The Tunnel

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org) at [http://archiveofourown.org/works/14880912](http://archiveofourown.org/works/14880912).

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**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences  
**Archive Warning:** No Archive Warnings Apply  
**Category:** M/M, Multi  
**Fandom:** Hetalia: Axis Powers  
**Relationship:** America/England (Hetalia), Canada/Russia (Hetalia), Germany/North Italy (Hetalia), South Italy/Spain (Hetalia), Canada/Prussia (Hetalia), Canada/Prussia/Russia (Hetalia)  
**Character:** America (Hetalia), England (Hetalia), Canada (Hetalia), Prussia (Hetalia), Russia (Hetalia), Germany (Hetalia), Spain (Hetalia), South Italy (Hetalia), North Italy (Hetalia), Liechtenstein (Hetalia), Switzerland (Hetalia), China (Hetalia), Hungary (Hetalia), Austria (Hetalia), Japan (Hetalia), Nordics (Hetalia), Sealand (Hetalia), Ukraine (Hetalia), Belarus (Hetalia), Other Countries  
**Additional Tags:** Alternate Universe, Six different worlds but only one that's important, Cardverse, Romance, Superpowers, Magic  
**Stats:**Published: 2018-09-18 Updated: 2019-05-07 Chapters: 21/? Words: 48166

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The Tunnel

by ChamirianBels

**Summary**

Five different worlds. Ten different people. Groups or individuals who are forced to enter the tunnel and venture to the end. The tunnel splits some groups up while making new groups as they go along. Once they all reach the end, their lives are forever changed. How will they all acclimate to a new world they never heard of but were born to be in?

A 3 Act story. Each act will be a different length but contain everything needed to complete the story. I am debating whether or not to separate each act or keep it all as one long story. For now I will change the Prologue's name to Act 1 Prologue. When Act 2 begins, I will be sure that it is clearly stated.

**Notes**

Note 1: My summary is kind of sucky for this story but you'll get the gist of it as you read. I intend to have something happen later on that will kind of be the plot, but this story is still up in the air. However, I'm very proud of this story idea. It's very fun.
Note 2: Finally figured out the plot I wanna use. This might end up being a three part series/trilogy. My plans span that so far out that I could possibly reach 50 chapters or more. I might wanna make this three parts instead of just one whole thing.
Act 1 Prologue

Chapter Summary

The beginning of everything.

Chapter Notes

So I decided to rewrite this story. Not anything like Haunted, everything will stay the same, but there will be changes that will be done through the chapters. Chapters 1-9 will most likely be rewritten but chapters 10-12 will not change at all. The last three will at most be edited since I have noticed mistakes here and there. I hope you all will enjoy this story, as it is finally starting to bloom in what it should be.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A lithe man hurries down the hall towards the throne room. His pale skin is clammy, nerves shooting through the roof. He is to be expected in another minute at the throne room of the castle, and he should be in tip-top shape. Pristine condition. He is the exact opposite as he is flustered and very, very disheveled. This is fact but he knows the king will overlook it. If anything, the king will think he’s adorable and help him clean up before their joker arrives with the news. So Tino hurries along until he reaches the double doors that conceal said room, throwing them open unceremoniously.

Berwald sits on his throne, eyes at first downcast as he reads a book with his arm resting on the one armrest, fist bedding his cheek, until the doors open. His eyes glance up, his body not moving as he wants to see who it is first before righting himself. When he sees his queen, he shuts the book, and sets it in a compartment of the throne’s armrest he made years ago. Standing up, he meets his queen at the bottom of the steps, letting the man rest his head against his chest before lightly patting his back.

“I’m sorry I’m late, Berwald,” Tino pants out. He rests another minute longer in the silence, knowing the man he’s leaning on his telling him it’s okay without even speaking. Once he’s caught his breath, he pulls away and smiles up at the Swede. “Could you help me straighten up before Matthias comes in?”

“Mm,” Berwald answers, nodding with a small smile. If there’s anyone who can crack the king’s exterior, it’s the queen.

So Berwald helps straighten out his queen’s outfit, lightly patting down the wrinkles and combing his thick fingers through his partner’s pale blond hair. Tino chuckles a little, blushing as he feels his heart swell from the affection his husband gives him. He remembers when they at first didn’t get along that well – the Swede was terrifying when Tino didn’t understand him and the Finish man always coward away from fear. Over the years, Tino grew to understand the taller man and find out that he’s a gentle giant. Berwald just has very little muscles in his face that move.

When the Finnish man is all tidy, the two take their places on their thrones, waiting for the
Danish joker to arrive. Before he does, their jack and ace walk in. Tino and Berwald nod a good morning to the two, Lukas and Emil nodding back just as silently. With all the important officials now present, they just had to wait for the fifth member to appear.

Time slowly goes on and the Dane doesn’t appear. Tino worries a little over his dear friend. He also notices Lukas giving the floor a death glare full of annoyance, which makes him smile a little as he knows that Matthias is the only one who can pull any emotion out of the usually neutral Norwegian. Emil tries to ease his brother back into a neutral emotion, failing as Lukas mentions something about having enough of the Dane’s tardiness. Tino glances at Berwald to see a reaction but finds the Swede is reading his book again. He smiles a little more, loving how casual and relaxed his husband looks.

Soon enough, a whooshing ripple swirls in the throne room. The air rips and cracks as a small sliver of white breaks through the reality. Everyone watches as the end of a well-known axe in the slot of the white sliver pulls the tear further down until it’s long enough for a tall person to walk through. The axe disappears and is replaced by some fingers which pull open the tear, showing the other side of the slowly forming portal, the rip in reality between two places which only jokers can make. A tall man stands on the other side of the portal, blond hair sticking up and defying gravity as he devilishly grins wide at the four in the other room.

“Sorry I’m late!” He shouts from the other side, pulling himself through with his axe. As his weapon swings down against the marble floor, cracking it like he has done before, the portal he opened snaps close in quick succession. “I had some newbies to train this morning before gathering all the intel you asked from me.”

“Quit making excuse,” Lukas hisses from his side of the throne room.

The Dane pouts, hurt as he gives the shorter man his puppy eyes. “I’m not lying, Norge. I’d never lie to you, babe.”

Lukas snorts, rolling his eyes as he shakes his head. “Just tell us what you have gathered, numbskull.” He obviously ignored the endearing term thrown his way, but he’s blushing just a tiny bit. He can’t break in front of the blond idiot otherwise Matthias would constantly call him pet names that fluster him. Not like he would admit that he likes the pet names.

“Please do update us on everything, Matthias.” Tino’s soft voice calms everyone. He turns to his king and places a hand on his lover’s arm. “Dear, put the book down. This requires our full attention.”

“Mm.” Berwald sighs through his nose, sticking the title of “King of Few Words Unless Pissed” that everyone has come to name him. He sets his book away once more, dull eyes gazing at the only person he dislikes the most in their world. “W’at do ‘ou h’ve f’r us, Dane?”

Matthias grins wide, an angry tick forming on his forehead from the king’s obvious distaste in his words. “I bring you news of the other kingdom’s missing crowns,” he states, bowing in respect towards Tino and Berwald. He soon stands tall as he hears three of the four murmur in surprise. “I finally have located them all. The kings, queens, jacks, and aces.”

He falls silent for a moment, causing Tino to gesture with his hand as he says, “Do go on. Tell us where they are.”

A wider grin appears on his face as he glances at his king, gloating silently that he has the queen’s full attention. Berwald glares at him, telepathically telling him to get to it before he hurts him like he has before. Matthias laughs boisterously before shaking his head and finally continuing on
with his news.

“They are spread out in five different worlds,” he states as he picks up his axe and rests it across his shoulders like it was a wooden pole, so light. “It seems some of them are siblings, which is sad since they will be split into different kingdoms. There’s only one world where only one person is living that shall come here soon, and he’s supposed to be the King of Clubs. I’m only going to warn you once about him since he’s quite the scary mofo. Not as scary as our king, but still scary within reason to keep an eye on.”

Berwald glares at the remark towards him but doesn’t say anything. Instead, his queen speaks for them all, obvious curiosity swimming in the lithe man’s form. “Does this mean we have to open the Tunnels?” He asks with a little glee as he looks towards Lukas. “Lukas, if the other destined crowns are in separate worlds, we will need you and Matthias to open the Tunnels. Oh, it’s been so long since they’ve been open. A few decades, right?”

“Exactly 87 years, if I am to remember correctly,” Emil answers his queen. He bows his head in respect, ignoring his brother’s proud stare. “87 years ago there was an occurrence such as this; where the crowns of different kingdoms were born in separate worlds and had to be brought through the Tunnels for our world to be complete once more.”

“Someone’s been studying up on his history.” Matthias laughs good-naturedly as Emil flushes a little.

“It is also during that time a great war between the kingdoms arose.” Lukas marches over and whacks the Dane on the head for making his brother uncomfortable. He then turns to the king and queen with a serious stare. “If history is repeating itself, I can only wonder if another war will break out once they are all here.”

“How many events through history do you know of that has been repeated before, Lukas?” Tino asks curiously.

The Norwegian is silent as he thinks, jabbing the other blond man next to him when he hears Matthias snicker from his quiet pondering. “If I recall right, at least four or five instances in our world’s history is a repetition of another that happened decades prior?” He glances at his brother for confirmation, receiving a nod from Emil. His eyes lock back onto the king and queen to continue speaking. “From past history, we should be cautious.”

Tino hums, nodding slowly as he glances at his king. “We shall take heed of your warnings, my dear friends, but we still should help fill in the gaps of each kingdom. It’s the least we can do.”

“You say that as if they’ve done things for us. I don’t remember them doing things for us.” Matthias winces from another jab, taking a huge step away from his companion whom he’s been trying to woo for years. “Geez, I get it.” He chuckles a little, hand over his side this time as he rubs the tender spot. “We’ll complete the puzzle. Just tell us when to start the spell.”

With a nod, Tino rises from his throne and extends his hand out towards the two. “Prepare yourselves tonight for the spell shall be cast tomorrow. Do not dillydally as this is of utmost importance.” After a moment he adds, “Please.”

Matthias chokes down a laugh that bubbles up in his chest from the showy order their queen gives. He lets Tino have the moment since he knows the man barely gets to do anything that makes him feel like he’s actually ruling the land and making great demands while still being kind. Saluting his queen with his right hand, he plops his other hand around Lukas’s shoulders and pulls the Norwegian close.
“You can count on us, my queen!” Before the shorter man can thrash and complain, Matthias drags the Jack out of the throne room.

For the rest of the night, both Mat and Lukas work seriously over the spell which has not been used in years. This spell always needs a person with magical abilities as well as a joker to tear open passages into the different worlds. They prepare for the next day, setting themselves up while dealing with flirtatious moves and near strangles of death. Once everything is ready, they head to the center of their kingdom where a giant summoning circle lies embedded into the concrete ground.

Tino and Berwald watch from afar with Emil as Lukas holds a book in one hand and extends the other. Closing his eyes, Lukas starts chanting the spell. Matthias spins his axe around with his hands in ease, grinning as he waits for his moment to slash the air as he always does. When the wind picks up around them, they see white streams coming from the ground, slowly rising up and swirling around the Jack. Lukas opens his eyes, which glow white as the spell overtakes him. He comes closer and closer to the end of the spell and the wind starts thrashing everything around him. Tino and Emil have to hang on to Berwald so they don’t get blasted away, watching in awe. Knowing that he’s nearing the end, Matthias braces himself, ready to slash the wind that’s picked up.

“Hi rips revera pontem cuniculis mundi creata sunt. Cum a VULNUS, qui preparabit viam tuam per alios ambulare.” He raises his hand higher, Mat raising his axe at the same time. With a quick swipe down, Lukas shouts “Scinditur!”

Matthias yells at the same time as he brings down his axe, cutting a long, big tear into the air. He then makes four more slashes, tearing the reality in front of them. As soon as he finishes doing so, the tears grow bigger, shining ever so brightly. Then the rips flash towards different directions, all heading towards the different kingdoms who await their missing crowns. The sky crackles with thunder as they shoot off like lightning, and once they’re gone, everything settles back down. Lukas and Mat both collapse to the ground, panting from the loss of energy during the spell.

“Why,” Lukas pants out the start of his question as he glares at the other, “did you slash five times?” He shakily tries to stand as his brother comes over to help him. “You were only supposed to slash four times.”

Mat laughs through his exhaustion, letting himself fall completely on his back, splayed out. “I must’ve forgotten to mention,” he begins, trying to gain control of his breathing, “that we’ll be getting a new joker from one of the other worlds as well.”

“Yes. Yes you forgot to mention that.” Lukas scowls, sighing as he leans on his brother. “Whatever. At least it worked.”

“With you casting the spell? Of course it worked.” Mat winks at Lukas, laughing off the next glare sent his way. He can see an ever faint blush but doesn’t point it out as he notices the queen offering a hand for him. “Thanks, Tino.” He takes the lithe man’s hand, feeling that secret strength the queen holds as he’s pulled up easily. “Really tucker me out,” he says as he laughs again. “I’m probably going to spend the rest of the day sleeping? After doing my usual duties, of course.”

“You do that.” Tino smiles, picking up the axe and handing it back to Mat. “I also will want you to keep watch over those worlds. Make sure that they all enter the Tunnel and go to the right kingdoms.”

The Dane grins wide and nods. “Will do, Tino.” He does a two finger salute in farewell before heading in the direction of his home.

Lukas and Emil watch him go, nodding towards the thankful king and queen before heading
home as well. Tino smiles up at his husband and Berwald cracks a small smile back. He offers an arm for Tino to hold as they go back to the castle and the other man takes it without hesitation. All they have to do now is rule their kingdom while waiting for the other kingdoms to finally become complete again. Hopefully there will be no battles to come and a war to stop. If history is truly repeating itself once more, then there’s a high chance of the peace finally breaking again after so many good years of tranquility. Tino can only hope for the best.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.

My girlfriend is helping me with Latin since she actually has a book for it. I used Google Translate for the one currently there, "Sunt lacrimae rerum universitas in ponte solus RIDICULUS quod cuniculum." She says it's wrong. So I'm waiting for her to help me fix it. xD

For now I will replace the one Latin with another:
Hi rips revera pontem cuniculis mundi creata sunt. Cum a VULNUS, qui preparabit viam tuam per alios ambulare. - These are the rips in reality, tunnels created to bridge universes together. With a slash, open the way for others to walk through.
Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

Meet Alfred and Matthew, two super-humans who like to do the right thing or just try to get by in life.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bright white lights streak across the night sky over the forest, separating into five as four streaks scatter and disappear while the fifth heads towards the land below. It rushes towards a hill, landing hard against the dirt part of it. A tear appears on the dirt part of the hill, white and glowing in the dark for all to see. It soon fades away as the tear grows and forms the entrance of a tunnel, the end not visible as it is not connected to this world.

Animals perk their heads up at the brightness and witness the change. Small deer and rodents get up and pull the brush of bushes near the tunnel over the entrance, hiding it so no one else sees it. Those who are meant to see it will find it on their own, for the Tunnel has a deep magic embedded into it that draws the chosen ones to it, or it traps them until they enter. Their destiny calls them as they are needed in the world they were meant to be in from the very beginning.

The first two chosen live in these woods and will one day come upon this tunnel when the time is right.

♠♣

Alfred stretches as he stands outside on the cabin porch, yawning and cracking his joints. He hums, rubbing a hand over his face to chase the sleep in his body away. Today was another day full of busy plans. He and his brother have a meeting with a reporter for an interview but he has a feeling they probably won’t make it on time. They could probably make a game of it when travelling towards the road; who can make it to their destination first? With his speed, Alfred will most definitely win.

When he sits on the porch swing he built years ago, he hears some commotion back in the house. A smile appears on his face as he leans back in the swing, waiting for his brother to join him and admire the morning in their woods. Some soft foot falls signal him that his quiet brother is coming so he schooches over on the swing, making room for his little brother. A man who looks exactly like him offers him a cup of Joe before sitting next to him with his own cup of tea. They both take a sip after blowing on the hot beverages and sigh with content.

“I kind of don’t wanna go to the interview, Mattie.” Alfred glances at his little brother, noticing how his pale blond hair is still slightly messy. The Canadian isn’t even dressed as he’s lounging in his pajamas still. “And I’m guessing you don’t either.” Alfred chuckles.

Matthew hums in agreement with his brother, sipping his tea half filled with maple syrup from the tress in back of their cabin. “I don’t see why it’s necessary, Al. They’ve interviewed us countless times before. We’re nothing like the Avengers or X-Men. Just two super-humans who were born with these kinds of powers. We don’t really do anything.”
Taking a long sip from his coffee, Alfred hums. “Actually, I do go out sometimes to save some people.”

The pale blond looks at his older brother with a ‘really’ kind of face. “Al, we’ve talked about this before. No-.”

“…doing hero work alone because you never know what kind of trouble you could get into or if you’re the one ending up in a jam needing help.” Alfred sighs, rolling his eyes though he’s smiling fondly at his brother. “I know, Mattie, I know. I just- You gotta understand it’s in my blood to jump out and save someone.”

“More like your energy is always sky rocketing out of control and saving people keeps you tamed.” Matthew chuckles, sipping his tea once more before speaking up again. “I understand. I’m just not the type since, you know.”

“Yeah, I know.” Alfred holds his coffee in one hand, wrapping his now free arm around his brother. Matthew leans into him, accepting this form of affection only his brother is allowed to do to him for now. “Your powers are cooler than mine. Invisibility, conjuring stuff up out of thin air, talking to animals. Those are cool stuff. I just got strength and speed.”

“You have a third ability, Al. You just haven’t found out about it yet.” Matt smiles, humming before sitting straight so he can stand up. “We should get going.”

Alfred nods. “All right. You go get dressed and clean up. I’ll take care of the mugs and stretch out my muscles before heading out.” He watches his brother down his tea before heading inside. Al snatches the now empty tea mug, chugs his own coffee down, then puts them in the sink. He feels a hard press against his leg and smiles down at the only pet they own. “Hey, Kuma. You wanna come with? You’d fit perfectly since you also have a special ability.”

The small polar bear cub sits on his haunches and stares up at Alfred. The American cannot talk with animals like his brother but he completely understands this one. It’s not hard since all the cub thinks about is his food, sleeping, and protecting his owner(s). Alfred isn’t really Kumajiro’s owner but the wheat blond likes to think the bear would also protect him if he needed help.

“You’re hungry, aren’t you?” He grins down as the bear blinks at him. Laughing, he grabs some raw fish from the refrigerator they keep specifically for him and set it on a plate on the floor. “Eat up, man. Just take it easy. The last time you-.”

He doesn’t even finish his sentence when Kumajiro gobbles the food and instantly chokes. Alfred sighs, lightly taking the bear between his arms and helping him dislodge the fish piece stuff in his throat. The bear spits up the piece of fish, breathes, then tries eating again but slower when Alfred lets him go.

“We’ve told you time and time again, Kuma. Slow down when eating.” The bear growls at him, glaring up with his beady black eyes while still eating. Alfred merely rolls his eyes. “Whatever. Be that way.”

“Are you being mean to Kumakichi?” Matthew asks as he buttons up a pastel green shirt that’s over a maroon t-shirt underneath. He leaves the top three buttons undone as he playfully scowls at his brother. “You know how he doesn’t like being lectured.”

“I don’t care. One day he’s going to die because of eating food too fast and no one being there to help him dislodge it correctly.” Alfred shakes his head as he stands and goes over to his brother. “He needs to learn.”
“He will one day.” Matthew chuckles, peering over at his pet from around the American. “We’ll be going now, Kumatari. Be good.” He waves as he walks out the door with Alfred.

Alfred stretches as he steps off the porch. “I didn’t get to stretch yet, so let me have five minutes.” He starts doing some lunges and crouches. “I’ll be ready soon, then we can race to the road.”

“I’m not racing you, Al. You know you’d win.” Matt shakes his head and chuckles, pushing up his glasses on his nose. He stretches a little too so his body can wake up some more. He raises his arms above his head and hums as he arches a little backwards, feeling some of his joints pop and his back cracking. Relief flows over him as he straightens himself. “I’m going to start going, all right?”

Alfred nods with a wide grin. “I was going to suggest you get a head start anyway.” He laughs, still stretching before he takes off. “Don’t slow down for me, okay? I’ll just slow down once I’ve caught up to you.”

“Okay.” Matthew rolls his eyes and puts his hand out as a mountain bike appears before him. He grips the handle and gets on the bike, kicking the stand up. “See you when you catch up to me.” Then he pushes himself forward, biking through the usual trail they take towards the road.

When Matthew reaches the old oak tree in their forest, he stops and leaves his bike against it. Putting a hand on the bark of the tree, he closes his eyes and hums an old tune he learned from some birds. As he hums, roots from the tree break out of the ground and ensnare the bicycle, crumble it as if it were paper. The bike slowly darkens and turns to dirt through the magic of the old oak. Once the roots settle back under the ground, Matthew opens his eyes and lets his hand fall.

“Thank you for your help, Oak,” he whispers to the tree. Turning around, he hears the wind rush by him before noticing his brother standing there with his trademark grin. “Ready?”

“Hells yeah, I’m ready! Let’s go!”

The two start walking through the forest again, further down and nearly close to the road. Or so they think. They lose track of time as they walk, talking about random things. Matthew mentions once how he’s surprised Alfred didn’t bring up the race again. Alfred shrugs and replies with a comment saying he didn’t feel up to a race yet. It isn’t until they reach the old oak tree again that they realize something’s not right.

“Dude, did we walk in a circle?”

“We couldn’t have. We’ve walked this path all our life.” Matthew furrows his eyebrows in confusion. There’s only one old oak tree in this forest and it’s the one they’re next to right now. The one that helped him disintegrate the bike he conjured out of thin air. “That’s odd. Maybe we took a wrong turn.”

The wheat blond hums in thought, unsure if that was it but leaning towards the positive end. “Maybe! Come on, let’s get going. We’ll seriously be late at this rate.”

“Should we climb the trees and jump from branch to branch? Will that be quicker?” Matthew grins a little as he implies something else only Alfred would get.

Alfred grins right back. “You’re on!”

The two climb the oak tree carefully, finding a good set of branches to start off on. When Matthew mumbles something about vines to swing on, multiple appear in front of him. He grabs one, looks down at his brother, laughs, then swings from vine to vine. Alfred smirks as he crouches
down, sets himself up, then uses his speed and strength to push himself from branch to branch. They race for a long while until they have once again found themselves at the old oak tree. Matthew suddenly feels unnerved about being at the tree again.

“Al, something’s not right,” he says as he lands on a branch, letting his vine go and watching it disintegrate into dirt like the bike did. “Looping back to Oak for a second time has to mean something.”

Alfred stops at a branch under his brother, hopping up so he’s standing next to Matthew. Glancing around the forest, he tries to see if there’s anything out of the ordinary. “Strange. Nothing’s out of place, bro. I don’t know why we keep coming back here.”

The Canadian’s mind rushes with possibilities, afraid that they’ve been stuck in a trap formed by another super-human. He panics, breathe coming in short gasps. Alfred instantly tries to comfort him and asks if Matt brought his inhaler. The pale blond pulls out the small medical necessity he has and puffs once, then twice after ten seconds. He slowly sits down on the branch, Alfred copying him and rubbing his back as he coos with comforting words. That’s when Matthew sees it. The anomaly.

“That wasn’t there before.” He points to a cave like entrance in the hill they’ve played on since they were kids. He stuffs his inhaler away, staring with his blue-lavender eyes. “There was never a cave there before. That has to be what’s causing us to go in circles.”

Alfred glances down at the hill, seeing the same thing his brother does. He furrows his brows. “Huh. Weird.” Humming, he moves and let’s himself slip off the branch he’s sitting on to the one beneath him. “Let’s go take a look at it.”

“What? No way, Al!” Matthew’s eyes shake in slight fear. “We don’t know what that really is or where it even goes!”

“All the more reason to investigate, yeah?” Alfred glances up with a crooked grin. “Come on. Don’t be a baby.”

The American jumps the rest of the way down unceremoniously as he hits a few branches that he didn’t see previously. He’s then tossed about from branch to branch, exclaiming an ‘ow,’ ‘ouch,’ ‘dammit,’ among other curse words until he hits the ground. Matthew sighs, shaking his head as he forms a slide from the tree branches down so he lands softer against the Earth. Alfred groans, aching from the impact against the ground he took from the fall.

“That hurt like an f-ing bitch.” Alfred jokes as he takes his brother’s offered hand and sits up, soon standing. “It’s a curse.” He rolls his shoulders and cracks his neck. “But I think some of the branches helped relieve some of my back problems. The ground probably made them worse, though.”

Matthew rolls his eyes as his brother laughs. “If you really wish to investigate this tunnel, then let’s go.” He turns on his heel when he believes Alfred is fine.

Alfred quickly scurries after his brother, going in front as he wants to venture in first. They stop at the entrance for a moment, gazing at each other. Matthew frowns as Alfred grins wide. Sighing, Matthew gestures for Al to go on through. The American happily rushes on in, turning around and waving his brother in to follow. Smiling just a little, Matt shakes his head and steps through the threshold of the tunnel.
After a couple of minutes to make sure the men have gone far enough into the tunnel, a small white bear follows them in. Kumajiro sniffs the air, scrunching his nose up in disgust as he doesn’t like the feeling he gets from the cave. He starts running as fast as his short paws will let him. He needs to get to his owner fast before anything bad happens to him.

The tunnel’s entrance snaps closed once everyone has gone through the threshold. A bright light explodes for a moment as the tear the opening originated from forms again. The sliver of white against the hill glows faintly before disappearing completely. One of five transport spells is complete.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Meet Francis and Arthur, two magic users who have a history with each other.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Francis approaches Arthur’s door, hand raised and ready to knock. He stops himself for a second, reconsidering the possibility the stubborn man would actually go for a walk with him. Breathing in, he steels himself and raps his knuckles three times against the wooden door. He takes a step back from to door, waiting for the Englishman to answer as he once more admires the well hidden house Arthur created for himself after graduating from Hogwarts.

The house melds itself into a tree but you have to climb or fly up to the door. It’s quite annoying for those who visit the wizard that don’t use magic as often as him. The inside is quite impressive though as it is larger than the inside of the tree. Wooden floors and walls encompasses the inside, though, which fits the nature loving Brit.

Francis hums as he looks at the circular windows on the bark, flower pots hanging from the sill with beautiful pink roses. He smiles and pulls one rose out with his own magic essence of the wind, slicing off the thorns so as to not cut himself. Smelling the flower, he closes his eyes and remembers when he first gave Arthur a pink rose. It was when he first met him in school and slowly got to know him. He really admired the British man when he was an adorable child growing up and going through phases. He misses him terribly.

A click sound coming from the door causes the Frenchman to focus back on his task. He puts on a smile as he watches the door open slowly and sees the blond Brit peek through a small slit created by the motion. Those deep green eyes first hold curiosity before a flame overtakes every other visible emotion. Arthur whips the door open in irritation.

“How the bloody hell did you-? You know what, never mind. Why are you here?” His eyes soon land on the pink rose in Francis’s hands, glancing at one of his pots to see that it indeed was picked from his pot. His glare intensifies. “Now you’re stealing my flowers, you prat?” He crosses his arms. “Tell me that you actually have a reason to be here besides bothering me, stealing my property, and not to sexually harass me.”

The wizard skilled in the elemental magic of air sighs through his nose. “Non, mon cher.” He offers the rose for Arthur to take, smiling a little when Arthur’s cheeks turn slightly pink and he takes to flower. “I merely wanted to ask for a stroll in the park. If I have come at a bad time, I can try again another day.”

Francis is about to let himself descend with the help of the wind that’s keeping him up. He looks away for a moment only to feel a light hand pull him back up. “Hold on, Francis.” He turns back to see Arthur gazing at a branch, twirling the rose between his fingers unconscious. “You’ve come with no ill intent? Just a friendly stroll?” Those green eyes glance over and lock with deep blue eyes that he used to stare into a lot in school.
“Oui.” Francis lets the wind carry him up again so he’s in front of the door. “I am here for a friendly chat. Nothing else.” He stares as Arthur silently ponders over the pros and cons of going outside with him. He laughs, shaking his head as he knows just what the other is think. “I swear on my lover’s grave that I will not advance on you, cher. I merely want to make amends and become friends once more.” He smiles sincerely as Arthur blushes again, taking his hand and holding it so lightly, so carefully. “You are still important to me, Arthur, no matter the fall outs we have gone through in our past.” He brings Arthur’s hand up to his heart, glad that the Brit hasn’t retracted his hand yet. “My heart still holds a spot for you, mon amour.”

Arthur scowls, swiping his hand out of Francis’s. “You say you won’t advance on me yet you call me by those dreadful endearments.” He turns so as to enter his home again but stops a moment to peer at the other man. “Give me a minute to change. I need some fresh air for a change, anyway.” He closes the door and leaves the other to hover in the air with a happy smile.

When Arthur returns, he’s wearing something a little more casual than previous, fixing up his shirt before nodding to himself. A feeling crawls up his back as he exits and steps onto the waft of air Francis is creating to stay in the air. He waves his hand back towards his home and watches as his trusty satchel flies over to him. Gripping the strap, he opens the bag and mumbles a few words under his breath while waving his hand around his tree house. The wood shakes and Francis panics as he believes the beautiful home will crumble and be destroyed. To his relief, it merely pulls itself out of the tree as it’s own small shed home. Arthur motions a few more waves and the home shrinks as it floats into his bag. Closing his satchel, he turns to Francis and locks eyes with him.

“I’m ready for that walk now.”

Francis balks as he blinks. “There’s no need for you to- How did you do that?”

Rolling his eyes, Arthur sighs and waves his hand to the side of the air he’s standing on, wooden steps forming in a spiral down towards the ground. “We live in a world of magic, Francis. Anything is possible. Including the ability to meld your own home into whatever natural thing in the world that the Earth has created.” He descends the steps, Francis floating around with him. “I merely conjoined my home with the tree at the perfect level where people will not willingly visit me. Seems I should have moved my house up a little higher.” He grins.

“Any higher and you would be at the thinning top,” Francis states, admiring the powerful earth magic that Arthur is showing him right now. “Your door wouldn’t exist.”

“Prefect.” Arthur snorts a small laugh before he finally touches the ground. He watches Francis touchdown as well before walking towards the town. “What’s your true reason for visiting me?”

The fact that neither of them have called each other an insulting name is an improvement from when they were in school. Francis smiles a little as he clasps his hands at the small of his back, walking besides the other. He hums in thought before answering. “I’ve been thinking of you for a while now. It took me quite some time to find you, you know.”

“The definition of isolation states that one should be away from others and not intermix. That was the idea behind me being hard to find.”

“It’s so lonely, though, cher.” Francis frowns. “It’s not a thing that will make you truly happy.”

“You don’t even know what really makes me happy, frog.” There it is. Arthur’s sensitive buttons are starting to be pushed. “Not since you broke my heart, you bastard.”
“How many times do I have to apologize for you to forgive me?” Francis frowns more as the memories reemerge from the back of his mind.

When they went to school with each other, the two didn’t get along at all. It was a miracle that they even started dating after five months of obvious hatred and rivalry between each other. Only those that were close friends knew of their relationship. ‘I hate you’s were usually ‘I love you’s when it came to them and it worked. Until Arthur found Francis cheating on him with a girl. Francis tried to plead his way through those final moments of being boyfriends. Arthur would have none of it and cut off all ties.

Shortly after their break up the girl passed away and Arthur felt horrible.

“I loved her, Arthur. I loved her as well as you. I loved both of you and I lost you. Then I lost her. She’s gone and you want nothing to do with me. I’m sorry. I’m terrible.”

Those words still tighten Arthur’s lungs as his heart pangs with guilt. Arthur still hasn’t forgiven the other – who would? – but they at least have become strange friends over the years. They’ve been passing letters through their owls and keeping up contact, but then Arthur stopped a few years ago and went into hiding. Francis didn’t understand but didn’t think it was his fault. Arthur always seems to over think things and go through phases of isolation – he did that even in school where weeks at a time he wouldn’t leave his hermit home he made on the grounds of Hogwarts. It’s a wonder that he was given permission to do so. Right now, though, they can finally patch things up again.

“I will never truly forgive you, Francis,” Arthur states as they walk into the town park. His eyes spot the park bench where their first actual kiss was during one of the breaks. How embarrassing that was. “But I do accept our friendship. That’s all I can give right now.”

Francis smiles a little. “Of course. I’ll take what I can get, mon ami.”

They walk through the park, conversing a little over what they’ve been doing over the years of no communication. Francis has been flirting relentless with many other people over the years but never taken one to bed or looked for a serious relationship. That surprises Arthur some but he understands the reason why. Losing both of the people you fell in love with seriously around the same time takes a toll on one’s heart, just like finding out that your first love is cheating on you with another.

Arthur inhales and exhales slowly, closing his eyes as he tries to keep calm. Very rarely does he ever truly spend time with someone. It actually feels nice being out and about again. Francis finding him is probably something good for him. Even if the Frenchman still flirts with him a little, he’s kept to his word. Not one single advance has been done towards him. Color him impressed.

“Since when did you mature?” Arthur suddenly asks.

“What are you saying, cher?” Francis laughs. “I have always been mature.”

The Brit rolls his eyes. “Hardly. You used to flaunt your ugly face and horrendous body around just to attract all kinds of people. You always thought of sex first. Who you could bed at night. Hell, you used to tally how many people you could take to bed in each house at Hogwarts.”

“Still couldn’t convince that sweet little Weasley boy to give it a go.” Francis sighs forlornly at the failure.

Arthur chuckles quietly. “I remember when you tried to woo him only to be blatantly rejected
in front of everyone.” He covers his mouth with his hand as he continues chuckling. “The look on your face was so priceless. I started hanging around Weasley more after that. Good chap, he is.”

“Oh ha, ha.” Francis pouts with a small huff but smiles. Arthur can be hard to crack and make laugh but he’s still got the touch. His eyes skim across the park as they lap in once more, spotting something he knows wasn’t there before. “Hey, Arthur?”

“What?” Arthur scowls a little, playfully since he’s not really all that irritated.

“Has that tunnel always been there?”

Francis points at the dark tunnel as they stop in front of it. Arthur stares at it, trying to recall if it has always been there. When coming up blank, he shakes his head. Francis hums in curiosity, a twinkle in his eyes as he thinks all the possible things the tunnel could be. Though he knows they can’t take magic lightly, he wants to liven things up a little.

“What if it’s a tunnel of love?”

“Hogwash.” Arthur waves the idea off, obviously disregarding the suggestion. “It’s just a tunnel. That was not there before and is probably bad news. We should turn back.” He makes to move but Francis grabs his wrist to stop him. Glowering at the other man, Arthur tries to get his wrist back all in vain. “Let go of me, you arse!”

“Let’s go inside!” Francis ignores the Brit’s command, pulling him along. “Maybe it’s a way to help us reconnect again. You never know what small adventures will do to people, oui?”

“I said no and to let me go!” Arthur pouts as he realizes the grip around his wrist is too strong to break.

Francis thinks for a moment as Arthur continues to pry his wrist out of his hand. “What if it could take us to a world where we felt we belonged?”

That comment freezes the other. It isn’t a secret that the two have never felt like they belonged in this world. True, Hogwarts and magic is all amazing. It was slightly homey and they learned a great deal of ways to protect themselves and others if need be. Just, they always felt off. Like there were anomalies in the world they grew up in. People who weren’t supposed to be where they were.

“Let’s go!” Francis takes his chance of Arthur being distracted enough to drag him into the tunnel. He chuckles a little as a flustered sound comes from the Brit behind him.

“Bloody hell! Let go! Francis!”

His shouts fall on deaf ears as they venture further down the tunnel. None of them notice the entrance slowly shrink into the form of a long tear that glimmers before stitching itself up and disappearing. All that’s left is the wall the tear formed on with graffiti of a word.

Egress .

Chapter End Notes

So you know, yes, Arthur and Francis are ex-boyfriends in this story. There's nothing
else going to happen between them, they're just stubborn friends.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Meet Ludwig, Gilbert, and Antonio, average Joes on the road looking for a home.

Chapter Notes

So, this chapter and the previous ones are similar but have definite changes. These changes are best for now. I am replacing the old chapters with these new ones but not deleting them from my computer. Gotta keep the drafts. Hope y'all like the changes, though.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Three white flashes in the sky dash across the blue-purple space above. One of the three arches down towards the third world it is destined to go to. It shoots towards an already made tunnel in the expanse of a long road between two cities. The rip appears before the tunnel, white light glowing brighter as it expands and changes the tunnel entrance from the usual road to the one that will lead back to its originated source. Now it just waits as the next set of chosen people will soon cross into its threshold.

Several hours down the road is a car with three passengers inside. The men inside are traveling from one town to another, looking for any place that will accept their skills and expertise. The German leading the group sighs as his tired eyes focus on the road. He’s been driving for majority of the trip, nearly five hours with only two stops for pit breaks. He just wants to rub his face and tip his head to the side so he can sleep.

“When are we going to find a place that we belong to?” He asks himself. The three have been together since they were kids and got along really well. They all felt the same thing: they didn’t belong anywhere in this world. Not for lack of trying.

The German glances over at his slumbering brother in the passenger seat, then back at his brother's friend who they graciously took in. Antonio and Gilbert are closer in age so they grew up closer together than Ludwig did with anyone else. With a six year difference, it could be slightly difficult to fit in with older kids. Since he’s wiser and acts older than he truly is, though, he fit in with his brother and the Spaniard pretty well. Ludwig smiles a bit as he drives in the dark. He turns on the radio for some noise, not realizing that a certain song would come on and be loud enough to wake his brother.

“Whoo! I love this song!” Gilbert shouts with a little gogginess. His shout wakes up his Spaniard friend in the back, who shakes his head to fight the sleep as he hears the song as well.

“Oh. Sí! So do I!” Antonio smiles brightly as he leans forward. Gil turns to look at Toni and starts to sing the lyrics. The Spaniard joins in a bit, dancing to the music in the back.

Ludwig sighs, smirking at the two. His eyes glance over at his gas gauge noticing how close
to empty it is. His eyes hold worry as they flicker back to the road. He hopes that it won't take any longer for them to get to the next city.

Gilbert notices his brother's silence. “Oi, Luddy. Get into the spirit!” He would've nudged his little brother's shoulder but the other was driving. “You need to relax, and live a little.”

“I would if I didn't have to worry about our situation.” He grumbles.

“What situ-” Gilbert stops in the middle of his question when his red eyes lock with his brother's blue eyes that glare at him. It was obvious that Ludwig’s irritation was running thin, lack of sleep not helping Gilbert any, so the platinum blond decides not to play dumb. “Oh… Yeah… That one.” Gilbert pouts and looks forward as he is silenced by his brother's stern gaze.

Antonio looks between the two, refraining from speaking. He sighs, leaning back into his seat and staring out into the wilderness. The vast emptiness stretches on, forms of cacti in the distance changing the same landscape now and then. He thinks about their situations, knowing full well that no matter how similar they are, each one of them were going through their own separate crisis. For Antonio, he was abandoned by his biological family and graciously taken in by the brothers. The Beilschmidt’s case was deeper than that. At least to him.

Gilbert tends to treat the situation as if it wasn’t really a big deal. He knows that the only person who treated the three of them like they belonged was their Germanic father. The man fell to illness a while back and they’ve been on their own ever since. Even though the platinum blond doesn’t remember much of their father, as he lived elsewhere due to reasons he doesn’t wish to disclose, he knows that Ludwig takes after him. From little of what he knows, the serious and quiet nature Ludwig has is definitely similar to their fathers. Looking at him, everyone could tell he was Gunter’s son. Compare Gilbert with the two, he was the odd duck.

Shaking himself out of the negative stupor, Gilbert groans in irritation from the thickening silence between them all. The music doesn’t help anymore so he just shuts it off. “I can’t stand this,” he says. “We’ve been on the road for hours. How much longer until we reach the next city?”

Ludwig rolls his eyes at his brother’s impatience, thankful the other man didn’t shout his complaints. “We should be there in another three hours.”

The red eyed German groans again. “This is so not awesome. I can’t believe it’s taking this long to get to the city.” Crossing his arms, he turns on his side and pouts, eyes staring at the door. “Wish something awesome would happen and we would just be there already.”

Antonio chuckles at his friend’s silliness but agrees. “Mi amigo, be patient, si? Something will happen soon.” The Spaniard reaches forward and pats Gilbert’s head. “When chasing something it will only get further away. If you wait, it’ll come to you.”

“Whatever, oh wise one.” Gilbert rolls his eyes but smiles. “I deserve some awesomeness right now. We all do.” His words silence the other two again. They really do need a change of pace as Gilbert says. “We just need to find the awesome place that we belong in.”

Ludwig sighs as he thinks why they’re on the move from town to city to village. Anywhere they can try to fit in for just a while. Every time some place looks like it will work out, one of them screws something up and they have to go on the run. This can’t keep happening forever but it seems like this world is just insistent on making them outcasts. As he thinks about the recent reason why they’re on the road again, his eyes blur a little from exhaustion. He shakes his head a little, trying to focus on the road again.
The elder brother turns back around and notices Ludwig struggling to stay awake. When the car starts to swerve, he sits up and puts a hand on the other’s shoulder. “I think we should switch.”

Ludwig is about to protest until he sees that he’s losing control of the car. Sighing, he nods and pulls over. “Don’t drive like an idiot,” he warns as they get out and swap sides.

“I’m hurt.” Gilbert mock pouts as he sits in the driver’s seat. “When have you heard of me being reckless in a car?”

Images of Gilbert back in high school when he finally got his permit appear in Ludwig’s mind. He sees the younger version of his brother putting sunglasses on as he promises to be back before midnight. The countless times he and Antonio received phone calls about Gilbert’s near accidents were higher than the times Gilbert actually got into an accident. No matter how many times they asked him to stop being an idiot driving, he would always call with a weary laugh and ask for someone to pick him up. Antonio is a much better driver but Ludwig will just give this one to his brother.

“I could write a small book based on your years of driving.” Ludwig teases his brother, a small smile twitching on his lips as he sees his brother’s eyes widen.

Antonio laughs in the back, mentioning how Gilbert got served by his younger brother. Ludwig ignores them and turns on his side so he can get comfortable. Gilbert grumbles as he starts driving down the road, turning the radio on low as the go towards their destination. Closing his eyes, the younger German tries to sleep for a few minutes before needing to be awake again. Lord knows what these two can do when they’re the only ones together.

Ludwig doesn’t wake up until he hears a slam of the door and Gilbert cursing outside. He jostles himself awake and opens his eyes in time to see his brother’s furious face morphing into many other types of faces. He rubs his eyes a little, listening to the muffled mumbling of Gilbert complaining with Antonio and then a thump. Ludwig raises an eyebrow as he focuses on the two outside again, holding in a laugh as his brother hops around in evident pain from kicking the vehicle. Sighing, he opts to get out with the others and stretch his muscles out from sleeping oddly in the car.

The two glance at his as he shuts the door and goes over to them. “The car ran out of gas, Luddy,” Gilbert states as he pouts. “We’ll have to walk from here.”

“Which will be good for us, si?” Antonio smiles. Ever the positive one. “Sitting for a long period of time isn’t good for anyone. Walking is better.”

Ludwig nods in agreement while walking over to the trunk. “We should grab our things and start walking.”

Gilbert complains as Antonio opens the driver door and grabs the keys. The Spaniard tosses them to Ludwig so he can open the trunk for them. Grabbing their suitcases and duffel bags, the shut the trunk door, throw the keys in the car, then start walking. It was only a rental so there was no need to be attached to it. They were lucky in the first place to get the car.

After several minutes of walking, the three begin wondering just when their luck would start changing. Their lives haven’t been the greatest since they were born. Sure, their German father was the only one to treat them as if they belonged, all three of them, but it wasn’t enough for them. They needed someone else, another kind of group for validation that they were indeed wanted in this world. Or any world, honestly. Gilbert sighs with a pout as the thought crosses his mind.
“Why did we choose Nevada to go to again?” He asks.

“Someone wanted to go to Las Vegas and experience the world of casinos,” Antonio answers innocently with no acid in his voice at all.

“Even though we already were in California.” Ludwig sighs. “We wouldn’t have needed to leave if someone kept himself out of trouble.” The blond German glares at his brother

The self-proclaimed Prussia flushes as he splutters. “It wasn’t my fault! The guy tricked me!”

“Mm.” Ludwig rolls his eyes. “You’re just lucky that you didn’t get arrested.”

“Right,” Gilbert deflates a little, “thanks for that, bruder.”

As the brothers hash it out telepathically through their eyes, Antonio gasps happily and runs in front of them. “Dios mio!” He exclaims, gaining their attention as he runs to the front of a tunnel. “It’s the tunnel! We must be getting closer to one of the cities!” He turns and drops a suitcase down to wave them on. “Come on! The sooner we enter, the closer we are to exit near the city!” He picks his suitcase back up and turns into the tunnel, not waiting for the other two.

The German brothers glance at each other, Gilbert shrugging as he follows their friend. Once all three have stepped into the tunnel, they feel a chill in the air which cause their spines to shiver. None of them realize that behind them, the entrance sizzles with a white static as it zips shut. The rip that created the entrance to the other world disappears, sending a message to its creator.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Meet Lovino and Feliciano, orphans who have barely enough to survive another day and only wish for their life to get better.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A chuckle reverberates through the Danish man’s throat as he perches himself atop his axe. He gazes down at the now two portals left in front of him, smirking as each rip he’s created for the different worlds slowly seal back up once their use is finished. He hums as he looks towards the two still left open, watching how one is in an alley near a market plaza while the other is covered by brush and small boulders which dampen with rain. Those two worlds contain the last three people needed to complete each kingdom.

“I must report this to the king and queen,” he whispers to no one. Jumping down from the top of his axe, he lands on the asphalt of his home’s sidewalk outside before picking up his axe. “They’ll be delighted to know it’s nearly complete. Hopefully the tunnel can hold out for another week or two until everyone is in and heading towards their rightful places.”

He soon dashes through the green trees around his home and throws his axe. It disappears into the bushes and creates a portal that the Dane quickly goes through after it. He lands on the shiny, marble floor covered with a dark maroon carpet the goes from the doors straight towards the thrones that sit a few steps up. As he looks at the thrones, he pales at the image of his axe ledge just above his Finnish queen’s head.

“Idiot!” Lukas hisses as he walks over towards the joker and hits him at the back of his head. “You nearly cut the queen’s head off.” The Norwegian glares at the other, pissed beyond compare.

“My apologies, your majesty.” Matthias kneels on one knee, head bowed in respect and apology. “I didn’t mean for it to hit your throne.”

“Drop the formalities, Matthias,” Tino coos, forgiving the other so quickly. “It was a simple accident. I dodged it just in time.” The lithe man stands up and crosses the floor towards his friend, patting the other’s shoulder lightly. “Stand up, my friend. No need to kneel.”

Just as Matthias does as his queen asks, the king stands from his throne, a menacing aura surrounding him and glares down at the Dane. Mat chuckles nervously, looking away as the Swede comes over, placing his own hand on Mat’s free shoulder and gripping it hard.

“King Berwald,” he chuckles a little, “no hard feelings, right? I mean, Tino accepted my apology, and-.” He winces as the grip on his shoulder tightens. Mat glances at the Jack next to him, eyes pleading for help only for the other to turn and head towards his brother, the ace. The Dane rolls his eyes, soon brought back to attention when the king forces him down on one knee. “Ow,” he hisses out, repeating the exclamation of pain as Berwald puts immense pressure on his shoulder.

“Berwald,” Tino scolds as he pulls his husband’s hand off of the Dane’s shoulder. “There’s
no need for that. It’s okay. Please calm down.” The silent man sighs through his nose, nodding only just because Tino asked. Smiling, Tino leans up and pecks Berwald’s cheek. “Thank you.” He giggles as the taller man blushes, turning away so as to reclaim his spot on his throne and to hide his reddening cheeks. “Now,” Tino turns towards the joker, “what’s the news you bring?”

Matthias hisses quietly from his pain, rolling his shoulder as he massages it with his other hand. When he hears the question, he grins. “Right. Three down, two to go.”

♥♠

The curious eyes of amber gaze at a cart full of bread and kneaded dough. Feliciano’s tongue glides over his chapped lips as he gazes longingly at the perfect ingredients for pizza or even pasta. Any kind of food that he could make to go into his belly. He stands there, ragged clothes hanging loose from his thin, tanned body. The small holes along the seams of both his shirt and pants let a small breeze caress his skin and he shivers, hugging himself and snapping out of his dreamy daze.

“Oi,” a voice softly beckons his attention at his right. He glances over, closing his eyes and changing his face to a dopy sad smile towards his older brother. “Don’t think about it.”

“Think about what, fratello?” Feli cocks his head to the side in confusion.

“About that food,” Lovino motions towards the cart, his hazel eyes gazing at it just as longingly before focusing back on his brother. “I know you’re starving, Veneziano, but we can’t resort to stealing. We’ll get our hands chopped off if we do.”

Feliciano hums noncommittally as he gazes back at the cart. “I won’t steal.”

“Good. Now, let’s go.” Lovino lightly hits his brother’s shoulder with the back of his hand and turns away, melding with the crowd almost instantly.

The younger Italian turns and lifts a foot up to follow only to stop and glance back and the bread and dough stand. He hums, licks his lips again, and holds a hand over his grumbling stomach. He inches closer to the stand, looking at all the different sizes of bread and dough set out for customers to see. When he stares for too long, he feels eyes on him as his skin prickles with anxiety.

“Boy, either buy the bread or run along,” the market man in charge of the cart huffs as he crosses his arms, “you’re holding up my customers.”

“I-I’m sorry.” Feli cowers, feeling his pockets for any of the spare change him and his brother picked up over the days. He only feels a few copper coins and counts them out, knowing he won’t be able to pay. “Uhm,” he glances up at the man with his eyes still closed, “will this be enough?”

The man laughs. “You think five copper coins is enough for my bread? Get out of here, kid. Make some real money and I’ll actually consider selling you my products.” He turns to another customer that comes along and asks him questions, ignoring the poor Italian.

Feli nervously fidgets in his spot, pocketing the coins as he nibbles on his bottom lip. He watches the baker chatting and bartering with the customers on the other side of him, gauging what he should do. He doesn’t want to leave empty handed. He’s starving, and he knows his brother is too. Speaking of his brother, he hears him in the distance calling his name in annoyance. Feliciano’s heart rate increases as he thinks what he should do, staring at the bread in front of him again as if it would calm him. It only increases his anxiousness as he slowly reaches for that long piece of bread just teasing him. As he’s about to grab the product, he hears a out.

“Hey! Keep your filthy hands off my bread!”
"Fuck off, ass-hole!" Lovino shouts from behind Feliciano.

Before the two can hash it out, Feliciano’s heart jumps into his throat and he instinctually grabs the bread in front of him, holding it to his chest before he starts running. The baker’s yelling behind him makes him run faster, only glancing behind him to see if Lovino is following. Knowing that his brother is right on his heels – while his eyes are wide from shock – he keeps going. The only moment he stops is when he doesn’t know which way to go next.

"Get back here! Thief! Theif!"

"Don’t just stop," Lovino hisses as he grabs his brother’s free wrist and drags him through the crowd for safety. “Keep going!” He guides Feliciano through the thick crowd until it thins out and he pulls them in an alley, far enough away from the screaming baker. The two take a moment to catch their breath before Lovino turns on his brother with a fierce glare. “What the hell were you thinking?! You said you wouldn’t steal it! I thought you were right behind me, but you were back at that fucking stand and you just- Do you know what you did?!”

Feli feels tears prick at his eyes from guilt. He holds the bread closer to his chest and curls around it. “I-I’m sorry, fratello. I just- I was hungry and it looked so yummy. I wanted to get it for you- for us to eat.” His closed, teary eyes gaze up at his older brother. Though the younger Italian is taller than Lovino, he’s always slouching so his brother seems like the tallest one. “We haven’t eaten anything the last two days. We’ll die if we don’t get anything. Right?”

At the pointed answer, Lovino sighs and rubs the bridge of his nose between his eyes. Clenching shut his hazel eyes, he counts in his head, calming down so he doesn’t yell at his brother again. “You’re right,” he says to his brother, “but stealing is wrong.” Opening his eyes, he scowls further at Feliciano. “You know we’ll get our hands chopped off for this.”

“No,” Feli whines, realizing what he’s done this time. “No, we can’t lose our hands! Nonno’s gifts to us, we- we can’t stop…” Feli blubbers, clinging to the bread as his tears fall. “W-We need to keep his name alive. His art, his cooking…”

Lovino frowns as he watches his brother cry. Remembering the days of when their grandfather lived and took care of them, he couldn’t help a small smile from appearing on his face. Too bad the old man was six feet under now. “There’s no use crying, Veneziano.” He places a gentle hand on Feli’s shoulder, urging the other to look up so they’re face-to-face. “We’ll pull through. Now, come on. We need to lay low in the alleyways for a while. Let the bastard forget our faces, si?”

Feliciano nods, uncurling himself just a little so they can start walking. Lovino leads them further down the alley and turns only to stop when he sees something odd. Feli bumps into his back, cooing with a small “ve” as he looks at his brother. “What’s wrong, fratello?”

“I’ve memorized these alleyways,” Lovino whispers. “I know them like the back of my hand, so this tunnel shouldn’t be here.” He motions to the archway with patterned beams around it, dark as the inside of it goes on forever. “Maybe we took a wrong turn,” he ponders aloud but he knows that they didn’t. This tunnel was never there before.

The copper headed Italian grips his brother’s arm lightly. “Should we try the other way?”

Lovino nods after staring at the tunnel for a while longer. They turn and go in the opposite direction, halting as they find a similar tunnel at a four way. “What the actual fuck?!”

“I don’t like this, fratello.” Feli trembles as he glances at each tunnel entrance, all the same
vast darkness at the end of each. “I-I don’t remember these tunnels either.”

“This is a load of shit,” Lovino emphasizes as he rages. His arms extend out at each tunnel, flailing as he’s confused. “What the hell is going on?!”

The two stand there stewing over the changes of environment until they pivot on their feet to go backwards. Lovino screeches, livid as the way back is also a tunnel now. He pulls his hair, avoiding the curl jutting from the middle of his head, and stomps the ground two times with each of his feet.

“This is ridiculous!” He shouts.

“Fratello…”

“You know what, I don’t trust this tunnel but if it’s not going to let us go, fuck it.” Lovino grabs his brother’s wrist again and heads into one of the tunnel entrances. “Stay close, Veneziano, and don’t you dare stray.” Feli nods to his brother, curling in a little as he tries to stay strong. “And give me a piece of that fucking bread. I’m starving.”

Feli chuckles a little and breaks the bread apart as evenly as he can. Giving one half to his brother, they each nibble on the bread as they travel further into the tunnel. Neither of them notice that behind them, a small white light shines dimly as it closes up the entrance.

From the other world, Matthias grins and mumbles aloud, “Just one more to go.”

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Small update from Mat to Lukas.

Meet Ivan, a wrongly accused and very misunderstood man on the run.

Chapter Notes

To be honest, I'm glad I've been rewriting these chapters because they are so much better and slightly more interesting. There's a lot more behind each character now, some soft scenes and other action like scenes. This one will probably be my favorite one that I've rewritten. I've added a shit ton more to each chapter but this one has more dialogue. I've also found it fun to have Norge and Demark interact some more with each other during the blips back in the Joker Kingdom. I am a DenNor fan but they're not a main pairing.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy the new version!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“How are things coming along?” Lukas asks as he comes up to the Dane’s house. He eyes the squatting man watching over the last portal that has yet to close. “They should almost all be here, right?”

“Yep,” Mat answers as he leans back with his arms. He grins at the Norwegian Jack. “Just one more person to get into the tunnel, then it can work your magic into separating them and guiding them to their rightful places.”

The pale blond nods with a hum, standing beside the other man. He glances down into the circular portal, watching as a frightening man with beige hair speaks with two women. “Is that man the last to enter?”

“Ivan?” Mat glances back at the portal before him. “Yeah. He’s the last of ‘em to come through before going to his kingdom.”

“Do you know who will go where?”

“Actually, yeah.” The Dane grips the pole of his axe and brings it over for Lukas to gaze at the blade. He points up at the silver end where scratches of each kingdom symbol resides with tally marks underneath. “So, for Spades they will be getting three guys, Diamond is only getting one, Hearts three, Clubs two, and us Jokers will get one.”

“Who,” Lukas sighs as he has to repeat his question, “will go,” he glares at Matthias’s grin, “where?”
“If you had let me finish, I would have listed them off for you.” The blond laughs obnoxiously before doing as he says. “So, for Spades they’ll be getting their king, queen, and ace.” He hits the stone ground with his axe pole and brings up three still images of each person. “The golden blond with glasses is Alfred. He’ll be the king. He’s going to be an interesting mofo as he has abilities like no other. His queen is Arthur, the pale blond with very thick eyebrows, who also has some skills. Kind of like you, with magic and all. Their ace will be Lovino, the only one of the three that is different in this group externally and talent wise.

“Diamond will get their king, Francis.” The previous three images disappear and are replaced by one single image of the Frenchman. “He’s the only one coming from another world for that kingdom. It’s interesting that majority of the others are more than one. Then again, we’re only getting one, too.” He hums as he waves his axe through the image so it can ripple before fixing itself. “It’s odd, though. They’re still missing their ace. If they’re not from another world, that means their ace is somewhere in this world. Hidden and not aware of their position.”

Lukas glances from the image down at the other blond. “Why does that concern you?”

Matthias shrugs. “It doesn’t, but it’s just strange. Every other position that’s missing their rightful owner is being filled up. The Ace of Diamonds is the only one empty. And when I try to search for them,” he brings up his axe and has the blade create a circle next to Francis’s image. He presses his hand against it as if it were firm and it turns white only to become static gray, “it does that. As if they’re nonexistent.”

“Or they’re out of your range.”

“You kidding? I’m the head Joker of the Joker Squad here for each kingdom. I have full range of every kingdom.”

“Then maybe they can’t be found by your magic.” Lukas huffs, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Or,” Mat pauses in thought, frowning with deep concern, “they’re completely cut off from everyone’s magic by someone else’s magic and are held against their will, not knowing anything about their role.”

The Norwegian rolls his eyes. “Quit living in your fantasies and list the rest of them off.”

With the small order, Mat’s seriousness ebbs away and he nods. “For the Heart Kingdom,” he starts, waving away the two images of Francis and static so three more can appear, “their king, jack, and ace will be coming. Ludwig, the stoic blond, is the king. I feel he’ll be a great ruler alongside Kiku. Then there’s Feliciano for their Jack. I’m not sure about him. He seems skittish and emotional, but there could be something he’s hiding behind his cowardice.” He hums, glancing at the other image. “Their ace, Antonio, will be interesting. From what I’ve gathered on him, he has quite the interesting skills with an axe like I do. He also is rumored to be slightly two-faced, like Ivan.” He points down to the fifth portal with said Russian still speaking with the two women. “Just, he’s more positive and hates resorting to violence if he can work something through words.”

“Hn.” Lukas gazes at all three images, impressed how so many different people will have to deal with each other. He finds a small interest in what kind of show they’ll all get to see if a lot of the personalities clash.

“I’ve already given you a glimpse of Ivan.” Mat swipes away the images and points to the portal again. “He’s supposed to be the king of clubs, and I have a feeling he might be a ruthless king. See that smile?” He urges Lukas to look and doesn’t continue until he sees a nod from the other. “It’s
completely fake. That’s why I say he has to be two-faced.”

“Who isn’t two-faced?” The Norwegian sighs. “And the last two?”

Matthias grins wide. “Gilbert is my kind of guy,” he states as he summons an image of the self-proclaimed Prussian up. “He’s slightly impatient and full of himself, thinks is so awesome, but cares an awful lot about his little brother, Ludwig. He can be very serious when he wants to be, but would rather be the light of a party.” He glances up at Lukas with a mischievous glint in his eye. “He’ll be the Hearts Joker since we have no one else for that position. It works out in the long run for everyone.”

When the Dane turns back to the portal, the image of Gilbert disappears and he stands. “What about the other one?” Lukas asks. He waves his hand to have an image of Matthew appear with a lime-green hue as his magic is a different color to Matthias’s white Joker magic. “You forgot about this one.”

“Oh, shit, right!” Mat rakes a hand through his hair as he laughs guiltily. “That’s Matthew. He’ll be the Club’s ace. Can’t believe I forgot about him. He has these neat powers like his brother, Alfred, but they’re completely different from Al’s.” He shivers a little. “I hope he can handle his king…”

With the list finally finished, Lukas nods and pivots on his foot. “I’ll go inform the king and queen of this news. Be sure that Ivan makes it to the tunnel.”

“Yes, sir!” Mat mock salutes the other’s retreating figure before glancing down at Ivan’s portal. “Well big guy, hope you can handle the dramatic changes about to happen.” He leans over with his axe, dipping the pole into the portal. Strips of maroon curve off the pole around the image of the three still chatting, covering the whole portal until it turns from white to maroon. “With a little dark Joker touch, things will finally get into motion.” He laughs, witnessing as the one of the two women jumps from her chair in anger, throwing her cup down. It shatters and Mat’s eyes glisten as he watches the argument commence. “Good luck, Ivan.”

♣

Ivan sits alone in a hotel room paid for him by his sisters. He sighs, hand rubbing his face as he stares at the broken teacup his little sister threw to the floor earlier. He refuses to scoop it up and clean for fear of cutting himself, so he leaves it for the cleaning lady to do it when she’s on her rounds. He thinks as he stares at it, remembering Natalia’s rage and Irunya’s disappointment. They were to leave together for home but his sister’s went on ahead of him. It was his decision to come along and he decided to stay.

There wasn’t a moment in his life where he regretted anything until today. Another sigh escapes him as he leans back into the chair, staring at the ceiling. It was blown way out of proportion. Their argument was petty but it still bothered him. Maybe taking a shower will relax his mind, so he gets up and goes to his bathroom.

After showering, he changes for the night and sleeps in his bed. He’s in and out of consciousness most of the night until he finally finds himself dreaming. The only problem is that it’s more of a nightmare than a dream. His sisters both turn their backs on him in the dream and he isn’t able to move to chase them. He yells their names, beckoning them over, begging for them to come back. His surroundings are dark and the stillness of the air saps his lungs dry. It’s hard to breathe as all he can hear is a ringing in his ears. The ringing increases its pitch until he cannot handle it and covers his ears. It’s futile as it continues changing into a scream which wakes him up.
A *thud* reverberates through the wall against his headboard. He glares, catching his breath as he unclenches his hands from the sheets. Another *thud* hits his wall and his glare intensifies. Getting up, he changes into his regular clothes – long tan trench coat covering a light t-shirt, dark pants, army boots that go up to his mid-calf, the scarf his sister made for him – and goes out to the neighboring room.

When a third deep *thud* echoes behind the door, Ivan raises an eyebrow. He knocks on the wood lightly, waiting for a response. “Hello?” He speaks up. “Is anyone in there?” When there’s no reply, he knocks again a little harder. The door sweeps open slowly from his knock, and he suddenly feels on edge. Stepping in as quietly as he can, he peers around in the dark room, hand sliding across the wall until he feels the switch. “I am turning light on,” he states to whoever is there. He flips the switch and his eyes widen.

Before him lays a beaten woman covered in blood. Her face is smashed in, unrecognizable, as her arms are cuffed to each post on the headboard. Her wrists are chaffed from constant movement, most likely fighting to free them all in vain. His purple irises gaze over the bloody scene and find the murder weapon, a long lead kitchen pipe. Furrowing his brows in confusion, he walks over to it, making sure not to mess up the crime scene. He bends down over the item, about to reach for it and examine it further, when a scream comes from the hall. His head snaps over and he sees a cleaning lady with her hands to her face, trembling. She continues to scream and he gets up to try and console her. When she backs up from him, he realizes how it looks.

“I’m not the one who did this,” he tells her, but it seems she doesn’t believe him. He forces a smile. “Trust me, if I did this, I’d be covered in blood.”

It doesn’t look like she’s listening to him even if he does have a point. She shakes her head and runs down the hall. He exits the room, about to go after her and straighten things out, but other people are witnessing the scene. Everything is going to be taken the wrong way. He rushes towards his room, ignoring the eyes of fear and whispers of concern. When he hears people behind him look into his neighboring room, he tries to quickly get in his own room.

“Stop him!” Someone shouts. He jams his card into the reader, panicking just a little bit. “Call the police! He’s murdered someone!”

Everyone goes crazy at that claim. He pushes his door open and closes it, pulling the door stop over the hook so it’ll be hard for people to come in. Rushing by his bag, Ivan packs up as much as he can, stripping his bed of the sheets and tying them together as a rope. Curse his stupid curiosity. Now he has to jump out of the third story window and run for it. Doing this makes him look guilty but who would listen to him? He knows how he looks when he smiles. He knows that people are generally terrified of him. This world just hates him.

It’s time for Ivan to move out of this world if at all possible.

With his bag zipped, he goes to the balcony and ties the makeshift rope around the banister before sending the other end down. It barely makes halfway through the second story window but he can drop with little damage. He throws his bag out the window to land on the bush below and steps over, using the sheets to help him shimmy down the side of the building. Once he reaches the window where the end dangles, he braces himself and lets go.

Falling wasn’t as bad until he hit the bush, realizing all too late that it was a rose bush. Thorns prick at him through his clothes as he moves around, his skin being slit as he grabs his bag and starts running. Ivan runs into the woods out behind the hotel, knowing he’ll be able to escape everyone easily in the darkness. He willfully ignores the dark of night as he rushes through, finding any possible place to hide. His ears soon pick up the sounds of barking and he curses. They shouldn’t
have gotten his sent that quickly. Who had dogs? No one checked in with a dog that he remembers.

As he’s running, Ivan feels the chill in the air turn as rain falls from above. He growls in annoyance, pushing forwards through the rain. His eyes are bleary from the mist that’s rising from the ground, nature’s own doing, so he misses the root that’s stuck up from the ground. It catches his foot and he falls forward into a mud puddle.

Rage boils in him as he picks his head up. There’s no time to waste if people were chasing him. He gets up and continues on until he finds a cavern behind some trees. He throws his bag into it and pulls at some small boulders around it to cover most of the entrance. He struggles a little as he’s not inhumane enough to have freakish strength but he gets the boulders close enough to hide the cavern. He squeezes through the only visible crack of the entrance and grabs his bag up from the ground. Catching his breath, he waits for a bit, sitting in the shadow of the boulders and listening to the rain outside.

The barks comes closer. He tenses a little as he mentally panics. Muffled voices converse as the slosh through the mud outside, passing by his little hideaway. When they get further and further away, Ivan releases a sigh of relief. He relaxes some, ready to let sleep take him again, but decides that he should press on further into the cavern. Maybe there’s an exit at the other end, one that will send him to a place where he won’t need to hide.

Ivan pulls up his bag as he stands up. He takes one step forward and proceeds to step with his other foot. The pattern continues on and he goes deeper into the cavern. He never notices the faint white light behind him absorbing the entrance as it zips up, blocking his only exit out of the tunnel. For all anyone would know, he wouldn’t care.

As the last portal seals itself up, Matthias sighs, eyes turning towards his two guests. “Good show, Nat,” he praises the younger woman. “I’m glad the two of you received the message clearly.”

“You promised he won’t be hurt,” Natalia crosses her arms as she glares at the Danish man, “but he is hurt in more ways than physical.”

“Yes, but he is on his way home.” Irunya pats her sister’s back before smiling at Matthias. “We will wait for him in our kingdom. Please make sure that he gets home safe.”

“He will, don’t worry.” He smiles kindly at the sweet woman. “I swear on my status of a Joker that he’ll find his way home easily.”

Natalia snorts, turning on her foot before heading through a portal the Dane creates for them to get home easily. The Ukrainian woman bows her head with a wave before following her Belarusian little sister. When they go through, the portal shuts and Matthias is left alone at his little cottage. He hums, leaning on his axe as he thinks of reporting to his Jack instead of the king and queen. Smirking devilishly, he picks his axe up and slices the air, summoning another portal that brings him to the Norwegian’s home.

“Hey Norge! I got some updates for ya!”

“Get out of my house you imbecile!”

The Dane laughs and his portal closes once he’s all the way through. His cottage, left alone once more, sits at the center of the forest outside of the Kingdom of Jokers. The sun beams down at his stone pathway before his door, causing the stones to glitter. Birds tweet and sing happily as the fly around his home. Everything is peaceful. Everything is bright.
No one realizes the changes in the future yet to come.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Alfred and Matthew travel farther into the tunnel, not bothered in the least that their entrance behind them disappeared. Humming a tune, the amber haired American zips around with his speed, easily running across the wall and ceiling. Matthew merely shakes his head at his brother, a small smile on his face as he “accidentally” summons an item that will trip Alfred. The pale blond laughs when Alfred doesn’t avoid the cement block in time and face plants against the ground. Alfred picks himself up, pouting as his nose begins to bleed from the sheer force of the impact.

“Don’t look at me like that.” Matthew walks over and kneels beside the sitting American, summoning up a handkerchief to cover the golden-wheat blond’s nose. “Oh, it’s broken.”

“You don’t say,” Alfred squawks out as Matthew pinches his nose. He winces at the small lightening jab of pain before sighing. “Fine, I get it. I’ll calm down.”

The Canadian hums, mumbling to himself as he blinks and sees Alfred’s skeleton composition inside his body. He moves his hands away to get a look at the cartilage of Al’s nose that broke, the muscles and tissues appearing on the bones. “Don’t move,” he orders as he takes the other’s nose, snapping back into place. Once that’s all settled, he blinks and his eyes are back to normal. “There.”

Alfred whines a little and feels his nose. Pouting, he feels his fingers conjure up a light blue light which melds with the skin of his nose. He feels the chakra strings mend his broken nose and push the healing process so it’s completely fine after a minute. Once he’s done, he stands back up and sighs.

These two hidden abilities are ones they rarely use. Matthew can change his vision into whatever kind he wants by blinking and Alfred can use the chakra flow in his body as extensions or ways to heal himself quickly. The American usually boasts about becoming a ninja like Naruto, but deflates the instant his brother refutes the possibility. They both could be great ninjas with their abilities but it’s hard enough living as super-humans. So they don’t brag about these powers and use them very rarely.

“There’s no scar, right?” Alfred asks as he lightly presses his fingers around the area that broke.

Matthew hums as he inspects his brother’s nose when the other pulls his fingers away. “Nope. No scar.”

“Good.” He nods and is about to continue on, avoiding the cinder block, but hears some rushing feet from the way they came. He glares, moving into a battle ready stance. “Someone’s coming.”

“What?” Matt blinks, turning his thermal eyes on as he goes behind his brother. He watches a
small red-orange dot from down the tunnel quickly become larger. It’s a familiar figure so he smiles and relaxes, blinking to inactivate his thermal eyes. “It’s okay, Al.” He lays a gentle, soothing hand on his brother’s shoulder before stepping forward again. Alfred almost objects but relaxes as soon as he sees a familiar white bear come into view and pounce on his brother. “Kumakichi!”

Alfred sighs, standing tall as he watches Matthew nuzzles his face into the polar bear’s fur. “Geez, Kuma. Didn’t even know you followed us in.”

Beady black eyes merely glance over the American, causing the golden blond to twitch with slight irritation. Kumajiro licks Matthew’s face, opening his small muzzle to speak, which only sounds like bear gibberish to Alfred. “This tunnel is not good,” the bear states. “It gives a bad feeling.”

Matt blinks as he processes that. “Are you sure, Kuma? I don’t think it’s so bad.”

“It’s made of magic.” Kuma sniffs the air. “Once was fine but now covered with bad magic.”

The Canadian doesn’t understand the latter part and shrugs the concern away. He turns to his brother, bear still in his arms, and translates. “Kuma doesn’t like the tunnel. Says it gives off a bad feeling.”

“Well, that's interesting.” Al stuffs his hands in his pockets. “We didn't get any bad feelings before coming in, so it should be fine.”

Matthew gives his brother that but ponders over other facts. “But Al, animals are more sensitive than us humans. Even super-humans aren't that sensitive, so we wouldn't have felt anything anyway.” Al huffs a little at his brother's response, disliking how Matt always tops him at smarts. “I think we should be careful from here on out. We have been walking for what seems like hours.”

“Yeah, yeah. Whatever.” The American turns and puts his hands behind his head as he continued to walk.

“W-wait! Don't get too far ahead!” Fearing that they might lose each other if they get any long distance between them, Matt quickly goes to his brother's side. “I don’t want us to get separated.” He states quietly as they walked on.

“Don’t worry. The only way I could lose you is if you turned invisible.” Alfred laughs, smiling reassuringly. “Just stick by my side, bro, and we won't separate easily.” Just as he says this, a fork appears before them in the tunnel. The two gaze into each continuing stretch and look at each other.

“I think we should go-” they both start.

“-Left.” Alfred states.

“-Right.” Matt speaks simultaneously.

They stare at each other before chuckling a bit. “Come on, Matt, I feel like we should go left.”

“And I feel like we should go right.”

“We're not going to get anywhere if we bicker about it, so let's just go left.”

“I agree, but I still feel like we should take the right path.” Matt tries to stay serious but
couldn't help chuckle at the small pun he made. “Al, I really think we should go right. I'm usually better at deciding things for us.”

“Oh yeah? Well, maybe this time you're wrong.” Al huffs childishly, pouting as he crosses his arms. “Left feels like the best choice so I'm going left.” He begins walking that way before his brother could say anything.

“Al, wait!” Matthew tries to follow to pull him back, but once Alfred passes the left threshold, the tunnel starts shaking. “Alfred!” Debris and rocks fall from the ceiling and Matthew can’t reach his brother in time; the rocks fall so fast that they instantly block up the left tunnel. “Alfred!” Matthew shouts through coughs.

“Mattie!” Alfred coughs, turning around and trying to move the rocks away. “Mattie, are you okay over there?!”

“T’m okay! What about you?!” Matt stands, holding his polar bear friend closer to his chest.

Grunting, Alfred moves three big boulders only for more to fall down and take their place. “I'm fine, but these damn rocks keep coming! I... I guess we have no choice but to continue on these separate paths!”

“B-but...” Matthew shakes a little at the idea of being separated. Sure, he has Kumajiro, but the brothers have never been separated before. Not like this. “I'm not good at being alone!” Matthew isn’t a person that deals with loneliness well. He’s not entirely scared of the world – uncertain of the unknown maybe but not scared – but he just doesn’t feel safe.

“You'll do fine, bro! I have faith in you!” Al smiles, sighing as he puts his hands back in his pockets. “We might meet up at the end of the tunnel somehow, so don't worry too much.”

“O... Okay.” Matt nods, gazing at the right path. “I'll be going down the right path then.”

“All right, Mattie. Meet you at the exit!” Alfred stands, waiting to hear his brother go before walking down the rest of the left path.

Matt stares at the rubble, sighing as he slowly walks past the right threshold. Once he does, another cave in happens to block his way out. He jumps, frowning as he knew that would happen. Gazing at his blocked exit for a few more minutes, he soon turns and continues walking through the tunnel without his brother.

Alfred hears and feels the right tunnel close up as well. He shivers, gaining a feeling that this tunnel has a mind of its own, like it planned to separate them from the start. Exhaling, he turns and walks along the left path.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Stumbling down the tunnel, Arthur struggles in Francis’s grip. The Frenchman hums a tune, smiling happily before he feels a zap down his back. His smile is wiped off his face and replaced with a frown as he slows his pace, gazing around at the tunnel with suspicion. He doesn’t pay attention to the Brit caught in his hand until he feels Arthur pull his hand out with a sound of triumph.

“Ha! Better not plan to take it back. I might just curse you into the frog that you are,” Arthur threatens with little venom. When he realizes that Francis won’t take the bite, he calms down and then it hits him like it hit Francis. “What is that dreadful feeling?”

“I’m not sure, mon ami.” Francis soon stops and swirls a finger in the air, trying to conjure up his magic. He’s able to do so, but it’s a small tornado in his palm. “Whatever it is, it’s blocking majority of our magic from it’s full potential. We might have to resort to our wands if need be, cher.”

Just as Arthur reaches for his satchel to pat it – the holder of his old wand he barely uses – the two of them feel the tunnel shake. “Bloody hell,” Arthur softly exclaims as he furrows his brows. “Was that a cave in?”

“Possibly.” Francis hums.

“We should be careful then,” Arthur quietly states. His green eyes gaze at the walls, sensing the dark magic around them as they just stand there. He also feels a soft magic underneath the dreadful coat of obvious black magic but he’s unsure of what any of this means. The tunnel isn’t just an ordinary one. “We should also be quiet if any loud noises can cause a cave in.” As he steps forward to continue walking forward, he feels an arm around his waist. An anger tick appears on his forehead as he raises up a fist. “Mind letting me go before I clobber your air head?”

The Frenchman sighs and pulls his hand away, pulling them up as a sign he won’t do anything. “Whatever you say, mon cher. I just thought it’d be best for us to stick together, lest we want to be separated or crushed in a cave in.”

Even if he has a point, Arthur ignores him and quickly walks forward. “Be that as it may, I still wish to be as far from you as possible.” Francis makes a hurt sound as he tries to ask the other why, but the Brit beats him to the reason. “All you’ve ever brought me was pain and misery. Nothing good happens when you’re around.”

That sends a shot through Francis’s heart. He frowns, keeping up with Arthur as best he can. “Arthur, you wound me.” He reaches for the other’s hand. “You don’t mean that, right?”

The Briton opens his mouth to answer honestly but stops himself. He pensively tries to decide if he should just say yes, hurt the Frenchman more, or say no and give the idiot hope. They could be nothing more than friends now, which he really needs to lay down for the Frenchman to realize that before trying anything more.

Before he can open his mouth to say something, Arthur’s eyes land on a fork coming up. He feels a pull towards the right path and is unable to stop himself from entering it. Ignoring the Frenchman’s shout behind him, he continues behind him until the cave starts trembling. He stops, bracing himself against the wall closest to him and glancing back. His eyes widen when he witnesses the entrance to his side cave in. Rushing back over to try and reach Francis, he unsuccessfully extends a hand out that the Frenchman just misses grabbing.
“Bloody hell!” He shouts as the rubble finally piles high enough and he can no longer see his friend.

“Arthur, are you okay?!” Francis shouts through the wall of rocks. “I told you not to rush ahead like that! Why didn’t you wait for me?” He pounds his fists lightly on the boulders, heart racing from the scare and worrying over his old love.

“I’m just dandy!” Arthur shouts back, frowning. He didn’t mean for them to get separated right at the start. He lays a hand on one of the rocks and sighs. “I’m going to push on ahead this way. You stay out of trouble, okay, Francis?”

There’s no reply for a few minutes. He hears a muffled sigh coming from the blue eyed blond. “Oui. I will continue to the left then. Hopefully we’ll see each other at the end. Stay safe, mon amour.”

Cringing at the endearing term, Arthur waits until he hears the other side cave in. He sighs himself before turn back around at the tunnel ahead of him. “Whelp, nothing to do but to put one step forward and press on.” He nods at his own words, steeling himself and continuing on.

As he goes further down the only way visible, the Briton thinks over what he could have said to Francis. He slows his eager and impatient pace as he does, holding his right arm as he sighs. The stupid Frenchman only tries to show Arthur that it’s possible for someone to love him, that he also deserves some love. Too bad that his only real experience for finding love ended with a cheating boyfriend. Sighing once more, he focuses on the ground, walking until he notices a new thing in the tunnel.

He glances up just in time to see a figure from down the tunnel getting closer. Inhaling sharply, he wonders if it could possibly be Francis. He takes off, running towards the person. “Hey!” He shouts towards them, causing them to stop and turn. His green eyes lock onto another pair of blue eyes as he gets closer, a lighter shade of blue with a bright childlike spirit behind them.

“Yo,” the taller man says once Arthur catches up to him. He watches the Brit lean over on his knees and pant. “Dude, I didn’t realize that any other people in this tunnel. Just thought it was my bro and I.” He smiles and offers a hand to shake. “Name’s Alfred.”

Arthur processes this and willingly takes Alfred’s hand. “Arthur.” He stands straight and shakes the other’s hand. Before he pulls away, he admires the handsome man and clears his throat. “You mean there are possibly others in this tunnel?” He pulls his hand away, gazing into those heart thumping eyes.

“I don’t know, maybe?” Alfred shrugs. “I mean, that’d be cool since we possibly won’t be on our own then, but this tunnel is odd.” He glances around, rubbing the back of his neck. “This tunnel isn’t all the great. It separated me and my brother by a cave in. His pet polar bear also said it’s got some bad juju going on.”

“The polar bear wouldn’t be all that- wait, bears can’t talk.”

“No, but my bro can talk to animals. One of his awesome abilities.”

Arthur inhales, ready to tell the other blond that it’s quite impossible for a person to talk to animals but refrains. “It seems we have a similar story as my companion and I were also separated do to a cave in.”

“No way. That’s way too coincidental.”
“Tell me about it.” The Brit massages his forehead. “Anyway, whether the bear said it or not, there might be some, uh, “bad juju” going on with the construction of this tunnel.” He glances at the surrounding walls, his vision lapping between reality and the parallel universe he can see upon his will. On the walls of the tunnel, he sees a dark purple mist worming it’s way over every visible part of the tunnel. Underneath it, he sees glimpses of a snowy white glow of magic only to be smothered by the other one. It unnerves him. Shaking his head and massaging his eyelids, he sighs. “There’s definitely some magic woven into this tunnel.”

Alfred nods, humming as he rubs his chin. “Sweet. So…magic really does exist? Kind of like super-humans do?”

Arthur scoffs. “Super-humans don’t exist.”

When Arthur states his thought, Alfred grins, turning to a boulder laying on the ground. The Briton raises an eyebrow as he sees the other walk over to it, crack his knuckles, then crouch down to pick up the boulder. When he lifts it over his head, he turns back to Arthur with a grin. The ashen-blonde stares warily at the other, wondering just what he’s planning.

“Where I’m from, there are real super humans,” Alfred says, tossing the boulder easily in the air before punching it, obliterating it into small pebble rocks. “My brother has the skill to become invisible and summon things that he’d like to have. He can also talk to animals, like I said before. I only have strength and speed.”

Stunned, Arthur's mouth falls open in awe before shaking his head and clearing his throat. “W-well, I guess those are good qualities to have then.” He begins walking once more. “Let's get going.”

“Okay!” Alfred beams, walking alongside his new companion. “I wonder where we'll end up once we come to the exit.”

Arthur stays quiet until he nods in agreement. “I wonder as well.”
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Gilbert, Ludwig, and Antonio meet Feliciano and Lovino only for them all to get separated.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The three traveling from the highway hoist up their bags as they go further into the tunnel. Asphalt turns to dirt and as soon as that happens, Ludwig becomes wary. His eyes slowly observes as the tunnel morphs from a stone tunnel into a dirt tunnel. There are many dirt roads in the area but for a tunnel to turn from stone to dirt? That’s not normal. At least to Ludwig.

“This is so boring,” Gilbert exclaims as he lags behind the other two. His backpack slowly droops from his shoulders down his arms as he leans back with his arms slack. “This damn tunnel is so un-awesome. Really, we’ve been walking for hours and there’s no exit to be seen.” He groans, lifting his bag up his back again as he puts his hands behind his head. “Seriously, where is this leading us?”

“I wouldn’t worry too much, mi amigo,” Antonio tries to calm his friend down, slowing down just to walk with him. “I have a feeling that we’re almost there.” He brings up one of his hands holding his suitcase and pats Gilbert’s back. “Be a bit more patient and we’ll get there, si?”

“I guess.” Gilbert pouts. “Still, boring.”

Ludwig sighs as his eyebrow twitches from his brother’s complaining. He ignores the two that start talking about random things while also complaining about their predicaments. His eyes stay forward as he looks for any changes. As soon as he is about to ask the two to be quiet, he notices another tunnel connected to theirs. Raising an eyebrow, he walks to the center of the entrance and gazes down at the dark end.

Before the German can make a comment, his brother rushes to his side and leans into the new tunnel. “About damn time!” Gilbert laughs. “We can finally start going somewhere else.” He nudges his brother and grins at Antonio, about to take a step further into the new tunnel until he hears some yells from the end of it. “…what was that?”

They all back up, Gilbert going the furthest from the entrance as the other two stay close to it. Their eyes soon see two figures running towards them. Right behind them is the reason they’re running for their lives.

“Who the fuck constructed a tunnel that could easily collapse?!”

“I don’t want to die!”

“This is utter bull shit! Veneziano, keep up!”

As they come closer, Antonio and Ludwig go to either side of the tunnel, throwing their bags down to the side and extending their arms out towards the two. Both new faces understand instantly
and head towards one of the two, grabbing their arms and letting themselves be pulled into each chest. Antonio and Ludwig turn from the tunnel in sync, their backs blocking the dust explosion from the now caved in tunnel. Gilbert jumps out of the way from any stray rocks and from getting blasted with dirt dust. He lands on his side, coughing up the dirt that got in his mouth anyway.

When the dust settles, Lovino struggles in Antonio’s arms until he’s free. Trying to catch his breath, he glares at the other new faces before deciding to just complain about what happened to him and his brother. “That,” he pants, “was fucking hell.”

Feliciano whimpers in Ludwig’s hold, clinging to the blond German for dear life. “Why did it suddenly collapse? That was scary…”

Ludwig blushes as Feliciano clings to him. Clearing his throat, he tries to push the shorter man away only for the copper headed man to shake his head and tighten his hold on him. He sighs, letting the guy just do as he wants. He tries to sooth him though by saying it’s safe now. “You don’t really need to cling to my arm anymore. You’re out of the tunnel.”

Gilbert coughs and picks himself up, wiping off dust from his pants as he gazes at the others. “Technically we’re still in the tunnel. You’re just out of that one.”

Lovino glares at the platinum blond before turning to his brother and lightly pulling him away from the blue eyed man. “Dammit, Veneziano, stop clinging to that guy. You don’t even know him.”

“But fratello, he saved me.” He proceeds to cling. “We can trust them, right Lovino? They helped us get out of harm’s way.”

“No. No, we cannot just trust people who saved us. Just- For fucks sake, let him go!”

Feliciano whines and then decides to cling to his brother. Lovino thrashes, not knowing that Ludwig is thankful for his help. The only thing is that said German is now thinking how he has to deal with two more people who will probably be just as annoying as his immature brother and the too happy-go-lucky Spaniard that goes along with Gilbert’s shenanigans.

“Well, now that we’re here and only have one way to go, I guess we will be traveling together.” Ludwig sighs, thinking if there are any other splits in the tunnel like the one these other two came from.

“No way in hell!” Lovi shouts as he glares at the blond. “One tunnel nearly killed us. How could we just walk through another one that could possibly do the same?”

“Hey,” Antonio lays a hand on Lovino’s shoulder, smiling, “you’re with more people, si? It should be fine. The more the merrier, right Lovi?”

The elder Italian glares at him, shoving off his hand. “Don’t call me that. Anyway, we don’t even know you guys.”

“That tall downer is Ludwig,” Gilbert states as he comes over to the group. “Antonio’s the cool Spaniard we’ve taken in, and I’m the awesome Gilbert.” He grins as he points at himself with his thumb.

Feliciano seems to calm down a little as he stays next to Lovino’s side. “I’m Feliciano. This is Lovino, mio fratello.”

Lovino glares at his brother for just telling them their names so easily. When Feli cowers, Lovi stops and sighs. Bringing his brother in close, he stares at the ground. “Fine. I guess we can go
The two stick close as the other three grab their bags up again and continue on. They converse a little, Antonio chatting a one sided conversation with Lovino while Gilbert tries to coerce Feli away from his brother so they can chat. Feliciano opts to walk beside Ludwig, who blushes when the shorter man clings to his arm again, and Gilbert shrugs, deciding to join Antonio to annoy the hell out of Lovino. The two easily cause the elder Italian to shout at them from irritation.

A while later, the three come upon some other extensions off the tunnel. They each gaze down the separate ways to go before looking at each other.

“I believe we should go right,” Ludwig states first.

Lovino shakes his head. “No, we should go left.”

“The middle tunnel seems better than the other two,” Gilbert says as he hoists his backpack up.

“Actually, I think the right is better,” Feliciano agrees with Ludwig.

“I also agree with the right path being the one to go in.” Antonio is the last one to put his two cents in.

Though Lovino wishes to refute everyone’s decisions, he rolls his eyes and sighs. “Fine, let’s go right since everyone wants to go that way.”

“Not me,” Gilbert shrugs as he starts walking towards the middle tunnel, “I’m going through the middle.”

“Wait, brother!” Ludwig furrows his brows, calling his brother back. Once he sees his brother step through the middle, though, he is unable to pull him back before the entrance caves in. “Gilbert!”

“The hell?! This is not awesome! Not one bit!” Gilbert growls, trying to move some rocks. Yeah, he was being stupid, but he doesn’t want to be separated from them. “Yo! West! Can you hear me?!”

They can't hear one another. Ludwig bites his lip, frowning and afraid for his brother. Sighing, he turns towards the right. “Let's go.”

Surprised and disgusted, Lovino gives the German a confused face. “The fuck? You're not going to try and save your brother? What kind of brother are you?”

“Lovi...” Feliciano tries to warn him. He can clearly see the emotions going through the German more than his brother could.

“No, that's wrong.” Lovino shakes his head. “Bastard. You'd leave your brother?”

“I have no choice but to.” Ludwig glares at him. “I would not be able to get to him through that rubble. I also cannot hear him on the other side, so it's probably really thick. It would take a longer time to get to him than continuing on.”

Lovino was speechless. He crosses his arms, miffed as Ludwig turns and walks on the right path with his luggage. Nothing happens to the entrance like the middle tunnel. Antonio gazes at the other Italian before watching Feli follow Ludwig. Sighing, the Spaniard walks over to Lovino,
putting a hand on his shoulder.

“If it was Feliciano, you would try and dig to get to him, si?” Lovi doesn't hesitate to nod.
“You two are close then.”

“We're all we have, idiot.” He scowls and shrugs off Toni's hand.

With a small smile, Toni nods. “It's the same for those two,” he states, “but they were each brought up to be able to go their separate ways if they couldn't get to each other. Their father was quite militaristic, so the way they think is how to survive even if it means leaving someone behind.”

“That's stupid.” Lovino huffs.

“Maybe, but you've got to understand, Lovi.” The Italian glares at him when he calls him that. “Ludwig has always thought with a calm and serious mind. He never loses his cool, so he is quickly able to find what is the best thing to do. I trust him.”

“Well, I don't.” His hazel eyes gaze at his brother and the German waiting for them. “I don't trust that bastard.”

Sighing, Antonio shrugs. “I guess you don't have to, but you should come with us.” Turning towards the others, he grabs up his suitcases and peers over his shoulder towards Lovi. “It's best to be with us than alone, si?” He smiles then crosses the threshold.

Before the Italian can reply, the entrance instantly caves in. Frantic, Lovi tries to make it before it is entirely closed but is pushed back by some force. He lands on the ground, coughing. When the dust and dirt settle, he stands up, eyes shaking. “Vene!” He rushes to the rubble and tries to claw his way through. His nails chip and he feels pain as they start bleeding from his perseverance. “Veneziano, can you hear me?!” He waits to hear his brother's voice, but nothing comes. Angry, he punches the rocks in front of him. “Fuck!” Shaking his hand, he thinks to himself that he should turn around and go back. There wasn't a way back to his home, though, and he didn't want to leave his brother. Grumbling, he runs through the left entrance, ignoring the sound of it closing up like the others, and kept going. Hopefully he would see his brother at the exit. That's what keeps him going.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Ivan meets Matthew and Kumajiro.

Chapter Notes

I'm nearly finished with rewriting chapter 8 and then I can finally work on the next chapter for this story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The rumbling and shaking of the tunnel doesn’t scare Ivan one bit as he walks through the tunnel. He doesn’t feel any sort of threat towards himself from this place. He senses that it is guiding him towards the place he needs to go. The place he will surely be wanted. A place where he won’t be misunderstood because of his scary features. If there is such a place, there’s only one thing he hopes is there along with it; a sunflower field.

As he goes along, the mud on his skin and clothing starts to harden and dry. Bits of dry mud falls off of him as cracks form from his constant movement. He scowls at the thought of his precious scarf being dirty as it is now. Taking it off carefully, he looks at it to gauge the damage done. Only half of it seems to be covered with drying mud. He pouts, upset that the one gift from his big sister is basically ruined. Hoping that it can easily be washed without any stains, he sighs and keeps it in his free hand as he grips his bag with his other hand. If only there was an end to this tunnel, or even the slightest change.

With his neck now visible, Ivan shivers from the touch of nippiness from the dank tunnel. He glares forward, ignoring the screaming voice in his mind telling him to cover up his neck like he usually does. No one was around right now so it’s fine for his neck to get some air. It’s fine because no one will see those wretched scars. Those light gray lines over his pale skin tone. The horrifying memories that go along with them always make Ivan shudder. They’re a reminder of what life is like, how people can really be, and the thread he was hanging on to stay alive.

Ivan keeps trying to accept people as his big sister wishes but it’s hard. It’s difficult when a person suffered at the hands of others, unable to protect themselves. Ivan was just a boy compared to his adult life now but those memories still haunt him. He still is wary of strangers. He tries to be friendly but everyone is terrified of him. Of the fake smiles and real smiles. No one wants to get close to him anyway so why should he bother getting close to others? This recent incident of being wrongly accused doesn’t help the argument his sister makes.

He wonders where they are right now since they left him behind. Ivan will admit his childishness during that argument with his little sister but he still stands to his own reason. Natalia is too young to think of marrying someone she’s only known for a year and a half. Some would say otherwise, but he believes that a relationship should last at least two to three full years before marriage. The engagement can happen at the crux of one going on to two years but marriage should
wait until exactly three or more years. Irunya did agree with him in a way but she still sided with Natalia in the end. He has no place to say what she can and cannot do.

In all honesty, Ivan is happy his sister is so in love with a person that she wants to marry. The only problem is that he’s never met him, though he knows their older sister has. Irunya’s blessing is almost a golden pass for both of the younger siblings, but he’s still the man of the Braginski house. A house of only...

It’s too bad that his sisters have different last names otherwise he would put his foot down and tell them what’s what. For the longest time he thought Natalia would take his last name since she was so infatuated with him, but now it seems she wants another name. A Lithuanian’s last name. When- If he meets the man who stole his little sister’s heart, he will make sure that the man waits to propose during their second year anniversary while thanking him for taking his sister’s romantic love away from him.

As he thinks about the different ways he can thank the man, Ivan soon notices a difference in the tunnel wall. He quickens his pace to inspect the difference only to find another tunnel connected to his. He peers down into it, wondering if he should chance heading down this way. When he feels that mysterious pull guiding him to go against his thoughts, he sighs through his nose. With one last look down the other tunnel, he kicks a pebble hard with his pent up rage towards the dark end of the wrong tunnel and turns around to continue down his own.

“Ow.”

Ivan stops when he hears a soft exclamation of pain. The pebble continues to bounce and skid across the ground as he turns back around, eyes squinting to see if anyone is down that tunnel. “Hello?” He calls for whoever is there. Listening closely, his ears pick up some faint breathing that’s definitely not his own. “I know you’re there. I can hear you breathing.”

When he states that, a sharp intake of air comes from his right. Glancing over, he sees an outline of a person holding some small yet not so small animal in his arms. Before he can say another word, the person sighs and slowly reveals himself. Ivan raises his eyebrows when he sees the toned pale blond holding a polar bear. Those animals are rare to come by and tame. It’s interesting to him that the animal isn’t thrashing around in the man’s arm.

“Hello,” the person quietly greets, eyes making contact with Ivan’s only for a moment before gazing at the ground. “I, uhm, I know it’s odd to see someone just appear out of thin air, but, uh, it is definitely not his own. “I know you’re there. I can hear you breathing.”

When he states that, a sharp intake of air comes from his right. Glancing over, he sees an outline of a person holding some small yet not so small animal in his arms. Before he can say another word, the person sighs and slowly reveals himself. Ivan raises his eyebrows when he sees the toned pale blond holding a polar bear. Those animals are rare to come by and tame. It’s interesting to him that the animal isn’t thrashing around in the man’s arm.

“I, uhm, I-.” He’s about to answer only for his bear to interrupt. It exclaims with its throaty growls and opens its mouth a few times to produce a small sound a bear does. The pale blond gazes at it and frowns as if he understands the white bear. “But Kuma, he asked. I can’t be rude and not answer.” The bear speaks again to the man and he sighs. “Just because he unintentionally hurt me doesn’t me he’s going to do so again intentionally.” Kuma begins again only to be cut off by the man. “You know what? I’m a full grown man. I don’t need your advice right now, Kuma.” He sets the bear down next to him even though it fights with him. Crossing his arms, he ignores the bear that paws at his legs, calling for his attention.

“Is your bear okay?” Ivan asks, amused a little at the exchange between human and animal.

“He’s fine. He’s just being overprotective because you kicked the pebble at me.”
“It wasn’t intentional.”

“I know that but he doesn’t buy it.” The man shrugs. “Says that there’s something about you that’s not all good yet not all bad so I should be wary of you. I’m a person who likes to get to know another before making my own opinions. Anyway, my name’s Matthew.” He offers a hand to shake with a small smile.

Ivan gazes at the bear before setting his bag down and taking Matthew’s hand in his own. “Ivan.” He winces when he remembers that his gloves are covered in dry mud but it seems the other isn’t at all bothered.

The Canadian nods with a brighter smile as he takes his hand away after a shake. “To answer your question, I have three other abilities besides invisibility, though one of them I rarely use unless needed. So,” he starts as he ticks a finger up to count, “I’m able to speak with animals, as you probably could surmise from my interaction with Kumakichi-,” the bear makes a sound as his name is called. “What are you saying? That is your name.” He furrows his brows. “Kumajiro? Oh! Right.” He grins a little which Ivan can only guess is a knowing grin. Either Matt really did forget his pet’s name or it’s a game between the two. “Anyway, I can also conjure up things out of thin air by either saying it aloud as a wish or just willing it to appear with my mind.” He points to a second finger for that before going to a third finger. “And lastly, I can change my vision into any kind of vision besides what a human usually sees whether they have color or are color blind. For example, if need be, I can change my vision to x-ray vision so I can either see under people clothes, skin, and muscle right to the bone.” He blinks and his lavender eyes turn yellow. “Right now I’m using night vision, though I don’t really need to.” He blinks again and his eyes are lavender once more.

With a slow nod, the Russian examines Matthew as he processes this new information. He hums, glancing at himself and the scarf still in his other hand. When he realizes that he’s forgotten to put his scarf back on with a person now being here, he panics. His skin turns cold as he sweats. Gazing down the way they should continue once they’re done doing whatever, he clears his throat while trying to hide his neck with his free hand.

“Is it possible for you to conjure up some water to wash my clothes with?”

“Oh, uhm, sorry.” He thinks about making the water hot but unsure if he can since he’s never really altered anything he has summoned before. As he’s thinking that, Ivan instantly pulls his hand out of the water that’s now steam. He blinks and shies away from the Russian’s glare, gazing down at the ground. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to burn you. I just was wondering if I could alter the water and…it seems I can.” He smiles bashfully with some guilt at the other.

Ivan hums with a dull stare before standing up and unbuttoning his trench coat. “Turn,” he orders the other. He peers over his shoulder as he hears the Canadian turn around, gazing down at the growling polar bear at Matt’s heels before sliding off his muddy clothing and washing them. It takes a few minutes for him to thoroughly get the dry mud off his clothes. Once he does, he sighs. “Is there a way to dry them? We can’t just summon a dryer without electrical ports.”

“Oh, uhm, can I try something?” Matthew asks, a little brighter now since he’s discovered something new about his power. “I wish for your clothes to be clean and dry with no stain of mud left behind.”
When his clothes almost instantly dry up, Ivan blinks. He checks every bit of his clothing and there is no stain or evidence of there being mud on them. Quickly putting his clothes back on, he wraps his scarf snugly around his neck before giving Matthew the okay. “You may look now.”

Matthew turns around and sees the clothes are dry. He beams. “This is so amazing. To think I can just alter what I summon or what is already there. The things I could do with that knowledge.”

Ivan raises an eyebrow at the comment, pondering the same thing as well. If one had Matthew in the palms of their hands, chained down by strings and used as a puppet, they could get anything. Money, drugs, women, men, the world. He glares at the Canadian, causing the man to jolt and stare wide eyed at him. He doesn’t mean to scare Matthew, he just is thinking that he’s not going to let anyone use someone else. Not like how he was used before. If at all possible, he will protect this man from anyone who finds out about his powers. He doesn’t know why he feels the need to do so but he does. He won’t go against his instinct.

“We should get going,” he states as he picks up his bag. “Come.”

“Y-Yes! Of course!” Matthew waves for Kumajiro to come over. “Let’s go, Kuma.” When the bear plops down stubbornly, the Canadian sighs and scoops him up. “I swear, you’re such a child.” The bear responds to him and he chuckles. “Yes you are.”

Ivan finds himself smirking a little as he admits that Matthew with his polar bear is a little cute. Rolling his eyes, he faces forward and walks with his new companions, hoping for the exit to soon appear.

Chapter End Notes

I literally just finished rewriting this one so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 10: Spades

Chapter Summary

Alfred and Arthur meet Lovino before exiting the Tunnel.

Spring Day 15

Chapter Notes

So, from now on I'll be having some days entered into the summaries so you all know when everyone comes in and things happen. I have a whole timeline plotted out, don't worry. I might paste it up as a separate informational chapter or just put it at the end of the chapter, each day being added as the next chapter comes along. More details will be given in the next chapter's note.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, let me get this straight,” Alfred starts as he puts his hands behind his head, “superheroes don’t exist in your world but witches and wizards do?”

“That is correct.” Arthur nods as he walks with his companion down the tunnel. “I myself am a wizard. Graduated top of my class for knowledge.” He proudly holds himself high with a grin.

“But ya sucked at conjuring stuff up, right?” Alfred could tell. When someone is great in one thing, they’re not so great in the other thing. “Nothing like Harry Potter at all.”

“I’ll have you know that I can conjure perfectly well.” The Brit pouts as his cheeks redden. “And Mr. Potter is a famous figure for all those who aspire to graduate at Hogwarts. It’s a shame as to what has happened to most of the best witches and wizards during his years of attendance, but he is still a great figure.”

“Yeah, yeah.” He knew how the story went, but still needed to get used to the idea that someone actually lived in the world of Harry Potter. Alfred laughs a little, bringing his arms down to his sides as he hums. “He’s got nothing on Captain America. That guy’s the bomb!”

Arthur snorts, crossing his arm as he rolls his eyes. “Magic is far superior than brawny muscles that can punch through walls.”

“Nu-uh!” The American gazes at the other with a determined face. “I can prove that my powers are so better than yours!”

With a grin slowly appearing on the Briton’s face, he hums in thought before nodding. “All right. Challenge accepted. Don’t whine and pout when I prove you wrong.” He takes out his wand from behind him and wields it. “Ready?”

Alfred brings his fists up, dancing on his toes as he nods. “Bring it on, Artie.”
At the nickname, Arthur scowls and shoots a spell at Alfred. The American dodges easily with his speed, laughing as he taunts the wizard. The British man huffs and aims for the other once more only to see he’s moved again from his spot. This angers the ashen-blond as he remembers Alfred stating something about his speed before. He didn’t think the American was serious, but he learns as he goes during most experiences.

The golden blond laughs as he keeps running around Arthur. He’s a blur to the other’s eyes and he takes advantage of this as he pokes and pulls the Brit while passing him. Arthur fumes as he tries to cast more spells, but it’s all in vain. Alfred does notice that the spells shot from the Brit’s wand do take affect to their surroundings. Part of the walls were growing flowers, a rainbow waterfall showers down from the ceiling behind them, and rocks are now jumping around while talking. He doesn’t remember these kind of spells in Harry Potter, but it’s amusing to say the least.

“Enough of this!” Arthur shouts. “You said your strength could outwit my spells, not your speed! You’re cheating!”

At the accusation, Alfred stops and pouts. “I am not. Speed is part of my powers. I didn’t specify just my strength.”

With a grin, Arthur nods as he raises his wand. “True.” Before Alfred can move, Arthur casts one last spell which freezes the American in place. The Brit sighs with a shake of his head. “See, brawny powers will never work against magic.” He walks up to the other, circling him as he taps his wand against his shoulder. “You superheroes get distracted so easily to the point where the villain can strike that one unexpected blow.”

“Ehts ot ’air,” Alfred tries to speak in his frozen state, eyes following the ashen blond when he sees him.

“The world’s not fair, Alfred. No world really is.” He waves his wand and releases the spell on the other. “Now that I’ve proven my point, we can continue forward and see if there is an end to this tunnel.”

Alfred stretches his body after being released from the spell, a small pout on his face as he mumbles, “I could see if there’s an end but you’re holding me back.”

“Pardon?”

“Nothing!” The American smiles as he turns and walks with the other man once more. “I just hope we reach the end soon and can possibly meet up with my bro.”

“Same.” Arthur nods in agreement, stashing his wand away once more as it is no longer needed.

As they walk forward, the tunnel turns here and there, twisting in ways and going up or down. Arthur poses the comment that it feels as if a toddler created this section of the tunnel. Alfred merely laughs loudly. They hear his laugh echo down the tunnel and instantly clam up as the situation dawns on them.

Walking down a tunnel that’s lit up even though there’s no source of light anywhere is creepy enough, but when there are echoes, it’s even worse.

Alfred tries to keep his cool as his overactive imagination paints morbid ideas for him. His face changes to pure horror at times – which Arthur has a hard time not noticing – but he doesn’t say anything. The only time he jumps and steps behind the Brit is when they see a figure in the distance.
Arthur rolls his eyes at the American as he walks towards the figure. He notices them slouching against the right side of the tunnel, hands covering their face as they mutter words to themselves. Glancing to the left, the Briton sees a caved in tunnel and instantly figures that the person is another victim of this magic.

“Hello?”

“CHIGI!!” The man exclaims and presses himself against the wall, doe-eyed as he looks at the other two. When he realizes that he’s not alone anymore, he scowls. “The fuck is wrong with you?! Coming out of nowhere behind a guy. You could give someone a damn heart attack!”

“Sorry, man,” Alfred says once he realizes that the guy is not a ghost. “We didn’t mean to spook ya.”

“Quite.” Arthur nods in agreement. “We merely wanted to make sure you were fine.” He shows some concern as he steps closer to the other man. “My name is Arthur. My companion is Alfred.”

The olive skinned man glances between the two with his amber eyes. He’s uncertain whether to say his name or not, but as he calms down, he figures he can. “Lovino.”

“Nice you meet you.” Arthur nods with a kind smile. “Are you by chance also lost because of these tunnels?”

“Well duh.” Lovino rolls his eyes with a nod. “I entered with my stupid fratello but got separated from him after meeting some other idiotic looking men.” He frowns as he stares off to the right at the ground. “Mio fratello is with two strangers and I was the fucking idiot who ended up alone.” He brushes a hand through his hair with a sigh. “I want to get out of this damn tunnel and figure out what the hell is going on.”

“Trust me, man, we do too.” Alfred claps a hand on Lovino’s shoulder. The weight makes the shorter man wince. “I lost my bro, too, but I know I’ll see him again. You feel the same, right?” He smiles brightly with positivity.

Lovino cringes from the brightness of the other as he shrugs off his hand. “Yeah, well, the shit hit the fan twice. What’s to say it won’t again?”

“What do you mean?” Arthur asks curiously.

“I don’t need to explain myself to you.” The Italian glares at them both. “Mio fratello and I were just running for our lives but ended up in this fucking tunnel. I feel like all we do is run, and I don’t need to tell you a damn thing about anything else.”

“Well, whatever, dude, but we’re all in this together now whether you like it or not.” Alfred stuffs his hands in his bomber jacket, glancing around the tunnel as he thinks. “We should get going. If the tunnels are caving in like it seems they are, this one might fall as well.”

“Right.” Arthur begins to walk with Alfred after he states that. Turning back around, he cocks his head to the side at Lovino. “Will you be joining us?”

Gazing around at the tunnel himself, the Italian huffs as he quickly catches up to them. “This doesn’t mean I accept being in your group,” he states as he walks in front of them.

Alfred chuckles as Arthur shakes his head. They continue walking for what seems like hours before they finally see some light at the end of their tunnel. When they see the light, they all begin to
run towards it. Once through the threshold, they are welcomed with a fresh whiff of sea salt and a chorus of seagulls. All their eyes gaze upon the ocean and the port town next to it. What catches Alfred’s eye the most is the tall castle sitting at the far edge of town next to the ocean. Arthur sees it, too, and they both feel a pull towards it. Lovino merely feels as if he belongs where he should be but knows there’s a piece of him missing somewhere else in this land.

As they marvel at the beautiful scenery before them, they overlook a single man walking up the hillside to where they stand. Once they realize a person is heading towards them, they begin to wonder just where they are.

“Your highnesses,” the man greets with a bow after he reaches them. “It is a blessing to finally have you both here.”

“Uhm, cool, dude. Happy to be here?” Alfred gazes at his two companions from the tunnel.

Arthur’s face contorts into confusion before he politely smiles. “I guess it is an honor to be here, but may I ask to whom you are speaking to?”

“Why, I am speaking to you, my queen.” The Chinese man nods to Arthur.

The Brit stutters as he flushes from the title. Alfred tries not to laugh but can’t hold it in long as he turns to the side. Arthur, furious, hits him in the side though he knows it does little damage. Lovino steps away from the two, obviously feeling left out like usual.

“I am sorry to say this, but laughing at your queen is quite rude, your highness.”

“Wait, what?” Alfred laughs a little more before processing what the man said. “Hold on, he’s not my queen. He’s not even a woman!” He snickers again.

“Just want are you on about?” Arthur asks, ignoring the idiot beside him.

The Chinese man sighs. “I realize that it must come as a surprise for the both of you. Even your Ace is puzzled.” His almond eyes gaze at the hiding Italian who flinches. “I am Yao Wang, your Jack.” He bows again but for a short second. “Welcome to the Kingdom of Spades.”

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 11: Diamonds

Chapter Summary

Francis enters his own kingdom, learning new things and accepting his place among the people.

Spring Day 19

Chapter Notes

The way France is portrayed in my head is different than from the original second prologue, but I prefer how he is in my head now than before. He's still a pervert, but he's a suave gentleman who flirts when he can. Mature, not too stupid, a hopeless romantic, and a little more reliable than one would think. I hope you all enjoy my rendition of France.

As you can see, this happens four days after the other one. I will warn you that once we hop back to Spades, the days will start scattering. The timeline will be slightly confusing but each kingdom's chapter goes consecutively down until the day they all meet together; after that, there should be no more scattered timelines. More information will be in the next chapter's notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Welcome to the Kingdom of Diamonds.” A slim man with a scowl unenthusiastically says this to the Frenchman in front of him. “You are our king and shall lead us so our queen may rest. She has done a lot while all of us have waited for you, your majesty.” He kneels respectively on one knee with his head bowed.

Francis, surprise evident on his face as he blinks at the man before him, hums as he waves a hand towards himself for any kind of breeze on him. “Well, this is definitely unexpected.” He glances around the sand filled town square with a running fountain. People are walking about but some passersby stop and gaze at him in wonder. He smirks and sends a flirty wink to some women nearby. They giggle but he sighs. “Why is it so hot? My hair is going to frizz in this heat.”

The man kneeling before him instantly stands and waves some women over. “Fan our king!” He orders. They rush over with some palm tree leaves big enough to make a nice breeze and the man nods. Glancing over with his green eyes, he stands straight. “I know it is unpleasing to you, your grace, but we do live in the desert. The kingdom’s color has always been yellow like the sand which surrounds us.”

Humming, Francis smiles kindly at the girls fanning him. The small breeze cools him off a little. When he finally takes in their fashion sense, he realizes how much skin most of the people here show. It is certainly like the tale of Arabian Nights, only he feels that he’s not in Arabia. He nods towards the person who said his name is Vash, waving his hand as he steps forward.
“I can acclimate to this weather. I merely need to change clothes.” He grins, feeling he will enjoy being in this new world if everyone will be half naked most of the time. “So, may I see the castle you say is now mine?”

“Of course, sire.” Vash bows his head. “Right this way.” He begins walking towards the castle, Francis following with the two women behind him. “Your queen also awaits you. She is excited to meet you.”

“Marvelous.” Francis giggles as he imagines what the queen could look like. A beautiful woman, tall, voluptuous. Or even short and skinny. He may like the sexy type, but the lolita type is also a great kind of person to have around. “Tell me, what is she like?”

Vash sighs through his nose, the faintest smile on his face as he recalls the queen. “She a very kind queen. Still very young and inexperienced, but able to do what she feels right.” He peers over his shoulder at the Frenchman. “I hope you will make her happy, my liege, for she is important to all of us. Especially myself since she is my sister.”

“Strange how she’s your sister and you’re not the king instead,” Francis states.

“The system is different here than from most places. We bear the symbols of what we are in the kingdom, whether it be citizens or higher levels.” The lithe blond stops and pulls down his sash a little to show his own diamond mark with a J in the center on his hip. “As you can see, I am the Jack of Diamonds. You should have a diamond mark with a K in the center representing your position.”

Knowing all too well what his body looks like, Francis never once came across a mark like that. Vash pulls his sash back up and continues walking, the Frenchman following behind after waving off the women with a smile. He thanks their help and proceeds to wonder about the mark he should have. Once he’s in his new room, he’ll take a look at where the mark is on his body. If it’s there.

They enter the castle, the guards standing tall and bowing their heads in respect. Francis smiles, thinking how he could get used to being treated like royalty. Well, he is royalty now, so it will happen no matter what. He’d love to take advantage of his proclaimed position, but he knew there were other things he should prioritize. Like where his dear British friend is and if he is safe. He would hate to think Arthur’s hurt. He loves him dearly still, even after all these years.

Francis knows he should get over the Brit since he won’t easily come back to him, but it’s hard. Once you love someone, you will always love them in a sense. Even if things change. They will always have a portion of your heart, just like how two portions of Francis’s heart belong to Arthur, and the woman his heart still cries for.

The Frenchman snaps out of his thoughts once Vash stops in front of some double doors. The Swiss glances at him with a frown, hand on the door knobs to open it. They stare at each other for a moment before Vash speaks.

“I will not hesitate to kill you if you hurt our queen.”

Blinking, Francis laughs good-naturedly. “Oui, I understand. I may look untrustworthy, but I swear, mon cher, I will not hurt her intentionally or unintentionally.” He raises his left hand while covering his heart with his right. “I swear it upon le tombe de mon amour.”

Vash doesn’t understand the French language he speaks, but the man nods and turns towards the door. He opens them with a flourish and walks up towards the thrones where Queen Lilly sits. She straightens her back, hands clasped together on her lap, and Francis marvels at her beauty. He
slowly walks in behind Vash, taking in the adorable queen who looks exactly like her older brother, only her eyes are a shade of blue and a purple ribbon sits in her hair. The dress also gives it away of who she is, it’s light pink color with white ruffles making her all the more majestic.

When they both reach the throne, Francis cannot help but kneel before Lilly with a smile. “It is an honor to be in front of a beautiful queen.”

Lilly blushes, a small smile gracing her lips as she giggles. “And it is nice to see who my king is. Please stand. There is no need to kneel, my king.”

He stands up, smiling at her. “You may call me Francis, mon chérie.”

“And you may call me Lilly.” She nods her head, smile still present.

Now, most people would think Francis would rush up the steps and over to the lolita girl of his dreams – those who know him at least – but he stays where he is. He nods back, one hand behind his back as the other comes up just under his chin. Looking down at the steps before him, he chuckles to himself.

Lilly cocks her head to the side. “What is funny, Francis?”

“Nothing, chérie.” He gazes at her with such awe in his eyes. “Nothing to worry about.”

She hums in thought, extending a hand over to the throne next to her. “Sit beside me, my king.”

Vash stands off, keeping a watchful eye on the other man. Francis nods slowly as he steps up to the free throne. He stands before it, staring at the chair he will be sitting in and commanding from. He lays a hand on the arm of the throne, humming to himself.

“I should wait until after an official coronation, oui?” His blue eyes meet with a lighter shade of pastel blue.

“Coronation will be tomorrow,” Vash states from the steps below. “You should rest before dinner tonight and clean up.”

Francis nods. “I could also use a change of clothes.” He pulls at his long sleeve blouse, unbuttoning the top two buttons. “It’s very hot here, considering it’s a desert.”

Lilly blushes as she watches Francis unbutton his shirt. Vash bristles and rushes up to the Frenchman, blocking his sister’s view.

“Then I shall show you to your room. This way, please.” He ushers the Frenchman away, trying to ignore the giggle he hears behind them.

“I will see you at dinner, my king.”

“Qui! I’ll be there, mon cher!” Francis laughs at Vash’s reaction.

“Please refrain from undressing in front of the queen,” Vash hisses out between his teeth.

“Why is she in a dress with far too many layers?” Francis asks, brushing off the Swiss’s comment but not entirely ignoring it. “It may be slightly cooler in here, but it’s still quite hot. Mon dieu, I’m lucky my hair isn’t frizzing.” He brushes his fingers through his hair, taking it out of his pony tail.
Vash sighs. “She has other dresses fit for being outside, but she prefers to wear those other dresses inside. She claims she enjoys the flowy and poofy look.” A blush sweeps across his cheeks, denying that he just said those words.

The Frenchman smiles. “That’s understandable. A cute girl can enjoy her dresses as she pleases.”

They soon approach a room where Vash leaves Francis. He opens the door and sees a large room, king sized bed, vanity in a corner, dressers and wardrobes besides each other across from the bed, a bench to sit on at the end of the bed, and glorious windows shut by red yellow curtains. The room is warm, but not suffocating or hot. He closes the door and enters the room, heading to the wardrobe for clothes.

He finds similar outfits of various colors with some head dresses to accompany them all. A smile appears on his face as he finds himself eager to live a long life in this kingdom. Not necessarily because he’s the king, but because he believes the place is where he truly belongs.

Speaking of being king, he undresses himself until he’s nude, so he can look at his body in one of the full-length mirrors. He turns himself around, checking himself out until he finds what he’s looking for. Funnily enough, the diamond with a K in the center is on the nape of his neck, hidden by his long blond locks. He’s only able to see it if he holds up his hair and holds a hand mirror – which he found on his vanity with no trouble.

Francis exhales as he thinks. He really is the king. Why didn’t he ever see this tattoo like mark before? He never noticed it previously, and he’s seen his body a good number of times while admiring his looks in the mirror, so he would know what should and shouldn’t be there. Humming, he wonders if Arthur will also have a similar mark appear. Vash obviously has one, but he hasn’t seen Lilly’s. He wonders where her mark is, the shakes his head as he banishes any perverted thoughts away. He wants to keep Lilly as an adorable woman in his mind, not sexualize her in anyway.

Deciding he has been through enough for now, Francis retires to his bed, not taking any clothing to sleep in as he prefers the nude anyway. Settling in his bed, he unties the laces around his bedposts and lets the drapes close him in. Privacy is something he respects. He hopes others feels the same as he naps before dinner.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 12: Hearts

Chapter Summary

Ludwig, Antonio, and Feliciano meet the Queen of Hearts, discussing how the world works and what their roles will be as they stay in the red kingdom.

Spring Day 22

Chapter Notes

This happens three days after Francis comes to Diamond. Now, what I mean by each kingdom having a better chronological timelines is that if you take each kingdom’s chapter out and set them into five different columns, their days are not mixed up and flow right up until the day they all start matching up better. Compiling them all together and having each chapter a different kingdom one right after the other makes the timeline jump from one day to another. The flow isn’t messed up but I’m clearing up any kind of confusion there might be since I’ve set up days for each chapter that I’ve written. This is more for me to have a better timeline than for the reader, but the reader might like to know when things happen. Especially with all the kingdoms starting off days/weeks after each gains the rest of their royal house.

If there are any questions regarding the timeline, just leave a comment and I will reply.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Is no one else concerned about how these people seem to know us?” Antonio asks to the other two in the room with him. They currently were in a lounge, waiting for the Queen of Hearts to join them and inform them about where they are. “I mean, they all seem so nice, but it’s still weird and not easy to believe we’re from another set of worlds that connect to this one.”

“Ja,” Ludwig agrees as he looks at the bookshelves. He pulls out one with the title “Hearts History” and skims through some pages. “The queen should tell us everything, as he said he would, but it’s still odd.”

“I just can’t believe I’m supposed to be the Jack, ve.” Feliciano leans back into the couch he’s sitting on. “I can believe Ludwig is the King, but I think Antonio is better fit as Jack. I could be the Ace instead.”

Antonio chuckles. “It’s interesting how easily you just accept that, Feli.”

“I’m not,” he states with a shrug. “I just find it easier to go with the flow than to question most things. I’m just glad that this kingdom is in an autumn forest instead of a volcanic sector.”

“I have to agree with that.” Antonio nods. “When thinking of the color red for places to live or be around, volcano does pop up first.”
“It’s so beautiful.” Feli smiles. “I’m glad that I’ll be living here, but I miss mio fratello.” He pulls his legs up to his chest and hugs them, leaning his head back on the couch. “I hope he’s okay. He was alone when we got separated.”

“Mm.” Ludwig shuts the book and places it on a desk next to him as he pulls another one out of the shelves. “I hope mien bruder is well.” He squints a little as he tries to read the small words on the pages. “He’s strong but can’t function on his own at times.”

“Si,” Antonio whispers as he looks out the window, admiring the autumn forest around the city. “He’s known for being depressed when alone. He’s better with a crowd.”

Feli looks between the two before gazing at his knees. He didn’t know Gilbert at all since they all just met in passing. He wonders what the man is like. If he truly was an albino or just had platinum blond hair that looks silver. His eyes could be something else with genes, but how would Feli know?

The door to the lounge opens and in walks a short man in a Japanese kimono. Ludwig shuts the book he’s reading, Antonio glances over from the window, and Feli puts his feet down. The man slowly walks in and smiles at the bunch as he nods his head. Antonio and Ludwig walk around the couch and sit on either side of the Italian, waiting for the Japanese man to speak.

“Sorry to keep you waiting,” he speaks. “As you know, I am the Queen of Hearts, but you may call me Honda Kiku.” He walks over to the lone chair next to the couch and gets as comfortable as he can. “You all must have questions.” He watches them nod. “I will do my best to answer.”

Silence follows after as he waits for someone to start. Ludwig brings a hand up to his mouth as he clears his throat. “Could you explain to us how we are ranked in this world’s system?”

Kiku nods, thinking his words over carefully. “In this world we have lived for centuries by the card system,” he starts slowly. Out of his sleeve he pulls out a deck of cards. “As everyone knows, this simple deck of cards have numbers, classes, royalty, and jokers. For as long as people have known, they are used to pick who the royals, guards, and citizens are. Instead of finding a card at our doors, we wake up with a tattoo of our class and rank.” He rolls up his left sleeve a little for everyone to see his forearm with a red heart tattoo. In the center is a red-orange capital Q. “We are born into our roles, but the symbols appear randomly. For example, if the king still lives and the next king is already born, the child will bear no mark until the present king dies.”

When he finishes speaking and rolls his sleeve back down, Antonio pipes up. “Why did we not have our own markings before?” He looks at his own arms to see if he can find a similar tattoo. “I know for certain I don’t have tattoos.”

“I am uncertain,” Kiku answers. “Maybe they have appeared but you have yet to find them.” He nods to Feliciano. “I can see the top of his heart in the crevice of his neck and shoulder.”

Unbelieving, Feliciano blinks owlishly before pulling down the collar of his shirt down and stretching his neck to the right. “Is it really there?” Ludwig and Antonio take a look, and sure enough, the red heart tattoo with a burgundy J in the center is there in the crevice.

“Es loco…” Antonio trails off. He stands up and begins his own investigation of where his tattoo is.

Everyone else ignores him as he searches. Kiku does his best to become blind so he doesn’t see the Spaniard revealing his skin so easily. Ludwig sighs and rubs the bridge of his nose. Feliciano feels his neck, wishing he could see the tattoo himself.
“So, what are our roles?” Feliciano asks. “I mean, what do we do with our roles?” His fingers still lazily touch his new tattoo while he looks at the Japanese man.

“The king and queen rule the kingdom,” Kiku states with a small smile. “The jack represents the advisor, or chancellor role. The ace is the leader of the guard.”

“Why can’t I find mine?” Tonio whines in the background.

Ludwig rolls his eyes. “And are the king and queen supposed to be wedded?”

Red appears on Kiku’s cheeks. “Only if they wish it so. I have heard in the past that kings and queens do not marry, that they take their own lovers to be with. They can marry their lovers, but those lovers will not gain any rank. They might be given special treatment, but they cannot rule the land with their significant other. They merely watch them rule.”

The German nods, relief flooding over him. He’s not one to marry so quickly. There are orders to such relationships. Feliciano feels a similar emotion wash over him but doesn’t completely understand.

“So that means Jack and Ace can also fall in love with whoever?” Antonio asks, lifting up one of his feet after taking off his shoe and sock to check his foot for the tattoo.

Everyone basically sweat-drops at the silly Spaniard, but Kiku nods. “That is correct.”

“Is gender an issue in this world?” The Spaniard asks seriously as he locks eyes with the queen. He slips his sock and shoe back on after seeing no tattoo there. “Is it okay for lovers to be the same gender?”

“Oh, of course.” Kiku smiles fondly. “It is quite common. I’m not sure about other kingdoms, but gender is no problem. If someone loves a person, be it they are the same gender or not, they will love them and be able to be with them with no judgement.”

“That’s interesting,” Ludwig mumbles.

“I’m glad.” Feliciano smiles as he exhales a small ‘ve’ and looks at the ceiling. “In my world, people would be punished if found with the same gender sexually or romantically. For some, they still risked it. Others, they played it safe.”

The German agrees with a hum. “In our world, there is a lot of discrimination for people who are anything but straight. Majority are slowly accepting it, but others are firm with their beliefs.”

“Everyone uses the excuse of religion most of the time for that.” Antonio sits back down next to Feli, giving up his search for the tattoo at this time. “I think people are just twisting the holy words of God in their own satisfying way. Everyone reads it with a different kind of understanding and thinking.”

“Interesting.” The Japanese man sits in silence, processing the information. “Well, there is no discrimination or punishment for being with the same gender here.” He smiles.

“Ve, do you have a lover, Kiku?” Feliciano asks innocently.

The man blushes tenfold and Ludwig tenses as he scolds the Italian. Feliciano frowns and tries to make excuses, even apologizing for being inconsiderate, as Ludwig states. Kiku chuckles, merely smiling.
“I, in fact, do.” He stares at his hands with a loving smile. “He is a quiet man, like myself. Very refined but lazy as he sleeps most of the time.” He chuckles. “He’s the owner of The Cat’s Inn. You will meet him one day as he comes by often to be with me.”

Feliciano exclaims a coo as Ludwig and Antonio smile at the cute answer. “I wonder if anyone of us will find out lovers in this world,” the Italian says aloud. He smiles dreamily. “It would be nice. A lot of the ragazza’s from home were pretty but never pulled me to them. None of the men did either.”

“I’d have to agree with that.” Antonio lifts a leg up to rest his ankle on a knee as he leans back in the couch, arms laying against the top of the couch’s back. “I’m more attracted to men but none of them were pleasing back home.”

Ludwig has no input for that topic. Instead, he locks eyes with the sweet queen as he has another question to ask. “Will we be staying in the castle?”

“You will, my king.” Kiku bows his head in respect. “Unfortunately, you two will be living in town houses.”

“Shouldn’t a chancellor be in the castle?” Antonio asks for the Italian.

“Yes, but I’m sure Feliciano-san would prefer to be in the town than in the castle.” The Japanese man smiles kindly.

“Of course!” Feli sits up straight and smiles wide. “Could I possibly have a building where I can make a restaurant? Or an art gallery?”

“I shall see to it that one is made for you,” Kiku answers.

“Grazie!” Feli jumps up from the couch and dances, happy he can do the two things he loves most. If only his brother were here with him. “Mio fratello would have been happy to help me.”

Before the Italian can frown and deflate, Antonio stands up next to him. “May I help you instead? So you’re not alone?”

Feliciano opens his eyes with glee. “Really?” The Spaniard nods, and Feli takes his hands excitedly in his own. “Yes! I’d love your help!”

As the two plan their future lives in the red kingdom, Ludwig smiles at them before conversing more with Kiku. The two talk serious business, coming to a mutual agreement of not marrying each other but still trying to rule together with little to no problems. If anything, they can all become good friends who support each other greatly. Now, if only there were a way to know where the other two had gone when they separated from them. Ludwig and Feliciano can only wonder where their brothers are.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 13: Clubs

Chapter Summary

Ivan, Matthew and Kumajiro enter the Kingdom of Clubs

Spring Day 29

Chapter Notes

PLEASE READ NOTE BEFORE YOU START THE CHAPTER!!!!
For those who have already read this story before, please read from the beginning once more. I have updated, added, changed, and nixed some things in this story. For example, I have added an actual prologue, just one prologue, and rewrote all the chapters from 1-9. Chapters 6 and 7 were lazily rewritten so I might rewrite them again in the future but for now they will stay as they are.
For those of you who started from the beginning already and are caught up with the new additions, you may continue reading.

There's more I wanted to add for this chapter but felt I could keep it for the next chapter with Clubs. So, here you go!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ivan sits on a lounge couch that has a glorious view of the savanna his kingdom is stationed next to. He sighs through his nose, smiling a little as he notices the yellow blotch in the distance, the sunflower field that he ordered Matthew to grow the instant they came upon the savanna. Said Canadian is currently working the fields with his polar bear, the obvious white animal standing out against green and yellow. He hums, knowing that he'll have to go outside to officially meet his queen in status and jack soon. He just wants to stay in his happy place, admiring his kingdom within the trees that borders a beautiful savanna separating Clubs from Hearts and Joker. He’s studied a few maps in his new room connected to his library as well as some books that were ready for his perusal.

When the two of them, plus the bear, exited the tunnel, they found themselves at the base of a great oak tree. Matthew was beyond happy as he is very familiar with forest terrain. He babbled on about where he grew up before he was interrupted by an entourage of men and woman falling from the trees. The two had a moment of shock before Ivan pushed Matthew behind him and glared at the strangers. The notion was equally surprising to the Canadian but he didn’t say anything.

Upon closer inspection of the people around him, he noticed their clothing holding the different shades of green. Their skin gradients from pale to a dark brown that matches the bark of wood in the forest. They never made a sound until one last person joined them on the ground. From a swing, a man slowly was let down from above, all proper with no wrinkles on his clothing. He greeted them with a nod and welcomed them to the Kingdom of Clubs. That man happened to be the jack of this kingdom, something he explained in the short time he had before their queen jumped down from above to meet them.
Ivan and Matthew were both very impressed with how the queen holds herself. Elizabeta, as she introduced herself, greeted them with a hearty smile and a death grip hug.

“It’s about time that our king and ace come home!” She laughed while squeezing the both of them with hugs.

“Please contain yourself, your majesty.” The jack, Roderich, sighed as he shook his head. “It is very un-lady like of you to greet them in such a manner.”

“Come off it, Roddy.” The woman grinned at the man still sitting on his swing. “You know you love me this way just as much as you love me as a proper woman.”

Ivan raised an eyebrow as he watched Roderich flush and pull on his vine lightly. “I will meet with the lot of you once our king and ace have settled in,” he said, rising up into the air again.

Elizabeta chuckled, shaking her head at the jack. “Do ignore him. It’s enough that he allows himself to live up in the trees.”

“Which is very interesting,” Matthew piped up, admiring the view from below he has of the village above. “To think you can create a place up in the trees like this. It’s amazing. Beautiful, even.”

“Glad you think so. Now, before we get into business, let’s go on up and give you a tour. Shall we?” She smiled at the two, whistling for a vine to be thrown down to them.

An hour later of touring and Ivan now sits in his castle, his room near the top of the largest tree that makes up his new home. Matthew eagerly commented on the savanna before, how perfect it would be to create some kind of garden or farm. Ivan instantly asked for a sunflower garden, not hesitating since he knew the other could make one appear easily. Matt smiled wide and nodded vigorously before heading out towards the vast area, his polar bear right on his heels.

Ivan could feel it as he watches his ace care for his new sunflowers. He feels welcome in this world just like he knows Matthew does as well. Humming, he stands from his seat and brings up his fingers to his mouth, whistling for the Canadian to come in. He watches Matthew turn and wave towards him before holding up one finger. With a nod, Ivan turns and leaves his balcony for the banquet hall.

When he enters the room, he notices Roderich sitting across from Elizabeta, who is wearing an outfit different from before. The Russian admires the change of wild woman with pants to proper woman with a dress but thinks that she looks better with pants. He walks over to the head of the table, taking his chair and staying silent until Matthew arrives.

“Will the ace be joining us?” Roderich asks with a raise of his brow.

“Of course he will, Roddy.” Eliza pouts at the man.

“Well, how should I know if he will? He disappeared the moment you were done showing them around the trees.”

“He will be coming,” Ivan states with a smile, ignoring how Roderich straightens himself from the small action. “I called. He’ll be coming.”

Elizabeta doesn’t seem to be phased by his smiles so Ivan thanks at least one other person for not cowering from his frightening exterior. No sooner does Roderich finally relax does Matthew show up, panting slightly as he fixes himself up before walking towards the other three.
“Sorry. I was just finishing up with watering the flowers.” He smiles at Ivan before taking a seat beside the queen, the only other seat with a plate placed at the long table.

Eliza smiles kindly at him. “It’s no trouble.” She furrows her eyebrows at the thought of there being flowers worth watering nearby but doesn’t press the issue. “So, Ivan, Matthew. You both must have questions about what’s been going on.”

“Yes. Which will be a droll to go through.” Roderich sighs, waving his hand towards some waiting servants near other doors in the room. “Please don’t ask too many questions.”

The Hungarian queen pouts at the man across from her and kicks him from under the table. He jumps, eyes wide with shock as he stares at her. “Don’t mind him,” she smiles sweetly as she says this to the two. “You may ask any question you have in your heads.”

Matthew nods, glancing at Ivan before deciding to start with his own questions. “How did you know we’d be here?”

“We received a message from the Joker Kingdom some time ago stating that they opened up the Tunnel for everyone that we are missing to come,” the queen answers. “As you are well aware, Ivan is our king and you are our ace.”

“Right.” Matthew chuckles a little, daunted by the tasks he will have. Eliza mentioned their duties while giving them the tour so he already knows that he’s Captain of the Guard. “I just wish to warn you, I have no experience leading any kind of group. Let alone a small militia ready for battle or to just guard the royals.”

“That’s okay.” Liz chuckles. “I’ll help you the best I can.”

“She’s been playing king and ace while also doing her own duties.” Roderich shakes his head. “You’ll learn well from her in any kind of violent art known to man.”

Matt nods, gazing at the clear plate in front of him. “Well, I’m not sure what I’ll be good at,” Ivan snorts as he knows the Canadian can just stay invisible through fights and assassinate people if needed. Matthew smirks a little, knowing just what his king is thinking before he continues speaking, “but I’m willing to learn.”

The Hungarian nods and waits for another question. As she waits, servants from the kitchen brings forth hefty meals for the four of them, plus a bowl of fish for Kumajiro who sits next to Matthew. The four wait until the servers leave before eating a little and Ivan is the one to ask another question.

“What are the other kingdoms like?”

Roderich answers for the queen so she doesn’t talk with her mouth full. “They are all like us but fairly different at the same time. The Spades Kingdom rests on the coast of the sea southeast of us, high in transporting goods to other kingdoms surrounded by water or who have large enough rivers for their boats to float down through. The Hearts Kingdom lies northeast of us. They live in the fall forest and are known for their relaxing springs. The Joker Kingdom is just east of us, a city of white made of diamonds and crystals. They also have good saunas but are known to visit Hearts when their saunas don’t work for them. Further east is Diamonds, the desert where constant heat bears down on you from the sun. I suggest not going there if you’re used to colder climates.”

“That’s a boring synopsis of each, Roddy.” Elizabeta sighs as she shakes her head, sipping her water to clear her mouth and throat of food. She locks eyes with Ivan and elaborates further. “We
are generally friendly with all the other kingdoms but Diamond has been known to stay neutral and out of any affairs for as long as Queen Lillian has been on the throne. Diamond is known for the oils and ore found under the sand and for the sometimes flirtatious common folk.” She giggles. “Lilly and I are good friends.”

She goes on about each kingdom, sharing what they’re known for as well as describing how the others in the royal court are. She doesn’t know those who will soon take the places of those missing but states that rumors of each new member coming is dashing and promising.

“The first kingdom to become full was Spades,” she states. “Their king is a gentle man with a childish heart. He’s very handsome, as some say, and has an interesting hero complex.”

“What’s his name?” Matthew interjects before Liz can continue. He asks his question so fast that everyone blinks as they remembered he’s there too. Heflushes, smiling sheepishly. “I, uhm, know someone like that.”

“Oh, well, his name is Alfred. King Alfred F. Jones.” Elizabeta smiles with a giggle.

Matthew’s eyes widen as he hears his brother’s name. He nods and lets the Hungarian continue, thinking about how his brother is a king while he’s an ace. It’s only fitting as Alfred is more of a leader than he is. Humming deep in thought, he doesn’t realize that Ivan’s eyes are on him, examining his reaction towards that information.

Time slowly ticks by until their food is gone and they move into the lounge. Roderich soon excuses himself so he can do his job. Eliza eagerly informs the other two men and polar bear about everything they should know about their kingdom and the other kingdoms. She even states that it is known through each kingdom that not every king and queen are wedded, that they have separate lovers most times throughout history.

“I have my own lover, but I wanted to wait for you to come before marrying him.” Elizabeta smiles fondly at her hands, the left ring finger vacant but wielding a tan line where a thin band used to be. “When we heard that you’d be coming soon, we agreed to hold off all plans of marriage until we knew what you wanted.” She gazes up at the Russian, knowing she will have to obey her king no matter what her heart wants.

Ivan smiles happily for her. “No need to wait for me. You may marry whomever you wish.”

Eliza brightens up and hugs her king, saying thank you profusely before heading in another direction. Matthew chuckles, watching her go before continuing on with the Russian King. “That was sweet of you.”

“Why hold a person away from who they love?” Ivan shrugs. “I do not know her. I will not keep her from her happiness.” He frowns as he thinks how much of a hypocrite he sounds just now. Sighing through his nose, he wonders if his sisters are here. “I wish I could say the same to my sister.”

Before Matthew can comment on Ivan having a sister, the two are interrupted by a soft voice behind them. “Brother?” They stop and turn, seeing a voluptuous woman with another next to her. She smiles shyly as Ivan’s eyes widen. “Welcome home.”
This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 14: Joker

Chapter Summary

Gilbert comes to the Kingdom of Jokers and gets a geography lesson from Queen Tino.

Spring Day 36

Chapter Notes

I really enjoyed writing this one. There's more that I wanted to type out with Gilbert learning about his new job, finding his new houses he'll live in, and meeting the rest of the Jokers of separate kingdoms, but this one is already long enough so I'll make that into a separate chapter. Either way, I hope you enjoy my take on these character and others to come. If they're slightly OOC, I apologize, but this is how they are in my head.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Gilbert is utterly lost in the city of what seems pure white. His eyes have a hard time taking in the surroundings he’s in, obviously uncomfortable as people stare at him. He sticks out like a sore thumb, which most times he’s okay with but right now he’s not. The clothing of the people walking around him is the color pink, many different shades of the vibrant color, and his dark blue shirt with black pants contrasts. Big time. It doesn’t help that he’s the only one with a bag on his back full of his possession. He’s definitely a stranger who looks like he’s moving in or just passing through.

He keeps to himself as he walks around the heart of the village, sitting at the fountain for a break. His red eyes glance at everyone who gazes at him, his face a scowl instead of his usual smirk since this predicament is something that annoys him. Being separated from his only family and friend really sucks. He worries about his brother just a little bit as a big brother should, but knows Ludwig can handle his own. The thought of Antonio screwing shit up for anything is what really gets the self-proclaimed Prussian to sweat some bullets. He sighs, leaning forward so his elbows are resting on his knees and his one hand can cover his upper face. No matter how two-faced Antonio can get, he’s still accident prone and sometimes an idiotic air-head who’s dense as bricks. Sometimes. Don’t get Gilbert started on the times he believes Antonio didn’t understand something only to surprise him and show his other color. That brunet be crazy.

“Are you okay?”

The near silver haired man glances up to see a small girl clad in a pastel pink dress and a white bonnet. He smiles a little with a nod. “Don’t worry, geißlein. I’m just resting a bit before I continue on.”

She doesn’t seem sure of that but can’t press the issues as her mother calls. With a smile, she nods and says one last thing, “If you are lost or in need of help, go visit our King and Queen. They can surely help!” She waves and heads off back to her mother, conversing with giddiness that only a child can have.
Gilbert raises an eyebrow as she leaves him. “King and Queen? What, do these people still live in the medieval times?” When he asks himself that question, he realizes that these people just might. Their clothes look it. That girl was wearing a bonnet. He pales as much as his already pale skin can allow as a thought crosses his mind. “Mein Gott, have I gone back in time?!”

“’Fraid not.”

The red-eyed man jumps with a small yelp as another person stands to his right. He looks up at the guy, noticing how he’s wearing a maroon outfit instead of the pink ones everyone else is wearing. Glaring, he stands up. “What do you mean? Do you even know what I’m going through, arschloch?”

The blond laughs. “Of course I do. You’re from the Tunnel, right?” The man grins as he leans on his axe’s pole, head of the weapon on the ground as a weight. “You’re Gilbert Beilschmidt from Earth in universe X-79. We’ve called you here because there’s a gap only you can fill on our force.”

Gilbert blinks, narrowing his eyes as he’s wary of the stranger. “…is what you say true?” His ego hopes, no, knows it to be true. If only to subdue his insecurities.

“Well, kind of.” The guy laughs again, offering a hand to shake. “Name’s Matthias Khøler.” They shake hands and Mat continues speaking. “It’s true that we need you to fill a gap only you are made for. I was just messing around with the letter and number, though you are from another universe. I bet you feel at home even if you originally are not from here.” The Dane grins as he watches the other gaze at the place.

It was really odd. He did feel at home. Like he belongs where he is currently. Gilbert shivers a little, wondering why he felt he belonged here so easily when back home he always felt out of place. He eyes Matthias and takes in how different he is from the people around them. Wielding a weapon, darker clothes that make it known he’s probably important. Gilbert felt the urge that he should wear a similar outfit. If not maroon, maybe Prussian blue or just straight up black. He could deal with maroon, though.

“So why am I here?” The German motions to the village. “Why this place specifically?”

Mat grins. “Because you’re a Joker and only Jokers reside in this kingdom.”

“Joker?” Gil raises an eyebrow. “Like the prankster or the card?”

“Like the card, but we can also be pranksters if we want. It’s part of our job description.”

“What is our job description?”

“I’ll tell you that later. First, I want you to meet our royal family and choose a place to stay.” Mat picks up his axe and swishes the blade down through the air, cutting it open. He pries open the rip he just made wide enough for each of them to go through. When it’s wide enough, Mat motions for him to go through. “Newcomer’s first.”

Gilbert looks at the portal noticing the other side as some kind of lounge. “Is it safe?”

“Yes of course it’s safe. As long as all of you has gone through it before it closes.” Mat grins.

The German is opting out of crossing through a portal he knows nothing of when it comes to how it works, not to mention that it’s frickin’ magic when he lived in a world without magic. When he opens his mouth up, his eyes land on a head that suddenly pops up on the other side of the portal.
“Matthias?”

“Tino! Hey.” The Dane waves and smiles. “What’s up?”

“Nothing but the usual. You know.” Tino smiles and comes in front of the portal, staying on the other side as he glances at Gilbert. “Who’s this?”

“The new Joker for Hearts.” Mat gazes at Gil. “He’s being a chicken for crossing through.”

“The awesome me is not a chicken!” Gilbert huffs as he grabs his bag and walks right on through the portal headlong. He makes sure not to run into Tino while doing so. When he’s on the other side, he glances around to see that he’s really in a different location. Turning around, he watches Matthias walk through and the portal close up. “How does that work? Like, seriously. This is just crazy.”

“It’s a form of magic that only Jokers can do.” Matthias rests his axe across his shoulders, grin still on his face. “You’ll be able to do it, too, once you pick your weapon.”

“First, we need to inform you of everything and anything.” Tino walks over to a desk which Gilbert assumes is his as the man sits in the chair. He grabs a few papers and straightens the small pile before smiling up at the newcomer. “Matthias will explain to you your duties as a Joker, but for now, I will explain to you how you’re here and why you’re needed.”

Thus commences a long conversation between the Queen of Joker’s and the new recruit for Joker of Hearts. Gilbert asks plenty of questions about the world he is now in, all which are answered thanks to both Queen Tino and Joker Matthias. He at first is unable to believe this is all real but knows it has to be. He was separated from his brother and friend, that wasn’t a dream. This whole white city can be a dream but everything leading up to it definitely wasn’t.

Tino shows him a map of the five kingdoms as he explains their home land, Joker being in the center surrounded by a forest that makes a near circular ring around the borders of each kingdom. From the forest lines, if someone heads west, they will walk through a flat terrain that leads towards another forest. The forest of Clubs which is the kingdom itself. The village is in the trees and the people generally wear shades of green. There are three Jokers that work for that kingdom, which is a rarity but happens every few centuries.

“How many Jokers are usually assigned to each kingdom?”

“Generally only one,” Matthias answers as he leans on his axe pole like he did at the fountain. “For this lifetime of Clubs, there were three chosen. No one knows why, but all of the men had one section of their insignia for Clubs of Joker on their back. If you connect each section, it creates the full image of the Joker. It’s pretty cool, actually, and they each can take a turn serving the royals, or they each can be assigned to a specific royal. Ed and Raivis have been serving under their queen and jack in Clubs but Toris has been going between the two while waiting for their king. Hopefully the king’s a good guy.” He forces a smile with a double meaning behind it that Gilbert doesn’t quite catch.

“They’re really great men. All of them are good friends of mine.” Tino smiles wide. “We grew up together but I was taken here at a young age since my mark appeared.” The lithe man bends over and rolls up his crop pants on his left leg so Gilbert can see his calf. “This tattoo like mark appeared when I turned eight after the previous queen passed away.” On his calf is a black Q with a small joker in the center resting against the inside of the letter, his legs forming the tail of the Q. “I was wearing some shorts that day and didn’t even realize it appeared until someone mentioned it. After that, I was taken to the castle and taught how to be the Queen of Joker.”
“Even though our kingdom’s color is pink, the Joker symbol tends to stray from the normal color.” Mat leans more on his axe as he brings up his left foot after taking off his boot to show Gilbert his maroon colored joker on his inner ankle. The joker is leaning towards the left a bit as if to see the other side of the ankle while grinning and extending a hand out. The other hand points to itself, gesturing that it’s him. “Mine is maroon because I’m the lead Joker. Or so I like to think.”

Gilbert watches them fix themselves up as he processes this. “So, since you think I’m the Joker of Hearts, I should have a joker somewhere on my body?”

“If you don’t, then you’re just an average Joe that will be forced to wear pink all the time.” Mat laughs.

“I don’t think you need to worry about that since I just know you are the Joker of Hearts.” Tino walks over to Gilbert and pats the right side of his pectoral. “Check there.”

The self-proclaimed Prussian raises an eyebrow as he unbuttons the top few buttons on his shirt and pulls it over. Right in the center of where Tino patted his chest lays a deep red joker forming a heart with its hands as it winks and kicks a foot back and up. He blinks as he sees it from an odd angle but he definitely sees it.

“Holy shit,” he exclaims, gazing up at Tino. “How’d you know it was there?”

“Our queen is gifted with insight and a kind of sixth sense.” Mat boasts.

“Oh, it’s nothing really. It’s just some feelings that come and go.” Tino waves off the exaggerated compliment.

Staring at his joker, Gilbert notices how different all of theirs look. “Are they all positioned differently?” He gazes up at the other two. “Yours was smaller and inside the letter while yours looked like it was reaching for the other side.” He points to the respective person he’s talking about for each observation. “And mine’s just forming a heart while looking flirty and in love. What gives?”

Tino and Mat look at each other. The Dane shrugs and explains why he thinks his is as it looks. “There’s this huge legend behind the joker insignia that because they’re so different, they appear as whatever is best for their owner. Along with the legend is a romantic tale saying that if your jokers fit together somehow, you’re meant to be together.” He chuckles a little with a faint blush on his cheeks as he formulates an example in his mind. “Like, if you see Lukas’s joker, it’s standing on the bend of the J for Jack while leaning over the extended up-shoot of the letter and extending its hand out to the right. If you draw his and mine right next to each other, their hands meet in the middle.”

“Lukas and Matthias grew up together as friends until they each got their marks.” Tino further explains. “When they found out about how similar their jokers were, Mat instantly started flirting and trying to woo Lukas.”

“I’ll get Norge to fall for me someday. It’s gotta happen! Our marks say so!”

Gilbert nods, humming as he buttons his shirt back up. “I’m guessing not all of the marks are like that, though?”

“Correct.” Tino nods. “My mark and my king’s mark don’t match. Berwald’s joker on his letter merely hangs off the upper angled part of the letter with its hand and leg wrapped around for sturdiness.”

“But, what Tino keeps forgetting, the joker is also looking down longingly while reaching
towards the lower right.” Mat mimics the position with his axe pole as the letter. “If you noticed, Tino’s joker isn’t looking up, but it’s smiling as if it already knows. And if you draw them together, the king’s joker is caressing the queen’s joker on its head.”

“You’re just stretching things.” Tino huffs with a roll of his eyes, but the blush on his cheeks is clear as day.

The German grins a little at the cuteness but shakes his head. “Okay, back to the main conversation. You were telling me about each kingdom?”

“Oh, right.” Tino giggles and turns back to the map, pointing south of their kingdom. “Here is the Kingdom of Spades…”

South of their kingdom from the forest line lies some hilly terrain that neighbors some water. The kingdom rests next to the ocean, its beach village always a joy to visit and full of amicable individuals. Tino describes to Gilbert the many things about this kingdom before pointing to the upper right from Spades to Diamonds. The Kingdom of Diamonds expanse is nothing but hot desert. Its main village is sometimes hard to find as the winds always pick up and make sandstorms for protection. The people are still nice, but they’re very wary even if they come off as flirtatious. Tino notes how the sandstorms are created by the king of the kingdom, who always has some affinity to wind. Gilbert finds that hard to believe but, then again, he did see Matthias cut open their reality for transportation uses. Then Tino continues north, describing the Kingdom of Hearts that live in a forest that is always Autumn. The greenery turns red after venturing from the forest line of the Joker Kingdom, but the trees taper out some when people reach the heart of it where the main village resides.

“What no one knows is that there’s a dormant volcano in this mountain back here.” Mat points to a mountain a ways from the main village but still scarily close to it.

“If anyone finds out, it’ll cause a panic,” Tino states as he glances at Gilbert, “so please stay quiet about that when you go there.”

“I’m going there?” Gilbert’s eyebrows rise up as he stares at the Hearts Kingdom.

Matthias laughs as he pats the other’s shoulder. “Of course you are. You’re the Joker of Hearts. You can live here, in our main kingdom, and there, the kingdom you’re stationed to work for.”

“Which reminds me,” Gilbert narrows his eyes at the Dane, “what “work” will I be doing as a joker?”

“You can take over from here, Matthias.” Tino nods to the two as he goes back over to his desk. “I have some papers to catch up on before meeting with my king for our evening stroll.”

“Of course, your highness.” Mat bows dramatically before taking up his axe and slicing the air like he has before. “Come this way, Gilbert. I’ll inform you of your duties or lack thereof.”

Gilbert grins a little, finding that he just might like this Matthias character. He steps on through the portal, Mat at his heels, and waits for whatever will come next for him.
This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.

Sorry for the long hiatus. I was writing a novel for NaNoWriMo - and finished last Wednesday - so I put everything else on hold. Hope you lovelies enjoy the update of /one/ of my stories!
Chapter 15: Spades

Chapter Summary

Six days after Alfred, Arthur, and Lovino arrived at Spades and they’re just meeting their Joker.

Spring Day 21

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It has been six days since Alfred, Arthur, and Lovino have arrived at their new home, Kingdom of Spades. During those six days, Yao, the Jack, had given the three a tour, told them of their duties, and summarized how this world works. He didn’t miss a single thing, especially the questions about the tattoos. Yao’s mark is on his right cheek with a clear J in the center. Arthur had noted that his was on the back of his right hand with a Q that was filled in with a cyan color. Yao mentioned how that generally means that he has met his soul-mate, but the Chinese man doesn’t entirely believe in such things.

Being a romantic, Arthur does believe in those things but is unable to accept it as easily since he has a bad history concerning romance. He can’t help but wonder who his soul-mate is, if it happens to be the stupid frog that’s most definitely somewhere else in this world. Yao explains that the color of the letter itself hints at which kingdom it is in. Since the Q is a form of blue, which means Arthur’s soul-mate is from Spades. The only people he has met thus far don’t have a mark on their person because they’re common folk, don’t have their mark filled in, or are unable to locate their tattoo.

Lovino seems like a nice chap but Arthur doesn’t feel that any romance would bloom between them. Maybe an interesting friendship, since they seem to have a similar personality, but nothing more than that. Alfred, on the other hand, would be a splendid candidate for being Arthur’s soul-mate. The bloke has even found his mark over the days they have been in Spades but hasn’t showed it to anyone or shared if his K is filled in. Arthur would pry but that would be rude.

Their first day in their new home village, Yao showed Lovino where he will be staying temporarily before he chooses his own home. As the Ace, he would be needed when called but first had to go through intense training. The Italian has no experience of being anything but a thief, which his brother is not aware of. His schedule is quickly put together for him so he can pick the weapon most comfortable for him to use then train with the respective leader of that weapon’s group and do whatever else he would like to be in charge of. Lovino easily decides that he wants to open up a food place where he can cook his country’s specialties for some copper or bronze.

The currency system is quiet similar to Lovino’s world that he lived in before coming to this new home of his. There are certain coins or thin metallic slabs with holes at the end or in the center for easy holding on a ring.

“It’s like these,” he says as he pulls out some spare change he stole a while ago. He pushes the circular coins away from the small ovular slabs on his palm, pointing to each as he describes them. “Copper and bronze are smaller amounts of payment while silver and gold are larger amounts
of payment. They’re frickin’ easy to distinguish but silver and gold are usually scarce to find for us poor folk. Unless we’re paid handsomely by a noble or steal some from some unsuspecting fool.”

Copper and bronze coins equal either one or twenty pence while silver and gold slabs equal five or ten quid. For Arthur and Alfred, copper coins are one cent while bronze coins are twenty cents, and silver slabs are five dollars while gold slabs are ten dollars. People tend to own more copper and bronze coins than silver and gold slabs. Either way, money is money and Lovino wants to make a living besides being Captain of the Guard.

Alfred and Arthur’s living quarters are in the castle that is now theirs until they die. At first Yao made it clear that they should share a room but both men absolutely refused. They hardly know each other and have a small gimp in their relationship due to their little rivalry concerning magic and super powers. So they both have their own rooms but have to deal with being neighbors and having a door connecting their rooms.

“Not all kings and queens marry and share a room, but sometimes it is best for face value.” Yao’s comment didn’t deter their decision of separate rooms.

The men soon fall under a pattern after their first day of introductions. Alfred and Arthur are primed and prepped for show as they meet the villagers and the royal advisors. Lovino moves into a building that can be turned into a small restaurant to start out his business while also training as both a swordsman and an archer. All of them are rather busy but do make sure to take time for themselves when they can. Alfred makes sure to do whatever the hell he wants for his childish delight before he gets serious. Arthur studies the many books from this world in the library they have in the castle. Lovino cooks and stubbornly befriends those who are willing to work under him to experience something new.

Yao makes sure they save face when needed, but by the sixth day he remembers another official person they have yet to meet. He wonders where that mischievous person has been as of late. It’s very rare for the Joker of Spades to not make an entrance or have it be known he’s there. Especially since there are new people he can have fun with now. The Chinese man sighs as he worries about the three meeting him before he can officially introduce him. What he doesn’t know is that the Joker is already making plans to introduce himself.

Lovino is working at his restaurant when Alfred and Arthur visit for a break. He orders his cooks to stray from their usual Italian cuisine and make the king and queen’s favorite dishes before heading over to them. “I’ve got your meals being cooked so no need to tell me.” He stands at their table, crossing his arms as he gives both a look. “Water and tea, right?”

“Could you add a lemon to that water?” Alfred asks kindly.

“And make sure the water is actually hot this time.” Arthur grins at Lovino.

With a roll of his eyes, the Italian nods to Arthur and waves for a server to bring their drinks. He then sits next to the British man and slouches. “So what brings you guys here today?”

“Well, it’s been six days since we’ve been here and two days since you started your business, so,” Alfred shrugs, “just wanted to check in on the place.”

“We’re also hungry and figured we could spend some money on you.” Arthur glances around the place, humming in amazement. “Though you are not from either of our worlds, it’s amazing how this place looks like it could be fashioned from a very modern time. Were booths a thing in your time for seats?”
"No, but our king suggested it and even helped the carpenters and blacksmiths to create them and bolt them to the floor." Lovino’s hazel eyes land on Alfred as the American receives his beverage and smiles at the waitress. "We’ve been changing this place up a little too much already. I wonder if people give a damn about the change or will riot."

“They can’t do anything as long as I’m making the orders.” The sunny blond sips his water and expels a sound of content from the freshness. "I'm planning to make this place a little more techy as well. We have the ore to do it, I just need to teach some of the people how to create things like phones and such."

Arthur shakes his head. "Don’t change this place too quickly, chap. People can only handle so much."

"Hey, our histories are kind of the same so you know what I’ll be doing.” Alfred grins when his queen sighs. “I’m just going to hurry the process. Maybe in ten years we’ll have the internet again."

“Internet?” Lovino furrows his brows. “What’s that?”

Before Alfred can go into describing the best thing created by man, a crash comes from the kitchen before a loud, deep boom echoes out. The three gaze over at the doors where the kitchen is, watching as the workers rush out with red faces. The Italian instantly stands up and curses in his mother tongue before asking what the hell just happened.

"I-I don’t know. Everyone was working fine, but then- I think someone accidentally put in wrong ingredients or- some reaction caused-!

Lovino clucks his tongue in annoyance as he goes through the kitchen doors, Alfred and Arthur right behind him. Smoke rises up from one of the wood stoves, the cooker being completely destroyed. Shrapnel is scattered about the area with splashes of grease and oil on the floor from the small explosion. The Italian fumes at the destruction, knowing he’ll be set back some because of this. He’s glad no one got hurt but this still pisses him off.

"All right, who was the last one to use this stove?!” He shouts from his spot. His workers peer in from the other side of the door and window, afraid to face his temper. “Well?” He turns to them all, crossing his arms. “Someone gonna tell me?"

When no one comes forward, Lovino is about to burst until Arthur lays a hand on his shoulder. “Might I try something?” The Italian cools down and nods for the other to do whatever. Arthur nods back and closes his eyes as he tries to remember a locator spell. He steps over towards the destroyed stove and mumbles a few words as he waves his hands over the contraption. After a moment, he opens his eyes and is able to see what happened. “Not exactly the right spell, but this will do.”

Everyone watches in awe as they see figments of the workers going about their business with orders. Then from the ceiling, a blue slash appears above the stove while no one is looking and a head pops through. A child, from the looks of it, grins as he looks around the kitchen then down at the boiling pot. He tosses something in the burner and then disappears back up through the slash before it closes. No sooner does he disappear does the stove explode.

“That damned brat!” One of the older cooks glares as the past images dissipate.

Alfred turns to the man with a raised eyebrow. “You know that kid?”
“Yes.” The man sighs as he looks at the three, not hesitant or in fear of their ranks. “That was Peter, the Joker of Spades.”

“Wait, we have a Joker? That’s a legit status to have?” Alfred grins crookedly at this information, formulating possible ways to befriend the kid and help him with his pranks.

Arthur slaps the American on the back of his head, knowing just what the man is thinking. He shakes his head with a sigh before focusing on the staff. “Would any of you happen to know where he often stays?”

“I'm going to rip the little bastard a new one,” Romano mumbles behind him, commenting about how long it’ll take to repair the damages. Arthur rolls his eyes and waves his hand over the stove once more, mumbling another spell, this time the correct one he wants to use, and the stove repairs itself back to its peak condition. The Italian blinks, frowning as he looks at his stubborn friend. “Thanks…”

Everyone marvels over the many abilities their queen has before he turns to them again. “Is anyone willing to guide us towards Peter’s residence?”

“Please lead us to him. We need to have some words with him.” Alfred keeps grinning, dodging Arthur’s elbow jab easily. “And quickly, before my queen decides to harm me any further.” He laughs, exiting the kitchen before Arthur can make a flustered comment.

“Just because I’m queen does not mean I’m yours, you bloody prat!” Arthur chases him, ready to throttle the idiot for his childishness.

Lovino rolls his eyes as he takes one of the members that know where Peter could be. He orders them to continue on without him until the usual time of day, then catches up with the other two. With the help of the one cook, they easily find Peter’s tree house at the edge of the forest north of the village. It’s quite the trek but they make it.

“Halt!” They hear from above their heads. “Who dares trespass on the Joker of Spade’s property?!”

“Peter, you don’t own this forest.” The cook huffs, putting her hands on her hips. “Just because King Berwald and Queen Tino have spoilt you rotten does not mean you can do as you please.”

“Oh come on, Becca, you know more than anyone that being a joker, I can do anything.” The boy pops his head out of the window of his house, pouting at her. “I’ve told you all over and over again that you can take it up with the Joker Kingdom. Better yet, just talk with Mat.”

“He’s of no help. He just makes things worse.” The woman glares at him. “Now, come down here and apologize to Mr. Vargas for destroying his property.”

“Please, that wasn’t even the worst I can do.”

“If you don’t get down here, kid, I’m going to climb up there and get you myself,” Lovino threatens, a deadly glare sent Peter’s way.

“Just try it. You won’t get me.” The child sticks his tongue out and goes back into his home, giggling as a kid does.

The Italian instantly rushes for the tree and starts climbing it in a rage. Becca expresses her concern but Alfred silences her to watch what happens. The American crosses his arms and grins,
watching as Lovino gets to the base of the house only for a portal to appear where his body is resting against the tree and suck him in. The next thing everyone knows, he’s off the tree and falling from the sky.

“Chiiii!” He shouts in fright as he falls, afraid he’ll hit the ground and die.

Arthur is about to pull out his wand and cast another spell but stops when Alfred raises a hand. “I got this.” The American crouches down and locks on to Lovino, jumping up higher than the trees and catching the screaming man. With a grin, he holds the other in the princess carry position. “Howdy.”

The brunet would flail and ask to be put down immediately, but instead he wraps his arms around Alfred’s neck and clings until the two of them are safely on the ground again. “Idiota! How are we going to land?!”

“Easy. Just let gravity work it out.”

“Oh no, you son of a-!!”

Within seconds they land, Alfred creating a small crater from his impact. The Italian is paralyzed from the experience, not letting go until Alfred clears his throat. “You’re welcome?”

“That was so cool!” They hear from the tree house as Lovino separates himself and puts some distance between himself and the king. Peter looks out of the window, glee on his face at what he just witnessed. “How’d you do that?!”

“Well, kid, I’ve got me some super powers no one else has.” The sunny blond flexes his muscles a bit. “Super strength, speed, and chakra control. My brother has invisibility, can change his vision, talks to animals, and summons up whatever he wants.”

The boy eagerly climbs out of the tree house and runs over to Alfred, stopping just in front of him as he bounces on his feet. “Can you take me for a speedy ride? Can you punch a hole in a mountain? What does the chakra control do?”

“Easy there, kid. We have all the time in the world now to catch up. I’m your king after all.”

“Oh.” Peter deflates a bit as he realizes something but smirks as he turns to the woman in the group, ignoring the other two men. “Becca, why didn’t you tell me that our king was cool?”

“I tried but you never listened.” She shrugs.

Arthur clears his throat before anyone else can say anything. “Now that we have you down here, you might as well apologize to Lovino.”

“I’m not apologizing.” Peter crosses his arms and sticks his tongue out at the Brit. “Who are you?”

An anger tick appears on Arthur’s forehead as he forces a smile. “I’m the Queen of Spades. Anything I order to do you must obey, isn’t that right?”

The child wavers as he pouts. “But anything the king says over rules your words!”

Lovino is just about done with this kid as he makes to strangle the child. Peter evades easily, letting the man fall to the ground. Arthur then tries to go after the child but remains unsuccessful. Alfred merely watches with amusement as he laughs. Walking over towards Becca, he keeps an eye
on the two men chasing Peter, who taunts them continuously as they fail at capturing him.

“So what’s the deal about Peter and being a joker?”

“Oh, well, your highness,” she bows her head before speaking, “being a Joker is a status only a select few have, like being part of the royal court. The only thing is, they are more like messengers and errand runners. They have to follow every order given to them by the royal court, including the ace, unless a higher rank says otherwise.”

The American nods and turns towards the three, brings his fingers up between his lips and whistles. “Yo! Let’s go to the castle and acquaint ourselves with our Joker!”

All of them stop in place and either glare or smile at the sunny blond. Peter runs over to Alfred and the man picks him up, setting him on his shoulder so he can carry the kid with him. Arthur and Lovino huff, following along as Alfred leads the way back to the village castle for them to hold council and officially learn who Peter really is and what he does.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 16: Diamonds

Chapter Summary

Francis meets Feliks and they share a few things between them. A short but nice meeting.

Spring 23

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Francis hums as he sits on his throne, clad in kingly attire that consists of layers. It’s been a few days since he’s been crowned king by his people. Lillian has been such a cute queen so far but he’s probably never going to see her romantically. He has learned about the important things of this world and his kingdom while being told what he is expected to do as king. It is boring work but sometimes he has his fun making Vash very uncomfortable while Lilly finds it entertaining.

It has been exactly four days since he arrived in his new land. Not much has really happened over these days but he doesn’t complain. He’s been walking around the main part of the village, chatting with the people who live in his kingdom, and acquainting himself with his beautiful queen. Lillian is such a doll - understanding, open minded, cute, shy, the perfect Lolita of his dreams. Unfortunately, she could be like a daughter to him, so he merely keeps their relationship as friends. She doesn’t seem to oppose as she believes that her soul-mate will come one day in her life, just like his will.

The Frenchman doesn’t believe his soul-mate is alive anymore, whether he’s in a different world now or not, but the topic interests him. “Soul-mate, cher? There’s such a thing in this world, too?”

Lilly giggles with a nod. “It’s merely a tale in our world for those who are marked as the royal court, but there have been some instances where people have met their soul-mate. How we know is when our letters become full with the color of the kingdom our soul-mate is from.”

Remembering that his K was clear and only showed his skin tone, Francis understands that he has not met his soul-mate, if he has one in this world. “Mon cher, is it possible for someone to have more than one?”

“That is the rarest form but I have read about there being three people being connected before.” She smiles as she looks down at her chest where her own tattoo hides beneath her dress. “How one should know if they have two or more soul-mates is when their mark is filled with two or more colors. That’s only if you have met them, even in passing. You must make notice of them or else their color won’t fill in your mark.” Smiling back up, she lightly lays a hand on her bodice, the center of her chest where her mark rests. “I have yet to meet mine. I know they’re out there. We just haven’t met yet. Or I haven’t noticed them yet.”

Francis hums with a smile of his own, admiring his queen’s positive look on the possibility for love. “Such treasure to behold as it is a mystery, and once solved, you’re overwhelmed with uncertainty before it turns into absolutely joy.” He sighs. “Ah, love. Such a wonderful thing.” Yet his
smile is sad.

Queen Lillian dislikes this smile of his and reaches over with a comforting hand. “Why do you look so sad when saying this, my king?”

He puts his hand over hers where it rests on his arm. Patting her small hand, he chuckles a little. “I’ve already loved twice before, Cherie. I lost them both – one to death and the other from my sheer stupidity. I’m not sure if I can handle a third love only to lose them before they should go.”

Lilly frowns, heart hurting as she sees her King so forlorn. She turns her hand around to hold his, smiling as reassuringly as she can. “My dear Francis, if they do come, please do not turn them away. They might make you happier even if they are not the ones you used to love.”

The Frenchman smiles at her, heart warmed by her words and the sincerity in her eyes. “I promise, mon Cherie. I will be sure to accept what fate gives me.”

As soon as they separate their hands, Vash enters the throne room. He storms in, face flushed with red as his hands are clenched into fists. Right behind him, an androgynous man saunters in wearing a mid-thigh length skirt, a short midriff shirt that cuts right under the breast and has a short shawl overlay on their shoulders, with sandals that have straps going up to the mid-calf. Francis admires this person, including the fashionable attire that’s different from what he’s seen before. His eyes soon go to the seething Swiss and he raises an eyebrow.

“What could make you so flustered, Vash?” He grins a little, entertained that something other than his own comments make the man squirm.

“Your insufferable Joker.” Vash glares at the other shoulder length blond that giggles innocently. “They insisted to meet you, your highness.”

“And who is it that I’m meeting?” He turns his gaze onto the stranger, his Joker as Vash said.

“My name is Feliks Łukasiewicz.” Feliks bows with a flourish. “You better remember it, your highness. It’s something you will totally be calling in the future.”

As Francis’s mind goes straight to the gutter, he tries to hide his blushing grin and raised eyebrows. “Really? How so?”

Feliks juts their hip out while resting a hand on it, bringing a hand up to examine their nails. “My job is to be at your beck and call, but I, like, have a life outside of my title.” Their green eyes lock on with Francis’s, sending a thrilling chill down the Diamond King’s back. “If there’s another reason for why you call me, that’s totally a different story.” They grin impishly, blatantly implying what Francis is thinking.

“Feliks, would you please refrain from that kind of speech in front of our queen.” Vash hisses with clenched teeth.

The Polish Joker waves off Vash’s warning glare. “Please, Vash, you know she’s not that innocent. She, like, rules a kingdom of flirts.”

“How this kingdom became such is something that will always allude me.” The Swiss sighs angrily, turning a semi-apologetic gaze towards his sister. “Lilly, if you wish to leave the room, you may.”

Lilly’s cheeks blossom pink as she looks at her lap. “It’s fine, brother. I may be a child but I will learn about this sooner or later in life.”
“I wish for later rather than sooner.”

“Vash, please.” She pouts. “I will be turning fourteen soon. I am of age to marry if I wish. I should know these little things if I wish to make a family in the future.”

Vash bites his tongue so as to not retort. Francis can’t help himself from snickering at the adorable banter before standing. He motions for Feliks to follow him. “I will save your sister’s ears for now, Vash. Just know there will be a time where she will learn what you do not wish her to have knowledge of.” Vash glares at him but stays silent.

The Frenchman walks down a corridor towards his office with Feliks at his heel. They pass by arched windows looking out into the distance where a constant sandstorm circles their village. The darker blond hums as they continue walking behind their king, rapier on their hip jostling with each step they take. Their hand lightly glides over the glass and walls before they reach Francis’s destination. They let their hand fall to their side and head into the office. As Francis goes around, sitting behind the desk, they make themselves comfortable on a lounge couch.

“So,” Francis starts as he begins disrobing most of the layers on himself, “tell me what a joker really does in this world.”

Feliks’s eyes study their king as he takes off his clothing. They bite their bottom lip, forcing a grin back as they lay on their side, hand holding up their head from the armrest. “A joker is as I said before. A totally boring position where I need to come when you call and do as you ask. I’m also a messenger between kingdoms but I just hate putting effort into doing something I don’t like.” They go limp against the couch with an exaggerated sigh. “I love Queen Lilly because she hasn’t asked for any totally outrageous tasks. Vash is just fun to torment so I deal. You,” they raise their head up, “I’m iffy about since we, like, just met and all.”

“True.” Francis chuckles, sighing in relief once he’s only in a light top with a split through the center and ends just an inch before the hem. He folds up his clothing and sets it to the side on his desk. “Just so you know, there’s not much I will ask from you.” When he thinks about how they go between the kingdoms at times, he can’t help but wonder. “I do wish for an answer on one question.”

“Only if you’ll answer one of my own first.” The Frenchman nods, motioning for Feliks to go first. “Are you responsible for the sandstorm outside? It was not there until you arrived.”

Francis turns so he can gaze out his window and see the sandstorm in the distance that covers their village from anyone’s eyes. He put a spell up for protection. The only ones to come through it are his own people in Diamond if they wish to travel elsewhere and his dear friend Arthur if he ever comes this way. He hums as he nods his answer.

“I’ve read in some books how past kings have an affinity with the wind and have used that gift to protect the kingdom.” He easily summons a small tornado in the palm of his hand to show Feliks an example of the gift. The joker sits up in interest. “This kingdom likes to stay neutral and at peace. I wish to keep it that way so I summoned up a sandstorm with a spell I know. Diamond civilians can go through it without trouble, but others have to gain my approval.”

Feliks hops up from the couch and goes over to the desk, leaning on it so they have a closer look at the mini tornado. “That is so totally fab, I’m not kidding.” Their eyes go between Francis’s and the tornado with childlike glee. “A spell you say? So what, you’re a wizard?”

“Mhm.” Francis smiles at Feliks, glad they seem interested instead of scared. He closes his hand and the mini tornado dissipates. “I have to refresh the spell every fifteen days, though. Else it
will crumble and any of the neighboring kingdoms can attack us.”

“You speak as if a war will come.” Feliks huffs, crossing their arms as they sit on the edge of the desk. They gaze down at the king with a small pout. “As if there would be a war. We’ve been at peace for, like, several decades.”

“That may be so but there’s never been any ill thought against being cautious.” He hums with a thought before glancing up at the other. “So, now that I’ve answered yours…”

Feliks waves their hand. “Do ask what you want to know. You’re the king.”

All kidding and seriousness washes away as Francis’s eyes hold worry and concern. “Do you happen to know Arthur Kirkland?”

The joker raises an eyebrow. “He’s the Queen of Spades. Why?”

Francis chuckles a little at the title. “Is he doing well? I know he’s stubborn and sometimes hard to get along with, but he’s okay? Not hurt, right?”

Feliks studies Francis’s face and relaxes. They smile a little before rolling their eyes. “Like that old coot could be injured. He’s been complaining along with his Ace since they arrived. He absolutely loathes his title.” They giggle. “He’s completely fine. No need to worry, doll.”

The King of Diamonds instantly relaxes into his chair with a sigh of relief. “That’s good news.” He chuckles, imagining the type of situation Arthur could be in. “What are his companions like? Do you know?”

“I only know what I hear.” Feliks hops off the desk and goes around so they are on the same side as Francis. “Tell me, sugar, what would you like to know?”

So Francis asks what has been going on around the Five Kingdoms. Feliks answers him as best he can, updating their king on the newest things to happen so far. The Hearts Kingdom was just completed yesterday as their King, Jack, and Ace came through the Tunnel. That’s when Feliks explains how the days work in this world. This day is Spring 23. Each season consists of generally 90-92 days depending on which month falls shorter or longer. In total, there are still 365-366 days a year, something Francis is familiar with. The months just have no names. He finds that interesting but likes the difference. Feliks continues on about the Spades Kingdom, as there have been more things happening there than in Diamond and Heart.

The rest of the day, Francis and Feliks befriend each other and find commonalities. They each enjoy fashion and cosmetics, which Feliks is ecstatic about since not many others are. Plans start to conjure up between them before Vash interrupts their conversation. Francis tells Feliks they can do as they please until he sends for them. They find no problems with that as they take their rapier and slice open the air so they can venture through their portal. Francis sits, marveling at the skills he still has to learn about a joker. When Feliks is gone, the Frenchman turns to his Jack with a smile.

“You are total opposites. I absolutely love it,” he states.

Vash bristles with a flush. “Sorry to not meet your expectations,” he sarcastically remarks.

“Nonsense.” Francis chuckles with a wave of his hand. “I enjoy your company as much as I will enjoy theirs. Now, what is it that I can assist you with?”
This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 17: Hearts

Chapter Summary

Ludwig thinks about the days that have gone by while getting an update about the other kingdoms.

Spring Day 33

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ludwig sets down some papers on his desk and sighs, rubbing his eyes as he tries to stay awake. It’s another day in the Hearts Kingdom where he has paperwork to filter through, a meeting with some of the villagers later in the day with the queen, and a walk around to check on everyone through his kingdom. It’s been a few days of this after he was properly crowned as king in front of everyone. Eleven days since the three of them came into Hearts.

The German hums in wonder as he plans to visit Feliciano and Antonio later in the day. Maybe during his walk around the village. It’s been a while since he’s checked on them. Last he heard was Antonio picking up his role as Ace, training with his men to increase his strength. The Spaniard may come off as an air-head and utterly dense in certain situations but he’s not an idiot. Toni can hold his own and shows a dark side only when necessarily or when someone he cares for gets hurt.

Then there’s Feliciano. That man is a mystery to Ludwig. He’s been skittish after the first meeting with Kiku they had on their arrival. Ludwig believes it has something to do with his filled in mark. The Italian has been shy and shrinks away when he sees the blond. Ludwig knows he’s a tall man, still shorter than Antonio and Ludwig but tall enough for the German to know which brother is the tallest. He doesn’t understand why Feli slouches and comes off as a shorter man than he really is, unless it’s a nervous habit or so Lovino seems taller. Whatever it is, Ludwig wish he knew how to deal with it so Feli can be chipper.

Speaking of their marks, Antonio found his a few days ago behind his right ear. His is filled with a deep blue color, which Kiku states that his soul-mate is in the Kingdom of Spades. Antonio was happy to know he has a soul-mate but didn’t know who it could be since he knows so few people in this world. Ludwig still thinks the soul-mate story concerning their tattoos is a complete fabrication, but his own K is filled in with a dark scarlet color. Supposedly his own soul-mate is in the kingdom he rules now, but he only knows Antonio and recently met Kiku and Feliciano. If anything, the German guesses that Feliciano is the only possible option, but it’s ridiculous to him.

A knock on the blond’s door causes all his thoughts to fly toward the back of his mind. He clears his throat and sits straight in his seat. “Come in.”

The door opens and Kiku walks in, bowing respectfully. “I have come in request of a meeting, my king.”

“Of course.” Ludwig nods for the other man to take a seat. He watches the man clothed in his usual kimono sit in front of him and motions for him to speak. “What do you wish to speak about?”
“An update on the neighboring kingdoms.” Kiku clasps his hands on his lap, eyes connected with Ludwig’s. “They have all become full.”

“Is that so?” Hope swells inside him as he thinks about his brother being in one of the kingdoms. “Are their names for those who have come to each kingdom?”

“Yes.” The Japanese man nods. “The messenger from Clubs has told me of the list. Shall I share it with you?” When he receives a nod, Kiku closes his eyes and remembers the list given. “The first kingdom to become whole was the Kingdom of Spades. Their King is Alfred Jones, a man said to have inhumane strength and speed. Queen Arthur Kirkland is gifted with magic. Their Ace is Lovino Vargas, Feli-san’s brother I believe.” He opens his eyes and watches Ludwig nod in confirmation of that guess. “I also believe that if Antonio has met either of them before, one of them is his soul-mate.”

The blond ponders over that, shaking his head with a sigh as he agrees. “Lovino,” he says in answer to an unsaid question.

Kiku hums, closing his eyes again as he continues the list. “The King of Diamonds is Francis Bonnefoy, one of magic skills as well. The Kingdom of Clubs just gained their king and ace, Ivan Braginski and Matthew Williams.” He opens his eyes as he frowns at his king. “I have not heard word of your brother, Gilbert. I’m sorry.”

Ludwig’s hope dies instantly at that but he refrains from showing his sadness. He nods to Kiku, glancing down at the papers in front of him. “Thank you, Kiku.” The Japanese man stays seated until Ludwig dismisses him. He doesn’t do so until after a request. “Would you be able to meet with the villagers in my place today? I wish to update Feliciano and Antonio on this news.”

“Of course.” Kiku bows his head as he stands from his seat. “Take your time. You’re still new to this, my king. It is okay if you need time for yourself and your needs.” The short man smiles kindly before leaving the room.

As the German gazes at his paperwork, his mind processes what he’s learned. He sighs, pushing himself away from his desk since he can’t concentrate. He worries about his brother not appearing in this world yet, wondering where on this Earth – if this really is another Earth – he could be. Standing from his chair, he grabs his red trench coat – said to be the king’s coat when going out – and heads out of the castle.

It doesn’t take him too long to reach Feliciano’s Pizzeria. He enters and looks around as he notices how busy it is. There’s no sign saying to wait so he goes to a free seat for a two person table and takes off his coat. He drapes it on the seat he won’t use and takes a seat in the other chair. Gazing at the patrons in the establishment, he smiles, happy that Feliciano’s business is doing good. Antonio’s help makes a good difference too.

“Ludwig!” Antonio comes over with a wide grin on his face, apron around his waist like usual waiters have. “What a surprise! I didn’t think you’d come by with being so busy. Como esta?”

“I’m well.” Ludwig nods. His eyes gaze at the door that obviously goes to the kitchen. “Is Feliciano free?”

“I can check.” A glint in the Spaniard’s eye appears, one Ludwig is confused to see but understands what it is.

The blond sighs. “I need to speak with the both of you.”
The gleam disappears at that added sentence but Antonio nods. “Okay. I’ll go see if he’s available.”

Antonio goes towards the kitchen and Ludwig waits. He puts his hands on the table, one hand holding the other fist. This news will be good news for the both of them. He just wishes he had good news regarding his brother. Bringing a hand up to cover half his face, he closes his eyes and sighs, remember the last moment he saw his brother. Being an idiot like usual while going off on his own through the tunnel. He can only pray that Gilbert is safe. The self-proclaimed Prussian is stubborn and can handle his own, but there are instances where Gilbert shouldn’t be left alone for too long. No matter the air he puts off, Gilbert is still living on a thin thread between “I’m okay” and “I’m going to be okay.” The worry lines Ludwig has regarding Gilbert’s lapses aren’t that deep but deep enough.

“Ludwig?” Feliciano’s soft voice calls the German back from his concerned thoughts as he takes the free seat across from him. “Toni says you need to speak with us?”

Said Spaniard pulls over a free chair and sits on it backwards. “What’s going on, mi amigo?”

Ludwig smiles a little at his friend before resting his hand and sighing. “I’ve received news of the other kingdoms being whole again.” The two stare at him, unsure of what that has to do with them. Ludwig looks at Feli with a small smile. “Lovino resides in the Kingdom of Spades.”

Feli’s whole being lifts up as he smiles. “Mio fratello?! He’s-a okay?”

“I didn’t ask but it seems he’s fine. He’s the Ace of Spades.”

“Hey, just like me!” Antonio laughs. “Maybe he and I are meant to be.” The Spaniard’s words merely mean friendship but as he thinks about it, he can’t help but ask. “What are the kingdom colors again?”

“Red Hearts, Yellow Diamonds, Green Clubs, and Blue Spades,” Ludwig answers instantly.

Antonio takes that in as he reaches for his right ear, fingers caressing the tattoo behind it with a blue A in the center of his red heart. “Dios mio, he has to be the one then. We don’t know anyone else from Spades, si?”

Feli giggles happily. “That’s great! You can actually become my big brother Toni now!”

“Yeah!” Toni happily agrees. “Now we just need to get you with your own soul-mate.”

Ludwig tenses up at those words, ignoring the side-glance he’s receiving from his longtime friend. “I still think the soul-mate system is just a story to keep romantics hopeful.”

Feli frowns a little but puffs his cheeks out in slight irritation. “Is yours still not filled in? You would agree with it if it was. It’s destiny, ve, calling us- the people who are fated together.”

The German picks up on the mistakes and tries to hide his blushing cheeks. He clears his throat, closing his eyes as he thinks about his scarlet K on his chest. “I do not need to disclose such information. Now, is it okay for me to order some meatloaf and potatoes?”

Antonio instantly catches the deflection as he grins. “I’ll get right to it! Feli, you need a break anyway. Take a siesta or keep our king company, si?”

Feli nods, pouting. Ludwig dashes all thoughts of the Italian being cute away. “Do you really believe in there being soul-mates?” The German asks.
The copper head puffs his cheeks again, causing Ludwig to blush again, before frowning. “I only wish to believe in them. I’m not really a romantic and I’ve been too shy to flirt most where I was from. What my brother doesn’t know is that I-.” He stops himself from saying anything further, biting his bottom lip. “N-Never mind.”

Ludwig can only guess what Feli has gone through. He remembers bits and pieces that he’s learned about the other – living on the streets and begging or searching for scraps to live for as long as they have without their grandfather. He closes his eyes, trying not to imagine other ways of getting currency to buy food. He can’t see Feli selling himself like a prostitute or hooker, but everyone always has a few skeletons in their closet. The German hums and nods in understanding, not needing to hear it.

When the blond doesn’t push for anything or speak, Feli softly speaks up. “I dream of the possibilities for happiness. I can only hope that my soul-mate will make me happy, that they will love me, care for me, and accept me as I am no matter where I’m from or what I’ve done in my past.”

Blue eyes stare at Feliciano as the Italian’s gaze is glued to the table. Ludwig smiles a little, feeling how he agrees and wishes for the same. He hums. “I wish for the same.” Feli glances up, amber eyes showing for once. Ludwig’s heart skips a beat before he continues speaking. “But in order for us to be certain, we must be willing to share those parts of ourselves we are too self-conscious and afraid of.” The German wishes to grasp one of Feli’s hands, an urge that he fights off as it’s not like him at all to act first in this regard. “Even if you have changed and are no longer that person, it is still part of you. You can only hope that this soul-mate you are destined to be with can accept that.”

“I-I’d accept it!” Feli blurts out, blushing instantly after saying it. “That is if, uhm, you wanted to confide in me. For anything. I wouldn’t turn away from you j-just because of your past. I mean, you’re how you are now because of your past, ve, but it doesn’t mean that’s what you’re like still. Like you said, you might have changed and can prove that you have.” He fidgets in his seat as Ludwig stares with wide eyes. “I might not have known you long, but I know I can trust you.” Feli smiles sincerely. “I know you won’t think ill of me or judge too quickly. I might still have doubts considering my, uhm, insecurities, but I just get the feeling you’re not one to judge people so suddenly because of their pasts. If anything, you’d learn more before judging.”

Ludwig doesn’t know how this man, one he’s only known for eleven days and has barely interacted with, can discern that. “We barely keep each other company,” he states with a furrow of his brow. “How can you assume that?”

“Antonio has told me a few things,” Feliciano answers honestly. “He hasn’t told me everything but has mentioned what you felt would be okay for me to know. Just little things about what you’re like and how you were as a kid.” He smiles. “Some of the descriptions remind me of a boy I used to know before he moved. Someone from Germany who stayed in Italy for majority of his childhood before upheaving back to his motherland.”

The Italian continues on as Ludwig thinks how Antonio’s jaw has really loosened up. He’s not angry about Feli knowing some things about him; on the contrary, he’s glad to know that Feli still is willing to speak with him even knowing just a few snippets of his own past. Smiling, Ludwig thinks how he should spend more time with the Italian and learn more about each other. They’ll have to deal with each other until the day they die now so why not? And who knows? Feli might possibly be the soul-mate his mark is filled for.
This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 18: Clubs

Chapter Summary

Spring Day 29
Ivan speaks with his sisters and learns a shocking truth.

Spring Day 35
Matthew makes a new friend who will help him train to be a better Ace.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ivan embraces his eldest sister in his arms when she comes over to him. He’s still feeling shock as he never thought his sisters would be in this world. It confuses him as to how it’s possible since he grew up with them and their parents in the other world. Blinking, he gazes at the both of them, obvious confusion expressed on his face.

“How are you both here?”

“We originally came from here,” Irunya states as she sheepishly chuckles. “I know must be confusing, but we’re the same sisters.”

Natalia snorts, crossing her arms as she glares at her brother’s companion. “Your story is different from other ones who came from worlds. You were born here, like us, but sent away by magic.”

“Our parents knew main reason for sending you away. I know little.” Irunya smiles kindly at Matthew. “You must be Ace. I am Irunya, Ivan’s elder sister, and this is Natalia, his younger sister.”

“Matthew,” the Canadian says, nodding towards them. “It’s nice to meet you.”

Ivan glances down at the other man. “If you do not mind, I will speak with my sisters. You may do as you want.”

“Okay.” Matthew thinks as he wonders how Ivan can get a hold of him. He waves his hand in the air and offers a small thin whistle fashioned for calling dogs to the Russian. The sisters gape in surprise as it came out of thin air and he chuckles. “If you need me, just blow this whistle. I made it specifically so I can hear it as well as Kuma.”

The beige haired man nods and takes the whistle with a polite smile. “I will keep hold of it. Thank you.” He watches Matthew pick up Kumajiro and go before he pockets the whistle, turning to his sisters. “We must talk.”

“Of course.” Irunya nods in understanding. “Where to, Ivan?”

He leads them to his office and tells them to sit on the sofa. He takes up his spot in his chair and moves the papers set there aside. Focusing on his sisters, he laces his fingers together and leans his elbows on his desk. There’s no need for words to start the conversation as Irunya sits straight and angles herself to face her brother.
“We do not know much but I will tell all I know,” she starts. “As a child, I knew our parents often left this world to go into another often. They asked the help of a witch, one with a black heart, and over years she soon asked for payment of her time. Our parents had nothing to offer so she demanded the next child they bear to be hers to raise.” She frowns, eyes glancing down and focusing on the edge of Ivan’s desk. “We did not wish for that so we asked the help of a good witch to send you away when you were born. The witch was angry and cursed us but hasn’t been seen since.”

“Sounds like you know more than you say, Nya,” Natalia grumbles as she rolls her eyes. “Don’t forget the after affects.”

“Ah, yes, well…” Irunya trails off, chuckling a little. “Our parents mentioned how the curse would mark their children, a marking of time that counts down until the day she meets us and ends our lives. I do not believe that’s what the curse is as we cannot find any numbers on our bodies.”

Ivan raises an eyebrow as he listens and processes this. He doesn’t believe a word of it, but being what’s been going on since he arrived, there’s a possibility that what they say is true. He gazes at the top of his desk in thought, wondering if he ever came upon a number before on his body. He might have to ask Matthew for help on that, he thinks.

“When it comes to curse, I believe it doesn’t have to be skin,” Natalia speaks up. She sits straight as the other two glance at her. “I found mine a few months ago. Before Toris proposed.”

“Natalia, why didn’t you say before?” Irunya’s face fills with worry. “Where is it?”

The youngest sibling opens her mouth and sticks her tongue out, lifting it up so that they can see a number on it. 1648. Irunya frets over this, hysterical about the curse being true. Ivan narrows his eyes as he stands up. He pulls out the whistle from his pocket and blows it so that Matthew can come. If his youngest has it, Irunya most likely has it as well. He doesn’t care if he has it, he’s known that there isn’t much for him in life to begin with, but his sisters are important.

“Speaking of Toris,” Ivan starts as he stashes the whistle away again. Locking eyes with Natalia, he seriously stares at her, “when will I meet him?”

She sighs. “Sooner than I would like.”

A knock on the door has them look at it and see Matthew stand in the doorway. His polar bear friend sits at his heels, looking bored and irritated. The Ace waves with a shy smile as he steps inside the room.

“You called?”

Ivan nods. “You mentioned have different sights.” Matthew nods to reconfirm that fact. “Can you use them to find something on us? Numbers. Like a tattoo.”

“Uhm,” Matthew looks unsure as he furrows his brows. “I can always try.” Ivan motions for him to do so, asking him to check Irunya first. Matthew closes his eyes, switching his sight from the colorful world to that of a gray kind of thermal registration. His lavender irises change color as he does this, turning a light gray as he gazes towards the three others in the room. This is a form of his x-ray vision he uses but specifically in search of something. He instantly notices four digits on Natalia’s underside of her tongue. “1,648 on the underside of Natalia’s tongue,” he states aloud. His eyes go to Irunya and he searches for her number. “1,649 on the inside of Irunya’s stomach.” The woman’s arms move over her midsection as he glances at Ivan, studying him though he instantly sees it. “1,687 on your heart, Ivan.” He blinks, eyes turning lavender again.
Ivan scowls at the man, causing Matthew to jump in fear of doing something wrong. “Why is mine longer than theirs?”

“I-I don’t know?” Matthew answers, shrinking away. Kumajiro growls at Ivan as he steps in front of the Canadian. Matt scolds the animal only to get a stubborn answer.

Irunya gazes from the growling cub to her brother. “Do not send your anger at him. He is not cause of this.”

Ivan glares down at his desk, hand turning into a fist as he rests his weight on it while leaning on his desk. “You are right. I apologize, Matthew. My anger is wrongly directed.”

“It’s okay. Uhm,” he fidgets as he crouches to pick up his polar bear friend, “is that all?”

“For now, yes. You may go.” He waves his companion away and waits until the door is closed again. Sighing, he looks at his sisters, remorse on his face. “My sisters, I will try for you to live longer than your counters.” He silently vows that he will ensure their safety, even if it means posting guards around them.

“We have four years. There should be time for us to discover how to reverse this curse.” Natalia shrugs, standing from the couch. “I must be going. Toris is waiting for me.”

“Tell him I wish to see him.”

“I will not have you scare him away.” She glares at him. “I have finally found someone who loves me and is not scared of me. You will not take my happiness away.”

Ivan straightens his lips as he feels a metaphorical stab in his heart. “I would never do that.”

“Yes you would because I would have done the same were I still in love with you.” She stares at him before turning on her heel. “I will be out. Do not bother calling for me.”

Natalia’s hair flips and splays in the air as she turns, her dress billowing just the same. She leaves the room and Irunya sighs, frowning at her brother. He responds with a “what?” expression only for his sister to sigh again and stand up, hands still over her stomach. She nods to him, mumbling that she will be going home and if he needs anything he’ll find her working on the ground. She takes care of the farms below and mustn’t be tardy for any kind of harvesting.

When he’s alone, Ivan sighs, flopping into his chair. He covers his face with a hand, dragging it down as he thinks over the conversation. There has never been an even ground with Natalia. She’s hard headed like he can be. Ever since she fell out of love with him, it’s been worse to try and get along with her. He wishes he could try harder but he knows nothing will work. Not unless he accepts the changes happening with her and stop being so overprotective like he wants to be. Another long sigh escapes him as he turns towards the archway leading to the balcony. What a day, he thinks.

♣

“What a day,” Matthew exhales as he leans against a tree next to the sunflower field. He wipes his brow with the back of his arm, sweat sticking to his skin before he wipes it on his shirt. “They’ve been doing well since I conjured them up. Right, Kumasachi?”

“Who?” The polar bear reflexively asks as he rests in the shade of the trees.

“Matthew,” the Canadian answers with a chuckle.
It’s been six days since they arrived and Ivan reunited with his sisters. Matthew has been learning from Queen Elizabeta his duties as an Ace and how to defend himself or attack a foe, doing any tasks that Ivan asks of him, befriending the people in the tree village that notice him, and tending to the sunflower garden he created for the king. The days have been going quickly because of his busy schedule but he doesn’t mind. He enjoys it. He just wishes he had a friend that he could associate with more than just a small visit or hello-goodbye encounters.

As he thinks about how little his list of friends is in this world, he hears a snap to his right. Gazing in the direction of the sound, he notices a portal open up with a brown haired man tumbling out of it before it closes up. The stranger tries to balance himself out but ends up falling on his face and exclaims an expression of pain. Matthew instantly lurches from his relaxed position and hurries over to the fallen man.

“Hello? Are you okay?” He crouches down and inspects the man, blinking so his eyes turn light gray. He makes sure that the person isn’t hurt, nothing broken, before blinking once more for his normal vision. He extends his hands out to shake the man a little and receives a small moan in response. “Did you get hurt somewhere?”

“I’ll be fine,” the man ekes out as he waves one of his hands at Matthew. He stays in this position for a moment longer, sighing before he decides to sit up. “I was just running and lost my balance. I’m okay.” The man casts a smile at the Canadian and Matthew feels himself smiling back.

“What were you running from?” He offers a hand for the stranger to take. He helps the brunet up and watches the man pick up a form of spear and shield on the ground. He marvels at the weapons, wondering if he’ll ever pick out a weapon himself. “And why are you carrying those? Are you prepared for a fight to come?”

The man chuckles a little as he puts his partisan spear across his back with the shield. “I have to be since I’m a Joker. Specifically the king’s Joker, but well, I believe you’re doing most of my job for him.” He then extends a hand to shake. “I’m Toris, one of the three Jokers of Clubs.”

“Oh!” Matthew smiles sheepishly as he shakes Toris’s hand. “I’m Matthew. It’s nice to meet you. Sorry for taking some of your jobs. I wouldn’t be doing them but Ivan seems to prefer asking me to do things. I don’t mind much but maybe if I need help with a task I can come to you?”

“Absolutely.” Toris nods.

They separate their hands and Matthew can’t help but ask. “Are you the same Toris that is engaged to Ivan’s little sister?”

Toris nervously laughs as he scratches his cheek. “Yes.”

The Canadian thinks for a moment. “You wouldn’t happen to be running from Ivan, would you?” Toris sheepishly smiles and that’s enough of an answer for Matthew. The pale blond chuckles. “I can always help you hide but I don’t want to be a target of his wrath…”

“Oh no! You don’t need to do that. I can hide during my patrols.”

“Patrols?” Matthew gazes at the other with a questioning stare. “Why must you patrol?”

“Well, no one knows if a kingdom will attack.” Toris shrugs as he looks out to the savanna which separates Clubs from three other kingdoms. “We’ve been in an era of peace, but that doesn’t mean little struggles on the inside won’t spark something. One small thing can set off a war.” He hums. “I also feel of use when patrolling. Not much usually happens besides the Joker of Diamonds
visiting occasionally, but one can never be too cautious.”

Matt stares at the man before turning his gaze on the expanse of green land in front of him. “I understand,” he mumbles. This makes him ponder of his title as Ace some more and he nods to himself. With determination, he feels that he can become the Ace that Clubs needs to protect this beautiful kingdom. “Would you ever mind training with me some days if you come across me during your patrols?”

Toris blinks and peers at the other. “Training?”

“Yes.” Matthew nods. “I’m not from this world, as you most likely know. In my world I didn’t need to physically train for much to protect myself. Queen Elizabeta has been teaching me the ways of the sword and other weapons since I’ve come here but she can’t do it all the time.” His expression turns serious. “I wish to be an Ace that this kingdom can be proud of.”

The Lithuanian smiles. “Okay. I’ll help you train, but swords aren’t entirely my specialty.”

“That’s okay.” Matt smiles back. “The more weapons I can use, the better Captain of the Guard and Ace I’ll be.”

“Would you like to train today while we’re here, then?”

“Only if it won’t crimp your schedule.”

“Not at all.” Toris pulls out his lance and shield. “Prepare yourself, Matthew. I won’t hold back too much.”

“Maybe holding back a little would be okay?” The Canadian chuckles a little since he’s a novice at every weapon. He extends his hand out and wills for a certain weapon to appear. The pole of a lance sizzles into existence from the palm of his hand and continues to form outward until finished. Matt quickly takes hold of it before it falls in the air and he positions himself in a ready stance. He brings his free arm up in front of him and a shield appears the same way as the lance. “Shall we begin?”

Impressed by the power the Canadian holds, Toris gapes for a moment before shaking himself into focus. “Yes.” He positions himself in a battle ready stance as well. “All the luck blessed upon you.”

Matthew laughs slightly. “And you as well.”

The two instantly swing their lances down, the weapons clashing between them. They back off and run in a circle of each other before jetting towards one another for another attack. Matthew remembers some action movies that Alfred watched a lot so some things he can recreate without a problem. It’s just his muscles that need work and his body that needs to be trained. With the help of his possible new friend, he can possibly achieve the right and honor of being the Ace of Clubs.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 19: Joker

Chapter Summary

Gilbert meets the Jokers from each kingdom, learning about what he's supposed to do as one himself and other things about the tattoos everyone of importance has.

Spring Day 36 continued

Chapter Notes

I have made a specific time system for this story. I have the timeline plotted out so if anyone wants to know what chapter happens when, just comment about it and I'll post a chapter with the timeline.

Instead of a calendar system with 12 months, it'll be a seasonal system where each season is is 91/92 days long. They do conglomerate 28-31 days as months and 7 days as a week, but it's based on Seasons. The months have no names.

I have the chapters this way so that it makes it more interesting. Nothing really conflicts with each other so it's fine. The only time things will merge and start being around the same times/current is when I get to Spring Day 61. The most likely longest chapter or chapter split in two. I hope you're eager for more in the near future!

After passing through Matthias’s portal, Gilbert was given a grand tour of the Joker Kingdom. He met up with some locals that the Dane knows personally, sparingly noticed the jack and ace roaming around, and found a good place to call his home when he comes to this kingdom. When Lukas and Emil were in their line of sight, Matthias had instantly gone over to chat with the two, introduced them to Gilbert, and then proceeded to flirt with the Norwegian. In response, Lukas blasted the wheat blond man back to the center of the village.

“Do ignore that fool,” Lukas states after dusting his hands off of Mat’s energy. “He doesn’t know what he says.”

“I do, too!” Mat calls from the other side of another portal he’s made. He laughs as he steps through to rejoin the other three, hoisting up his axe on his shoulder to pose like nothing had hurt him. “I’m the head Joker, here, so I know what I’m doing and saying.”

“Being a joker is not as important as our own jobs.”

“Be one of us for a day and you’d say otherwise.”

“I still have no fucking clue what it is we do.” Gilbert gives the Dane a look with his arms crossed. “The awesome me doesn’t have all day to be dragged around like a doll. I have a home I want to move into and a bed to acquaint with.”
“Right.” Mat chuckles sheepishly. “We’re doing that next.”

“This is why you would fail at our jobs.” Lukas sniffs and nods to Gilbert as he turns away. “Let’s go Emil. We have that conference to make.”

Emil nods to the other two before following after his brother. Mat leans on his axe and watches them go, a near mock love struck look on his face. The German rolls his eyes and chuckles, uncrossing his arms as he lightly nudges the other out of his stupor.

“Come on, lover-boy. I’d like to get this over with so I can go home.”

Mat shakes his head and blinks a few times before smiling wide. “Of course! Come with me! I’ll introduce you to the rest of the gang.” He picks up his axe and slices the air, opening the portal up to a dark room with a medium sized wooden round table in the middle. “I’m not sure if everyone will be there, but I did send them a message that you’d be coming.”

Gilbert nods and walks on through the portal, not as wary as he was before since he’s done it multiple times during this day. He enters the room and notices one lone artificial beam of light pointed at the table with several chairs around it. On the walls are torches lit with white flames, brightening the room up a little with a calm atmosphere. The room itself is also circular, which kind of freaks the German out since it reminds him of some dark memories. He shakes himself out of it quickly before diving deep into his past and focuses on the stone walls. There are no doors.

“Why are there no doors?” Gilbert turns to Matthias. “Isn’t this place supposed to be a meeting hall for all of us?”

“Yeah, well, it’s no ordinary meeting hall.” The Dane walks towards one of the walls with some short angled hooks. He sets his axe head in between one set before heading over to the table and pulling up a chair for himself. “It’s specifically only for us Jokers, so we can only get to it through our portals.” He sits in his chair and kicks up his feet on the table, hands behind his head. “Any next gen Jokers that come up are mentored by the last previous gen Joker so there’s always one Joker who knows where this place is. It’s directly under the throne room, six hundred feet down.”

“What?!” At the large number, Gil’s eyes widen in surprise. “How can we- How is that- What?” He fumbles with his multiple questions, trying to process the information.

“I know. Crazy, right?” Mat grins then turns as he hears a tear of reality. “Looks like they’re coming now.”

Around the room, different colored rips appear from nowhere. Gilbert watches as each one opens up at a different time only for the other jokers to walk on through. From the yellow portal is an androgynous looking person with shoulder length blond hair, mischievous green eyes, a wicked playful grin, and a skirt outfit fit for the desert climate. Coming from the blue portal is a small child with short blond hair, blue eyes, bushy eyebrows, a grin only a child can pull off, and a sailor boy outfit. Next there are three separate green portals that produce different men wearing green garments of different designs - one with brown hair and kind greens eyes, a second with short blond hair and calculating hazel like eyes behind some glasses, and a third shorter man with messy blond hair and nervous blue-violet eyes. After crossing through their portals, they go over to the wall where Matthias hung his axe. They take out their own weapons and hang them in the places made just for those weapons, and then they all walk to their respective seats, sitting down and staring at the new joker to join them.

“It’s, like, so totally nice to meet you,” the yellow joker says with a flirty grin. They cross
their legs and lean their head on their hand as their arms rest on the table. “It’s about time we got a Joker of Hearts. It’s been, like, a pain in the ass to cover for that kingdom.”

“That may be true, but their queen has always been so kind,” the only brunet in the room states with a soft smile. “He rarely asks for any of us to do anything.”

“It’s also sometimes fun to mess around with him.” The child grins wide, a prankster spirit evidently inside him.

“I don’t like going into hearts, a-anyway.” The shorter club joker shivers. “The autumn forest i-is nice but I don’t like the mount-tain.”

“There’s nothing to fear, Raivis,” the one with glasses assures the other, “for that volcano has been dormant a long time. I’ve calculated it time and again but it won’t wake for another five decades. Unless something forcefully wakes it up, of course.”

Matthias takes his feet off the table and sits right on his chair. He grins at Gilbert, who just stares at all the new faces in the room. “Take a seat, Gilbert. We’ll introduce ourselves then get to describing our jobs for you.”

As the German takes his seat, the child snorts and crosses his arms, slouching in his chair. “Job? What job? All I do is play around with people in Spades and swim every day.”

“And I’m so totally over running errands. I’ve been making myself productive with fashion designs that will change this century.” They check their nails and purse their lips in thought. “I also need to find rare plants that will help with cosmetics.”

“Yeah, well, now that all of our positions in each kingdom are filled, we need to stay at attention.” Mat scowls at the two, who straighten in their seats a little. “All of your kings are now here. There no doubt will be days they call upon you. Even the queens.”

“Not mine,” the child says with a happy smile. “The king in my land is so easy-going and cool! If there’s anything he’s ordered me to do, it’s to do pranks. I like him! But the queen is such a stick in the mud.”

Sighing, the Dane shakes his head. “I understand. We’ve all been pretty lax lately but now’s the time to get our heads in the game. First, introduce yourselves to our newest member.”

The first to introduce themself is the brunet from Clubs. He smiles at Gilbert as he stands up for the other two. “My name is Toris. I am one of the three Joker of Clubs. My partners and friends here are Eduard and Raivis.”

“You may just call me Ed if you wish.” The Estonian nods a greeting while pushing his glasses up his nose.

“I-I don’t really have a nickname, but you can call me what you like.” Raivis smiles shyly, almost curling in on himself as he’s not one for being around a lot of people.

As Toris sits down, the androgynous person grins and scoots over towards the man so they can hang off his arm. “This man is, like, mine, so don’t think about taking him.”

“Feliks, you know I’m engaged to Natalia, right?” Toris flushes but doesn’t push his friend away.

“The girl be crazy.” Feliks pouts a little but soon giggles and backs off. “I’m just messin’
with you, hun.” They narrow their eyes at Gilbert after giving Toris some space. “But seriously, you harm this beautiful child and I will end you.”

Gilbert raises an eyebrow at the protectiveness, smiling a little as he thinks how Antonio gets like that sometimes. The Spaniard is known to be very overbearing with those he cares about, those he considers family. Gil could be the same, but he doesn’t have anyone to protect anymore. If anything, he’s the one being protected majority of the time. This makes him feel guilty for a moment but he mentally shakes himself enough and shoves those thoughts away. Glancing at the last one who he doesn’t know yet, he waits for the kid to say their name.

When the child doesn’t speak up, Mat sighs and leans over, taking the kid’s hat off to ruffle his hair up before placing the accessory back on his head. “This here is Peter,” he says as Peter whines and glares at him. “He’s a little snot but fun to prank others with.”

“I am not a snot!” Peter retorts, huffing as he crosses his arms in a pout.

“Well you’re no angel so you must be a snot.” Feliks grins with a giggle.

As they bicker, Gilbert smiles and leans back into his chair, resting an ankle on his knee as he crosses his arms. “I’m the awesome Gilbert from another universe,” he states, quieting the table. He basks in the attention for a moment before continuing. “Seems I’m here to be what you guys keep calling the Joker of Hearts. I don’t know why, but I feel like I fit in here. Hopefully it will be as awesome as my bones are telling me.”

Matthias laughs. “I like you.” He smiles at Gilbert then nods. “All right, let’s get down to business!” Clapping his hands, he stands up and sends a broad smile to the group. “Why don’t you all tell Gilbert the different things that you do as a Joker?”

“Feliks and Peter have already told you what they do as a joker,” Toris starts, “so we’ll tell you what we do.”

“I serve under the Jack, Roderich, as a researcher and errand boy.” Eduard pulls out an inkwell pen and notepad from a hidden breast pocket. “I’ve always been good with doing small services that aren’t all that hard to do, so serving under him is easy. Sometimes I feel like a babysitter when he goes on a walk, though. He doesn’t have much of a sense for direction so someone has to always look out for him if he’s out on his own.” He begins writing as he lets the next one describe what he does.

Raivis smiles meekly as he fidgets in his seat, eyes staring at the center of the table. “I help the queen, Elizabeta. She’s r-really nice. Uhm, she doesn’t ask much of me besides doing some small chores or errands if she isn’t a-able to do them herself.”

“As for me, I go between the two but have been used often as a lookout.” Toris sighs with a small smile. “I keep check of who enters and exits the borders of our forest. More than not, I’m stationed in the savanna that separates the forest around Jokers and the forest of Clubs.”

“He gets a lot of ‘me’ time because of this, but now that the king is here, he’ll be serving under him and doing his bidding.” Feliks rolls their eyes. “I totally think it’s a shame. You won’t be able to visit me or your woman as much now.” They pout.

“Not necessarily.” Toris chuckles a little at his friend. “The new ace has already become the king’s favorite to order around. I’m not entirely sure why, but Matthew doesn’t say no.”

Matthias hums. “That’s interesting. I wonder if they’re connected somehow. Old friends?
Lovers?"

"They just met in the Tunnel, but it seems King Ivan has made it a job of his to keep Matthew either at his side at all times or doing whatever he asks of him. It’s peculiar, but I won’t complain. I’d rather be on everyone’s good side than to squeeze myself in where I’m not wanted yet.”

“Well, keep doing what you’ve been doing until he calls for you.” Mat nods before realizing something. “Wait, I’m surprised he hasn’t done anything with you yet. You’re engaged to his little sister.”

“Right.” Toris pales a little. “I, uh, might have been intentionally avoiding him. I haven’t officially met him yet, but I’ve been keeping my eyes on him. Just in case I’m needed.”

Their lead Joker hums at that with a knowing grin. “Do whatever you need to do, Toris.” Mat chuckles before glancing at Feliks and Peter. “Now you two better share something more than just sitting back and doing whatever you want.”

Gilbert listens as they tell him about what they do for their title of Joker. As he keeps track of what it means to be a Joker, he notices the marks on Feliks and Peter to show how they’re the jokers of their set kingdoms. On Feliks’s upper face, at the ends of their eyes, is a yellow joker split in half. From a distance, the mark looks like butterfly wings on their temples. Up close, they’re really a contortionist like joker split in half to be on either side of his face. It makes them look like they’re wearing make-up, but it’s obvious they’re not. As for Peter, his joker is in the center of his left hand palm. It’s a zaffre blue joker that’s sticking its tongue out while hiding something behind it’s back, an obvious yellow that appears to be in the form of a scepter. Gilbert cocks his head to the side a bit as he wonders why there’s a streak of yellow when he thinks about the legend of soul-mates for Jokers. Could this kid actually have a soul-mate this young in his life? Now Gil’s wondering if he has a soul-mate.

“I think you can get the glorified picture of what we do, right Gilbert?” Mat grins at the newcomer.

“Here’s a summary of the different things we do.” Eduard hands some notes he took for the other over. “If you have any questions, you can ask any of us at any time.”

The platinum blond takes the notes and skims over them. “Thanks.” He locks eyes with Mat as he pockets the notes. “So, I’m supposed to get a weapon next then I can go home?”

“That’s right.” Mat stands and smiles at the rest of the table. “You guys can head back home now. I’ll take over from here.”

The other five nod and get up from the table, going over to retrieve their weapons and head on out through their portals. Once they’re alone, Gilbert gets up and grabs his bag. “Before we get my weapon, I have a few questions for you.”

“Shoot.” The Dane goes over and grabs his axe, waiting for the questions before they leave.

“Now, I’m just going to say this out of curiosity and not because I’m a romantic,” Gil starts, gazing around since he is slightly embarrassed to ask such a question. “Is it possible for Jokers to have soul-mates that are not from the Joker Kingdom?”

“Oh, absolutely. Peter does.” Mat grins. “He doesn’t know this, but his soul-mate is the Queen of Diamonds.”
“How do you know that?”

“I studied it enough to notice the yellow scepter with a Q at the end.”

“And for those in the other kingdoms? How do they know if they have a soul-mate?”

“Initially, they don’t.” Mat shrugs. “Peter didn’t have that yellow streak on his palm until after he saw Queen Lillian. She’s never seen him, though, so I doubt there’s any irregular mark on hers. See, when it comes to the other kingdoms, they have boring old marks that are the symbol of their kingdom and the letter in the center. Usually the letter is clear, which will show their skin tone. I’ve seen some of them filled before with different colors depending on the kingdom their soul-mate is from, but those were in books, not real life.”

Gilbert nods, taking that in. “So nothing would change until we actually meet our soul-mate?”

“For those not in Joker and us who have no soul-mates within Joker, yes.”

He processes this then asks his next question. “From what I’m hearing, it seems some of the people that came back have already been here longer than I have. I mean, I just got here today and I know that the people I was with came in the Tunnel the same time even if we were separated. Why does it sound like there are a few days difference?”

“Oh, that.” Mat chuckles as he gazes at the ceiling. “When coming through the Tunnel, I’ve heard that sometimes it will bring you to a certain day different from all the rest. Like, the first ones to actually come through the Tunnel were King Alfred, Queen Arthur, and Lovino Ace for Spades. That was…three weeks ago?”

“Wait, the dirty mouthed Italian came through before I did?” Gilbert laughs a little at the memory of Lovino but wonders just how that is really possible. Magic. Right. That’s a thing. “Mein Gott, I bet he’s pissed as hell.”

The Dane grins. “A few days after them the King of Diamonds, Francis, appeared. Two weeks ago Hearts got their King, Jack, and Ace. You’ll be happy to know that Ludwig, Feliciano, and Antonio are in that kingdom. Which means you’ll be working with them.”

“Really?” Gilbert’s eyes widen, glee shimmering within them as he realizes what that means. He’s the Joker of Hearts, the Joker who works for the Heart Kingdom. He’ll be able to see his brother and best friend again. They’ll be together again. “That’s so awesome!” Then he thinks of how Feliciano and Lovino are separated, wondering if that has happened to others. “It’s a shame that the brothers are separated, though.”

“They see each other during the Five Kingdoms meetings we have every season on the 61st day.” Mat shrugs. “Anyway, a week ago the Clubs finally got King Ivan and Matthew Ace. Now today, you came, so everyone is here and hopefully no wars will be made.”

Disregarding the latter comment, Gilbert focuses on another thing out of interest. “I know we’re specifically stationed in our own kingdoms, but can we visit the other kingdoms?”

“Sure. Just don’t cause too much of a disturbance where people will want to rattle you and use you for a reason to go to war. Trust me, if you read the history books, past kings have been known to have a short fuse and wage war for fun.”

“What’s with this war? War this, war that. Are you expecting one to happen?”
“No.” Matthias laughs, hiding his uneasiness that is only budding up because of Emil and Norge’s comments a month ago about activating the Tunnel and bringing those missing back home. “So! If you don’t have any more questions we can get you your weapon and set up your homes!”

As Mat creates a portal, Gilbert feels as if there’s something the other is keeping from him. He’d press for it but right now he just wants to get his weapon that can conjure up portals, get situated in his new homes, and meet his brother at the Hearts castle. After crossing through the portal, Mat makes it quick as Gilbert selects an old but sturdy broadsword as a weapon with a long, thin pole staff a monk would use for a secondary weapon. The German is then ushered to his home in Joker so he knows where it is, then taken to his home in Hearts. Once his leash is finally let go, Gilbert rushes towards the castle his brother lives in. Boy, he can’t wait to see Ludwig again and get up to speed with what he’s missed. Hopefully their lives will be better here than back in the world they were born in.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.
Chapter 20: Spades

Chapter Summary

Peter informs everyone of the recent events in the other kingdoms.

Spring 30

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You are driving me mad, you little cretin!”

“Careful Peter! We don’t want the queen to blow a gasket!”

“But what’s the fun of holding back? I’m gonna do what I want to him!”

“For fuck’s sake, Arthur, just use some of that stupid magic you brag about!”

“I would if he gave me back my wand!”

“You mean this weird looking twig? This is seriously your wand? I wonder how durable…” Crack “…whoops.”

“Oh, you’ve done it now you twit.”

Alfred chuckles quietly to himself as he watches the regular scene in front of him. Ever since meeting the little Joker of Spades, Peter has become a terror for both Arthur and Lovino. To the blond American, it’s hilarious. He knows that he should take this all seriously but why be so serious when nothing right now needs that kind of attentive seriousness. As King of Spades, he will need to set an example and become the man that he knows his parents would have wanted him to be. He’ll need to push aside his childish ways and be an adult, but he knows that it won’t be easy. He’s a child at heart and everyone that knows him will testify to that.

As a shout comes from the child in the group, Alfred blinks out of his thoughts. He grins, watching as Arthur has successfully frozen Peter without using his wand. Magic is such an amazing skill to witness and having his queen with said skill is awesome. They might as well be the most powerful kingdom in this land. For Al, he’ll use these powers to protect instead of creating disasters.

“Alfred, stop day dreaming and scold this child, will you?!” Arthur grumps as he makes sure the young Sealander stays frozen.

The young king sighs and stands from his seat at the dining table. It was only breakfast and Peter was already at it. True, it’s a comedy show that Alfred can watch day in and day out, but for now, he’ll concede to his queen’s wishes.

“Peter,” Alfred starts in sternness, “I know it’s fun to tease and prank people, but you’ve got to learn where the line is.” He sits on the edge of the table in front of the petrified kid that hangs in the air. Crossing his arms, he smiles at Peter. “Truth be told, I enjoy the show you give me with riling these two up.”
“Are you fucking serious? You think this is a play for you?!”

“We are not a sit-com for your pleasure, git.”

The American chuckles, gives the two a grin with double meaning, then continues with his lecture. “I may enjoy it at times but there are moments where I know you have crossed the line. Like today, with Arthur’s wand, that’s way over the line.” He reaches for said object, taking it out of the boy’s grasp easily. “A wizard’s wand is their everything. It’s not just an ordinary tool nor is it a toy. The wand always chooses it’s witch or wizard. It’s very special. Kind of like that anchor you’ve got there. Would you like it if someone stole your anchor and broke it?”

Though the boy is frozen, Alfred can read the emotion in Peter’s eyes. “Nn-nn,” is all Peter can say in his petrified state.

“Then I think you understand how mad Arthur must feel since you broke something very special to him.” Alfred motions for the Brit to come over and grab his wand. Arthur does, slowly taking it back as he stares in awe at the other blond. “You can fix it, right?”

“Of course. There’s a basic spell even you should know about.” Arthur huffs, flushing as he holds his wand and mutters a few words. A lavender glow surrounds his wand and it’s good as new when the light disappears. “Easy.”

“Good.” Alfred smirks when he witnesses the magic happen. “So,” he turns back to Peter, “I believe you owe Arthur an apology when he thaws you out. Okay?”

Peter hums and his eyes glance over at the Englishman. With a sigh, Arthur unfreezes the boy and Alfred catches the kid before he can slam against the floor like his anchor does. Peter wriggles in his king’s hold before jumping away and picking up his anchor that shrinks so it’s pocket sized. He pouts, turning to the side as he crosses his arms.

“I’m sorry for accidentally breaking your wand.”

Alfred is about to say that Peter should face Arthur but the Brit stops him. With a small smile, Arthur nods to the boy. “I accept your apology.”

“Now that that’s done, why the heck are we here?” Lovino leans back into his chair, as he was watching the whole thing unfold from it and refused to get up to do anything.

“Oh yeah, there’s a reason we were called here besides for breakfast.” Alfred pushes off the table and goes to his chair at the head. “Yao, what brings us together for today?”

The silent Chinese man waits for everyone to take their seats, including Peter though the kid opts to use his chained anchor as a swing from the ceiling like usual, before he beings. “We have recently received reports regarding the other kingdoms, aru. It seems the other three have finally filled their own missing spots, aru, and I wanted Peter to announce those that he knows of from each kingdom.” Yao gazes up at the child. “Peter, if you would.”

Peter groans a little with a pout, hugging the neck of his anchor while swinging his legs to-and-fro. He glances at the four men below him. “I don’t know every person that’s come through quite yet. Heck, we’re still missing one from our own kingdom.”

“Wait, I thought this was your kingdom?” Arthur furrows his brows up at the kid.

“It is, but it’s more… What’s that word that Mat calls it?” Peter sifts through his memories, coming up with bits and pieces of the idea he’s trying to say. “It’s more like- Okay, so, I believe Mat
said something about the kingdoms we are messengers for are basically our jurisdiction? Like, we
cover our own kingdoms though we originate from the Joker Kingdom.”

“Oh my god, there’s a kingdom full of you dudes?!” Alfred excitedly taps the table with his
hands. “Fucking rad. I wanna meet them all!”

Peter laughs as he sits straight on his weapon. “None of them are as cool as Mat or me.”

“Whatever, just get on with it.” Lovino rolls his eyes.

The child sticks his tongue out at the Italian before slouching against his anchor again.
“Ay, wut’s bein’ goin’ on besides our kingdoms being filled again. The last report we got was these two blokes coming into Clubs just yesterday. Mat doesn’t like the feeling he gets from their King, Ivan I think he said? But he thinks that their new Ace will be interesting considering he has some weird super powers. Kind of like you, Al.” Peter looks directly at his king with a smile. “Mat said the guy can summon anything his heart so desires! Is that true? Do you know anyone like that?”

Almost instantly Alfred stands up from his seat, both hands on the table and eyes shaking
with hope. “Are you serious?”

Surprised from the reaction, Peter nods, smile disappearing as he feels nervous. “I, uh, yeah. I’m…serious. Mat doesn’t lie, so…”

“Mattie! That has to be Mattie!” Alfred gazes at the table in front of him, a weary smile on his
face. “Oh my god, he’s okay. He’s really okay. I- I need to see him!” He snaps his head up again.
“Peter, take me to see him! Please! I need to see my brother!”

“I-!”

“Now hold on! If you’re going to see your brother, then I should, too! I don’t even know
where Vene is!” Lovino scowls.

“Uhm-.”

“You two should settle down! Let the boy finish speaking!”

“But I need to see him, Artie. Matt’s the only family I have left now!”

“The same goes for me and Vene! We’re fucking orphans that had to steal to survive!”

“I can understand that, but what-?”

“Aiyah!” Yao shouts as he stands from his seat, quieting the other three. “We all have people
we wish to see, aru. My own brother is the Queen of Hearts but you do not see me complaining, aru,
or requesting Peter to send me off so I can reunite with Kiku. No, aru, I am here because it is my
duty to serve the king and queen of this kingdom.” His eyes bear into the three of them. No one
would know but he is far older than all of them. A wise man that should not be argued with. “I
understand your want of seeing your brothers, aru, but you both have a duty as the King and the Ace
of Spades. You cannot just leave your posts, aru.”

“I could leave the kingdom to Arthur.”

“Hey now-!”
“It would just be a few days visit! What the hell is so wrong with that!?”

“The fact that it is out of our country.” Yao’s stoic gaze shuts them up. “None of you are ready yet to even be the role that you are destined to play, aru. Lovino still needs lessons in weaponry, Arthur and Alfred both need etiquette lessons as well as how their parts are different or similar. There is much to teach and none of you have learned yet.” The Chinese man huffs. “Anyway, you can all meet them at the Five Kingdom’s Seasonal Meetings.”

“What’s that?” Alfred asks as he sits down, finally calming himself.

Yao watches as the other two also settle back in their seats and Peter relaxes against his anchor. “It is a seasonal meeting where all the kingdoms meet, discuss political ideas to keep the peace between every kingdom, and catch up with friends we see four times a year, aru.” He sits back down in his own seat, stuffing his hands up his sleeves. “We can see each other during those meetings and it is worth it, aru. There may come days where some of the kingdoms visit other kingdoms for political conversations, but most of the time we all meet during the Five Kingdom’s Seasonal Meeting.”

Hearing this makes the three newcomers ponder. Alfred still feels the need to visit his brother, verify himself if Matthew is okay, but he understands that there are responsibilities he needs to take care of. Lovino thinks the same, knowing that Veneziano can take care of himself no matter how weak he portrays himself. Arthur only wonders how Francis is faring in comparison to him. He’s not all that worried about the Frenchman since it’s been proven they can both take care of themselves.

“I believe,” Arthur begins as he looks at the other two, “that only in dire need should we visit anyone else. It’s not necessary at this time. We still have so much to learn of our own kingdom; we shouldn’t immediately leave for another kingdom for God knows how long just because we hear our family and friends are there. It’s irresponsible, and being the highest ranks in this system, it would reflect poorly on us all.” He sighs through his nose. “I myself would not mind visiting my friend Francis if I knew where he was, but I know where my focus should be: Here on my kingdom as the…” he trails off, sighing, “Queen of Spades.”

The ashen-blond still dislikes his title of queen as it is more of a feminine title. It’s enough that he’s teased about it constantly by Alfred, but he’s slowly coming to ignore the jabs. If only Alfred and Peter didn’t snicker like they are now.

“I will tear your tongues out if the both of you do not grow up and act like you should.”

“I don’t know why you bother trying to correct those idiots, Art,” Lovino sighs. “They won’t stop no matter how many times you ask kindly.”

“You think that’s him asking kindly?! Did you not hear the threat at all, Lovino?” Alfred balks.

The Italian grins. “Trust me, idiota, I can come up with far worse a threat than that.”

“Oh, do enlighten me.” Arthur grins at the olive toned man. “I’d love to hear your kind of threats.”

Before Lovino can utter a word, Alfred pales from his imagination and stands up quickly from his seat. “I just remembered that Peter and I have something to do! Right Peter?”

Peter is about to ask what he’s talking about until he sees his king’s face. “Oh yeah! Right! I also remember what we’re supposed to be doing now!”
“Good! Then let’s go!”

“Have we even finished-?” Arthur starts, grinning knowingly.

“As the king I formally dismiss everyone for the day!” Alfred shouts out as he bounds toward the door, Peter rushing right behind him.

The other three sit there in puzzlement before Lovino laughs. “Damn, we should threaten him more often!”

“I think he gets queasy around morbidity,” Arthur murmurs.

“And the tongue thing didn’t get him?”

“Maybe he was holding a brave face.”

“Aiyah.” Yao sighs, shaking his head as he excuses himself from the table. “It will be interesting to see how our kingdom will go on with these men running it.”

He leaves the room and the other two remain for some time before leaving themselves. Arthur opts to join Lovino in his lessons of becoming a grand Captain of the Guard, learning how to wield other weapons. He finds it enjoyable and the Italian doesn’t complain as much. The two silently agree that they will become good friends as they train beside each other when Arthur isn’t doing his queenly duties.

Everyone in the Spades Court wonders just how much change will be brought to their kingdom with their other worldly leaders.

Chapter End Notes

This is not beta-ed so there might be mistakes.

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