss’s main room. “Hey Old Man! You in here?”

Unaware of all the dirty and even repulsive looks he was getting from the gang members, Alfred was about to turn the doorknob himself when he swiftly stopped by Matthew, who placed his hand over his twins. “Wait.”

Furrowing his eyebrows impatiently, they listened for any movement.

“Come in.”

Given permission to enter, the two opened the door and stood near the entrance as a large man with a faded brown beard grinned in their direction. “Ah, if it isn’t my two favorite boys! To what pleasure do I owe you two this time? Or are you perhaps, looking for another job from me?”

“I thought we made it clear that we were done doing all the dirty work for you.” Retorted Matthew.

“Can you blame a guy for trying?” Joked the man, urging the two blonds to come in and close the door behind them. “You two are without a doubt, the best at taking out whoever I see fit. If it wasn’t for you two, I would still be out here trying to build a name for myself while the rivals rooted out all my weak links.”

In a boisterous laugh, he rose from his seat and followed the two boys to their spot on a couch to the side of the room. “Then what business do you have with me? Come to visit old friends?”

No time in beating around the bush, as Matthew so plainly thought it. “We want to know what’s going on around here. What kind of people are you talking to? There have been a few scuffles around the Lands. Not much really. But it’s gotten quiet. And I don’t like it when it gets quiet.”

Again the man chuckled, oblivious to the frown on Matthew’s face. “Well dear Matthew, don’t you think you’re just being a bit too paranoid? I’m simply looking for new dealers. Experimenting with those who can keep control of their territory and working to find the right partners. You know, business.”

“Yeah, well you’re dealers suck.” Added Alfred lazily. “I see a dead guy around every block. Is that what you call a good partner?”

Smiling at the blonds blunt nature, grey eyes gleamed down on him. “Are you sure those bodies aren’t rival dealers? I’ve been stanch in making sure that my partners don’t disappoint me.” Leering at Alfred, the man closed in on his personal space. “Unless, you’ve been out there playing with my people again.”

Before Matthew could make a move on him, he backed off, smirking at Alfred’s innocent smile. “Like I’d waste my time playing with small fry.” Retorted the American playfully.

“Same old Alfred I see.” Turning back towards his desk the man stopped in front of it, lifting a few papers off his desk and aimlessly skimming them, not paying attention to a single word written on the paper. “You know, for the few years I’ve known you two, I almost feel like you’re the sons I’ve always wanted. Lord knows my own son is already dead.” He muttered dryly.

At that last piece of information, Alfred watched his twin from his peripheral vision, a nervous gulp visible. Thank god the head mob leader had his back to them.
“Two well skilled men who know the streets like the back of your hand. It’s no wonder you two are so popular in Europe. How has it been over there anyways? Dead as usual, I suspect?”

“Eh. The dominos are falling. That’s all.” Matthew replied dully, studying his nails with boredom.

“Really? I had no idea.” Said the boss with a smirk.

Liar, thought Matthew with a hidden frown. Adjusting himself on the couch that was far too soft for comfort, Matthew sent the head criminal a raised eyebrow. “Does that mean you’re playing nice and sticking to your own borders? Staying away from the hosers across the sea?”

The man clicked his tongue in annoyance. “Yes. What reason would I have to go throw myself in their mess?”

“Then how come that isn’t what we’re hearing.” Added Alfred. “Making deals behind our backs?”

The older man studied the twins with a blank expression, until his lips began to curl into a twisted smile. He aimlessly brought a hand up to his chin and stroked the light beard he had in thought. “Ah, Alfred. Matthew. Please, don’t worry. I said it before and I’ll say it again, it’s nothing to worry about. My organization holds such diversity in it, don’t you think it proper that we should spread our roots? Just business my friends.”

The distrust in Alfred’s eyes spoke of suspicion. Matthew, on the other hand, flat out wanted to wring the man’s neck for creating any bargains without their consent although he hid his true feelings behind a hesitant smile and timid nod of his head. He would eventually find out WHO the man was doing business with, one way or another.

“Right. Then I guess we have no further business with you.” Rising from the couch, Matthew placed a hand on Alfred’s shoulder ready to lead him away as quick as possible from the lying man in front of them but was halted when he held out a hand in pause.

“Before you go, would one of you be so kind as to go and find one of my subordinates? He’s been gone for quite a while and I really need some papers handled here.” He looked in Alfred’s direction. “How about it? Last I heard, Rafael was hanging in the bar, drinking away the night with a few friends.”

“Uh, su-.”

“I’ll do it.” Intervened Matthew quickly. “The idiot with the one eye, right?”

“The one and only.” Chuckled the boss.

“I’ll be right back.” Matthew said in a wary tone, glancing one last time at his brother before exiting the room.

“I swear, he never lets me have any fun.” Alfred mumbled, shuffling his feet in agitation.

“Alfred, please sit down.” Gestured the man with a wave of his hand.

Dropping himself back onto the couch with a huff, the blond hacked at the cloud of dust that rose with the action. “Man, don’t you ever clean around here?” He coughed, waving away the suffocating particles.

“Tell me Alfred. Do you think family is important?” Came the man’s solemn and unusual question.
“Hell ya!”

Slowly taking his seat at his desk, the man examined Alfred’s odd posture on the couch; caught between trying to lean back on the furniture and sit up right. He let out a deep breathe. “Even if… they don’t have the best intentions for you?”

Ok, now Alfred was confused. What was he getting at? “I don’t know what you saying old man.”

He knitted his eyebrows when the mob boss hid a smile behind cupped hands. “What I mean is; do you still care about family, even if they stab you in the back? Kick you to the curb? Ruin you?”

“Well, if I had any other family then…” Alfred paused. “…I don’t know actually. Matthew’s my only family although I don’t see how that applies to him.” He answered with a shrug. “Why you ask?”

It was the man’s turn to shrug carelessly at Alfred’s question. “Just wondering. Not many people have families these days.”

“I know.”

“Makes you wonder…who you can trust.”

“Yeah.” Mumbled Alfred as he stared at the floor.

“But you always have a family with us Alfred. After all, you’re one of us.”

“Heh, Mat doesn’t really like to associate with yo-.”

“I never included your brother.” Interrupted the man in a sinister tone.

Immediately, Alfred’s head shot up, staring in disbelief at the man’s words. “What?”

“Your brother is Canadian, isn’t he?”

“Yeah, but I don’t see how that matters!” Shot back Alfred.

“True. I guess it doesn’t.” Trailed off the man as he turned his eyes to the side in disinterest. “I mean, who would really care? Certainly not my people. Men who were all born and raised here. Natural Americans.” He purred out the last two words.

Scrunching up his nose in repulsion, feeling his identity violated in every sense, Alfred snapped up from the couch, his boots slamming against the wooden floor. “Are you talking shit about my brother?”

“No, not at all.” Offered the man with calm expression. “Do you honestly believe all my men are American? What do you think happens to the few Canadians that try escaping the hell hole that is their country?”

“You kill them.” Stated Alfred bluntly.

“Wrong. We accept them. They’re desperate just like the rest of us to make a living out of our torn countries. The day that we rebuild our nations will be the day that the world will rue ever having fucked with us. You’ll see Alfred.”

“…” No words came to mind on how to react to the man’s declaration although his glare did not fade.
“Don’t take offense to my words. I only want the best for you. If it includes warning you about any possible betrayals then so be it.”

“Then how come it doesn’t sound like it?” Prodded Alfred in a strained voice as he approached the boss’s desk.

“What? Does me reminding you that you’re American really bother you that much? We’re family here Al. We take care of each other. I truly do wish to have you by my side one day, although the challenge that Matthew might present you may just make you run for your money.”

“Matthew isn’t a threat to me.” Alfred growled out. “Nor should he be to you.”

“I never said he was.” Answered the man loftily. “I trust you both Alfred. Now why can’t you trust me?”

“Give me a reason to trust you.”

Closing his eyes for a brief moment, the man pursed his lips then slid his hand under the desk. For a second, Alfred considered pouncing on the man but dismissed the idea when he simply placed a gun on top of his desk.

Opening his eyes, grey eyes shone up at him with mirth. “This is my favorite pistol. Even though I know you’re angry with me, I want you to have it. Because I know you won’t shoot me with it. Because I trust you.”

With an emphasis on the word trust, the man slid the weapon across the desk and smiled when Alfred warily lifted it up. His smile only grew larger when the American cocked the gun and pointed it straight at his forehead.

“Are you 100% sure I won’t shoot? I could always say my finger accidently slipped you know.” He added icily.

“And I can always say that it was a simple mistake.” Countered the boss.

“…Touché.” Muttered Alfred. He swiftly pocketed the weapon into his jacket and stepped away from him. “I’ll let it go this time, but don’t ever talk shit about Matthew again. You really don’t know who you’re messing with if you try it.” He warned.

“Calm your jets Al. It was a simple thought. Nothing more, nothing less.”

“Hmph. Says you.” Retorted Alfred, crossing his arms. Just after his pout, the door squeaked open, an aggravated Matthew Williams marching through.

“Rafael wasn’t even at the bar.” He gritted out.

“Oh? Then he must have gone home. Oh well. I’ll see to it that he is punished for abandoning his duty.” Reasoned the boss.

“Uh huh.” Grunted Matthew, stepping into the room long enough to slip his hand around Alfred’s arm and yank him towards the exit. “Nice seeing you.” He muttered.

“Adieu.” He sang out, waving goodbye at the twins. Smiling at Matthew’s narrowed eyes, the man watched him turn away giving him the chance to leave Alfred’s gaze with one last message.

_I trust you_, he mouthed, delighted to see the blond’s reaction, a combination between suspicion and
anxiety. Once left alone, another door creaked open, this one a different one to the side of the room where a bookshelf slid to the side. Curiously, a man with an eye patch over one eye approached his leader carefully.

“Sir?”

“You heard everything right?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Give me a few more meetings with Alfred and maybe, I won’t have to terminate the poor boy. He’s so handy with a gun. It’d be a shame to destroy such talent.” He chuckled out loud.

“And Matthew?”

“Keep an eye on him. He’s asking too many questions and quite frankly, I’ve never liked a man who can’t follow simple orders. Unlike his brother, he has to question every little action we make.” He spat out.

With a nod of his head, the man turned to leave the room but was stopped. “Oh, and make sure you call back those men from Europe. Tell them that we’d be happy to accept their deal.”

The man nodded once more than left. Alone, the boss of the largest criminal organization in the Lands, the former country of the United States, sighed.

“Don’t make a wrong choice Alfred.”

London, United Kingdom – Outskirts of the city – August 4, 2003 – 2:20 p.m.

Any form of progress between the feuding countries and their senseless war came sluggishly. Numerous governments had called their armies back to the borders although they stared one another down from opposite ends, waiting for one person to make a wrong move. The tension was poisonous to many, causing civilians to flee in alarm from their homes and cities to become ghost towns over night.

If the land wasn’t being trampled by soldiers than it was intimidating ships that anchored off the coast prepared to strike their enemy with efficiency and speed. Every nation loathed to bear the horrors of war upon their land, silently praying for a beacon of hope in the form of a cease fire and eventually, a treaty.

Not far from where ships waited at sea, the city of London buzzed with rapid activity, civilians looking for cover in case planes should come by skies while military members did their best to organize a front against any invading countries. From an endless field of green, a small house stood, listening to all the noises with a morbid atmosphere. Its sole occupant did little to bring up the mood; lingering near the corner of the living room where he slowly swung a bottle of whiskey from its top.

“It’s a lie…It…” He let the bottle slip from his grasp, its end rattling onto the floor with a hollow clink. For a week, he withdrew into the small confines of his house, numb to the rest of the world’s woes as he wallowed in his own. “Why…why you…America…Canada…”

He wrapped his arms around his legs, green eyes glossed over in the tears that plagued him endlessly. “Why…”

_England! England! Look! Look what I found! Shouted a small child, bouncing on the balls of his_
bare feet while he held up a large rock.

“It’s a rock America.” Chuckled England nervously. “And where are your shoes? Didn’t you leave the house with them on?”

“Well….yeah. But look!” Edging the rock closer to the Britons face, his eyes grew large as he saw a crack exposing numerous blue crystals inside the rock.

“Where did you find this?” He asked, grabbing the rock and examining it in his hand.

“Come on! They’re over here!” Tugging on England’s sleeve, the boy hurriedly lead him behind the house and over a small creek, stopping near a well hidden cave big enough for only children to enter. He narrowed his eyes and held a hand in front of America when he heard rustling within the entrance.

“Stay back America. I hear-.”

Pushing passed the man’s hand, Alfred giggled as he shoved an arm into the cave.

“America! Don’t-!”

“Ta-da!” Cheered America as he yanked Canada out of the cave with a smile on his face. In the Canadians arms, he carried a bundle of rocks similar to America’s, their color glistening in the sunlight.

“We got a whole bunch for you!” America jumped up with his arms outstretched to the sky. England slowly held a hand over his mouth, adoration evident in his badly hidden smile. Glancing over to the American’s side, the boy’s twin smiled up timidly at him, offering the rocks up to his caretaker as a token of gratitude.

“You two are quite a pair, aren’t you?” He said, carefully scooping up the twins in his arms. “How about we go home and put these rocks right in the front of the house? That way, everyone can see them.”

“Yeah!” Exclaimed America loudly.

“Ok.” Whispered Canada in a soft voice.

“It’s not possible. How could they…become so…” The Briton reached to his hair and grasped it tightly, caught between wanting to pull out his hair and simply just hold his head. “I didn’t raise them to be so twisted. So why?”

“America, Canada. What’s wrong?” Came England’s alarmed voice when he entered the brothers room, finding one of the twins crouched into the corner with his twin consoling him from behind. Quickly, he approached them, anxiety welling up in him once he realized that one of them was crying.

“Canada misses France.” Mumbled America as he cuddled his brother. “He says he wants to see him.”

The Briton chewed on his lips, regret eating away at him as the weeping child silently sniffed into his soaked nightwear.

“…I don’t think…” He started but immediately swallowed his words when Canada looked up at him with tear filled eyes. He sighed tiredly. “Ugh….I guess…we can maybe…visit him.” He
relented.

“The lad WAS always fond of that frog…” Whispered England as the dull echo of tanks passing by caused the floors to tremble. He rubbed viciously at his eyes, blinking several times in attempts to clear them of any residue.

Tilting his head back on the corner of the wall, his gaze roamed across the empty living room, a few belongings scattered on the floor from last week when he had hastily entered the house and refused to unlock it for anyone that bothered him with unimportant matters. As long as it wasn’t his officials or government he didn’t have to open the damn door for anyone.

“Damn it.” He muttered, burying his face in his hands, waiting for the last memory to reply itself. The worst one.

“England…England! Listen to me. I-.”

Without warning, the Briton spun on his heel and rammed a fist against France’s face, his whole figure shaking from suppressed anger. “It’s your fault! You’re the bloody reason this happened! If you hadn’t decided to attack my men and take Canada by force, then the boys would never have-.”

He bit down on his tongue, unable to speak the cursed word. Dead.

He mechanically turned around one last time, gagging at the two small corpses that lay sprawled before him. Two young children, consumed by the very land that promised them so much. Their bodies were barely recognizable through all the shredded skin and mutilated limbs. It’d be a miracle if they could lift them up without something falling off.

Taking in the whole scene before him yet again, England felt his breathe grow hard and labored, his stomach contents circulating through him with the turbulence of a wild ocean. He quickly placed one hand over his stomach and the other over his mouth, taking a mortified step away from the carcasses. Holding back a gag, his attention abruptly zoned in on the sound of France shuffling behind him.

England whipped around and without further thought, delivered a sharp kick to the Frenchman’s stomach, causing him to crumble back onto the floor. Like a rabid animal, he fell upon the man and began to attack him, using punches, kicks, whatever it took to cause the Frenchman pain. Throughout his assault of his rival, he continued to roar in rage.

“BLOODY FROG! THEY’RE GONE! GONE! All because of you!!”

In a futile attempt to lessen the blows, France placed his arms in front of him, jerking all over the ground as he tried to push the crazy Briton off of him.

“YOUR FAULT! YOUR FAULT! YOUR FAULT!”

Another brutal punch to his face and the Frenchman could have sworn that his nose had been broken. But the sacrifice would surely be worth it. Distracting the man with that one opening, he slid an arm around England and grabbed a handful of clothes, yanking briskly and succeeding in causing him to lose his balance. As soon as he was free from the nation’s assault, he rolled away and jumped to his feet.

“Shut up! I cannot stand your accusations any longer! Is this my fault? I-!"

“Yes! It’s all your fault!” Screamed England, his fists trembling to his side, yearning to punch the French nation some more. Until all his pain would go away. Until the boys would come back to him.
“Non! I refuse to place all the blame on myself! And you! Do you truly think you are the only one suffering here? I lost Canada. Mon dieu, I never wanted any of this to happen. To either children!”

“I couldn’t care less about your pain Frog! And you know why? Because - ” He choked back a sob, vision becoming more blurry by the second. Finally, he gave up the fight to hold back his misery and dropped down onto the floor on all four, sobbing and crying out loud.

“Because…” He repeated in between sobs, pounding a few times on the earth. He was faintly aware of the man that began to kneel next to him with an air of caution.

“…Because what?” France dared to ask, wiping away at the blood that dribbled down his lip.

“W-we…we were going to…” He stuttered, then sobbed. “…To visit you…”

Blue eyes widened in horror, the Frenchman stunned by the horrible mistake he made in trying to take his colony back by force. In between the battle that he waged against England, the boys ran away in fear. And paid dearly for their error.

“We were already going to visit you…” Cried England.

“How could I know that…that those little corpses…weren’t America and Canada? They were…holding hands.” Whispered England. “Just like…America and Canada always did.”

The trembling of the floor underneath him began to fade into a numb shiver, alerting to Briton that the tanks had departed far enough from his temporary home. “All this fighting achieves nothing.” He said softly, running a thumb over his left eye. “If you two didn’t die then why did you choose this life? Why choose to make everyone miserable?” Knowing he wouldn’t get an answer he rose from his corner and dragged himself to the nearest couch. Like a lit firecracker, the dead silent in the house was suddenly shattered with the sound of vibrating sound, accompanied by a small alarm that grated on England’s nerves, if he had any left to lose. He shoved his hands into his coat pocket and glared at the communicator in his hand before ruthlessly tossing it across the room, letting it bounce off the wall and land on the floor with a pitiful clatter. It did the job in disabling to ringing but only caused its shudder to become a light background noise.

“To hell with the world! I’m done attending to everyone’s whim.” He growled, plopping on the couch where he eventually fell into a fitful sleep despite the communicator’s weak vibration.

Yukon Territory, Canada – Cottage – August 5, 2003 – 8:59 p.m.

“Its obvious even to a moron that the bastard was lying.” Grumbled Matthew. He crossed his arms and narrowed his eyes at Alfred. “I still don’t understand why you didn’t come get me when he started talking shit about me.”

The American simply sighed in defeat. “A week and you’re still going on about that? Man…how many times do I have to say sorry? I threatened him like any good brother would do. What else did you want me to do? Cut off his tongue and stuff it up his ass?”

“That would be nice.” Smiled Matthew. His brother rolled his eyes at his remark.

“Look, we’ve been over this already Mat. I trust you, no matter what. Do you think I’d trust the old man’s words over yours? You’re my brother. My twin! We have centuries of memories with each other. I wouldn’t turn my back on them just like that.”
Content to hear no arguments against his declaration, Alfred returned to brushing his teeth, tilting his head ever so slightly in order to get at every tooth in the mirror.

“But there’s one more thing that’s bugging me.” Came Matthew’s reply.

“Augh! Wha’ ish it naow?” Demanded Alfred with a mouth full of toothpaste, half his words coming out as a jumble.

“You’re terrible at hiding things from me brother.” Stated Matthew plainly. His brother knitted his eyebrows together in confusion, slowly lowering his tooth brush down. He sloppily spat out the paste into the sink and wiped his face with the back of his hand.

“What are you talking about?”

The Canadian took a few steps back and reached into the drawer that was in their bedroom, returning into the bathroom with something hidden behind his back.”Mind explaining this?” He asked, pulling forth the faded American flag that Alfred received from the dying old man in Boston.

“Wha-….w-where did you get that?” He asked dumbly.

“Where did I-? Are you joking? Alfred, where did YOU get this? I found it stuffed at the very back of you’re plane. Now, why was it there in the first place? I’ve never seen this before. And I could have sworn that they had all perished after the war.” He chided.

“Tch…it’s a…memento.” Alfred replied hesitantly.

“Memento? How? I’m the only person you care about. Who else in this world would you get a memento from?” Refuted Matthew.

“Ah well, you see, it’s…” Alfred reached forward for the flag but frowned when his brother pulled away from his reach. Seeing that he was being refused the item he childishly stomped his foot on the floor and pouted. “It’s from an old man Mat. No one important. He was dying, I was there, and he wanted me to keep it. Said that he didn’t want to see it fade away like him. Now would you kindly stop being an asshole and give it back?”

He caught the flag as it was tossed to him, a frown still present on his face. “Yo, what’s your problem?” He grumbled.

“I don’t see why you’re so protective of that thing.” Muttered Matthew in a matter of fact. Before Alfred could reply, he exited from the bathroom into the bedroom, neatly organizing his side of the bed and slipping himself in. He then promptly turned his back to the bathroom door and ignored Alfred’s existence.

“Ok, so, you smack me and scold me whenever I act like a kid but you get a free ticket to Tantrum Land and expect me not to lecture you?” Started Alfred as he treaded over to his side of the bed.

He received no snarky reply from his twin.

“Unbelievable.” He sighed, quietly placing the dull flag inside the drawer behind him before returning to the silent treatment Matthew was giving him.

_Now, how do I go about this?_ He pondered, silently staring at his brothers back. _I can’t try the old tickle method. He sleeps with a knife under his pillow and I know for a fact that he sneaks some of my guns under the bed too._ His grimace shuffled everywhere, his teeth busily working at chewing
his lips.

Unbeknowest to the American who was lost in thoughts and plans, he had started to hum Matthew’s old lullaby out of anxiety.

“I never did properly celebrate your birthday.” Spoke Matthew suddenly in a timid voice.

“Huh?”

With a grumble, Matthew sat up from bed and frowned at Alfred. “You’re birthday you idiot. Remember? You got captured in Italy a day before your birthday. And all because you had to be the stupid hero.”

“Psh, hero? Nah! I’m a villain Mattie. The only time I’ll ever be a hero is for you.” Grinned Alfred brightly. His eyes widened at another realization. “Oh, does that mean your not giving me the silent treatment anymore?”

Matthew simply slapped his hand against his face in reply to his brother’s question.

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

“Where’d you put the flag?”

“Are you seriously jealous of a flag?” Mumbled Alfred as he shuffled under the covers.

“Of course not!” Snapped Matthew. “I just don’t want you getting any wrong ideas. That’s all.”

“Wrong ideas?” Alfred tilted his head. “How can I replace you with a flag?” He chuckled. “It’s just a flag. I only keep it because I promised the man that I’d take care of it.”

“Is that it?” The Canadian held doubt in his eyes.

“Yeah, what else would I do with it?”

“Ah…ok.” Answered Matthew in what sounded like a relieved tone. Puzzled by his brother’s weird behavior, Alfred playfully punched his twin on the arm.

“Lighten up buddy! We’ve got everything in the bag!” He chirped. “Those guys in Europe should be making their move soon. Once they take over, we’ll just slip in, take them out, and bingo! No more governments. Then we can finally just enjoy each others company in peace.”

“Right…” Agreed Matthew quietly. Staring in the direction where Alfred deposited the flag, Matthew held back a frown. “Just make sure to remember that your Alfred first, and American second. No one else can take that away from you.”

His brother heartily laughed. “Hehe…sure Mat. Sure. I’m your one and only bro!”

“Yeah, you are. And starting tomorrow, I’m going to do everything in my power to get back at the bastard that tried putting doubt in our relationship.”

“No comments on the nations huh?”

An awkward moment of no words being exchanged between brothers strangled the room until Matthew broke its curse.

“No. We have no ties to them anymore. We’ve finally revealed ourselves. Now we’ll watch them
fall. Maybe we’ll even go back to see what remains of them.”

“Ok. Their war seems to be reaching its breaking point. Someone is going to crash, and hard. Hopefully it’s England.” Muttered Alfred darkly.

“Or France.” Added Matthew. “But first, we should plan on going back to Philadelphia and see what that Mob’s boss is doing. Feel like being a spy again brother?”

“Sounds like a plan to me!” Throwing the blankets over themselves, Alfred snuggled nicely into the sheets, content to feel the warmth radiate through him. The night quaintly settled over their house like a gentle wave on sandy beaches, lulling a calm feeling over them. While Kumajiro occupied his familiar spot near Matthew’s side of the bed and Alfred was about to fall asleep, a docile voice spoke out again.

“Alfred?”

“Hm?” He murmured lazily.

“We still have to celebrate your birthday. Even if it’s a month late.”

“O.K.” He answered over his shoulder. In the moments he replied to his twin, Matthew swiftly pulled him forward and planted a soft kiss on the tip of his nose, before letting him go.

“Sweet dreams brother.”

London, United Kingdom – City Streets – August 6, 2003 – 5:30 p.m.

The nightmares that had plagued him on the last two nights had efficiently prevented the man from wanting to sleep anymore. But staying awake did little to remove him from the pain either. Trapped in a house by his own will, England loathed life and all that it offered. It was because of life that his worst enemy was someone he had loved dearly in the past.

“Bloody hell.” He moaned, bringing a hand up to his head and rubbing circles near his temple. “If drinking doesn’t get rid of the memories then what will?” Much to his surprise, he had not heard a word from the nations about requesting his presence at their meetings, if they were having any. He was pretty positive that something was being done though. The sounds of passing tanks had decreased, whether because they were not necessary anymore, or simply because they had sent out all the tanks in the first place in preparation for any invasions of the sort.

The television seemed to offer some hope, as bleak as it seemed, repeating the news that a joint meeting between fighting nations was to take place in the next coming days. No one bothered to inform the Briton anymore though. Perhaps being locked up in a desolated house for around a week and a half caused everyone to lose faith in him. Or maybe Germany told everyone about the incident in France and no one trusted him now.

“Whatever! They don’t need me!” He barked, shooting up from his seat in the kitchen. Wandering over to the fridge, he opened it and stared dully at the contents inside. Not much.

“Oh, why can’t I get anything right?” He softly muttered, remembering that he hadn’t gone to shop for anything in the last week. “Ugh…” Maybe things could indeed improve. As he ran a hand over his stomach, he considered the absence of physical pain in his body, recalling that his government was taking great strides in holding back the others.

Simply in need of food, England slowly walked toward the front door, grabbed his coat, and for the first time since he arrived there the day after meeting America in person, he opened the door.
But such plans of seeking food and returning to the numb confines of his prison did not indeed go according to plans. The further he got away from his house, the further his mind raced about all the events that were occurring around the world, despite his absence from everything. So what if he wallowed in misery, cursing the world for making America his enemy. The world continued to spin, and the war continued to threaten the little life that all nations tried to contain in their lands.

“I…I…” He slowly mumbled to himself, trying to come to terms with what he had been doing this whole time. The longer it took him to get his act together, the longer America and his brother were out there, happily killing whoever they see fit and bringing chaos amongst society.

Abruptly, the green-eyed nation halted in his step, his face morphing into something that no longer resembled desolation and despair.

“This is my fault.”

That was it. “This is my fault!” He repeated more loudly, his hands balling up into fists at the epiphany. “By God, this whole time… I’ve been neglecting my duties! My people! And…and America…Canada.” It still stung him a bit to recall the wild smile on the nations face, no remorse whatsoever for what he was doing but…he had to push passed it.

Strength flushed into his vein, heated his blood and propelled him into a frantic sprint back towards the empty house on the outskirts of the city. “Fuck! I finally get it! What happened in the past, what America and Canada became…its all my fault! I let them become that! And now it’s my responsibility to bring them back to their senses. Or else…” He faltered near the end of his thought but vigorously continued his dash as he busted through the front door.

Without fully realizing what he was doing, the Briton ran towards the wall where the abandoned communicator rested and jammed at the buttons, eyes widening at the many calls he had received. Strangely enough, none of them were from the nations. But…from Blake, the detective at the agency. He pressed a few buttons and waited for a call to go through but furrowed his large eyebrows when the device refused to work.

“Damn it. I broke it!” He immediately ran to the house phone and was about to call the young man but stopped when he remember that not one call included France. Was he still wait-?

“Ah! I forgot about him!” He screeched, quickly jamming the Frenchman’s number into the house phone. He’d be damned if the phone was bugged but in this case, he had to make sure that the Frenchman was still available. A few minutes and 3 failed tries confirmed England’s fears.

France did not wait for him this time.

Cursing a few colorful words, he slammed the phone back onto its holder and departed from the kitchen and eventually, the house.

He was running on pure instincts now. Not bothering to inform his people or governments about his actions he ran towards the nearest airport and through much arguing and disputes, managed to acquire a ticket to Paris.

Paris, France – In front of an apartment – 8:57 p.m.

Nearly jumping out of a moving taxi, England ran up to the apartment where France temporarily lived in now, and pounded on the gate. “Francis! Francis!” He yelled at the top of his lungs, pounding on the metal gate a bit harder. “Francis!”

His sole reply came in the form of a woman screeching in what he could assume was a derogatory
insult out her window, but no Frenchman. Slowing down his frantic pounding until it was a weak tap against the gate, England stopped.

“I missed him…” He said in a broken voice. Gritting his teeth, he took a step back. “What now?” He asked to no one in particular, giving the dark sky a glare.

He stood there for a while, thinking, until he settled on the next best option. “Fine. I’ll do it alone. I’ll get America and Canada back myself.” He reasoned, stiffly pulled his coat around himself as a cold shiver ran through him. “Even if it kills me, I’m going to get them back.”

Looking up at the apartment one more time he sighed.

“Oh ho ho~! Ah Angleterre, I never knew you would choose to be so reckless.” Purred a familiar French voice.

“Eh?” Yelped the Briton, spinning on his heel and coming face to face with a very satisfied France. “What are you doing here wanker? I thought you left!”

At this, the man pursed his lips in annoyance. “I actually did mon ami. But I forgot to get something. You were taking so long and I couldn’t bare to wait another day knowing that mon petit Canada and America are still out there, doing who knows what.” He leveled England with a crocked smile. “You know, it’s my responsibility to stop them.”

Although England had been considering punching the nation for leaving him behind he restrained himself, knowing full well that he had been right in his reasons of wanting to take action, unlike him who had pitifully sank in his own despair.


Left speechless with the man’s admittance, France resorted to pulling the Briton into a crushing hug, releasing a few chuckles as he was violently shoved back.

“Get off of me Frog! We’re wasting time here with your dillydallying!”

“Merci!” He cheered happily. Unable to contain his budding joy, he grabbed England by the hand and dragged him towards a car parked a distance away from his apartment. Stopping in front of the vehicle, England was about to open the door to the passenger seat but jumped back when it opened by itself.

“England? I thought you were still in your country?” Spoke a timid voice, its owner emerging from the car.

“Japan? What are you doing here?” England curiously directed his gaze at Japan, then France, seeking out an explanation.

“He’s going to help us.” Replied France happily.


“We can explain most of it on the way mon cheri but right now, we have to leave before anyone catches wind of my escape.” Whispered France, quickly ushering the two nations back into the car.

“Ah, it’s not important anymore. I have you with me so an extra gun isn’t necessary.” Starting up the car, the Frenchman departed from the sidewalk and entered the road, anxious to get out of the country as quick as possible. “My government and I got into a little…disagreement, and now they insist that I remain here at all times. But I cannot fulfill such a request unfortunately.” He sang out dramatically.

“He arrived in my country about a week ago, pleading that I assist him in his endeavors to bring America and Canada to their senses.” Added Japan softly. “He also heard the rumors that Germany has kept me at a distant, still unsure on how to go about my…betrayal.” He mumbled out weakly.

“Are you betraying him?” Asked England with a raised eyebrow. “I don’t see this as a betrayal whatsoever. We’re actually doing the exact opposite. We’re going to stop those two.”

He made a good point there, leaving Japan stunned with the view as he opened and closed his mouth, no words coming out of them.

“Have you noticed the shift in the land?” Spoke France, a hint of amusement in his voice.

“What shift? I’ve been…busy at home.” Answered England reluctantly. “But I remember that I didn’t hear anymore tanks coming passed my place.”

“That’s the shift.” Japan said, having found his voice again. “Do you feel tired?”

“Now that you mention it, no. I’m hungry, but not tired.”

“The war is going to come to a halt. Once this ceasefire is approved, the talks will commence. Germany has been quite determined in getting this to work, although I wouldn’t give him all the credit.” France smiled devilishly as he turned the steering wheel to the right, following a road that lead to a hidden airport.

“He’s gotten a lot of help from the other continents.” Continued Japan. “Australia, Mexico, and even some Latin nations are acting as mediators between the nations of Europe and Asia.”

“And to make things just a bit better, he hasn’t told anyone about America and Canada yet.” France was positively ecstatic with the news.

“W-what? How could-?” Stuttered the Briton as he stared wide eyed at the grinning Frenchman.

France slowly stopped the car, having reached their destination, while his bright grin sank into something weaker. “Key word: Yet. He’s convinced that the only way peace can be achieved is if he remains quite about it for now, although I cannot assure you that he has his doubts about hiding it.”

“For all we know, he might be telling the others about America and Canada right now.” Japan whispered softly.

“That’s why we have to take action now and find them before the others hear it from him! You ready England? Japan?” Exiting from the vehicle, France turned towards the small airport and scanned its field. Up ahead, a man waved to them before returning to his post near a plane.

“What are your plans?” England glanced across the field and took note of the plane, eager to know how they would execute their goal of dealing with America and Canada.

“We have no plan.” Admitted Japan bluntly.
“At the moment!” Added France hurriedly.

“…” England could feel most of his patience evaporating like butter on a frying pan at that answer. Following the two nations towards the lonely plane, England crossed his arms in irritation. “Then it’s a good thing I’m coming with you.” He grumbled.

“Oui! Before we depart, do you have any final business to attend to? Any lasts errands before we leave? All that’s clear is that we’re going to the Lands and we might not be back for a while.”

“What are the others going to think about our disappearance?” Looking back at the plane, England furrowed his eyebrows, questioning who the dingy little thing would get them across the bloody Atlantic Ocean.

“They think we’re immobile.” Reaching the plane, the man who revealed himself to be the pilot, swiftly introduced himself and left their company in search of some last items, assuring them that he would be quick.

“I was distraught for a while but eventually, I saw passed it. That didn’t mean I showed my true intentions in front of the others though. And I heard from some of your own people that you locked yourself in a house and told everyone who came near to “Go to hell” as they so kindly informed me.” Chuckled France.

“That’s not! I-!” England instantly grabbed France by the collar, lifting a fist near his face and threatening him with it.

“I told Germany that my government required my assistance while I told my government that I was called upon by Germany. I sincerely hope that they do not find out the truth.” Added Japan, worry clear in his stance.

“See? We’re ready to go Angleterre~! I even called upon a close friend to cover up for me while I was gone. He’s made sure to keep my officials busy with all the numerous excuses he makes for my absence.”

“Who is it?” England dared to ask although he felt like it would be a mistake.

“Prussia.” Answered Japan for France.

“I should have known.” England huffed. “Then may I ask how you can trust this blasted plane on taking us across the Atlantic Ocean? And how can you even trust this pilot too?” He growled, assured that the man was still far enough away that he couldn’t hear his doubt.

“First off, it’s not taking us across the Atlantic my silly friend, its taking us across to Spain, or possibly Portugal. Which ever airspace seems friendly enough and doesn’t try shooting us down. From whichever nation we land on, we’ll take another plane and continue from there. I certainly can’t trust my own country to offer me the liberty to enter a public airport without getting ambushed. And second, we can trust this man. If I know him then he is trustworthy. Don’t doubt my connections.” Winked France.

Rolling his eyes, England pulled out his communicator. “Well if your communicator still works I need it. I should have someone cover me before I leave. Not to mention I have to find out what is so bloody important for him call 20 times.”

Given the freedom to use France’s communicator, England dialed the number from his own device and waited, unaware of the news that awaited him when a frantic detective answered, raving something about double documents and threats to the government.
The Next Day...

By the next day, England, France and Japan would be on their way towards the Land’s determined
to locate America and Canada through whatever means.

By the next day, enough diplomats and nations would have gathered to attempt another ceasefire
between warring countries. And succeed.

And by the next morning, Alfred and Matthew would wake up; Matthew, happily content on
having a good nights sleep while Alfred would remain silent to the nightmares he had the night
before. As they turned on the television, the first thing that would greet them would be the
headline news that the war in Europe and Asia has halted.

And the brothers would most definitely not be happy, knowing that their morning had been
thoroughly ruined.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: They planned on finding America and Canada quick, talk to them and
hopefully get them to see the errors in their ways before the nations got involved.
What a shame that such plans never were meant to see fruition. If they can survive the
wrath that is America and Canada, they have worse horrors to behold in their return to
Europe. And it has nothing to do with the war.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: They seem to be at a loss. They can’t take one step in Europe, the Mob down south is stirring up some suspicious activity, and now, they have to deal with unwanted visitors. Simply talking to one another brings up so much. Until a shot rings out above their words and a fragile tie is severed.

Rule #2: Never turn your back towards the enemy.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Misunderstandings

Living Room – August 7, 2003 – 8:10 a.m.

“This is-! I can’t believe that-! ARGH!” Cried out a very furious Matthew. He clawed at his hair and growled at the news that projected itself through their television. Lost in his own anger at having their plans foiled so unexpectedly he snatched a spare screwdrivers that Alfred left lying around and was about to fling it at the droning box.

“Mat.” Mumbled Alfred, his hand wrapped firmly around his twin’s wrist, halting his random assault on their TV. “Calm down. Don’t make me end up being the bro with the cool head.”

“I know!” Snapped the Canadian who grudgingly let go of the blunt object. “I should have seen this coming though!” Once released, he swiftly marched off into their bedroom, a loud crash echoing from within.

Alfred watched their bedroom door swing sharply, solitude his only companion. He sighed tiredly, bringing a pale hand to his face and rubbing gently at his eyes. “Like things couldn’t get worse.” He whispered.

He rose with from their living room couch languidly, distracting his hand with his rumpled hair. “Damn nightmare.” He muttered, forcing his mind to block out the image of a certain Canadian who held the thousand yard stare, the perfect example of a man whose sanity had cracked.

“He’d never do that to me again. He promised.” Continued Alfred, passing a dull gaze over Kumajiro. Damn the boss in New Jersey for giving him the idea that Matthew could bring him down through whatever creative means. Including being a burden.

“Didn’t he promise Kumi?”
The bear barely took notice of him, dropping his chin back onto the floor in utter disinterest. “Thanks.” He grumbled, taking a seat in their petite dining room. The moment he sat down, a second large crash vibrated in the bedroom. For a moment, the American considered going in their room and telling his brother to chill but thought against it. Matthew rarely got angry like this. Most of the other times they argued, it was considered a disagreement and that was it.

This time, however, he was furious. For the sake of his own safety, it was best if he just let the blond fizzle himself out. Ten minutes later and the Canadian exited the room, an air of dreariness surrounding him as he took a seat besides his twin.

“Feel better?” Asked Alfred.

“You’re going to have to fix our drawers later on.” Mumbled Matthew in shame.

He ignored the pat that Alfred gave him on his back, his head lowered in defeat. “Sorry you had to see that.” He added timidly.

“See what? I didn’t see anything. And those drawers were getting kinda old too.” Said Alfred with a tiny smile. He tilted his head below Matthew’s lowered head, trying his best to get a good look at his hidden expression. “What’s wrong with letting out some steam every once in a while? I do it all the time. You shouldn’t be an exception.”

“Yeah…” Agreed Matthew, cautiously lifting his head up. “So what’s gotten into you all of a sudden? Did we switch personalities last night? Why are you so calm about this?”

“Uh, let’s just say…I already had a bad start to this morning. The nation’s stopping their war was just the icing on the cake.”

That instantly seemed to perk Matthew’s attention, his mind desperate to find some idle distraction from the failure of their plans. “Oh? What happened?” He examined his brothers red shot eyes. “…Have a bad dream?” He dared to ask.

That flinch! Immediately Matthew pounced on his twin the moment he let his guard down, grabbing hold of his hands before he could flee. “What did you dream about?”

“Nothing.”

“I’m not buying it. What did you dream about Alfred?” He urged, his grip on Alfred’s hands tightening.

“I said nothing. Now, what about the nations?” That insistent look on the American’s face quickly told of the excruciating laborious task it would be to extract such details from him. He would ask another day about his dream/nightmare, whatever the heck it was.

“…The nations.” Warily wringing his hands together, Matthew sped into the bedroom and came back out with a large world map in his hand. He sloppily flattened it out on the table. What better way to change the depressing topic then to return their attention to the world?

“Before you consider the idea, we can’t go back to Europe. Everyone’s most likely on high alert waiting for any possible attacks on them or even their officials in the events that follow their… cease fire. Not to mention we can’t try lucking our way into another meeting as diplomats.”

A moan escaped Alfred, his hand sloppily covering half his face. “Great. Europe and Asia are off limits. What else?”
“We’ll with the lovely news we’ve received today, it’s safe to say that our ambitions have been diverted on the worst crappiest luck mankind can ever dig up from their own graves.” Gritted Matthew.

“Translation Mat.”

“Our plans are screwed.” summarized the Canadian.

Continuing to skim over the lands depicted on the map, Matthew frowned. “Damn. We’re stuck. We can’t go overseas anymore without risking one of us getting caught. And you know I’m not going to tolerate any of your ‘heroic’ brotherly bullshit anymore.”

“But it was for-!”

“I don’t care.” Matthew cut him off. “If you try that again, I swear, I’ll break all your fingers when you get home.”

“…Right.”

“Glad to see you understand me. Now…” He neatly folded the map back into a fourth of its size and placed it under his arm. “…chances of the nations establishing peace amongst each other are 80% probable while chances of us thwarting them during their process are between 0 to 1%.”

“Hey, we got a chance!” chirped Alfred.

“No, we don’t. We’ll most likely get captured or killed before we get near any of the nations this time. They know our identities. And if anything, I bet Fate is laughing at us right now, cackling at how we got so cocky with approaching the others...”

“Crap. Well, we did need to tell that limey and his sidekick the truth, lest they die never knowing who we really are.” retorted Alfred.

“Yeah, you’re right. They did need to know. If only we finished the job beforehand. Maybe then, there wouldn’t be the possibility of them surviving.” finished Matthew sullenly. A few seconds of muted silence.

Then, “So what now?” asked Alfred. The boredom in his voice demanded an answer.

“Wait. Watch. Pass the time.” Offered Matthew grudgingly. “The horrible truth is that we’ll most likely have to keep on the low down for a long while. Stay on our lands. Maybe go back down South and deal with your stupid people. God knows the “American” Mob is just asking for trouble.”

“Ouch. That insult almost hurt me bro.” Alfred casually placed a hand over his heart in weak jest. If acting like an idiot would lighten up the gloomy atmosphere that had settled over their morning than so be it.

Matthew cracked a tiny smile. “Don’t worry; the next one will burn like an iron rod. Just in case you’d like a heads up.” Rising from his seat across from his twin, Matthew wandered into the kitchen aimlessly, his face sinking back into grim defeat. “…I hate to say this brother but it looks like we failed with our plans this time.” He admitted. Best to accept what was done.

“I know.” replied Alfred quickly.

“They know who we are. They have witnesses. What more?” questioned the Canadian dully.
“A meteorite hits us!” Barked Alfred in fake enthusiasm.

“Shut up Al.” Replied Matthew, although he could almost feel that smile begging to return. He had to be serious here though. “We have to stay here. For as long as its takes for our existence to fade away from their memories. Then, we can try again.”

“Ok. If that’s our best move to make.” agreed Alfred hesitantly.

“Yeah…” Glancing down at the sink in front of him, Matthew frowned. “We’ll return to our daily lives in the forest. As long as we stay away and hidden from the nations, we should be safe.”

Safe and sound. Like it should always be...

Auburn, Maine – Near an abandoned hotel - August 9, 2003 – 3:26 p.m.

Upon arrival on the Lands, formerly the United States of America, England France and Japan had hastily disembarked from their grey plane that barely reached the country in one piece and watched, perhaps for the last time, the rusty aircraft fly into the unknown distance. From there, they got to work immediately.

Starting with their clothes.

“Mon dieu! Why must these rags reek of death? Oh, the horror.” Cried France as he tilted his head away from his new faded shirt, shielding his nose with the back of his right hand. “Angleterre, I understand we must do our utmost best to blend in with the Americans here and not appear so much like foreigners but…must I be subjected to don such filthy clothing?”

“Yes, now shut up. We came here to find America and Canada, not express our fashion senses!” Fully covered in what discarded clothes he could rummage up in the empty city, England began his way south, unconcerned with whether the Frenchman was following or not. Japan quickly kept his pace with the Briton.

“May I ask what our plans are?” Questioned Japan quietly.

“Yes. We’re going to infiltrate these lands and question as many people as we can find in the larger cities. In order to make such feats possible, we need to look like the people here and we need to talk like them too.”

“The only flaw it has is the fact that not even God can correct your bloody accent.” Growled out England. “It’ll be a miracle if we get through the first city with you in tow.”

“What about my accent?” Japan asked nervously.

“You’re ok Kiku. Anyone who tries to talk to you can answer to me.”

“Oh? So you protect Japan but not me? I feel so unloved.” Continued France. “And what makes you so sure that your ‘proper English’ won’t tip off to the Americans that you’re not from here?”

“Easy.” Bit back England as his eyes narrowed in on an old rusty car in the distance. “Americans only exist because of my people. If they can butcher up the Queen’s language so easily after coming over here, than what’s to say that I can’t do the same? Though God forbid their abhorrent accent stick with me. I swear, when America and Canada finally come to their senses and join us I’m going to make both of them pay me dearly for all of this.”
“Don’t forget, there’s a long line of people who want to make America and Canada pay for their actions.” Reminded France with a grave expression.

Halting in his step, England paused long enough to turn his head over his shoulder and nod at the lagging nation. “I know.” He admitted curtly, yet a strong determination burned in his emerald eyes. A conviction that could not be easily swayed.

And despite being dropped off in unknown lands to the northeast of the country, the three nations had done well in acquiring a car, getting it to work long enough for them to reach Massachusetts within 3 days. Beyond all the empty and deserted cities and towns they passed devoid of human beings, the nations watched in disbelief, unable to fully understand the sadness that permeated the land.

Stopping within a small town in the Bay state as the car heaved onto a dirt lot, the nations tumbled out of the vehicle just as the car began to emit a deep black smoke from its hood.

“Great. Just fantastic! New York’s only a few hundred miles away. Do any of you think we can make it there on foot by the end of next year?” chortled England in a hysterical voice. He roughly kicked the dead car once as punishment for failing to reach its intended destination before settling to look for a new form of transportation. Anything really.

“Japan, if this isn’t too much to ask, for what reason did you decide to help us? I would have understood your reluctance to avoid us, yet…you were almost insistent on coming. Why?” quizzed France innocently enough, eager to avoid the fuming Briton.

Startled by the sudden question, Japan ceased his fiddling with the extra communicator that France lent him. “Why you ask?” He repeated. “Because…”

Lost in a dull gaze across the horizon, Japan frowned. “…I trusted them. If they truly intend on betraying me, I want to know what their reasons are. Their true reasons.”

“Do you want revenge?” England dared to question as he slowed down his pace long enough to linger near the smaller nation.

Staring straight ahead at a broken road that stretched beyond their dirt lot, Japan sighed. “Revenge? No. An apology? Maybe.”

“How often did you spend time with them?” Deciding to walk on his left side, England tilted his head in interest, wanting to learn about the nations believed to have perished long ago.

“Not too much truthfully. But on the occasions that I would get the chance to meet up with them, after we’d complete our business, they would go to great measures to take me somewhere and as they say, ‘treat me’ for being such a wonderful asset to them. If only I could imagine what they were using all our trades for, I would never have helped them.” Said Japan regretfully.

“I can’t imagine any of us would have either, if we knew their true intentions.” soothed France.

“Yes. But…” Japan stopped in his tracks, France and England following suit. “When I first met them, or should I say, when they first found me, they were so kind. So gentle. For the five years I knew them, they truly came off as nothing but decent humans who helped me in my worst time of need.”

“Perhaps they are the best actors the world has had the misfortune to behold.” France muttered ruefully.
“Perhaps.” Confirmed Japan. His gaze swayed below France’s line of sight, concentrating on the Frenchmen’s beard. “But to think such behavior can be faked so easily? I don’t want to believe that Alfred and Matthew are truly evil until I determine that they indeed do not hold a shred of humanity in them.”

“Then?” England asked.

“Then…I will have to abandon all hope of saving them and side with the others.” Said Japan.

“I see.” Spoke England with a hint of sadness in his voice.

“We understand.” Placing a hand on the Japanese nations shoulder, France offered a small smile. “We thank you for giving them the benefit of the doubt though. Let’s do our best to bring them back to us.”

“Ok, how about we start with those fine folks over there? Any of you think they’d be bothered to give us a ride in their truck?” Pointed England as they began to make out a figure of two people arguing nearby a small gas station ironically located just a mile away from their broken car.

“Please, allow me to handle this.” chimed in France, dusty off an irremovable stain from his shoulder as he sauntered his way over to the duo up ahead. With a roll of the eyes from England and a small smile from Japan, the 3 men made their way towards the strangers.


“…No, don’t have any idea what’cher talkin’ bout. Mind lettin’ me through?” Pursed a large rugged man who stood before England, his hand inching his way towards a hidden weapon. Grudgingly, England stepped to the side and let the man continue through the street, an angry frown on his face as yet another ‘American’ failed to give him any information regarding the brothers. Not even France’s photo of the twins at the airport seemed to rouse any recognition amongst the people that traveled through the neighborhood, which was busy enough to be considered a sure route for drugs and weapons to pass through.

“Stupid man…” Grumbled the Briton under his breath as the gruff American nearly spat near his shoe when he walked passed him. Lightly shaking the flashlight in his hand, he could feel his irritation building up as the light faltered and faded in a threatening manner. “I swear, if you turn off on me…”

And it did just that.

With a final farewell, the flashlight buzzed for a split second then died, leaving England in the darkness of the street.

“You piece of rubbish!” He growled out as he stuffed it into a bag behind him. No point in lingering in the street waiting for another checkpoint to occur between him and the lovely Americans that graced his presence. Walking towards the edge of an empty house to the right of the street, England tapped once on the boarded up door and waited until a click could be heard from inside.

Once let in he strolled past Japan, threw his bag on the floor and dropped himself onto a dirty kitchen chair unceremoniously.

“How did it go?” Began Japan.

“Nothing. Not even a wink of help from any of these wankers!” Declared England, his gaze
searching around the poorly lit house for France. “And the Frog? Does he have any news? Or is he getting mugged again?” The sound of a door closing from the back alerted both nations to their ally’s arrival immediately.

“Mon cheri, I was not ‘mugged’ that time as you so kindly put it. I was just having a minor confrontation with a thief who thought he could take advantage of my kind nature.” Stated France, a small slip of paper woven around his fingers. “But if you must know, a chanced upon a lovely brave flower who has stormed passed all the ugliness of this torn society and was able to bargain a few hints out of her.”

“In exchange?” Japan tilted his head.

“Oh, that is of no importance. Just don’t ask for too many pain pills.” Waved off France nonchalantly.

“You what?” hollered England in dismay. As he was about to lunge at the Frenchman, France quickly shoved the slip of paper into his hands like it was a hot lump of coal.

“Here! She told me where the main mobs of this nation are located in. We’re not too far from one actually and she even said that she’s seen some men that look like America and Canada gracing the area.” Threw France in his defense. “She said if the people we’re looking for are involved in large crimes, they will eventually have some business with the American mob.”

“How could you tell if she was telling the truth?” Asked England in a suspicious tone.

“I…” France paused. “…It’s more of a lead now then what we had 2 weeks ago. And for nations that have landed on unknown territory with no plan, looking for people that aren’t supposed to exist, I think we have fared well.”

Turning the paper around in his hands, England grimaced but pocketed the item anyways. “Fine. It’s better than nothing anyways. Now…” He looked towards Japan. “Will you please keep watch over our base while France and I rest for a bit? I can’t believe how draining it can be, stopping potential crimi- Ah, what am I saying? ALL the bloody American’s here are criminals! Argh!”

He yanked at his hair slightly in frustration before releasing a sigh. “Just…watch the place while we sleep for a few hours. God…if only I had a month before to think of a plan, then we wouldn’t be running around here like headless chickens ready for the pot.”

“Of course.” A curt nod from Japan and the two blond nations were off, disappearing around a corner as they settled into the living room for the night.

“Merci.”

“Sleep well…” Whispered Japan as he returned his gaze to the dusty window in the kitchen, his mind wandering around clues and old memories about the twins.

“Hey Kiku, wanna play a game?” Echoed Alfred’s voice.

“…it’s amazing how much of a challenge it is trying to get foreign parts to work with old planes.” Spoke Matthew softly. “But what’s life worth if you don’t have a challenge every once in a while?”

A small flicker of a petite candle on the dining room table caught Japan’s attention for a vague while, his teeth clattering as he repressed the feeling to nibble his lip in thought. How strange that an old habits of Matthew’s would stick itself onto Japan.
“We love traveling! I mean, sure, we’ve seen so much that—” A swift nudge from Matthew halted Alfred long enough to consider his words and rephrase them. “...that it gets boring cruisin’ around the same neighborhood back home. So we’re always up for a new trip anywhere.”

“I hate being bored.” Chirped Alfred with a sloppy grin. “So if it’s telling jokes or pissing off my bro, I’m game!”

No more looking out the window. A tug of the chair and Japan was comfortably seated, his gaze dancing with the soft sway of the candle light. “Alfred and Matthew…” He whispered, barely focused on some graffiti decorating the walls of the abandoned house.

“...why must you two always view life as a game?” He had asked that one time, didn’t he?

“It keeps us entertained.” Alfred answered, as he recalled that specific memory.

“And gives us purpose. A goal. To win.” Continued Matthew.

“We can never refuse a good challenge.”

A challenge? A game they had to win. Where could he go with this? Raking his thoughts for anything that could garner the brother’s attention of interest, Japan continued to mull.

A goal, a goal, a goal. ...To get revenge. Revenge was their purpose. To hurt those that hurt them.

Such a twisted purpose. If only this could all be a dream. Or a lie. A lie...

That was it! A lie. Their purpose. Standing up from his seat so fast that he had to swiftly catch it before it clattered to the floor, Japan could feel his blood rushing. “That’s it! They want to win this game so badly but... if it was all for nothing then...” That’d make all their endeavors pointless.

Which reinforced that they’ve been following a lie this whole time.

How would he go about telling them this nicely though? And would they believe him, or see to reason? This would definitely change their purpose; their game. So why not? But how would he get their attention?

As all the pieces and details came together, Japan could almost say he felt a faint grin sneak its way unto his face as he stared intently into the graffiti lining the kitchen walls of the abandoned house. Once France and England woke up from their break, he’d be sure to bring up this fine proposal immediately.

A game could only last so long...


**YOUR GAME IS A LIE. THE STORY ISN’T OVER. RETURN TO WHERE IT BEGAN.**

Standing back a distance from the message with lips pursed in thought, England nodded in silent acceptance and walked away, scanning the environment for another place to rewrite the same message.

“Oh, mon cheri, don’t you find this message a bit...taunting in some way?” Asked France.

“Yes, I do.” replied England as he spotted another building in the distance; its structure promising sturdy support. “Exactly how I want it.”
“The brothers won’t take that lightly.” Sighed France as he followed after the Briton.

“Anger elicits response Francis. If it drags them from hiding, than it’s worked effectively.”
Reasoned the blond as he began to paint out the same message a few blocks down the street. “I
don’t care how long it takes us. They WILL see this message soon enough.”

“Well, at least be thankful that Japan was sharp enough to conjure up such a brilliant plan.”
Boasted France. “Or else, we’d still be stuck stopping random strangers on the streets, crossing our
fingers that they have the information we’re looking for.”

“Tch, I’m not even going to dignify that with an answer.” Growled England as he finished the same
message on a gray wall. “Now stop wasting my time and go paint what I wrote somewhere else!”

“But mon ami… when exactly are we going to meet with our dear “friends”? Next year? And do
they even know where it all began? I applaud Japan for trying to help but still, I can’t help but feel
some worry for this plan. And then the nations are bound to…”

“France…” Started England slowly. “…Just shut up and do as I say. We’re going to find them.
We’re going to talk. And then we’re going home with both brothers in tow. Whether they are
willing, or kicking and screaming.” He finished calmly.

With a amused chuckle, France picked up his own make shift paint brush from beside England and
wandered to his own corner of the street, convinced for a second that England would actually
achieve such a goal.

“Please let it be that easy…” He whispered softly.


“…And they said that…”

“I know….but…."

“At least if…”

Through the hush and whispers that snaked its way in between various diplomats that wore the
most serious looking business suits they could afford, a pair of red eyes lightly glared in their
direction before returning to his own audience as they made their exit out of an important room.

“HEY! We’re talking to you, you bastard! The least you can do is pretend you’re listening!”
Snapped Romano angrily, a quick slam of the meeting room doors echoing behind Prussia.

To his side, Spain sighed. “Lovi, be nice. He’s only worried about the hell our diplomats must be
giving his brother.”

“Nah. He should be ok.” Assured Prussia quickly. “After all, half of the work is going to China
now.” He smirked.

“Is that good?” Added Belgium who glanced over Spain’s shoulder.

“For my lil’ bruder’s health, yes. For the rest of Europe? I don’t know.” Answered Prussia
reluctantly. “Not all of Europe trusts the great and powerful China intervening in our affairs. His
nation WAS threatening ours for a while too after all. And who knows if he’s still in cahoots with
Russia.”
“B-better him t-than that Russian bastard.” Stuttered the Italian. “These stupid diplomats better do their job and NOT let anyone invade our nation or else!”

With a soft chuckle, Spain wrapped an arm around him, albeit it was briefly refused with a curt shrug. “So…we just wait until they finish again?”

“That’s what it looks like.” Replied Belgium with a sad smile. “But hey! At least everyone seems to be doing better ever since the fighting has stopped. That should be a blessing in itself.”

“I guess. But still, does it really take THIS long to get treaties signed and finalized? I don’t like how these guys don’t allow us to be in every meeting they have. Even Germany is refused access sometimes.” Grumbled the albino.

“Tch, whatever. I just want to go home already before Italy decides to escape from the church again.” Complained Romano.

“Yeah, yeah. I’ve only heard you moan and bitch about that all day, geez! I really question what you see in him sometimes Spain.” Dodging a swift kick sent his way, Prussia grinned. “Hey, it was an honest question. Can’t take a jo-?”

Without warning, the doors to the meeting room slammed open, a very disgruntled German walking through them followed by a silent China.

“Prussia, come here.” He ordered stiffly.

Uncertain whether this was his usual frustrated rant he’d release on him regarding the government and its decision, or something else, Prussia came. “Yeah? What’s up bruder? Ready to release some steam abou-?”

“Quiet. I am not playing around.” He uttered immediately.

Ouch. Scratching the back of his head sheepishly, Prussia did his best to sum up a serious face; his eyes curiously wandering over to China as he approached the 3 other nations and lead them away quietly. Was something wrong?

Feeling the air get thicker by the second as he was left alone with a very tense Germany, Prussia pulled at his collar nervously, then swallowed. “What’s wrong West?”

“The officials. They got some news that affects us all, including the assassins. But before I can explain anything, YOU need to tell me everything you know about them. Everything.” He repeated.

“Ummmm, ok? Is that all? Cause I can…” His words trailed off into a low mumble as he noticed Germany’s scowl still in place. What?

“It’s taken a whole month for our people to establish some sort of peace with the others. With any luck, we’ll still be able to keep it once I tell the nations about the assassins true identities however…”

However? Prussia raised his eyebrow in question, urging his brother on.

“…We’ve just received some disturbing reports that although they haven’t been confirmed to be true, have caused great worry in the international community.”

“…ok. Why are you telling me this?” Asked Prussia warily. This didn’t sound good either way.
“If these reports are true Prussia, the nations and I will need all the information you can recall to us about America and Canada. Even if our governments don’t know about their existence, their lands still pose a very dangerous threat to us in ways we thought impossible after the Great War.”

He wanted to say something; really, he did. But for some reason, it felt like all the words in his mouth had evaporated when he saw a deep crease on his younger brother’s face.

“If what I assume occurs...we are going to find ourselves with greater opportunities at catching these rogue nations very soon. More man power. We must apprehend them. Before our people discover them first.”

As Prussia searched all over the floor for any excuse to avoid his brothers stare he finally gave up his endeavors and looked up, watching his brother nod over towards a spare room some ways down a narrow hallway.

*Looks like I won’t be able to keep my promise to France after all… Thought the albino as he made his way past Germany. Within the confines of that blasted room, he would soon break his code of silence to not speak of the brothers, or recall any specific details he could describe that would give the nations an advantage over France and England. And like that, the door closed behind him with a resounding and ominous click.*

Northwest American-Canadian border – Off a beaten path – October 3, 2003 - 3:59 p.m.

“Damn it. ...Are you ok?” Muttered Alfred through gritted teeth, his right arm slung around his twin while he half carried him, half dragged him towards the border. “Mattie.”

A jolt vibrated through the Canadian, followed by another one; this one larger and more violent. “Ugh…urk…..” He choked out passed the hand that covered his mouth. “Al...-fred...”

“Mattie just stay still ok! Don’t-Don’t move! I’ve got you!” Wrapping his arms strongly around Matthew’s midsection, Alfred struggled to quell the tremors that racked his body.

“Lightning…hurts….” Whispered the quieter twin, his grip on Alfred’s hand tightening. He violently shuddered, willing the static that coursed through his body to cease. Curse all of Mother Nature and her wretched storms that raged through the Canadians lands.

“Please…make it…stop…” He wept. Thunder crashed behind the brother’s back, followed swiftly by lightning that crackled overhead demanding to be allowed free range of the nation underneath.

“Don’t worry, I’m here.” Spoke Alfred in a gentle voice. “Just relax, ok? Once we make it to Washington, I’ll find us the nearest bar and get you the strongest liquor they can offer. That should numb the pain.” He offered in an unusually high voice, worry eating away at him for his brothers well being.

Unable to take another step forward, Matthew quickly became the perfect burden he never wanted to be, causing his twin to halt in his step at the sudden increase in the weight he supported.

“M’sorry. Can’t walk anymore.” To prove his point, Matthew did not budge from his spot, his legs unable to serve their purpose anymore. “Go ahead. I can…wait here.” He mumbled.

“Matthew...I-no. I’ll carry you. Just-.”

“Go!” Ordered Matthew bluntly. Refusing to let the pain show on his face, he gave Alfred a weak smile. “I’m ok. Just get me something...really strong while I try to wait out the storms back home.”
“And if it gets worse?” Asked Alfred worriedly as he eyed a nervous twitch affect his brothers arm.

“It won’t.” Countered the blond. “Now go. If you come back and it starts raining over here I’ll…”

“Fine.” Despite feeling a heavy ball in his stomach as he slowly backed away from his incapacitated brother, Alfred did as he was told. “I’ll be right back ok? Then we’ll go straight home.”

A nod from Matthew and he was off.

Yet, from a distance, blue eyes watched with astonishment at the opportunity presented before him.

Oroville, Washington – Empty cabins – 4:15 p.m.

“You’ve found them? But how is that possible? We’ve only covered the northern half of the country.” Spoke Japan through his communicator; a low French accent flowed through from the other end.

“I am just as surprised as you mon ami, but such moments cannot be wasted on thoughts when it is clear that action is necessary. I leave you adieu.” He finished.

“Be careful France.” One solid click and the communicator went silent before another voice spoke through.

“So the bloody Frog found them huh…?”

“Yes. How long do you assume it will take you to return to the cabin by the lake?” Came Japan’s question as he nervously glanced out the dirty window.

“About 5-10 minutes if I sprint. Why?” England asked.

“Because. Alfred is heading my way and I’m quite positive that he’s not aware of my presence yet.”

“Bloody he- Ok! I’ll be there in 2 minutes. Just…keep an eye on him and stay out of his sight!” Ordered England.

With a nervous pause, Japan bit his lower lip in thought. “…”

“Japan?”

“…I’m sorry England.”

“Japan! What are you-!” The device went dead for a second time, this time for good as Japan turned it off and hastily rushed out of the cabin and headed straight for an anxious, unsuspecting American.

A small meadow – 4:17 p.m.

Silently lying in the grass of the sparse meadow out in the middle of nowhere, Matthew sighed tiredly, willing his nerves to keep calm.

“Not feeling well, mon cheri?”

Quickly, he regretted the sigh as he swallowed the air and gagged on it. “W-what?” He sputtered, sloppily lifting himself from the comforts of the silky grass. The moment his eyes landed on
France’s worried face, he immediately shuffled back from the nation with a vicious snarl on his lips.

“You! How did you-?” Withholding another cough from escaping his person, Matthew quickly threw France a glare to cover up for his sudden silence.

“…Are you ok?” Questioned the Frenchmen gently.

“That’s none of your business!” Barked the Canadian, his anger building with every second his legs refused to lift him from the floor. The disadvantage he was at drove him crazy, yet even if his condition, should the bastard try anything, he’d-!

“Here.” Stretching an elegant arm forward, France offered the blond a small blue pill. “It’s a pain killer. My last one, although it looks like you-.”

Before he could finish his words, the gift was slapped away from his reach, a sturdy frown on Matthew’s face. “I don’t want anything from you! Now tell me why you’re here! Came to silence us for good?”

“Non, non! We’ve come to do no such thing. I am merely here to-.”

“We?” Cut in Matthew in confusion. “You mean you’re not alone? Then…” …Alfred! Despite trying to force some sort of strength into his legs, he fell flat on his tail immediately. Seeing a look of pity on the Frenchman’s face, he snarled again. “Don’t you DARE give me that look!”

“Mon cheri…”

“Ta gueule!” (Shut it!) Yelled Matthew. “…What exactly did you plan on accomplishing by coming here? Did you think you’d convince my brother and I to return to you?”

“I-.”

“No. That’s my answer. We’re not returning. And even if-.”

“But you didn’t even let me explain myself! You didn’t let me explain this whole misunderstanding!”

“Oh?” Scoffed the blond out icily. “What pathetic excuse could you possibly have to throw at me?”

“It’s come to my understanding that you believe that England and I never cared for you, when on the contrary, that is the exact opposite.” Blurted out France. “We looked so desperately for you and your brother when you two got lost. You can’t possibly imagine our heart ache when everyone told us you were gone for good.”

“…”

Silence. This HAD to be a good sign. He had to continue. “I know that we weren’t the best caretakers when you were little but please understand that there was nothing but love for you two! If we could correct our mistake in the past, both England and I would jump on it in a heartbeat, so long as it meant that you two would live happy lives with your own kind.”

“Is that so?” Asked Matthew blankly, an unreadable expression on his face as he glanced up at his former caretaker.
“Yes! Mon chéri, please forgive your foolish papa and come back to me. Please.” Pleased France with an outstretched hand.

“…”

“Ca-?”

“You’re not my papa.” Correct Matthew.

“Ah-? …I see. I can understand that.” Nodded France sadly. He further pressed his hand in Canada’s direction. “But that’s beside the point. Won’t you forgive me for my folly and start anew? I can help you and-.”

“Is that it?” interrupted the Canadian.

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“Your story. Is that all you have to say?”

“…Yes. It is.” Added France slowly. “But you do understand my apology, right? You see this whole misunderstanding you and your brother have been under the impression of?”

“Yes.”

“Bon. (Good) Then please, take my hand and we can start all over.”

A smile graced France’s face as Matthew slowly inched forward towards his hand. But as soon as he was within reach, his smile fell flat into a look of utter shock as the blond easily slapped his offer away.

“No. I’m not going with you. Ever. I’m staying here, where I belong.” He stated calmly, finding new strength in his conviction. Lifting himself stiffly from the ground, Matthew edged himself away from France.

“But-!”

“And I completely understand your apology. The mistake you made in the past. But that doesn’t mean I forgive you. Or that I want to start anew.”

Like an old house caving in on itself, France could see all his hopes falling apart.

“To tell the truth, I can’t stand people like you. Those that think a few pretty words can win someone over. I’m not a child anymore France. And you can’t sway my thoughts either, no matter how much you beg or plead.”

Standing before the Canadian and his biting words, France’s mouth hung open in disbelief.

“Between being an assassin that the whole world hates and being with you again, I’m rather content with being hated by the whole world then being by your side again.”

That hurt.

“Because this is what I was meant to do. Until the day Alfred and I perish from this Earth.”

Empty cabins – 4:30 p.m.
“I thought I told you that if we ever see you again, we won’t show any mercy.” Came Alfred’s icy voice. “I guess you just have bad luck then.”

“Alfred, please don’t. I-I…” Caught between distracting a very furious Alfred and stalling long enough for England to arrive on the scene, Japan was in an unsettling predicament.

“Oh well. I’ll always remember you as a good friend.” Sighed America as he pulled out a revolver and aimed it at Japan.

“Alfred, if you shoot me, I assure you that it will be a mistake that cannot be forgiven.” Warned Japan warily.

“Too bad then.” He shot back in a dark whisper.

*click*

“I wouldn’t be so rash, if I were you.” Called out England from behind with his own weapon aimed at the American. With a curt nod of his head, Japan understood his order and sprinted away the moment Alfred lazily glanced over his shoulder at the Briton.

Please be careful… Was the Japanese man’s last thoughts as he took off in search of France, leaving the nation alone with his former charge.

America and England

“How the hell did you even find us?” Whispered Alfred loud enough for England to hear.

“How you ask?” England repeated. He shrugged. “Luck?” No point in telling him that he merely passing by, trying to paint the whole country with one message.

The moment Alfred broke out into laughter, England suppressed the hairs that stood on the back of his neck. Well, that was to be expected.

“Hey Arthur, I’m sorry if this disappoints you but, I don’t have any more stories to tell you. In case you couldn’t tell from the last time we spoke.”


Again, America broke out in laughter, although it came out more bitter. More strained.

“Nah, I’m pretty sure the story ended just how I told you. No happy ending. Just misery for everyone.” With a shrug of his shoulder, America casually pointed his gun in England direction, despite the Briton already having a weapon aimed at him. “I can make this a happy ending though, if that’s what you want.”

England sighed. “Happy for you, or happy for America?”

The wide grin that Alfred held immediately dissolved into a nasty frown the second he heard his former name uttered. “Don’t you dare call me that! You have NO RIGHT to call me that anymore!” He shouted angrily.

“Yet, you’re free to call me anything? Even going as far as to giving me a human name?”

“Yeah. Now how about you shut the fu-!”

“Shut it!” Yelled England angrily. “You will not use such language in front of me! And if you
really think for a second that you don’t have any reason to hear out my story, then you truly are a child. A stupid child!” His lost his patience, what else could he say in his defense?

With a wicked glare sent his way, England let out a slow breathe, secretly counting to 10 before he’d start his story.

“Why should I listen anyways?” Interrupted Alfred with one arm crossed over his chest, the second arm still clutching his gun. “You don’t give a shit about Mat and me. We were nothing but property to you. Symbols of your status in the world back then.”

“That’s not-!”

“It’s the truth! I’m not a fucking retard, got it? I know what nations did back then in order to appear big and powerful. They conquered. Conquered and conquered and conquered all the lands they could find until nothing was left. That’s what we were anyways; trophies to your shelf. Nothing else.” He spat out disgustingly.

“Alfred…”

“You want proof of the kind of horrible person you are? I got plenty to share!” Accused Alfred. “Even when Matthew and I were lost we always thought that as soon as we’d find you, everything would be back to normal. But what happens when we finally find our way back home?”

England bit his lip.

“We find out that we’ve been replaced! Replaced with some new colonies that you’ve, yet again, CONQUERED!!”

The colonies… How on Earth did they..?

“We didn’t need much more proof about how ‘important’ we were to you! We knew our own kind when we saw them. Watching them play in OUR garden while you watched from a distance. Do you even know how broken Matthew was? To see that yet again, he was given up so easily.” Continued Alfred, his teeth clenched so tight he felt he’d break his teeth soon.

“But you just couldn’t abandon Mat and me so easily, could you? You just HAD to keep fucking in my lands. Lands that never belonged to you in the first place!”

“Wait. About those colonies-.”

“The revolution! Just when my people are sick and tired of your shit, you go and ‘proclaim’ that our rebellion is a betrayal of the Crown? Who do you think you are leaving me alone for so long and then coming back saying that I still belong to you?”

“Alfred.”

“And the War of 1812! That one fucking war where you used my own brother against me! How could you?”

“You attacked him first!” Barked out England, tired of having his opinion and thoughts dismissed so easily.

“No, I didn’t. My people did. But that doesn’t forgive the fact that if Mat and I returned to you, we would definitely by at each other’s throats, trying to kill each other while you’d just smile at the chess pieces that mangled each other.”
“But you didn’t-.”

“And then my civil war! I bet you were laughing on your high horse watching my people murder each other! Weren’t you, your majesty?”

“I was most certainly not laughing, although you did-.”

“Remember when we first met in London? And then we talked in the forest near New York?” Cut in Alfred yet again. A wary England nodded. “All those times I was simply, the assassin to you. So now that I’m not only that but Amer-…Alfred…do you still want to turn me over to the police? I’m a criminal after all.”

“I…I don’t know. If you could just return to us quietly we can-.”

“Return to you? Whoever said I was returning?” Spoke Alfred in an icy tone. “The best criminals always go down with a bang. Not a whimper. Do you seriously think me and Mat will just… surrender? Keep dreaming!”

“Tch. So that’s how it’s going to be? You haven’t even heard my story. The prequel to yours.”

“I don’t really care.” Added Alfred.

“You should. Because I never once abandoned you. Or your brother. And neither of you were replaced. Ever. To see you believe such a nightmare, I am deeply sorry.” Offered England, but rather than appease the American it seemed to fuel his anger.

“Sorry? Is that all you can say? Sorry?” He growled in an acid voice. “Oh wow! He said sorry! The great and powerful British Empire said SORRY! Ha! Shame that I don’t give a damn.”

At this England furrowed his eyebrows. He had to handle this with a different approach. “A- alright…Alfred. You’re right… My apologies mean nothing.” He uttered in a defeated tone. At that statement, Alfred bristled up.

“See! I knew it! You really didn’t give a fu-!”

“But!” Interjected England quickly. “…That doesn’t mean I’m not truly sorry for everything that’s happened to you.”

“You don’t-!”

“That day you saw the colonies at your old house…I wasn’t replacing you or your brother. My government had placed them in my care, but I refused to keep them longer than a week.” Explained England.

“Eh…What?”

“And if only you knew the days I spent looking for you and Cana-.” There was that bristle of the American again. “I mean…Matthew. I was only given a week before everyone told me to give up. And they only insisted upon it because we found two small corpses in the woods.”

“…”

“…Everyone confirmed that it was you and your brother we found. What else could we do but accept the horrible thought that you and Matthew had died?”

Hearing this truth, Alfred lowered his gun dejectedly, almost losing complete hold of it while his
mouth was agape in disbelief. “That’s not…"

“It’s the truth Alfred. I’ll admit, my people…I… have interfered in your lands for so long. But don’t think for a second that I didn’t care about you. Or your brother. That day I lost you two…I was taking you both to Canada because your brother wouldn’t stop crying about how much he missed France. That’s how much I cared about you two. Taken to the point where I would be willing to take you over to the Frog to visit if it would make you both happy.”

The range of emotions that ran through the Americans face were so rapid, England could have sworn he was literally fighting with someone else in his head. What thoughts could he possibly be considering in face of this sudden truth?

Canada and France

“Can’t you accept defeat where defeat is obvious?” Muttered the Canadian. “Back then, you gave me up to England so shamelessly and always retreated, never once looking for another approach. You couldn’t stand up for me in the past and even now, you can’t stand up for yourself against me. A man that can’t defend that which he cares for.”

Without a blink of pity in his face, Matthew shook his head. “You’re not even worth the dirt you stand on.”

At a loss for words, too conflicted on how to respond to Matthew’s ruthless words, France slowly brought a hand to his forehead and massaged it. Then a foot went forward and another until, “STOP!”

Backing away from the Frenchman that dared to come towards him, Matthew frowned. “Don’t come near me. You and I have nothing else to speak of. You lost everything. And that’s how it will remain.”

“But Cana-.”

“Quiet! I said don’t call me that! Only one person can ever address me as such.”

“…Matthew…”

“If you still truly have any love for me, than give up.” Offered Matthew coldly.

“W-what? …N-non, I cannot-.” Came France’s stuttered words.

“Give up France! Give up like you always do.” A bitter smile lifted Matthew’s lips up. “You have no excuse for your actions. After all, old habits die hard, non?” Bringing a hand up to his chest where he could still feel a few surges of electricity coursing through him, Matthew held back a groan and started backing away from his former caretaker, never once breaking eye contact with him.

Today, he would be spared. Simply for the reason that he was not stable enough to take a good aim at the nation. But at least he would make sure to see the expression on his face. The expression of pure defeat as one is unable to prevent their worst fears.

Just as he was far enough to be concealed in the bushes some distance away to barely make out France’s figure before him, Matthew could have sworn he heard an eerie whisper flutter through the air and make its ways towards him.

“I did it to protect you.”
Only the leaves all around him welcomed him back with the silence of isolation.

**England and America**

To affirm his dedication to gaining his trust, England brashly tossed his gun before him. “Please… just come back with us. Whatever happens with the rest of the nations, I’ll stand by your side. I failed to protect you once I vow never to fail again.”

That familiar taste of blood blossomed in Alfred’s mouth as a result of the force his teeth placed on his lips. Could he go back? But what about Matthew? What if he already chose to join them? No… Matthew wouldn’t do that. Not without his opinion. And he couldn’t do the same either. But… He had to make a choice. NOW!

From behind, England could hear the vigorous sound of bushes being shoved as someone came his way. Perhaps France? Or Canada? Unable to continue staring at Alfred’s conflicted face, he turned towards the rustling foliage in hopes that France was coming back with Canada. Then maybe they could all go home and-

**BANG!**

Where that sound came from, he couldn’t tell immediately. He remained frozen for what felt like an eternity as he could imagine France come tumbling through the vegetation with a bullet through him, yet, that was not the sound to interrupt the dead silence of the area.

It was America.

“There. Now we’ll never have a choice to join you…” Whispered the American as he slowly lowered his smoking gun with a tight grip. Behind his glasses, cold eyes watched England hesitantly inch his hand towards his chest. When he pulled back and saw his hand painted red his breathe hitched, his gaze working its way over his trembling shoulder where he silently asked the American one question.

*Why?*

Taking small steps away from the Briton who struggled to keep himself standing, Alfred frowned, his figure swaying for a reason he wished not to think too long on. “The America you knew back then doesn’t exist anymore. But the person I am now and the things I’ve done…you’ll never accept.” He shook his head in denial.

“Never…” Hastily, he spun on his heel and dashed away before England’s body crumpled to the floor. And where incomplete tears lingered, green eyes slowly became glazed over before a last breathe escaped him.

…

“England? What happened?” Shouted a familiar French voice, the sound of footsteps coming towards the Briton.

“England?”

… A body found.

“ENGLAND!”

… “-been shot!”
“What…to do…breathing!”

“Hold his head! I’m-”

...

“No! No, no, no, no, no! N-

Fuck.

No pulse. No heaving chest indicating life. Just a lifeless body. Upon hearing that wretched shot cut through the area, Japan and France were left with a horrendous find: Their ally shot dead. And in the chaotic aftermath that ensued with both men trying to revive a nonresponsive Briton, they eventually had to concede with the harsh reality and pray that he was strong enough to break free from the grasp of death.

“He’ll come back. He has to…” Muttered France as he held the man’s head in his lap. Holding back tears the threatened to slip passed him, France felt his body flinch as his eyes landed upon the sole bullet hole in the nations chest. Directly planted where his heart would be.

“How could this happen…?” Japan mumbled; his hand clutching England’s timidly. With the bullet having penetrated the nation so easily, there was not much for Japan to do but examine his fallen friend for any additional wounds that may have been hidden in what unfortunate argument he held with Alfred.

“America…” Echoed the Japanese nation. “…how could you do this?”


“…” There was no reply from Japan as he simply frowned.

And waited. Waited for England’s awakening.

America and Canada

“Alfred. Alfred!” Whispered Matthew as he whipped his head in all directions, expecting any moment for his twin to appear. Through the shuffling shrubs to his side, he finally emerged; hesitantly.

“Oh God, there you are! Are you ok? Did you get shot?” instantly rushing towards the American and searching him for any visible wounds, he began to cease his frantic actions when he realized Alfred wasn’t talking back to him. Or even speaking.

“Alfred?” He peeked his head below his twins downcast head and found an unreadable expression. Something so unlike his brother to hold. “What’s wrong? Alfred…tell me.” He pleaded.

“I…” He lifted his head at last, his eyebrows scrunched up as if he was still in thought. “…I shot England.”

“You did? Oh thank God! I thought he was the one that shot you.” Blew out Matthew in a relieved breathe.

“And I killed him…” Finished Alfred blankly.

“What? Really?” Exclaimed the Canadian. “…But do you know if he’ll come back or not?”
“No, I don’t know. But I actually did it. I pulled the trigger and shot him.” He mumbled, more to himself then telling Matthew. “What do I do now?” Came a soft whisper.

“I’d propose we celebrate but I’m still worried he might come back.” Answered Matthew who was still mystified by Alfred’s strange behavior. Shouldn’t he of all people be ecstatic to have finally done in his caretaker, the man who caused his whole life to be one miserable wreck?

“Let’s go. I’ll find out sooner or later if he’s dead or not.” Grasping a hold of Matthew’s arm, Alfred took charge in leading them away from the scene of the crime. His crime. “For now, let’s deal with your pain though.”

“Oh that? I’m ok brother, really. Can we just go home? I’m a little tired after all that’s happened today.” As if to confirm his thoughts, the Canadians legs gave way a second time, bringing both him and Alfred down to the lumpy earth.

“Ah! I’m sorry! I-It was an accident! I-I-I swear!” Stammered Matthew while his arms flailed around trying to force his body back up.

“Oh Mattie…” Untangling himself from his twin, Alfred let a crooked smile slip onto his face as he easily lifted him from the floor.

“No! Don’t pick me up! I can walk on my own.” Struggled the Canadian, refusing to acknowledge a light blush dusting his cheeks. “I’m not weak, dammit!”

He wanted to frown, really he did. But to let such an expression cross his face, Alfred could not exactly determine what other emotions would reveal themselves in due time if he let just one negative emotion through. He was supposed to be happy no matter what. Even if it felt like a fat lie.

Unable to allow his twin to see such trouble cover his face, Alfred forced a smile on his face and chuckled. It felt strained. “How ’bout this, you let me give you a piggy back ride home, just for old time sakes. I know you can walk, but I want to relive old memories if that’s ok with you.”

With a thoughtful pause, Matthew reluctantly nodded. Oh the things Alfred would say to cover for his faults. “Ok… But only because I know you’ll keep whining until you get your way!” He chided.

Agreements were settled and brothers were eventually on their way home, but somewhere along the way, as Matthew finally fell asleep, Alfred knew his frown was back on his face. And in the empty silence of the wild, he could only hear one word repeat itself endlessly. An unexplainable torment.

Why?


“…he stable…?”

“…yeah…but…”

“-Are you going to call Prussia?”

“Yeah… we should know what we’ve missed in Europe anyways…” Replied France tiredly.

With a nod from Japan and one last glance at England body whose chest rose slowly, almost
faintly, he sighed and fumbled around with his communicator before recalling Prussia’s number. A quaint buzz drifted through the device. Then a loud shout.

“Where the hell are you guys?” Hollered Prussia angrily. “Shit! I’ve been trying to call you for the past 2 weeks already! What are you guys doing anyways? Enjoying a fuckin’ honeymoon?”

“Gilbert, please calm down! Now’s not the time for any of you snide comments.” Retorted France harshly.

“…”

“…Oh dang. Sorry France didn’t know you were in a bad mood today.” Apologized Prussia quietly. “Is everything ok with you guys?”

“…Not as pleasant as I’d wish it’d be.”

“What happened?”

“England was shot. And died.”

“Holy fuc-! Is he…?”

“No. He recovered from the wound. Thankfully his nation and government were stable enough to revive him or else…”

“Yeah…” Agreed Prussia softly. “Well…do you want an update then?”

“Please. I’d much appreciate good news right about now.”

“O-Oh…” Stuttered Prussia suddenly. “…You want GOOD news?”

“Prussia…” Began France cautiously. “What has happened while we’ve been away?”

“Ok, first, is Japan still with you?” Quizzed the albino.

“Yes, I am still here Prussia.” Answered Japan from behind France.

“Awesome. Hey Japan? Make sure that you stay with France, kay?” Echoed the Prussians voice forth from the communicator.

“Que? What do you mean?” Uttered the Frenchmen, confused by his friend’s unusual order.

“Fuck, how the hell do I tell you guys this without sounding like an asshole?” Muttered the albino. “Argh, never mind! Look, long story short, Japan is now a traitor. The nations somehow found out his connections to America and Canada. And the nations, hell! Everyone’s been having a lot of meetings. Like a shit load of them. Most of them were about how the governments could get along better but then 3 weeks ago some guy came in with some ‘unsettling records’ regarding the former United States after the war they had with Russia. And DAMN, being your spy sure is a lot of hard work. I’ve already been interrogated by my own brother, Spain and the others are wary of me and now THIS?” A deep sigh floated through.

“What was it about?” Prodded France, feeling his nerves growing on edge with the giant knot at the bottom of his stomach. Watching England’s chest slowly rise and fall from the comforts of his make-shift cot, he frowned.

“Something was missed when the world was picking up the remains of the country. There’re
speculations that one nuclear missile was never accounted for and now -!

**Yukon Territory, Canada – Cottage – October 9, 2003 - 5:23 p.m.**

Walking through the forest of Canada, Matthew and Alfred leisurely crept through, on the pursuit of a stag. Just one shot was necessary, than they’d have dinner for at least a week. As Matthew took aim at the creature with his rifle, a twig cracked loudly.

Whipping his head in the directions of the twins hiding spot, the stag took flight and escaped before Matthew could pull the trigger.

“Great. Dang it Alfred, what’s up with you lately? You’re usually the most quiet of the two of us and now, you’re stepping on twigs and tripping over rocks! What the heck?”

“Ah, sorry bro. I guess I’m not in the game right now.” Answered Alfred softly. “Want me to go home while you go chase after that stag?”

“No. It’s fine. We’ll catch him, together.” Said Matthew flatly. Placing the rifle on his back he took the lead, Alfred slowly following after him. “We should hurry though. The seasons are going to give us a lot of snow this year.”

“Heh, of course. Just what we need.” He grumbled. “Hey, what about-?”

Without a warning, the American dropped to his knees, speech cut off immediately as he clutched his stomach. “…!”

“Al?” Glancing over his shoulder, the Canadian felt his blood run cold as he saw his twin on his knees, head hanging while he held onto his stomach. “ALFRED!” He sprinted back towards the blond, quickly trying to assess what was wrong with him.

“I…” He barely uttered, his breathing becoming rapidly erratic. “…”


“…they…” He took a heavy breath, his arms circling around his stomach tightly. “Mat…”

“I’m here Alfred, I’m here!” Shouted Matthew, slipping his hand around his brother’s abdomen as he cautiously tried to support him up.

Unable to pin point exactly what he was feeling, Alfred desperately grabbed at Matthew’s jacket, pulling him back down to the earth. With wide blue eyes that shook with every breath, Alfred felt his body jolt with a second spasm. He stared up into Matthew’s anxious eyes with fear.

“They’re coming Mat. The nations are coming! I can feel it!”


“…They’re coming for us.”

Chapter End Notes
Next Chapter: You’ve evaded our attention for so long. Don’t think for a second that you’re safe in your lands anymore. We’re coming. And you WILL be captured. No matter what the cost.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: The two brothers have caused havoc and chaos in their world for far too long. For over 50 years, the nations have endured it, trying their best efforts to apprehend the both of them as their dead leaders were interred one after another. Now, with identities revealed and whereabouts coming into a narrow close, the North American twins will see the wrath of the world’s nations. Hide all you want and run all you like, dear America and Canada…

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Up in Flames

Yukon Territory, Canada – In an open field – October 11, 2003 – 2:48 p.m.

With the sounds of metal clicking against one another, a figure stopped before a gaping forest, his green eyes studying the environment intently.

“Are you sure you should be-?” Began a voice with a french accent.

“Quiet.” Replied a stoic voice.

“But... you're...” Started another voice although it trailed off as the owner saw no hesitation in his destined target. “England...”

“I'm fine.” Answered the Briton casually as he shuffled a backpack further up his shoulders. From within the pack, metal objects clanked against each other with greater force.

“And yet, here you are, standing before uncharted lands in hopes of what? Finding America and Canada? By foot? You've truly gone mad now, haven't you England?” Chided France with a disappointed shake of his head.

To his utmost surprise, the Briton did not snap back at him nor did he scowl or even glare. In the place of all those angry emotions, France received a blank stare from the island nation instead. That alone sent a deep shiver down his spine at the man's unusual behavior.

“If I've gone mad, thats ok.” Answered England with his gaze fixed on the horizon of the forest ahead. “If the others forsaken me and hunt me down as a traitor, that's ok too.” He slowly peeked
over his shoulder back to his companions.

“But I swear on my life, until it is the absolute last breathe I draw it will be spent trying to capture America and Canada. I will not barter and I will not compromise, they are coming with me; by will or by force.”

“But... mon ami! It is an entire forest you are going up against. Nay! An entire continent! You are throwing your life away if you truly intend on charging ahead without the proper equipment.” Shouted France, a firm frown planted on his face.

“And?” Questioned the Briton as he gripped his chest lightly. Both France and Japan were clearly aware of the bandages that lined his chest although England paid their stares no attention. “I'll burn that whole forest down if I have too.”

“England! Are you trying to capture them, or kill them?” Asked Japan nervously.

“Maybe both.” Replied England softly. “If there's one thing America helped me see, its that he and Canada are no longer the little nations I once adopted. In fact... they aren't even nations anymore. Whatever they have become, its only proper that the person who let those nations become the monsters they are today should be the one to deal with them.” He clicked his tongue and took a step away from the two before a hand gripped his elbow. He snapped his head back and finally showed some sign of emotion in his eyes: pure anger.

“Stop being so rash in placing all the blame and responsibiily on yourself.” Pleased Japan. Although France no long stood by his side having apparently decided to leave England to his choice, Japan stood his ground under England's intense stare.

“You're not the only one who helped create these monsters!” Came Japan's surprisingly loud declaration. “I supplied them. With so much. I thought they were simply very active in engineering and playing with other inventions but... to think, I helped them assassinate so many politicians.” The Briton furrowed his eyebrows as he digested Japan's words.

“Even you heard from Prussia that I am considered a traitor to the other nations.” Finally releasing his grip on England, Japan took a step back. “If anything, I am just as guilty as you are. And if you do cross into Canada's territory, I will follow after you.”

In response to that comment, England's body momentarily became rigid, until Japan spoke his next words. “But I will not follow you to be a hinderance. I will follow you in support of your cause. My only request is that you truly think through your actions completely before following through on them, understood?”

“Japan...” At this point, England could feel his shoulders go slack.

“Every action has its consequences. I only hope you are absolutely willing to accept the consequences that come with yours.” Ended Japan gently.

A moment of silence passed between the two nations before England returned his gaze to the forest. “You're right. I will think about my actions.” He muttered as he took a step forward. With the quiet echo of Japan trailing him, the Briton did not even give a moment of hesitation as he heard France's call for him to wait. It wasn't until he was roughly yanked back that he could feel a growl form on his lips.

“What did-?” He was quickly cut off, yet again once he realized France's intentions.

“Angleterre, did you really think I was simply going to let you cross into these lands alone?” The
Frenchman asked as he lifted up a backpack he held in his right hand. To his left shoulder rested another backpack.

“France, you...you're coming?” Green eyes lit up in surprise.

~Flashback~

“England... can you hear me?” Asked France as he worriedly hovered over an unconscious Briton. Having already been treated by Japan as best as he could in their current situation, the two nations were left to wait for the awakening of their fallen brethren. Yet, even with the rise and fall of his chest, they still couldn't help but worry for the man.

“I believe he still needs time.” Answered Japan in a tiny voice. Crowded in a shack somewhere in the empty city, they took turns watching for any surprise guests.

“I know, mon ami. But...why? Why did this have to happen? Why did England place so much trust in America!?” France cried out, the fists on his lap starting to turn white from its pressure. “And me... why did I foolishly believe that Canada would come back to me...?”

“Because... we wanted to believe that there was a way to save them.” Came a whisper.

Startled to hear a new voice inside, both nations looked down and noticed the Briton’s empty gaze focused on the roof above him. “You're awake!” They shouted with relief.

Given no warning, the Briton struggled to rise from the ground, only to be quickly ushered back onto the floor. “What are you doing?! You've barely recovered from your wounds!” Accused France angrily.

“I'm going to find America...” Replied England bluntly.

“What?”

The hollow tone he held did nothing to explain to Japan or France how England was feeling. Was it anger or sadness that he felt? “I need to find America.” England continued, however the hand placed on his shoulder did not relent, thus preventing him from moving much further.

“Stop. Stop this idiotic idea of yours!” With body trembling, France did his best to hold back tears that threatened to spill from him. “Don't you see? They've made their choice! They won't come back to us. Why can't you accept that? Why can’t you accept that...that we failed?”

England did not reply.

“They can't be reasoned with...” Despite his best efforts, a few tears slipped passed the Frenchman. “They aren't America and Canada anymore...”

“...” England quietly turned his head away from his companions and mumbled something incoherent.

“What did you say?” Asked Japan.

“I said...I'm going after America anyways.” Came England's firm reply.

Shocked to hear that comment, France robotically pulled away from the island nation. “Then I'm not going with you...”

**This is my choice alone...**” With his eyes fixed on a wall away from the two nations he did not see the hurt that laced their face.

*Once England recovered from his wound, France and Japan would argue more about his rash action to follow America into the forests that covered Canada's region. They would strongly oppose his idea and propose that they either quit their actions altogether or regroup somewhere else with better supplies. And every time, England would reject their proposals or ignore their pleading comments not to follow; emotionlessly insisting that he was going after America. Alone.

~End Flashback~

“Ah, well I cannot lie and say that I was going to come along this whole time. But I will admit that I did get caught up in emotions earlier.” Explained the wavy haired nation sheepishly. “And let me say this: If I didn't convince you to stay here, I was going to follow you no matter what.”

To Francis relief there was no sign of opposition from England as he patiently waited for him, an unreadable expression decorating his face. When he took his place by his side, the Briton finally broke away from his unusual behavior and gave the French nation an exhausted smile. “I'm sorry...”

“Non, I should be the one who apologizes.” Retorted France immediately. “I let myself get carried away too quickly and I failed to see our main goal when tragedy weakened my resolve.”

“It happens to us all.” Japan added. “It is only human nature.”

“I suppose.” Echoed a response as the trio finally started their trek into the wilderness.

“Well, I'm still sorry for dragging the two of you into this mess.” It was England who took the lead as he looked over his shoulder with an apologetic frown. “I know you two wanted to help at first but when its gotten this far and this dangerous... I know when to draw the line when asking for help.”

“It's just as Japan said mon ami,” began France. “If this is our choice, then we have wholeheartedly accepted the consequences that come with it.”

“Starvation, mauling by wild animals, dehydration, physical trauma and mother nature...” Listed England of all the possible ways to die.

“For all we know, they might not even be in this region.” France chuckled ruefully. “Oh what a fate we are left to.”

“As some people would put it nicely, we have 'lost our marbles' if our goal is search all of Canada for those two.” Japan quoted with a crooked smile

“I guess we have.” Ended the Briton with a grin as he pulled his backpack up his shoulders and lead the way into the Yukon Territory.

“Only one way to find out...”

**Yukon Territory, Canada – Outskirts of the cottage – October 25, 2003 - 11:23 a.m**

With the soft crunch of pine needles underfoot, Alfred slowly tread passed a few evergreen trees as he made his way towards a tiny lake that rested just a few distance away from him. Upon stopping before the water, Alfred released a heavy sigh as he languidly scooped up water with a large bucket. “God...” He mumbled as half lidded eyes barely remained open against the bright rays of
the sun. Lifting a second bucket out of the water he turned back in the direction he came from but hesitated as he recalled what waited for him back there. A mess of documents and one crazed Canadian in the middle of it all...

“Ugh...” Groaning out in suppressed pain, Alfred made his way back to his house, making sure to bite back another groan as he slapped on a smile for his brother.

*No point in worrying him right now. He already has enough on his plate.*

And as he entered the cottage a furious string of swears could be heard ringing within their home as Matthew yet again, failed to gain access to any government files.

Atlantic Ocean – On a ship - October 26, 2003 – 3:29 a.m.

Turning once more in the uncomfortable cot, a pale fact scrunched up in agitation, unable to claim sleep once again. “Damn it.” He growled out, as his ship rocked with the next wave that rubbed against them. Could France and the others really blame him for betraying them? With a guilty sigh, Prussia frowned. But what else was his supposed to tell his brother. Even if he had promised France to stay tight lipped about any details regarding the twins, piercing blue eyes did little to ease the growing ball he felt in his stomach. Eventually he spilled every detail to his brother regarding America and Canada.

“...Sorry France but... you know I can't lie to my little brother. Well... when its this important to him anyways.” Tossing to his left, he stared into the wooden wall in front of him, quietly replaying the events that unfolded during his “confession.”

~Flashback~

*It was just the two of them. Inside a bare room, sitting at a table as one tried his best to look anywhere but up, while the other tried his best to read his brother. Just one glance was all the albino needed to crack under the pressure his brother was placing on him. Thus, he forbid himself from looking up until the air in the room eased out of its heavy tension. “Sooo...”*

“Prussia, I called you here because I have a request for you.” Started Germany. “As far as anyone is concerned, no one is aware that the assassins are America and Canada. They only know that they are nations. However, there are still a lot of things that we don't know about them.” Said the German with a tired grimace.

“Uh huh?” Agreed Prussia absently.

“So before I went ahead and informed the community about our discovery regarding the brothers and Japan's connection to them, I'd like to receive any added details from you regarding America and Canada. Before I tell them everything I want to make sure that all my information is organized and correct. I will not tolerate any misunderstandings, understood? Then hopefully we can move onto the next plans of detaining them and how to implement our strategies.”

The Prussian could only shuffle under the German's stare in reply, his lips squirming in uncertainty as if ready to spill out all secrets any moment.

“Brother, consider this then: What would we do then, if by some unfortunate events, our people managed to discover America and Canada before we did? What would we do if they injured the two brothers and then realized that they wouldn't fall as easily as normal humans would? Don't you think they would question that?” A hesitant nod was given.

“Only a select few humans are allowed to know about our existence and even they... even they
can’t be trusted with that knowledge. Not in this age anyways.” At that moment, heavy hands slammed against the table, causing the albino to jerk in surprise and look up at his brother in question.

Damn.

Blue eyes clashed with red ones instantly. “Brother... we need to make the first move before our people catch wind of this. Imagine the chaos it'll bring if the people- no! Our government found the living embodiments of America and Canada? It'll bring about another war if they considered the fact that the country was stable enough to support two living nations. Imagine all the battles that'll come when our governments begin to think about conquering North America all over again.” At this moment, Germany took a second to rub at his temple, willing a permanent headache to go away for once in 2 years.

“I just want all of this to end. Just...” Germany looked at his older brother with pleading eyes, a deep tint to them that revealed more age and wear then it should have. “...end.”

“...Alright. Alright West. I'll talk.” With those words, the darkness in the German's eyes lightened up, ever so softly. “But will you at least try to smile a bit more when I talk? It's pretty depressing seeing you frown all the time.” Added Prussia with crooked smile. He sighed in defeat.

“You see...”

Why was he bothering to protect the two brothers anyways? Just because France asked him to? Hell, those two bastards put him through a lot of crap. At some point, he had to weigh two things: How much he was willing to cover for France as a friend vs. getting back at the twins.

Well, by now it seemed like even friendship couldn't prevent his betrayal. Well, partial betrayal anyways. If there was one thing he could still stay tight lipped about, it was the fact that France, England and apparently Japan, were looking for the brothers long before the other nations considered a live manhunt that would surely turn into the most extreme version of hide and go seek. What would they do if they caught the brothers before the nations did, hell he didn't know? All he knew is that he didn't want to ruin the headstart they had on the nations. Or cast any suspicions on them.

“Damn... someone could actually die here.” Whispered Prussia into his pillow as he considered what he had heard in the discussion between Germany and a certain asian nation. Could they really die though? They were nations after all. That question alone sent a chill down Prussia's back. Why did death have to come up in so many conversations now these days?

“Dammit...” He muttered as he grudgingly rose from his bed and exited his room, heading straight for the front of the ship. In the little light that creeped up from the horizon of the sea, Prussia laid his head down on the railing and continued to replay the memory involving himself and his brother. Oh, how France and England would hate his guts for this...

“...and the two brothers, even though Alfred is always hyper and Matthew is always quiet and thinking about something they're really close. Almost like you and me, West. Except they also fight a lot too. But they have some nice planes. One plane and one helicopter. And-” Before he could continue a voice cut him off.

“So you say that Alfred and Matthew are like polar opposites, da?” Russia stood by the door with a wide grin on his face, meanwhile China had quietly took a seat away from Germany when they entered the room. Was it pure luck that they arrived to this room when Prussia was spilling every little detail about the twins he could recall to his brother?
“Ah, yeah. I guess you can say that.” Muttered Prussia nervously.

“And Alfred deals with most of the assassinations while Matthew creates all the strategies, correct?” China added with a thoughtful expression.

“Eh, well I didn't exactly mean it like that. I mean... from what I could hear and see, it felt like that and-”

“I wouldn't be surprised if that was the case.” Interjected Russia cheerfully.

“OK! You know what? How about you two shut up?” Yelled Prussia as he stood up from his seat. “And second, why the hell are you two here? Can't you see I'm talking to my bruder? Private conversation here!”

“Bruder...” Began Germany softly, his hand lifted up in gesture that signaled he calm down. With a click of his tongue, Prussia reluctantly sat down and took a few breathes.

The recognition that settled over the German's face was immediate as he questioned their presence as well with a raised eyebrow. “Despite how my brother has worded his thoughts, Prussia has a point. Why are you two here?”

Quick to answer that question, China politely coughed and said, “Right, I came here hoping to finally discuss something that I imagine would be of great importance to you.”

The German nation frowned as he quietly massaged his temple, then sent his stare in Russia direction.

“Ah, he... I really don't know why he's here.” China muttered. “If you don't mind though, I'd appreciate it if you let me stay and listen to what Prussia has to say.”

“Tch.” Prussia rolled his eyes as Germany nodded in reply, then shot Russia a dirty glare. “And him?”

All three nations glanced at the Russian who smiled back. “Can I-.”

“Hell no.” Interjected Prussia vehemently. “Make him leave or I won't talk West.”

At this point, it was a miracle that Germany's head didn't explode yet with the constant pressure and stress he experienced at every moment. “Russia, would you please excuse us?” The blond asked with an annoyed frown. “I don't have all day.”

Ignoring the haughty sneer that Prussia held on his face, Russia uncrossed his arm before retreating to the door behind him. “Very well. I know when I'm not wanted.” Replied the Russian with an exaggerated sigh. “Do make sure not to forget any important details comrade.” He added with a devilish smile, then exited the room.

“Creep...” Mumbled Prussia as he watched the door close behind him. Back to his brother and China he opened his mouth to speak but quickly shut it as he noticed the sound of footsteps outside the room. Making sure to stay quiet enough to here them retreat, it wasn't until silence encompassed the room that the ex-nation decided to continue where he left off.

“When I was their prisoner, the brothers at one point did mention something about the land hurting them during natural disasters. And I've seen first hand how they act when they're apart from one another. I mean, Jesus, the Canadian wasn't even violent towards me anymore when his brother left him alone for a while.”
“Is that crucial for us to know?” Quizzed Germany.

“Well, when you’re constantly being threatened 24/7 by someone whose nature is to torture people, only to seem them become a shell of their former self another moment, its kind of a shocker to say the least.” At the sight of his brother looking away in shame, Prussia felt a nervous chuckle escape his throat.

“Why so down West? There’s nothing to be sad about. The awesome me is still here, alive and giving you as much juicy detail as I can about the assholes you wanna nab. Shouldn’t I be seeing a smile on your face?” He accused with a pointed finger. His words seemed to have done the trick as Germany looked back at Prussia, albeit his smile was a bit twisted but there nonetheless.

With both brothers distracted in their exchange, China quietly mulled over the basic details he had received. Both assassins where nations, brothers at that, who are very close. Twins, yet very unique in their own way.

“Ah, but as I said we need to assess their weakness and their strengths; determine how to best approach them before our people start meddling in their lands.” Came Germany's rough voice as he quickly jotted down some notes on a small piece of paper.

“Yeah yeah, I know.” Grumbled the albino. “I guess America and Canada have what's comin' to-”

“What?” China asked incredulously with mouth agape. “Did you...?”

“Oh shit! I forgot!” The Prussian shrieked. Too late. The cat was out of the bag.

Spending about 10 minutes explaining to the asian man how the identities of the two assassins were now deduced down to America and Canada, the two germans regrettably had to fully include China in their plans now.

“So Alfred is America and Matthew is Canada...” Repeated China with disbelief still lingering in his tone. He cautiously brought a hand up to his mouth to hide his frown. “This changes everything then...”

“What was that?” Germany was confused at this point.

“If what you say is true about the brothers true identities then...” He briskly shot up from his seat. “I have a theory. One that might explain how its possible for America and Canada to exist.”

The blank looks from both nations urged the Eastern nation to explain further.

“Nations exist because of two things: Their people and their land. And as we are aware, my country went to war with America and Canada long ago, resulting in the demise of their nations. If America and Canada were normal nations then naturally, they should have perished with their people. Yet... they live. Is that not abnormal to any of you?”

When he received their nods he continued.

“America and Canada... something kept them alive. What exactly, I cannot tell yet. But one thing I can assume is this: If they are indeed abnormal nations and given that they are unstable in the first place behaviour wise, would it not be safest for our community if we destroyed them?”

The coughing fit that racked Prussia surprised both China and Germany as he desperately tried hitting his chest for air. Oh lord, what had he done! Instead of helping everyone around him his information lead to something greatly harmful to the cause that England and France pursued:
“Are you ok?”

“...*cough*...*hack*... ugh. Y-Yeah...” Prussia answered in a hoarse voice.

“As I was saying,” China tried to proceed. “If we manage to permanently kill America and Canada, the assassins mind you, not the actual lands, then would it not make sense that new nations would be born in their place if their lands are truly salvageable?”

The fact that his own brother was nodding in approval sent waves of horror throughout the Prussians body as he could see all his plans falling apart into millions of tiny irreplaceable pieces.

“Yes, that is something to consider.” Echoed Germany.

“And another thing that comes to mind is this: if we are to apprehend America and Canada they have unique skills that make them a lethal team when put together. So what would happen if we would use their skills to our advantage?”

The blond rose an eyebrow in question. “What do you have in mind?”

“I haven’t exactly decided what would be our best strategy but I was thinking we could either use their skills against them, taking their weakness that come with it and exposing it, or even better, pitting them against each other. I honestly like both ideas if they increase our chances of success.” Chimed China smoothly.

“I see...” The glow to Germany's eye was quite a spectacle for his brother to see however, it felt bitter sweet. “And what other business did you have to discuss with me?”

“Ah, right! I wanted to inform you about something I found in my government.” In the moments that the topic had switched, China hurriedly walked to Germany’s side and spoke in a hushed whisper. “I’ve been working as close as I could with my government, following all their orders and even refusing contact with the other nations in hope of proving my loyalty to my people. However, during my endeavors, I found something startling. Double documents.”

“Double what?” Restated Prussia bluntly as he hoped this conversation would make them forget all about their previous ideas on the North American brothers.

“Double documents!” China spat a bit louder. “Deep within some crevices of my government, I found them. Meaning someone is possibly trying to use them in hopes of betraying my people.”

“China, how do you know-?”

“I know it!” Blurted the black haired nation. “Why else would there be a need for an exact copy of important information. It can't be used for security purposes. In fact, that only jeopardizes its safety. And when I come back after I discover them, I find that they have been moved! If they are being moved then it could only mean that someone is surely working against us.”

“Does this explain why you have been so distant from us lately?” Inquired Germany.

Caught off guard by the Germans swift realization of his position China quietly looked away. “Yes, partly anyways...”

“Great. And here we thought you were already brain washed into being the lapdog of your government.” Despite the livid look he received from China Prussia simply chuckled in response.
Grudgingly forcing himself to stop glaring death at the albino, China patiently counted something in his mother language before turning back to the more serious German.

“As I was saying, I highly suggest that you look more closely into your governments files when you get the chance. It’d bring me some peace of mind to know that my government is the only one involved in such suspicious activity.”

“Hey, didn’t the Briton mention something about that as well?” Gilbert offered with a tilt of his head.

“He’s right.” Confirmed Ludwig with a grave nod. “China, why didn’t you mention this at the previous meeting? I’m sure during all that ruckus, someone like England would have given much support to your suspicions.”

“Well...” Trailed off China. “…I thought it would have been safest if I came to your first. You see, I fear we may have a bug admist our community. Hence why I did not want to bring out such sensitive information out to the others.”

“Wait, so you’re not the bug?” Asked Prussia with a confused expression. At that point, China had to be ushered back to his seat with a warning hand as Germany shot his brother a scalding glare.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have said anything after all...” China grumbled but was appeased when Germany’s vehemently shook his head.

“No, I appreciate the concern. Really! Thank you for the warning.” Germany replied with a grateful nod.

“Well then, if we’re done I think we should get going now. After all, we still need to deal with our own problems and...” Muttered Gilbert. It was about time really. The albino had just about had it with how things had gone terribly against him when all he had hoped for would be that his brother would feel less pressure off his back. Instead, it felt like most of the pressure had been transferred over to him now, what with having to explain to France later that discussions regarding America and Canada had gone sour.

“Yes, if you’ll excuse us China, we need to start preparing for our departure and assess which nations are going to the Lands before the end of this month. Last I heard, Finland, Sweden and Spain were ready at any given moment so I think we’ll send them over there first to evaluate the situation. Before that however I have to inform them about...everything.”

“Right, then...” With Germany and China deeply engaged in their new alliance and Prussia left out of the picture, the albino slunk off towards the door. Maybe he could still convince Germany to be a little lenient on the twins? Damn, there was also the fact that at some point, the nations were going to realize that England and France were missing from their countries. So much to cover for!

As he mulled over all the sides he had to support he and the others slowly made their way towards the exit.

Unbeknowest to anyone in the room however, a tall figure smirked as he stood next to the door, having overheard everything from their discussion. And with a soundless chuckle, he departed from his rooted spot, his pink scarf trailing obediently behind him.

~End Flashback~

“Crap...” Moaned out the Prussian as he groggily pealed himself from the railing, having had the sheer luck of falling asleep outside without falling into the ocean. All those meetings they had after
their discussion were really the final nail in the coffin. Everyone knew the truth now. America and Canada being alive, Japan betraying them, and the assumed strategies that China came up with. Almost none of which he had informed France or England of yet. They only knew of Japan being called a traitor now. Throwing the boat outside one more glance as he wondered how Germany was doing in his own rooms, he lazily made his way back to his room and passed out on his bed, exhausted from having to consider what he'd have to do to fix his problem. If that was even possible.

Soon with the rise of the sun, their boat would finally land somewhere near the gulf of Mexico as they would make their way towards a make-shift base that the United Nations had formed in the Lands. By then, other nations would have already landed in various regions, awaiting further orders from the German nation as they continued to pretend that they were there for the UN mission.

Yukon Territory, Canada – Cottage Living room – November 5, 2003 – 1:39 p.m.

“Mat... Hey Mat...” A voice echoed calmly in the room, a tall blond gently nudging his twin with the tip of his boot. “Hey. Wake up bro.” Despite his best efforts to avoid stepping on any of the quieter twins paper work and files in the end, Alfred failed as he could feel the edge of his shoe digging into some unfortunate file.

“Freakin' Mattie. Who said you could grab every damn paper we own in the house and dump them in our living room? You better NOT get angry at me for leaving footprint on them...” He grumbled as he nudged his brother's lifeless body once more before making a beeline to the couch. As he flopped onto the heavenly cushions, Alfred let out an obnoxious moan relieved to see that even that wouldn't stir his brother from his deep slumber in the middle of his sea of papers.

With one free hand he gently rubbed his forehead, cursing the migraine that plagued him for the second week in a row. Thankfully he wasn't feeling anymore pain in his body although it would sometimes return, and with a vengeance at that!

Using his other free hand to search around the crannies of the couch Alfred finally found what he was looking for. The remote control.

And without a moment of hesitation, he swiftly chucked it at his brothers sleeping form.

“WAH! What happened! I'm awake!” Screeched the Canadian as he immediately shot up from the living room floor, his hair a mess and glasses lopsided on his face. Greeted with the plain usual grin on Alfred's face, Matthew furrowed his eyebrows in confusion before his expression darkened considerably. “Alfred...” He started in a low tone.

Not even flinching at his brothers deathly aura, Alfred's smile grew. “Wake up sleepy head. It's about time we went out for a while. Unless you seriously expect me to bring back more berries and nuts for dinner again.”

A twitch of his eye was all Alfred received from his twin albeit it was probably a lot better then a sharp jab to the gut. “Besides... you need to get out of the house.” Muttered the American worriedly. “At some point you need to accept de-.”

“Don't say it!” Warned Matthew harshly with a pointed finger. “Don't you dare Alfred!”

Alfred sighed in exhaution. “Mat... stop. Stop all of this!” He exclaimed, arms outstretched towards the landfill of papers that was now their living room. “What does it matter if you can't access government files?!”

“Dammit! Didn't I say-!”
“I don’t care.” Alfred interrupted boldly. “It’s not like I can go around sniping at politicians from here! So why should it matter that you can’t spy on them? Didn’t you say we had to lay low now anyways? God damn!”

The silence that Matthew gave Alfred did little to ease his nerves. Or his headache. One glance in Matthew direction and he could tell that the man was not happy about his declaration. With head turned towards the side and arms crossed, Alfred held back a groan.

“Look, can we please forget about all this assassinating junk for now? Jesus, you haven’t even gone outside in weeks. As far as I can tell, if you stay in here any longer you’re seriously going to become transparent at some point.” Prodded Alfred with a pout.

“Oh yeah?” Retorted Matthew. “And this coming from who? The same person who looks whiter than the papers on the floor. Look at- hey! Alfred! Why is there a footprint on this file!?”

Waving a file angrily in his brother direction, Alfred rolled his eyes in annoyance as he lifted himself off the couch and headed for the door.

“Ugh! I knew you were going to complain!” Cradling his head for fear that his headache would somehow spread, the American sidestepped his brother and was about to exit the house but halted in his tracks as he felt the world spin for a moment. “Whoa...”

“Brother!” Shouted Matthew as he was at Alfred’s back within seconds. “Are you ok?”

“Yeah...” Alfred mumbled as he held onto the door frame for extra support. “Just lost my balance there for a second.” He grinned sheepishly.

“Al...” Whispered Matthew worriedly, having forgotten all about their argument mere seconds ago.

“Well, I guess I’ll be right back. Going to get some fresh air. Maybe work a bit more on those traps I set up...” Alfred replied quickly, aiming to head out the door and away from Matthew’s concerned gaze.

“I’m coming with you!” The Canadian added hastily.

“Oh, NOW you’re coming outside?” Alfred drawled out with a raised eyebrow.

“You were right... I need to go outside. I think the sun is starting to burn me already.” Joked Matthew softly as he could feel the sun’s ray baking away at his arm. “And besides, I’m sure I can help improve your traps. God knows I’m getting tired of you coming back home with just a handful of berries.”

“Hey! You enjoyed those berries.” Pouted Alfred in mock anger. Feeling a smile pull at his lips as Matthew nudged him with his elbow the two brothers quickly made up and departed for the forest behind them.

Yukon Territory, Canada – Forest – 4:56 p.m.

“Are you sure you know how to get there?” Came the soft voice of Finland as he was following the small figure of a child. As much as he loathed to do this, here he was, relying on Sealand to help lead him, Sweden and Spain towards the house of the North American twins. Just recalling their name alone sent a shiver up his spine as he considered all the danger they would encounter once they located the house. And to think they were actually going up against the former countries of America and Canada...
“Su-san? Will you please take Sealand and run if things start to get out of hand?” Whispered the Finnish nation to his Swedish partner. Hoping to receive a sturdy nod, the nation was flabbergasted as Sweden shook his head in refusal. To support his next words, Sweden quickly grabbed Finland's hand. “N’t le’ving w’th’ut you.”

“Awwww, que lindo.” Sang the Spanish nation as he held no shame in watching their lovely exchange occur. “Its nice to see the bonds of love between you two shine so strongly.”

Laughing nervously while trying to pry his hand away from a man who held firmly onto his own, Finland eventually sighed in defeat and allowed Sweden to hold his hand until he was satisfied. “Ok... sooo...” Sealand mumbled as he studied the paper in his hand intently, making sure to keep it for his sights only whenever one of the older nations tried to peek over his shoulder. “If we go... this way! Yeah...” They turned right. “And this way!” They made a left. “Ummm...”

“Sealand, dear, are you SURE you know where you're taking us?” Maybe they should have waited for Prussia and Germany after all...

“Of course I do!” He barked happily. “That's why I wanted to come and help you!”

“And how can you tell where they live?” Spain added with curiosity.

“Easy! When Prussia and I were escaping I made sure to memorize all the monuments we passed by. Then I drew them onto here~!” He cheered as he offered the nations a view of his doodled map.

In all honesty, it looked like a jumble of images drawn together, surrounded by an endless supplies of trees. And yet, they were still following it. There was little room for insult there.

“Now, where's that tree with...” Trailing off with map in hand, Sealand absently passed by a wide bush and was about to continue but was immediately yanked back by a hand. “Ahh!”

A distance from where he would have walked stood a gaping hole, large enough to swallow up a bear.

“C’reful.” Warned Sweden, oblivious to the shocked and horrified looks that Spain and Finland were giving the hole from behind.

“They booby trapped this area?” Uttered Spain with an open mouth. “Dios mio...”

“Su-san,” started Finland in an anxious tone. Understanding what he was going to say before he even worded his concern, the tall swedish man lifted up the tiny nation onto his shoulder. “Th're.”

“That's better.” Finland added with a breathe of relief as he gave his surroundings a suspicious glare. “Maybe you can even tell us if you see any movement from up there Peter.”

“Aye sir!” Saluted Sealand. Back to his map he pointed forward and continued to direct them where to go. And yet, the further they followed his commands, the more booby traps they set off. From crashing logs aimed to knock out its trespasser to tricky ropes that would lift up its captives into the sky, the nations at some point had to suspect every blade of grass and every standing tree. Only with Finland's sharp eye and Swedens quick thinking did they manage to escape most of them unscathed.

“There's that one too.” Finland called in alarm as transparent strings seemed to lead somewhere into the trees above them.
“How many traps did those two set up?!?” Cried out Spain, having had the fear of death scared into him with a few very close calls. He apprehensively shuffled their pack in his arms, wishing they could just rest for the day already.

“I'm sorry you guys but... my map says that just up ahead is where their house is at.” Sealand said with a hint of regret in his voice.

“Alr'ght.” The Swedish nation smoothly lifted Sealand off his shoulder and gently placed him on the ground before turning to Finland. Again, without words, they nodded their heads in agreement.

“Spain would you please do us a huge favor and wait here with Sealand?” Asked Finland, a troubled smile gracing his lips. “I'd really appreciate it if, should anything happen, that you will grab him and run as far as you can.” A nod was all he needed from the Spaniard.

“Huh? Wait! I'm coming too!” Cried the island nation in protest. “You said I could come!”

“I did. But I didn't say how far, did I now?” Countered the Finnish man with a wave of his index finger. “Its ok. Don't worry. Su-san and I are just going to investigate the area. Hopefully bring Germany back a good report on our findings as an apology for not waiting for his orders.”

Doing his best not to chuckle at the childish pout that Sealand was displaying, Finland gently roused his hair. Satisfied with that, he turned back to the transparent string that was neatly stretched before them on the forest floor and kneeled down its level. Aware of Sweden's stern gaze fixed on his back, the smaller nation quietly withdraw a small knife from his pocket and nicked the string, feeling himself swiftly get pulled back as a series of booby traps began to play out all around them.

As quickly as they were triggered, they eventually simmered out to the lazy swinging of an axe tied to a tree near the opening of the forest before them. “Imagine the poor animals that would trigger any of these death traps...” Mumbled Finland.

“Y'ah... hum'n.” Replied his partner as he boldly took the first step forward passed the now useless traps.

“Hey, wait!” Sprinting up to the man, Finland looked over his shoulder one last time and mouthed the words, Be right back.

**Cottage – 5:26 p.m.**

“Wow... He was right. This is the place.” Spoke Finland in a daze as he examined every little detail of the area. Right there near that pine tree, that's where they interrogated him. And over there, near the bushes is where they hid the planes. And...

A shiver ran through Finland's body as he recalled the memories that came with this place. It wasn't until a hand was placed on his shoulder that the nation finally felt the trembles ebb away. “Su-san?”

“L'ts h'rry.” He spoke in a low tone, failing miserably to hid an angry scowl on his face.

“Right.” Cautiously making their way to the house they kept all eyes and ears open for any indication that someone was home, but as soon as they dared to peek into the living room window a heavy weight was lifted from their shoulders as they realized that the place was empty. For now.

“Ok, lets make this quick!” Came Finlands order as they returned to the front door and carefully turned the door knob. It was locked. Figures.
Grunting in agitation, the smaller man bit his lip in thoughts before grudgingly settling on one choice. One swift quick was all he needed to open the door however he cringed at the loud smack it made as it bounced back from the living room wall. Just as he was about to release a curse, his eyes grew into the size of plates as he took in the sight before him. A sea of paper, everywhere in the room.

Taking the first tentative step into the brothers house, Finland glanced down at the file underneath his foot and felt his breathe hitch in his throat as he read what was on it. “Codes...”

He gingerly picked one up, then another, realizing that they were all codes, a couple possibly government files however, they were few in numbers. “Sweden, check the other rooms. And be careful.” Warned the former hacker as he continued to pick up as many papers as he could possibly hold in his hands.

Once alone, he frantically searched the room for anything to carry the files and almost cried out in joy when he saw a discarded backpack near the corner of the room. Just as he was about to grab it he released a stunned yelp as he heard a crash somewhere in the house. “Sweden?” Echoed the nervous man's voice within the living room.

Hurriedly stuffing the papers in the bag the Finnish nation sped into the room Sweden had only momentarily disappeared into and gasped out in shock. Where the spectacled nation stood were numerous maps and various computers inside a tiny room, the door weakly hanging onto a hinge while it swung idly. “This...” He started but couldn't finish as he immediately took a spot in front of the computer and furiously typed things down, making sure that there was a flashdrive connected to the machine.

Fully aware that Finland was now lost in another world as his eyes wildly scanned every word on the computer screen Sweden wordlessly rummaged through the room, making sure to collect every flashdrive he could locate. Once he was certain there were no more to be found he started to collect random documents and scrapped off the maps from the walls, rolling them up and placing them in Finland's new pack.

Only when the bag was completely filled did the nation leave the room to find another bag to carry the remainder evidence they planned on stealing. When he returned to the tiny room, he stopped as Finland sat in the chair, now facing the door, an empty look on his face as he kept his eyes trained on the floor. With Sweden now present, his face snapped up.

“Change in plans. We need to destroy this place. Now.” He stated swiftly, ignoring the tremble that vibrated in his throat. “Sweden, go outside and go some distance to the left. If I'm correct, you'll run into a small wooden door built into the ground. Open that door and bring back whatever you can find in there that would create enough explosives for this place.”

Turning on his heel, Sweden was stopped in his tracks as Finland's voice floated to him once more. “And here!” He turned just in time to catch a gun tossed in his direction. “The more you're armed, the better. Please be careful. I'm almost done here.”

As Finland spun back to the computer screen, the Swedish man was curtly prevented from commenting on whose safety mattered most but diligently followed his given orders anyways. To the basement he went.

Ten minutes later and the nation emerged from underground, a horde of explosives and other ammunition carried in his arms. Half way to the house however he froze midstep as he heard the all familiar sound of rustling within the bushes to his right. Unable to accept that they had already been caught, he briskly sprint towards the house and tossed the items onto the living room couch.
before taking his stance near the front door. “Hey, is everything alright?” Questioned Finland from the Fun room although his voice was slightly muted by the drone of clicking buttons, signalling that he wasn't done yet.

Cautiously peeking out the door from the side, Sweden watched the bushes rustle some more before it spat out its occupant.

“A p'lar b'ar?” Questioned the nation as he watched the creature carefully sniff the ground. Just then, Finland finally exited the room with backpack in hand and was about to say something but halted when he noticed the situation he just walked into.

“G't th'm re'dy!” Barked Sweden as he tossed his head in the direction of the many explosives discarded behind him. At that moment, the white bear lifted his head in alert and then turned towards his masters cottage. Intruders.

Watching one man quickly gather up some items from the couch and sprint back into the computer room, Kumajiro calmly slapped the ground with his heavy paw and let out a huff.

Taking a few steps back into the overgrowth that he had emerged from, Kumajiro kept his gaze locked onto the front door of his house.

Then ran full charge at the cottage.

“D'mnit!” Yelled Sweden as he left the cover of the wall and stood in the middle of the front door, taking aim and firing in the bears direction. He wasn't bad at aiming, that much he could flat out admit. Most of the shots were actually landing on the raging bear. The only problem was just that. He was a full grown bear. Even with 5 bullets lodged in him, he didn't falter in his sprint towards the house.

Finally, with luck on his side, Sweden landed a bullet on the bears face, causing it to rise up in agony and release a wild roar before he turned on his heels.

The wild animal rashly made a sloppy left turn and quickly disappeared into the foliage, his roar echoing in the forest as Sweden grunted in relief.

“Are you ok?” Cried out Finland as he sprinted back into the room for more dynamites. A nod from Sweden didn't fully convince him however he would accept it nonetheless as he asked the nation to continue planting the inside with explosives while he added some outside. He ignored the hard stare Sweden shot him and continued on his way, making sure to place enough dynamite near the hidden aircrafts and even some down in the basement.

“Hurry! We don't have much time!” Commanded the blond nation as he grabbed a bottle of alcohol and threw it onto the floor, its clear liquid staining the floor instantly.

With Sweden quickly gathering all the bags they could carry, Finland continued to soak the house with what little alcohol he could find in the kitchen before he himself half ran, half tripped out of the house.

Searching the forest for any sign of the brothers, Finland hurriedly pulled out a few grenades, pulled the pins and threw them into the house before running after Sweden who had done the same in the direction of the basement. In the 5 seconds it took for the grenades to detonate, both nations had taken cover in the overgrowth with their backs to one another in case the assassins would be on their way there any moment.

Within the forest – 6:03 p.m.
“Damnit!” Screeched out Matthew as he ran passed trees with the agility of a wild animal. “Kumajiro!”

There was no doubt in his mind, that roar he had heard earlier was definitely his bears roar. And the sound of guns shots that preceded the reverberations only fueled the Canadian to hurry.

“Mat!” Huffed out Alfred as he desperately tried to keep up with his twins pace. “Wait... up!”

Why? Why had they decided to stay out longer than usual? Why did any of this have to happen now of all times? Pushing himself further in the direction of their home, Matthew could feel a violent growl work its way up his throat. If any worthless bastard thought they could target his bear, they had another thing coming!

Just as he was about to jump over a large root the ground beneath him shook, causing the Canadian to fall face first into the dirt as the air around them vibrated with a loud explosion. “Our house!” He screamed as he realized it wasn't his bear that was under attack. It was them.

“They found us?!” Hollered Alfred out loud as he finally caught up to his brother and yanked him off the ground. “But-?!”

There was no warning from the Canadian as he slipped out of his twins grasp and rocketed himself forward, aiming to reach their home and confirm its unfortunate fate. Their house. Their belongings. Their livelihood! They had everything there!

“Matthew!” Came Alfred's shout although it fell on deaf ears.

It was all a blur to him. The trees, the ground, the air. How he was getting there, he wasn't even aware of anymore. He just knew that he had to see it. He had to see it for himself to truly believe that this wasn't some wretched nightmare his mind had conjured up.

At last, the Canadian reached an opening up ahead and with eyes as wide as a deer caught in the head lights, he watched as his home that he and his brother had built themselves danced with flames into the darkening sky.

In the moments that followed, he remembered two things: one, the burst of heat that embraced him as another explosion rocked his house, further consuming it in fire. And two, there was blossom of pain that sprouted forth from his stomach as he placed his hand there and gingerly pulled it back.

In the light of the fire ahead of him, Matthew noticed one distinct color on his hand.

Red. The color of blood. His blood...

A few miles away – 6:05 p.m.

“What the hell? Are those twats seriously bombing a forest now?” England shrieked as he, France and Japan sprinted in the direction of the explosions they had heard earlier. Despite how ill equiped they were in traveling through a forest, they had done very well in surviving so far. With tents pitched some distance back south, they had intended on resting for the day after their 3 miles hike through rugged terrain but questioned their choice when they thought they heard the crack of a gun shot some miles away. Dismissing it as nothing more than a falling tree they had returned to preparing for the night, choosing France to be the night watch for the evening until they heard another sound echo in the distance. This one more louder and with greater force. An explosion.

Thus, they found themselves in this situation now, desperately running in the direction of the commotion as England gave them no choice but to give chase when he wordlessly left them
behind.

“All of our equipment... mon dieu...” Breathed out the Frenchman as he mourned the supplies they would surely loss if they didn't find their way back to base after this.

“Look!” Japan added with his finger raised towards the sky. “Something is on fire!”

And sure enough, in the darkness they could make out the distinct glow of flames licking at the sky.

Promptly followed by another explosion as the flames climbed up the trees and towards the heavens themselves.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: With their peaceful home destroyed and once again on the run, the brothers slowly find out that Alfred isn't simply suffering from a simple headache. His lands are being populated again. By UN soldiers. An arrest is made and shots continue to ring out. But from who?
Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: They built their lives up from the ground and made a living from their crimes. But for the first time in a long time, they will struggle. Struggle to escape a terrible fate.

Chapter Notes

A/N: The scene with Alfred and Matthew – 8:35 might be a little too graphic for certain readers. Just leaving a warning.
Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia.

Through the Forest

The fire, the pain, the voices around him. How exactly he ended up face first on the floor, Matthew couldn't properly recall as the heat of the fire before him ran wild, throwing blasts of hot air with every rock the crumbling house endured.

“...-eed...-et.....be-...” Someone was talking. Er, shouting to be exact as their voice battled to be heard over the angry crackles that rumbled nearby. “...-where ar-...re...”

BANG

Another shot rang out? With a muddled mind, the Canadian simply did what he was capable of and shuffled his body ever so slightly, worried that he had been shot a second time. No spasm of pain anywhere else minus his abdomen, but judging by the shadows dancing before his dark vision, they were running away from his spot. Thank God...

It was almost as if his body had been drained of all energy as he laid on the forest floor, feeling his body burn along with the house. “No...” He whispered when the house gave one final groan. His home. His livelihood! This couldn't be happening. It had to be a nightmare! Straining to blink away the darkness from his sight, he felt tears form on the corners of his eyes as he fought against the pain. And just as he was forcing himself off the ground, the area around him shook, his one and only home finally caving in on itself as the flames greedily ate away at its remains.

Despite his injury and his impaired sight, the Canadian did not look away. He watched in horror as his whole life fell apart with the house, oblivious to the chaos around him.

“DAMMIT!” Shouted a familiar voice to his left. Broken from his trance, Matthew turned his head and felt his blood run cold once he recognized what was happening.
Even without his glasses, he could see someone pinned down on the ground by another figure, their furious barking ringing in his ears. It was Alfred! And he was viciously trying to push off an intimidating Swedish man while another figure was quickly charging his way.

“Alfred!” Screeched Matthew, the adrenaline inside him rushing through him like a tidalwave. With his best efforts, he pushed himself off the floor and tried to jump around Finland before he grabbed him but halted midstep as he felt his wound spring forth with torture.

Leaving himself open, the Canadian was then roughly yanked from the side and pinned back onto the cold ground, feeling the air from his lungs escape him as a knee was jammed onto his back.

Alfred's point of view

From chasing his twin through the dark woods, to seeing his figure fall before their blazing house, Alfred could no longer follow his train of wild thought anymore as he body simply ran on instinct. Cold, calculating instincts he had learned and ingrained in his head from years of assasinating leaders and targets worldwide. Curtly changing his direction that was originally following his brothers footsteps, Alfred continued his sprint through scratching foliage, aiming to locate the perpetrators that hid themselves within their property.

Distance, trajectory, cover. All these details raced through Alfred's mind as he stopped immediately behind a tree and aimed his gun into some bushes before shooting. Like birds being flushed from their trees, the two nations hiding fled from their cover, one of them cradling a bleeding hand while the other bled from his cheek.

Giving chase to the fleeing nations across the yard, Alfred sent a hasty glance over in Matthew's direction but stopped when he saw his brother struggling to get up. Matthew!

Spining on his heel, Alfred would have happily ran to his brothers aid and flee right then and there but made the mistake of changing his original plan once a bullet shot through his chest.

Taken aback but the sudden sensation as hands became slack and his gun slipped from his grip, Alfred's attention desperately narrowed on Matthew when dark circles and blinding flares blended together into a hazy mess that threatened to confound him as he sloppily tried to command his legs to continue forward. “Mat...”

Immediately, he was tackled to the dirt, a large intimidating Swedish man looming over him as he roughly tried to gather up Alfred's hands behind his back and apprehend him with little trouble. Fortunately for Alfred, the impact of being tackled was sharp enough to bring him back to reality and fight.

Flailing around viciously and kicking in every direction, Alfred eventually caused the nation to lose his balance, giving him the liberty to flip him on his back and return the favor as his hands wrapped around Sweden's neck. Ignoring every painful kick to his body, Alfred did not relent on his attack on the nation until he too was flipped over, their tussle constantly switching between who would become victorious.

“DAMMIT!” Screeched Alfred as he endured punches to his face, his eyes frantically racing between his assailant and the Finnish man that was running towards Matthew. Just as he finally gained a upper hand on the Swedish man for the final time, a yelp of pain reached Alfred's ears.

“Let go of him.” Warned Finland as he held Matthew still under his boot, the Canadian heaving in shock as his body was further pressed into the ground when Alfred merely stared widely at his assailiant.
“Unless you want me to hurt him more than he already is.” Finland added in an emotionless voice.

Despite trying to pull off a cold attitude towards the brothers, Finland couldn't help but break his mask of apathy when Alfred simply released his hold on Sweden and became slack, giving the nation the opportunity to escape from under his weight. Free from the American's grasp, he didn't hesitate to snatch up a discarded gun that laid some distance away from them and aim it directly at Alfred's head.

“St'nd up.” Growled out the intimidating nation as he ignored the dribble of blood that crawled down his forehead. Without another word, Alfred did as he said but his eyes never once left Matthew who was feebly wheezing out in discomfort under Finlands weight.

“Put your hands in the air and don't move a muscle.” Finland commanded with narrowed eyes.

No objection came from the American yet again however he felt his shoulders relax once Finland was kind enough to alleviate some of the pressure on his twins back. “Good...” Whispered the Finnish man as he carefully removed his boot from Matthews back and swiftly grabbed the ex-nation by the back of his collar, ignoring any hisses that he released. Lifting him up far enough so he could get a good view of his twin, Finland pointed towards the two men before them.

“The same goes for you. If you make a bad move here, my partner won't hesitate to place a bullet in your brothers head.” Studying the Canadians face, Finland could see a glimmer of terror in his blue eyes. Feeling perhaps a small pang of sympathy for the man despite his reputation, he softened his voice and added, “Please. We don't need anymore destruction today.”

“Fuck...” Mumbled out Matthew, whether it was for the fact that he felt the noose around his neck getting tighter as their situation only worsened by the second, promising no hope of escape; or simply for the fact that he started to feel blood build up in his mouth and spill ungracefully passed his lips.

Adjusting the pack that he carried, Finland slowly began to push Matthew in Sweden's direction, his eyes trained on the assassins every movement as he struggled to walk with his stomach wound acting out with every step he took. As the Canadian held a twisted face of agony, Finland felt confident enough to assume that he would not pose too much of a challenge to control, but felt his hand slip towards his pocket anyways, where he knew he held a sharp knife in case of emergencies.

Despite his display of forced meekness, the Canadian could only concentrate on a flurry of expletives rampage in his head as he see no chance of freedom for himself or Alfred.

Speaking of Alfred, why wasn't he doing anything? Putting up a fight? Saying anything! Focusing on the aforementioned blond, he kept his head bowed, preventing his brother from reading an expression. Had he really given up that easily? Or perhaps... he was disappointed in his twin. Upset that he caused them to be caught so easily. That realization alone caused Matthew to halt in his step in fear that he had done the one thing he had vowed never to do again: Become a burden.

“What do-?” Began Matthew's captor before he felt himself yanked to the floor. Although his hand tightened around his knife instantly, he had to release his hold once he noticed that Matthew was coughing up blood, rather than hoping to create a diversion.

“Mat!” Called Alfred nervously, his head finally lifted and broken out of his previous thoughts. The gun planted behind his head surely didn't falter however, causing the tension Alfred felt to spike once again. If he could just have the man behind him distracted for one moment, maybe he could...
“Come on. Get up.” Ordered Finland as he tried to lift him by the collar. Illuminated by the wanning flames, the small nation sent Sweden an anxious glance. Aware of the look they exchange, Alfred had two choices, take a chance of accidentally getting Matthew killed in exchange for freedom, or admit defeat.

_Shit! If only there was a way my life would be the only one at stake._ He also had to take into consideration that his injury was a handicap for him once the adrenaline faded away. Then they truly will have been caught for good.

Feeling his breathing become more rapid, Alfred's gaze shot to the burning house, the nations, then to his brother. His coughs were becoming more violent the further he pressed himself into the dirt, Alfred noted with fear. Desperate to reach Matthew, it was with shock that Alfred recognized a small hand gesture underneath his brother. It appeared as if he was clutching a balled up hand to his abdomen but no one else could read the minor raised fingers that Alfred saw. A silent code.

**Go without me.**

Like a spring ready to pop, the American felt his teeth clench tightly as his twin continued do his best to distract the Finnish man and possibly his partner if he was dramatic enough.

**Go.**

*The idiot.* The key was to appear calm despite his twins messages.

**Now!**

But this, this was ridiculous. Ready to cement his commitment to ensure Alfred' freedom, Matthew swiftly yanked his head up and rammed a fist into Finland's face, regardless of the fact that a knife shortly dug into his arm. At that same moment, a loud pop echoed in the dark forest, a terrifying indication that Alfred hadn't taken his sacrifice as a chance to run.

Instead, a hoarse infuriated voice rang through. “Run, you fucking idiot!!”

He'd never understand why he took those words to heart and did what he said. Perhaps it was because Alfred rarely commanded him to do something? If anyone ever gave the orders in their plans it was Matthew. But with how far they had slipped into enemy hand, at this point, it was absolute suicide if he wasted any hopes of escape.

Ripping himself away from the flailing nation who immediately tried to use his knife as a hook to incapacitate the Canadian's movement, Matthew shoved the assualting man with a sharp kick to the shoulder. In the moment that Finland lost his grip on the knife, he launched himself forward and ran. To the forest ahead where the darkness would kindly welcome him into her sweet protection.

As a few more bullets echoed behind him, the Canadian chanced a peek back to the nations but was startled speechless as he was suddenly scooped up and thrown over a shoulder.

That pain that shot up through his spine continued to leave him without the ability to speak but felt his heart free itself from a numb grip of despair as he saw two figures become distant ahead of him. Finland and Sweden.

“Al-!” He managed to choke out as his body rocked harshly against his brothers bleeding arm.

“Shit! It's not me you dumbass!” Shouted Alfred, sprinting frantically through shadows and passed wretched roots that threatened to cripple their dash to salvation. “You're bleeding too much!”
“Ugh. Says... the guy who - just tried - to be the - hero again!” Matthew belted out in a broken sentence, the pressure on his chest threatening to silence him again.

“Just shut up already!” Alfred rebuked him bluntly. Making a sharp turn to the left, he cursed when he could hear footsteps behind him, fueling his body to push itself further.

Crunching dead leaves under his boot and recklessly breaking through solid bushes, Alfred carried his twin as far as his body could handle before the adrenaline began to fade. Unfortunately, that didn't seem to be enough to lose the constant beat of boots trailing behind him.

Glancing his head desperately in every direction, the American could barely decipher his surroundings properly but saw a spark of hope from this daunting obstacle.

Sprinting to the edge of a hill that overlooked the entire forest down below, Alfred clumsily climbed over the edge, barely catching himself as he momentarily lost his balance, and wedged himself and his brother deep into the side of the hill, willing with all his heart that the two pursuing nations wouldn't consider investigating their corner of the ledge.

With footsteps drawing near, Alfred anxiously clamped a hand over his heavy breathing and attempted to maneuver his twin around so that he could do the same for Matthew. A few seconds ticked by as they waited.

Labored breathes soon interrupted the peaceful silence of the forest, foreign words being exchanged between nations before they shuffled their legs close to the side of the cliff.

“Damn, where could they be hiding? There's no way they could have escaped that quickly!” Uttered Finland as he inched closer to where Alfred and Matthew concealed themselves underneath a dark corner.

Once his foot rested above the twins heads, both of their hearts beating in fright that they'd be discovered shortly after, something short of a miracle happened. Finland lost his footing. Before he would plummet to the bottom of the cliff, he was luckily yanked back to steady grounds by Sweden who growled in annoyance.

“C'reful. Too d'rk to see.” He warned, refusing to remove his grasp on Finland as he pulled him further away from the ledge. “Th'y're h'ding but n't h're. Th'y'd f'll by th'n.”

Although the Finnish man was not happy to admit the high probability of falling over the edge if he searched around, he followed Sweden anyways. “Well, let's at least search around here then. They couldn't have gotten far.” Grumbled the nation to his counterpart in his mother language.

Holding bated breathes, the twins remained motionless in their tight corner, feeling a twinge of terror pass them everytime some living creature moved in the surrounding area and caused the pursuing nations to jump in anticipation. In addition, the longer they lingered in the area the harder it became for the brothers to contain their pained moans.

After about 20 minutes of the nations blindly prowling through every bush and tree nearby, they both at last departed from their location and headed further west, away from the cliff and the two brothers. Once Alfred's removed his hand from Matthew's mouth a short curse flew from his lips, a small spasm racking his body as his brother held fast to him for support.

“Are you ok?” Whispered Alfred in a strained huff. With crickets chirping in the air and the crisp air getting colder with every passing gust, a shiver ran up Matthew's spine.

“...” He gave no response as he gingerly adjusted his position and was able to properly sit next to
his twin.

“Mat-.” Began Alfred but was hushed with a hand.

“I'm sorry brother...” Mumbled Matthew regretfully. “...For putting us in danger like that.”

“But Kumajiro... and our house...” He continued in a broken voice, feeling the irritating hitch in his throat accompany his words. “How... did...”

“It's ok Mattie.” Alfred interjected gently. “None of it was your fault. And we somehow managed to escape. Let's do our best to keep it this way.” Looking up at the sky where a veil of stars draped over their continent, Alfred sighed in exhaustion, ignoring the wince that passed him. To his misfortune, most of his energy had finally left him, leaving him vulnerable to fully experience the brunt of having a bullet lodged in his chest.

The same could be said for Matthew who had it much worse once he realized where the bullet had pierced him. “Fucking mother of-!” He swore lowly as he held back a screech when he prodded his wound.

“Alfred! Ugh, I need you to do me a huge favor. Like, right now.” He pleaded with gritted teeth. With his brothers confirmation, Matthew shakily lead his hand over to his gut. “I'm sorry to ask this but, can you dig this bullet out of me...?”

West of the Yukon forest – 8:06 p.m.

“Good grief...” Muttered England once he and his group had found the source of the loud explosions and blazing fire from earlier. Grimacing at the remains where a house once used to stand, England carefully walked around the charcoals of wood and burnt vegetation, closely trying to find any recognizable material within the wreckage. Using the tip of his boot he prodded at some black lumps but retreated when the objects collapsed into tiny embers.

“Nothing.” Shaking his head in disappointment, England glanced back at his allies and frowned. “Well, you don't suppose this place belonged to those two?”

While they both exchanged wary expressions before turning back to the Briton they all immediately became tense when they heard the familiar sound of bushes rustling towards them. Drawing his gun in the nations direction, England briskly joined his companions as they took sturdy stances in expectation of a confrontation.

Only when a brown haired man popped through the foliage followed closely by a child, did England's group take a step back in confusion, guns dropped in apology once the Spaniard shrieked in surprised at the directed weapons.

“F-France?! What are you doing here?” Spains eyes roamed over all three men in question. “England? And... Japan?” With his stare settled on the Japanese nation, eyebrows scrunched down in concern.

“Oh no...” Came out the barely audible murmur from the nation as eyes darted around suspiciously.

“Spain, what's the matter?” France asked as he took a step in the man's direction. Reaching a hand out to him, he pointed once in the direction of the embers. “Did you see what happened here?”

“Is this the house of-.” Arthur began but hesitated when he noticed that his words were not getting through to the nation. Even with Sealand trying to gain the man's attention by hanging on his arm, the Spaniard did not so much as glance down at the boy as he nevously removed his bag and
started searching for something.

“Spain.” England snapped as he grew tired of the man's continued ignorance of their question. That seemed to have done the trick at he froze in place, his hand jammed towards the bottom while he slowly lifted his head up and gave them his full attention. Despite the frown on his face, England repeated his question once more. “Is this the house of the assassins?”

“You mean America and Canada?” Spain voiced quietly as if fearful that the mentioned nations would spring up any moment.

The look of terror that plastered itself on England and the others face however did little to ease Spain's worries. “Wha... what did you say?” France uttered in disbelief.

Muttering what could have best been compared to a prayer, Spain shook his head in what seemed like an apology. “Right... you've all been missing for some time now. And the others haven't informed you yet for that reason...”

Pointing towards the burnt remains of the cottage, Spain explained in a soft voice, “America and Canada lived there. And they're the ones that committed countless assassination from years past. How many exactly, we don't know but another thing I should add is...”

Slowly rising from his crouched position on the ground, the man brought up the pack he carried and finally withdrew a gun. Which he aimed in Japan's direction. “Please forgive me my friend...” His frown only deepened. “But we've all been given orders that should we find you, we must apprehend you immediately.”

Startled by the declaration, all three men and even the young nation to Spain's side held wide eyes before the torrent of questions demanding answers erupted forth.

“What is the meaning of this Spain!” Came France.

“Apprehend me?” Repeated Japan in a lost daze.

“By whose bloody damn orders did that come from!” Barked England.

“Spain, what are you doing? Finland never mentioned this...” Sealand pleaded.

“Again, I ask for your forgiveness for my actions but... Germany and the others concluded that since Japan has been missing for some time now, it is with our deepest regret to assume that his disappearance without any warning would mean that he has joined the criminals, America and Canada and is choosing to aid them in their destructive actions.”

“Under what premises do you base that foolish idea on!” England shot back angrily.

“Under the premises that Japan had helped the brothers out before.” Spain replied solemnly.

“He didn't know that they were the assassins back then!” Countered France.

“That still doesn't change the fact that he helped them out!” Shouted Spain in frustration. That seemed to have silence both European nations who grudgingly could no deny that fact.

With gun still aimed at him and both his allies unable to rebuke this accusation, Japan broke his silence. “So Germany has labeled me a traitor.” He stated plainly. It wasn't a question. Simply a confirmation of a terrible conclusion.
“Yes.” Replied Spain with a downcast tone.

“He never joined America and Canada though.” Added England once again. “Can't that prove his innocence? We'll testify for him if we have too!” France vehemently nodded in agreement.

“If what you claim is true, then what possible explanation do you have to provide for the nations when they ask why Japan left his country without so much as leaving a message behind for his people?”

Both England and France were left speechless when their previous commitment to protect Japan were called into question. If they continued to push for his innocence, then surely they would be forced to reveal what Japan was helping them with. Their efforts to locate the brothers before anyone else could not be discovered now.

Then there was their excuse to consider as well. What could they provide to the nations once they started asking for their reasons to be prowling around the forests of Canada? They had to conceive a valid excuse for themselves before they could even considered defending their ally.

When no words were offered and both blond nations were left to glance away in regret, Spain puffed out a stressed breathe and stepped to the side, calling the Japanese man over with a wave of the firearm.

“Please make this easy for me.” He pleaded. With wary brown eyes crossing over limp hands that had previously threatened to leave bullets in him, Spain coughed anxiously. “I won't ask why you two are here but please keep in mind that the others will, once they meet up with you.”

Holding back a cringe, England choose to send Spain a cold stare instead. In retaliation for the dark look he was receiving from the Briton, Spain glared back in annoyance. “And remember that if you try to stop me here, the others will label you as accomplices to Japan, and thus, America and Canada in turn. Please think about your actions carefully before following through on them.”

It was quite a dilemma they found themselves in this time. Should they accompany Spain back to the others and offer a viable excuse that would clear all their names in return for giving up hope on finding the twins alone, or risk being placed under suspicious notice and leaving Japan to defend for himself if they parted ways with the Spaniard in hopes of finding the brothers? And they were so close too...

Grinding his teeth in defeat, England aimlessly kicked an ember aside and pocketed his gun as he joined Japan's side. “Right...”

Alfred and Matthew – 8:35 p.m.

So much blood. Why? That lone word continued to spiral around madly in Alfred's mind like vultures ready to scavenge the remains of a corpse. “Why-!” He voiced angrily as the hand that clutched his shoulder became stiff and sharp as a bear trap. Not even the small bullet he held in his scarlet hand helped ease his panic as his brother continued to bleed before him. With the red liquid bubbling out profusely Alfred was left with no other choice but to remove his jacket and press the material against his twin's body.

“Mat-!” He choked out as he gently nudged Matthew's sweaty face. It was a bad idea. He knew it was a bad idea! How long had it been since Alfred had last treated a wound this severe? And yet, Matthew insisted that his brother remove the bullet from his liver, least he recover and end up living the rest of his immortal life with a bullet inside his organ. For some strange reason, his twin didn't like that idea very well.
It was then with an excruciating slow pace that Alfred was given a small pocket knife, and under his brothers order, was told to dig around his twin's wound until the metal collided with a solid object inside. Certainly, this experience alone would be one of many more that would haunt Alfred's dreams for the rest of his life as his brother writhed in agony underneath him, his mouth tightly wrapped around his own shirt as he prevented himself from screaming out loud.

But no, just when Alfred thought this scene couldn't get any worse, his fears only heightened to inhumane levels as his knife simply cut deeper into his twin and refused to locate that damned bullet. He was no longer finding a bullet. He was cutting his brother open.

It wasn't until Matthew had finally had enough of the knife missing its intended target that he recklessly grabbed Alfred hand and yanked it into his wound, plunging his brothers hand deep inside where he would finally feel a small bead concealed under all his tissue.

With the deed finally done and his brothers body twisting in unnatural angles, Alfred desperately held back sobs, afraid that even one tiny peep from him would doom them both. He cradled Matthew in his lap, smoothly brushing a hand over his hair as he forced himself to remain as calm as possible and shush his twin in a soft voice. There was no point in cleaning off his hand on his cloth if he was already covered in the matter.

He did his best to ignore the surge of electricity up his arm as Matthew's grip refused to relent their hold, not only preventing blood from circulating into the rest of his arm but also inching dangerously close to his own injury planted between his lung and his left shoulder.

The darkness that had once served to protect them from enemy detection was now hindering the Americans effort to read his brothers expression under the shade of the cliff. Was he even conscious?

Juggling his twin around so that he would still be pressing his jacket on his wound, Alfred choose to use his free hand to remove the shirt Matthew held in his mouth but found great resistance as he refused to release it. “I'm sorry Mattie.” Mumbled out Alfred ruefully.

As if he was at last aware that Alfred had been trying to earn his attention, Matthew gingerly turned his head, his moans seeping past his teeth and shirt.

“I got it Mattie.” Alfred explained in a whisper, oblivious to the fact that tears were freely slipping down his face. “You can relax now.” Feeling the pressure in his arm ebb away sluggishly Alfred carefully drew his hand up to his twins face and removed the limp wet shirt from his mouth.

Only to have be welcomed by a bone chilling shriek erupt from Matthew's lips.

Startled by the animal like noise but also alerted to the fact that the forest would provide no protection from the enemy once they heard the scream, Alfred hastily clamped his hand over Matthew's face, struggling to contain his brother's flailing as the screams only boosted his terror.

“Fuc- stop! Mat-! Ugh!” Alfred spat out in between the moments he was wrestling his twin for control while manipulating where his hand rested over his open wound. Once he was restrained, chest heaving erratically, the American apprehensively hugged his twin to his body as he listened for any movement nearby. Straining to hear even the slightest twig snap in their vicinity, Alfred snapped his head up when leaves crunched and crackled. They were coming back?

“No.” He mouthed emptily, swiftly heaving Matthew onto his shoulder as he pushed himself away from under the cliff and tried to climb back onto solid land. But alas, even God above would not see to it that Alfred would have the same luck that Finland had when he lost his footing earlier.
Unable to fully balance himself properly with Matthew hanging over his shoulder, the blond yelped once in surprise and raked the air for any support as he felt his body start to slip towards a black ravine below. Just one hand clawed at the unsteady dirt above, blue eyes frenziedly staring down into what seemed like an endless abyss while Alfred urgently tried to pull himself up. Then with the added pressure of Matthew slowly slipping from his shaky hold as the blood he was matted in caused any sort of grip to become near impossible to keep, the ex-nation truly felt as if there was no hope left for him or his twin and made the dreadful conclusion to accept this fate.

Maybe this was karma's way of coming back to haunt them for every little crime they committed?

It was of no importance to him anymore. Taking one last breathe of what he would like to have called freedom, Alfred let go of the cliff and slipped into the darkness below, his last actions focused solely on using his body as a shield for Matthew once they hit the Earth below.

Finland and Sweden – 9:00 p.m.

Birds screeched into the distance and crickets suddenly seized their constant buzzing for a few moments when two men slowly crossed through their forest. “Did you hear that?” Finland spoke up with vigilant ears yearning to hear beyond their capacity. Spinning around in a small circle, he took in every shadow surrounding him with a glare, ready to pounce into action should anyone break through them.

“No.” Replied Sweden curtly. “B’ck to the oth'rs. F'rest w'n't aid our s'rch any f'rther.” Despite his words, anyone could tell by his drawn up eyebrows that he was just as disappointed, if not more angry that he couldn't apprehend the two criminals that had previously threatened his partner when they had held him hostage. Perhaps revenge would have to wait another day then.

Turning back towards the west, they continued on in route towards the faint glow of dying flames licking away at the fragments of wood that littered the assassin's home. Pushing aside some low hanging leaves that shielded the area from view the scandinavian countries were met with an unexpected sight.

Patiently waiting for their return was Spain and Sealand, as expected but along in their company stood England, France and Japan; three nations that had just about refused any and all forms of communications with the other nations.

“Thank God you're back!” Called Spain blearily.

“Whoa. How did all of you end up here?” Chirped Finland with a crooked smile.

With a small frown, England arched his head in the direction of the burnt house behind him. “It wasn't exactly the hardest thing to ignore the firework show over here.”

“Good point.” The Finnish man answered casually. “France, I trust you are doing well?” He asked with a grin.

A hesitant nod from the Frenchman yielded no further response from the blond nation as he continued his glance in Japan's direction. “And Japan! What a pleasure to see you. How-?”

“Cut the fake enthusiasm crap.” Remarked England with a disapproving snarl. “We're all very well aware already that you and the others are going to arrest Japan under the suspicions that he's conspiring with America and Canada.”

“Oh? You already told them Spain? Good. I really do loath being the bearer of bad news...” Sighed Finland as he relaxed his tense shoulders. “Ow!” He hissed when his body reminded him about the
swift kick Matthew had dealt to him only an hour ago.

“Wh't's wr'ng? It's d'slocat'd?” Sweden questioned as he diligently examined the smaller nations arm. Vaguely able to discern any vivid injuries under the weak light of the dead flames around them, England uncrossed his arms and walked the short distance that separated him and the Finnish nation.

Doing his best to approach the nation without appearing as a threat to a protective Sweden, the Briton looked him over once, taking in a limp left shoulder, a broken nose and some dried blood coated on his shirt. Never mind the fact that Sweden looked just as bad as askew glasses and a face decorated in colorful bruises that would most definitely look terrifying in broad daylight, revealed that the brothers had put up a vicious fight.

“Did America do this to you...?” He asked in a low voice.

“Do you really have to ask?” Countered Finland with a grumble.

Clicking his tongue in disgust, England glanced away for a moment until his eyes flashed over something hanging on the nations back. “Hm? What did you bring with you there?”

“Ah, this? Documents.” Finland stated as he shuffled the pack further up his back. “Their house was full of them before we burned it down. It won't be until early daylight however that we can fully read these papers and see what sensitive information they've been hoarding for us.”

“And in what direction did the brothers run off in?” France quizzed from the side, his curiosity getting the best of him.

“To the 'ast.” Spoke Sweden.

Watching the French nation send a longing stare in the mentioned direction, Finland added, “Don't bother giving chase. It's too dark and you're more likely to end up in a ditch if you don't watch your step.”

Snapping his head back to the tired men, France sent them a dreary expression. “I was merely wondering where they might be hiding. Besides, as you had mentioned before, Japan is being accused of betraying the nations and thus needs moi and England for support. A good ally never abandons his friend after all.” As if to affirm his statement, France marched on over to where Japan silently sat near a tree and plopped down right next to him.

How he would have loved to have seen a grateful smile on the Japanese man's face, yet, since Spain had declared him a traitor he had rejected any further notion of proclaiming his innocence and had settled for sitting on the ground near the Spaniard who sullenly looked after him.

“Oh course. We have many misunderstandings to clear up with the others.” Came England's haunting voice as he returned to his previous spot some feet away from his allies. “Until then, I do hope you have enough supplies to spare with us for the night as I trust you won't allow us to go back and retrieve our own material some miles back eh?”


Down a ravine – November 6, 2003 – 6:45 a.m.

Through the little light that streamed passed the branches of the thick forest trees, a rabbit sprinted by a lake of dried leaves, jumping back in fear when it came across two tangled bodies hidden underneath a pile of brown leaves. While both blondes appeared lifeless, the forest creature knew
better then to linger by and find out whether they were alive or not. Abandoned to the elements of the earth, a cold breeze raced low to the ground, rousing up a wave of leaves and effectively causing a shiver to run up one of the brothers spine.

With pained moans and weak shuffling, blue eyes barely opened in a dead half lidded state, the individual unable to comprehend the deep cold that consumed his body or the reason why he could not identify any object barely inches away from his face.

Bringing a hand up to his twin's neck, he checked for a pulse, relief flooding over his body when a steady beat was felt against his finger.

Gently untangling himself from the unconscious brother, the blond tried to pick himself off the floor but gasped out in surprise when a sharp pang shot through his side. Gripping the affected area, he held back another gasp as he realized with mortification that he had broken a rib. Unwilling to let this slow him down, he tirelessly crawled around the forest floor for a good 10 minutes until he had finally located what he was missing. His glasses.

Once properly placed where they belonged, the ex-nation returned to his brother and lifted him from the ground, gingerly placing him on his back before studying his surroundings with a blank look. Only the vibrant noise of the forest creatures around him assured him that no humans had climbed down the ravine in hopes of capturing them. What luck he had.

Squeezing his eyes shut as he took the first step up along a path, the blond fought against his injuries demand for attention and began his trek, almost in a zombie like state as nothing but the constant tap of his boot on earth echoed in the environment.

They had to keep moving. No matter what. And with the pure luck he had in not being discovered when he was out cold... this blond would most definitely be sure not to squander this opportunity of a second chance.

When he reached the first hill that peeked over the ravine they had fallen in, the man was already out of breathe. “Damn...” He wheezed out, taking one long good look at the hills that spread out before him. Shaking his head lightly, Alfred adjusted his twin’s weight on his back and continued on his march through the forest, thankful that at least the sunlight was warming up his frozen body.

Chapter End Notes

Next Chapter: Fleeing from the nations for once without any advantage over them, Alfred and Matthew must rely on skill and even pure luck to pull through the trials that lie ahead of them. And what sort of discussion is being held between the nations regarding the information Finland stole and the sudden appearance of 3 missing nations?
A Cold Front

Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: Escape is their only hope of freedom but with the weather growing worse and their pace becoming slower, the brothers must use their survival instinct in order to pull through.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own Hetalia

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A Cold Front

- Canada, Middle of nowhere? - November 15, 2003 – 6:46 p.m.

Treading slowly over the snow covered Earth a figure halted before a large tree and placed his back on its trunk, slowly sliding down as his body refused another step forward. Just a few steps behind him, another figure stopped and simply frowned.

“…”

“Just give me a moment…” Mumbled the tired American. He shivered against the cold, having tossed his only jacket away after realizing the blood soaked coat would only hinder him. Taking in a shaky breathe, he had to hold back a cough as he steadied himself before throwing a glance to his twin.

“…Are you 100% sure you know where you’re taking us? How far do you think the others would be willing to chase us?”

Taking in the sight of his pale brother, Alfred scrunched his eyebrows in worry feeling as if any moment, the ground around them would suddenly swallow up his brother. Ever since their disastrous defeat back home, his brother had little to say.

Albeit, the relief that had overcome the American once his brother had awoken and eventually recovered from his wounds was immense, he soon felt the burden of anxiety and even fear shoulder him once again as Matthew would barely engage in conversation with him.

Refusing to look straight into Alfred’s eyes, Matthew gave a curt nod in his direction before whispering out something Alfred could barely hear.

“Almost there.”

Three Hours later
“Mat, we can’t go any further. Even in this darkness it’ll be too dangerous for us.” Reasoned Alfred in protest as he watched what he could assume was the receding back of his twin. “And don’t even get me started on this weather.”

Lifting his hand face up and glancing towards the heaven, he flinched as snowflakes assaulted his vision in a light frenzy. “Ugh.” He muttered in disgust, feeling the ice sink further into his skin.

Without warning, something began to pelt his feet. For a second he was caught off guard until he realized that his brother was already digging away at the snow covered ground below them. “Thanks for the heads up bro.” He mumbled out sarcastically.

When no response came yet again he rolled his eyes in annoyance and blindly joined his twin, both working diligently at removing enough matter near the corner of a rocky dip in order to create a makeshift den.

Thankfully enough, the temporary shelter was decent enough to shield them from the ruthless cold winds but the tension between both brothers did not ebb one bit as they wordlessly took their turns keeping up guard duty while the other half rested.


“In more favorable weather, if any suspicious activity is confirmed within the border or even remotely some kilometers off they are to be reported to me immediately. These suspects should be captured and brought back to camp for questioning, do I make myself clear?” Ordered Germany to a handful of pilots that stood before him. Once they confirmed their given orders he turned away and took in the sight of the busy camp before him; UN officials and workers buzzing around on various duties, from securing the perimeter of their acquired property to sending out organized groups on little escorts to the harbor where further troops would disembark and join their established facilities.

When no one else seemed to harass him for further instructions on what to do the German nation grunted, having found a moment of peace at last. He headed towards a specific green tent that rested near the center of the camp.

Peeking inside for any familiar faces he felt his lips pull up as Finland sheepishly grinned back at him, having patiently waited at his desk. “Excuse me for the sudden intrusion.” He explained as he swiftly rose from the seat and gave a curt nod of his head in apology.

Briskly shaking his head, Germany politely opened the tent flap to the Finnish nation. “No, please don’t apologize. I was the one who asked for an update on to what you found regarding the brothers.”

Both men exited the tent as they casually strolled towards the end of the camp, refusing to share any details aloud for fear that someone would overhear them. On the outskirts of the UN grounds, Germany briefly informed a guard that he would be taking a quick assessment of the north region and continued on, despite the skeptical and even worried look he received from the guard.

It wasn’t until they were out of sight from the bustling community behind them that Finland finally began their conversation.

“As it was previously suspected from earlier statements, it appears that America and Canada were indeed responsible for the assassinations of a majority of our leaders, dating back all the way to 1953.”
That fact alone made the German man visible stop in his tracks as Finland patiently halted in mid step and continued. “Most if not all the data, files and documents that many of us have lost or have had stolen appear to be in their possession.”

The blond took a few steps ahead as if to join the Finnish spy.

“And I believe with enough solid evidence that they are solely responsible for all the murders. They do not have any further associates close to them as far as I can deduce and on top of that, the only true people of interest that have actually played a hand in supporting them include some people down in New York and…Japan.” Ended Finland quietly.

Slowing down his steps, Germany opened his mouth as if to explain something but shook his head and stopped a few steps away from Finland. “I understand.”

He quietly withdrew from his pocket a folded document and handed it to the smaller man. “Here.”

Curiously examining the paper in his hand, Finland unfolded it and carefully studied its contents.

“What is this?” He quizzed as he quickly tried to scan the letter. Before he could receive a valid answer however he felt his eyebrows rise in surprise as he read the bold word: GUILTY. Not so far from this proclamation was Japan’s name neatly printed at the bottom.

“Germany, what… what is this supposed to be?”

“It’s a rough draft of his verdict.” Came the grim reply.

“A rough draft? Can you even make those?” Accused Finland as he waved the paper around in front of the tall nation. “I know that he’s connected to the brothers but he’s wouldn’t purposely help them if he knew their plans!”

“I know that!” Barked out the German sharply, abruptly silencing Finland who stared at him with deep pity. “I know all of that…” He repeated softly. “But in the end, it doesn’t change the fact that he is an accomplice to their past assassinations. Despite our relationship, in the end, he is guilty of assisting America and Canada.”

Tightly clutching the paper in his hand, Finland frowned. “And who made this verdict? What’s going to happen to him? This problem can only remain in our circle of nations so any judicial punishment from our people cannot take place.”

“The verdict? I think our lack of jury shouldn’t matter so much as the evidence against him in the first place Finland. Even I cannot deny that he is guilty of his actions. As for his punishment however… that’s something we are discussing at the moment although France and England don’t appear to want to cooperate with us properly.” He added with a grimace.

“Well surely he could avoid something grave like a death penalty right?” When Germany did not reply Finland swiftly apologized with a bow of his head.

“Ummm… Look, regardless of how much of a part he had in helping the brothers I for one am against any corporal punishment. I know he wouldn’t do this on purpose. And I’m sure if we talk to the others and explain to them the situation they would understand.” There was doubt in Germany’s eyes. “Well, to an extent anyways.”

Slacking his shoulders in fatigue the former axis member turned back towards the camp, reluctant to return to the mess that was the UN. Suddenly feeling a hand rest on his shoulder he glanced down to its owner.
“Please don’t worry so much. Worst case scenario, if the others truly feel that Japan needs to be punished for his mistake then I’ll fiercely advocate to everyone that his way of atonement should be to be the front runner of capturing America and Canada. Sound better?”

Watching the German’s lips turn upwards into what he could assume was an appreciative smile, Finland grinned in return and sprinted ahead of the man.

“When you have more time please find me! I still have so much more information to go over with you once I’m done reviewing it!” And then he was gone, back to his work as the German would find no sign of him within the camp later on.

November 17, 2003 – 9:30 p.m.

“Brother?” Echoed Matthew as Alfred began to stir from his sleep.

“Hrrmmmm?” He groaned out as he weakly rubbed at his eyes and the blankets around him fell away. Wait.

“Wha?”

“It’s your turn to keep watch” Came his apologetic mumble. He still failed to see the shock and surprise that engrossed Alfred as he questioned the sudden presence of blankets. Or the fact that they weren’t sleeping in a ditch again.

“Where are we?” Asked Alfred at last once he registered the house that encased them. “What happened? Did-?”

“It seemed like you didn’t want to wake up so I decided to keep walking without telling you. We’re in a shack. When we arrived there were already some blankets on the floor. Not exactly the place I was hoping to run into but it’s good enough for now.” Explained Matthew quietly

“…How are you feeling?” Spoke Alfred.

“Well enough…” There was a nervous hesitation to Matthew’s tone.

“You sure about that?”

“…”

“Alright, keep your silence.” Snapped Alfred as he tossed his blankets to the side and headed towards the window closest to the front door.

“You’re going to freeze that way.” Matthew trailed away. “

Alfred studied his twin for a few seconds as if he wanted to point something out but instead slumped his shoulders in frustration. “I’m fine. It’s your turn to sleep with them.”

As if in defiance to his brother’s wishes Canadian nudged the blankets away with his boot.

Watching his twin cross his arms and turn away from him in the manner a child would do in protest Alfred crossed the room in a flash, scooped up the blankets and roughly fastened them over his brother.

“Take the blankets or I’ll bind you in them.” He hissed.

When he received no argument he marched back to the entrance of the door to keep watch of the
darkness outside. Learning against the wall he peered through the glass with resignation. It seemed more than unlikely that any sane person would march through this blizzard in their pursuit.

With a frigid night singing its lonely tune around the cabin the brothers remained like this for a good hour.

“Alfred.”

“You’re still awake?” Muttered the American.

“…We’ll get out of this mess soon. So don’t worry.”

“Matthew,” Alfred whispered. “About the house…”

“It’s fine!” Matthew barked abruptly. “We…we don’t need the house. We can always build another one later!”

Sadness enveloped the American as it pained him to see his brother try so hard to avoid the sorrow that weighed heavy on their hearts. To think that so many years of work could easily be wiped clean with just one grave encounter.

“…Right….” He’d have to give his twin more time to let this train wreck settle in.

Abandoning his post in favor of keeping his twin company, Alfred sat right next to him and began to lean on his shoulder. “You’re right. We’ll build a better one.” Said Alfred as he watched the window vibrate from the winds outside.

He made no comment when it was evident that the Canadians body was trembling. He gingerly wrapped an arm around his shoulder and pulled him closer.

“Brother…”

With the passing of a few hours and continuous winds rasping against their shelter, both blondes eventually fell asleep to the tune of winter’s bitter melody.

November 18, 2003 – Washington - Temporary UN Base - 11:57 a.m.

“The others want me to become a front runner to catching America and Canada?” Echoed Japan in surprise as England nodded in confirmation from across the table.

“Well to be specific, we have to convince the others that this is your best option. It is pure nonsense to persecute you for some past choices you made and argue that you did them with ill intent.” France added with a huff. “We all know you are not that type of person.”

“And as much as we may feel conflicted about your position we support this motion, for your sake.” Crossing his arms with a final sigh, England whipped his head towards the door as soon as Germany walked in and shot him a dark glare. “Guess our visit is over, eh?”

Without allowing the German man a second to reply, both blond haired men rose from their seats and headed towards the exit, sending their comrade one last hopeful glance before departing. Left
alone in an awkward silence, neither nation attempted to make eye contact as one quietly studied his current holding: a decaying room, while the other anxiously tried to take a seat across from his ally.

When another minute of silence had transpired Germany finally broke the tension in the air.

“Japan.”

Hesitantly raising his head from the corner he was ever so interested in, Japan forced himself to face Germany. “Yes?”

Seeing one of his closest allies seated before him with such a meek air about him, something the nation rarely confused with his polite nature, Germany frowned but pressed himself to continue. “How… How are you?”

That question seemed to have caught the oriental nation off guard, as seen by his ever slightly raised eyebrow and the wrinkles forming on his forehead.

“I’m… fine.” He answered, despite his lack of emotion.

Grunting in disappointment, Germany crossed his hands together and lowered his head as if to rest it atop his hands but halted midway and simply waited.

“Come on.” Came the abrupt words from the blond man.

“Excuse me?” Questioned Japan, almost taken aback as Germany screeched his chair back and rose towards the door.

“Let’s go for a walk. I’d feel better talking to you outside then in here.” He muttered, already waiting for the Japanese man’s presence near the exit.

“Outside?” Glancing towards the window as a few UN soldiers could be seen marching around the grounds, Japan sent his friend a confused frown. “Won’t the others-?”

“It’s ok.” Interjected Germany as he held the door wide open. “I need you to tell me everything you know about America and Canada, in private of course. Somewhere far from here.”

Only when Japan stood between the man and the door, still reluctant to leave his temporary prison, did Germany’s eyes soften.

“Besides…” Turning away and exiting the building he paused long enough to ensure that Japan was following. “…I trust you.”

And with a tired smile, he led the way.

-Remote Forest- 12:39 p.m.

“Dammit!” Heaving through a door packed heavily with ice, Matthew stumbled out of the shed like house with Alfred close on his heels. Exposed to the white world around them, both twins quickly sank in the knee deep blanket as they struggled to wade through the dense snow.

With the warmth of the sun barely beginning to seep through their wrinkled clothing and nary a creature to stir in this newfound icy prison, they faintly heard a grumble echo between them.

“I’m starving.” Alfred muttered quietly.
“Me too.” Matthew mumbled. Stumbling ahead of his American counterpart, he buried his hand in the snow and shuffled through it as if he was looking for something.

“What’re you looking for?” Prodded Alfred with a raised eyebrow.

“Branches.” Matthew replied with a glance over his shoulder. Nodding his head in approval Alfred returned to their shelter before reemerging with their blankets along with what appeared to be a rusty canteen.

“Ok, when did you decide that ripping up one of these was a good idea?” Accused Alfred with a grimace as he held a tattered blanket by the corner. When a suppressed chuckle escaped the Canadian however, he couldn’t help but feel a flush of delight burst through his chest, a wide grin breaking upon his face as he rashly dismissed his complaint and finally took note of a stringy mess poking out of his brother’s pocket.

Exclaiming in complete understanding now, Alfred patted the blond on the back happily. “Ohhhh, I see what you’re doing now!” When the blond flinched in response the American hastily apologized. After hushing his brother’s incessant worries with an annoyed glare Matthew returned to the snow before him but stopped.

“I still feel some pain every now and then.” Admitted the Canadian at last as he began to search the ground. Gathering up what remained of the frozen branches underneath, Matthew hugged them close to his body. “But I’ll be ok.”

He turned around with a pained smile tugging at his lips. “We should get going.”

At a loss for words, Alfred hesitantly nodded in reply and followed his brother. Towards the edge of a cliff overlooking a winter valley below, the brothers searched the distance.

“There.” Pointed Matthew. “We’ll stop there for the night. Once we stock up on some game and find some sturdier material, we’ll set up camp if we can reach there before nightfall.”

“Ok,” agreed Alfred, shuffling the blankets around his shoulder into a shawl like cape. “We’re not aiming for anything big, right?” He asked as he stretched out a hand.

Handing him some branches and mangled fabric Matthew shook his head. “No. It’ll be too much to carry around. Just small stuff like rabbits. Maybe we can find a lake or river. I wouldn’t mind some fish for dinner.”

Sharing a few chuckles between themselves they grew solemn once more as they parted ways and began to set up traps within the perimeter of the cliff. When they completed their task they returned to a clearing where snow lightly sprinkled from above, promising more treacherous weather to endure.

Alfred feverously rubbed his arms and huffed into his hands. “Damn cold. Do you think another blizzard will hit us if we make it to our stop point over yonder?” He motioned with his head towards the direction of the cliff’s edge. “Because to be honest, I rather stay in that shack for a few more days if it means we avoid freezing to death.”

Matthew mulled over this for a few moment before he grimaced. “We can’t stay put too long though. The longer we stay confined to one spot, the closer the others get to us.”

“I know that. But still. What sounds worse, getting caught or freezing to death?” Groaned Alfred. He held his head as if he were suffering from an intense headache but halted his inner turmoil when his brother did not respond. “Mat?”
Removing his hands from his face, he was taken aback as he saw a horrified expression on his brother’s face.

“Alfred. Don’t even joke about that.” He growled as he took an intimidating step towards him. “Do you WANT them to separate us again?!” He tightly gripped his twin by the arms, oblivious to his recoil.

“Mat, it was just a complaint.” Retorted Alfred in his defense.

“Something like that should never have crossed your mind in the first place.” Barked Matthew as he shoved his twin to the side and stomped away. “Fuck!”

Glancing around the trodden snow as if expecting to find a proper answer there, he grimaced before deciding to take his leave of his brother.

On his way towards the overlooking cliff he gathered some materials, carefully spreading branches on top of flat boulders and took a seat nearby. Mindlessly scraping one sharp rock against another he observed the valley below like a guard dog. Occasionally he would glance up at the sky and hold his breath in hopes that he could perhaps catch any unusual sounds vibrating in the distance.

To his relief not a sound came to his ears but the eternal silence was surely getting to him quick as he gritted his teeth in apprehension.

He remained at his self assigned post until his brother finally returned an hour later, carrying two dead rabbits by their ears.

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“I was hoping for a little more…” Muttered Alfred.

Matthew lazily prodded the small fire he had established with the branches they dried in the sun, a frown plastered on his lips. “Well… at least we have food.”

Alfred sighed. Grabbing hold of his cooked rabbit he blew on the steam that emanated from it. When he bit into it he flinched for a moment. “…I forgot how these tasted.”

Matthew on the other hand had no problem with the flavor, his interest solely focused on the flames flickering quietly.

Once they finished their meal Alfred carefully stood up to reach for the canteen atop the rocks, its liquid contents swishing around. Giving it a rigorous shake, he popped the top open and deposited the fluid onto the ground. He watched with mild disgust as large brown speckles of rust escaped with the tainted water.

He then grabbed the cleanest ice he could find nearby and stuffed it into the metal container before placing it near the fire.

“Did your rib heal already?” Asked Matthew without warning.

Scrunching his eyebrow in confusion, Alfred reluctantly nodded as his brother continued to watch the fire in a daze like state. “Uh… yeah?”
When the Canadian refused to acknowledge his answer with a proper response, Alfred crossed his arms in annoyance as he added, “Although sometimes I feel sore from time to time.”

For a split moment, Alfred couldn’t help but smirk when his brother’s head whipped up to face him. However, his grin died quickly when he saw a panicked look in Matthew’s eyes. He sprang from the ground and dashed to his brother’s side, taking hold of his hand and sprinting away from their camp.

“What’s going on?!” Shouted Alfred as his brother’s lack of explanation left much to fear.

“People are coming.” He hissed harshly. “By sky. They’re pretty far but we need to leave, quickly!”

It astounded yet disturbed Alfred how he was unable to pick up the distant sound of helicopters traveling their way. Between the two of them, Alfred’s hearing wasn’t that far off from Matthew’s. He tried to shove that minor thought to the back of his head and desperately tried to keep pace with his brother as they jumped over white mounds of matter.

They constantly looked back over their shoulders with fear embedded on their face. To their horror and despair, Matthew’s actions were justified as they began to hear the echo of something in the sky.

The faster and longer they ran down towards the valley below the more their lungs burned. And the more they began to falter in their pace. Soon they were staggering to continue their escape.

“Mat- *huff* -we can’t- *huff*…. keep this up,” Alfred stopped, his body begging for rest.

“I know.” Matthew choked out with revulsion. “We need- *pant*…to hide…somewhere.”

They frantically searched their surroundings, hoping to find a sanctuary to shield them from their pursuing enemies but were met with an endless field of empty trees and bare grounds.

“Shit!” Yelled Matthew as he kicked at the snow around him.

“Can’t we take cover under a few trees?” Alfred pleaded as he could hear the sound of humming rotor blades getting closer. Despite running as fast as their damaged bodies could carry them it seemed like it had done nothing to put any distance between them and the approaching helicopters.

“What if they’re using infrared cameras?” spat Matthew. “They’ll spot us in a heartbeat!”

“What do you suggest we do, keep running?!” Alfred shot back angrily. “We literally can’t even run anymore! We’ll pass out before we get far. Then they’ll just swoop on down and take us to the gallows!”

Matthew could feel his chest tightening up like his throat would start to reject oxygen, his sight growing dim before something shook him.

“Matthew!” It was Alfred, his body trembling uncontrollably like a naked dog. “Think!”

“We’ll be caught at this point.” Matthew whispered in a broken voice. With the sun beginning to set and the helicopters nearly upon them, Alfred felt his heart drop.

“We can’t run anymore and even if we hide, it’s very likely they’ll spot us out here.”

“No… No no NO! Mat, you can’t just accept that!” Reasoned Alfred with tears brimming near his
eyes. “Aren’t you the one who always says it isn’t over till it’s over?”

“Didn’t you want this…?” Muttered the Canadian quietly.

To his shock, the Canadian was instantly smacked across the face in response to his bitter accusation.

“Don’t you dare put this on me.” Threatened Alfred in a livid voice. “You’re always telling me to put my trust and faith in you when times get tough. So why are you abandoning me now when I’m just doing what you told me to do?!”

Matthew was speechless for a second.

“If you don’t want to lead anymore or make the decisions, then tell me! I’ll take over!” Heaving from his built up frustration, Alfred scrutinized his brother’s shifting expressions, searching for his final answer when he was abruptly shoved backwards. Landing near a fallen tree, a handful of curses were ready to stab at his twin when his face was smacked with cold ice. “Argh!”

His brother was swiftly kicking snow on top of him without mercy. Halting only for a moment to kneel down to his brother, Matthew held his head down onto the snow.

“Don’t move brother.” He warned. Alfred glared up at him but was perplexed to see a sadden expression on his face. “They’ll be over us any moment so for now, I need you to stay here and play dead.”

Alfred grimaced as he resisted a shiver. “What about-?”

“I won’t be far behind you. I’m going to be a few feet away from you and do the same. The point we want to get across to these people is to make them think we’ve been dead for a while.” He emphasized this by scooping more snow up to Alfred’s face.

“The moment they find us they’ll either get down and try to inspect us, which at that point, we’ll either have our fight or flight options; or they’ll decide to report back to their camp, wherever that may be.”

“And if we have to fight?” Alfred mumbled through the ice.

“Then we die trying to escape.” Ended Matthew somberly. “Regardless of what happens, we need to wait this out somehow. It’s going to get dark soon and the weather is only going to get worse. Even these pilots should be aware of that.”

Without a single farewell Matthew sprinted some distance from his brother and rested against a small boulder, heaping a hefty amount of snow over his legs and chest. When he finished, he allowed his head to dangle over his chest, imitating a decent image of a corpse.

Overhead, winds blasted viciously around the vicinity of where the brother’s were strewn. Three helicopters sped over their corpses nearly in unison, causing the twins breathes to halt in their throats as they passed by.

For what felt like an eternity, their mindless drone raced ahead of them as if the earth had swallowed up their existence from sight but slowly a familiar echo began to return to them.

“Fuck.” Whispered Alfred as he could feel a ruthless flurry of ice assault him. A lone helicopter had located their corpses while its other companions continued their manhunt.
It hovered over them for a good few minutes, taking its time to watch and inspect them. Almost as if mocking them, it occasionally dipped as close to the brothers as possible before taking back to the sky. But neither stirred, despite the terror that gripped their heart and throat.

Eventually the helicopters companions also returned, all three machines surrounding the brother’s like cornered animals. They spanned the area, perhaps looking for an opening to land but found no grounds for such an endeavor. When they rejoined together, they ever so slowly began their trek back to whence they came, the sunset graciously bidding them farewell.

Only when their hollow echo could be heard no more did the brother’s move. And when they stood they were quick to run in the opposite direction of the helicopters, neither sharing a word until they would nearly pass out from exhaustion a few miles away.

Snowstorm – 7:14 p.m.

Supporting each other as they walked, the North American brothers were struggling. Having somehow escaped a direct encounter with their pursuers they were currently building a makeshift tipi like structure with what few large pieces of bark they could muster from their run. They built it against two evergreen pine trees, both trembling from their prolonged exposure to the dropping temperature around them.

Their shelter was flawed, that much was obvious but they had mustered up enough energy up to pile up an icy wall against any cracks in their walls. The pitiful pieces of branches and dead matter they spread upon the ground did little to lessen the contact of cold beneath them.

When the tipi was sturdy enough to hold its own against the storm outside they rigorously began to start a weak fire near the center of their shelter. Using soiled pieces of wood, it took them over an hour to finally get a spark going.

Placing their hands as close to the fire as possible without directly placing it into the flames they huddled close together.

“Al-fred…” Whimpered Matthew softly. “We need to rest somehow. Or else they’ll get us first thing tomorrow if they reported back to their superiors.”

“Ok.” Alfred mumbled. “But is it safe to sleep? What if we…don’t wake up?”

Matthew desperately pressed himself against the blond, willing the permanent cold to disperse, at least for a moment. “We’ll take turns sleeping. Keep an eye…on the others breathing.”

Alfred stiffly nodded in agreement. He tightened the grip he had over the blankets that shrouded them and tried to wish his brother a peaceful sleep while he would keep guard of the fire. For the remainder of the night they suffered a fitful sleep at best and awoke with dread. They would have to summon the strength to continue on their trek despite how lifeless and drained they felt.

November 19, 2003 – UN Camp – 8:50 a.m.

“There was no indication that the corpses had started to decompose so we can only assume that they had recently passed away when we found them.” Reported a pilot, his fellow comrades nodding in agreement behind him. They had given their superior as many details about the two blond suspects they had found in the forest but shuffled under his intense gaze.

A Chinese man and his German counterpart grimaced in unison as they sent each other a knowing
look. “Is that so?” Asked Germany. “Did any of you land and investigate the bodies further then what your helicopter could allow?”

The pilots flinched and looked away sheepishly, none of them wanting to take responsibility for this mishap. “Uh… excuse us sir but… it was already getting dark when the weather was starting to get risky. We chose to leave before it got worse.”

“That is understandable and acceptable.” Stated Germany as a matter of fact. The pilots were relieved and disclosed when their next search would occur before excusing themselves. With their departure China turned to Germany with a doubtful expression. “They aren’t dead, are they?”

“I’m afraid not.” Replied the blond haired man seriously. “According to what Finland told me before, they injured the two brothers but with their tenacity I would be surprised if they actually succumbed to their injuries.”

“And even if the UN soldiers return back to where they were last seen it’s very likely that they have fled the scene by now.” China gripped his head and groaned in annoyance. “How unfortunate. Even with their description, for all we know, it could have just been two random dead strangers out there.”

“But…” Began Germany with a glint in his eyes. “The fact that the pilots actually located two suspects miles away from where the brother’s formerly lived is too much of a coincidence.”

China raised an eyebrow in curiosity. “I think I know where you’re going with this.”

Germany could not help but reveal a small smirk. “If we assume that those “corpses” are America and Canada and they are still alive, this indicates that they are indeed slowing down their pace as they try to escape.”

The Chinese man returned a grin. “As I thought.”

“Yes. It seems Japan was correct in assuming they would flee towards the border. Surely if we follow his strategy of blockading the boundary under the guise of a checkpoint, the brothers will eventually turn up there. At worst, even if they slip through they’ll be taking refuge in the Land’s.” Germany paused as he studied the documents resting on a large desk in the center of his tent. He pursed his lips.

“With the United Nations united against a common threat here in the Land’s it’s just a matter of time before this ruined country is monitored strictly by the international community. And then, the rope around their necks will become unbearable.”

“They’ll break at some point.” Added China with a glare.

“Yes.”

The camp around them continued to bustle with rampant activity, more and more vehicles arriving with materials and equipment as they expanded their territory.

November 20, 2003 – Near the Canadian-American border – 1:30 p.m.

“…This is it.” Coughed Matthew. He was holding onto his brother’s shoulder for support as they heaved themselves forward. “No more. Can’t.” He was about to slip from Alfred’s side when his twin tried to catch him midway, only to be brought down with him.
The damage done by the constant snow and low temperatures at night were not evident with blackened fingers or toes fortunately but the brother’s most certainly had lost a lot of feeling in their limbs. If they accidently tripped and slashed their hand or arm, they would be oblivious to the injury until their counterpart pointed it out later.

“Damn it all.” Alfred hissed.

They held pale faces and disheveled hair; their clothes were stained and torn about. While Alfred monopolized the only blankets they had they barely provided the warmth his forsaken jacket had given him in the past. Matthew cradled his stomach and moaned, having been forced to walk miles on low energy and an empty stomach.

“Mat, we need to find food ASAP.” Alfred nearly cried out. “Or else the nations catching up will be the least of our worries.”

“Just a bit further.” He didn’t have any energy left that much the Canadian knew. But to make matters worse, he could almost feel himself freeze in place, whether it was from his past injury or the constant blizzards raging across his country.

Alfred gritted his teeth, picking himself off his brother and standing on shaky legs. “I know. Come on.” He leaned down to lift Matthew off the floor, steadied himself before he started falling forward, and somehow managed to get them both on their feet again.

In the distance the border between the US and Canada could be seen clearly, a few broken houses littering the field. The frost covered land spread like vines from the forest towards civilization but dwindled the further it ran into urban territory.

As they approached the first abandoned house closest to them they inspected the area for any unwanted visitors. When the coast was clear they immediately began to ransack the place for food and materials, grabbing what measly items they could find: some tattered clothes, a discarded purse and some stale bread.

They ravenously devoured the rock hard bread, ignoring the pain in their mouth and then continued their frantic hunt for more food. “It’s not enough.” Whimpered Matthew. He bent down to pick up a plastic cracked bowl they had thrown to the floor.

He choked back what felt like bile in his throat and stuffed the bowl into their bag. “We need…to find refuge but in the city there won’t be animals to hunt.”

“We’ll need to survive off of whatever we find. We’ll… need to scavenge.” Just saying those words out loud somehow damaged Alfred’s pride, the same for Matthew as he twitched in response.

“It’ll be like old times all over again.” Muttered the Canadian in a broken voice. “No money, shelter, food, or protection.”

A wild chuckle escape Alfred. He stood still, staring blankly into space with a wide grin on his face. “Whatever bro. We can take this, right?” He shot his twin a smile but it was crooked and on the verge of falling into a miserable frown. He rubbed his stomach, wincing when its emptiness greeted him back.

“Let’s search the next house. Afterwards, we should start heading towards the east. The only place I know that will give us hope is our former home back in New York.”

Matthew scoffed offhandedly at his brother’s mention of that wretched place. “Unfortunately I
can’t argue against that.”

When they opened the door to exit the house they froze in step as they heard people approaching the field of empty houses.

“Hurry up and bring the men and equipment here! We only have till 4 to have the camp set up and operational.” Barked a stranger with a foreign accent.

“No…” Whispered Matthew, his grip on Alfred’s arm tightening indefinitely. “They can’t have located us already. Why are there people here with…?” He did not finish his sentence as he pulled Alfred back to the corner of the room.

“Mat.” Alfred trembled when the voices got louder.

The Canadian whipped his head in all directions, looking for a quick escape but swore as all the windows to the house were boarded up. Their recent arrival to this urban area had allowed them to relax too much, leaving them drained more than expected. If they fought any people they would lose, if they ran and were chased, soon they would slow down enough for capture to become inevitable.

“Matthew!” Whispered Alfred, motioning towards what appeared to be a small hole on the side of the house.

They huddled over the hole and were about to dig at the cracked tile when voices rang out.

“You idiot! Get back over there and grab your stuff. Do you want to lose it?”

The brothers ears perked up, trying to pinpoint where the men were stationed. To the north, perhaps a house away? Maybe if they could reach this “stuff” it could give them an advantage. Trying to be as silent as possible but efficient, they dug away furiously as the ground with their bare hands, ignoring the blood that started to seep into the gravel below.

“Hurry.” Added Matthew once the hole was large enough to allow exit from the house. He pushed his brother out and followed suit, only to be greeted by his absence. “Al?”

Making a mad dash towards where the voices would holler to one another, Alfred slunk behind crumbling walls and took cover near overgrowth. “Where is it?” He hissed to himself.

When he tried to trace where the voices directed each other, he nearly gasped when he saw what he was looking for. A reasonably sized military pack lying discarded on top of a cargo crate.

Scanning the area hastily with feral eyes, he took his chance and half ran, half staggered to the pack, already out of breath by the time he reached it.

When he touched the pack and hugged it tightly to his body he felt a good weight of burden fall from his shoulder. “Thank god.” He laughed quietly.

“Who are you?”

Glancing over his shoulder, Alfred felt his blood run cold as a soldier stared wide eyed at him, his gaze switching between his pack and the strange blond holding it.
Here's a big thanks to everyone who has supported (and continue to support) this story. Thank you for reading!

P.S. ~ In case it wasn’t clear, the “Temporary UN Base” in Washington refers to Washington state. Not the capital.
The Noose Gets Tighter

Chapter Summary

Chapter Summary: Everything seems to be crashing around them. Hungry, injured and with no energy, the brothers can only feel the pressure of the nations barring down their back. The consequences of their sins are finally falling upon them without mercy.

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I don’t own Hetalia.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The Noose Gets Tighter

In the moment they made eye contact, time stood still as if fate herself were holding her breathe for what was to come.

Alfred felt his voice hitch itself in his throat as he struggled to make out some sort of intelligent word. “I-…I-it…” His gaze frantically dashed every which way, desperately looking for an escape. Slowly taking a step back, his grip tightening over the pack like a child holding a precious doll, he continued to stutter. “I-I…th-this…”

“Put that down, right now!” Barked out the soldier as he took a threatening step towards the American. The grunt glared down at the disheveled young man as he sized him up. His clothes were littered with holes and his face full of grime and bruises. The soldier wrinkled his nose in disgust as Alfred continued to press the bag closer to his battered body.

“I said drop my bag you piece of shit!” The soldier shouted this time as he withdrew from his back-pocket a small pistol and aimed it directly at Alfred’s head.

“W-wait!” Alfred interjected shakily. As much as it pained him to lower himself to the mercy of a mere grunt he knew he had to escape with this pack. Or at least escape with his tail intact. Gingerly lowering the bag till it was nearly on the ground, Alfred never let his gaze drift from the man before him. “Please…don’t shoot…”

The soldier growled in annoyance as he warily approached the bag, his gun stiffly trained on the blond.

“She said drop my bag you piece of shit!” Alfred interjected shakily. As much as it pained him to lower himself to the mercy of a mere grunt he knew he had to escape with this pack. Or at least escape with his tail intact. Gingerly lowering the bag till it was nearly on the ground, Alfred never let his gaze drift from the man before him. “Please…don’t shoot…”

The soldier growled in annoyance as he warily approached the bag, his gun stiffly trained on the blond.

“Do you…have any food?” Alfred mumbled bitterly. It felt so unreal, hearing himself say such pitiful words to a filthy human. With his pride dwindling Alfred bit back any added words and watched the man yank his bag away.

“Ugh! Disgusting! Now my bag smells like shit.” He snapped, lifting the bag onto his shoulder. He
flinched yet again as the smell permeated his uniform and caressed his cheek mockingly.

The former assassin clenched his fists in growing anger but could feel the lack of power in them as the world began to sway. Despite his best efforts to stand his ground vertigo seemed to wash over his vision, hindering him from clearly seeing a gun grow closer to his head. It wasn’t until the muzzle was planted against his temple that Alfred felt his blood run cold, eyes wide and alert to the sneering man holding the firearm.

“I believe you owe me an apology for stinking up my equipment.” Alfred winced as metal dug deeper into his skin. “A worthless slum rat like you should really know his place.”

Having been gradually lead towards the ground with the gun pushing down on him, Alfred felt the fear in his stomach twist before it began to shift into anger. Whether he had shown that feeling or not did not matter as the soldier sent a quick kick to his abdomen, sending him sprawling to the floor.

He struggled to breathe for a few seconds, regretting immediately the impact the kick had on his empty stomach. Clawing at the dirt with one hand while the other tried to appease his recoiling body the American could vaguely hear a strangled gurgle echo above him.

Alfred would have felt immense relief and satisfaction if it had been the assailant retching above him, but unfortunately it has his own voice, sounding completely foreign and unfamiliar to him as a shadow descended upon him.

The robust laugh that swarmed around him was cynical. Feeling the dirt and the sky above meld into a mess of shadows, Alfred was left to curl up into a ball in hopes that the incoming bullet wouldn’t strike a vital organ.

“Go on. Crawl.” Offered a cold voice. Something cocked in Alfred’s direction and before he could bury himself into the ground he heard a loud disgusting crack.

“YOU FUCKING BASTARD!” Screamed a feral voice. Peeking in between the crevices of his crossed arm Alfred could barely make out another figure viciously pounding a blunt object onto the body that crashed right next to him. Unable to really register anything aside from the pain in his stomach and the taste of iron, he dragged himself away from the commotion and attempted to stand up.

“Mat-thew...” He barely moaned over the wild screams and flailing limbs that slammed against flesh. It seemed that the offending soldier would soon become a puddle of meat and brain matter if not for the distant sound of rampant footsteps swiftly heading their way.

“Mat.” Alfred reached forward and grabbed a handful of Matthew’s soiled shirt. “Stop.”

As if broken from a trance, Matthew dropped the crimson brick he had raised above his head and immediately searched Alfred up and down. “Oh my god. I’m so sorry Alfred! I should have gotten here sooner and-!”

He hastily pulled the dazed American towards him only to be startled as men could be heard shouting out behind him. He whipped his neck back and felt a rush of adrenaline as he saw uniformed men retrieving their guns from their belts.

“What the fuck happened here!?” Cried out one soldier as he could barely recognize what once was a man, smeared onto the dirty ground.

Caught between hugging his brother and the gruesome scene of a now deceased man, Matthew was
at a loss for words as the men aimed their guns at the twins.

“Get down on the ground!”

Something shuffled in his arms, the Canadian glancing down to see his brother lazily trying to reach for the pack discarded to the side. He had a vacant look on his face as if he could not sense the danger they were in.

“Alfred, please stay-.” It lasted for a second, but Matthew could barely make out the hint of resolve and focus in those faded blue eyes.

“M’srry Ma-.” Muffled Alfred, his breathe beginning to grow frantic.

“Get down now or you will be shot!” Commanded the officer once more in a bellowing voice.

“Don’t be Al. We’ve been through worse.” Matthew smiled weakly as he rubbed his thumb over his twin’s cheek.

“FIRE!”

There was no point in taking cover for the bullet would pierce him regardless but, in the moments, that the bullets entered his arm, back and legs, Matthew provided Alfred with enough cover to pull a gun out of the discarded pack and retaliate against the 5 men who had them cornered. Thankfully his aim was sufficient enough to kill one man and injure two but the remaining two were unfazed and only sought to respond with equal vigor.

Like a wild animal escaping from a forest fire, Matthew scooped up his twin and propelled his body forward in a staggered dash for cover. He knew he didn’t have the energy to outrun these people. And he barely had enough strength to carry his brother. The bullet’s embedded in his body bit at him and did well to slow down his progress as his adrenaline would jump then drop again.

As if things couldn’t get worse, the commotion that had transpired during their shoot out brought the attention of more soldiers, their barking orders calling forth back up for the first responders. The task of escape soon appeared insurmountable as a wounded Canadian could feel his energy leave him. Fate only seemed to mock him further as he suddenly felt the weight in his arms double. His brother was on the fence of consciousness, his hold on the gun growing slack until it fell away.

*Alfred was dead weight.*

When that thought crossed his mind, Matthew let out an inhuman shriek and ignored every warning his body was throwing him. He didn’t feel the crack in his legs. His choose to be blind to the blood flowing down his side. And he did not care if his arm was about to break, or even miss the fact that he could not hear anymore in his right ear when a bullet nicked his head.

“*Mat...give up.*” These blasphemous words froze Matthew dead in his tracks. In his arms Alfred did not look to be in any condition to be speaking clearly as blood slowly bubbled past his lips and dribbled down his chin.

Did he imagine that or had Alfred really lost all hope? So why-?

Two men brashly tackled the blond to the ground with the force of a small car. The Canadian thought he would lose consciousness right then and there when the men slammed his head against the pavement repeatedly but alas, darkness would not take him.

His brother had been spirited off to who knew where, the warmth of his body replaced with the
unforgiving gravel and stones of this ruined neighborhood. He had instructed his arms to push back and throw these savages off his back, but they lay useless and limp to his side, the violent thrashing continuing without stop. He couldn’t restrain the whimper and cries that flew from his mouth as the men kicked and pounded him relentlessly.

*It’s over.*

This thought swirled around him like poison in his veins, burning his insides and ravaging his heart that pleaded for a stop to everything.

And it was over.

The fists stopped flying. The kicks halted. And a single shadow towered over the broken brother.

“That’s enough.” Echoed an unfamiliar voice. Boots crunched nearby before idly nudging Matthew’s rib.

“Urk!” He choked, most certainly feeling the pain of a few broken ribs wailing at him. The glare from the sun seared his open wounds, the murmur of many men tormenting his mind. “You can’t escape. You lost. Worthless.”

“Hold him.” Ordered the voice one more. Without warning it felt like a thousand hands descended upon his body promising to bury him alive into the ground. Caked with blood and dirt Matthew could not bring himself to open his eyes but felt the cool shadow sway above him regardless.

“Al…” He sobbed out quietly. Any second now he would hear it. The bullet to end it all.

Hopefully it would strike him first, somehow entertaining the thought that they would spare Alfred. He was the one who killed that soldier in the first place. Oblivious to the men speaking above, Matthew wavered between the sunlight and the darkness that swam around his swollen eyes.

How much longer? He hated that he was still awake. He hated that Alfred was no where to be heard! He really did fail as a brother…

The quiet blond was unaware of how much time had transpired. He didn’t even notice that most of the soldiers had departed from the scene. Yet, the hands holding his frail body did not fade away.

The sound of another pair of boots soon graced his one working ear.

“What are you doing sleeping on the ground?” Said a childish voice. Matthew felt his heart lurch into his throat and choke him. His mind seemed to spin into a fathomless void, his stomach eager to release what little content it held as his temperature fluctuated wildly.

A gloved hand roughly pressed against the swelling near his cheek and forced the Canadian to see who stood before him. Through swirling lights and dark rings, Matthew could almost feel tears well up as Russia smiled down at him.

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“Come on. Don’t you have anymore fight then that?” Behind the tall coated man, the grunts and soldiers whispered amongst themselves sending the Russian agitated scowls and glares.

“How?” Matthew was able to utter out in between his labored breathing.

“Easy.” He leaned down towards the Canadian’s bleeding ear. “I heard from a birdie that you two might be heading this way.” He whispered, yet somehow Matthew could make out what was
spoken despite the ringing.

Giggling at the despair etched on Matthew’s face Russia stood up and said something rough and foreign to one of the men. The commanding officer shoot the two brothers a quizzical look before lowering his head in understanding and shouting at his remaining grunts in more gibberish.

There was hesitation in the men’s movement, wishing to linger and see what punishment awaited the foolish brothers but were brazenly yelled at once more before the message got through. They sprinted away from the trio, leaving the former assassins to feebly fend off the Russian’s sadistic advance. When the silence greeted them openly, Russia gleefully turn back towards the brothers.

He tilted his head as he bent down and lifted Matthew by the scruff of his shirt.

“N-no, no no!” He yelped, weakly trying to pry his large hand away from his neck. In the corner of his eye he caught sight of a figure lying face down just a few meters away from him.

“Brot-.” He bit his tongue and sent Russia a horrified look when he realized his mistake too late.

“Ah, well if it isn’t our dear American.” He dragged the Canadian who continued to struggle and writhe in his grasp and easily picked up his lifeless twin. Although he wasn’t as badly beaten as his Canadian counterpart the young man still looked worse for wear. Tousled hair littered with debris contrasted against his pale sickly-looking skin full of purple bruises and caked with a layer of filth. He almost looked like a grey statue, the thin bright stream of crimson leaking from his mouth probably being the only thing to give him some sort of color.

Russia giggled as he could see a glow of pure hatred in Canada’s good eye. With his eyes planted on Canada he smiled fiendishly as he brought Alfred close to his face and nuzzled him. The Northern nation was practically spazzing at this point but still could not call upon any inhumane power to beat the living life out of this bear of a man.

Having got a good laugh out of teasing Matthew and his newfound powerless state Russia carelessly released his hold on Alfred and coldly watched the blond crumple to the floor like a sack of flour. He then placed his boot on the blond’s head and was just applying the minimum amount of pressure when Matthew screeched.

“STOP!” He called out hoarsely. His nails dug into Russia’s arm in an attempt to prove he still had some power left but all he received was a wicked chuckle in response.

“Nyet. Did you two not want to play some games?” Russia dragged Matthew close to where Alfred laid, placing the man just within arm’s reach of his twin. He smiled, amused and entertained when Matthew scratched at the air, his trembling arm merely inches away from touching his brother. “Alfred!”

“Tell me Canada. As a nation…” Again, the Winter nation began to press down on Alfred’s head. “How much of my power do you think I have to use in order to crush his head open?”

Hysteria seemed to have set in Canada when he saw Russia’s boot grind his twin into the ground. “STOP STOP STOP! P-PLEASE!” He begged. Squirming like a worm trapped in a spider’s web, Matthew snatched at the air. “Take me instead! Don’t hurt my brother!”

“But he’s just as guilty as you are for killing my leaders.” He glared down at Matthew. “For ruining my country.”

“Please, I beg of you!” The boot did not recede.
“My people want justice.” Answered Russia menancingly.

He lifted his leg and swiftly stomped it down.

“NOOOO!!” Matthew could not bare to look, his eyes squeezed shut and heart thumping erratically. It was as if all the air in the world had suddenly been sucked out of his lungs. Hyperventilating, Matthew could not remember how to breath. His body jolted and jumped until a low voice entered his head.

“As if I would make it that easy.”

He gasped for air and pried his eye open, expecting to see an unspeakable horror.

His brother was unharmed, the Russian having slammed his boot next to him. The next thing Matthew knew he was dropped thoughtlessly next to his twin. Unable to process what was going on he simply embraced Alfred in a tight hug and cried.

The sound of metal hitting the ground was what shook him from his breakdown. “If you promised a game, then I expect a game.” Russia smirked. A large metal pipe rested in his hands.

Matthew studied the armed man with a heavy glare. He pushed at the dirt with his feet and tried to bring his brother with him but could not muster much strength to achieve any distance between them and their assailant.

“The others don’t know that you’re here yet.” Russia began with a wide grin. “For all they know, the UN soldiers were having a nasty scuffle with the remaining pig-headed Americans here.”

His pipe snaked its way towards the brothers until it innocently rested on Matthew’s leg.

The brother hissed in distress as he tried to pull away only to be met with a chuckle.

“What’s the matter? Can’t you get up?” The grinning nation casually wiggled the pipe into the man’s leg, enjoying the sharp gasps that rang from Matthew.

“Well, you better hurry if you wish to escape.” Russia offered offhandedly.

Matthew stared up at the pale man with disbelief. “Whu-?”

Russia giggled and shrugged his shoulders as if he had no care in the world. “As far as I see, you have two options. You can give up now and wait for the others to catch you.” He nodded towards where the soldiers had originally retreated.

“Right now, they should be reporting to Germany the incident regarding the dead man and two crazy twins retaliating against UN soldiers.” He clapped his hands together in delight. “Oh, and I’m sure the camp will be up in arms very soon once England hears about this.” He narrowed his eyes and smirked.

“I heard that England is just dying to get his hands on America.”

Grunting and snarling like a wild dog, the Canadian forced the pipe off his leg as he staggered to get a good foot standing. His brother hung to his side and almost brought the man back down to Earth until he was slung haphazardly over his shoulder. At last, he stood on both legs, albeit shaky, threatening to give way any moment.

“Or you can run away and live to fight another day.” Russia tapped Matthew’s injured leg as if to
test its stability. “Well…walk away is probably a better choice of words for you.”

The blond bared his teeth in what Russia could assume was supposed to be a form of intimidation. Turning with rigid movements and muffled pained moans, the former assassin began to stumble towards the East, away from the UN camp and Russia.

“But. Please keep in mind dear Canada, I am not taking pity on you or America.”

Canada did his best to drown out the Russia’s voice with a single mantra. Get away. Get away. GET AWAY.

But the voice persisted.

“I am merely playing your game.” Russia walked calmly right next to Matthew, like two classmates heading to class. “The only reason you don’t see this as a game anymore is because your losing for once.”

Giggling madly, the Russian “accidently” brushed his pipe between the Canadian’s legs, causing him to lose his balance and crash onto some littered debris and broken glass.

“Oops. Did I do that?” Russia said in an innocent manner.

He watched with amusement as Matthew coughed and convulsed after pulling his face away from the Earth. He retched and gagged frantically pulling at his face where glass fragments lay embedded in his right cheek and chin.

When it became apparent that he was only making it worse by trying to dig the shards out Matthew grew still and lay limp, sobs shaking his entire frame. He freely allowed the tears to stream down his face, stinging the fresh wounds he received.

“Mat…” Curled in front of him, Alfred could not open his eyes but he shuffled and reached for his twin. Through a half-lidded stare, he mustered the strength to sit up on his arm.

“Mat.”

“Alfred!” Whimpered Matthew.

“Ah, your finally awake.” Russia chirped. He expected some sort of violent reaction from the American but only received a dead glare. Disappointed, the Russian pouted and crossed his arms. “And here I thought you wanted to murder my guts.” He instigated, using his pipe to prod the American’s back. Again, he got no reaction as Alfred sat up and moved to lift his brother off the brittle ground.

Russia laughed hollowly. “Ah, the cold shoulder treatment? Honestly, I’d expect that from Canada, but not you America.” The American remained unmoved to his words and was finally on his feet with Matthew in tow.

“Brother are you ok?” Whispered Matthew into his ear. Taking a peek below, he could see that the American was on the verge of fading away again. It confounded yet terrified Matthew to see his brother acting so strangely.

Before the Canadian’s counterpart could fall back into the darkness Matthew grabbed him and maneuvered him until they could walk again.

“Did he go back to sleep?” Russia questioned. “He didn’t even say hi to me.” He clicked his
tongue.

With what he could only describe as something akin to renewed determination, Matthew gritted his teeth and pushed forward. Russia followed.

“Not giving up then?”

He got no answer.

Sighing in perhaps annoyance, Russia lifted an eyebrow in interest as he strode past Matthew and stood in his way. No more tears stained his face, replaced with a deathly grimace coated with bloody prints.

Russia sent him one last smile.

“You better hurry.” His eyes darkened considerably as he graciously opened the path with one hand. The hand holding the metal pipe. “The others are already on their way here.”

Biting down on his splintered lips, Matthew lowered his head and followed the trail where Russia indicated. Cautiously getting closer to the Russian he shot him a bitter glare when they were shoulder to shoulder.

Russia giggled in response, taking the pipe and trailing it down to Matthew’s chest. Matthew stiffened, knowing full well that he could not retaliate even if he tried. With his hands tied carrying Alfred and his body at its breaking point he glanced away anxiously. Any colorful words begging to be spat at the winter nation remained shackled in his throat, fear overruling his pride.

“I spared your life for today.” Stated Russia cockily. He carefully pulled the pipe away from the blond and returned it to his side. “Remember that when you drag yourself out of here.”

Matthew felt his face twitch. He lowered his head and continued on his way past the Russian.

“I saved you.” Russia added devilishly. He laughed when the man flinched in response. Although his eyes glazed over the former nation trudged on with his twin. The further he got the more Russia was tempted to chase after them and continue to harass them.

“Walk faster Canada! You won’t put any distance between us if you keep that pace.” Russia exclaimed. Still, the man continued on his way.

“Don’t go that way. They’ll look there first!” His merciless giggle echoed around the Canadian. But he paid it no mind. Nothing stung more then the thought that his enemy had to “save” him. Save them.

“This will be our final game of hide and seek,” whispered the Russian with a grin.

How far exactly did the Canadian manage to walk, he couldn’t measure. He lost his footing once, crumpled to the floor and refused to rise again.

Washington - UN Camp – 3:43 p.m.

Upon his return towards the camp, Russia leisurely strode passed his men with a satisfied air about him. They nervously glanced away from the intimidating man, none willing to risk their life to question why he had asked them all to keep quiet about the twin brothers that had attacked and killed one of their own.
He looked around the camp until his ears picked up what he eagerly waited for.

“I believe with the limited resources provided to them they will either head south and meet us head on, or run to the east, perhaps trying to seek to safety of the remaining city life over there.” Echoed Japan’s voice from inside a tent. “Either way, any chances of fleeing north is an automatic death sentence with the weather growing worse up there.”

Entering the tent without asking for permission Russia smiled innocently when Germany shot him a dirty look. Japan carried an annoyed expression as he halted in his plans.

“Can we help you?” Germany groaned with little patience.

“Don’t mind me. I just want to help.” Neither nations bought his excuse and continued to glare at him.

When it seemed like he wouldn’t budge Japan sighed in defeat and continued despite the questioning look Germany sent him.

“If we mobilize the new UN soldiers around the perimeter of the border and increase the patrols to the east… propose a valid reason for instituting a 24/7 patrol regarding security reasons…” The Japanese shuffled through various papers and jotted a few notes onto one of them before handing them to Germany. “We have the basis for their capture.” He stated matter of fact.

Germany rose an eyebrow in slight skepticism as he skimmed over the proposed paperwork.

“I can’t guarantee that I can predict their every moment but for the most part, I know them well enough to say that they will come back to the Lands. They have better connections down here then up in the barren lands of Canada.”

“For now, where do you propose we concentrate our units?”

“To the border, until reinforcements arrive.” Japan replied.

“Hmmmm, perhaps to the east is a better option?” Russia interjected harmlessly.

Japan narrowed his eyes in Russia’s direction. “And for what reason do you have for proposing that?”

“Oh, no real reason.” He answered with a toothy smile. “I’m just worried that America and Canada are a little slipperier then we give them credit for. And besides, my people are ready for your commands.”

He dramatically bowed his head as if in the presence of a superior. “Please lead us to their capture oh fearless leader.”

Japan scowled. “Very well then. If you really do intend to help as you claim you will then I’ll follow your advice. I’ll send YOUR soldiers to the east and I expect them to keep a constant patrol until the others arrive.”

“Please assemble the others and gather opinions from key allies, like China and Finland. Their assistance will be your greatest help if you utilize it properly.” Germany offered calmly.

“Send my people to the east as well.” Added one more voice, its posh accent bringing some sort of comfort to the Japanese nation.
England entered the tent behind Russia, arms crossed and ready to accept any argument in disagreement to his words. When no one offered to oppose him, he smirked.

“We have one unit already landing west from here and the remaining forces coming up from the south since this port is not… suited to accommodate a full-scale invasion.”

“Good. I expect your men are well equipped?” Asked Germany.

“Of course. And as such, I will be taking lead of their command when the first unit departs. Is that agreeable with you Japan?”

Slightly taken aback by the man’s offer to join the ranks of his men Japan shuffled anxiously, quietly thinking about his response.

“Are you sure that is-?”

The Briton lifted his hand and stopped the German in his tracks. “Let me assure you Germany that my goals are perfectly in line with Japan’s mission.” He offered his ally a sympathetic smile before returning to the German with a determined scowl. “I am doing this for his sake now.”

“Da, then we will have a fun time.” Russia quipped as he patted England’s back playfully. The Briton growled in response, taking a side step to avoid contact with the tall man.

“Where is France?” Japan wondered aloud.

“He is rendezvousing with his men to the middle west of here. Upon your instructions to cut off the boys from meeting up with their contacts in New York France will now meet our forces down the middle of the Lands. From there, we will converge and spread out to cover as much land as possible.”

The island nation was baffled with England’s comment as he did not recall giving out such orders but quickly got the message when the Briton sent him a knowing glance. Thank you.

The forming plan did well to impress the German who nodded in understanding. “Remarkable insight into the possibilities presented to us Japan. I await your update tomorrow morning on our next orders. Dismissed.”

The man curtly excused himself and left to inspect the new recruits training some ways away from the entrance of their camp.

“Shall we?” Russia opened the flap of the tent for the Briton who scoffed at him, briskly passing him without another word. Just as he was about to follow suit, Japan spoke up.

“I really hope you are not hiding anything from me Russia.” Japan accused with a wary stare. Standing near the exit with his index finger resting over his lips in thought, Russia beamed back at the island nation.

“The thought would never cross my mind comrade,” he giggled before taking his leave.

Japan sighed tiredly, bringing a hand to massage his temple. Resigned to accept his situation as it was, he left the tent as well in search of Finland and China.

Small distant forest east of UN camp – November 21, 2003 – 7:45 a.m.

Two very unpleasant things had awoken the Canadian from the boundless void of blissful sleep.
The bright early rays of sunlight harshly penetrated his eyelids and continued to burn his eyes despite his efforts to ignore their call. And second, there was an excruciating pain flaring up on his face as something sharp and jagged ripped at his skin.

“Aarrughh! Ugh-urk!” He screeched against the pain, hastily shooting up from the ground and trying to suppress the agony with his palm. On cue, someone grabbed his hand before he could slam it over his cheek and hissed out, “Stop it.”

He whipped his head to his left, ready to throw an insult and perhaps a fist towards the owner of the voice but softened his posture the moment his eyes meet Alfred’s. “Ah, A-Al-..”

His brother looked so tired. Worn down to the bone quite literally as their fruitless endeavors to find food left them starving for almost a week, Alfred was as pale as a ghost. Yet, despite his condition he seemed to carry concern in his eyes towards his brother who he would gladly argue was in a worse state then himself.

“Shuuuush. We can’t stay here long.” He whispered through chapped lips. Taking a chance to crawl over to the edge of the bushes shielding them he cautiously pulled them aside and gauged the surroundings. “I heard some people wandering nearby about an hour ago. I don’t know if they’re coming back but regardless, we can’t stay here.”

He looked back to Matthew with a miserable frown. “I’m sorry bro but I can’t treat your wounds here. They’re…” He hesitated as he chewed his lips. “They’re pretty bad.”

It was Matthew turn to frown as he examined his own body. Yes, there was quite a lot of blood he seemed to have lost evident in his darkly stained tattered clothes, but he honestly didn’t feel anything. Shaking his head as if to dismiss his brothers worry, Matthew tried to get up but was surprised when his legs refused to function properly. “H-uh?”

“Dumbass.” Hissed Alfred, rushing to push Matthew back from forcing himself up. “They shot you in the legs pretty badly. Honestly, I don’t even know how you got this far with me weighing you down and all.”

Scowling in frustration, Matthew opened his mouth to speak but was flabbergasted to find that he had lost his voice as well. Only a hoarse weak sound could cross his lips. “I…”

“Its fine Mat. Just chill and hang in there.” Alfred glanced around the area, taking a moment to drink in any resounding noises. When none came, he shakily stood up and pulled Matthew along with him, pushing the pained reaction he felt from the man to the back of his mind.

“Let’s go.” They headed east, making sure to take refuge within the foliage and behind broken buildings that lay scattered throughout the roads and neighborhoods they traveled through.

Eventually, Alfred carried them to the opening of an abandoned cul-de-sac. The loneliness that permeated the atmosphere promised the possibility of safety from UN soldiers, so Alfred desperately rushed to reach its confines before anyone caught sight of their miserable limping figures. Taking the back gate and finding the back door unlocked Alfred gratefully stumbled his way upstairs until he could finally deposit his twin onto the heavenly old remains of a dusty bed. The Canadian flinched in pain and reeled on the mattress, unable to see anything through his tightly shut eyes.

When the pained subsided long enough for him to gather his bearings, he noticed that Alfred was gone. Before he could hit the panic button and find the energy to seek him out the brother had returned with what appeared to be some ragged bandages and a bowl of water.
Astonished, Matthew greedily yanked the bowl from his brother but almost spilled its contents on himself if Alfred hadn’t steadied the object in time. With his help, Matthew drank from the bowl like a man suffering from severe dehydration.

When the bowl was empty Alfred gave his brother a relieved smile and left for the door, motioning the man to patiently wait for him. It nagged the Canadian to follow his orders, and wordlessly at that, but he grudgingly obeyed and waited 5 minutes until his twin returned with another full bowl of water.

“Ok. I know your not going to like this but,” Alfred anxiously eyed the man’s wounds. “I need to clean some of these.”

Cringing at the thought, Matthew reluctantly nodded. “O-o-oh kay.”

It took about an hour and a half to clean and dress the majority of the bullet wounds the blond had sustained in his desperate escape. What disturbed the American the most though was having to squeeze out the glass shards that hid scattered in his brother’s face. It wasn’t like he had the proper equipment to accomplish this task feasibly. And Matthew muffled moans did little to alleviate his guilt.

When the work was done and his brother laid resting on the bed at last, Alfred heaved a sigh of release and lulled his head to the side of the bed. As much as he yearned for sleep he knew someone had to stay alert at all times.

“Dammit.” He cursed, slamming a fist onto the bedroom floor. The fact that this place had running water was a god sent but what he would give for a simple meal! And then there was the pain that ravaged his body.

Rubbing his chest as if willing it to be still, he gritted his teeth when it responded with a sharp jab. “Fuck.” He pulled his legs up to his chest. He tried to banish the tears away, but they fell anyways as his chest grew tighter.

“Al-fred?” The American nervously glanced up at his twin.

“M’sorry Mat.” He muttered faintly. Unable to face the blond he curled into a ball, continually swearing under his breath. *Fuck, fuck, fuck.*

“Bro-ther.” Matthew struggled to find his voice but did not let that hamper his efforts. He wiggled under the covers until he could place his hand on his brother’s shoulder. “Don’t…worry.”

“Ugh.” Alfred lifted his head with tear stained eyes. “I…I can feel them Matthew. I can feel the others invading me. I can feel them crawling under my skin. Pressing my lungs. They…my chest…feels so heavy.”

The Canadian was just about to embrace his brother and share his tears when they heard gunshots echoing close by. Both brothers jumped in surprise.

The shots rang in rounds, the voice of men shouting in indecipherable words as they retreated into the distance. Thankfully the owners did not come their way but needlessly, the brothers agreed they could not rest long here either.

They weakly arose from their hiding and made their way out of the house and back into the ruins of the land. The ruckus from early seemed to have dissipated but it nagged at the back of Matthew’s mind that there wasn’t added confrontation with whatever the men were shooting at.
“Hurry and report back to command!” Shouted a new voice just behind the house where the twins resided. Jerking in shock at the unexpected people lingering close by the twins hobbled away from the house and headed where the racket took place earlier.

Taking extreme caution in their movement so as to not draw attention, the former assassins managed to place some distance between themselves and the commanding voice. They rested against another house just a block away and listened for any further sounds until something garnered Matthew attention.

It was an unnatural noise, sounding heavy and guttural. Unable to hold back his morbid curiosity Matthew dared to peek across the neighborhood street. He sucked in a harsh breath and felt his vision spin uncontrollably when his eyes landed on a giant white mass bleeding in the street.

“Kumajiro!” He shrieked, only to be shoved back into the wall by Alfred. The American quickly assessed what his brother was screaming about and felt his face go pale when he recognized his brother’s dear pet dying in the middle of nowhere.

“How?” He whispered in disbelief, his hand trembling from the sight. “He… he’s supposed to be in Canada…”

Unfortunately, the American’s words fell on deaf ears as his Canadian brother lunged to try and reach his pet.

“No! Stop.” Alfred wrenched the blond back, struggling to restrain him as he pleaded to see his bear. When others started to echo nearby it took all of Alfred’s strength to contain his brother and keep him quiet as soldiers ran by, many of them whistling and commenting on the giant polar bear in the street.

“What the hell? Where the heck did this thing come from?”

“Do you think it escaped from the zoo?”

“Impossible. The nearest zoo is located nearly a state away from here.” Explained one of them.

“Wow… this place must be really fucked up if even the polar bears are wandering down here.” The men loitered long enough to crack some jokes and prod the bear out of curiosity until they reasoned that it was time to return to headquarters.

When the environment grew still with only Kumajiro’s heavy breathing vibrating off the pavement Alfred could no longer hold back his brother who thrashed out of his grip and stumbled to where the bear laid.

“Kuma…Why?” Cried the Canadian, gently lifting his giant head and cradling it. Alfred slowly trailed behind the man, his eyes darting everywhere for any signs of onlookers.

“Why did you come down here?” Asked Matthew brokenly. He squeezed the bears head, rubbing his fur as if it would soothe his suffering. “You…you should have stayed… In Canada.”

“Mattie,” began Alfred softly. He grabbed his shoulder, about to lead him up when the blond ferociously yanked free from his touch.

“No! This isn’t supposed to happen!” He wailed. At this, Alfred fretfully tried to silence his brother.

“Shuush! Quiet! Do you want someone to hear us?”
“Shut up Alfred!” Retorted Matthew angrily. “They killed him. They killed my friend!” He continued to scream.

“Shit!” Alfred swore. Without warning, he wrapped his arms around his brother’s chest and pulled him away from the fallen bear.

“Stop! Let me go! He needs me!” He screeched and kicked.

Taking one last glance at the white bear, Alfred bowed his head in grief and continued his way away from the corpse, dragging his brother along whose muffled screams continued to torment his frame.

7 miles from the UN camp – November 27, 2003 – 7:57 p.m.

He sat resting in front of a fire, his hands pressed forward, greedily trying to absorb as much heat as possible. With bags under his eyes he bit back a moan, cradling his chest for the fifth time that day. With nightfall the winter air buried into his skin and offered no comfort for a good night’s sleep, his body shivering and his stomach pounding at him for sustenance.

A shadow danced near the flame, beckoning the American forward who wordlessly agreed.

Weary like a war-torn soldier fighting a losing war, Alfred followed the shadow with squinted eyes until it pulled him into the cracks of a one-story house.

“I found some blankets.” Came Matthew’s dejected voice. He tossed them onto Alfred’s who vaguely registered what covered him.

“As for food I-.” He stopped mid-sentence and twitched as he sniffed the air.

“Alfred, why do you smell like trash?” Asked Matthew, his nose scrunched up in disgust.

“There was trash burning in the fire.” Alfred replied blankly. He shivered when a frigid gust of air blew past them.

The purple eyed blond sighed, taking the blankets draped on his brother and fastening them over him properly. “Look, I know you won’t care but… its Thanksgiving today.”

Alfred did not react.

Shuffling uncomfortably Matthew pulled at his pocket and withdraw a small object. Bread. Stale bread. He gingerly placed it in Alfred’s palm and grinned crookedly.

“Here. Eat it. I already found something so-.”

“Liar.” Answered Alfred. “You wouldn’t eat without me.”

The American cupped the bread in his hand and scratched at it, attempting to break it into two even pieces but could not even accomplish a simple feat as that. Frustrated past his limit, he grunted in anger and threw the bread on the ground.

“Al! That’s literally the only thing I could find!” Scolded Matthew as he scrambled to locate the bread in the darkness.

“I’m tired Mat! I’m cold, I’m tired and I’m hungry! I’m tired of running!” He exclaimed.

“And you think I’m not?” Retorted the Canadian angrily. “Do you think I’m having fun here?”
When Alfred replied with silence Matthew snarled in irritation. “Ok! Then what do you want to do smart one?”

“I want to sleep.” Offered Alfred sullenly.

“We can’t sleep. Not now. Night is the best time to walk without fear that the others will see us.”

“And when do you say we can sleep then!? Even in the day time you want to keep moving!”

“If we stop too long, the others get closer to us!”

“If we keep running and forget the basic necessities of life then we might as well already be dead!” Barked Alfred. He flinched when a sharp bang ran through his arm, sending him to his knees as it traveled to his heart.

“Alfred!”

“Dammit.” He grunted. He shook the feeling away and stood up. “I’m fine.”

Matthew clicked his tongue in disapproval. “As if.” He had half a mind to carry his brother in their trek to flee east but knew very well that he lacked the strength to fully support his brother now.

“Fine. Let’s take shelter here for the night. We’ll take turns keeping watch until early morning.”

8 miles from the UN base – November 28, 2003 – 2:12 p.m.

The brothers stood glancing at one another nervously. Before them lay a few scattered bodies decorating the field they chanced upon. It wasn’t until the unspeakable question surfaced that both brothers had to seriously consider this loathsome option.

“Are we really…?” Alfred quietly asked before shutting up. His twin sent him a hard look, bending down and going about his business.

“I-its… Its not as bad. If you really think about it.” He began as he started to undress the corpse. Alfred looked on in horror as his brother completely undressed the deceased man and handed him the clothes. He made a disgusted face and flinched when he felt the crinkled clothes rub against his face.

“Hurry up.” Commanded Matthew emotionlessly. He went about undressing the new corpses, taking great measures to reap as many layers of clothing he could steal from the dead bodies.

“Ugh… they smell.” Alfred complained as he peeled away his beloved ruined outfit and began to replace it with the clothes Matthew handed him.

“Too bad. We need to do this.” Pressured Matthew. He wasn’t pleased by this either, but they really had no other choice.

9 miles from the UN base – 8:05 p.m.

They slowly walked upon a field of barren land, nicely concealed by the darkness but completely exposed to the bitter cold of mother nature.

Without a single form of shelter to be seen for miles, the brothers continued their trek huddled next to each other. Until a sound made their efforts sink.

Thunder.
Closely following the booming sound was the crackle of the heavens above who opened their gates and released a shower upon the twins. Unable to process any more torment from their situation Matthew slipped to the muddy ground and began to cry. His brother wasn’t far behind him as he urgently sought his warmth.

“Al… we can’t keep doing this.” Cried the Canadian pitifully.

“I know.” Whispered Alfred frailly.

The cold rain seeped into their body and robbed them of all warmth, thoroughly drenching them and cleansing their dirty forms.

“Why is it even raining!?” Screamed Alfred into the open field. “Like, are you fucking kidding me!!”

His brother shook and trembled, the American mistaking the action for mourning. It wasn’t until he heard his brother’s laughter over the rain that Alfred grew puzzled.

“This is it. This is all it Alfred.” Cackled Matthew. “This is all a part of their plan!”

“Wut?” Alfred backed away, trying to get a good look at his brother’s downcast face.

“Don’t you get it Alfred!? They’re doing this to us! The others are putting this on us until we give up! They want to see us suffer!” Shouted the Canadian. “But I know better! I’m onto their tricks!”

“Mat… what are you talking about?” Alfred replied with concern.

“Its that fucking Russian! He did this! He wanted to see this!” Matthew continued to shout into the sky.

Thinking his brother had lost a screw, Alfred did the next best thing he could think of and slapped his twin across the face. “Stop it! You acting stupid right now!”

It seemed to work as the blond stopped accusing the sky of its betrayal, but he stared off into the distance blankly. Assuming his brother’s episode was done, Alfred tried to lift him up by the arm.

“Come on. We’re going to freeze our asses off out here.” He reasoned miserably.

“Brother, do you remember our pact?” Matthew asked randomly. Alfred was confused by the question, raising an eyebrow.

“Our pact?” In the darkness he could not see the hysterical look on his brother’s face, the pain etched into his eyes, or the tears blending with the night’s rain. He heaved heavily and gasped out loud.

“I’m sorry Alfred.” He babbled uncontrollably. “B-but…I can’t. I can’t!”

Alfred dropped down to his knees and held his twin by the shoulders. “Its ok Matthew. We’ll get through this. Just… get up.”

“NO!” Screamed the blond as he tackled his brother to the ground. “I CAN’T LET THEM HAVE YOU!”

Even fumbling in the darkness, Matthew somehow managed to snake his hands around Alfred’s neck and pressed down on it.
“I CAN’T LET THEM KILL YOU TOO!” He screeched wildly.

“Urk! Uu-ugh!” Alfred couldn’t put up much of a fight as most of his energy was already fading him. But he still jerked around and squeezed on his brother’s arms, pleading for him to stop.

“We made a pact Alfred! We said we’d rather kill each other then let someone else kill us!” His hold on his brother’s neck faltered and grew, not quite certain what decision to truly make.

“A-aa-aa-uurrk!”

Hearing that desperate gasp for air is what did it for the broken Canadian. He instantly released his grip on Alfred’s neck and screamed into his hands, unable to fulfil his final pledge to his twin.

Dreary and closer to death then he had ever been before, Alfred could not speak a word to console his twin. Remembering how to breath, Alfred’s chest heaved against the rainfall, frozen air quickly drowning his lungs in oxygen. Knowing he was close to darkness, Alfred patted at the wet Earth until his hand found his target.

He gripped a handful of Matthew’s soggy coat before releasing it.

The heavens above watched the conscious blond wail his defeat and failures to his sleeping brother. And the rain pressed on.

9 miles from the UN base – November 29, 2003 – 8:00 a.m.

Neither spoke a word to one another. After awakening to the field and his brother sleeping next to him in the mud, Alfred had tried to reconcile with his twin but was bothered to find him unwilling to listen to a word of his forgiveness.

So, they walked in silence. Finally reaching some sort of inhabitable town the brothers went about avoiding the main street, slinking under the cover of darkness provided by overgrowing weeds and wasted buildings.

Like zombies without a real purpose they ambled between structures, their empty eyes and sunken faces searching for something. Flirting between abandoned houses, ransacking with little they had to offer the brothers found nothing of importance.

Neither can remember who was the first one to initiate this pride breaking act but going this far without a single bite to eat, they threw pride to the wind and began to rummage through discarded trash cans. What they found to eat there, they dared not speak off it, for any shred of humanity they held crumbled to dust as they stuffed their faces, ignoring the tears that added salt to their meals.

10 miles from the UN base – November 30, 2003 – 6:06 a.m.

Hovering over a small bridge from the small town they occupied, Alfred lurched forward emptying his stomach onto the tiny creek below. His brother silently held onto his back, a frown permanently carved into his face. Glancing around for possible enemies, he narrowed his eyes when he noticed some scrawl on a nearby house.

YOUR GAME IS A LIE. THE STORY ISN'T OVER. RETURN TO WHERE IT BEGAN

His eyes widened for a moment as he took in the words. Eventually they returned to their dull and devoid appearance, mindlessly patting his brother’s back who continued to throw up into the bubbling creek.
He took one long shaky breath and sighed in defeat.

Chapter End Notes

(If you think this was painful to read, imagine how painful it was for me to write...) Thank you for the support as always!

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