### Afternoon

**Summary**

A detailed story of Collins and Farrier's relationship from when Collins begins training until after the war has ended.

**Notes**

Hello everyone, this is my first ever fic so be nice! Because the first chapter is setting things up, it's of note that you may want a little RAF history to read this. (ie the levels of training were split into beginner which was independently run, and then intermediate and advanced were officially RAF run) but you may also learn a bit from reading, because I've tried to make it historically accurate to RAF procedure where possible being a big history fan myself!  
Enjoy :)

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Explicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive Warning:</td>
<td>Graphic Depictions Of Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td>M/M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandom:</td>
<td>Dunkirk (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship:</td>
<td>Collins/Farrier (Dunkirk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Farrier (Dunkirk), Collins (Dunkirk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series:</td>
<td>Part 1 of Afternoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats:</td>
<td>Published: 2018-08-13 Completed: 2020-03-09 Chapters: 94/94 Words: 305118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was the last day of March, 1938.

Jack had been looking for work in Scotland for many months, and had finally moved to England for a fresh start. He'd completed the rudimentary training course and had been employed with the RAF for 6 months, before some of the officers began to suspect him of being homosexual. Collins was never good at hiding it, and nobody had every accused him of it before, so in his eyes he was being subtle enough. No longer. They eventually forced it out of him and decided that it could not stand in such a job. Since his record stated he had been expelled from the RAF and since Scotland held everyone's records at every base, no other RAF centres would take him, so he had to move. All of this was of course, illegal. Collins had not broken the law, not done anything with any other men, but in rural Scotland, the law wasn't enforced much and the officers did as they liked. The blonde had completed the independently run civil flying school successfully, but he had already gone into the intermediate school when they found out, so his beginner record, which was separate to the others was clean, only his intermediate was tainted with his expulsion. Collins had no choice but to leave Scotland for England, there he could start again with the intermediate training. He took his civil flight training graduation paper with, but had to destroy the intermediate. He did keep his uniform for some reason or another, he told himself it wasn’t sentiment. Within a week or so of arrival the blonde found RAF Gatwick, smaller than a lot but near to the capital. Plus, it was a college like the famed Cranwell, meaning he'd graduate as a Flying Officer, and also had boarding privileges. Collins' only option was to lie and say he'd only done the beginner training, not attempted intermediate, he didn't want to have to begin again altogether, nor did he have the patience to, so Collins made peace with himself to lie.

The building was tall and square. It was red bricked and had crenellations along the top. There was a black fence made up of long thin poles, sharpened at the top. Collins walked along the footpath until he reached a small gate which was open. It led up a short footpath to a front door, large and made of wood. He knocked on the door of the building and waited for an answer. An older man wearing a navy blazer with several patches sewn onto the sleeves and medals dangling on the breast opened the wooden door and smiled. “Hello young man, what can I do for you?” The man spoke with a gravelly voice and a posh accent, making Collins slightly self-conscious of his thick Scottish one. He fumbled over his words a little, “Hiya, I’d uh, like to apply to join the RAF. I’ve already gone through civil flight training.”

The man chuckled, wondering why this lad was so nervous. “Of course, of course! You’re a long way from home aren’t you son?”

“Yeah uh, not so much work where I’m from, the Depression is even worse up there,” and although it was true, it wasn't the reason he’d moved.

“Good point, why don’t you come in? We just need to do a quick background check and have a look at your certificate, then we'll have you measured for a uniform.” the man said. “Sure thank you, Mr. Uh, I didn’t quite catch yer name.” Collins replied said.

“I didn’t say it son, you may refer to me as Canfield, but my title is Wing Commander.” the man gave a friendly smile,

“And what’s your name?” the man asked, stepping aside to let Collins inside.
“Thank you, Mr Canfield sir, you may refer to me as Collins.” the blonde said, nervously copying Canfield’s words with a smile, an attempt to appear confident though he wasn't feeling it. He walked past Canfield into the building. The older man closed the door behind Jack and walked with him.

“Well it’s very nice to meet you, Mr. Collins.” Canfield shook his hand.

“Now, you’ve got very good timing I must say, first day of training is tomorrow for a new group! Let’s get you through the paperwork and have you measured up, then you might just be lucky enough to join the other lads we’ve got.” Said Canfield. Collins laughed nervously, he knew the term began tomorrow, the reason he’d rushed in today.

“Just lucky I guess sir,” he said,

“Lucky indeed son.” Canfield replied warmly. They walked down a wooden hall with windows on one side and doors on the other. Out the windows Collins could see a dusty quadrant, and realised that he was walking down one wing of a square building around the central quadrant.

“Do ye train out there?” He asked,

“Yes we do, we also have indoor classrooms for the theory, and behind the building is the hangar and runway for the exciting stuff” said Canfield. The older man found it nice that the lad was actually curious about what was going on, most of the new recruits just wanted the uniform as soon as possible. Collins thought to himself, as long as he didn’t do too well at anything, he supposed he could pass as a beginner, it wouldn’t be that hard.

“Now Collins, you’re going to meet the Squadron Leader now, he’s an old friend of mine so be nice to him.” Canfield smiled.

"Yes sir.” Collins replied, though he was more in awe at how beautiful the old building was, in stark contrast to the little more than shed he'd been trained briefly in up in Scotland. They reached the end of the corridor and faced a door which opened into a room which took up one of the corners of the square building. Canfield opened the door to reveal a younger man sitting at a desk writing some paperwork, dressed in a light blue button up with a navy tie, the same colour as Canfield’s blazer.

“I’m a little busy with these files right now Michael, is it urgent?” Then the man looked up into Collins’ inquisitive blue eyes. The man had dark stormy eyes that held a look which appeared to be a mixture of irritation, surprise and curiousity? Collins guessed that the man had thought Canfield entered by himself.

“Who is this?” The man at the desk asked, pointing at Jack with his pen, holding eye contact. Collins liked how his voice sounded, and how his eyes looked, but then he remembered not to think such things because that’s what got him kicked out in the first place, he mentally scorned himself and looked away from the man.

“This is Mr. Collins, Farrier. He would like to apply.” Canfield’s sentence interrupted the uncomfortable eye contact Farrier was giving Collins, the man dropped the impatient look and became more professional upon realising this was a potential new pilot,

“Does he now? Well come with me Mr. Collins, I can check through your file with you now.” The man put his pen down and held his tie to his chest as he stood up. He walked over to Collins and held out his hand to shake, which Jack took,
“I’m Squadron Leader Farrier.” Said Farrier with a small smile. His hands were warm and strong. He let go of the handshake a beat quicker than felt necessary.

“Would there be anything else Canfield? I’m able to check the lad through but I do need to attend to these papers as soon as I can, they’re for the other new recruits.”

“No no by all means do it whenever suits!”

“Thank you Canfield.” Farrier said warmly,

“Of course Farrier, I’ll be back in my office if you need.” And with that, Canfield left and closed the door behind him.

“Now, I trust you have your civil certificate with you now? Medical certificate, all that?” Farrier asked, Collins noticed that he was slightly taller than Farrier.

“Ya, they're folded up a bit but I have 'em,”

“That’s absolutely fine, now come with me into one of the classrooms and we’ll sit down and go through some things”

“Right, thank you” Jack answered. Farrier turned and opened the door for Jack, waited for him to exit and then closed it. They walked down the hall adjacent to the one Collins had walked down with Canfield, Farrier was slightly irritated at himself, partially because he acted rude to the newcomer upon entrance, and secondly because he’d held eye contact with him purely because Farrier found him nice to look at. He was sure nothing would come of this one though, he wasn’t special. Farrier tried to drop the curiosity he felt, just like he successfully did all the other initiates he’d felt that way about in the past, which was a lot of them if he was honest with himself. The two walked into an empty classroom. Farrier sat in a chair next to a window looking out behind the building into the airstrip. He pulled out the chair next to his for Collins to sit which he did. It was then that Collins noticed how tight the shirt was around Farrier’s biceps as the older man rested his elbows on the table and clasped his hands together.

“Right so let’s have a look at your certificate first of all” Farrier cleared his throat and said, Jack was woken from his gaze and got the piece of paper out of his coat pocket and unfolded it, he put it on the table between them. Farrier took the page and scanned it, mumbling some of the words he read. “Outstanding achievement in aircraft landing and takeoff” he said more clearly, he continued to scan the page, muttering “distinction in physical activity” and he also more clearly read the paragraph signed by Jack’s supervisor, “Jack Collins is an exceptional student, he will follow instructions and go the extra mile to prove himself. He has determination and is an intelligent person. He has shown leadership qualities, physical strength and endurance, and stand up for himself. Collins is prepared to put in extra hours in order to fully grasp concepts and has an excellent work ethic. An exceptional student.” Farrier finished reading the certificate. He was impressed, perhaps a bit more than impressed. “Well Collins, it appears that you passed with flying colours, congratulations.”

“Thank you Squadron Leader” said Jack with a small smile.

“Call me Farrier, bit of a long ranking I know. Another thing about the RAF which is different to the private beginner schools is that we do not use first names, now that you’re in with us we use last names or rankings, you may go your entire career in the RAF without knowing everyone’s first name here. The superiors know the students’ first names, of course we have to read the paperwork, but they’re not used, this is to get you used to regimental life. I want you to understand the formalities that come with the RAF, so I won’t be calling you Jack.”
Collins nodded,

“I know it’ll seem very odd at first but everyone gets used to it Collins” Farrier added. Collins was more caught up on how his name sounded in Farrier’s low husky voice.

“Got it. Sounds a bit formal aye, but it’ll be fine” he replied. Farrier chuckled. “What?” Collins said with a smile,

“My apologies I shouldn’t have laughed, I’ve just never actually met a Scottish person before.” Farrier smiled but seemed embarrassed that he’d laughed.

“Ah it’s no problem, lot o’ folk can’t even understand me here.” Collins jested,

“Well I can, fortunately” Farrier said, his deep blue eyes holding eye contact until he realised that he was. The Squadron Leader hoped that if he just acted formal and treated Collins just like the others he’d taken interest to in the past, the curious feeling would pass just like the others. “Now, I just need you to sign a form for me Collins” Farrier got up and went to the teachers’ desk at the front of the room, he opened a drawer and pulled out some pieces of paper and took a pen off the desk. He brought them back to Collins and sat back down. “Now, this is not the time to lie.” Excellent, Collins thought. “Have you ever been employed by the RAF excepting your civil flight school?” Farrier asked, looking Collins in the eyes.

“No, I haven’t” said Collins, holding eye contact.

“Good, if you had we’d be wasting money training you when you’ve already passed this level.” Farrier continued. “Now I just need to ask a few background questions.” “Sure, go ahead.” Farrier turned his attention to the piece of paper he’d taken from the desk, he ticked a box to say Collins hadn’t previously been employed by the RAF. He scanned for the next box. “Birthday?”

“2nd June 1915” Collins answered, he couldn’t help when his eyes strayed to Farrier’s arms again. His muscles were tight against the thin blue fabric. Farrier noticed the gaze on his arms, he felt slightly uncomfortable under it- why was he looking? Was he the same as him? Collins had never even gotten this far, all the RAF bases in Scotland already had his record transferred between them all, to protect them from double ups or from hiring failed students like Collins, unluckily for him, he didn’t have much control over his urges, and hated to think what training in a courtyard full of men would be like if he could barely handle one, a thought he hadn't even entertained until now.

“Place of birth” Farrier snapped Collins out of his state,

“Aviemore, Scottish Highlands.” Farrier vaguely recognised the name.

“Thank you, parents names?”

“Marie Collins and James Collins.” Collins answered as he watched small neat cursive flow onto the page in blue ink.

“Now if something were to happen, how would I contact them best, a phone?” Farrier asked.

“Ye, everyone in town shares the same line, cheaper.” the blonde answered. "Don't they pick up each other's calls?" Farrier asked, he'd never heard of this concept. "Nae, each house has a different ringtone so we know when it's for us.” Collins smiled. Farrier shrugged in response.

“Okay, can I have a mailing address?”
“Ya, it’s house 74 on high street in Aviemore” said Collins. Farrier held an air of authority that made Collins slightly nervous. Collins was beginning to realise that pulling this off may prove more difficult than he thought, those arms were not easy to look away from. As Farrier wrote down Collins’ address, he tried to recall last time a homosexual man came through Gatwick RAF, he couldn’t remember one. Not that he knew Collins was, the boy would probably be insulted if he was asked. Farrier hoped he wasn’t gay, he’d gone through his whole RAF career without having to deal with one, it made his little fascinations easier to deal with because he knew nobody would return feeling, he’d bottle it up until the man in question completed training and left. He really hoped Collins wasn’t gay, now that would be difficult to deal with. He mentally said ‘stop’ to himself and forced himself to become composed in thought as he finished writing the address.

“That’s all we can fill in for now, we need to go and get you measured and write those in, then you can sign it.” Farrier said, standing up.

“And then I’m in?” Collins asked, was it that easy? He didn’t expect them to outwardly ask him if he was gay, but he thought it would be harder to get in, though thinking back he couldn’t imagine why it would be, he guessed he was just nervous.

“And then you’re in” Farrier answered with a pleased smile. As Farrier stood, Collins rose to stand next to him, he stood and faced Farrier, accidentally making awkward eye contact. Farrier picked up the paper and pen. He followed Collins out of the aisle of tables and walked up to the teachers’ desk to pick up a clipboard. Upon doing so he led Collins back out of the classroom and down the hall adjacent to the one they’d come from. They reached the corner across from Farrier’s office and Farrier opened the door, it led to a largish locker room.

“Okay Collins. So all we’re doing here is taking your height, weight, and body measurements, that’s all fine?” Farrier asked, busying himself with setting the clipboard down on a bench seat and looking for the key in his pocket.

“Aye that’s fine” Collins replied, he was a little self-conscious about his body and hoped he wouldn’t have to strip but he had to think ‘if I was straight this would be fine’. Farrier found the key and unlocked one of the lockers and took out a set of scales and a measuring tape.

“Now step onto the scales please” Farrier instructed, picking up the clipboard and pen again. Collins smirked at the wording. He stood straight with his back to the wall, the Squadron
Leader put the measuring tape at the base of the wall and kept it against it with his shoe, he then
stretched it up to Collins’ head. “6’1’” Farrier said.

He continued to take rudimentary measurements for Collins, with each one he got more and more
comfortable with the fact that he was measuring him. “Right were done” Farrier stated as he
finished measuring. “Now we have the measurements for your uniform, they come in batches so
yours will arrive with all the others in about a month or so.”

“Great, thank you.” Collins said.

“No problem” Farrier answered as he jotted down all the measurements onto the piece of paper on
the clipboard. “Right, lets get back to my office, you can put your shoes and coat back on now
Collins.” Said Farrier,

“Right, ye” Collins mumbled. He slipped his shoes, belt and coat back on and walked back up to
Farrier who was still writing on the piece of paper.

“Ready? Okay.” Farrier began walking and Collins followed. They reached Farrier’s office and he
sat back down in his chair. Collins stood on the other side of the desk. After a few silent minutes of
Farrier completing the form and checking it against some other pieces of paper, he looked up to
Collins.

“Congratulations Collins, welcome to the RAF.” Farrier smiled warmly, stood up and held out his
hand. Collins was shocked he’d actually gotten in, he woke from his daze and took Farrier’s hand
enthusiastically. Beaming, he said

“Thank you Farrier!”

“No at all, good thing you came today not tomorrow.” Farrier said, still smiling slightly.

“Aye it is Indeed.” Collins replied. “So, when should I be here tomorrow?” He asked,

“Ah yes.” Farrier said letting go of Collins’ hand, “We open the doors at 9 am so be outside shortly
before that. As you don’t have a uniform yet, you may wear smart casual clothes. We won’t be
doing any physical training until you all have your uniforms so don’t worry about that. Tomorrow
you’ll get a handbook with all the other little details in it.” Farrier explained.

“Right, easy. I guess I’ll be off then.” Collins said, full of nervous energy,

“Yes absolutely. Thank you for coming in today Collins, we’ll see you tomorrow morning.” Said
Farrier warmly. “I’ll take you to the door.” He added and walked around the desk to his office
door. Collins followed Farrier out and down the hallway to the doors to the street.

“Thank you again Farrier, being in the RAF means a great deal to me” Collins said with a smile,

“Of course, I didn’t do anything, merely filled out your details, you have yourself to thank.” Farrier
said. Collins chuckled to himself.

“I’ll see you and Canfield tomorrow then!”

“That you will, goodbye Collins.” Farrier said warmly,

“Goodbye!” Collins said and began walking down the street.
Well, I hope you all enjoyed it and please leave comments, I'd love to know what you thought of the first chapter! If anyone noticed, Canfield is the name of Michael Caine's RAF character in the movie 'Battle of Britain' so there's a little easter egg for you, seeing as he voices Fortis leader I thought it fit well.
Next chapter coming soon!
Collins arrived a little early but was glad to see there were a few other men outside the doors. He hoped he wasn't underdressed.

“Hello there!” Said a young man with sticking out ears and brown messy hair.

“Morning,”

“Oh, not from here then,” chuckled the man, able to pick up the change in accent from that word alone.

Collins chuckled back. “Yeah,”

“My name’s William, but you can call me Wingnut, everyone else does.” He flicked his ears in explanation before he held out his hand to shake,

“I’m Jack, but I’ve heard in the RAF ye use last names, so I’m Collins, nice to meet you.”

They stood together for a few minutes, hands shoved in pockets.

“Ready for today?” Collins continued,

“Sure am, excited as hell. And, I guess you can call me Timson then, but then again you can still use Wingnut,” he replied with a goofy smile. Collins was glad this interesting man had shown up, hopefully now he wouldn't be the only one who wasn't a seeming perfect example of a posh upper middle class Englishman.

Then the front door swung inwards and Farrier stepped out. He was dressed in full uniform this time, Air Force Blue trousers and blazer with a handsome smattering of medals and patches. Collins noticed for the first time how his body was built, he was broad and strong, and it took everything in the blonde's willpower not to stare.

“New recruits follow me,” he said with authority. Wingnut looked excitedly at Collins and they filed inside. The group followed Farrier into a classroom at the front of which Canfield was stood. Once they were all seated, Wingnut and Collins at the front, Farrier began.

“Congratulations on making it this far, you are now part of the Cadet Wing, you are officially part of the RAF. I’m Squadron Leader Farrier if you haven’t met me already, and this is Wing Commander Canfield. Us, along with a handful of other officers will be conducting most of your lessons. You must behave as properly and preserve the image of the RAF, so no immaturity will be tolerated, this is a very serious business. You will each be given pamphlets which instruct the specifics of how you must conduct yourselves, from haircuts to language. You can take them home and read them, we’ll ignore those regulations for the first week as you’re all still settling in. Now,
it outlines it in the pamphlet but I’ll touch on it now. You lot remain here in Cadet Wing for two months, then you will move to the School of Military Aeronautics for another two months, then there are two separate courses at the Training Department Station, the first takes three months, the second takes two, then you’ll be told of what job you’ll ultimately end up in, whether it be mechanic or pilot, and finally move into specialist schools, but you can read about all of that in the pamphlets we’ll give out,” he explained, though most of the men were too excited to properly listen.

Farrier got a pile of said pamphlets out of the drawer and placed them on the desk in front of him, suppressing a tired sigh. The first day with a new lot was always nerve wracking.

They spent the day in that room learning the introductory parts of each subject and lesson. On lunch break they could go anywhere, Collins and Wingnut went out of the RAF base to a sandwich store and ate their food on a bench along the footpath near the base.

“This is just how I wanted it to be,” said Wingnut,

“Yeah, beginner school cannæ prepare yae for the real thing.” agreed Collins, though he somewhat knew what it was like already, having started up in Scotland.

“What do you think of the teacher?” Asked Wingnut through bites of his lunch,

Collins panicked wondering if this was a loaded question,

“He’s uh, a bit serious I suppose, but he seems nice,” he said.

“Yeah, doesn’t seem like the kind of person you’d make friends with, I suppose that's maybe good.” laughed Wingnut, and Collins realised this may be true. Wingnut playfully elbowed Collins in the arm, Collins forced a chuckle out as not to seem weird and took a bite of his lunch.

“But yeah if the rest are friendlier, it’s exactly how I hoped it'd be.” Said Wingnut.

“Yeah,” said Collins unenthusiastically.

After lunch they all sat back in the classroom and they learned that the instructors worked in pairs with groups, so the amount of students starting was actually about 100, and 50 or so of them were going to be instructed by Farrier and Canfield. At the end of the day they were given the option to become boarding students, Collins and Wingnut both thought this was a good idea. They agreed that the rent in London was ridiculous, so along with the pamphlets on appearance and upholding the RAF image, they left with papers to get a room in the base.

“Well Canfield is a bit chipper than that Farrier, so I’m happy.” Said Timson,

“Aye he’s a bit grumpy isn’t he,” chuckled Collins, trying to laugh along with Wingnut's seeming fascination with Farrier being uptight. He couldn’t help but be more interested in Farrier because of his mysterious nature. Collins had also seen some other new recruits which he found attractive, which he hoped didn’t prove to be as much of an issue as Farrier. Timson came home to Collins’ apartment and they filled out their boarding forms together so they could have rooms next to each other.

“We get set hairstyles to choose from Jack- I mean Collins!” Said Timson as they ate homemade clapshot and mince at the shoddy flat Collins had found to stay in, an attempt to make good tasting food that didn’t altogether fail on the blonde's behalf. They looked at the photos showing haircut examples. There was long medium or short, though short was recommended because it minimised risk of getting hair caught in helmets. Long wasn’t actually long however,
there wasn’t much difference between the three.

“I want the long one I think” said Collins,


“Dunno I like my hair,” said Collins with a chuckle before realising that it sounded stupid out loud.

“Nah I want the short one, can’t get in the way if it’s that short, imagine your helmet pulling your hair out!” said Wingnut, pointing at the example image of the long hair.

“Yeah that’s a good point aye, but they wouldn’ae have put that cut in there if it was actually too long,” said Collins. Farrier had the short cut he was pretty sure, and Canfield he thought, may have the medium. Though again, there wasn't much difference between them. Maybe everyone just got the short one cut and once it reached the length of the long style, they got a trim. It wasn't as regimental at the base the blonde had been kicked out of, it was a lot more casual and that was probably the reason he was expelled. It wasn't like they were supposed to expel students for the reason of suspected homosexuality, he guessed it wouldn't have happened at a bigger or more important base.

“Says they don't recommend facial hair,” said Collins while chewing,

“Yeah, I’d hate to get my beard snagged in the mask, ey.” replied Timson, Collins shrugged in agreement.

The next day they went and got their haircuts in the morning before heading to Gatwick base with their filled out boarding forms, arriving early to hand them in. Collins knocked on Farrier’s office, he would have knocked on Canfield’s but he didn’t know which room it was. He wasn't sure why he wanted to avoid Farrier, there was something intimidating in the man's eyes. Collins told himself that he didn't like it.

“Who is it?” Farrier called out,

“It’s Collins and Timson, we ‘ave our forms for boardin”” Collins’ voice wobbled a bit. He heard an exhale from the other side of the door.

“Come in boys,” said Farrier through the door. They entered to see him sitting at his desk,

“Nice haircuts lads,” He said smiling at Collins, who tried to remain unwavering.

“Thanks Farrier!” Said Timson, breaking the moment. They both placed their forms on the desk.

“Thanks boys, I’ll have a look over them and show you to your rooms after today’s lessons. Come see me here at the end of the day.” Said Farrier with a tone of authority in his voice that made Collins slightly warm in the cheeks. He was going to have trouble if he was already finding someone nice to look at here, especially that someone being ain instructor.

The day passed relatively easily, it was more of the same, general introductions to mathematics, geography and mapping, aerodynamics, Collins found it all easy. What he found more difficult was keeping his eyes off Farrier. Though he didn’t conduct all the lectures, he did most of them. There were some conducted by Canfield too but it seemed that as a general rule Farrier worked more
directly with the initiates. Collins and Wingnut went back to the same sandwich bar for lunch.

“How do you think this work is?” Asked Wingnut

“Aye it’s easy for me, and you?” Responded Collins,

“It’s pretty easy, maths was never my strong point, been counting on my fingers to help me,” chuckled Timson.

“Well whatever helps ya work, dunnae matter I don’ think.” said Collins.

They continued talking about the classroom work for a while, then the subject of rooms came up,

“How do you think we’ll be put next to each other?” Asked Collins, not because he was hoping, he just simply wondered.

“Probably, we went in together so surely they know we’re mates, if not they might put us in order of when we handed in the paper, so we’ll be next to each other anyway.” Timson smiled with a mouthful of sandwich.

They went back in and Collins endured another few hours of breeze through the work whilst trying not to look at Farrier in any other way than as his teacher, but he was just so nice to look at. Collins didn’t consider himself to have a type, he just picked individuals. One couldn’t really have a type when it was illegal to be with another man. Everything that should have turned him away from Farrier didn’t. Not his closed personality, not his age, not his rank. If anything it drew him in more. He wanted to know why Farrier was so closed off.

Farrier couldn’t believe the audacity of this Collins character. Was he trying to make some sort of statement? Or was he staring at Farrier for an unrelated reason? It was a guessing game, the Squadron Leader spent most of the day trying to ignore that student, was he gay? Was he staring at Farrier out of attraction? Was he touched in the head or daydreaming in class? Or was Farrier reading far too much into it? It was tiring him out because something inside him wanted to stare back into those ridiculously clear blue eyes.. Except he was the teacher, Collins was just another pupil he told himself. The day finally ended, and Timson and Collins went over to Farrier’s office. They didn’t knock, Farrier’s stomach flipped when he saw Collins, and Collins’ movements momentarily seized up when he saw Farrier. Timson trailed Collins slightly, giving time for an awkward stare into each other’s different shades of blue eyes. Farrier’s brow wasn’t furrowed, he looked curious, possibly peaceful, younger, Collins thought. When Timson entered Farrier cleared his throat.

“You forgot to knock, boys.” he put his concerned, busy expression back on.

“Sorry Farrier,” said Timson,

“Sorry,” added Collins, though still unable to look away completely.

“It’s alright, you’re here for your rooms, which I will now show you to.” He said. He passed them through the door and walked down the hall. He’d taken his blazer off and was in the same light blue button up Collins had first seen him in, minus the tie. Farrier’s strong back muscles could be seen easily through the shirt, Collins was sure the shirt was purely to tease him.

“Now, we order the rooms in this stupid combination of first-come-first-serve and alphabetical, it doesn’t make any bloody sense but unfortunately you won’t be able to be posted next to each other. Sorry lads, I don’t make the rules.” Said Farrier as he walked.
Timson exhaled disappointedly at Collins, who looked back with an expression of ‘oh well’.

They turned the corner to the stairs leading up to the bedrooms.

A few rooms after the top of the stairs they stopped. “Right Timson, this is your room. Here is your key, it only unlocks your door, but keep in mind that myself, Canfield and the other officers have a master key. You can keep all your belongings inside, and do whatever you want in there that doesn’t damage property or break RAF code.” said Farrier. He opened the door and then handed the key to Wingnut.

“Feel free to make yourself at home while I show Collins to his room. Oh and I should mention, there’s a lockout at 1am. If you should be outside after that time but before 8am, call the base phone number from a phone box and Canfield or myself will let you in.”

“Thanks Farrier! You two board here too?” Asked Wingnut,

“Yes we do.” Replied Farrier, giving off an air that he didn’t want to talk any more, Collins’ stomach doing somersaults at the new information.

“If you need anything come find me or one of the others, Timson.” He said as he began to walk off.

“See ya later Wingnut!” Said Collins with a smile,

“Yeah, for sure!” Said Timson.

Farrier walked briskly with Collins at his heel.

“I thought that lad’s name was Timson,” He smiled sarcastically.

“Well I thought seeing as it’s not his first name it’s okay,” Collins said awkwardly.

Farrier sighed, “Just try not to get familiar. That’s the point of it, try not to get close with anyone in case.. Well, you know why. Tensions are high in Europe right now, we’re trying to prepare our trainees for the worst, he’s just your classmate.” Said Farrier,

Collins stayed quiet but managed a broken sounding “Okay”. They turned a corner and Farrier immediately felt remorseful.

“You’re the first in the alphabet of the few who have actually signed up board Collins, so you get this one,” Farrier gestured to a door next to the end one.

“Not the room on the end?” Asked Collins, Farrier turned his body to face Collins, who was worried he’d said something wrong,

“That’s my room.”

Collins stomach dropped. This was ridiculous.

“Any corner rooms are reserved for officers, unfortunately.” he continued.

“Ah okay.” Collins said.

“Meaning I don’t want to be kept up by any antics, I’ve trouble enough getting to sleep.” He said with a ghost of a smile.
“Understood.” Said Collins, not sure if he was happy or nervous they were next to each other. He told himself to be neither.

“Thank you Collins. Here’s your key, same rules apply to you as the ones I told Timson.” Said Farrier, not making eye contact. He held the key out and dropped it into Collins’ outstretch palm

“Thanks, I’ll be careful with it.” the blonde said,

“Be sure that you are.” Said Farrier.

Collins forced a single chuckle to keep the conversation going. Farrier stared at Collins as he fiddled with the key, his hair was so blonde, and his eyes were so blue, he was just so pure looking compared to himself.

Collins looked up from the key to Farrier, who was already looking into Collins’ eyes. Collins saw a look of, he wasn’t sure. Longing? Reminiscence? Farrier quickly started speaking,

“Well Collins I’ll leave you to it, feel free to bring your belongings to base whenever you like. Oh I forgot to mention to Timson so if you could tell him, we have a kitchen if you feel like cooking, but we can write it into your fees to receive the standard food from the cafeteria, that’s what everyone tends towards anyway.” said Farrier.

“I’ll probably just do that, and ye I’ll tell him. Thanks Farrier.” Said Collins, fiddling with the key in his hand. Farrier began to walk off and turned,

“Went for the long haircut did we?”

“Ah, yeah,” Collins smiled, hiding his nerves.

Farrier chuckled a bit and turned around shaking his head. Happiness was a good look on him, Collins thought. In the mere days he'd been at Gatwick, that was the first sincere looking smile he'd seen on the man. Farrier walked down the stairs and could hear Collins opening his door. Why did he mention the hair? So arbitrary! He was irritated at himself for saying that, and for the mostly awkward exchange in general. He told himself he’d do better next time and that Collins probably just thought he was the slightly odd teacher. But what he’d give to feel that hair through his fingers... Farrier stopped in his tracks and stared ahead, that thought was, strong. He needed to distract himself. He went to his office to see if anything needed tending, but he needed to stop interacting with Collins or he was going to develop serious feelings, and that was a serious problem.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! The different levels of training were the real layout of the RAF in the 30s before they accelerated the program during the war. Also, RAF Gatwick was a real RAF training station, but it was shut down a few years after opening due to constant flooding. I chose to use it in my story because that means it has a clean slate and I can make it what I want.

I'll stop rambling about history, hope you enjoyed chapter 2!
Collins opened the door to a nicely decorated room made of dark wood. There was a single bed on one side against the wall shared with Farrier’s room, a desk, a chest of drawers, a cupboard, and a few odd chairs. There was also a window looking out into the field behind the base, he could see the hangars and runways. There was a carpet to keep the floor warm, and even a small radiator heater.

This was better than his flat, and barely took a cut of what he’d be earning in the RAF. He walked down the road to his old flat and began to pack. He brought his things in suitcases back to the base and dumped them in his room. Collins had a bit of banter with Timson and also told him about the kitchen, who was in the process of unpacking as well, and meeting a new friend called Dawson who was also boarding. Farrier had also told Dawson not to use his first name, so Collins introduced himself as Collins, not Jack. Wingnut still said his full name, and that Dawson could call him Wingnut.

“Hey Timson, Farrier had a bit of a word with me about callin’ ya that when he was taking me to my room. I think I should keep to Timson” said Collins,

“Yeah, sorry I agree. Farrier said it’s so we don’t get too familiar.” Said Dawson.

“That’s alright Lads, I suppose I should get out of that habit” said Timson.

“Wingnut” Dawson playfully said holding back a giggle,

“Wingnut” Collins repeated stifling a laugh, elbowing Wingnut.

Timson held his ears out and said “Wingnut” they all laughed, Collins supposed among friends it would be fine. Because Wingnut had told Collins his name was William, Dawson was the first student Collins met which he actually didn’t know the first name of.

Collins headed out to make arrangements to have his flat put back up on the market. When he got back it was dark. Not being bothered with cooking his own meals for now Collins headed down to the cafeteria, which was underground and was essentially a very large square room. When he entered the dining area he was surprised at how many men there were, he guessed you didn’t have to board to eat here. He spotted Timson and Dawson and wandered over to them. They sat at a long wooden table sandwiched between other long wooden tables.

“Evenin’ lads” Collins said as he squeezed in.

“Hi Collins” Dawson smiled,
“Hey!” said Timson.

“What time’s dinner? A’ve spent all afternoon movin’ mae stuff” said Collins as he looked around. There were people here he hadn’t seen, from other groups.

“I think it’s served at 7, it’s ten-to now.” Said Dawson.

“Aye good” said Collins. He looked over at Dawson, Collins began to realise he was quite attractive. Collins cursed at himself in his head, not another one. Dawson was very blonde like himself, he had blue eyes and honey coloured skin. So he was quite similar in looks to Collins, but a bit shorter and with different shade of blue in his eyes, and darker skin. Collins forced himself to look away after a few seconds. The dining hall was noisy, everyone seemed ready to eat. Dawson and Wingnut were looking around at everyone too, Collins supposed it was the first time all the new cadets been together. That was when he spotted Farrier. He looked tense as usual, he was drinking from a white tin mug with a blue line along the rim. He sat at a shorter table with Canfield and who Collins assumed were the other officers. Farrier put his mug down and began looking absently around, then he found Collins’ eyes. Farrier actually held eye contact for a few beats before looking back down in front of himself uncomfortably. Collins felt his cheeks redden.

If Collins was trying to get himself noticed it was working, Farrier didn’t know how he’d act if he got confirmation of Collins’ sexuality, he was supposed to have anyone leave the RAF because that kind of thing could get in the way of work, but he didn’t want to see Collins go. Did he really just think that? No, Collins was just another student, Farrier drummed the thought into his head, maybe one day he’d believe it. He looked into his half mug of tea and swirled it around.

A loud bell ringing sounded around the room, the new students all looked around for the source while the older ones stopped talking. Farrier smiled at Canfield at the new students’ reaction,

“Bit amusing isn’t it” said Canfield,

“Indeed, everything is still exciting to them, it’ll wear off” Farrier replied with a smile.

“Dinner is served!” A woman’s voice yelled out from the front of the hall.

“Officials first, then most experienced to least experienced please!” she yelled again.

“C’mom we’re last!” Collins whisper-yelled to his friends.

“It’s only fair mate” said Dawson,

“Yeah but I’m hungry too!” said Wingnut.

“Fook’s sake” said Collins quietly and he slouched onto the table as he watched some of the students around him rise. So this was more than everyone who joined with them, these were also students who had already done some training, Collins thought to himself. He could no longer see Farrier through the crowd of people.

“How many people do y’reckon are in here?” Dawson asked the group,

“Hundreds, like.” Guessed Collins.

“Surely not hundreds, c’mon” said Wingnut smiling at Collins,

“Well if we have one-hundred in our group altogether, there’s at least that many, so ya, I’d guess hundreds” Collins countered, smiling back.
“I guess” said Timson, looking away, Collins knocked him in the arm with his shoulder to let him know he wasn’t seriously being competitive,

“Oi don’t poke me!” Said Wingnut, Collins and Dawson both laughed at his remark, He shoved Collins back,

“You southerners get offended too easily!” said Collins and they all chuckled.

One of the older boys who was getting up must have gotten shoved accidentally, he turned around,

“What are you boys doing, have some respect.” He said looking down his nose at them,

“Sorry ah, we dunnae mean tuh” said Collins, who then watched as the older boy’s face screwed up. The boy looked down his nose at Collins,

“A Scot in this hall, the world’s gone mad letting the likes of you in here.” He walked off.

Collins was genuinely confused as to what he felt, he was embarrassed as well as angry and wasn’t sure if he wanted to sit and stare at the table or go after the boy.

“Don’t worry mate, we’re not all like him.” Said Wingnut, putting a hand on Collins’ shoulder.

“Dinnae know anyone here didn’t like us” said Collins making eye contact with Wingnut.

“Well,” Dawson began, Collins turned to face him.

“There are some people everywhere who don’t like different things, you know? Can’t please everyone mate” he said.

“Ya, s’pose.” Said Collins.

“Why don’t some of yer like people like me?” He asked while looking at the table in front of him. Wingnut and Dawson looked at each other, not sure who should say

“Well mate,” Wingnut started,

“Some of the people from the South see people from Scotland, and even people from the North of England…” he didn’t know how to continue so Dawson did.

“They see northerners as a bit… Rough. Not as gentle in character or demeanor.” He said.

Collins chuckled, but he wasn’t happy.

“Well, they’re not so wrong” Collins decided to confront the boy. He began to stand up when his friends each took an arm and sat him back down.

“Make a good impression mate, don’t want the superiors thinkin’ you’re a troublemaker hey?” said Wingnut.

“You’re right. Farrier already thinks I might be” Collins said quietly.

“Wait, does he?” Said Dawson,

“Aye, my civil flight trainer wrote on my certificate that I’m ‘audacious’. He said it in a positive manner aye, but Farrier didn’t seem tae appreciate it.” Collins said with a faint smile to Dawson.
“Well, show the grumpy old Squadron Leader he’s wrong about you” said Dawson, coaxing a chuckle out of Collins.

“Let’s line up lads” said Wingnut,

“Aye, let’s” agreed Collins.

The three filed into a long line which snaked through the tables. This was going to take a while, Collins could already tell. He had a clear view of the front, he could see quite a few busy cooks spooning things onto the out-held plates of the teachers. He made out Canfield, then looked next to him to find Farrier. He saw Farrier smile to a woman giving him food, he saw his mouth move and supposed he said ‘thank you’. The woman smiled back as Farrier walked off, then she turned to her friend behind the counter and smiled excitedly. Collins guessed Farrier was popular amongst the kitchen lasses. He’d probably been here long enough to learn all their names.

“Move on Collins!” Wingnut pushed Collins from behind, the line had moved about a metre in front of him, Dawson looked back at Collins and chuckled.

“Staring at the lovely ladies are we Collins?” he jested,

“Ah you know me” Collins replied with a smile. He was glad he seemed to react to situations like that, without even thinking of his words. Collins moved up but looked over to Farrier again, who had since sat down. All the other officials were still getting their food, and Collins knew the ranks and knew Canfield was Farrier’s superior, so he guessed he’d let Farrier in front of him which was nice, Collins thought. Collins’ stomach jolted when Farrier looked up from his plate, he surveyed the room before finding Collins, who wanted to smile but was frozen. Farrier lifted his eyebrows and put his hand out in a ‘what?’ gesture, Collins quickly looked away, his nervous confidence made him chuckle while looking down.

Farrier wasn’t sure why Collins felt like he could watch Farrier whenever he wanted, it was attention the man wasn’t at all used to, like a puppy that wouldn’t leave him alone. Could this boy really not keep his eyes off him? Surely that wasn’t the reason. He saw Canfield walking over.

“Canfield might I speak to you?” Farrier asked,

“Of course, if you let me start my food first” Canfield laughed as he sat down.

They ate together for a while but then the other officers began to sit.

“I’ll tell you another time” said Farrier quietly to Canfield.

“Food looks good tonight boys” said Farrier with a smile,

“Sure does Squadron Leader” answered one.

The line had moved considerably, it had been about 20 minutes and the boys were three quarters of the way to the front.

“I think it’s meat” said Collins, looking over.

“Good” said Dawson. The boys finally made it to the counter, collected their basic meat and vegetables, and sat down again. They didn’t even exchange words, all three were so hungry they finished in about ten minutes.

“That was good, that was really good” said Wingnut, pushing his empty plate back from himself.
“Agreed mate” said Collins,

“I’m stuffed” said Dawson.

The boys gave their plates back and sat at the table again.

“So what do you two do?” Dawson asked,

“Fly planes, now” said Timson in jest,

“I mean, what are your hobbies lads? What do you like doing when you’re not flying?” Dawson clarified.

“I like playing football, I love being active, ya know?” answered Wingnut.

“Ah yeah. I go to the gymnasium sometimes, don’t play sport though. I’m actually from Weymouth so I can sail a boat, used to do it with my Pa and little brother when I was there. Heard stories from my uncle who flew and it just sounded so great, since there's no base there I decided to come out here, but I've never been one for a big city, so this, just out of London is nice.” said Dawson.

“Ya, I know exactly what that feels like, I'm from a town in the highlands.” Said Collins.

“Yeah? What did you do in said town then?” Dawson asked,

“Me, I actually write and draw, I walk a lot and used to get a lot of inspiration for my art from the highlands, where I’m from. It’s pretty different here, not as much snow or mountains” Collins laughed. “I also dance a bit”

This elicited impressed faces from the others.

“So Wingnut, you’re the only one here who’s actually from London?” Dawson asked, Collins was relieved he didn’t ask why he moved here.

“Sure am, London born and bred!” answered Wingnut.

“Well lads” Collins began,

“I think I might head up to bed for a bit, I haven’t actually finished readin’ that manual they gave us on how to conduct ourselves” Collins grinned.

They left the dining hall, Collins made a point not to turn around to look at a certain someone as he did so. As he lay in his bed, which was very comfortable indeed, he did his reading. Later on he heard Farrier open his bedroom door and then close it again, didn’t hear anything else from him that night, and soon after Collins fell asleep with the pamphlet on his belly.

Chapter End Notes

So he's settled in and ready to learn! As I've mentioned I tried to keep it historically accurate, and it was true that often pilots only knew each other's last names, as the only places you could find first names were on teacher's lists and such. The pamphlets about how to conduct yourself also did exist!
The first signs

Chapter Notes

As always thank you so much for reading my work. This one is a bit shorter but it's cute!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

That’s how the first few weeks went, Collins, Wingnut and Dawson sat together in the classrooms, but in the middle at Dawson’s request because apparently sitting at the front was for ‘obnoxious twats’ much to Collins’ viewing disappointment. They always went down to the sandwich bar Collins and Timson had discovered, rather than the cafeteria for lunch, and every breakfast and dinner there would be banter, as well as a generous amount of Collins trying not to stare at Farrier.

But then a development happened.

One Tuesday during aerodynamics class, Farrier said something which sparked Collins’ interest.

“If any of you are struggling, and believe me I know some of you are because I actually do read the work believe it or not,” Farrier smiled and some of the students laughed nervously,

“I will be offering tutoring sessions after hours. If you feel like you’re not doing as well as you could be, come and see me and we can discuss the idea.”

The students had somewhat warmed to Farrier, and Farrier had become a little less uptight, he even made sarcastic, dry comments occasionally. The class seemed to treat Farrier as one of the lads in a partially joking, partially genuine way, as if they were making an effort to get Farrier out of his shell, which was nice Collins thought.

Collins wasn’t falling behind, quite the opposite, but he thought if he could find a reason to go, perhaps he could figure out what was going on in Farrier’s head, get to know him even. Collins had somewhat abandoned the idea of trying to hide his attraction completely, it hadn’t been addressed at all so he assumed it was so minute of a problem that nobody cared enough to talk to him about it, even when Farrier had raised his eyebrows at dinner the first night he went to the cafeteria, he never went up to Collins and confronted him about it.

“We should do that!” Collins murmured to Wingnut, who he knew was falling behind a bit.

“Yeah I will be, but I didn’t realise you needed any help” replied Wingnut.

“What, you want to go Collins? Why?” said Dawson, who was doing just as well as Collins.

“Wingnut, I can come along with yer and maybe I can help” said Collins,

“I mean, sure I don’t mind, but you don’t seem to need it mate.” Said Wingnut.

“Sometimes I wonder if I do though. I can answer the questions but sometimes I donnae really understand the logic behind the answers” Collins said, proud that he’d come up with some sort of excuse as to why he wanted to go. It wasn’t entirely made up either, he could easily answer the questions, but he didn’t question the why and how of them.
Class ended, and Wingnut went up to the teacher’s desk which Farrier was leaning on the front of.

“I’d like tutoring please, Squadron Leader Farrier.” Said Wingnut,

“Timson, glad you made that decision. I could do any day after 4, I’d be spending an hour with you going through any work you don’t understand.” Said Farrier, not making eye contact with Collins.

“Right, maybe every Wednesday at 4?” said Timson,

“Absolutely, I guess I’ll see you in tomorrow at 4, in this room by the way.” Farrier smiled.

“Thanks Farrier, see ya then!” said Wingnut. Wingnut then spotted Dawson waiting at the door smiling expectantly,

“I’m gonna go with Dawson, catch you up later Collins” said Wingnut,

“Yae, see ya then mate” Collins replied.

“Don’t tell me you think you’re getting tutoring sessions with me Collins.” Farrier crossed his arms over his torso, the blue material of his shirt stretching against his biceps.

“Ya, actually. I know I can answer the stuff but sometimes I donnae get why the equations work, or why they work.” Collins shoved his hands in his pockets and stood up straight, Farrier slouching back on the desk made the height difference more obvious. The Squadron Leader sighed,

“You can come, but if I decide you don’t need them, I’m not going to continue, okay? It’s my free time after all”

“That’s fine, I assume you don’t want me coming along with Timson?” Collins had to stop himself saying Wingnut.

“No, you two’ll distract each other to no end and I’ll hardly get a word in.” Farrier smiled an empty smile,

“Aight, so perhaps Thursday then at 4?” said Collins, smiling a happy smile,

“Yes that should be fine Collins, I’ll see you then.” He said tiredly,

“See ya then Farrier” Collins continued to smile and walked out.

Collins finally finished the pamphlet that night, he learned that in the higher divisions of the RAF they had to salute to any superior every time they walked past. Collins thought It’d be weird to salute to Farrier, or any of them.

The next day, Timson had his tutoring session with Farrier, at lunch that day Collins had asked him to let him know what it was like after. Collins was currently sitting on his bed after class, waiting for Wingnut to finish at 5. He went over to his window and looked out at the hangars, some of the planes were still out from the older students using them. Collins couldn’t wait to be back in the air, he remembered every detail, how to start the plane perfectly, how to land, it was an obsession, a passion. Then there was a sharp knock at the door.

“Ey you” it was Wingnut,

“Ya, comin’” said Collins walking over.

He unlocked the door and Wingnut came in and sat on the bed,
“Well, that was fucken’ helpful” he said, exhaling deeply.

“Sarcasm?” asked Collins,

“No no, it was genuinely really helpful for me.” he said, smiling.

“Ah well that’s great, mate!” said Collins, sitting in the single chair in his room.

“Yeah he’s easy to understand, unlike some people” Wingnut eyed Collins with a smirk,

“Ey now” Collins laughed, resisting the urge to make his accent stronger on purpose.

“Yeah but seriously Farrier doesn’t treat ya like you’re stupid for not knowing, he takes you through it slowly until you get it, didn’t make me feel dumb or anything” said Timson.

“Well good, let’s hope he treats me the same” said Collins,

“Yeah he will, speaking to ‘im one on one is different ya know, he’s not as… weird” said Timson,

“ Weird? Ya mean how he’s kinda quiet and closed off” Collins asked,

“Yeah, yeah.” Answered Timson.

“Well I’m glad you had a good experience with it mate, you’ll be teaching me in no time!” joked Collins.

The next day, Collins spent most of the class time between idly answering questions he didn’t really have to pay attention to, compiling a list of things to ask Farrier to make sure he thought Collins deserved to be there.

The final lesson of the day, history of flight, was taken by Canfield. The class was fascinated, not in the class content but in anything Canfield said about his experience in the War.

“Come on then, how was the Sopwith Camel?” someone asked while they were on the topic of the particular plane.

"The Sopwith bloody Camel," Canfield laughed,

"difficult to fly in today’s terms and back then as well. Too touchy for my liking, but Farrier wasn’t bad in them.” Canfield said in thought, chalk still in his hand. The class got loud at the mention of the Squadron Leader,

“Tell us more war stories!” Someone else yelled, followed by laughter

“That’s enough class, I’m not here to teach you our personal histories!” Canfield chuckled.

Collins was beyond nervous as class drew to a close, and as soon as the clock struck 4, his stomach dropped. The old bell was rung, and the students scattered. Dawson and Timson made their way to the door with Collins, but after exiting the classroom Collins realised he never specified a meeting place for his tutoring.

“Right lads, I need to go find Farrier for my tutoring session. I’ll see ya later” said Collins to them

“See you then mate” said Dawson,

“Later!” said Wingnut.
Collins first went into the classroom Wingnut had his tutoring session in, but it was empty. Then he knocked on the door of Farrier’s office but there was no reply. He went back into the classroom he had just had class in to find Canfield still erasing some things from the blackboard.

“S’cuse me, Canfield.” Collins nervously stood in the doorway.

“Hello my dear boy, what can I do for you?”

“I was actually lookin’ for Farrier, I have a tutoring session with him and I dunno where he is” Collins rubbed the back of his neck as he finished his sentence.

“I’m sure I’ve no idea I’m sorry, you’ve checked his office?” said Canfield,

“Well I knocked and there was no answer” said Collins,

“I don’t know where he is, sorry I can’t help you Collins, but chances are he’s looking for you if you’ve an appointment with him now” said Canfield.

“Ya true, aight, thank you anyway” said Collins politely,

“Of course son” replied Canfield before turning back to the blackboard.

No sooner had Collins gone back into the hallway and walked one classroom down did he hear, “Collins, I was looking for you” from behind him.

“Ah, Farrier, I was looking for you too. Realised I never specified where to meet ya, sorry” said Collins smiling nervously,

“No it’s fine it was my fault. Let’s just do your lesson in this one, Farrier ducked into the nearest classroom.

The session flew by faster than Collins had hoped, Farrier was very careful and caring about explaining and making sure Collins understood. He was also very intelligent, Collins learned, much more than he had thought before. He was able to answer every question with ease, though a lot of questions were follow-ons from others or somewhat irrelevant altogether. It was hard not to stare at Farrier the whole time but Collins thought he did a good job of acting normal, only holding eye contact for a few too many beats once or twice.

“16:57.” Farrier read off his watch. “Any other questions today?”

“Uhh, not that I can think off the top o’ mae head” said Collins, thinking.

“Can I continue with tutoring?” he asked,

“Well, you actually did come up with a substantial amount of questions, though some weren’t necessary for your learning” Farrier smiled a bit and met Collins’ gaze,

“But, I don’t mind setting aside a little time for one curious student if you think it helps” Farrier’s smile widened a little.

“Oh, thank you! I did learn a lot just now, and it does help me to understand the reasoning behind the questions, makes the work seem less pointless” Collins joked.

“Now now, I helped design some of those courses” Farrier laughed.
Oh how Collins loved seeing the emotion of happiness on Farrier’s face, something of a rarity on such a serious man.

“Thank you” Collins said earnestly, Farrier’s smile dropped to a small but humble one, “For letting me come to a tutoring session. I enjoyed it.” Said Collins.

“Of course, I enjoyed it too.” Farrier said, somewhat losing his composure in those ridiculously blue eyes, surely he could allow himself this tiny pleasure, after all Collins was always staring. It was the blonde who snapped out of it first,

“Right, I should be off”

“Yes, absolutely.” Farrier quickly replied.

Collins gathered the sheets of paper they’d written on,

“Thanks again, Farrier” he said with a small smile as he walked out the door.

Once the blonde had left and was out of earshot Farrier slouched back in his chair and let out a long sigh, followed by a whispered,

“Fuck.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone enjoyed! I'll hopefully be uploading a chapter every Monday so stay tuned :) let me know what you thought in the comments, I love feedback!
Weekly chapter is here! Hope everyone enjoys this one :)

Same time next week, Collins had another set of questions to ask Farrier. They met in the same classroom as last time.

“Hiya” said Collins as he walked in, Farrier was already there,

“Oh, hello Collins” he said with a shy smile. Collins walked over to the desk they usually sat at, front row next to the window.

Collins really hoped he wasn’t blushing but could feel the warmth creeping up from his neck to his face just from seeing the man.

“Well, A’ve got a few questions today,” Collins smiled innocently and held eye contact.

“What questions be those?” Farrier said in a monotone voice, trying to keep his emotions inside. “Anything to do with this week’s new work?” he added,

“Yae they are” Collins reached into his pocket and pulled out some sheets they’d been given. Working through the questions helped Farrier recompose himself. He couldn’t shake the feeling of butterflies in his belly the whole time, but he could at least get used to it. He began taking in not just the questions from Collins, but the man himself. Farrier just couldn’t help it. He noticed his dimples, the few freckles, the way his hands moved, elegantly over the pages, expressing every sentence with arbitrary gestures in the air.

Farrier was on the verge of admitting his feelings to himself.

He could tell Collins was trying to focus on the work and Farrier felt embarrassed that he was more distracted than a pupil, he was meant to be the stoic one, he thought to himself. That’s what Canfield called him anyway. It finally ticked over to 5 o’clock but neither of them noticed. Only a few minutes later though Farrier checked his watch,

“Ah, we’ve gone overtime”

“Oh, so we have, sorry” said Collins.

“No problem Collins, hoped I answered all your questions.” Said Farrier with a forced smile, Collins met his eyes,

“Just aboot” Collins couldn’t wipe the smile off his face. As they stood Collins was hit by a faint smell, it was Farrier. Not cologne, just his natural smell. It felt like something that he shouldn’t have smelt, somehow private to Farrier only, but that only made it more special to Collins.

“See ya same time next week” Collins said as we walked off, looking back,
“See you then Collins” Farrier pasted a smile on his face that he knew probably looked forced. Collins held eye contact for two long, and then left in the same happy-go-lucky way he always walked off in. Once the blonde was gone Farrier rested his hands on the desk in front of him, his arm muscles began to shake slightly due to the pressure he was exerting on the table. Farrier was frustrated with himself, and embarrassed. He was worried that something would happen between them, he had genuine trouble not staring at Collins, and was getting downright flustered around the young man. It was the last thing Farrier wanted to do about the matter, but he had to speak to Canfield.

Farrier walked briskly to the older man’s office and didn’t find him there, so he went upstairs to Canfield’s bedroom. He knocked on the door,

“‘Yes?’

“‘It’s me.’

Canfield opened the door.

“‘You don’t have to knock, lad.” He said with a warm smile.

“I know, just precautionary. Anyway, I never told you what I was going to at dinner a few weeks ago.” Farrier rubbed the back of his head,

“‘Ah, yes. Don’t stand in the doorway, come in Thomas.’

Farrier was waved in, he sat on a wooden chair by Canfield’s window, whilst Canfield sat on his bed looking towards Farrier.

“‘Now” Farrier began,

“I already know what this is about, son” Canfield chuckled.

“‘Oh really.” Said Farrier in a jesting tone,

“Is it about dear young Collins, by any chance?” Asked Canfield with a grin. Farrier didn’t let his eyes stray from the window for a beat or two, but resigned soon after and could only look over at Canfield in defeat and embarrassment.

“Thought so.” Canfield chuckled.

“He’s being troublesome.” Said Farrier,

“In what way?” said Canfield,

“I think he’s… Interested.” Admitted Farrier, making helpless eye contact.

“So? Ignore the lad and he will go away, just like what you told me all those weeks ago” Canfield prodded Farrier’s knee with a finger.

“I know, I know. I’m trying to ignore him but he’s persistent. I need to deal with it.” Farrier knew there wasn’t much Canfield could say, he just needed to share what was happening.

“Well he hasn’t actually done anything has he?” Canfield asked,

“No.”
“Well then he hasn’t broken any laws, so we can’t do anything drastic. Just have a quiet word to him, maybe let him know you can tell what he’s doing, that’ll probably scare the lad into never looking in your direction again!” Canfield laughed,

“Yeah, maybe I will talk to him about it.” Farrier said, looking out the window. There was a pause,

“You know, he’s a really good student, Michael. He’s firing through the classwork, he comes to weekly tutoring because he’s thirsty for even more knowledge.” Farrier’s face had lit up, a genuinely happy smile.

Canfield had a smaller, perhaps disenchanted one.

“I know that look Farrier, I'd hoped I wouldn't see it on you today.” Canfield said, Farrier’s smile dropped. The old man continued,

“You don’t know what to do because you like the attention he gives you deep down, perhaps you don’t even know it yet. You came here because you’re worried this will become a real issue, because it has the potential to if both parties are interested.” Both of the men’s smiles had disappeared. Farrier ran his hand through his hair, then began picking at his sleeve.

“Say it’s not so.” Canfield said in a low voice,

But Farrier couldn’t answer, he was ashamed and looked at the floor.

“Farrier.”

Farrier looked up, Canfield had a way of making him feel like a boy again. It was like getting in trouble at school.

“I don’t mind what you are, I’ve always said that. But I don’t want to see you, or a bright student, in trouble with the law. As long as you can live an unassuming life, it shouldn’t matter. But,” Canfield said,

“If it begins to interfere with anything, it becomes a problem, Tom.” He said.

“I know, I don’t want any trouble with the law, of course. I just wanted to talk to someone, that's why I came up here.” Farrier sounded disheartened. Canfield reached over and patted his knee,

“It’s okay lad, just don’t let anything get in the way of work, I know you’ll find a way to deal with it, just don’t let it show.” Canfield smiled in an attempt to cheer his friend up.

“Thanks for letting me come and chat, Canfield” Farrier smiled an empty smile,

“Of course, any time I’m here.” Replied Canfield.

“I should go, but… Thank you for accepting me, something Dad never could do, still can't do.” Farrier said earnestly,

“I always will.” Replied Canfield.

Farrier walked out the door, down the hallway and walked to his room.

Collins had been sitting in his room for a few minutes when he heard Farrier open and close his door again, he smiled. Then a knock at Collins’ door cleared his thoughts.
“Who is et?”
“Me, Dawson.”
“Aye come in mate.”

Dawson opened the door and walked over to Collins,

“Hey I signed up to boarding and I’m basically between you and Wingnut, he’s in my room now, we were wondering if you wanted to come and catch up a bit?” Dawson said,

“Aye sure, great we’re all kind of close!” said Collins, walking towards the door, Dawson followed.

“Yeah, definitely mate!”

Farrier heard someone- Dawson by the sounds of the voice, at Collins’ door, then heard them leave his room and a few laughs in the corridor. He didn’t know why but this irked him. Jealousy? No, definitely not. What was there to be jealous of? Dawson wasn’t that attractive, except he was. He had golden skin, no scars, he was carefree too, something Farrier didn’t consider himself to be, nor did anyone else.

“Ah, what am I thinking?” he murmured to himself, he had no reason to be jealous because he wasn’t interested in Collins, he reminded himself.

Collins entered Dawson’s room,

“Ello there!” said Wingnut,

“Hey mate, how are yae?” Collins smiled,

“Yeah good!” replied Timson. Dawson closed the door and they all sat crossed legged on the bed.

“This is cool guys,” said Dawson,


“How was tutoring then?” asked Timson.

“Ya it was good, he goes really in depth explaining stuff, it’s just what ah was lookin’ for, and ya you’re right he seems less borin’ when it’s one on one.” Replied Collins, doing, in his opinion a good job at hiding the fact that he enjoyed it for a completely different reason.

“Yeah good, glad you’re enjoying it” Wingnut replied,

“Yeah, I’m glad you two are getting the help you wanted.” Dawson said.

“You lads wanna do somethin’ together? It’s all well and good we can all catch up in Dawson’s room aye, but I dunnae wanna be sittin’ here with you two for too long” Collins joked,

“We could go out for dinner?” suggested Timson,

“Yeah we should do that! We haven’t done anythin’ as friends yet guys” Dawson added,

“Alright, but no drinkin’ we’ve got class tomorrow.” Said Collins.
“Fine!” Wingnut jokingly rolled his eyes earning a chuckle from the others.

“Hey we haven’t gone to the sandwich store with Dawson yet, it’s open till late ya know” said Collins to Wingnut.

“Oh I see, I’m the other friend” Dawson laughed,

“I’d love to see where you two gays go off to every day” Dawson added, Wingnut elbowed Dawson while Collins laughed uncomfortably at the joke.

“Alright we’ll go there.” Said Wingnut.

Farrier was sitting in the dining hall at his table and had just completed his fifth scan of the room. No Collins. Or Dawson or Timson.

“What are you looking for?” Canfield interrupted Farrier’s scanning,

“Not looking for anything, just looking around.” Said Farrier absentmindedly, Canfield hummed as if to say he wasn’t convinced, Farrier didn’t care. He tried not to be bothered by the lack of Collins, he didn’t have to eat here every night, but Farrier had seen him every single night so far, so tonight was a bit odd for him.

The three friends walked down to the sandwich bar, it was getting dark and cold so they quickly hurried inside.

“This place is cool” said Dawson.

“Yeah, food’s good and cheap too” said Timson. They sat at a table and had a look through the menu. As well as sandwiches, which was all Wingnut and Collins ever got, they had hot chips, wraps, soups and salads.

“Thinkin’ o’ getting’ a soup boys, warm up a bit” said Collins,

“I was thinking the same thing!” said Wingnut,

“Yeah I may as well too, otherwise we’ll be here forever waiting for me to decide.” said Dawson,

“Well then, three soups it is. I’m getting that broccoli one, what aboot you lads?” Collins said,

“I’ll get pumpkin” said Dawson,

“And I think I’ll be getting the leek and potato” Wingnut added.

The boys ordered and waited for their meals.

The ladies at the dining hall rang the dinner bell and Farrier began to stand with the rest of the men. As they walked to the front, as usual Canfield offered Farrier the first spot which was meant to be for Canfield as he was the highest ranked person there.

“No not tonight Michael, I can’t take your spot every time” Farrier said warmly before going behind Canfield in line,

“Alright, doesn’t make much of a difference anyway, I’m starving” Canfield smiled, Farrier smiled back. He wasn’t really hungry, he was more interested in where those three troublemakers had gone. The ladies gave him a big smile as he passed per usual, he smiled back out of politeness.
“That was very nice” Dawson said as he finished mopping up the remains of his soup with some bread.

“yup.” Agreed Timson,

“Yae mine too.” Said Collins. After a bit of chatter, they began the short walk back to the base.

“I wanna come with you guys more to that place, that was great!” Dawson said,

“Yes sure, I dunno why we didn’t even think to take you as soon as we met to be honest” said Collins,

“Yeah you can come whenever you want mate” Timson added.

Farrier finished his food and said his goodnights. He was about to open his door when he heard familiar voices behind him, he turned around to see Collins walking and laughing with Timson and Dawson. A sudden feeling of nervousness came over him so Farrier quickly ducked inside his room and shut the door. He heard some more laughter followed by Collins opening his door, Farrier seized the moment to open his, stupidly. Without thought as to why he should do this. Now he had to make up an excuse.

“Oh, Collins.” He pretended he didn’t know he was there,

“Oh, hiya Farrier” smiled Collins, he had just begun to undo his top button to get ready for bed, Farrier looked down to see a layer of golden hair on Collins’ upper chest, Collins watched the man’s eyes turn downwards so he turned away self-consciously.

“Was there somethin’ ya needed?” Collins asked,

“No, I was just heading downstairs for a bit, didn’t realise you’d be here.” Farrier answered,

There was a brief silence between them.

“Didn’t see you at dinner tonight” Farrier said as he looked at the floor,

“Ya, I went out with my friends” Collins replied, he’d done his button back up.

“Oh. Well was it nice?” Farrier asked, noting how self-conscious Collins seemed to be,

“Yae, it was.” Collins gave a small smile.

“Collins, before I go downstairs,” Farrier needed to let Collins know that he could see what he was doing, try and make sure a stern word put a stop to it, but Farrier wasn’t sure he wanted the attention to stop, and didn’t have the heart to say a thing. He mentally scorned himself for being soft.

“Never mind. As you were Collins, enjoy your evening.” Said Farrier as he walked downstairs. He heard Collins shut his door a time later that meant he had watched Farrier walk away. He had to go downstairs not because he had anything to do, but because he told Collins he would. He found some things to tidy in his office before heading back up.

Collins flumped down onto his bed, what was that about? He thought to himself. Collins didn’t really like his body, he was too lanky, not enough muscle, not tanned enough. He didn’t need the thought that Farrier had seen part of his body on his mind either, even if it was only one button down on his shirt, so he began to sketch the sandwich bar to distract himself.
Collins fell asleep pencil in hand.

Chapter End Notes

As always thanks for reading, any feedback is greatly appreciated :) New chapter every Monday!
At the end of that week on the last lesson of Friday, Farrier made an announcement to the class.

“Right lads. It’s the first of May, you’re four weeks in now, so congratulations on making it through the first month. Now there’s a little surprise waiting for all of you down in the dining hall, I’m very proud of you all.” Farrier’s smile looked genuine, Collins knew what he was talking about as soon as the words left his mouth.

The students were quick to file out after that statement. Farrier overheard Timson and Collins talking,

“What d’you think he was talking about down there mate?” Timson asked,

“Uniforms of course!” Collins looked like he could barely contain his excitement.

“You’re joking!” Dawson chipped in,

“No, he said they come in after a month!” Collins said, Farrier couldn’t hide the smile this gave him, how excited Collins was.

The students ran downstairs into the dining room, Collins knew he was right about the uniforms before they even reached the door into the dining area because the whole room had erupted with shouts of happiness, so loud that Farrier could hear it upstairs, he was in a great mood, he always loved seeing the students get excited over the new uniforms. Something so rudimentary to him by now was still so amazing to them.

They were all in cardboard boxes on the tables, it was chaotic at best. Collins saw peaks of dark blue material out of boxes of students too eager to wait, his heart began to race in anticipation.

There were sheets of names in alphabetical order, at long last Collins found his box. He grabbed it and managed to find Wingnut.

“I’m gonna get out of this chaos mate, knock on my door when you’re up.”

“Good fucken’ choice, I’ll let you know when I’ve got mine upstairs too.” The pair exchanged a grin before Collins moved off to the stampede of students who had their boxes and were trying to leave. He managed to get upstairs relatively easily, as most students departed the building onto the street at ground floor, but Collins followed the stairs to the second floor. He jogged along the corridor, turned the corner and opened his door haphazardly before dumping the box on his bed. He kicked his door shut and promptly stripped, he could not wait to try this on. Collins was grinning ear to ear as he opened the box, and then he saw his first glimpse.

Royal blue blazer and matching belt, with gold buttons, perfect crisp collar, and made of beautiful thick warm wool. It somehow looked even more special than his old Scottish one, hanging forgotten in his cupboard. He carefully lifted the new blazer out of the box and placed it on the
bed. A matching pair of woollen trousers, equally ostentatious, which were placed with just as much care on the bed. Then was that classic light blue button up shirt, two of the same actually, then the dark blue tie, and two pairs of thinner navy pants, the uniform Collins saw the instructors wear every day. Then he got to two beige coloured button up short sleeve shirts and matching beige pants, which were very lightweight, and two plain white t-shirts. At the bottom of the box were three pairs of shoes, one was a pair of professional black and shiny lace ups, one was a pair of short black boots, and the other was a pair of long black leather boots with woollen insulation inside.

Collins first put on the thick woollen trousers, which fit perfectly around him, then he threw on the blue shirt and tucked it into his pants around his slim waist, then the tie and finally his beautiful new blazer and the dress shoes. He turned to look at himself in the mirror against the wall, now he looked the part. He combed a hand through his hair to neaten it and straightened his tie. Collins felt very important indeed. A knock at his door stopped his vain thoughts,

“Hey mate, I’m here!” it was Wingnut,

“Me too!” and Dawson.

“Come in lads, it’s open!” Collins called, they opened the door and Collins saw that they were wearing their uniforms too.

“Bloody hell we look good!” Dawson said,

“Ah this is great guys! Look at you two!” Collins grinned. They exchanged boyish embraces, and all walked out into the hall. They walked downstairs and saw many other men who had changed in the locker room and bathrooms, all looking proud.

“Hey guys, looking good!” one of them said to the three,

“Thanks, you too!” Dawson replied.

“Lots of us are thinking of heading out tonight and celebrating. I mean it’s Friday, we’re all looking pretty darn dashing, we’re trying to get as many as we can on board. Wanna join?” the brunette asked,

“I will” smiled Collins,

“Yeah me too!” Wingnut chipped in,

“I’d love to mate!” said Dawson.

“Great! See if anyone else wants to. We’re all gonna arrive at the Red Pint around 7 tonight so be there!” He walked off into the crowd.

“This’ll be a great night I reckon.” Said Timson, Collins threw an arm around him,

“You bet mate”, Dawson grinned at the two.

“Well let’s hang out upstairs for a bit then go.” Suggested Dawson.

The three went and all sat in Dawson’s room for a while playing cards. At around 4:30 Collins heard footsteps outside the door, then heard Farrier cough, confirming who he thought it was.

“Should we invite Farrier?” He asked his friends innocently, the two chuckled which made Collins
nervous.

“I mean, it’d be hilarious to ask but I doubt he’d ever do it” Dawson said,

“Yeah I agree. I’d actually like him to be there but yeah, I don’t think he’ll come. You can ask though.” Said Wingnut.

“Challenge accepted boys” Collins smiled, causing more chuckles,

“Challenge: Get the crankiest instructor on base to come and fucken party!” Wingnut almost yelled,

“Quiet ya fucken loon, he’s in the hallway!” Collins said, earning more laughter. He got off the bed and went to the door,

“I’ll be back in a bit, don’ look at my cards!” he said as he left Dawson’s room.

Farrier was closing his door when Collins got out of Dawson’s room. He ran and was able to get in a “Farri” before the door shut. But then it opened straight after, a peaceful looking Farrier peered out. Peaceful? Collins thought, he was surprised not to see Farrier’s trademark furrowed brow, or an elusive smile, but something neutral.

“Yes?” Farrier said, moving out of his room but still holding the door.

“I ah, well firstly I wanted to say that the uniform fits perfectly” Collins rubbed the back of his neck, Farrier smiled,

“I’m glad it does, you all look very fine in them.” That was a very calmed down version of what Farrier’s mind wanted to say.

Collins nervously chuckled.

“The second thing is…” He had no idea it would be this difficult.

“Me and the lads were wonderin’ if ya wanted to come out with us tonight, celebrate. Not just with us, there’s a lot goin’. It’ll be at the Red Pint.” He said, not able to look into Farrier’s eyes for long periods of time.

“I really appreciate the thought Collins, but I’ve got work to do.” Said Farrier kindly, he began to back into his room. No. Collins thought, he couldn’t just say that and get out of it.

“What work on a Friday night?” Collins asked, half his mouth turned upwards slightly.

“That’s not a question I need to give you an answer to, Collins.” Farrier said with a smirk, but there was the familiar removed, guarded voice. Collins tilted his head sideways in a come on gesture. Collins didn’t even believe Farrier had any work to do.

“What, what else can I say? I’m busy!” Farrier laughed in a defensive manner.

Alright, alright, didn’t think you were too strained to go out once in a while, guess I was wrong.” Collins smirked, he knew this would strike a nerve. It did, immediately and he could see it on Farrier’s face.

“C’mon, you don’ have any work to do Farrier, that much I do know.” Farrier looked taken aback.
“You don’t know anything about my private life Collins.” Farrier looked at the ground.

“No, I don’t. But I know I’d like you to be there tonight.” Collins looked earnestly into Farrier’s eyes, hoping making eye contact would amount to something.

Farrier sighed a relenting sigh, Collins’ stomach fluttered.

“I’ll think about it, that’s all.” Farrier said, eyebrows raised.

“Great” Collins smiled.

“Let us know by 5:45.” Collins said with a voice full of happiness.

Farrier smiled in an *are you happy now?* Kind of way and closed his door.

“You gonna drink tonight?” Wingnut asked Dawson as they sat on the bed looking at Collins’ cards while he was gone,

“Yeah, ‘course mate! You better be too I hope!” he replied,

“Yeah yeah I will, Saturday is like, what 2 classes? And I think all the instructors are going to know we went out so it’ll be fine.” Replied Timson.

“Nice” said Dawson. The two heard a knock at the door, Dawson got up and opened the door to Collins, who had a smile that looked like he was struggling to contain on his face.

“What? Don’t tell me he didn’t shut ya down in five seconds.” Dawson said.

“He said he’s gonna think about it!” Collins said excitedly

“What!” Wingnut laughed on the bed.

“Oh if he says yes I’m gonna have a fit!” Dawson laughed and closed the door behind Collins.

“Well boys, thanks for not messin’ with ma cards” Collins said eyeing the mess that was a neat pile, he put his hands on his hips as they laughed.

Farrier didn’t want to go. But he wanted to see Collins, and he was friends with the barman at Red’s, mainly from being there too many times. He knew Canfield would disapprove… Unless he could get him to come along! Maybe that would make sure Farrier stayed on track, and would give him someone to talk to as the barman would likely be preoccupied. He decided that was a good idea, besides if he didn’t go he’d be moping about thinking about why he should have gone. He went to Canfield’s bedroom and knocked. It’d be good to get the old man out anyway.

“Come in?” said Canfield.

“Hi Canfield” said Farrier

“Ah, Tom. Don’t the initiates look splendid?” said Canfield,

“That they do. I actually had a question regarding them.” Farrier said and sat on a wooden chair by Canfield’s desk.

“I’ve been invited to celebrate with them. I was wondering if you’d like to keep me company.”
Farrier smiled and tried to hide his discomfort with the thought of being out with Collins without Canfield.

“Well, I’ve not been out for years, my friend.” Canfield said,

“But” the older man added,

Farrier got excited,

“I suppose I can make an exception for tonight. I’m not teaching until the afternoon tomorrow, I suppose it would be good for my old soul to get out while I can!” Canfield laughed. Farrier was elated,

“We’ll have a good time, I’m sure of it.” He smiled,

“Yes we will, but you watch yourself with those young strapping men Farrier, I mean it” Canfield said, with more of a joking demeanour than anything.

“Yes I know Michael, it’s a celebration for the uniforms.” Farrier said earnestly, slightly irritated at the amount the old man felt he needed to bring the subject up.

“Indeed it is. Well, come and get me when it’s time to leave, I’ll put my uniform on, will you?” Canfield looked excited to get out.

“I suppose I will so I’m not the odd one out” Farrier smiled. He wasn’t particularly fond of his blazer, he didn’t like the attention from women it gave him, or anyone come to think of it, and they all seemed to want to know the stories behind his medals, which he didn’t feel inclined to share.

The boys had given up on cards, mainly due to Collins’ cards being looked at and the game therefore being ruined. They chattered until they heard three knocks on the door. Dawson looked at Wingnut conveying *Who is that?* Wingnut shrugged in response.

“Hello?” Dawson said to the knocking.

“Hello boys, you got a moment?” it was Farrier.

“Yes of course!” Dawson replied, he was not expecting Farrier and it had flustered him slightly. He jumped off the bed to open the door.

“Hello Dawson, Timson, Collins. I just wanted to let you all know that I have accepted your invitation, and I have also decided to bring Canfield along with me.” He smiled into the room.

“Great! Well we’re leaving for the train station with the other boys around 5:45, so I suppose we’ll see you both there!” Dawson said,

“Thanks for comin’ Farrier, means a lot that you’re wanting to celebrate with us and that” Wingnut said,

“Of course Timson, I’m glad you all appreciate your uniforms and want to celebrate them” Farrier’s smile was genuine, Collins had a vague dreamy smile on his face which didn’t go away when Farrier made eye contact with him for a brief moment.

“See you later boys.” Farrier said sincerely and closed the door.

Dawson walked back to the bed,
“Cool then!” he said to the others,

“Hey wonder if Canfield’ll get drunk” Wingnut laughed.

“Imagine him lads, I can see it now!” Collins laughed.

“Yeah and Farrier havin’ to fucken help him back to the base!” Dawson chimed in, the three laughed at the thought. A failed card game later the three realised it was almost 5:45, so they all tried their best to fix their hair and then excitedly walked down the stairs to the foyer where a lot of the other initiates were already waiting. They made their way to the door, where the boy who had invited them was standing, they supposed he was the one who organised the whole thing.

“Hiya, we almost ready?” Collins said,

“Hi! Yeah gonna wait to make sure no more stragglers get left behind. I’m Anderson by the way, nice to meet you.” The brunette held his hand out to shake,

“Collins” he replied with a smile. Anderson had striking blue eyes and pale skin, and seemed to have a permanent confident expression on his face.

“This is Dawson and Timson” Collins said, gesturing to his friends,

“Hey boys” replied Anderson as he shook their hands,

“You can call me Wingnut” said Timson, flicking his ears, earning embarrassed chuckles and eye-rolls from Collins and Dawson.

“Yeah, I might stick to Timson mate” Anderson awkwardly laughed at the odd nickname.

“Let’s go guys.” Anderson said a few minutes later, and pushed open the front doors, there was a cheer from the large group behind them and all the boys walked out onto the street. It must have been a sight to behold, no less than 50 or 60 newly recruited RAF pilots, all in their strapping uniforms, confidently walking down the road together. Anderson unbuttoned his blazer, Collins noticed he wasn’t wearing the tie, and the first two buttons were undone on the shirt, revealing a glimpse of dark hair. Anderson had an arrogant streak apparently, but Collins didn’t mind, he seemed alright.

“You boys smoke?” He asked Collins, Timson and Dawson.

“Nah mate” Dawson replied,

“Never smoked before” Wingnut said.

“What about you Collins? Commonplace up there?” Anderson asked,

“Well it’s no more common than down here, and A’ve smoked a few but not somethin’ I enjoy massively” he answered in a friendly way.

“Ah c’mon boys, it’ll make you feel better!” Anderson laughed,

“Fine, fine” Collins said, taking a cigarette from Anderson.

He lit up and puffed, he didn’t dislike smoking, it just didn’t do much for him.

“So this is Charles, and Johnson” Anderson introduced two boys on his other side, Johnson was a lanky pale boy with dark curls and green eyes, he had a vaguely conceited expression, and Charles
was a tall boy with blonde hair, golden skin and high cheekbones, it was obvious that he hadn’t followed the haircut protocol, he’d shaved the back and sides but the top was way too long, it fell onto his face.

Johnson smiled quickly at them and Charles gave a short “Hi.” With a small smile afterwards.

“Pass me one mate” Charles held a hand out for a cigarette,

“Yeah I’ll take one” said Johnson.

“Whaddaya think o’ that lot?” Collins murmured to Dawson next to him,

“I mean, they seem okay, maybe a bit standoff-ish but we’ll see” Dawson said, Collins could tell he didn’t like the smoke so he stood a little further from him. The sun was golden as it went down, the air was crisp and Collins’ fingers began to get a little cold, but he didn’t mind, he was surrounded by good people, wearing his uniform and about to have a great night.

Farrier hadn’t seen the three idiots all evening, he’d heard a commotion downstairs and went to see what it was, realised it was the group going out and got Canfield and himself down there to wait. He’d walked at the back of the group talking to Canfield, it felt like he was on some sort of excursion, making sure there were no stragglers, he couldn’t even see the front of the group, not that he was looking for anyone, of course.

“Don’t let me drink too much Canfield.” He said looking forwards,

“Well, only if you do the same for me” Canfield chuckled as he walked along smiling.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, all! As always I'd love to know what you thought :)
An interesting night

Chapter Notes

Hope everyone's well this week! The initiates reach their destination for the night and some interesting events ensue.

Trigger warning(s) listed in end notes.

The group reached Gatwick train station and took up a lot of the platform. Farrier almost felt bad for everyone else who had to board with them, he just hoped that everyone upheld a professional image for the RAF as he had asked.

Slowly heads turned to him and Canfield, the boys realising they were there too. Some seemed pleased, some seemed uptight, he supposed that was a fairly normal response considering the boys most likely imagined this night would be unsupervised.

Farrier spotted Collins putting a cigarette in the bin on the platform, he turned around and Farrier followed his gaze to a group of students. He was with his usual two friends, and also Charles, Johnson and Anderson. Farrier couldn’t believe they’d be talking, those three were so good, and the other three were, well, so bad. Collins laughed and patted Anderson on the back. Farrier knew he couldn’t tell Collins who to be friends with, but those boys always sat at the back and talked and Farrier didn’t like the vibe he got from them. The train came and filled the room with steam and smoke, masking the boys from Farrier’s view.

“Why did yae do this?!” Collins yelled at the group around him.

“Why would yae put a steam train in a tunnel?!” the others laughed at both his remark and accent.

“Well I hear there’s talk of diesel trains soon mate” Wingnut said, coughing,

“Better be” Collins said as the steam began to clear. As Collins began to see in front of him again he realised he was looking into the eyes of Anderson. Very blue, but not aqua like his, Anderson’s were icy cold. Anderson’s mouth twitched upwards at Collins and didn’t break eye contact as the boy lazily stepped into the train, Collins looked down, in that moment terrified of being thought of as anything but normal. They boarded and sat together and everyone else followed suit.

“How on earth are we going to keep an eye on them all? They need to act properly!” Farrier began to worry, maybe he should have tried to stop the outing instead of going along, he didn’t want the RAF to be known as a bunch of sloppy drunk boys.

“Don’t worry so much Farrier, every time I see you you’ve got your brow furrowed or you’re fidgeting or your arms are crossed, just relax son!” Canfield patted his knee,

“They’ll be fine, even if they drink, even if they drink a little too much, unless something like, oh I don’t know, a fight, happens, I’d say it’s fairly normal for a group of young boys to be out drinking, in uniform too.” Canfield’s words were always grounding and relieving to hear, but there was still nervousness in the back of Farrier’s mind.
“What about old men like us?” Farrier laughed,

“Definitely, nothing like a couple of elders out with the youngens!” Canfield said, causing a hearty laugh to erupt from Farrier, which Collins heard from his seat quite a few rows behind. He looked over and smiled at the two conversing. He appeared to be the only one who took notice, Wingnut and Dawson were having a conversation, as were Charles and Johnson, Collins assumed Anderson was minding his own business when he leaned right up to Collins, making him slightly hot under the collar.

“I know that look.” He murmured,

Collins looked at him without really facing him, stared at him to let him know that he needed to stop talking.

“Don’t worry.” The brunette said.

“Nothin’ to worry about mate.” Collins replied seriously.

“Just happy that he’s laughin’ instead of bein’ fucken depressed” Collins added, loud enough for the others to hear, Wingnut and Dawson chuckled,

“Got that right mate” Wingnut said, Collins smiled back, glad someone backed him, Anderson sat back and chuckled quiet.

Charles, who, like Johnson hadn’t addressed the three directly yet spoke.

“So how are you three going with things? Easy?”

He had a soft, well pronounced voice, and took time speaking, he looked at each of them in turn.

“Ya, I’m goin’ fine.” Collins said and looked away absently.

“Yeah me too, getting some extra help but I’m good” Wingnut said with his trademark goofy smile,

“And you?” Charles looked at Dawson who absent-mindedly hadn’t answered,

“Yeah I’m going well” he smiled quickly, seemed uncomfortable under Charles’ gaze apparently.

The train eventually pulled up in London Victoria, and the students spilled out of the doors onto the platform. They walked in a big group to the Red Pint.

“We ready boys?” Anderson shouted behind him, earning many yells of happiness. He pushed both doors open at once and led the way in. Bartender Pete’s face behind the bar went from beaming as the first ten or so walked in, to shock as the other forty or so did. Then he saw Farrier walking in at the very back next to Canfield, he made eye contact and gave Farrier a look of not impressed to which Farrier put his hands up in defence and gave an apologetic smile. Farrier walked up to the bar,

“Hi Pete, you remember Canfield?” he said,

“Of course I do, nice to see you again fellow!” Pete said to Canfield.

“Likewise, Peter” Canfield smiled warmly and shook his hand.

Collins followed the group to a table and sat between Wingnut and Anderson.
“Been here often boys?” Johnson asked,

“Once yae.” Collins said, he’d been told it was the place to go if you wanted atmosphere so he had. It had been full of middle aged people sitting and talking, and there was soft music playing, but he supposed that was because he went on a Tuesday, Collins was not used to anything past the small pub in Aviemore which was like that every night of the week anyway.

“A few times yeah” Dawson answered,

“Yeah same” Timson said,

“Yeah we come here quite a lot come to think of it” Johnson said, turning to Charles,

“Yeah, it’s nice here.” He wore a small smile.

“Now, why have you brought a couple thousand of you in here?” Pete asked, only half joking.

“Come on, about fifty. And they brought me in more than I did them, their uniforms arrived today and they all wanted to go out, and we thought we ought to supervise.” Farrier smiled at Canfield.

“We also came to show them how to really enjoy themselves, god bless them.” Canfield laughed, the two men sat at the bar and ordered some drinks.

As the night went on, Dawson, Timson and Collins warmed to the three other boys. Maybe it was the alcohol, maybe not, but Collins had already had perhaps five shots, the whiskey was too good not to. The new friends were a bit smug but Collins found it different in a good way to the open kindness of his friends.

After a few rounds of drinks, Collins decided it was time for a dance.

“Anyone here dance?” he asked,

“Nope” Wingnut laughed, nobody seemed to want to,

“Aight lads, guess I’ll show yah how it’s done then” Collins swaggered off.

Farrier noticed Collins get up, he wasn’t wobbly, but he definitely had a more confident walk.

“I think I need another drink if I’m gonna watch this” Dawson said and walked over to the bar.

“Oh, that’s young Dawson coming to say hello” Canfield tapped Farrier on the shoulder,

“Oh, so it is.” Farrier said as he noticed the blonde walk towards him, interrupting his Collins-watching.

“Hello Dawson” Farrier smiled, Canfield smiled and then raised his eyebrows at something behind Dawson, causing the younger boy to turn, it was Collins. He was dancing, and he was very good. He was swing dancing, and so smoothly anyone would think he had taken lessons. Collins was lost in the music, he let his subconscious do the moving. He was vaguely aware that quite a few of the men were watching, a sly smile crept onto his face at the thought. Collins looked up from his footwork arbitrarily to the bar area and happened to be where Farrier was stood, eliciting a brief butterfly in his stomach. The blonde smiled and bit his lip in delight as he continued to dance.

“Look at him go!” Canfield laughed,
“Didn’t know he had *that* in him” Dawson said to the two older men,

“Neither” Farrier chuckled and shook his head. A circle had cleared around Collins. Farrier took another sip of his drink and continued to watch, this was an opportunity in which it was okay to look at him, and he wasn’t going to pass this up.

“Well, lad’s got style!” Pete said from behind the bar,

“Indeed he does Petey. Think I might need another drink though, still not feeling anything.” Farrier finished his glass and slid it across the bar counter.

“That’s your sixth!” Pete laughed,

“Annoying isn’t it? And you wonder why I don’t get drunk much, I don’t get paid enough for that!” he laughed, earning a friendly whack on the shoulder from Canfield who knew exactly how much Farrier got paid. Wingnut couldn’t do anything but stare, he was too elated to laugh even. Charles was leaning on a wall talking to a waitress but he was watching Collins, Johnson was in the circle watching Collins, egging him on, it was just Timson and Anderson sitting at the table still.

Collins began to unbutton his blazer, he handed it to Johnson with a smile, who laughed and threw it back to their table. Farrier couldn’t believe his eyes when he saw Collins take his blazer off. It was too good to be true, and he was *allowed* to watch it happen, though part of him wished he had more respect for that blazer than to give it to the likes of Johnson, who threw it at the table. Collins was lean, Farrier’s eyes went down to where Collins’ shirt was tucked into his pants, showing off his thin waist, Farrier then realised he was going a bit far. He took a large gulp of his seventh drink and finally began to feel a bit tingly.

“Well I came over here for a drink and I’ve got it now, so I’m going to sit back down” Dawson smiled with a glass in his hand.

“Yes, good lad” Canfield said, but he was watching Collins still. Farrier raised his glass in Dawson’s direction to acknowledge him but didn’t look his way. As Dawson sat down Wingnut grabbed him

“Fucken legend, isn’t he?!” he laughed,

“Yeah he’s the life of the party!” Dawson smiled. The song began to wind down and so did Collins. His shuffling got slower and his tiredness began to show. At the close of the song he did a dramatic twirl and finished his dance. The room erupted. He walked off into the crowd and to the table, panting.

“Well, that was very impressive Collins” said Anderson with a smile, Collins could only smile in thanks as he continued to breathe heavily, he rested his hands on the table and put his weight on them.

“More than impressive mate, the whole group was watching!” Dawson said,

“Thanks guys, just doin’ what I like” Collins puffed.

“I need a drink or three” he added. Someone else had already taken up residence on the dancefloor, people were watching him too, which made Collins feel a little less self-conscious, knowing the group watched anyone who could dance.

Collins walked over to the bar, smiling at Farrier and Canfield, who he knew were watching.
“Well done lad! Having a good time?” Canfield said,

“Ya, it’s a very good night” He had a very sweet smile, slightly lopsided, thought Farrier as Collins spoke to Canfield.

“Hiya, can I have another glass o’ scotch whiskey please?”

“Sure, on the house after that show, I’m making enough tonight with all you lot here!” Pete handed Collins a full glass of whiskey,

“Wow, thank you very much mister!” Collins smiled and took it,

“No worries son” Pete chuckled. Farrier was leaning against the bar with his back and had his elbows on the counter behind him, as Collins walked past his arm brushed Farrier’s torso. Farrier barely felt it under his thick blazer, but it made his stomach drop. He hoped it was the alcohol that was enhancing his emotions, and not genuine feeling. When Collins got back to the table, Wingnut had gotten up, leaving only Anderson sitting.

“They all dancin’?” Collins asked Anderson,

“Well,” he sat up slightly, pushing Collins’ blazer towards him which had been sitting on the table,

“Charles has found himself a lovely little lass,” he motioned his head towards the back wall of the bar, where Collins saw Charles’ figure pushing a woman against the wall, kissing her and holding her hips with his arms.

“Johnson is dancing, yes” Collins turned to see a mess of curls bobbing in the crowd.

“I believe your two friends are dancing also.” Collins thought he could see Dawson, maybe Wingnut.

“Ah, dunnae matter much, just wonderin’” said Collins with a smile.

Anderson watched Collins slip his blazer back on, he didn’t take his eyes off Collins’ who didn’t make much of an effort to hold eye contact, he was still somewhat tired from dancing so energetically. He drank half of his glass straight away,

“Jesus, this is good stuff” he looked at his glass,

“What did you expect?” Anderson smiled,

“Piss weak English alcohol” Collins smirked. Anderson wasn’t bad looking, his pale skin was as alluring as his cold eyes. Collins felt slightly tingly as he finished his glass, glad that sculling it like that had an effect.

“Let’s get some air, yeah?” said Anderson,

“Yeah sure” Collins smiled, putting his glass down.

Farrier watched as Collins drank.

“He just drank that entire glass in about ten seconds!” he laughed turning to Canfield.

“Of course he did! Probably doesn’t even feel a thing!” Pete said. They both laughed. Canfield leaned in close to Farrier,
“I can see what you feel Tom.”

Farrier looked up at Canfield hopelessly,

“I can’t control my feelings, only my actions.” He murmured.

“I know but keep them controlled is all I’m saying.” Canfield said.

“I know, Michael, I know. Stop telling me that.” Farrier stared at the ground. Canfield sighed,

“I’m sorry, but I can tell you really fancy this one.” Farrier’s stomach flipped once again. He turned his body to face Canfield,

“Yeah, I do Michael, I really do. Now, imagine never being able to do anything about it, it feels fucking terrible. When will it be that you stop talking about this? It’s because of you and your incessant mentioning of my sexuality that I can never bury what I am.” Farrier stared at Canfield for a second before looking to see where the barman had gone.

“Petey, can I have a glass?” Farrier said to him at the other end of the bar.

“Of what mate?” Pete laughed,

“Something strong.”

“Same as that young scot had then, mate” Pete said,

“Thank you” he said, briefly smiling at Pete.

“Do not come looking for me, Wing Commander.” Farrier said as he walked off with his drink. He heard Canfield sigh as he walked off. He looked at the table Collins had been at, and saw it, along with Collins’ glass, empty.

Collins followed Anderson out to the back of the bar. They were in an alleyway.

“So, Mr. Collins, how is it you’re such a good dancer then?” Anderson asked, Collins had the feeling this was a loaded question.

“What d’ya mean? I just practice mate, grab moves from others I see ‘n make mae own thing” Collins smiled and rubbed the back of his neck.

Anderson hummed,

“No ladies to practice with?” He smirked and stepped closer, Collins thought before answering,

“Not at the moment, no.” Collins said, hostility spiking in his voice.

Collins was beginning to worry he’d put himself in a dangerous situation.

“I’m sure they come flocking!” Anderson laughed, pulling out his cigarette pack.

“Ahh I wish” Collins chuckled uncomfortably.

“Doesn’t matter. Want one?” the brunette offered him a cigarette which he took more because he didn’t want to annoy the man.
“Timson, where’s Collins and Anderson?” Farrier grabbed the arm of a dancing and very drunk Timson,

“Uh, over there” he pointed at the table,

“Oh” he said as he realised the table was empty. He thought for a few moment and then a look of realisation appeared.

“I think they went out the back! Yeah I remember now” he smiled.

“Thank you” Farrier said. He didn’t know what he was going to do, maybe just act like he was going out to have a smoke or something, which if he was being honest he needed right now. He didn’t like the fact that Anderson was alone with Collins.

“So, you’re homosexual?” Anderson said. Collins almost choked on the smoke, he spluttered.

“No, course not! Were we no’ just talking about ladies?” he said quickly. Anderson didn’t answer, just kept smoking.

If he wasn’t worried before, Collins was worried now.

“We were, but you act differently around your superior” Anderson smirked and Collins knew who he meant.

“Don’t know what yae mean, mate.” Collins said taking a long draw on the cigarette.

Farrier shouldn’t have been worrying so much but he couldn’t help it. He made the decision to go out the back, just pretend he was going to smoke a cigarette or something, he needed to make sure nothing sinister was going on with the likes of Anderson, who he didn’t trust at all. He supposed he was worried because Collins just looked too pure, Farrier somewhat doubted he’d been in a fight before, if he’d know what to do. Coming from a small town Collins was probably too trusting anyway, Farrier thought.

The man opened the door to a scene which was much less dramatic than he imagined.

Collins and Anderson were having a smoke together against the wall a way down the alley. They didn’t even notice him so he headed back inside.

“Well, I’m done smoking. I’m going inside.” Collins said, stepping on the cigarette to put it out.

“Me too.” Anderson said, doing the same. Before they reached the door Collins felt a hand on his shoulder.

“Hope you’re not lying Collins, it’s disrespectful to lie.” Anderson still held that confident smirk.

“I’m not, and it’s disrespectful to ask if a man’s homosexual, ya know.” Collins answered before letting himself back into the pub.

He put on a brave voice, but Collins was genuinely scared now.

Chapter End Notes
As always, thank you for reading :) Collins finally got a reality check, I think he had it coming with all the blatant staring. Next chapter will be up in 7 days (next Monday) to find out how the night resolves itself.
Not healed

Chapter Notes

If you've been waiting for a happy chapter, you're going to hate me after this, I'm sorry.

Some pretty heavy feels in this one.

Trigger warning(s) listed in end notes.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Canfield?” Farrier’s voice cracked a bit so he cleared his throat,

“Yes?” Canfield said, turning to Farrier.

“I’m sorry for going off at you earlier. I needed to clear my head, and you’re right, as always, so I apologise.” Farrier smiled apologetically.

“Ahh!” Canfield held his arms out, the two men embraced.

“It’s understandable, but thank you for apologising.” Canfield said. Farrier had a nervous fluttering feeling in his gut, he got it every time he went off at Canfield, but every time he came back to him in the end anyway. Sometimes he hated his inability to stay angry at the old man, other times Farrier saw it as a good trait, like when a family fought and made up, and Canfield was the closest thing Farrier had to a father figure. He pushed the thought from his head.

“I need another drink, but I think we should begin to wrap up soon, don’t you?” Farrier said,

“Yes, we do have to teach these bastards tomorrow!” Canfield laughed.

“Petey? I’ll have another of that whiskey.” Farrier beckoned his friend over.

“Coming right up mate. Gee, you and that Scot could drink your weight in alcohol and still be saying ‘I’m not even tipsy yet!’” Pete mocked a common saying of Farrier’s using the man’s voice and demeanour. Canfield heartily laughed at this remark, Farrier chuckled as he was handed his glass.

Anderson sat down at their table, where Charles and the woman he was kissing earlier were now, along with Johnson and Wingnut and Dawson.

“Uh, hey boys, where the fuck did you go?” Dawson joked,

“Ah we just went for a smoke” Collins smiled, Dawson seemed needlessly suspicious of the answer, Collins ignored it.

“Farrier was looking for you” Wingnut made eye contact with Collins as he said it,

“Oh, why?” Collins asked, not pleased that Farrier had been brought up after the altercation outside.
“Dunno, I said you were outside but I don’t know if he went and got you.” Timson answered, fixing his blazer sleeve.

“Well I didn’t see him, maybe I’ll go ask him now. I need another drink anyway.” Collins began to walk off.

“How much do you fucking drink?” A clearly drunk Johnson yelled after him, Collins laughed as he kept walking.

Farrier spotted Collins laughing over his shoulder walking towards the bar, he must have physically stiffened because Canfield leant in and murmured,

“He’s just another student, Farrier”.

“Yeah yeah” Farrier said absent-mindedly, thoughts yet again tinged with annoyance.

“Hiya!” Collins said happily, all Farrier could do was smile slightly, he couldn’t focus his eyes on Collins and they remained focused on some unspecified space behind him, his mind was beginning to take him back to places he didn’t want to go. Collins immediately worried Farrier had heard or somehow knew by his detached demeanour, but that was silly.

“Could I please get another scotch whiskey?” Collins leaned over the counter,

“Sure can, does everyone from up there drink so heavily?” Pete laughed, “Only the best of us” Collins laughed. He said a polite “thanks” as his drink was handed to him, he sipped it, glanced at Farrier and Canfield with a smile, which was returned by Canfield, but Collins was surprised to see Farrier looking, disappointed? Sad? He began to walk off but turned when he remembered why he’d come over,

“Oh Farrier?” Collins turned,

“Yes?” Farrier was shaken from his daze and answered nervously,

“Wingnut said you were lookin’ for me” Collins said,

“Who?” Farrier pursed his lips.

Shit Collins thought,

“Oh Farrier?” Collins turned,

“Yes?” Farrier was shaken from his daze and answered nervously,

“Wingnut said you were lookin’ for me” Collins said,

“Who?” Farrier pursed his lips.

Shit Collins thought,

“Ah, Timson, sorry”

“Oh, yes I was but it wasn’t important, no matter Collins” Farrier smiled, but it was empty of emotion.

“Aight, just checkin’” Collins answered as he turned around and walked back to the table.

“You went looking for him?” Canfield asked, Farrier sighed.

“Look. You know that boy Anderson and his two friends Charles and Johnson?” Farrier asked,

“Yes, they sit at the back and talk all through my lectures, sometimes they make paper planes from the worksheets.” Canfield said with a tinge of amusement in his voice,

“Well tonight Collins, Timson and Dawson are sitting with them, and I don’t trust those three boys one bit, not with Collins and Dawson, two of the brightest students and Timson, one very eager to
learn student. I didn’t want something sinister to happen.” Farrier said.

“They’re kids Farrier, what’s going to happen?” Canfield smiled,

“They’re not kids Canfield, they’re all in their twenties! Plus, I’ve had to intervene twice in the past because that group keep ganging up on other men, they almost started a fight in the locker room once.” Farrier said.

“I’m allowed to be protective of my best students.” he added defensively,

“Yes of course, especially when there might be a fight, but don’t show favouritism outwardly to them, okay?” Canfield said,

“Yes, I know. I just don’t like those three.”

“Neither do I, but we have to teach them. They applied because they want to be part of this, why else would they have gone through all that training to get here?” Canfield said,

“Yeah I know, I know” Farrier said.

“Should we go?” Farrier asked after a few beats of silence maybe a change of scenery would help the fact that he was getting distracted by memories,

“I think so.” Canfield answered.

“How do we get their attention?” Canfield asked,

“I have no clue.” Farrier said resignedly.

“OI YOU LOT!” Pete, who’d been listening in yelled, and then laughed.

“Thanks for the effort Petey” Farrier laughed, it seemed to partially work.

“LISTEN ALL YOU BASTARDS!” He yelled again, causing a laugh from both Farrier and Canfield. The room was mostly silent.

“Right lads! We’re off, I doubt any of you have looked at a watch all night, so it may surprise you to know that it’s a little past midnight!” Farrier yelled, causing laughter from some.

“So we need to go, else we’ll miss the train.” He added, with some more laughter in response.

“Come on, I wasn’t joking!” He added, and began to get some notes out of his pocket, he handed them to Pete,

“There’s a bit extra there mate for your trouble, sorry for not warning you we were coming, I didn’t have any warning myself.” He smiled warmly

“Oh mate, you’re an angel” Petey laughed and shook Farrier’s hand over the counter.

“It was lovely to see you again Peter!” Canfield smiled,

“Likewise Wing Commander, hopefully I’ll see you again soon!” Pete shook Canfield’s hand too.

“Right, shall we wait at the door?” Farrier said,

“Yeah.” Canfield answered.
“Night, mate” Farrier waved back to Peter, who held a hand up and smiled.

As Collins and his friends walked past Canfield and Farrier, Collins smiled at Farrier quickly, Farrier tried so hard not to smile back but the ghost of one made its way onto his face. He still wasn’t too happy about his friendship choices for the night but Collins was just so pure it was hard not to be happy when he saw him. He reminded himself it wasn’t a big deal who Collins chose to hang about with. Farrier supposed if he did end up being friends with Anderson then he wouldn’t be the target of his bullying.

“Well, I think we managed to get them all on the train!” Canfield said,

“Yeah I don’t think we missed any, there’s one more train next hour if they missed this one anyway.” Farrier said, rubbing the back of his head.

It was about halfway through the trip that his sadness really began to set in. Sometimes it was like this, in life after the war. Sometimes he just couldn’t stop seeing things behind his eyelids, things he wished he’d never have to see again. This time he couldn’t even place what had started the train of thought but here he was.

Collins began to sober up a little, he looked up to see Farrier leaned against the window looking blank. Canfield was talking to him, but he wasn’t answering. By the time the train had pulled up in Gatwick, Collins was almost sober.

“How ya feeling?” Wingnut asked,

“Ya nearly normal” Collins answered.

“You?”

“I’m fucked guys.” Wingnut said as he stumbled out of the train carriage. Collins laughed with Dawson at this.

“Yeah I’m a bit drunk but not too bad” Dawson added. They all went up to bed fairly quickly, Collins was tired and didn’t want to be wrecked for tomorrow’s lessons.

Farrier trudged up the stairs behind the students, all who weren’t boarders which was most, had gone their own ways to their homes, still he had made sure nobody was left outside the doors. Everyone was already in their rooms by the time he reached his. He walked in and kicked his bed hard deliberately. His sadness had turned into frustration. He growled and flumped onto his bed.

Collins heard a loud bang followed by a growl come from the wall separating his and Farrier’s room. He was set slightly on edge, but tried to think nothing of it. Collins lay in bed sobering up, he wished he’d said no to going outside for that smoke. Now he was in a vulnerable position, and Anderson was in his classes. The blonde resolved to talk to Anderson tomorrow and ask to put that night behind them.

Farrier sat on his bed, he wasn’t sure if he was angry or sad, probably both. He took off his blazer and threw it on the floor, the rest of his clothing followed suit.

He looked absent-mindedly down at his left forearm, he slowly turned the inside of it upwards, and studied the now white stripes across his skin that he’d made himself many years ago. Such a distant memory, yet so close at the same time. He couldn't believe he'd done them to himself, but then again, he could still see the fresh blood dripping from his arm if he closed his eyes. Looking
at the scars somehow sated the feeling of needing to create destruction. Ridiculous, and yet the thought of actually doing something stayed at the back of his head. Farrier knew he wasn’t healed, he wasn’t sure if he ever would be either. He needed to drink more, the man decided. He opened a drawer on his bedside table and took out a half empty over proofed bottle of rum. He drank straight from the bottle, didn’t care how much he winced as he drank the liquid, it burned his throat but he kept gulping, forced himself to. He stopped when there was one quartre left. His head began to spin, he stood up to make it take effect even faster. The man steadied himself on his dressing table which was against the wall separating his and Collins’ room. He was beginning to feel drunk now, at least more than he did while they were out. His thoughts began to get a little less logical. Should he speak to Collins? No. Should he hit something? Kick something? He didn’t know what to do but he felt like he had to do something or he’d explode, at least the alcohol had worsened his memory and he could no longer see fire behind his eyes. Farrier recalled now, this was the other reason he didn’t drink aside from it being too expensive to get drunk, it didn’t make him forget, it made him remember. He put his trousers and a big jumper on, struggled to lace his boots up and then opened his door, slamming it behind him.

Collins jumped in his bed, Farrier’s door slammed and he heard footsteps walk past his door in the direction of the stairs. Farrier walked as quickly as he felt he was able without stumbling. Collins very slowly, very quietly opened his door and peeped down the hall. Farrier was walking, albeit slightly off-balanced, down to the staircase. Collins thought to call out, but something stopped him. He closed his door again but had a nervous feeling in his gut. Farrier seemed out of it, ever since he’d gotten that last drink at the bar he could tell there was something going on.

Farrier didn’t really know what he was doing. He had to get some air, so he was going to his peaceful place. He walked out into the airfield and walked behind the hangars so he couldn’t be seen from any windows from the buildings. He got out to the last shed and collapsed against the wall. He looked out into the empty field, the darkness, the stars in the sky.

Then Farrier really began to overthink about the war, something he tried very hard to suppress when sober. He was a failure in his mind, his country needed him and he was laying helpless in a hospital bed, and just when he was getting really good at flying the Sopwith. Then the visions came on hard. His plane bursting into flames around him. Looking down and seeing metal from the engine sticking out of his own body, but feeling nothing. Farrier began to feel the familiar feeling well up inside him, and he didn’t supress his tears when they came, he knew nobody could hear him. His breathing was deep and staggered, he wiped his face on his jumper sleeve and rested his head in his hands. He damned whoever decided no pilots should have parachutes in the war, damned whoever decided the canvas stretched over the plane’s body should be doused in highly flammable liquid to tighten it. Farrier knew he was lucky, to be that close to both a camp of men and a safe place to ditch, it must be fate, he told himself. At a stronger time this might have empowered him to clean up his act, but right now the thought did nothing. His mind flashed to the river, or was it a lake? Whatever he had to ditch in. Jumping out at the last minute, the metal still inside him being jerked sideways while still attached to him. Struggling, swimming, seeing his blood being swept along with the current, and the plane wreck disappearing under. The shock on the men’s faces when he reached the camp, the hurried French as they all crowded around to help. Looking behind him and seeing he’d literally left a trail of blood.

Then it all got a bit fuzzy, thank god. Farrier’s emotions were out of hand and he couldn’t do anything about it because he was drunk, he was helpless. He was disappointed in himself, he was crying over things that had not been his fault, and that had happened years ago. He was ashamed of this and yet, the tears didn’t stop. Farrier sniffed, the man never let his emotions out so when they did escape, it was strong, uncontrollable. His emotions refused to stop flowing until he was empty
and numb once more. Farrier was pulling clumps of grass out, he found a rock and threw it. He hated the war. He hated that he was out of action for part of it, that nothing he would do from now on could change that. He hated that he couldn't forget it.

Collins looked out his window, he couldn’t see anything. He desperately wanted to know where Farrier had gone because as much as he didn’t want to admit it, even to himself, there was something there. Something he couldn’t shake. He almost felt like there was an unspoken acknowledgement with Farrier, but then again, how could he be sure what Farrier felt?

The brunette’s body began to stop shuddering, he breathed deeply and tried desperately to stop being so emotional. It was unlike him, it was the alcohol, he told himself, this was childish at best. He stood up, holding a hand against the shed to support himself. He was numb inside, he couldn’t feel anything except the puffiness of his eyes and the cool breeze on his skin. He wiped his nose on his sleeve and began to realise how cold his fingers were. He staggered back behind the hangars and through the locker room. He could feel heat in his cheeks from his outburst. He went upstairs, tried to be quiet.

Collins heard footsteps coming up the stairs about twenty minutes after he heard them go down. He was so conflicted, why was it his business what Farrier was doing? But then again, what if he just walked out and said he was going to the bathroom and coincidentally saw him? Collins decided to, he had nothing to lose, he wasn’t sure if this was a bad decision because of the alcohol or a bad decision because of his habit of bad decision making, but he was sure it wasn’t a good idea at all. He opened his door as Farrier was walking past, he turned and looked Collins dead in the eyes. Collins heart panged,

“Farrier…” he began, but Farrier walked to his room, Collins saw him sniff as he opened it and disappeared inside. Collins felt weak, anyone knew those tell-tale signs, Farrier had been crying. Collins went downstairs to the bathroom and splashed his face with cold water. He was worried. He couldn’t impede on Farrier, who knew what was going on, perhaps something personal. Nothing wrong with checking, he arrived at the drunk conclusion of. Collins walked back upstairs, he stood at Farrier’s door.

“Farrier?” he said quietly through the wood,

“Go away Collins.” Was the response he got, from a slightly blocked sounding voice. He couldn’t argue with it, he walked slowly back to his room and closed the door. There was nothing Collins could do, he wasn’t sure if he would tell his friends tomorrow, or ever. Perhaps he’d ask if everything was okay at tutoring. He fell into a light sleep at long last.

Farrier kicked off his shoes, removed his pants and jumper, there was nothing else to do but sleep, plus he was embarrassed that Collins had seen him at his weakest. He wouldn’t do anything destructive, he couldn’t, that was the old Farrier he told himself. If Canfield found out he’d done it again he’d never hear the end of it, either. He scratched at his scars with his nails, he irritated them but at least the small stinging sensation was something. He didn’t want anyone to see them, he was self-conscious of them as it was, he didn’t even want to look at the mess of scar tissue on his torso from the long-gone injury that plagued his thoughts, it made him feel sick to think that was what he looked like. Farrier knew one thing, as much as he put on a brave face for the students, and for Canfield at times, he was not healed.
The man fell asleep from exhaustion and intoxication.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): PTSD, implied/referenced self harm, injury detail/gore

Yeah, idk what to say about this one except it broke my heart to write. I'm sorry if I upset anyone (which undoubtedly I did), the story gets happier I promise. Also don't worry, I go into more detail about Farrier's family situation later in the story.

On a lighter note, you've no idea how happy everyone's comments and kudos make me, to actually know that people are enjoying my work is so amazing. Let me know what you thought of this one, I'll see you all same time next week.

Also, if anyone's interested, my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com and it's heavily Dunkirk, with some Marvel and other stuff thrown in. If you wanna chat with me over there, feel free!
Hello everyone! Sorry to leave last chapter on a bit of a down note, this one's happier.

The morning came, Farrier woke to a bad taste in his mouth and a rotten feeling in his gut. No sign of a headache at least, but more symptoms than he had expected from what he did last night. He got ready slowly and carefully, watching each button as he did it up. The weather was warming up, but this year more than any other he didn’t want the new students to see his arm. He couldn’t let Collins see it. He wore the long sleeve blue button up though he wished he could be confident enough to put on the short sleeve beige summer uniform. Not today, Farrier thought. Maybe when it was unbearably hot, but not today.

Collins woke up suddenly, he’d momentarily forgotten what he saw last night, he was excited to wear his uniform for classes. Though all he wanted to do was wear the classic blue, he picked out the summer uniform, beige pants and top. The pamphlet he’d flicked through when training started said not to mix the uniforms. He was about to walk out of his room when last night’s thoughts caught up with him. How could he face Farrier after last night? Should he pretend it didn’t happen? These were the thoughts going through Collins’ head as he exited his bedroom. Luckily he didn’t bump into the man in the hallway. He knocked on Dawson’s door softly, who opened it. Dawson was also wearing the summer uniform.

‘Hey, looking good!’ He said,

“Aye thanks” Collins smiled.

“A bit warm today.” Collins remarked as they walked down the hall and knocked on Timson’s door.

“Nearly done hang on!” he said, the two blondes chuckled. Wingnut opened the door wearing the winter long woollen pants with the summer beige top. Dawson and Collins exchanged looks of, of course he did.

“What?” Timson smiled,

“You don’t mix the summer ‘n winter uniforms ya eejit!” Collins laughed, causing Wingnut to become slightly red in the face.

“What did you call him?” Dawson turned to Collins with an amused smile,

“Eejit?”

“yeah”

“Never heard that?” Collins was genuinely surprised.

“No mate!” Wingnut yelled in laughter as he changed in his room behind the closed door. He came
out of the door for a second time in the full summer apparel. They ate breakfast in the dining room as usual, it was scrambled eggs and toast today, not any of their favourites, plus the eggs were slightly undercooked. Collins noted that Farrier wasn’t present and had decided he shouldn’t tell the others about what he saw last night. After brushing their teeth together in the communal bathrooms and going upstairs to hang out until high afternoon, they wandered to their first class. Collins was still not used to having Saturday classes.

“Afternoon lads” Canfield greeted them warmly as they entered,

“Hiya Canfield” Collins smiled,

“Hello Canfield” Dawson replied

“Hey” Wingnut added. The three took their usual seats somewhere in the middle of the classroom. Then Collins saw Anderson walk in. His resolve to speak to him was gone, he stiffened up and became nervous again. Then Anderson gestured to him to stand up anyway.

“Look mate, I’m sorry alright? I was drunk. Take back what I said okay?” Anderson stated.

“It’s fine, no worries.” Collins said, relieved. He went to sit back down and was given a quizzical look from the two alongside him.

“We had a bet on if I was hungover, I’m not” Collins said, there was no such bet.

“But I’d uh, prefer if we didn’t hang out with those three too much” Collins added,

“I am so glad you said that mate” Dawson breathed,

“Yeah I think we’re two different to them for it to really work” Wingnut said.

“Alright class, everybody seated please” Canfield said loudly.

“Now, let’s begin. I hope you’re all feeling well after your big night out last night” this earned a few awkward laughs, Canfield chuckled at this.

“Well I’m feeling just fine, so we will continue.”

It was aerodynamics class, something Collins wasn’t particularly interested in, especially since the more experienced groups were flying planes just outside the window. Canfield must have seen Collins looking,

“You won’t get out there unless you complete this first, Collins.” He said with a smile, Collins straightened his gaze to the blackboard upon being caught out.

“Who wishes they were in a plane right now?” Canfield asked,

Every hand in the room was raised.

“Well I’ll let you know this, next week you’ll begin physical training, which is the next step to being in one of them” Canfield said excitedly,

“We’ve all been in planes in our civil flight training, why do we need so much preparation to go up again?” someone asked,

“Because, these aircraft are much more powerful than any you’ve flown in. It requires a great deal of skill and knowledge to be able to fly one properly. Plus, when you did flying in your beginner
training the planes were all prepared ready for you, you just got in and went. Here, you learn to care for, and start and turn off your aircraft yourself. Now, I do need to get on with the lesson lads.”

Eventually the bell sounded, and everyone piled out of class.

“I can’t wait to fly again” Dawson said as the trio left,

“You an’ me both” Collins agreed,

“Yeah, feels like I’ve half forgotten how to” Wingnut joked. As they were walking away from the classroom a tired looking Farrier walked past them in the other direction.

“Drank too much?” Timson laughed,

“S’pose he did” Dawson smiled. Collins tried to laugh along but he knew this tiredness was linked to what he saw of Farrier the previous night. At lunch the trio took their food from the sandwich store back to the base and sat out the back of the building watching the planes fly above them.

After lunch there was engineering class with Farrier.

“Right boys everybody settle down please.” He said when everyone was in the room. His arms were folded tightly over his impossibly broad chest. Collins could already tell that Farrier was in a bad mood.

“Today I will begin teaching you about the specific models of planes we have here at Gatwick. You’ve probably flown in Tiger Moths, Avro Tutors, maybe the Hawker Hart.” He smiled as if to mock the beginner planes, it was anything but a happy smile.

“Here we have a few different planes, we have Miles Magisters, affectionately known as ‘maggies’” he said.

“We also have Airspeed Oxfords, and we also have the lovely North American Harvard planes. Now all these machines are more complicated and powerful than what you’ve flown in, so pay attention to what I teach you in these rooms or you won’t have a clue what to do when we let you out there.” He gestured to the window. Farrier didn’t make eye contact with Collins all lesson and this annoyed the blonde, he could tell it was deliberate.

Farrier spent the next few days trying to avoid Collins as much as he could, maybe if he refused to allow himself to even look at Collins, he’d lose interest, because it was becoming a big problem. But then Wednesday came around, the day Collins had the tutoring lesson he didn’t need.

Collins was more nervous about this tutoring lesson that he usually was. He didn’t know what he’d done wrong, but it was something with the way Farrier had been acting. Ever since he’d seen the man come sulking up the hall on uniform night something had changed. Collins made his way into Farrier’s office, where they would meet if the last class wasn’t with Farrier. Collins’ stomach churned when he saw the man.

Collins entered quietly, not that he surprised Farrier with the entrance. Collins said nothing.

“Right Collins, let’s go” Farrier said tersely. Collins nodded and followed Farrier into an empty classroom. No smiles from him today.

“Let’s begin. Any questions from today’s lesson? I had a few students approach me afterwards about the engine heating?” Farrier said,
“No, all that was fine wi’ me” Collins said without a smile.

“Okay, is there any other work I can help you with?”

Come to think of it, there wasn’t anything Collins had struggled with or been curious about since last session. His foot began to tap under the desk as he frantically tried to think of a reason to stay.

“Seems like you’re all fine this week? We can skip tutoring today if you’d like.” Farrier said.

“I have questions…” Collins began, Farrier lifted an eyebrow,

“But they’re not about the work.” Collins finished, Farrier leaned back in the chair with a guarded smile,

“Well I’m not answering them, then Collins. I’m your professor, I’m not your Wednesday afternoon friend.” He said with cold blue eyes. Collins swallowed and looked down at the desk.

“Sorry Farrier” He said quietly. Farrier exhaled through his mouth.

“I dunno what I did, but I can tell it was somethin’ yae dinnae like” Collins said sadly.

“I’ll stop wasting your time, I just wanted ya to know I’m sorry for whatever it was that pissed ya off” Collins began to stand.

“Wait” Farrier said, Collins at him with a glimmer of optimism.

“You didn’t do anything Collins, I’ve just had a lot on my mind lately.” Farrier admitted as the blonde sat back down.

“On the night everyone went out to Red’s, I noticed that you had disappeared. That night felt more like an excursion than a celebration because I had to keep track of all of you.”

Collins knew where this was going, so he had seen them after all. But it didn’t look suspicious, so why did it matter?

“Anyway, I went looking for you Collins, and I found you.” Farrier continued.

“I can’t tell you who to associate with, but Anderson isn’t really a good person Collins. Can’t you tell from how he conducts himself?”

“Oh, let me explain.” Collins began,

“You’re not in trouble Collins”

“Then why were you actin’ like I was?” the blonde interrupted.

Farrier was cornered.

“You seein’ me with Anderson at the pub can’t be the explanation for you trying your best to ignore me all week, Farrier.” Collins said.

“Honestly Collins, I’m actually really bad at expressing myself, okay? I think you’ve all realised that by now. I’m not angry at you.” He said.

“Well that’s a relief.” Collins exhaled.
“Thought I was gonna get kicked out or somethin’’” he almost laughed.

“Of course not. Why would I kick you out?” Farrier asked,

“Ah no reason. Just my mind goin crazy.” Collins answered. In the time they’d chatted Collins compiled a short list of meaningless questions about the weeks work to ask Farrier in a desperate attempt to continue the tutoring.

Eventually Farrier decided the questions were indeed meaningless and they cut the session short. It was probably the most useless tutoring session in history in Collins’ opinion, he didn’t need to learn a single thing more but had sat there for the company. At least he appeared to have cheered Farrier up in the time he was there.

“But I am sorry for treating you the way I have been this week. It’s just…” Farrier didn’t know how to word this. But he knew his explanation had been pretty poor.

“I feel that we’re getting too close, you and I.” he finally said. Collins’ wasn’t sure if he was currently breathing, all he could do was stare at Farrier and hope the heat in his cheeks wasn’t visible.

“I just mean, I’m not supposed to have favourites, or I’m not meant to show it.” The man held a small smile at the rosy cheeks on the pale man before him.

“Ah. S’pose Canfield told yae that?” Collins asked.

“Yes, apparently it was noticeable.” Farrier replied, glad he’d found some sort of way out of this without admitting feelings, though he was fairly certain Collins had some sort of idea what was going on anyway.

The session drew to a close and Collins decided to go and talk with his friends to relax his mind. He knocked on Dawson’s door,

“Yeah, come in” he yelled and Collins answered,

“Hiya Dawson” he smiled,

“Hey, finished early today”

“Ya I didn’t have many questions this week I guess”

“Well, Wingnut is down in his room I think if you wanna hang out with him too.” Dawson said,

“Ah, mind if I bring him up here?” Collins asked,

“No by all means, I was just too lazy to do it myself” Dawson laughed, Collins walked to the staircase.

“Can you ask him to bring the cards?” Dawson yelled down the hall,

Collin turned around to the noise but didn’t answer, mentally noting to get the cards. When he turned back around he nearly walked into Farrier who was walking up the stairs reading a piece of paper.

“Oh, sorry” Farrier said, taking a step back down to put reasonable distance between them,

“Aye me too, wasn’t lookin’ where ah was goin’” Collins scratched the back of his head, they
maintained eye contact as Collins walked down and Farrier walked up. Then Farrier chuckled and shook his head, turning back around. Collins grinned as he jogged down the rest of the staircase. Maybe it could go back to how it was. Though when Collins thought about it Anderson’s comments still had him shaken up. He knocked on Wingnut’s door.

“Hello?”

“It’s me ya bastard”

Wingnut opened the door,

“Hey mate, finish early?” he asked,

“Ya, didn’t have much to talk about, Dawson wants ya to bring the cards up though” Collins smiled,

“Ah yeah sure” Timson replied. The boys spent the afternoon playing cards and snacking on a bag of sweets Dawson had bought.

For Farrier, sleep wasn’t something that came particularly easily most nights, but on this particular afternoon, he had a comfortable nap. He was warm and happy, and the nap just happened. Farrier wasn’t entirely sure why he was so relaxed, maybe it was because his resolve to stop associating with Collins didn’t go so well, which probably shouldn’t be a good thing, but it was. After dinner Canfield made an announcement to all the new cadets who weren’t boarding, which was most, to bring their summer uniform tomorrow, for they would be undertaking physical training.

Chapter End Notes

As always thank you for reading. You don't have any idea how much comments and kudos mean to me! I'd love to know what everyone thought, don't be afraid to comment, and don't be afraid to on more than one chapter if you liked it! If anyone's interested, my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com and you're welcome to chat to me there. See you all again next Monday for the next chapter!
Hey everyone, it's that time of the week again!
Also, guess who saw Venom today and thought it was absolutely amazing!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The boys went down to class, today everyone in their year was wearing the summer uniform as instructed. Farrier was nervous. He didn’t want to do any demonstrations, he wasn’t in the mood, nor did he want to embarrass himself in front of Collins. To add to it he was feeling self-conscious in the short sleeves, but it was just too hot today. Boys began to pool into his classroom. Once they were all seated he addressed them,

“Morning boys, today we’ll be out in the quadrangle in the middle of the building. We won’t be doing anything too strenuous today, but I do need to ask, does anyone have any issues that may prevent them from undertaking physical activity today?” Nobody answered.

“Good. Follow me then lads.” He walked out of the classroom and opened a door out into the quadrangle.

“Hello Canfield,”

“Hello Farrier, beautiful morning isn’t it?”

“Very sunny.” Farrier smiled.

“I’m just here if you need any assistance.” Canfield said,

“Ah, thank you.” Farrier said and turned back to the group.

“Right. I want you in lines of four facing me.” Farrier said loudly. Collins, Timson and Dawson found themselves in the middle somewhere lined up with one other boy they didn’t know.

“Spread out boys, put your right arm out to your side, make a fist and make sure you can’t reach the man next to you.”

The group did as they were instructed. Farrier clapped his hands once,

“We’re starting with push ups!” He laughed, the group collectively groaned.

“Twenty with my count.” Farrier said, they begrudgingly got down ready.

“What the fuck is this” Wingnut whispered to Collins, who chuckled.

Farrier began to count and they all began their push ups. By the end of it some were tired, some were fine, Collins was more towards the tired side of things. “Not too bad” he said to Wingnut,

“Yeah not too bad” Wingnut repeated to Dawson on his other side, who smiled,

“Easy boys.” Collins shook his head at this and smiled as they all stood up. They spent about an
hour and a half doing rudimental activity, jogging around the quadrangle, push ups and sit ups, and star jumps. By the time Farrier called them to come inside, Collins was very tired and hot.

“Why do we even need this?” he panted to either of his friends,

“Don’t really know” Dawson answered.

“I think I need to do more exercise” Collins said with a laugh.

“Willing to help mate” Wingnut said,

“Yeah?” Collins said,

“Yeah if you wanna play football or run with me you can, I do a run every week.” he smiled as they walked back into the hallway.

“Yeah that’d be great!” Collins said,

“You can come to the gym with me sometimes if you like” Dawson offered,

“Yeah that’ll be good too, thanks lads.” Collins said to both of them.

“No worries mate, we can all do it together!” Wingnut smiled.

The classes were more relaxed that afternoon, mapping and deciphering was something all the boys found easy. That night at dinner, the three began to chat about exercising together.

“So maybe one night a week we can go for a run” Wingnut said,

“Yeah and another night we can all go to the gym.” Dawson added,

“Yeah that’s great guys!” Collins smiled.

The following Monday they all went for a jog, Wingnut and Dawson found it relatively easy and Collins found it relatively difficult.

“Why cannae we even stop for a drink?!” He panted after they had finished, the two just laughed. Collins wasn’t sure how much he enjoyed this, but he knew he’d be happy he’d done it when he could compete with his friends in physical training, he had to live up to standards in the RAF. That Wednesday Collins had his tutoring lesson,

“Why is it so important we’re physically fit?” he asked,

“Isn’t it always?” Farrier answered,

“Yae, but is there a reason?” Collins pressed. Farrier sighed.

“Collins I’m going to be honest with you. I don’t know how much you read the papers or listen to news.” Farrier stopped to wait for an answer,

“I don’t at all”

“Didn’t think so, in which case I’ll have you know that Europe is a very tense place right now, as I told you when I asked you to call your friend Timson by his actual name and not ‘Wingnut’. We’re
trying to prepare you all for the worst, so this is training to ensure you’re fit to enter a warzone. Before things got to this stage men didn’t have to exercise this much, but now they do.” Farrier ended, Collins got a nervous feeling in his stomach, he knew things in Europe weren’t looking good, but he didn’t pay it much notice, certainly didn’t think a war would come of it. Seeing Farrier unnerved by this made him genuinely worried. But why did he strike Farrier as someone who wouldn’t read news? Collins wasn’t sure if this was an offensive comment or not.

“But if we fight, it’ll be in the sky.” Collins said quietly,

“Things happen, we need the RAF to be prepared for anything.” He answered just as quietly.

On Thursday, the boys went to the gym. It was a large airy room with a wooden floor that was creaky. There were different things set up around the walls, weights, a trampoline, and balancing beams were some Collins could see as they entered. Dawson could lift the heaviest of course, he went to the gym regularly. Wingnut was only slightly ahead of Collins though. They spent a good hour or so there, Dawson taught the two how to lift safely and the dangers of pushing themselves too hard.

Collins woke up on Friday with sore arms, but he was glad of it because it meant progress. The next week they did the same run, Collins brought a water flask with him this time and did slightly better because of it. In his tutoring session he asked Farrier about the planes.

“Are they that powerful?” He smirked,

“Yes” Farrier said leaning back in his chair eyeing the boy,

“They make whatever you trained in look like a toy.” He said.

“Aight, I was just curious” Collins chuckled, Farrier tried to smile but a tinge of pain in his torso stopped him. Collins’ smile dropped instantly as he saw his tutor wince.

“You alright?” He said, almost standing up,

“You alright?” He said, almost standing up,

“Yeah, it’s okay” Farrier held a hand to his torso.

“Let’s continue, yeah?” He said,

“Yae, sure” Collins tried to shake the worry in his gut.

The next day they had weekly physical training again, it seemed to happen on a Thursday usually, but it could be any day if the weather wasn’t being cooperative, though in the coming weeks it had been heating up, much more than Collins was used to in the highlands.

“Right. Today you’re going to practice unarmed fighting.” Farrier said to the group.

“I want everyone to pair up now” he said,

“It’s alright boys, wouldn’t be fair if I went with one of ya” Dawson laughed and turned to another boy. Wingnut and Collins shrugged at each other and stood facing one another.

“Now, there are many different ways to attack unarmed, and all can be very effective. You’re not going to do any harm today, only practice the movements.” Farrier explained, eyeing Anderson chuckling at Johnson. Probably they’d try and hurt each other, but Farrier couldn’t be bothered
doing anything with them so he ignored it.

Collins and Timson looked nervously at each other. One thing Collins prided himself on was coordination.

“Sorry if I hurt ya anyway” He whispered,

“Yeah same to you mate” Wingnut whispered back.

“Now the first thing, is that it’s best to attack with the front of your forearm, that’s to say if you put your arm out parallel to your body in front of you with your hand horizontal, the side that’s away from your body.” Farrier demonstrated. Canfield was walking up behind Farrier,

“Mind if I join in?” he asked.

“Not at all.” Farrier beckoned him to stand beside him in front of the group.

“Another thing, is that the second knuckle on your middle finger is often the most effective so try and make sure when hitting, it’s in the centre of where you drive your force.” He said.

“Now, some basic techniques. We’ll start with the head and move down.” Canfield began, it began apparent that he and Farrier were going to demonstrate on each other.

“Now you lot follow along to get the hang of the movements if you can.” Canfield said as he faced Farrier.

“Firstly, you can use your fingers to gouge out the eyes, pretty basic.” The old man said, reaching up to Farrier’s face and mocking the movement a few inches away from him.

“Notice how far away from the man you need to be to achieve this, notice where you are standing and how outstretched your arm is.” Canfield added, Collins tried it out with Wingnut, who in turn did the same.

“You can also punch the eyes actually, it has a chance of breaking the eye socket.” The old man added, it looked somewhat out of place to see Canfield doing a punching motion. Then Farrier took the offensive stance.

“A blow on the temple will almost definitely knock a man out if your punch is accurate,” he said, mocking a slow swing at Canfield’s head to which there were chuckles.

“Now the nose, you can attack it with a clenched fist,” Farrier did the movement, not touching Canfield.

“Or you can use the cutting edge of your hand across the bridge to break it.” He showed the boys who copied. Canfield had begun mocking pain and the group found it quite humorous, including Farrier who chuckled and shook his head.

“Or use the cutting edge underneath the nose, pushing up to knock him off balance.” Canfield said demonstrating on Farrier, who feigned injury also, causing more laughs than Canfield’s.

“If he’s off balance, he can be easily dealt with.” Canfield added before pretending to knee Farrier in the gut who feigned getting winded, with great amusement from the class.

After a while of practicing different ways to harm the opponent on multiple locations of the body, the instructors moved to ways to fall.
“Now boys, if you’re going to fall backwards, most people will just fall onto their backs. Maybe try and put their arms behind themselves a bit, but there are smarter ways to fall.” Farrier explained.

“It also minimises the risk of knocking yourself out if you know how to fall properly.”

“Yes it’s best not to fall on your head, spine, pelvis, knees, or elbows.” Canfield elaborated.

“Then where can we fall?” someone smartly laughed.

“Well it has a lot to do with shoulder blades and also the feet. But the main idea is that you have to distribute the weight properly, don’t fall hard on one place, try and roll more, or at the very least as we said, don’t land directly on those places if you can help it.” Canfield said. That was when Collins realised that both Canfield and Farrier were much fitter than he thought. Canfield demonstrated the falling procedure with Farrier by first grabbing Farrier’s shoulders to keep him in place while facing him, outstretching one leg, and pushing Farrier over it to trip him over. The brunette landed somewhere between on his side and on his back, a winded sound exiting him. The event was followed by some gasps, but he got up uninjured.

“In that instance, I rolled the weight of the fall mainly across my shoulder blades.” He explained. Collins let go of a breath he didn’t know he was holding.

“Do you want to try one?” Farrier asked Canfield.

“Maybe an easy one in a bit” Canfield replied.

“Right boys, we’re going to try that one. It’s actually very easy. One person hold the shoulders of the other.” Farrier instructed. Apparently Collins would be the first to fall out of him and Wingnut, as his shoulders were grabbed by the brunette.

“Now, person holding their partner’s shoulders, outstretch their right leg and push the other over it. And the person being pushed, let yourself fall to the side, focus on landing on your shoulder and rolling your body, don’t land still.” Farrier said.

In their own time each pair did it. As Collins fell his stomach tightened but he tried to do what he was told and not twist and put his hands out. As his body hit the ground it hurt, but he still rolled off his shoulder. A few falls later and he was beginning to understand it.

“Now boys, this is something you can practice in your spare time. Just do some rolling from a standing position. That way you can be used to tucking in the parts of your body you don’t want to hit the ground hard.” Canfield said. He then stood straight with one leg in front of the other, took one step and rolled arms outstretched onto the ground, somersaulted and stood back up. It was difficult to believe a man of Canfield’s age could still do somersaults, especially from and ending in standing positions.

“So spread out lads, at first you can do the rolls starting on your knees if you want, but try and get used to doing them standing.” The old man said.

The rest of the day was spent doing somersaults in the dust.

Farrier and Canfield continued demonstrations on each other, as well as some genuine attempts to disarm one another, as the class practiced the movements they knew. That day Collins learnt how to completely disarm a man with nothing but his own body and how to do a standing somersault. He also saw a playful side of Farrier he’d never seen before, when he was sparring with Canfield it
was like they were younger men.

Later that night everyone was eating dinner in the mess hall.

“What’d you guys think of today?” Dawson asked.

“Fun” Collins said between mouthfuls.

“Yeah I thought so too” Wingnut chimed in.

“Somethin’ I never thought I’d enjoy, but I doubt I’d like a real fight.” Collins said.

“You’ve never been in a fight? Lucky.” Wingnut said.

“Nae, should I have been?” Collins asked.

“Well yeah, it happens” Dawson answered.

“You’ve both been in fights?” Collins asked.

“Course” Wingnut said with a mouthful.

Collins began to feel like he was somehow vulnerable for not having been in one. In truth he wasn’t very good at confrontations, he seemed to get too emotional so usually he’d just go along with whatever was being said instead of causing an argument out of it. Not a very manly trait, Collins thought to himself, though he knew it fruitless to try to swallow his emotions, they were just ever-present. And the more he thought about it, the more Collins decided it was a good thing he felt strong emotions, meant he was different, he supposed.

“Good fun today” Canfield remarked at the dinner table to Farrier, who hummed in unenthusiastic agreement.

“I’m quite proud I can still do forward rolls” Canfield chuckled. Farrier hummed again.

“Farrier?” the older man tutted. Another hum.

“Gosh boy, anyone would think I never taught you manners!”

“Hungry”. he mumbled.

“Yes, and what else?” Canfield asked. Farrier sighed and answered after a while of thinking,

“Just don’t like that we have to teach them how to fight. They shouldn’t need to do that.” Farrier replied finally.

“Oh Farrier, that’s ridiculous. Everyone learns that.” Canfield said,

“Yeah I know.” Farrier said, mostly just to shut him up.

“So are we going to the gym tonight boys?” Dawson asked.

“Ugh, I dunno” Collins said,

“Thanks for your agreement, it’s settled.” Dawson replied much to Collins’ disappointment. They all practiced somersaults from standing that night.
Thanks for reading everyone, I know I can't do any of the stuff they had the boys do in training lmao. As always your kudos and comments mean so much, don't be afraid to let me know what you thought of this week's chapter, even if you've commented before I wanna know! See you all next Monday for the next chapter <3

my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to personally chat to me.
Hey everyone, hope you liked the last chapter. This one's a bit longer than usual!

Collins woke up to a bruise from yesterday hurting as he rolled in bed, getting up and looking in the mirror he realised he had quite a few. He’d gotten somewhat ready, hadn’t touched his hair or fixed his tie yet, when he walked out of his room. He’d taken a few steps down the hall when he heard a door open behind him.

Farrier got a surprise when he saw a sleepy looking Collins exit his door with messy blonde hair, trying to tie his tie as he walked down the hall. Usually the boy was sparkling by the time he saw him in the dining hall at breakfast.

“Collins?” he called out, Collins slightly jumped and turned,

“Sorry, I just wanted to check up on you, everyone looked a little rough after the lesson yesterday.” He smiled warmly.

“Aye a bit bruised but that’s tae be expected I guess.” Collins smiled and lazily ran a hand through his hair.

“Yeah, not what you’re used to, I imagine.” Farrier chuckled,

“Nope, and then ma eejit friends dragged me to the gym.” Collins huffed with a smile.

“Impressive” Farrier chuckled, assuming that ‘eejit’ was an insulting word.

“Not really, cannae lift much at all but I need tae go because I’m strugglin’ wit’ these physical classes.” He admitted, beginning to turn back down the hall, Farrier decided to walk with him.

“Well you can’t be good at everything. Though your civil certificate said you excelled in physical training.”

“Ya it did. That’s why I need to improve more, because excelling in civil school isn’t excelling here.” Collins slightly reddened as he finally managed to tie his tie. Farrier huffed.

“You’ll get there.” Farrier smiled and put a hand on Collins’s shoulder as they walked, taking it off after a few steps. Collins enjoyed the pressure and warmth, he didn’t like when it suddenly disappeared. They walked down the stairs together in silence, and arrived at the open doors of the underground dining hall.

“I’ll see you later Collins.” Farrier smiled, before walking over to his table,

“Ya, seeya.” Collins smiled back, before walking over to his friends who were already seated.

“Hey mate, bit late today” Wingnut jested as Collins sat down, his hair still felt messy.
“Ya, pretty tired from yesterday if I’m honest lads.” he said, trying to comb his hair to the side with his hand.

“Talkin’ to Farrier?” Dawson asked,

“Oh ya we were both leaving our rooms at the same time so we started chattin’” Collins smiled.

“Smells good in here” Collins added, looking over to the front.

“See much? I haven’t even looked over” Timson said.

“Pancakes!” Collins grinned.

“Get in!” Dawson said, Wingnut clapped his hands together. They eventually went up to get said pancakes, with which they had honey, a vast improvement on most of the breakfasts served. The day passed quickly, the classes were somewhat rudimentary but not disinteresting. As usual Collins was somewhat more interested in the teacher rather than the teachings.

That night, Collins was in Dawson’s room with Wingnut too, as per usual. They were playing a game of questions and commands instead of cards for once, to Collins’ disappointment, seeing it as a somewhat childish game. He only said yes to make Wingnut happy.

“Right, Dawson. Question or command?” Collins asked,

“Command.” The blonde answered.

“I command you, to run up and down the hall once each way screamin’.” Collins laughed. The only way the game was fun to him was if it was outrageous.

“Or else? That’s a hard one!” Dawson laughed.

“Or else you drink, mate!” Wingnut said holding up a bottle of over-proofed alcohol he’d bought for the game. Dawson huffed,

“Fine, not worth getting drunk over.” He stood up to Collins and Wingnut’s delight. He slowly opened the door, checked the coast was clear, took one more disapproving look at his friends and ran towards the stairs with a wild, loud scream trailing from his mouth. Collins and Wingnut were in stitches listening, Dawson sounded like a deranged bird. Collins secretly thanked the fact that there weren’t many other boarders.

Farrier was in the middle of trying to read a book, to be fair it was an instruction booklet on some new engine Rolls Royce was putting into their planes, but reading was something Canfield had told him he needed to get back into doing so an instruction book was good enough. Then he heard a warbling, high pitched scream in the hallway. At first he thought a boy was in trouble and sat up in bed, but then he recognised the sound as something silly. He huffed and fell back onto his bed with his eyes shut. The sound got louder and more annoying.

The two boys heard Dawson coming back up the hall and going past the other way.

“I have to watch I’m sorry!” Wingnut laughed,

“Aight me too, but only a peep!” Collins said with a stupid grin. They cracked the door open to see Dawson windmilling his arms and running in a zigzag up the hallway making the stupidest screeching sound imaginable. They tried desperately to stop cackling at him, but then,

“DAWSON!” Farrier appeared in his doorway. Dawson screamed in a very girlish way and
physically jumped away from Farrier’s doorway.

“Sorry Farrier.”

“What the fuck are you doing? Everyone is asleep!” Farrier hissed. Collins couldn’t contain his laughter anymore, he let out a snort, then Wingnut began giggling. Farrier looked down the hallway to see the two giggling feverishly in the doorway.

“Oh I see, let’s annoy Farrier, is that it?” he said down the hallway to them.

“No” Dawson started, but was laughing too much himself.

“No, we we’re playing questions and commands and Collins told me to scream up and down the hallway.” Dawson began giggling again. Instead of saying anything Farrier just gave Collins a disapproving look, to which he made an innocent face.

“Go to bed boys.” Farrier said before shutting his door again.

Dawson ran back to the door,

“No more commands like that” He laughed with the other two.

“Well we dinnae think yae were going for the banshee screamin’ windmill arms mate!” Collins laughed,

“Well you told me to scream so I made it interesting!” Dawson laughed.

“Right, my turn. Wingnut, question or command?” Dawson said,

“Question.” The brunette answered.

“Okay.” Dawson thought.

“Did you score any action on the uniform party? I genuinely didn’t see ya for a good portion of the night.”

“Nah I didn’t mate, whole pub was full of men from the RAF, barely a woman in sight!” he smiled to Dawson,

“I mean… Didn’t say woman.” Dawson laughed.

“Push off man, I’m not a poof!” Wingnut laughed, Collins chuckled uncomfortably, though slightly irritated inside.

“Got a problem with gays ey?” Collins laughed, tried to make it sound joking and not an actual question.

“Nah, in reality I don’t care who ya like, boys, girls, both. But I’m just sayin’, I’m not gay myself.” Wingnut said,

“Yeah I agree. I was just messin’ with ya Wingnut, I don’t mind homosexuals, I care more about people being able to work equally. Like, if for some reason it means you don’t work as much or can’t do the job as well I’d care, but if you’re into men and it doesn’t affect your job, why does it matter? And I can’t even think of how it would affect your work anyway.” Dawson smiled happily.

This was it. Something Collins never thought he’d be able to do, he could tell them, and now he
knew they wouldn’t judge.

“Well, if neither of yae have a problem with homosexuals…” he began, feeling his face redden he looked at the floor.

“I’m one of them.” Collins said. There was an awkward silence as the two boys let the information sink in.

“I had no clue mate, but don’t worry, secret’s safe with us, right Dawson?” Wingnut said, elbowing Dawson.

“’Course mate, as I said, I don’t see you any differently, just appreciate that you’re open enough with us to tell us.” Dawson smiled, he’d had his suspicions about Collins but had kept quiet.

“Exactly, we’re ya best mates, it’s what we’re here for!” Wingnut smiled.

“Thanks guys, I appreciate it bein’ kept quiet.” Collins smiled.

“Aight let’s keep the game goin. Collins, question or command?”

“Question” Collins answered, trying to somehow mentally push the redness out of his cheeks.

Wingnut smiled cheekily, Collins raised an eyebrow.

“Fancy either of us?”

“Oh stop mate, don’t make fun o’ me” Collins said offendedly.

“Nah serious! I’m dashingly handsome and so is Dawson here.” Wingnut laughed.

“Look, no. Sorry mate, but both of yae, definitely not.” Collins laughed sarcastically, though he did recognise Dawson as quite attractive in his head, he’d never say it.

“Then is there someone in Gatwick?” Wingnut pressed,

“Ah, one question at a time.” Collins smirked. They called the game quits soon after that, and Collins went to bed with a happy feeling in his belly. He was very relieved he could trust his friends with his secret.

On Wednesday the following week, the boys had their weekly physical education lesson, and Collins felt good about it after their successful jog earlier that week. This time an obstacle course had been set up. There was a ladder lying on the dirt, several tyres, and a climbing wall made of ropes attached to wooden planks. It was easy enough for Collins, he may not have been as strong as he wanted, but he was agile. Timson and Dawson both struggled more than Collins, being stronger but not as nimble. Farrier and Canfield watched from their chairs in the shade.

“This was always fun.” Farrier said with a nostalgic smile.

“You could go and do it Farrier, in fact you should probably make sure that you’re able!” Canfield jested, Farrier laughed,

“I can do it, I don’t need to participate every time, I was just saying.” Said the brunette.

“I’m not going to make you, heavens I wouldn’t want to be out in that sun” Canfield laughed.

Collins was sweating, thankfully the shirt was short sleeved but the pants had no short counterpart.
He looked around as he sat on the top of the climbing wall for a rest, everyone’s faces sheened with sweat, he looked over at Farrier and Canfield sat comfortably in the shade. He began to climb down, and met Wingnut who was clambering up.

“Why do they get tae sit in the shade all day and watch us getting sunburnt?” Collins panted,

“Not fair, is it.” Wingnut panted back as he continued to climb. Collins wasn’t used to this much sun, he could feel his pale skin burning. He stopped going through the obstacle course and stood still, breathing heavily.

Farrier watched the group from his chair, noticed that Collins had stopped, he was standing still and appeared to be breathing heavily.

Collins squinted up into the sky, he thought London was supposed to be cloudy. Collins ran a hand through his sweat-dampened hair. He needed water, or a break, or something. He felt like he was going to get heatstroke. He walked over to the water fountain without asking permission, not that he needed it, but he knew it probably looked a bit odd for one of them to have stopped, nobody else had needed a drink yet.

“He’s not used to the weather, poor thing” Canfield laughed quietly to Farrier,

“Yeah, I mean while I’m not surprised, it does amuse me that he’s finding this weather hot, can’t be that different up there can it?” Farrier smiled.

Collins gulped water down from the fountain, splashed some on his face and the back of his neck. He finished his drink and stood up with his eyes closed and took a big breath.

“I think they all deserve a break.” Farrier said, wincing as he stood up.

“Are you okay?” Canfield asked, watching Farrier wince,

“Yeah, just my torso again.” He said.

“Ah.” Canfield smiled sadly, knowing there was nothing he could do.

Farrier walked over to the step down to the dirt,

“Right men, everyone take a break and get a drink.” Collins hadn’t even started doing anything since he got back from his drink, he couldn’t help feel guilty that it was probably him that made Farrier call break time. Having already had a drink he walked over to the wall of the building and sat against it in the shade. Wingnut and Dawson joined him.

“What’s the matter?” Dawson asked,

“It’s so hot” Collins said, with his eyes shut.

“Mate” Wingnut said, waiting for Collins to open his eyes,

“It’s like twenty-two degrees today, that’s pretty average for this time” he smiled,

“That’s like the heat of summer where I’m from, not the cusp of it, in fact even hotter than the heat of summer!” Collins said out of breath.

“It gets to like twenty-five usually here.” Wingnut said.

“Well I suppose that’s not too bad” Collins said,
“Just a bit sudden, this weather” he added.

“Yeah I’ll agree with you there” Dawson said.

“Right everyone, half an hour more then we’re done” Farrier said.

Collins groaned and got up again.

“Easy for him to say” he says,

“Ah c’mon, he’s probably too old for this shit, fighting demonstrations were standing still mostly, probably can’t do all this!” Wingnut laughed, Collins smiled, in his head disagreeing. He began stepping through the ladder that lay on the ground, then the tyres, then back to the ladder. Collins eventually made it back to the climbing wall after a few rounds of warming up on the stepping obstacles. He climbed up one side and down the other, then climbed up and sat on top again. After a minute or two he climbed back down and went back to the ladder and tyres. It was easy, just hot work. After a few more rotations Farrier’s voice sounded over the courtyard once more.

“Right class, let’s get you all inside” he said, Canfield had already gone. Collins was sitting on the top of the climbing frame again when he heard, and was subsequently the last in line to go inside. Farrier always waited for the students to go in before he did. Collins passed him,

“Didn’t feel like joinin’ in?” Collins asked, smiling but the question seemed somewhat jealous.

“I’ve done it all many times before, Collins.” Farrier smiled, Collins chuckled,

“Ah no worries, mightn’t be able to anymore.” he joked, and went to backhand Farrier’s shoulder in jest, but his hand was stopped by Farrier’s forearm instinctually blocking the hit. They locked blue eyes, Collins smirked and tried again, he went for a genuine swing to the arm, blocked again, he tried to swipe Farrier’s hand away and get him in the side, blocked seamlessly again,

“Try me.” Farrier said, not breaking eye contact. Collins dropped his hands and chuckled to the ground, muttering some sort of insincere apology. He walked inside and after a few moments Farrier followed, he smirked at Collins attempts to hit him, and made a note to apologise later for being so harsh.

If it was one thing Farrier knew about himself, it was that there was an on/off switch somewhere. There was work, and not work. Collins had just flicked that switch, nothing playful about that little scuffle. He was strange that way, it was Collins for god’s sake, yet he’d gone completely serious and not even let him hit his shoulder, Farrier thought to himself. Maybe he found life easier when it was compartmentalised into ‘work’ and ‘not work’. Sometimes he wished he could blur the line more.

After classes Collins went to tutoring again.

“How did you find physical education today?” Farrier smiled knowingly,

“Well, I’m not used to the heat at this time o’ year, but it was easy.” Collins smiled.

“You did well, when you weren’t sitting on the climbing frame.” Farrier smirked,

“Yae but I genuinely think I was getting’ heatstroke.” Collins said,

Farrier didn’t say anything, just smiled.
“What was that play fight about then?” he asked after a while.

“Wanted to see if you could keep up” Collins smirked,

“Don’t get ahead of yourself, I’ve got no bruises to show for the fight lesson we had.” Farrier grinned, Collins rolled his eyes but smiled back, and momentarily they both got lost in each other’s eyes once more before Farrier continued,

“But I am sorry for being a bit cold, sometimes, I dunno. Sometimes things seem to trigger me I guess, and it’s like it’s real. I don’t know how to explain myself.” Farrier said,

“I think I know what yae mean. It’s like seeing someone go for you without warning made yer mind go into combat mode?” Collins said.

“Yeah, I s’pose so. So I’m sorry for that.” Farrier said.

“It’s fine, my fault.” Collins smiled.

“Uh so. I had a question about the mathematics class on Monday.” the blonde added.

“I understand that it works, but don’t fully understand why.”

“As usual.” Farrier smiled.

“Collins, you’re not blushing are you?” Farrier asked with a smile creeping onto his face, this question shocked Collins. But then he realised why he’d been asked.

“Sunburn.” Collins smiled with half of his mouth while taking a piece of paper out of his pocket.

“Ah” Farrier said, mirroring the half-smile.

“Yes you’re quite pale” he muttered as he looked at the question page Collins had pulled out of his pocket. In truth Farrier thought his pale skin was beautiful, with bursts of freckles if you looked close enough. Such stark contrast to his own olive skin, he pondered.

“Well, we don’t get much sun up there.” Collins answered, pulling Farrier’s thoughts back to the present.

“Neither do we, today was weird.” Farrier murmured as he read. There was a scar on the side of his head, Collins had never noticed before. Farrier looked up and noticed the gaze on the side of his head, he ran his hand over his scar and cleared his throat.

“Sorry.” Collins said,

“No, it’s not like I can hide that one.” Farrier said with a faint smile. Collins thought to himself, what did he mean by ‘that one’? Did he have more? He didn’t ask.

The next day was gym day with the boys, and Collins was determined to do well. He lifted weights heavier than he had been, and felt good when he was able to. He also worked on his torso and back muscles, something they hadn’t tried yet, Wingnut and Collins had been focusing on their arms and legs, but Dawson stressed the importance of working out their torsos, complete with a brief lifting up of his shirt to show off his sculpted body, accompanied by a laugh when he realised he’d made Collins blush, although seeing Dawson’s body only made Collins push harder. They also did some fight training afterwards, against each other. It wasn’t much, but Collins began to feel confident in his style, maybe he’d try it out with Farrier sometime again.
Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading! Collins finally confided in his friends, what a relief for him.
The physical training they've been doing is all true to historical accounts btw which I think is super cool, there are even some YouTube videos of the RAF training.
Also, Dawson’s thoughts about homosexuality affecting work was an actual mindset that was drummed into people back then, and men actually did get fired from places like Collins if they were homosexual if they thought they’d ‘get distracted’. As you read Dawson is beginning to see the obvious falsities in this mindset so that’s a plus.

See you all next week for the next chapter :)

My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat to me.

Until then, happy reading!
Collins felt good about himself, it was Monday, they were going on a run tonight. His torso was still a bit sore from working out last week, but he enjoyed the pain, he knew it meant progress. The classes were mainly with Canfield today. He used the blackboard more than Farrier and this interested Collins. Farrier tended to just talk to the class and make sure everyone was taking notes, Canfield didn’t check if anyone was noting anything down, but he plainly wrote it all up on the board. Sometimes Canfield got distracted and told stories or riddles, which everyone loved. Farrier always turned down stories, sometimes it looked like he wanted to divulge, but he never did.

“Hey Canfield, why are we doing fight training?” someone called out after Canfield mentioned their training during a particularly interesting class in which everyone was being particularly rowdy to Collins' annoyance.

“Isn’t it obvious?” the man said, after getting no answer he continued.

“We’re preparing for war, Edwards. Britain needs to be ready, and so do you. Maybe it won’t come to it, but what’s a little training?” Canfield said, then shrugged to himself.

“Can you and Farrier fight properly too?” Someone else piped up.

“Well, I probably can’t, not much past the training you saw me doing.” he laughed, there was a tinge of pain behind it,

“But I imagine Farrier can, yes. Not that I’ve seen him do it for a long time.” Canfield turned to the board to continue.

“Why hasn’t he for a long time then?” someone asked, Collins turned around and looked at them in annoyance, the boy shrugged at him. Collins just wanted to get on with it and find out the differing speeds and altitudes at which planes began to get faulty, which was about where Canfield had been interrupted.

“Well, we’re in a time of peace, it’s a good thing I haven’t seen him for a long time. That, and he-actually I don’t think I should divulge.” Canfield said,

“Stop trying to distract me!” he chuckled and turned back to the board. Collins wondered what he was going to say, but stayed quiet.

That night they went on their jog.

“Let’s go this way tonight!” Dawson said, he was pointing to a hill. The friends jogged up to the
hill and slowed down as it began to get steep. They walked up most of it, puffing and taking short breaks. Collins was the first to reach the top, spurred on by a burst of energy at the end probably from some need to be first.

“Look at that!” he said, lacing his fingers together on top of his head. He could see the whole of Gatwick from here, it was beautiful. The sky was purple, and all he could see was the black outline of the buildings. The three friends laughed gleefully to each other at the sight.

“We have to come up here after every run!” Wingnut said,

“Definitely” Dawson said. Collins then felt something cold on his nose, then his cheek, his head.

“Is it rainin’?” he said,

“Ah shit yeah it is!” Dawson said,

“Ah there’s the London I know.” Wingnut laughed. The boys jogged back down the hill, cautiously as the grass got wet and slippery. Collins looked up and saw dark clouds moving in. they continued to descend and after a few minutes reached the streets again.

“Hope our uniforms dunnae get too soaked!” Collins said to the others as they jogged back to the base,

“Yeah, I mean we could hang them somewhere surely.” Wingnut said puffing as they jogged,

“Ya true.” Collins said, not able to talk much while he jogged. They continued along in the light rain, sticking under the cover of trees as much as they could. Nonetheless, when they reached the base they were more or less wet all over.

It was dark by the time the boys got back.

“Good run men” Wingnut said,

“Yeah I think it was a bit longer than our usual.” Dawson smiled.

“Ya, bit damper too!” Collins laughed,

“You’re used to it mate, surely.” Dawson said,

“Yeah, I wasn’t complainin’.” Collins smiled. His hair was dripping onto his nose and his clothes felt heavy on him.

“Where do we hang these? I don’t have anything in mae room to hang things except in the cupboard.” he said, gesturing to his top.

“Good question.” Wingnut said slowly as he thought of an answer.

“Locker room?” Dawson suggested,

“Nobody is gonna go in there, and if they do what’re they gonna do, steal some uniforms?” he added, Collins and Timson shrugged at each other.

“Well I’m gettin’ dry clothes before we go down, I’m not runnin’ up the stairs in ma trunks, it’s not exactly warm.” Collins smiled as he walked upstairs.

“Good idea actually” Dawson said, following.
“Yeah” Wingnut said, jogging up to the others. Collins went into his room and pulled out the first warm, comfy clothes he found, woollen brown pants, and a navy turtleneck. He waited for the others in the hall. The three went down to the locker rooms with their clothes bundled under their arms.

“Dinner’s still on right?” Wingnut asked,

“Yes mate, it’s not that late yet.” Dawson laughed, wondering how he never seemed to know the time.

“I’m hungry.” Collins said, then his belly gurgled comedically. They reached the locker room, “See?” Dawson laughed. The lights were dim, and the locker room was empty but peaceful.

Farrier was in the dining room with Canfield. He had begun to notice that Collins and his friends were later on Mondays for some reason.

“You know my class asked about you today Farrier.”

“Oh yeah?” He lifted his head from his tin mug of tea.

“Yes, they wanted to know why they were learning to fight, I told them it’s in preparation for, well, anything. And then they asked if we could fight!” Canfield chuckled,

“And?” Farrier asked,

“Well I said I probably couldn’t and you probably could!” Canfield laughed.

“Probably could?” Farrier smirked,

“Yes, probably. Haven’t seen you do it for a long time my friend,” Farrier was about to laugh but then Canfield continued,

“They asked why I hadn’t seen you fighting for a long time, I just said it’s because we’re in peacetime.” Canfield reassured his friend. He watched Farrier exhale slightly into his mug.

“I do the light stuff, we did demonstrations together for them for fighting techniques and that.” Farrier said,

“Indeed we did.” Canfield replied.

“It’s nothing to be ashamed of Farrier.” the old man added, patting Farrier’s shoulder, to which he flinched instinctively.

“I know, but it still concerns me, that my injuries probably would hinder my abilities to join in.” He said, taking a drink of his tea.

The three boys all faced the walls and took off their shirts. Collins always wore his white singlet underneath the beige top, it may have contributed to his heatstroke the previous week. He caught a glimpse of Dawson and Timson, both without shirts in the corner of his eye.

“Collins?” Wingnut said,
“Ya?” Collins answered, unstrapping a shoe.

“Why are you wearing your singlet?”

“I dunno, I always wear it under my shirt” he answered, looking up and trying to act like he wasn’t struggling to keep his gaze on Wingnut’s face.

“You can’t be that bad mate” Wingnut laughed, Collins didn’t answer, just laughed uncomfortably. In truth it wasn’t about self-consciousness, he supposed it was just from living in a cold climate, you got used to dressing in layers all the time.

“Hey let him go mate.” Dawson said to Wingnut,

“Yeah yeah, but by the looks of your arms mate you don’t have much to be ashamed of Collins.” Wingnut said, and then slipped on his dry top.

Collins glanced at his right arm, then his left. They did look a bit better, and that amazed him. He could actually see progress, maybe he was imagining it but he hoped not. Collins turned to make sure the others were turned away before quickly slipping his damp singlet off and immediately putting his turtleneck on. He was, perhaps, a little self-conscious, whether he’d admit it to himself or not. He quickly got his shoes and socks off, slipped his pants down and put on his dry ones as soon as he could. He sat down and put his dry socks on and relaced his shoes onto his feet. They hung their uniforms on the racks placed above the benches around the walls in the room. Eventually the three made their way down to the dining hall.

“I think I need a watch.” Collins said absent-mindedly,

“That’s a good idea, I always forget to wear mine.” Wingnut said, answering Dawson’s earlier pondering of why he never knew the time,

“Yeah I’ve got one, I keep it in my pocket usually actually.” Dawson said, pulling out a watch from his pants pocket.

“Yae I can never tell what time it is.” Collins laughed as they went down the stairs. Dawson supposed he didn’t notice as much because it seemed that if Collins didn’t know something, he’d just keep quiet, whereas Wingnut would voice anything he could, any time. He appreciated the quieter side of Collins, it certainly made him seem more intelligent than Wingnut.

They walked down the hall to the stairs leading down to the dining room, Collins’ hair was still damp annoyingly, and it was making his ears cold. Wingnut saw Collins staring at a drop of water falling down his blonde hair onto his straight nose.

“Told ya to go short.” he smirked, running a hand through his almost dry hair.

“Still like it long.” Collins smiled, shaking his head of get rid of the single drop, producing a laugh from Wingnut.

Farrier looked at the door anxiously as it opened. Just the man he wanted to see was entering, Collins. He was dressed in casuals, a dark turtleneck and brown pants. His hair was messy and hung down to his eyebrows. Farrier exhaled and forced himself to look down at his tea. But the turtleneck clung to Collins’ figure, unlike the uniform shirts. It was hard for Farrier not to watch as he led his friends to their seats.
Collins felt eyes on him, and he thought he knew who they belonged to. He looked straight over to Farrier’s table as he swung a leg over the bench to sit down, he smirked a little when he saw that he was right, Farrier had been watching, Collins saw the corner of Farrier’s mouth twitch into a smile which sent tingles up Collins’ spine. He ran a hand through his damp hair, genuinely without meaning to, nor realising the effect it had on Farrier, who was still staring over with an intense look in his eyes, and then sat down with Dawson and Wingnut. Collins’ heart was racing, that was flirting, it had to be. Unless Collins was completely delirious or socially retarded, that was about as close to actual confirmation as he had gotten yet. The fact that he’d kept eye contact for that long, surely it meant something.

Farrier couldn’t help it, he literally couldn’t stop looking. Did Collins have to wear those clothes? Did he have to have wet hair? Thank goodness Canfield was distracted by talking to the other officers or he would have slapped Farrier silly. Everyone at his table began standing up so he followed, not that he’d even heard anyone yelling out the food was ready. He got up absent-mindedly and made his way to the line.

“You take the front, Canfield” he smiled, offering his hand forward.

“Too kind” Canfield mumbled with a smile as he walked in front.

Collins lay in bed that night thinking what he’d done to deserve that dinner. Did he actually have a chance with Farrier? But of course, he had to be careful, if he was somehow misreading all these signs he could get in a lot of trouble. Somehow, Collins didn’t think he was misreading anything.

Farrier had to stop himself. If what he thought about Collins’ sexuality to be true, this could actually eventuate to something, and that could not happen. Farrier couldn’t help watch Collins, think about him, want to be around him, and that was a problem because it almost seemed that Collins felt the same way. Farrier didn’t know what it was like to have his feeling reciprocated. If this was it, it was madness.

That Wednesday Collins had his favourite time of the week, tutoring. He walked into the usual classroom to see Farrier leaning back against the teacher’s desk,

“Hi” he said, with a husky voice.

“Hi yourself.” Collins smiled, before wondering, was I meant to answer like that?

Farrier liked the answer he’d just received, Collins’ tutoring always put him in a good mood, especially if Collins was acting especially chirpy which he seemed to be today. They took their usual seats opposite one another at the desk in the front row next to the window.

“So, what can I do for you today?” Farrier smiled, Collins had a piece of paper in his pocket with his questions which he lay on the table. Farrier scanned it,

“That’s it?” he looked up from the page,

“Yae. Startin’ to think these sessions might no’ be worth it.” he scratched the back of his head, he regretted it as soon as he’d said it. As much as he enjoyed them, he did sometimes feel bad for Farrier for having to sit for an hour even when Collins didn’t really need it, but he loved it so
“Indeed. Unlike Timson, with whom I often struggle to finish all of his queries by the end of his session, you and I have a lot of spare time.” Farrier said. There was a heavy silence between them.

“Tell you what, why don’t you just come in when you’ve got a decent amount of questions, or if it’s urgent for the work, doesn’t have to be every week. How does that sound Collins?” Farrier asked after a while.

“Ya that’d work fine, so we’ll just finish these ones today and then I’ll be off?”

“Yeah. When you want to come in for another session just speak to me during or after class, but preferably give me more than a few hours’ notice” Farrier smiled,

“Easy. I’d be lettin’ ya know like days in advance probably.” Collins smiled.

“Excellent, Now, let’s quickly get through these questions.”

Farrier loved seeing Collins weekly in private, but the boy didn’t need tutoring, and he didn’t want to give him special treatment. Collins walked out of class that afternoon looking visibly disheartened, making Farrier feel almost guilty for changing the tutoring plan. He heard Collins huff in the hallway.

Later that night the rain had gotten heavier, and the air colder. Collins was sat up in bed drawing his bedside lamp. He had less and less time to doodle nowadays, so he felt lucky tonight. His thoughts strayed from the task at hand however, to his friends, and not for the first time since coming out to them. Collins hadn’t noticed a difference in their behaviours to him, but for some reason he felt strange that they knew. Felt scared. Anderson knew as well, and that didn’t go well at all. What if they were just pretending to be okay with it? That was nonsense the blonde told himself. Yet he was unable to concentrate on the drawing. He shut the book and got out of bed. Collins walked out into the hallway in search of Dawson’s room. He knocked quietly on the door.

"Who is it?" Came Dawson's voice.

"Me" Collins said dumbly. The door opened moments later.

"Hey, mate you okay?" Dawson asked.

"Yae. Look I just wanted to know..." Collins began, not realising how hard it would be to ask. He took a deep breath and looked down, a nervous habit.

"Collins, what?" the blonde asked.

"It’s just, yae know that thing I told you two last week?" he finally got out.

"Oh, yeah 'course."

"I s'pose I wannae know.. You're sure you donnae mind?" Collins asked, finding Dawson's eyes.

"Of course not Collins! I told ya mate!" Dawson smiled sadly, wishing this wasn't something that plagued his friend's thoughts.

"Okay, good. Just because, someone else knows and they didn't take it so well. I think I'm just worryin' about nothin'." Collins tried to laugh.
"No it's fair enough, I get it. But who else knows?" Dawson asked.

"Anderson, I think." Collins' breathing sped up as he recalled the night at the pub.

"How?" Dawson asked.

"Dunno. But he, come to think of it I suppose it was some kind of threat. The uniform party, he dragged me outside at some point basically just to let me know he knew. Wasn't bein' friendly about it." Collins said, his breath was shaky.

"Shit. Well keep an eye on him, we will too, Wingnut and me. If you're okay me telling him?" Dawson said. Collins nodded at the floor.

"Collins, it's okay. You can trust us, you know that." the blonde said.

"I know. Just wish I didn't have to be so afraid." Collins replied in a small voice. He felt strong arms pull him into a hug. He let out a sigh and closed his eyes,

"Thank you." he mumbled into Dawson's shoulder.

"Don't mention it mate. I'll see you tomorrow yeah?" Dawson said, letting Collins go.

"Yeah. Night then." The blonde said.

Collins fell into an uneasy sleep, and the drawing never got finished.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading! Sorry if you thought this chapter was a bit boring, but I just love writing about Collins and his friends as well as Farrier tbh. As you can probably tell by now the story is VERY plot-heavy, I love writing for the plot and characterisation, not only of main characters but side characters ie Canfield, Dawson and Wingnut, but trust me you'll all get your flyboy fix sooner or later but I'm seriously enjoying writing Collins and his friendships. Let me know if you like it too, I always love to hear what everyone thinks!

If I haven't already mentioned it, the RAF actually did hold fight classes, which I find pretty cool, there are even videos of the training online.

If anyone wants to chat, my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-r-e-r.tumblr.com

Until next week, my dudes.

(PS it's my birthday this Wednesday, happy bday to me!)
The next day was comparatively warm again, they were out in the courtyard doing more physical work.

“You complain about it bein’ rainy here, you stole all the sun!” Collins remarked to Wingnut,

“You should go to the sea, even nicer there mate” Wingnut said,

“Yeah it’s true, sunny days all around back home.” Dawson smiled,

“That’s probably why I don’t really have an issue with this” he pointed up to the sun.

Farrier instructed them to get into pairs, another fighting lesson. Collins was somewhat eager to practice what him and his friends had been practicing amongst each other. Collins was first paired with a skinny lad who was a good head shorter than him, he felt bad that they had to fight.

“Sorry if I hurt ya” he said quietly,

“Same for you” the boy said, Collins knew he wasn’t joking but he looked incapable of hurting him.

After Farrier had given the signal to begin, the man went to sit in the shade with Canfield.

“Good to see you’re in the summer uniform today, my friend.” Canfield said.

“Ah, yeah. Way too hot to wear anything else.” Farrier said, not that he particularly enjoyed this uniform. He sat with his arms folded across his chest, careful to keep his wrist inwards. Canfield reached over to try and uncross his arms for him.

“Don’t.” Farrier said sternly.

“Why?” Canfield asked.

“You always do that. It’s not a good look my boy, plus it looks like you’re trying to hide something, to me.” The old man added.

Farrier just huffed.

“I shouldn’t be worried there’s something there you’re hiding, Farrier?” Canfield pried.

“No, Canfield. Not what you’re thinking of. I just don’t like the look of the scars, and don’t want them to see either.” He looked out into the courtyard.
“Well, you made them.” Canfield said. Farrier couldn’t believe what the man had just said, he sat dumbfounded for a second. Canfield gave some sort of smile as if to say, it’s true. Farrier didn’t respond to Canfield.

“Right boys, time’s up.” Farrier yelled and stood up, walking away from Canfield to the group. They began reporting their number of hits, they arrived at Collins and his partner,

“One” the boy said,

“Two” Collins said, Dawson and Wingnut turned around with smirks on their faces. After the rest of the group had announced their scores, Collins made his way over to his friends.

“I had to go easy look at him!” Collins explained,

“Yeah that’s what we were laughing at mate, don’t worry” Dawson chuckled.

“Now, today we’re going to learn more about kicking.” Farrier said. He began explaining to the class how to kick, how to aim the power and how to recoil after impact.

“Why don’t you demonstrate on someone other than your imaginary friend?” Anderson laughed, Farrier had been going through the motions in the air so far today, Collins was genuinely surprised Farrier could lift his legs that high but was thrilled at the prospect nonetheless.

“How about you then?” Farrier laughed, but it was a hostile one.

“Serious? You’re an old man, I’d have you on the ground in seconds!” Anderson turned and smiled to his friends behind him, Collins scowled.

“I’m bettin’ ya wouldn’t.” Collins said to Anderson, the whole group turned to him, he was slightly embarrassed that he’d spoken out of turn, but he didn’t like what Anderson was trying to do. Farrier’s stomach tightened as he heard the Scot’s voice, couldn’t he have stayed out of it? Damn that blonde boy and his meddling.

“Me too, Farrier could easily take you.” Dawson crossed his arms and smirked at Anderson.

“Yeah blondies? Why don’t we find out?” Anderson turned and smiled with cold eyes at Farrier. The older man smiled at the sky and then looked over to Canfield.

“It’s his fault, let him learn. But don’t hurt him!” Canfield yelled.

“Or is there another reason you sit out every single lesson and have never really participated?” Anderson laughed,

“Too weak maybe? Scared a student might actually beat you?” Anderson laughed. Collins was almost shaking with anger.

Farrier walked towards Anderson heatedly, who kept his arms casually folded.

“Why don’t you find out first hand then Anderson?” he said quietly.

“Farrier I’m not calling the nurses!” Canfield called out, only half joking.

“Well old man Canfield seems to have a high opinion of you mate!” Anderson smirked,

“He was talking about a nurse for you. Anderson, I don’t want to seriously fight you, but I will if you honestly want it.” Farrier tried one last time. As much as he did somewhat want to teach the
boy a lesson, this wasn’t the most professional way. Though, if it was what he really wanted, Farrier knew it would be a genuine example of a fight for the others.

“Don’t try and get out of this, I wanna test you, old man.” Anderson laughed.

“Class, this is how you fight.” Farrier said with a sigh,

“Move back.” he said, and the group shuffled back.

Anderson and Farrier faced each other.

“I’m not sticking to what you’ve taught us ya know” Anderson smiled,

“Don’t worry Anderson, neither am I.” Farrier almost smiled.

“I’m kinda concerned boys.” Wingnut murmured,

“Yeah, hope it doesn’t get too serious. That fucker.” Dawson said, visibly irritated at Anderson. Collins watched nervously, stomach in too many knots to speak currently. What if Anderson actually hurt him?

Farrier and Anderson slowly circled one another, and then Anderson made the first move, an attempt at a punch to the ribs, easily blocked by Farrier’s forearm, Anderson suddenly looked less confident. He kept throwing punches, all blocked easily, though Farrier didn’t hit back. Collins got progressively more nervous as Anderson threw each punch.

“Right, I’m tired of playing.” Farrier said as he blocked the umpteenth punch from Anderson, and he punched back. He hit Anderson in the ribs, who looked up at Farrier with shock in his blue eyes.

“Looks out of his depth now” Dawson smiled at Collins, who tried to smile. Farrier advanced on a still recovering Anderson and punched him again, in the stomach this time. He doubled over and held his stomach, trying to recover from being winded. Farrier gave him a chance to stand up properly, Anderson ran at Farrier with rage, Collins held his breath. Anderson swung his leg, aiming for Farrier’s gut. Farrier grabbed Anderson’s leg mid-kick and pulled it upwards sending the boy down on his back, hard. He dropped Anderson’s leg after the boy had landed in the dust. He circled him looking down disdainfully.

“Nothing I can’t handle, guess I’ll stop going easy on him ey boys?” Anderson said as he got up, his friends chuckled at his remark.

“Keep your guard up Anderson, if I were actually trying to fight you, I’d have taken that opportunity to attack” Farrier said,

“This isn’t a lesson mate, stop trying to teach me. I told ya to go hard, damnit!” Anderson laughed,

“That’s where you’re wrong, this is a lesson, I’m trying to teach you to be better Anderson, as much fun as this is, it’s still a lesson, at the very least it’s a lesson not to speak out.” Farrier said, Anderson rolled his eyes. Anderson punched again and Farrier grabbed the boy’s forearm before his fist could reach his body, he twisted Anderson’s arm, causing him to yell in pain.

“Farrier!” Canfield yelled. Farrier ignored it. He smirked at Anderson.

“Go on, try your best” he smiled, dropping his arm and opening his own as if inviting Anderson. The boy’s lips twitched into a smirk and he took another run at Farrier. Anderson tried to feign right but Farrier saw through it, he swiped both Anderson’s arms out of the way and brought his
knee harshly into Anderson’s gut, forcing the boy backwards. He stumbled but ran at Farrier again, his skills and plans had gone out the window, now he was just angry.

“Calm down, I think we’re finished now.” Farrier said. Anderson tried to kick again but Farrier jumped back as Anderson’s leg swung through the air in front of him. It was too easy, Anderson ran yet again at him, with an open stance so Farrier took the opportunity to boot him in the ribcage, sending him falling hard onto his back in the dirt. Farrier knew it wasn’t hard enough to cause damage, but it was an easy stop to the fight. Anderson groaned and held his chest with one hand, the other up in defence. Farrier was done with this lesson.

“Farrier!” Canfield yelled again. Farrier eyed Collins once, and then walked off inside. If Farrier was honest with himself, he thought Anderson deserved everything he got. Canfield was too soft on them all.

Collins heard a clap, then a few more around him, he joined in, as did Dawson and Timson and soon the whole group was applauding Farrier, Collins’ heart relaxed a little.

Farrier walked up the steps to go inside as clapping and cheering began behind him. The boys were, congratulating him? For what? Hurting Anderson? Joining in for once? The cheering didn’t bring the slightest of smiles to Farrier’s face, and he continued inside.

“You’re alright lad, you’re alright” Canfield said as he helped Anderson stand, once he was on his feet he brushed Canfield away,

“I’m fine,” He said.

“Well then maybe next time you shouldn’t anger a senior officer, Anderson. He earnt his title, his medals, Farrier isn’t some decrepit teacher that can’t fend for himself. Well, I guess you know that now.” Anderson considered saying something in retort but merely scowled and walked over to his friends.

“Now class, that little ordeal is over now, I suppose I will conduct for the rest of the lesson! Back in your positions boys, we’ll go through the motions of each move and I’ll be checking to make sure you all have correct form.” Canfield smiled, hiding his anger at Farrier.

Farrier had to learn to keep his emotions in check. He paced around in his office before planting himself down in the seat at the desk. He knew he had to take a class after this, and he needed to calm down. He walked out into the airfield to the old hangar at the back. He sat in the grass and felt the cool breeze on his face. Farrier could have fallen asleep there if it weren’t for the impending class he had to teach and the impending lecture from Canfield he’d be getting. He considered himself to be a composed person most of the time, it was just that stupid boy Anderson. He was infuriating.

Collins walked into the classroom Farrier was standing in, they took their usual seats.

“Right. Firstly, Anderson, I’m sorry for hurting you, everyone else, I’m sorry if I alarmed any of you. It was unprofessional of me to have agreed to do that.” There was a silence after that, so Farrier continued.

“Okay then, onto the lesson. Just a bit more on aerodynamics today.” He said.

After class, Farrier was walking to his office to collect some papers when he saw Canfield. He tried to walk past without talking, but of course Canfield stopped him.
“Farrier, mind if I join you?” he asked without a hint of joy in his voice,

“Sure, I’m just going to my office.” Farrier answered shortly.

Once they were inside, Canfield shut the door behind them, Farrier looked over in annoyance.

“Now” Canfield said, Farrier rolled his eyes, he knew what was coming.

“You cannot fight students.”

“You said he had it coming yourself Canfield.” Farrier replied.

“I thought you’d give him a shove and that would be it! You kicked him to the ground!” Canfield said,

“He kept going, I told him to stop and he didn’t, I’m sorry okay?”

“Are you?”

“Yes, I apologised to Anderson as well. Although he asked for it, and you say I should join in sometimes but I get it. I know it was too much.” Farrier looked at Canfield over the desk, Canfield sighed.

“Yes, you should join in, but I didn’t mean put on a show for everyone else and knock the living daylights out of one of our boys, I meant join the group and choose one of them who needs help and, well, help him!” Canfield said and added,

“I can’t do anything about it, it’s happened now, and yes he’s an annoying little bugger, but restrain yourself.”

“Yes Michael, I know. I stepped out of line.” Farrier said,

“It’s okay Tom, just don’t do it again.”

“Yeah” Farrier murmured as he picked up the papers he’d come for. He walked past Canfield and opened the door, realised something that lightened his mood.

“You know what’s happening on Monday?” Farrier smiled,

“No?”

“They’re graduating from the cadet wing” Farrier smiled.

“Oh!” Canfield said, Farrier laughed.

“We haven’t prepared anything Farrier, we need to plan something!” Canfield began to speak quickly,

“It’ll be fine, we’ll sit down sometime over the weekend and think of something.” He smiled and walked down the hallway.

That night was gym night, and considering the warmth Collins wore his white singlet without anything over, something he supposed he should get used to doing in the warmer months. The boys did their usual workouts, and then practiced their fighting skills and kicks at punching bags. They got back and all agreed that they needed a shower. They were only allowed two showers a week,
every other night had to be washing with a cloth and water from the tap. It was an upgrade from Collins’ house, in which there was no hot water shower, just a big bath tub that had to be filled with multiple buckets of water that had been boiled over the fire. Collins hadn’t brought anything in to change into after his shower, so he put his beige pants and white singlet back on with his boots. He walked up the stairs and saw Farrier in the hallway looking out the windows down into the courtyard they’d been in earlier that day.

“Hiya.” said Collins as he walked past.

“Oh, hello” Farrier said distractedly, looking at Collins’ exposed arms rather than his face. But when he did eventually look up, Collins’ strawberry hair was wet and hung over his eyebrows.

“I just wanted to say uh, yae donnae need to worry about what yae did today to Anderson. We all wanted to see it happen.” Collins smiled, Farrier was in a daze because Collins was a lot more sculpted than he’d imagined.

“Uh yeah, thank you. I just really hate him” Farrier said without thinking, Collins raised his eyebrows at the language and smiled.

“Well then” Collins chuckled,

“Did I say that out loud?” Farrier said as he smiled out the windows, not particularly caring that he had.

“Don’t worry, it’s okay to have favourites.” Collins said with a smirk as he walked up the hall to his room. Farrier felt himself go a little red at the comment, Collins better keep his shirt on from now on, he thought.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): physical fighting

Don’t you love it when the Composed Character™ loses their shit at the Asshole Character™? I do. Let me know in the comments what you thought, I love hearing from you all.

Until next week!

My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat!
Of geography and biscuits

Chapter Notes

Hi all. Uni is over for the year for the most part, thank god. A huge congrats to Mr Lowden for his win at the Scottish BAFTAs this year, I watched the coverage and it warmed my heart <3 Hope everyone likes this week's update.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Farrier spent Friday morning in Canfield’s office with him thinking of how to celebrate the students’ completion of the cadet wing. They arrived at the conclusion that they would not take them out because they both felt like they were supervising instead of having a good night last time they did it.

“Why don’t we just have the cooks make something really nice for them on Sunday night?” Farrier asked, leaning back on a wooden chair.

“Sure” Canfield said,

“Not like they’re getting their wings or anything” Farrier added,

“Exactly, doesn’t have to be much. I’ll have a chat to the ladies about what to make”

“Great.” Farrier smiled.

“Farrier do you have a class today?” Canfield asked, knowing the answer a smirk crept onto his face.

Farrier swore under his breath and quickly got up,

“Talk later Michael” Farrier called back as he jogged out the door, he was ten minutes late to his class.

“Where is he? He’s always in here before us” Dawson said to Collins,

“Dunno, I’m sure he won’t be much longer” Collins said, trying to stabilise the butterflies in his stomach. Dawson was right, Farrier was always early, not once had he ever seen him enter the classroom, he was always already there, was something wrong? Before Collins could answer that question the brunette walked through the doorway hurriedly. Collins visibly exhaled. earning a subtle sideye from Dawson.

“Sorry to keep you waiting class, I was in a meeting with the Wing Commander and we lost track of time. Anyway, we’re doing some mapping and directional skills for geography today, and you’ll be working in groups of three or four.” Farrier said and brought their attention to the worksheets he was holding.

“Easy” Wingnut murmured to the others, who smiled. The task was to find the quickest route through a course with several pathways, and to pass certain checkpoints. Surprisingly, Timson took leadership and did a good job of it. They finished devising their plan a few minutes before Farrier called time up.
“Right class,” he began to draw the map large-scale on the black board.

“Who wants to come up and show me which path they took and why?” he held up the chalk in his hand. A boy with hazel hair and a lanky build got up,

“Olivers, thank you.” Farrier held the chalk out. The boy took the worksheet with him and drew the path his group had made.

“Well done Olivers, although I would suggest…” Farrier took the chalk and made a few shortcuts to the plan,

“Ah, okay.” Olivers smiled and walked back to his group who laughed a bit.

“Next?” the tiny boy who Collins had to fight in physical education got up, he didn’t take the sheet with him. Farrier erased Olivers’ line and gave the chalk to the boy.

“Let’s see if Browning can show us the best way.”

The small lad drew his line, it was similar to Farrier’s version of Oliver’s, but had some different routes too.

“Yeah kind of, I’m not giving any hints away this time, but you’re getting closer to an answer.” Farrier smiled and took the chalk, rubbing the line off the map.

“Why does ours look so different?” Wingnut whispered,

“Dunno, it works though. Why don’t you go up?” Collins whispered back,

“Alright” Wingnut said.

“Can I have a go?” he asked, raising his hand for no reason, nobody else had.

“Of course Wi- Timson” Farrier nearly said Wingnut. *Idiot* he thought to himself. He pursed his lips as Timson got up smirking to Dawson and Collins, the latter of whom received a glare from Farrier, probably something about it being his fault Farrier almost called him Wingnut. Collins smiled down at the desk. Wingnut walked up to the black board with the piece of paper in his hands,

“We did something pretty different,” he chuckled as he took the chalk.

“Ours was like” Wingnut began to draw,

“That” he said as he finished.

“That’s… Correct.” Farrier said as he studied the map.

“Very well done boys, who figured it out?” he asked back to the table, Timson cleared his throat,

“Uh, I did”

“Really?” Farrier smiled,

“Good on you Timson, well done boys, good team work.” Farrier patted Timson on the back as he walked away, invoking a small pang of jealousy in Collins.

“There were a few correct ways through, some more efficient than others. This one is the best,
though I thought it might have taken longer for someone to get this.” Farrier said, and went on to explain why that route was the best.

“Well then.” Wingnut said as he sat. Collins and Dawson smiled at him, the tutoring was paying off, it seemed.

“So class, we’re doing team building exercises mainly because not all of being in the RAF is being by yourself in a plane, you must have good communication and interpersonal skills, though I have no doubts everyone in this room wants to be a fighter pilot. And even if you do make it to be a fighter pilot, which by the way most won’t end up doing, you still have many aspects of your job that require you to be efficient in explaining your ideas, like leading in formation, for example.” Said Farrier.

“Good communication and interpersonal skills like you?” Anderson laughed, “Apparently so” Farrier held up his blazer sleeve and pointed to the rings on the cuff that indicated his position. Collins was seriously regretting hanging around that boy at the bar, he was a genuinely mean spirited person, especially towards Farrier it seemed. Class eventually drew to a close, and Collins was glad of it, he was becoming increasingly unable to tolerate Anderson and his sniggering friends, who somehow found humour in Farrier’s words even when there was none. Collins was red in the face staring ahead at Anderson as he left the class. As he was nearing the door he felt a warm, strong hand come down on his shoulder.

“Leave it, I don’t care.” Farrier said warmly. Collins managed a small smile between the anger towards Anderson and the nervousness towards Farrier’s touch.

"Yae but he shouldnae say things like that. You do have those skills, shouldnae let him talk to you like that.” Collins huffed.

He must have imagined Farrier rub his thumb over Collins’ shoulder before he let go.

"I mean, I'm actually apparently hard to work with at times, s'pose being a good leader and being charismatic don't always go hand in hand.” Farrier said,

"But you are charismatic.” Collins blurted out, suddenly glad everyone else in class had left. Farrier chuckled,

"Glad you think so Collins, but I'm a different man in the air. Anyway, I was just trying to teach you all that you'll need to work with other people, if Anderson wants to make a joke out of it, he'll end up as ground crew for one, and for another, nobody will like him because he can't work in a team.” the older man smiled, and Collins returned it before walking off.

Collins had been so tense under his hand, it was amusing how flirtatious he was but as soon as Farrier initiated anything the boy seized up. Farrier had all but resigned himself to the fact that he fancied the blonde, a lot, though he still scolded himself for the fact. As long as he didn’t act upon it, it would be fine, he could think about it in his head, but he had to keep it there.

After all his classes were over, Farrier headed up to his room and flopped onto his bed. Somehow standing at the front of the class all day tired him endlessly. He also didn’t like being the butt of whatever jokes those troublemakers were making to each other, even if he’d told Collins he didn’t care, being laughed at wasn’t fun and Farrier hated not knowing why he was amusing to them. His only solace was Collins, pure innocent Collins. Farrier could have lay there thinking about him for hours, but he still tried to refrain himself for fear of making his urges uncontrollable.
Collins made his way up to his room, after a day of classes with Timson and Dawson he needed a break from their antics. Farrier heard Collins’ door open and close, he got a fuzzy feeling in his belly, for which he mentally reprimanded himself. He decided this was unhealthy, laying here thinking about him. He exited his room in search of Canfield. Collins heard Farrier leave down the hallway and suddenly sitting in his room became a lot more boring, simply with the knowledge that Farrier was not nearby.

Farrier went to Canfield’s office, he seemed to stay in his office rather than go straight to his room like Farrier did. Sure enough the older man was sat at the desk sipping some tea.

“Hello, Farrier, what is it?” Canfield smiled as he put his teacup down on the saucer.

“Hi, Michael. I was wondering how it went with the lovely ladies in the kitchen?” he lied, he wasn’t wondering it all, he didn’t have any reason to be there.

“Oh, I haven’t gone yet, why don’t we go now?” he said and gulped down the remainder of his tea.

“Yes, let’s.” Farrier smiled. The two men walked down to the kitchen where some of the women had already arrived in preparation for the night, they all smiled as the men walked towards them.

“Hello ladies, how are you all?” Canfield said warmly, earning a chirping of answers from the kitchen.

“Yes we actually have a request for you” Farrier smiled at the head chef, who walked over to them.

“What can we do for you?” she smiled with red lipstick on her lips.

“Well our newest group of students will be progressing into the second stage of their education here on Monday, we thought we could have a special dinner for them. Possibly even hold it separately to the other men.” Canfield explained.

“Oh you two are so sweet. Of course we can do something, and we can certainly do it separately. Would you like the new students to come in before or after the main group?” She asked,

“First, don’t want the other group leaving dishes to be done and whatnot.” Canfield said,

“Of course Wing Commander. Now, what should we make?” the brunette smiled at Farrier and then Canfield, moving a wisp of hair from her face. She had white perfect teeth and rosy cheeks with dark brown hair pulled back from her face. She was every part a beautiful woman, Farrier knew she was attractive, not being attracted to her didn’t mean he was blind to what he was sure every other man was swooning for.

Farrier turned to Canfield, having no idea.

“You can decide for yourself I think, your meals are usually delicious Ms. Downing.” Canfield smiled,

“Usually?” she jested,

“I’ll make it meat based so they can at least be full, perhaps we’ll be able to throw in a dessert or drink after” she smiled politely.

“That all sounds absolutely lovely, Ms Downing.” Farrier hoped his smile looked sincere, as much as he enjoyed the company of the kitchen staff his mind was distracted.
“Thank you, Squadron Leader” She blushed slightly as she always did when Farrier spoke to her, he was used to it. He continued,

“So this will be happening on Sunday night, I should specify. If the new students are to come before the other group, what time should they arrive here?”

“Well usually dinner is at seven, so I’d say have them here at five-thirty so we can clean up before the bigger group comes in.”

“Should be easy then! Better make it filling so they don’t go wandering about later looking for more!” Canfield smiled.

“Thank you so much for helping us with this” he added,

“Of course, my pleasure Wing Commander” Downing smiled,

“Though I must return to the kitchen, I’ve got some new girls on tonight that need a bit of direction” She said, looking anxiously behind herself into the kitchen.

“Of course. See you later tonight Ms. Downing” Canfield said with a smile.

“See you both then.” She smiled at them and then walked off. Canfield scoffed as the two men walked up the stairs to ground floor.

“What?” Farrier questioned,

“I think Ms Downing fancies you” he laughed,

“I think half the bloody kitchen staff fancy me Michael.” the two men laughed.

“How’s your little problem going?” Canfield asked casually,

“Which one?” Farrier tried to laugh.

“The whole Collins thing.” Canfield said as they walked, Farrier’s heartbeat sped up.

“Uh, well nothing’s happened, obviously, it’s just my thoughts that are out of hand.” he answered, choosing his words.

“Well, I suppose that’s all we can hope for.” Canfield said, Farrier felt slightly annoyed, he knew Canfield was trying to protect his position and his image, but hearing his interest in Collins so abruptly looked down upon was harsh.

Farrier walked up back to his bedroom, he looked down into the central courtyard from the windows of the hallway, he spotted the drinking fountain, and his mind reminded him of how nice it was when he saw Collins running water through his blonde hair. He stepped away from the window banishing the memory and continued to walk. He spotted a door opening, Timson,

“Hello Timson, you well?” he smiled,

“Hello Farrier, yes I’m good, and yourself?” Timson smiled,

“Yes I am well, thank you. Ah looks like we’re going the same way.” Farrier remarked.

“Might I take this opportunity to compliment your teamwork today, that particular map is interesting because every option through the path is similar, except for the most correct one which
is very different, so well done.” Farrier smiled.

“Oh, thank you! I dunno, my mind just kind of saw it when I looked at it, you know?” Timson answered,

“Yeah I know the feeling. You like teamwork?” the Squadron Leader asked.

“Yeah I do actually, having people around helps me more I think.” He answered.

“It’s interesting, most men in fighter command don’t actually like teamwork at all!” Farrier laughed. Timson wasn’t sure if it was a good thing he enjoyed it after hearing that comment, and he vaguely realised they were nearing his destination; Dawson’s room, but before he could look at the door numbers properly to make sure, he was grabbed by the collar and pulled into a room with a yelp.

“Timson?” Farrier said in surprise, he backtracked a step to an open door from which he heard giggles, and saw that Timson had been grabbed and pulled into the room by none other than Collins, who was letting go of Timson’s collar as Farrier peered in, Dawson was standing with them giggling. Farrier smiled and shook his head, but walked on.

“Were you walkin’ with Farrier, mate?” Collins asked Wingnut,

“Yeah, he was walking up the hall same time as me” he answered, Collins supressed a laugh.

“What?”

“Well, kinda funny he's walkin' with yae and ya just disappear from next tae him!” Collins laughed, Dawson laughed too and went to shut the door.

“So lads, what’s it tonight?” Dawson asked, Wingnut held up the deck of cards, they played all afternoon and then took the cards to dinner.

The next day was Saturday, Collins only had one class so he slept in. he eventually rolled out of bed and threw some clothes on, went down to the locker room for a shower. He dressed himself again realising he had to be in uniform for class, and also realised he’d missed the scheduled breakfast. He sleepily wandered down to the small kitchen in his socks, knowing the dining hall would be closed, and hoping there might be some ingredients he could make something with. He found bread and cheese, could be worse. He sat in the late morning sun eating.

“Where is he?” Wingnut said as they walked around the halls,

“Dunno, wasn’t like him to miss breakfast” Dawson answered. They turned a corner and then spotted the man in question.

“Where on earth were you?!” Wingnut yelled down the hall to a confused Collins.

“In the kitchen?” he responded.

“Yeah mate, this morning we mean” Dawson said.

“Oh, in bed, I didn’t set my alarm clock” Collins scratched the back of his neck.

The two boys smiled in relief,
“Thought you’d done a runner” Wingnut laughed,

“Why would I do that, I love this place!” Collins smiled. At midday was about time for class. It was geography with Canfield, and Collins was slightly disappointed that he didn’t have any classes with Farrier. After class Wingnut went up to Canfield,

“Mr. Canfield?”

“Yes Timson?”

“I’m curious about something Mr. Farrier said to me yesterday. He said, fidgeting.

“Go on?” Canfield was slightly bemused the boy was saying ‘Mr.’ but he didn’t question it.

“Well he said I worked well in a team and that it was odd of someone in fighter command to like that.” Wingnut said,

“Well, he was probably just making an observation, he may have been implying that you may end up in a different division, ground crew or bomber command perhaps, because they work in groups more, but it was probably just a passing comment, lad.” Canfield smiled.

“Ah, so how would I get to a different division if I did want to?” Timson asked,

“Well as you progress through the levels here, we make decisions about which division you will ultimately end up in, many of these men won’t even end up in planes, there are a lot of ground control options too, more than you’d think. But if you continue to enjoy teamwork more than solo work, amongst other things of course, you may be sent to bomber command, at a different headquarters where you’ll hone in on those teamwork skills. After you get your wings you’ll go off to a different station and do a month or so of conversion training.” Canfield smiled,

“Hmm, interesting. Well thank you, I just didn’t really know what he meant, I suppose.” Wingnut smiled and began to leave.

“Of course son, Farrier can be rather cryptic at times.” Canfield laughed as Timson walked off.

As Collins walked to dinner with his friends that night, he realised just how much seeing Farrier could affect his mood. Even on a day without classes with him, seeing Farrier at breakfast and dinner was enough. Missing his breakfast viewing, Collins felt depraved. He stepped into the dining room and was surrounded with warm air. They took their usual spots, which to Collins’ annoyance was facing away from the leaders’ table, and began conversation. Collins didn’t pay much attention because he was trying to see through the waves of people to Farrier. Eventually Collins got what he was craving when Farrier’s table was called up first as always. He was the same as always, blue shirt that looked too tight on the arms in Collins’ opinion (not that he was complaining), dark pants, worried expression, but perfect. Collins soaked it up willingly, until,

“Who are you looking at?” Wingnut elbowed Collins in the ribs with a grin.

“Nobody, and ow!” Collins said with annoyance in his voice, he couldn’t stop the red that rose to his cheeks.

Collins glanced at Dawson who held a knowing expression, unnerving the Scot who looked away from him quickly.

“Alright then, if you say so” Wingnut said.
“Farrier, come back up at the end, one of the girls has something for you.” Ms Downing said to Farrier as he collected his plate of food.

“Does she now? Why not give it to me now?” he asked with a coy smile, looking behind the counter to who it might be.

“She’s a bit nervous I’m afraid.” Ms Downing murmured with a smile.

“Alright then” Farrier said amusedly.

Collins and his friends went up to get their food in due time, and Collins ate it quickly. He didn’t like being spotted watching Farrier, and the blunt way Timson had put it had Collins in a worrisome mood. He finished and decided he’d leave without his friends.

“I’m heading up, see you two tomorrow ya?” he said, trying to sound normal.

“Sure will, buddy.” Dawson smiled.

“Yeah. Hey Collins, I didn’t mean anything before, I was genuinely curious.” Wingnut said, “I know, dunnae worry abou’ that mate” Collins fake smiled, but he guessed it looked real enough considering Wingnut smiled back and patted his shoulder.

“Bye lads” Collins said before wandering off. Farrier, who had missed seeing Collins at breakfast, and after not even catching a glimpse of him in the halls all day, was somewhat worried about the boy’s whereabouts until he spotted him at dinner. Farrier was mildly disappointed when he left abruptly, but he tried to tell himself not to be as usual. He finished his food, and began to stand,

“I’m gonna head up, I’ll see you tomorrow.” he said to Canfield next to him,

“Okay, see you then don’t forget to visit the kitchen girls!” Canfield smiled to which Farrier chuckled.

“Night lads.” Farrier smiled around the table,”

Night Farrier” one of officers said, another had a mouthful of food so he waved.

Farrier walked up to the counter again and Ms Downing saw him coming.

“Well, here I am.” He smiled.

“Oh, I’m sorry, she seems to be a bit too shy, Squadron Leader. Um, she wants me to give you these.” Ms Downing held out a packet of chocolate biscuits.

“Oh, that’s lovely. Come on, where is she?” Farrier chuckled. He was embarrassed but still felt humbled by the gift.

“She’s gone out back!” Ms Downing laughed.

“Suppose your secret admirer wants to remain a secret a bit longer” she added.

“Suppose so. Well, tell her I say thank you.” Farrier said,

“Will do. Enjoy your night.” The brunette said.

“Thank you, you too Ms Downing.” He replied. Canfield eyed the biscuits hungrily as Farrier left.
He walked out of the warm kitchen, up the stairs and into the cold corridor. He was genuinely tired, but was hoping to see Collins in the hallway. He wasn’t following him, he told himself. He was just walking the same way and happened to leave straight after him, not because he saw him leaving either of course, just coincidence.

Collins had made it up the stairs to the second floor but had become distracted by the courtyard out the window, it begun to rain. Collins ran a hand through his hair which kept falling forwards, the sounds of the rain on the windows was serene, calmed Collins from Timson’s earlier words. The blonde decided to go back to his room soon, before the rest of the students ruined this peaceful moment, he looked a few moments more, it was always so busy and stressful and hot when they were in the courtyard, they seemed to have the worst luck with the weather, he supposed most people thought a sunny day was good luck, but from the window in the rain it seemed so peaceful.

Farrier resigned himself to the fact that leaving dinner early in case he saw Collins in the hall was stupid and irrational and that he shouldn’t have done it. He walked up the stairs to the second floor, but then saw the young blonde in question, silently standing at the window looking into the courtyard, now Farrier felt guilty of following the boy, even though that’s not what he did, of course.

Farrier quietly crept up the remaining stairs, thanking the rain for masking his footsteps. He stood at the landing and watched as reflection from the rain on the windows made patterns on Collins’ pale skin, illuminated by the blue light of the night. It mightn't have been that late but it was always dark early except in the height of summer, something Farrier quite enjoyed, as much as he also loved the sunshine. He walked a few slow steps towards Collins, but sensed he was about to walk away. Farrier quickened his pace and was a few metres away when Collins did begin walking.

“Collins” he tried to seem surprised sounding. Collins jumped and turned around with wide eyes.

“Jesus” he managed, Farrier almost chuckled.

“Sorry, suppose you didn’t hear me in the rain.” Farrier said,

“Ya suppose so” Collins smiled, his heart had nearly jumped out of his chest at the surprise of seeing Farrier so close to him.

“I was just heading to bed, I’m knackered. Think I'm gonna read.” the blonde admitted.

“Yes of course, I was heading up too, didn’t sleep too well last night.” Farrier replied, which was true, but not unusual. He began to walk past Collins.

“Oh, sorry to hear.” Collins said as he walked to catch up with Farrier.

They walked together in silent awkwardness for a few paces and turned the corner to their wing.

“Excited to be moving through the ranks?” Farrier asked,

“To the school of military aeronautics? Ya, a bit, it’ll be mostly the same won’t it?” Collins answered,

“Well, yeah I’ll be honest” Farrier laughed a bit.

“But it does get more difficult in terms of learning more about engineering and the like” he added
as they walked, they had about reached Collins’ door.

“Well maybe I’ll be needin’ some more tutoring then.” Collins smirked and opened his door, he was only half joking. Farrier’s stomach lurched at his tone of voice,

“Night Collins.” Farrier shook his head and smiled at the floor.

“Night” Collins called happily from his room before he shut the door. That boy was a nightmare, Farrier thought to himself as he shut his door.

As soon as Collins got into his room his mind registered something that it hadn’t while he’d been talking to Farrier, did he have biscuits in his hand? Now Collins was hungry again.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! Honestly I wish there was more info out there about RAF training, but there’s only what I’ve found. some of the classes sounded pretty fun, I would’ve liked the mapping like the boys did in this chapter tbh. Let me know what you all thought, in particular, the speed of the narrative. I originally began writing this for myself only, and then decided to publish it. Because of that it’s VERY plot heavy and slow-burn, bc I like that, but do you? Let me know! And let me know if you want more of Farrier’s point of view, because for some reason even though I love them completely equally, my writing decides to come out mostly from what Collins experiences.

If anyone wants to chat, my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com :)

See you all next Monday!
So you're getting this week's chapter a day early because I'm busy this Monday. It's also longer than usual, hope you enjoy!

It was the end of May and today was the last day of cadet wing, Collins realised as he woke. Not that the next stage was particularly special according to Farrier, but nonetheless after today he progressed to the school of military aeronautics. He woke up in time to make it to breakfast today, which he was grateful for after yesterday’s disaster of a self-made breakfast. Today was cereal with fruit and a cup of tea. After everybody had finished, Dawson spotted Canfield walking to the front, looking like he was going to address the group.

“Looks like we’re gettin’ an announcement” he said, pointing his spoon to the man.

“Everybody!” he yelled, and held a hand up until the room was quiet enough to speak.

“I would like to ask that all cadets come for dinner tonight at five-thirty for a surprise.” There was an excited murmur,

“I don’t want to see any of you older students there” Canfield smiled, the group collectively groaned.

“That’s all, have a good day, men” Canfield finished.

“Nice” Wingnut said as he finished his tea.

“Ya, wonder what that’s aboot” Collins replied.

“Suppose it’s to do with us finishing in cadet wing” Dawson said,

“Yeah almost definitely, just wonder what’s gonna happen” Wingnut said.

The day passed slowly, there were three classes with time between them, but not enough time to do anything in particular. Collins was still slightly confused over the lesson plans, though he’d been there for months he wasn’t used to it. Unlike school, it wasn’t certain the lessons would be the same every week. They had a black board with weekly timetables for each section. It was usually the same, and they seemed to stay in the same class groups, but occasionally a class would change times, like today, leaving Collins with bothersome gaps in which he could almost walk to the sandwich bar, but not quite.

“What do we do?” Wingnut asked,

“Well, suppose we either find somewhere closer, not that I’ve seen anywhere, or we wait till after all our classes in which case our suspiciously early dinner won’t be far away” Dawson answered.

“We could check the kitchen” Collins suggested, the other two shrugged. Their efforts were fruitless, in Collins’ mind at least, because all that was there was the bread and cheese, some of
which he’d used to make the worst breakfast he’d had in months the day prior.

“You two can, but A’m not eatin’ that stuff again” Collins half laughed. They did just that, so Collins went hungry while his friends at their cheese sandwiches.

“Like them?” he asked when they’d finished,

“Was alright, bit boring” Wingnut answered,

“Yeah, better than nothing” Dawson smiled. Collins refused to eat it, he didn’t like cheese by itself and the bread had gone hard.

“It’s nearly class time anyway, I’ll just have a drink of water. He filled a random mug from a cupboard with water and drank it quickly. It relieved some of the empty feeling, at least.

Farrier sat in the teacher’s chair eating his chocolate biscuits. As much as he appreciated being given free food, he hoped that in taking it he hadn’t given the wrong impression. He heard voices in the hallway and pushed the packet into a drawer, quickly finishing the biscuit in his mouth. He stood and walked in front of the desk, leaning back on it. Students began to file in, Farrier wanted to eat more biscuits. Collins thought he saw Farrier eating something, his stomach growled at the sight.

“Hello class, today we will be delving a little into engineering, as you all know this is your last day in the cadet wing, I’m just going to give you a small taste of what’s to come next week.” He explained. Collins internally groaned, he just wanted to fly already. He couldn’t concentrate on an empty stomach either, Farrier’s words blurred into a low rumble to Collins’ ears. He heard a plane taking off outside, he snapped his head to look. The American Harvard, Collins had seen it a few times out the window and knew which one it was. It was a brilliant yellow that glowed gold in the pale afternoon sun. it roared off into the sky, Collins sighed and looked back own at the desk. Dawson looked sympathetically at him and patted his shoulder while looking forward.

“Me too” he said, Collins managed a small smile. The lesson drew to a close, and all Collins managed to learn was that you need to know the engine of your airplane, and that they were often finicky. He had a blank piece of paper in front of him on which he was supposed to have copied what was on the board, which Farrier actually used today unlike usual.

“C’mon mate” Wingnut said, trying to yank Collins from his seat.

“Cannae, I need to copy that” Collins said, beginning to scribble down Farrier’s words on the page.

“Well I’m not waitin’” Wingnut said,

“Okay” Collins said with an air of annoyance, probably born from his hunger.

“We’ll probably be in mine as usual” Dawson smiled,

“Ya, I’ll see ya” Collins said, manically writing down everything he could, he spied Farrier picking up the black board eraser. He wrote faster, Farrier began erasing the parts Collins had copied,

“Wait!” Collins called forwards scribbling down the last of the information.

“Okay, sorry, wasn’t finished” he explained, standing.

“You had about fifteen minutes where that was on the board to copy, Collins.” Farrier smiled,
“I’m tired an’ hungry, I haven’t eaten since breakfast, and I got distracted by the plane” Collins admitted as he walked past Farrier to the door.

“Would you like a biscuit?” Farrier asked in a soft voice.

“What?” Collins was surprised at the random offering, Farrier realised it may have sounded a bit strange. He pulled them out of the drawer.

“One of the cooks gave them to me last night, I think she’s sweet on me.” Farrier chuckled, not because he was humbled, but because he imagined how distraught she’d be if she knew he was interested in men.

“Oh, yes please” Collins took one.

“Thank you very much” he smiled, holding the biscuit in his hand and his paper in the other.

“Of course. Take a few if you like, I won’t eat them all myself.” Farrier smiled and held the packet towards Collins.

“You sure?” Collins eyed them,

“Of course lad.” Farrier smiled at Collins who was positively staring at the biscuits in front of him. He took two more, no doubt for his two friends, Farrier thought to himself.

“Thank you again, Farrier” Collins smiled.

“You’re very welcome Collins. I’ll see you sooner rather than later, then” Farrier said in reference to the early dinner.

“I’m countin’ on it” Collins smirked as he exited.

Shit, why did he say these things? Collins was so happy he had biscuits, but equally frustrated that he couldn’t stop flirting, and was slightly concerned that one of the cooks liked Farrier.

Farrier had trouble believing Collins wasn’t having him on at times, surely he couldn’t be that stupid, or reckless, as to genuinely flirt? Of course not, Farrier told himself. What reason was there for Collins to feel attraction to him?

Collins walked up the stairs and reached Dawson’s room.

“Hiya, I got ma hands full” he said into the room, he could hear them chattering inside.

“Coming” Wingnut said, a few moments later the door opened.

“Want a biscuit?” Collins smiled and held up his hand with three in it,

“Sure?” Wingnut took it looking surprised but happy. He bit into it in the doorway and some spilled out of his mouth onto the floor.

“Careful you dirty bugger! Leavin’ crumbs in Dawson’s doorway!” Collins laughed and walked in, handing Dawson the second biscuit. Wingnut shut the door and joined them.

“So where did these appear from?” Dawson asked,

“Farrier gave ‘em to me” Collins smiled as he finally ate his biscuit.
“Did he now? Bit random” Wingnut laughed with a mouthful of his biscuit.

“Ya I know, he asked me why I hadn’t finished writing the shit down and I said I was tired an’ hungry, he had a packet in the drawer and offered me some” Collins said as he finished the treat.

“Fair enough, good man he is then” Dawson said, finishing the snack also.

Farrier walked back to his room, relieved he’d finished classes for the day. He saw biscuit crumbs outside Dawson’s door and smiled to himself. He picked them up and opened the window looking out over the courtyard and threw them down. Farrier shut the window and kept walking to his room. He lay back on his bed and kicked his shoes off. He fell into a light sleep to the faint sound of the Harvard outside his window. It was a light sleep because he then realised he wasn’t sure if he was supposed to be there for the early dinner. He slipped his sheepskin boots on and padded around the hall to Canfield’s bedroom, hoping he wouldn’t be downstairs in his office. He knocked twice, and to Farrier’s relief there was an answer.

“Hello?” Canfield said,

“It’s me”

“Oh, come in” Canfield said. Farrier opened the door to the older man sitting having a cup of tea at the small coffee table in his room.

“I realised I hadn’t asked you, am I to attend the early dinner with the cadets or would that just be you?” Farrier hoped he would be attending.

“Of course you’re coming, we are their two instructors, it’s the other officers that won’t be there until the main lot arrive” Canfield smiled,

“Okay, thought I’d just check because I prefer to eat late and wouldn’t want to go for no reason” Farrier smiled and walked back to the door,

“Of course my friend. Do you think they’re all doing well?” Canfield asked,

“Most of them, yeah” Farrier smiled back.

“See you in a bit then” Farrier smiled, Canfield raised his teacup to Farrier as the younger man exited and shut the door. Now, Farrier thought, perhaps he could relax a bit. He went back to his room and took off his woollen blazer, he hung it on the door. He stripped himself of his light blue button up and looked at himself in the mirror. He supposed he wasn’t that bad, if he ignored his scars. He knew he was strong, broad chested, olive skinned, all good things in his mind, but he just couldn’t look past those scars. He sighed and turned away from the mirror throwing on a turtleneck jumper. He looked out the window as he heard a whisper of the plane engine in the distance, the yellow machine was flying back to base. Farrier sat at the small coffee table next to his window, the same setup as Canfield’s room, on a low wooden chair. The clouds were rolling in and it looked like rain on the horizon, Farrier gave a small shiver as the cold seeped through the glass.

“So, question or command?” Dawson grinned at Wingnut,

“Command” he answered, Collins shook his head at the idiotic smile.

“Right, I command you to hang out the window for thirty seconds.” Dawson smirked triumphantly
and crossed his arms.

“What the fuck, mate we’re a floor up! If I fall—”

“Well we got the bottle of booze still if you’re a chicken!” Dawson said, reaching to show Timson the bottle, who rolled his eyes.

“Any more specifics on this command?” he asked,

“Hmmm…. You can only have your forearms inside the window, rest has to hang” Dawson laughed.

“You’re not actually gonna do this are you? I was kind of joking” he added,

“Yeah I am, gonna show you I’m no chicken” Wingnut answered.

“We’ll be there to grab ya if yae aren’t feeling like yae can do it mate” Collins said as the boys rose to their feet.

“Thanks mate,. But I’ve got this.” Wingnut said as he opened the window. The cold wind rushed in, the sound of the plane outside got louder.

“Right. Here goes” Timson smiled as he sat on the windowsill. He lowered his body out and held on with his hands, resting his forearms on the windowsill.

Farrier was still watching the American Harvard, he noticed the trees on the outskirts of the field blowing around, something you always had to look for when assessing wind. He opened the window to see how windy it was. He hoped whoever in the plane knew how to land properly in the current conditions, because it was getting quite stormy. He was about to poke his head back in when he spotted somebody hanging out of one of the windows. His insides seized up.

“Hey you! Get inside the building, now!” he yelled.

“Fuck that’s Farrier!” Dawson giggled as he watched Timson hanging from his window,

“C’mon finish it! Five more seconds” Collins egged Wingnut on.

Farrier saw Timson’s face.

“Timson!” Farrier yelled across to the other window. Eventually Timson was hauled back into the room, assumingly by his two idiot friends, one of which he was sweet on, damn it. That didn’t make Collins any less of an idiot. Farrier sighed and shut his window. That needed a telling off. He shrugged on his blazer again and walked into the corridor, loudly knocking on Dawson’s door.

“Open the door, now.” Farrier commanded in a low voice, all three boys were nervous, none wanted to open the door but it was Dawson who ended up turning the knob.

Farrier walked a step in and sighed.

“I do not want to see that happen again. Do you know how worrying you three are?” Farrier said, no answer.

“I should punish you for something like that, but it’s your last day as cadets, I suppose that would just be too cruel. But please promise me boys, whatever game you’re playing, I’m assuming it’s a dare game of sorts, does not end in injury or death. No more dangerous ideas.” He said tiredly, Collins was looking at his sweater, not his face. He didn’t think a man as hard as Farrier could look
almost cuddly.

"Sorry, Squadron Leader, it was my dare. We were playing Questions and Commands." Dawson admitted,

"I expected better from you Dawson, if I catch you boys being so reckless again there will be consequences." Farrier said sternly. Collins watched Farrier’s eyes, they drifted from Dawson to out the window. Farrier walked through the group to the window and leaned out, he was watching the plane.

"What is it?" Wingnut asked,

"I’ve got a bad feeling about the plane, it’s windy and it looks like the pilot is going to land with the wind behind them." He answered. The yellow plane lined up with the airstrip and Farrier knew immediately it was going to land nose down, it was going too fast and it was coming down at the wrong angle, something only eyes of an experienced pilot could see. He sighed openly and stood up from leaning on the windowsill.

"I’m going to the airstrip, don’t think that plane’s going to land safely." He said,

"Do you need our help?" Wingnut asked,

"No you stay in the building. I need you boys to go to Canfield’s bedroom, it’s the corner one after mine, tell him to get the other officers and meet me out there." Farrier seemed calmer than he should have been.

"Is it going to be okay?" Collins asked,

"Yes yes, just precautionary" he said as he left the room. The boys briskly left Dawson’s room and Farrier had already disappeared around the corner. They jogged to the room Farrier described. Collins knocked thrice.

"Yes?" Canfield answered,

"Canfield, it’s Collins. Farrier needs your help.” He said, he really wanted to open the door but didn’t, it seemed more urgent than Farrier put on, he didn’t need to because a worried Canfield opened it seconds after.

"What?" he said,

"He needs you and the other officers on the airstrip, he thinks the Harvard is gonna land badly.” Collins said, he had a worried feeling in his gut.

"Okay, you boys go back to your rooms, it’s under control.” Canfield said, with the same air of very controlled emotion as Farrier. He scurried into his bedroom and held a button down in front of a microphone fixed to a desk.

"Officers report to the airstrip immediately.” He said into the mic, and then pressed a button to turn it off.

‘Thanks for your help boys” he said, implying he wanted them to leave, not being given a chance to answer as the older man walked quickly through the group and down the hallway, Dawson exhaled.

“I guess we watch out the window” he said,
“Guess so” said Timson, and they returned to Dawson’s room.

Shit shit shit Farrier said to himself. He ran down the stairs, through the hallway and into the change rooms, through which the door outside was. He exited into the cold wind and saw the Harvard still in the air. He ran into a hangar and grabbed two flags. He waved them above his head in the middle of the airstrip in the patterns to tell the plane ‘do not land’. The plane seemed to be ignoring them. Then he realised it wasn’t, the tailfin was moving but not doing anything, the wind was too strong. The Harvard was getting too close for Farrier’s liking, he ran to the side and saw Canfield appear with two of the other officers.

Collins watched with his friends from the window, he felt sick, the plane was heading straight for Farrier. Thankfully the brunette got out of the way with time, the Harvard touched the ground on the airstrip, and just as Farrier said it didn’t land well, went nose down. The nose hit the ground and scraped forward, pieces of the prop flying off. A plume of flames erupted from the front of the plane, Collins gasped and then swore.

“What do we do?” Farrier barked at Canfield,

“Can’t do anything till she’s stopped!” he yelled back over the wind.

Farrier watched in horror as the front of the plane scraped along the ground, the wind picking the tail up and thrusting it into the air. The front of the plane caught fire, causing Farrier to yell in shock. The craft ground to a halt leaving scratches along the bitumen. Without thinking Farrier ran towards the plane.

“Farrier the engine’s on fire!” Canfield yelled.

“The pilot’s still in there!” he yelled behind himself.

The three friends watched as Farrier sprinted towards the plane.

“What’s he doing? Engine could explode for god’s sake” Dawson said. Collins couldn’t watch it. He sat on the bed and rested his head on his hands, elbows on his knees. He shut his eyes.

Farrier reached the Harvard, damage to the nose was preventing the canopy from opening. Farrier clambered onto the wing and ripped the canopy open, allowing the pilot to clamber out. Two officers Canfield had brought with ran up with the firehose and the fire was out in a minute, a huge cloud of smoke taking its place. Farrier jumped off the plane and the pilot followed. Farrier pulled the flight helmet and goggles off the pilot, and saw that it was Miller, one of the better flyers from an older group.

“Miller” Farrier breathed, the blonde boy had wide eyes and couldn’t take his eyes off the plane.

“I’m so, so sorry” he managed. Farrier didn’t know if he should be angry or not, the plane could be repaired, it wouldn’t be cheap but it was possible. The boy was understandably shaken up.

“That was a very close call.” Farrier said, Miller just looked at him sadly.

“It’s okay, wind is a bastard when you’re starting out, I’m very glad you’re not hurt.” Farrier put a hand on Miller’s shoulder.

“Thanks. I’ll pay the plane expenses from my earnings” Miller said,

“No no no don’t be silly. It wasn’t your fault, I’ll be having a chat with the instructors because you shouldn’t have been sent up in the wind by yourself okay? It is not your fault.” Farrier said to the
“Okay, but I am sorry, even if just for causing you stress’’ he said with big blue eyes.

“Part of the job, lad. Now get inside, get warm.” Farrier said and patted his shoulder again. The rest of the group that had been waiting to fly or had already flown peered out from a hangar. Farrier pointed in the direction of the main building and they all followed. The instructor of the group, Davis, walked up to Farrier to explain.

“You nearly cost a student his life, Davis.” Farrier said.

“I know, I understand that. The wind was not strong, in fact barely there, when he went up. It picked up quickly, ask any of the boys in my class they’ll tell you” he said very quickly with a wobble in his voice. Farrier was going to make a smart comment but held it back, and sighed instead.

“It’s okay. Just go speak to Canfield alright? You need to watch the clouds more.” Farrier said,

“Yes Squadron Leader.” Davis said and walked towards Canfield.

“Someone’s getting out of the plane!” Dawson said, Collins went up to the window again and watched someone climb out and run a few steps away from the plane as the fire was extinguished with a huge hose running from one of the hangars. The boys watched on as Farrier pulled the helmet off the pilot and began talking to him. Collins recognised the boy.

“That’s the lad that got angry at me at dinner once” he said softly.

“Oh yeah, bastard” Wingnut said. Collins watched as Farrier put a hand on the boy’s shoulder for a few moments, even if he was rude to him, he’d been in a crash, Collins thought Wingnut’s words were too harsh. After a minute or so Farrier sent the boy off and began talking to an officer who had emerged from a hangar with some students.

Farrier inspected the damage, it wasn’t as bad as he initially thought. Canfield appeared at his side,

“Not too bad I suppose” the older man said,

“Yes, looks like the fire was at the propellers and the front of the engine, didn’t reach the main part.” Farrier said.

“Set us back decently but I’m glad Miller is fine” he added.

“Indeed.” Canfield said.

“Let’s get the plane in the hangar, I’ll make some calls to get it repaired.” Canfield said. It took four men to push it into the shed. After which Farrier went back inside, it was only a bit until the early dinner anyway.

Collins was on edge, he was trembling and felt numb. He didn’t want to watch see Farrier in danger but he’d just had a front row seat. He was angry that the man would walk towards a burning plane, his stomach lurched to think what could have happened. Collins excused himself on account of feeling unwell and went back to his room but stopped at the door because his head was spinning, he wasn’t joking when he’d made the excuse of feeling sick. Collins couldn’t believe Farrier had been so reckless, running at a burning plane. It solidified in Collins’ mind that he genuinely cared
for Farrier, which he wasn’t sure if it was a good or bad thing. He laid his back against his door and tried to slow his breathing which had quickened considerably. Collins wished his mind would be quiet, instead it was coming up with plenty of what if’s for him to think about in regards to Farrier and burning planes.

Farrier trudged back up the staircase and walked along the hallway to his room, Collins looked like he was having a break resting on his door. As he got closer Collins looked visibly distressed.

“Okay there?” Farrier asked in a deep rumble.

“Not somethin’ I enjoyed seein’” Collins answered after a deep shuddered breath, beginning to open his door.

“Yeah, plane crashes aren’t pretty” Farrier said with a sad smile.

Collins wanted to specify that it was him in danger that he didn’t enjoy watching, but decided against, didn’t trust his voice to hold out anyway.

“See ya at dinner soon.” Collins said before closing the door behind him. Farrier walked back into his own room, checked his watch to see that he didn’t have much time to relax until the early dinner, to his annoyance.

A few minutes was all Collins got to spend on his bed before curiosity got the better of him. He walked to his window but the plane was gone. He went to sit back down but a knock at the door prevented him. He opened it to Dawson.

“Are you okay mate?” he said,

“Ya, didn’t like seeing the plane crash is all” Collins tried to cover his feelings with a smile.

“Yeah it looked terrible, lucky the boy was unharmed” Dawson said. Collins nodded.

“What is it, mate? Wingnut’s right, dinner’s in a bit.” Collins pressed.

“Where’s Timson?”

“Said he wanted to relax before dinner” Dawson said, standing in the doorway. Collins relented and stood to the side, his friend walked through the door and sat on the bed. Dawson wanted something.

“What is it, mate? Wingnut’s right, dinner’s in a bit.” Collins pressed.

“Oh, not much, just thought we could hang out a bit more.” Dawson answered. Collins smiled and looked at the ceiling, Dawson definitely wanted something. The lanky blonde sat on the bed next to his friend.

“Funny how something can suddenly change your day, innit. Like, it was a kinda boring day for me till we saw that” Dawson said,

“Ya I agree, I bet even more for the pilot” Collins said.

“Lucky Farrier opened the canopy for ‘im, he saved the lad” Dawson said.

“That he did” Collins answered curtly, and looked back out the window. He could feel Dawson’s eyes on him, studying his expression, trying to work out if, if what? If he fancied his teacher?
“Collins…” Dawson began, Collins looked down at his hands in his lap and then his blue eyes met with Dawson’s. Collins was about to open his mouth to answer when the door burst open, making both boys jump.

“How do I look?” Wingnut said loudly. He was dressed in brown woollen pinstripe pants and a white button up, with a disgustingly busily patterned tie.

“Oh, good” Dawson said, Wingnut huffed.

“You do, but it’s just a dinner mate” Dawson laughed.

“Aw c’mon, man’s made an effort!” Collins smiled at Timson.

“Thank you” Wingnut said to Collins but looking at Dawson in jest.

“You guys know what the time is right?” Wingnut added, Dawson looked at his watch,

“Oh, we have to be there in ten” he said to Collins.

“Oh, clear out then both of ye!” Collins stood up and shoed them out.

“Meet ya in the hall?”

“Sure” Timson replied to Collins.

Dawson gave Collins one more look which seemed to imply he knew something, the something Collins seriously hoped he didn’t know.

Chapter End Notes

Well, hope everyone enjoyed this one, let me know what you thought of it :)

As always my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com if you want to chat!

This time next week I'll be on my way to the UK! Either the chapter will come a day early like this one or a day late if I'm too busy. Fun fact, I'm going to Aviemore when I'm in Britain (I've been there before, it's lovely) so I do know my way around my headcanon of where Collins grew up!

If you're curious I'm also going to London, Nottingham, Edinburgh and Kingussie (small town in Scottish highlands, I've been to all these places before, I just love them.) While in London I'm seeing Jack Lowden's play Measure for Measure, pray for me I don't spontaneously combust when he gets up on stage lmao

Until next chapter!
A special dinner

Chapter Notes

I arrived in London today, and went to see measure for measure!! Sorry this chapter isn’t very exciting, but nonetheless it’s new content right?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Collins almost just wore his uniform to dinner, but didn’t like that he’s gotten into the habit of staying in it after class time. He chose dark blue pants and a short sleeve white button up, somehow it looked similar to uniform anyway. Collins cursed himself for having such plain clothes. He had never felt the cold and seeing as it was getting to summer, decided he should start wearing his summer clothes, as few as they were, and the storm seemed a warm summery one anyway. Farrier wandered down the hall in his blue uniform pants, black polished shoes and turtleneck to Canfield’s room. He knocked to see if he’d gotten back from the airstrip yet, and the door opened to reveal he had.

“What are you doing Farrier? Get changed, lad!” Canfield laughed, the older man was wearing brown trousers and a light reddish button up.

“Is this not acceptable? I’m cold.” Farrier said defensively,

“Just thought you’d like to put in a little effort!” Canfield said.

“Fine, I was going to ask if you wanted to get there early but I’ll go change.” The brunette huffed, Canfield chuckled. Farrier chose a blue and cream soft pinstripe button up and blue trousers, distinctly lighter blue than the uniform so that Canfield couldn’t say he still looked to be in uniform. He ran a hand through his short hair and walked back down the hall, he opened Canfield’s already ajar door, holding his arms out for dramatic effect.

“Much better, you scrub up well boy.” Canfield said, walking out of his room and closing the door behind him.

“Not too bad yourself, old man.” Farrier chuckled. The pair began to walk.

“I can’t believe that boy was sent in the air in this wind, ridiculous!” Canfield said

“Yeah, the officer made the wrong call, it happens, at least he wasn’t hurt and the plane isn’t as bad as we thought” Farrier said.

Collins and his two friends walked down the hall, he thought he could hear Canfield and Farrier somewhere behind him, but the blonde resisted the temptation to turn and look. The three got to the entrance of the dining hall and smelled something nice and warm. They took their usual seats, but there was nobody else in the room.

“Don’t you dare” Farrier murmured at Canfield, who he could see was walking towards the boys, most likely going to sit with them.

“Why? They’re just students, nothing special about any of them” He said to Farrier, eyeing him carefully.

“Mind if we sit lads?” Canfield asked the group, Collins’ heart dropped. They all smiled to each other consensually,
“Yes of course” Dawson said, Canfield sat on the bench opposite the boys, as did Farrier, who made brief eye contact with Collins before looking around at the others.
“Sorry you men had to be involved in the incident earlier” Canfield said with a warm smile, “Ah we weren’t really, we just watched from the window” Wingnut smiled, Collins nudged his leg under the table.
“Not that it was anything amusing to watch of course” he added, he was struggling to explain his point and Farrier could see that.
“What you mean is, it’s the kind of thing you can’t bear to watch, but can’t look away from?” Farrier said.
“Yeah that kind of thing.” Wingnut answered, noting the dark spin he put on it.
Another group came through the door.
“Taking their time” Collins said,
“Yes I had hoped everyone might be a bit more timely, at least you three were” Canfield said.
There was an awkward silence, all three of the boys felt somewhat odd sitting with their superiors, Collins was glad he wore short sleeves, he was feeling warm now, not to do with the temperature. Farrier tried his hardest to disguise his glances at Collins as general sweeping looks around the room. Did he have to wear short sleeves? It was teasing Farrier, he wished he could touch those arms but he wouldn’t, couldn’t.
As usual, Farrier’s muscles were straining against the material of the shirt, Collins could feel his face going red so he forced himself to look elsewhere. More groups began to pool into the room in the following minutes.
“So you are finding the work adequate I take?” Canfield asked the boys,
“Ya, it’s interestin’” Collins smiled,
“Yeah I’ve been getting tutoring from Farrier which is helping a lot” Wingnut smiled, then looked at Dawson to hear his answer.
“Yeah I like the work too” he said with a smile.
“Wonderful. And Collins, you’re getting tutoring too aren’t you?” Canfield asked,
“Ah, I was but not anymore” the blonde smiled,
“Oh, why did you stop?” Canfield asked,
“Dinnae need anymore I suppose, just began to have less and less questions aboot the work” Collins said.
“Fair enough, wouldn’t want you wasting Farrier’s time now” Canfield chuckled, Farrier feigned a smile. The room seemed emptier without the main group, but Farrier supposed most of the cadets were here now. He checked his watch and it was five thirty exactly. He spotted Ms Downing behind the counter and made eye contact with her, letting her know it was time to bring the food out. She smiled and waved, then disappeared back into the kitchen.
“Now, who’s hungry?” Farrier smiled, at Canfield mostly.
“To be honest, not really” Timson laughed,
“Yes we thought about doing this after the main cohort but they would have had to clean the kitchen up after them and by the time they’d done that it wouldn’t have just been too late”
“This should fill you up for the rest of the night though” Canfield added.
“Well, not complaining then” Wingnut smiled at Dawson and Collins. The rest of the group was seated, more spread out than usual, taking up the whole room with gaps all around the tables, it seemed like Collins and his friends had been some of the only ones to sit where they usually did. They heard a bell ring from the front, Collins saw a brunette lady with red lipstick standing in front of the counter.
“Dinner is served! Please form an orderly line men, and wait to be called before you come back up for more!” she said.
“More?” Collins murmured to Dawson,
“Yeah, sounds good to me” Dawson said.
Collins was still hungry, the cookies tasted nice, but weren’t exactly filling. Maybe he should have taken the cheese sandwich. His stomach gurgled, and he held it self-consciously.
“Hungry Collins?” Canfield asked hearing his gut,
“Ya, I didn’t get lunch today” he admitted.
“Oh?”
“Well, my lessons were set oot in a way I couldn’t walk to the store in time to buy somethin’, but I donnae like cheese by itself, and all I could’a made in the kitchen was a cheese sandwich” Collins laughed nervously.
“Sounds like we need to restock the kitchen then” Canfield laughed and stood up, the rest of the group rising after him. They lined up, Canfield first, then Farrier, then Collins, followed by Dawson and then Wingnut. As they got closer Collins saw what the food was, a plate of cheeses, assorted meats, olives and crusty bread. Could have been worse, but it was somewhat close to a cheese sandwich. Nonetheless Collins gratefully took his plate, noting how Farrier seemed to get extra big smiles from all the kitchen staff. They sat down again and began to eat.
“Ladies did well, did they tell you what’s next?” Farrier said quietly to Canfield,
“No not at all, surprise for everyone, including me” he chuckled and ate an olive.
“So,” Wingnut said chewing a large mouthful,
“Is the school of military aeronautics the same as the cadet wing?” he directed the question at both Farrier and Canfield, Collins smiled down at his plate when he saw a slightly disgusted look on Farrier’s face, most likely because of the enormous piece of food Wingnut had stuffed in his mouth.
“Well, you will be applying the same concepts and techniques you learned in the cadet wing, to different and sometimes more in-depth questions” Canfield answered. Wingnut nodded in response. Collins didn’t think he would, but he was enjoying his food, and looking around the table, everyone else was too, save for Dawson who wasn’t eating his olives.
“Dunnae like olives?” Collins asked,
“No, too salty for me” Dawson smiled.
“Mind?” Collins asked, not waiting for permission before stabbing one with his fork and eating it, earning a scoffed laugh from Dawson,
“Be my guest” he laughed. Farrier smiled softly at his plate, it was enjoyable, though still nerve-wracking to sit here, but he couldn’t shake the crash he’d dealt with earlier. He must have looked obviously distracted because he got a nudge from Canfield.
“What is it? Don’t like the food?” he asked,
“No no, I very much like the food.” He answered, then leaned into the conversation,
“Just what happened earlier with Miller” He said blankly. Collins tried to hear what Farrier was murmuring but between the general chatter around the hall, his friends’ (Mainly Wingnut’s) eating and Farrier’s habit of murmuring when not addressing a group, he couldn’t. The meal finished, and Collins was very glad they were getting more food.
After a few minutes of awkward silence, the woman at the front spoke again.
“Everyone may now come up to collect the main meal, we will collect your plates from the tables so please don’t bring them up with you.” She called. Wingnut raised his eyebrows while standing up.
“Yer good at flirtin’ then” Collins mumbled, earning a light shove in the ribs from his red-faced friend.
“Why don’ you show me how it’s done then pal?” Wingnut challenged,
“If I did that with anyone I actually wanted to, I’d ge’ in trouble wouldn’t I Wingnut” Collins smiled blankly ahead. He heard a chuckle behind him.
“Wha’?” Collins asked Dawson,
“You’re sayin’ there’s someone here you’d flirt with?” he asked, catching Wingnut’s attention too, “Nah, not sayin’ that at all mate” Collins smiled and turned back around to receive his second plate of food, gammon steak and vegetables.

“Now this looks delicious” he said to his friends as they walked back to the table.

Farrier and Canfield had been separated from the three they were seated with on account of them sitting across from them and having other students blocking their way to the front, annoying Farrier. The two men sat back down where they were to see the three boys already eating.

“They’ve put on a real treat for us” Farrier said to Canfield.

“Yes indeed!” he agreed.

Collins ate as quickly as he could, he was so grateful they were getting an early dinner because he wasn’t sure how much longer the sugar from the biscuits would last. Canfield hoped none of the boys were vegetarian, but on the other hand, the meat was so delicious he wasn’t sure he cared much.

Farrier was struggling not to watch Collins devour his food, not out of attraction but sheer amazement of how fast a person could eat. He ate his own gammon and tried to focus on his plate. Collins finished his dinner and looked like he was almost panting from eating so fast.

“Tha’ was so good, why don’ they make this more?!” he said to his friends, but Canfield answered. “This is a special occasion, Collins, we can’t afford gammon steak every week!” he laughed, Canfield chuckled.

“So what do you boys do in your spare time?” Canfield asked as they ate,

“Well” Wingnut began before swallowing his mouthful,

“I play football, well I used to before I joined up here, been meaning to find a new club actually” Wingnut said.

“Ah, why did you stop when you joined us?” Canfield asked,

“Well it was a club that was for under twenty-five’s” Wingnut answered, earning a knowing nod from Canfield. Farrier was disinterested but was patiently waiting to see if Collins was going to pipe up about his interests.

“And Dawson?” Canfield asked,

“Ah, well I exercise regularly at the gymnasium down the street, but apart from that I’m quite fond of the outdoors I suppose, being active in general” he smiled.

“What’s that accent, may I ask?” Farrier asked politely looking up for a change

“You’re not from London are you?” he smiled, Dawson chuckled.

“No, I’m from Weymouth actually.”

“Really? Why’d you leave?” Farrier asked, smiling,

“Well there aren’t any air bases nearby, and I dunno, I’ve always wanted to see what’s beyond my little town, so I did. I always write to my parents and little brother though” the blonde smiled back. “I’ve been to Weymouth, lovely beach there” Canfield added as he ate.

“And Collins?” Canfield added with a mouthful,

“Well before anyone asks if I’m from London or no’” Collins smirked, Wingnut supressed a laugh.

“I uh, dontae really do much physical activity, ‘cept me an the boys now go to the gym and tha’ now every week because I was lackin’ so much” Collins blushed a little as he embarrassed himself but kept talking to hide it.

“But yeh, my hobbies I suppose are drawin’, readin’ walkin’ aroond in nature, lot less of tha’ here though” he chuckled.

“Ah, so you’re not from a city in Scotland then?” Canfield questioned,

“No, from a wee town called Aviemore, just houses a few stores and a lot of greenery” Collins smiled at the memory.

“Do you miss the nature?” Farrier asked with a softness to his voice,

“Yeah, but flyin’ here makes up for it” Collins smiled but quickly diverted his gaze when he felt heat creep up his neck.

The dessert was mince tarts with cream, and all around the table finished very quickly indeed.
Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading everyone :)
See you next week for the next chapter!

At some point I’ll write a review of sorts for measure for measure on my tumblr (s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com) but I’m too jet lagged rn. Have a good week all!
After Dinner

Chapter Notes

Owo what’s this, second upload in a week?? You’re correct!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After dessert, Canfield stood and the rest of the table went to follow, “No no, you lads stay seated, I’m just going to say a few words.” He smiled, Farrier looked uncertain but sat back down, looking over at Collins, whose big blue eyes were already looking at him, but the blonde quickly looked down and then over at Canfield walking to the front. Collins tried to swallow his butterflies, he loved how unpredictable Farrier’s eyes were, he could never really pinpoint what colour they were. Tonight, they were a dark stormy gunmetal colour, other times they were aqua, icy blue, sometimes they looked a little green or brown. Collins would never tire of looking into that man’s eyes, they were so everchanging he wanted to remember every shade.

Farrier felt the nerves rising in his chest. He had to do better at covering his attraction, he could not allow himself to look at Collins because when he did he came undone, he melted in those baby blue eyes. He mentally punished himself for instinctually looking to Collins for reassurance, but those eyes… They were the brightest blue he’d seen, they were so full of life, perhaps that was why he loved looking into them he thought, made him feel something, made him feel more alive. When Farrier realised how deep his thoughts were he dragged himself back to reality where Canfield was hitting a tin mug with a spoon out the front. Farrier chuckled, Canfield amused him sometimes with his methods, the old man could have easily asked one of the kitchen staff to call out, but instead there he was tapping a mug with a spoon.

It eventually worked, and when it did Canfield cleared his throat “Good evening men, tonight is your last night in the cadet wing!” he announced, followed by a small chorus of cheers and claps. Canfield continued, “Tomorrow you will begin your first day in the school of military aeronautics, which I have to tell you, is more of the same but more difficult” he said with a smile, the sentence was met with laughter.

“But I’ll let you all figure that out on your own. Tonight, with the help of the absolutely amazing kitchen staff, expertly managed by Ms Downing” Canfield said, holding his arm out to the brunette which had appeared by his side. The room applauded for her, and a few wolf-whistles could be heard, Collins laughed at them.

“We put on a little surprise dinner for you all, a graduation ceremony of sorts, if you like. Now, it must also be noted that for every stage you progress, the supervision and command becomes evermore rigorous. You will all need to wear your uniforms correctly and properly, hairstyles must be well cut and not dyed anything other than a natural colour, and failure to comply with any regulations” He paused and looked around, “Will result in consequences. Now that you’re in uniform your conduct, good or bad, is much more noticeable.” He caught the eye of Charles as he snickered.

“You belong to a fine service, see that by your smart and airman-like behaviour, you do your bit towards enhancing its reputation.” Canfield said.

“But, we are not here to talk about regulations and rules or behaviour, I do hope you all enjoyed your food, I certainly did. I hope you all get a good night’s rest, and we will see you in the
morning, gentlemen.” Canfield finished. The room gave a polite clap as he walked slowly back to the table.
“How was I?” he chuckled to Collins and his friends, Farrier smiled at the table in front of him at the question.
“Good yeah! Motivating words, Mr. Canfield!” Wingnut said, Collins almost visibly cringed at his choice of words, they sounded fake but Collins knew Timson was being honest, just very awkward.

“Ya, I’m excited to progress, and the food was amazin’ thank ye” Collins added.
“Yes I was very impressed by what the kitchen produced, I hope there were no vegetarians” Dawson laughed.
“I was thinking exactly the same thing my boy” Canfield said. Farrier began to notice groups leaving the tables and rose up himself.
“Well boys, it’s been lovely sitting with you all tonight, but I’m going to head up now.” Farrier said, Canfield stood too.
“You’re quite right Farrier, I best be getting out of the cooks’ ways, let them clean before the rest of the cohort get here.” He said. The two men rose.

“Thanks for organising all this” Collins said, alternating eye contact between each of the officers, “Not at all, you’re all good students, you deserve a little reward” Farrier smiled warmly, genuinely. Collins smiled back, but then quickly directed his smile at Canfield,
“Ye very well earnt, chaps, see you next week” Canfield said as the men walked away. Canfield and Farrier walked up the stairs together in silence until they were on the ground floor.
“Why did you sit with them? Some sort of test?” Farrier asked,
“Well, I suppose it was, not a bad thing is that?” Canfield replied defensively.
“I’m trying to stop feeling anything for him, you sitting us across from him doesn’t help with that, Canfield.” Farrier said measuredly.
Canfield shrugged quickly,
“Well my apologies, I thought surely if we can get you used to being near him it’d work” he said, Farrier sighed as they began climbing the steps to the bedrooms.
“I appreciate your efforts, but it doesn’t work that way for me” he smiled sadly.
“Oh, I’m sorry Tom.” Canfield said, his blue eyes making eye contact with Farrier’s.
“It’s okay, really. I’m just telling you because I’m open with you.” He said.
“And I’m very grateful for it. They’d reached Farrier’s room.
“Night, then” he said.

“Goodnight, try and get some sleep” Canfield said affectionately as he walked down the hall, “Always do” Farrier called after him before shutting his door. He went over to the small basin in his room and brushed his teeth before stripping down to his boxers and laying on the bed on top of the covers. He was full from his food, and therefore should have been content but there was a tinge of irritation in Farrier’s thoughts because Canfield had sat them with the students. He supposed there was a bright side, though he tried not to indulge himself too much, Collins did look dashing, almost alarmingly so. Farrier eyes slid shut as he pictured Collins in different clothes, the shirt tonight, the blue turtleneck, his suspenders keeping his trousers from falling from his slim waist, Farrier always liked Collins’ clothes, but part of him wondered what he’d look like without them. Farrier wondered if he had much chest hair, how muscular he may be, if he was well endowed. He wondered what his body would feel like under his touch, the warmth, the pressure. He thought about Collins’ lips, so pink and soft-looking. What he would give to be able to find out for himself, to be allowed to kiss those lips, however much he wanted, whenever he wanted. Then Farrier’s thoughts took a turn as he began to imagine what Collins’ lips would look like wrapped his length. The expression on Collins’ face, he wondered if he was practiced at that sort of thing, he hoped so. Farrier’s body had gotten warm from the thoughts, but then his eyes snapped open when he realised what he was allowing himself to think about. Farrier looked down to see a larger than normal bulge underneath his
undergarments. He sighed and sat up, trying to ignore his semi. He couldn’t believe he’d just been thinking about a student that way, it should have made Farrier sick but it gave him a feeling somewhere between power and arousal. Collins wasn’t far over half Farrier’s age, he was so pure, so innocent. Farrier wasn’t sure if he wanted to preserve that or ruin it in the best way possible. He didn’t allow himself to choose an answer to his question, instead deciding he had to distract himself. The man dragged himself off the bed and found a book on his desk. Canfield sometimes gave him them hoping it would relieve some stress. This one was about different kinds of native birds. Farrier sat on his bed and began to read. There were nice illustrations in the book, Farrier focused more on them than the words. They were hand drawn, there was one for each bird. He was able to distract himself to the point of returning to flaccidness, but there was still the lingering thought of Collins on the man’s mind. Farrier checked his watch, it was eight-thirty. He’d been reading for quite some time and still couldn’t shake the thought of the blonde Scot. He tried smoking a cigarette, he leaned out his window and slowly smoked, trying to relish in the slightly dizzy feeling and forget about that troublesome blonde.

Collins had stayed behind chatting with Wingnut and Dawson until they got shooed off by the staff of the kitchen, much to Timson’s embarrassment. They went upstairs but the boys decided to get an early night and not hang out in Dawson’s room for a change. Collins entered his room and lay on his bed with a full belly. After a few minutes of relaxation, he decided he would draw. He got out his sketchbook and pencil and looked around for a subject. He hadn’t had many chances to draw between classes and his overly social friends. Collins settled on drawing part of the airstrip he could see. He opened his window and kneeled at the windowsill resting his book on the edge. He looked out into the night, cloudy and dark and cold, but he could make out the shapes of the hangars. Then Collins smelled smoke, at first he was alarmed and stuck his head back inside thinking there was a fire, but then realised the smell was coming from outside. He saw a puff of smoke drift past from the direction of Farrier’s window. Collins got flustered and shut the window quickly.

Farrier jumped slightly when the window to his left slammed shut. He hadn’t heard Collins open his window, and didn’t see him, Farrier continued his smoke trying not to think of Collins in any other way than a student.

Collins then decided he would draw from memory. He began sketching the sandwich store he frequented, but wasn’t happy with it, the angles were wrong, the lines weren’t straight enough either. He turned the page and thought of something else to draw, something more naturally shaped. Like a person. Collins thought about drawing Farrier, but he didn’t want to mess it up, drawing him would have to be perfect, and Collins wouldn’t use that word to describe his skills. He settled on drawing plant life he’d seen around London. It wasn’t a good drawing night, the blonde decided, he wasn’t happy with a single one of his drawings. He flicked back through the pages. There was the rolling countryside of the highlands, some of the plants from his parents’ garden, a few objects from around the house. He shut the book and put it down on his desk, Collins decided a shower would get him warm and ready for bed. He was getting more comfortable around the base, it was beginning to feel like a real home. Because of that, Collins brought his blue and white striped pyjamas with him to the showers, not caring anymore if someone saw him in them. The shower room was next to the locker room on the ground floor. Collins undressed cautiously and held a towel around his waist even though there was nobody around. The hot water shocked his skin at first, but then then air around seemed cold and all Collins wanted to do was stay in the warm shower. He let the water wash over his skin and thought about what would come in the next stage of his training, he was excited at the prospects, but mainly Collins was excited at getting closer to flying again.

Farrier tossed and turned in his bed as he tried to read. He couldn’t stop thinking of that stupid blonde. Maybe he should just wank and get it over with, but then again, he knew who he’d be thinking of while he did that, and Farrier wasn’t sure he was comfortable with that. Maybe, he thought, if he wasn’t comfortable with it, then it was a good thing, perhaps that meant what he felt
wasn’t real. But deep down, Farrier wanted it to be real. He lazily shoved a hand down his boxers and held his shaft until it began to get hard, putting the book on the table. He began stroking up and down slowly and measuredly, his eyes slid shut and his head hit the pillow as he exhaled in pleasure.

Collins stepped out of the shower and shook his head to get his hair off his face. The air was cold around him so he dressed swiftly into his pyjamas and socks. He managed a quick look at his torso in a mirror before shoving the pyjama top over his head with a shiver. He was beginning not to feel as self-conscious about himself. He walked over to the mirror to fix his hair a bit.

Farrier had pulled his boxers off completely, he lay naked on his bed as he stroked his length. His breathing was heavy and deep and his movements sped up. He squeezed his cock tighter as he pumped, sending a new wave of pleasure coursing through his body, he clenched his stomach muscles in response and bit back a groan as he ran his thumb over the head, slick from arousal. He hadn’t done this in a long while, it almost shocked him how good it felt. He felt pressure building as he sped up, his movements becoming more erratic, his other hand gripping the sheets beneath him. But then he thought, what if it wasn’t his hand on his cock? What if it was someone else’s? He imagined it was Collins who was pumping up and down, and swore it felt better when he imagined that. Farrier squeezed his eyes tighter as the familiar tension began to build inside him. He knew it was wrong, but it felt so good he couldn’t stop. He kept pumping until, his torso began throbbing with pain.

“Fuck” Farrier breathed as he sat up, half in annoyance and half genuine worry for himself. He let go of his dick and held a hand to the scar across his torso. He became flaccid within a few minutes of sitting still in anxious wait with his hand on his stomach. Maybe he should tell Canfield, maybe not, he’d worry too much. Farrier felt something wet on his finger, he looked down to see a small amount of blood coming from the scar. He moved his fingers tentatively around the spot until he found what he was looking for. Something sharp feeling poking out of his skin. He tugged at it and gasped at the sudden pain. And it was turning out to be such a good wank too. He gripped the tiny spike and slowly pulled it out of his stomach. It was small, only an inch or so long. A piece of shrapnel. Farrier was annoyed more than anything. With a groan he put it on a handkerchief on his bedside table and swung his legs off the bed. The cut was already clotting but it hurt to pull the metal out. He was annoyed that he’d let himself think about Collins, and decided it was because he’d gone too long without sex and was desperately trying to think of something. Farrier put some warm clothes on, wincing as his jumper slipped over his torso, he intended to go somewhere he hadn’t gone since before he lay eyes on Collins the day he walked into the base.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked this one, the chapter before it was a bit bland so I hope this one tickled your fancies. See everyone next Monday!

If you ever want to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com

Until next time, happy reading :)}
Chapter Notes

Upload Monday again? Boy that was quick, I’m currently in the Scottish highlands, I always love it here, it’s one of the most beautiful places I’ve been. Probably why I thought Collins would have grown up here.

This chapter is basically pure smut.

The Scot walked into the hallway remembering that it was nearly his birthday, he’d been so caught up in classes and schedules that he barely knew what month it was, it was only because he knew the cadet wing was for two months that he realised it was nearly June. Walking up the stairs, he couldn’t even recall telling Wingnut or Dawson when his birthday was. But it was like that here, he was good friends with them but still didn’t know much about their personal lives, he supposed it was a good thing. Collins rubbed the cold end of his nose and tried not to make the wood squeak beneath his socks. He wished he had a watch, he guessed it was around eight, but would have to wait till he could see his clock in his room to know for sure. He rounded the corner and saw Farrier exiting his room.

“Hiya,” Collins said quietly as they passed, suddenly feeling like he shouldn’t have worn his pyjamas back to his room.

Farrier’s heart skipped a beat and he barely heard the blonde’s soft ‘hiya’ as they walked past each other.

“Evening Collins,” he smiled, but inside felt like doing anything but, after having such thoughts about that exact boy not minutes before, Collins wasn’t the first person Farrier wanted to see.

“Headin’ oot?” the Scot asked,

“Uh yeah.” Farrier answered and continued walking, he turned back,

“Nice pyjama,s” Farrier smirked, Collins blushed but chuckled as he walked back to his room.

Fuck Farrier said to himself, how did Collins have that effect on him? Even when he didn’t want to see the boy, he still made him happy. Even just thinking about him made Farrier happy, and that was worrying to the man. Don’t get familiar he repeated to himself, but he somehow knew it fruitless. He’d never let himself get this invested before, he knew what road he was walking down. Collins entered his room, slightly embarrassed at the pyjamas comment. He checked the clock, eight-thirty, not a bad guess. He clambered into bed and tried to draw again, but fell into a light doze halfway through a sketch of his clock.

Farrier slammed his car door and began to drive. Sometimes he just didn’t have the patience for the train, and it wasn’t like he had anything else to spend his money on besides bad habits like alcohol. He’d bought the thing only a few years ago, used it a decent amount when it was new, but work got in the way of going on pleasure drives. It was a black Aston-Martin, and Farrier, although aware he didn’t need it, enjoyed being the owner of a car. It was getting less special as the years went on, more and more people were getting them, but he supposed everything lost its novelty eventually. He drove from Gatwick into the heart of London and parked down an alleyway. He stepped out into the cold air and walked into a run-down bar. He walked up to the counter,
“Men’s room?” he asked sliding a coin towards the barman, who knew what he was asking, “Of course, let me get the door for you.” he said. Farrier followed the man down some stairs and he unlocked a door and walked off. The pilot opened the door and closed it behind him, and was greeted by the familiar smell of arousal in the air. He couldn’t count how many times he’d been here. He lost his virginity within the confines of this place, and had been back many times since whenever he was bored. Wasn’t like there was another way for him to get laid. It wasn’t infamous like some of the gay brothels in London, it was secret, tucked away and completely unknown, how in Farrier’s eyes they all should be. It was risky to be an infamous brothel, for obvious reasons. He walked through a short entryway and into a dimly lit reception lounge. A man dressed in a bright purple blazer squinted through a haze of smoke he’d blown in front of himself. “My god, is that you old man?” he said in a squawky voice, Farrier chuckled, “That it is, James” Farrier leaned an arm on the counter.

“How long has it been love? Over two months! What’s gotten into ya?” James asked, “Ah just been busy with work and that, hard to find the time to come down here.” Farrier smiled. He did almost miss this place, but seeing Collins virtually every day made up for it.

“I understand that yeah, busy days my friend, we’ve had plenty of customers to keep us afloat anyway!” the odd weaselly man laughed, Farrier gave a huff of a laugh and looked around the room to the multiple closed doors. “Lookin’ for anyone in particular tonight Tommy?” James asked, “Ah not really, doubt I know any of them, you get a big turnover no?” Farrier asked, “Yes this is true, well what kind of mood are you in?” the man asked, continuing to smoke his cigar.

“I don’t know,” Farrier said, looking at the counter. James put his cigar out in an ashtray. “What is it?” he said lowly, “What’s what?” Farrier looked up, “You used to waltz in here, knew exactly what you wanted, you’d beam as you walked through that door.” James said, pointing to the door Farrier had entered through. Farrier breathed out deeply through his nose. “C’mon Tommy, you’ve been coming here for years, what’s got ya down?” James pushed, Farrier relented.

“There’s someone,” “Oh!” James interjected, “Someone I can’t be with.” Farrier continued as James’ face became concerned, “But I cannot help but like them. I’m here because…” he couldn’t think of what to say. “I know why you’re here, lad. And I have just the bloke for you.” James said. “Oh yeah?” Farrier lifted his head, “Sounds to me like you need a little reminder, perhaps a wakeup call.” James mused. Farrier smiled a little, “Honestly I’ll take anything to get this man off my mind.” he almost laughed. “His name is Leo, you’ll have fun with him,” James said blatantly. “Alright, how much?” Farrier asked uncomfortably. “Ah for you, I’ll do four pounds as a welcome back.” The man smiled. Farrier pulled the money from his pocket, “You always carry so much cash around, what if you get mugged boy?” James laughed, “Eh, doubt that’ll happen.” Farrier chuckled.

“Suppose that’s true also. Now you don’t mind waiting a bit? Leo has a guest already.” James said, “Not at all, not like I’ve got anywhere to be.” Farrier smiled and took a seat on a couch against the wall. It was only about five minutes that Farrier had been seated, he couldn’t stop picturing Collins, so innocent, but he was so mischievous and flirtatious, maybe he was darker than he let on, Farrier’s stomach churned at the thought. “Never pictured you for the touchy-feely type Tom.” James said softly to him from behind the counter.
“Neither did I,” Farrier replied sadly.

Collins lay in bed, proud of his drawing of the clock, it looked quite realistic, to him at least. He looked at his hands, both had silver smudges from his pencil. Begrudgingly Collins got out of bed, slid his socks back on and went for a walk to the bathrooms to wash his hands, taking his toothbrush and toothpaste with too. He padded down the stairs, quickly brushed his teeth and washed his hands in the cold water, and walked back upstairs with hands rubbing together in an attempt to warm them after the shock of the water temperature. He checked the clock when he got back in his room, nine-forty. He knew he should get to sleep soon, he’d caught a glimpse of the new week’s roster and he had to be up early the next day so he turned the dim lamp off and tried to get some rest.

Farrier’s head snapped up from his thoughts as a door opened and a lanky man with messy brown hair stepped out, gave a curt nod to James and left to go back up to the bar. The door shut again, “I’ll go let him know he’s got another guest.” James said as he stepped out from behind the desk and up to the door. James knocked and Farrier couldn’t see Leo, but he saw James looking up at someone, though it was something which usually happened with James’ short stature so that didn’t say much. The owner of the brothel closed the door with a nod, “He said he’s ready when you are, good man.” James laughed.

“Ah, that’s good of him,” Farrier said getting up, “thanks for the discount,” he said and patted James’ shoulder as he walked past. “Not too long okay?” James called after Farrier, who waved a hand in the air to tell him to be quiet.

He didn't take long either, it wasn't like he was trying to set the mood, Farrier needed some sort of release and he'd gotten it.

Chapter End Notes

Not sure what the general consensus will be for this chapter, was it good or bad for Farrier to have gone out? Wonder, if Collins knew how he would feel. Anyway, hope you all enjoyed the chapter, feel free to leave comments, I always read/reply!

My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat.

Until next week!
I missed upload Monday by 24 hours I’m sorry. I haven’t had internet for days but I’m back now! Hope everyone is having a good festive season.

"Alright then?" James asked as Farrier left the room and entered the foyer again.

"Uh, yeah it was fine," he said. He could tell James was in a chatty mood, but Farrier wasn't inclined to do any such thing, the beginnings of a bad mood already brewing in his mind. He said a quick goodbye to James who was quite put out by the lack of conversation, and he walked to his car.

Collins' attempt at sleeping lasted twenty minutes before he was out of bed drawing again, so much for washing his hands. He didn’t know what the time was, but he knew he’d been up for more than an hour, maybe even two. He’d been in the hallway looking out the window opposite his door into the courtyard for some time now, he was drawing the stars, and the clouds covering some of the sky. He needed to work on his straight lines and structures, so Collins was drawing the top of the building he could see out of the window across the courtyard as well.

As Farrier got into his car to drive back, he began to feel empty again. It was the reason he stopped going to these places, they never made him feel any better apart from the immediate high of orgasm. He felt no more relaxed, no more whole than usual, and now he felt like Collins knew, even though he couldn't possible, he felt like he already knew what had happened and that everything would be bad now. It was late at night and he was cold. There was a brief thought of how strange the weather was, stormy and windy and now dead and cold. Guilt mixed in with empty feelings was awful. Farrier couldn’t help but think he shouldn’t have done it at all, as much as he knew it was what he needed. He had no actual connection to the Collins, Farrier didn’t even know for sure the blonde fancied him, but he still felt like he’d gone behind Collins' back tonight. He knew it was stupid, but the feeling would not go away as he drove in the still, cold night.

Collins’ drawing was going well, not as well as the clock but it was okay. As he stood in his pyjamas and socks he thought about Farrier, what would he think of the drawings? Would he ever see them? Probably not, the blonde thought. Thinking of the man made him happy, and somehow Collins wasn’t all that worried about his stupid habits of flirting, he had some idea of what was going on and knew he’d get at least a warning if he was going far enough to be expelled, not that he thought it likely at all. Collins chuckled at his own confidence, he’d been so nervous and told himself he’d be so careful not to do anything that might end this run with the RAF like last time, yet here he was unable to contain himself around a man twice his age. It partially annoyed Collins that the flirtatious sentences and glances came from him mostly without it registering before it had already been done, but then again he was fine so far.

Farrier parked his car around the side of the base and got out into the cold air. He checked his
watch, eleven-twenty. Not too bad and certainly earlier than he thought it was. As he walked through the doors he decided that he’d tell Canfield tomorrow that some shrapnel came out, it wasn’t like he could do anything, he’d worry as usual and then go about his day. He began up the stairs to the bedrooms and walked quietly as not to disturb anyone. He rounded the corner and saw someone at the window. He knew who it was, but wished he didn’t have to confront him right now. Not after having sex with someone else.

Collins brushed the page of eraser crumbs and yawned. Maybe he should go to sleep soon, he was considering going into his bedroom to check his little clock when he heard something close to him. Looking up he saw a figure and jumped before realising it was Farrier, but not before dropping his sketchbook.

“Sorry Collins,” Farrier smiled apologetically. He wanted to walk past without incident, but something was keeping him there. He bent to pick up the book Collins dropped, but upon realising the boy was doing the same he stopped and stood back up. Collins retrieved the book and stood up slowly until he was at his regular height, looking slightly down at Farrier.

“S’okeh, god yae sneak around don’t yae.” Collins smiled, taking the pencil and eraser from the windowsill.

“It’s late, didn’t want to wake anyone. You should be asleep too.” he smiled and tried to walk away.

“Yeah I know, couldn’t though so I came out here,” he gestured at the window.

“You draw?” Farrier asked, turning to Collins and crossing his arms.

“Ya a little, nothing good,” he laughed nervously and a hand reached up to the back of his neck.

“What’s that?” Farrier asked, looking at Collins roll the pencil in his hand. He wished he hadn’t said that. The blonde chuckled,

“Suppose so,” he said with a smile opening the book.

“This is Scotland,” he said, opening to a page of hills dotted with small farmhouses and cows.

“It really looks like that?” Farrier asked, impressed with the drawing.

“Ya, that’s the farms near my town actually,” he said and turned the page. Farrier couldn’t understand why he would want to leave such a nice place.

“This is uh, just come plants from memory,” he opened to several sketches of flowers and leaves.

“Very nice,”

Then Collins smelled Farrier’s scent for the first time since one of his tutoring lessons. At first he relaxed as he inhaled, but then there was something different.

“Uh, this is my clock,” he said absent-mindedly, still trying to figure out why Farrier’s smell was different. Collins turned the page again, Farrier’s stomach got slightly tingly, he drew his clock, part of the man found that cuter than he would like to admit.

“It’s a nice clock,

“Ya my maw gave it to me.” Collins said,

“And this is jus’ what I was doin’ then,” he turned the page again to the sky above the courtyard. Then he realised what he was smelling. Collins was smelling sex. Alarm bells rung in his head as he came to the conclusion. He smelled the faint but distinct scent of another person.

“Very good. You’re a good artist Collins.” Farrier smiled at the silver parts of the boy’s hands from the pencil, having continued drawing after washing his hands.

“Thank you,” Collins said absent-mindedly, snapping the book shut.

“I’m going to bed now. Goodnight.” he said quickly.

“Okay, night.” Farrier said, picking up on the change in tone. He watched Collins disappear into his room, but not before the blonde gave one look back out the door. And was that hurt on his face? No Farrier thought as Collins’ door closed. No no no as he walked into his room and shut the door behind him. How could he possibly know? Then it dawned on the man. Smell. He took his jumper off as he walked into his own room and sure enough the stench of arousal and Leo was thick in the wool, he had discarded it before anything had begun to be sure this didn’t happen, but it
had. Farrier supposed it had mixed with the smells on his skin. He sat sadly on the bed. Collins walked in a daze to his bed. He thought he and Farrier had something going on, unspoken but there. He guessed not.

Chapter End Notes

As always thanks for reading everyone, your comments and kudos mean so much! If anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com

Until next week!
Trouble sleeping

Hi all! Early chapter this week because last one was a day late. Hope everyone is having a lovely Sunday evening.

Collins didn’t sleep much that night. When he woke he saw big circles under his eyes in his mirror, it didn’t help that he had to get up at seven-thirty to be ready for an eight o’clock class. At least, he thought, he’d found that breakfast was more of a ‘come when you please’ arrangement, as long as you weren’t there later than 9. He didn’t know if Dawson or Timson were awake so Collins groggily went down to the bathrooms to wash his face and take a piss. When he arrived at the dining hall afterwards he spotted his two friends already there, and thankfully no Farrier.

“You look well rested” Dawson smiled as he ate his cereal.

“Thanks, I am” Collins said in a monotone voice as he passed the table to get a bowl of food from the front. He filled it up not as much as he would have usually, his appetite had left him, and besides, if he wasn’t good enough maybe he didn’t deserve as much food. He sat and ate quietly, in his peripheral he saw Dawson and Timson exchanging looks.

“Everything alright mate?” Wingnut asked,

“Course” Collins said without looking up from his bowl. His friends looked at each other but didn’t say anything. After breakfast, quickly brushing his teeth and haphazardly dressing, not bothering to fix his hair, Collins trudged down to first class which was navigation. He hoped Farrier wasn’t teaching, it was a mix of nerves and anger. Collins entered the classroom and was somehow late, the lesson was about to start and everyone was seated. He stormed in and took a seat in the empty one saved for him by Dawson and Timson and refused to look at the man standing before the class, whose heart panged as he saw Collins. He obviously hadn’t slept properly and looked exhausted. Farrier wished he didn’t have to teach him today. The lad took a seat, the last to enter, and when Collins finally looked up directly into his eyes Farrier couldn’t bear holding eye contact. The amount of hurt he saw in those big beautiful orbs was too much. In that instance, Farrier hated his job for making him go on like there was nothing wrong.

“Right class. Today is the first day of your training in the school of military aeronautics. Things are going to begin to get more regimental as you go through the stages of training. Now we’re going to be doing regular uniform checks and haircut checks. As we’ve said we prefer if you don’t have facial hair but if you must you can, so we won’t police that unless it’s ridiculous. We will also be learning more about the engines and inner workings of planes. Unless you know exactly how one works, we’re not letting you up in them, they only really let you up in your basic training to make sure you were okay with it. You’ll learn how to map properly, follow routes and some other basic things you’ll eventually need to do in the air.” He finished, he had to swallow his feelings and put on a cold front. It was a good thing he didn’t usually share feelings anyway, it made pretending he didn’t have any somewhat easier. As long as he didn’t look at Collins.

“You sure you’re okay?” Dawson leaned in and said,
“I dunnae wanna talk about it” Collins said quietly. Dawson exhaled sadly but turned back to the front.

That lesson was hard for Collins. For the first time he didn’t want to hear Farrier’s voice. He mindlessly filled out the sheets given out and didn’t look up again after the first time he had. This mapping was easy for him so he barely paid any attention to Farrier’s instruction. At long last, class was dismissed.

Farrier was tired of talking and he’d only done one lesson, it was so draining to talk to the class when all he wanted to do was apologise to Collins. The boys all got up and walked out the door. As Collins passed, last out of the door as per usual, a word forced itself out of Farrier’s mouth.

“Collins” he said quietly. The blonde stopped for a beat and his head looked up from his feet, but then he kept walking. This was bad. Not only for Farrier’s immature crush but from a teaching standpoint. How could he teach a student that ignored him?

Collins wanted to wish away his fancying Farrier. That would make it easier, but he couldn’t help but like him, even though he, now clearly, didn’t care about Collins.

Collins perked up a bit when he had Canfield for a lesson of engineering. The man seemed in a chipper mood and was doing a good job of making Collins feel temporarily better, the old man loved his stories. This particular one was about how he won his first flying competition at a local fair. After class was dismissed Dawson asked Collins and Timson a very common question.

“Sandwiches?” they both said yes and off the boys walked to the sandwich store down the street. The day passed as easily as Collins could hope, passing off his friends’ pestering with the excuse that he was tired and was like this when he was tired, which wasn’t completely untrue, he just didn’t mention anything else.

Farrier was grateful not to have to teach Collins until the end of the day, at least it gave him some time to think. He had to make it up to Collins, but had no idea how. He wasn’t someone who had feelings for other people, it just didn’t happen. Farrier realised at that moment as he sat in his office, that Collins was the first person he had properly fallen for, the first person he’d felt drawn to in more than a sexual way, and that made his body warm. He so dearly wished for it to be better between them. It did somewhat disappoint him that he couldn’t go to James’ now without a feeling of guilt, but for Collins’ happiness, it was worth abstaining.

Last class of the day, Collins didn’t know if it would be Canfield or Farrier, but it was geography so he would breeze through it.

His friends walked into the class and when they’d moved from the doorway Collins saw Farrier leaning against the front desk. Part of Collins felt something of sympathy, he looked sad. Not in concentration or stress like a lot of the time, but genuine sadness. Deep blue eyes shifted up at Collins, who immediately looked away and took a seat.

Farrier internally sighed as he pushed off the desk and walked behind it to the blackboard. He put on the same fake front as he had in the morning, covering his internal struggling and trying to ignore Collins, as Collins seemed to be ignoring him. The real question Farrier had on his mind was, how was he supposed to apologise without telling Collins of his feelings?

The lesson drew to a close and all the boys filed out. As Collins passed, Farrier had to say something, he couldn’t let this go on for another day, or who knew how much longer.

“Collins, do you mind if I speak to you?” he said, making the blonde stop nervously.
“Eh okay” he said quietly, his two friends turned around with him.

“Privately?” Farrier clarified, Collins eyed Timson and Dawson.

“I’ll see ya later guys” Collins dismissed them. Farrier closed the door behind them.

“What do you think that was about?” Dawson asked Timson.

“Probably his bad mood, he was ignoring the teachers today so most likely he’s in trouble for giving attitude” Wingnut chuckled.

“Yeah probably, he wouldn’t tell me what was wrong.” Dawson said,

“Yeah neither, if he doesn’t wanna talk about it then it’s fine, I just want our Scot to be happy” Wingnut said.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading as always, all your comments and kudos mean the world to me, seriously. If anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com
See you next week guys <3
This after class meeting wasn’t something Farrier was looking forward to, and by the looks of it neither was Collins. But it had to be done.

The man sighed and leaned back on the front desk of the classroom with his arms crossed. Collins looked around, trying to swallow his feelings.

“Are you okay?” Farrier said in a low husky voice,

“Ya I’m grand, how are you?” Collins said sarcastically, for the first time Farrier saw anger in his eyes.

“I’m not great, thanks for asking,” Farrier made eye contact but Collins walked over to the window,

“Oh ye? Wonder why not, seemed to have a good time last night,” Collins said as he walked, it hurt how honest Farrier had just been, Collins almost wished that cold front was back where it usually was, firmly between Farrier and the rest of the world. The man quietly followed Collins over to the window.

“Well not really actually,” he murmured.

He watched what Collins was watching, the planes.

“I know why you’re upset,” said Farrier,

The words cut through the air and Collins’ body and mind seized up. He knew? If he knew that, then he knew…

“You couldn’t know,” Collins quickly said as he stared out the window.

“Collins…” Farrier trailed off and almost stretched a hand out to grab Collins’ arm. The blonde straightened up and looked down his nose at Farrier.

“I’m sorry, Collins.” his voice cracked as he said it making it sound much more heartfelt than originally planned, Collins’ eyes fought his will not to show emotion and his response was unexpectedly impudent for Collins, a cold chuckle and shake of his head. The blonde walked away from the window and Farrier followed.

“I was trying to take my mind off something okay?” Farrier said. Collins almost believed him.

“What?” he asked Collins.
“That’s private,” Farrier replied to him as he walked towards the door.

“Well I hope it worked,” Collins said as he turned the handle. Farrier suppressed a sigh,

“It didn’t.”

Collins stopped mid step only for a second as he processed it, and kept walking.

The blonde walked up the stairs in some sort of haze. He didn’t know if he was going crazy and interpreting everything as having a secret meaning, but as he left the room he realised that he himself may well have been the thing Farrier was trying to distract himself from. He felt bad for being angry, and then began to feel like it was his own fault. If he was the reason Farrier went out, then he was to blame. But it probably wasn’t him that was on the man’s mind, in fact it definitely wasn’t, was it? Why would one of the students be on Farrier’s mind, Collins reasoned with himself. Least of which a skinny Scottish one with two friends and who was usually a shut in. As Collins opened Dawson’s bedroom door, behind which he could already hear them talking, the two silenced.

“So what did the old man want?” Wingnut said. Collins sighed but let himself smile a bit,

“Jus wanted me to stop bein’ an arse and pay attention,” he said, causing his friends to laugh.

“Now, who wants to play cards?” Timson said.

Farrier felt better, but still not normal. Had he said too much? Part of him thought so. Before he forgot he looked for Canfield, finding him in his office.

“Hi,” Farrier said awkwardly.

“What is it?” Canfield chuckled without looking up from his desk.

“Yes I’m well thank you,” Farrier smiled and paused,

“Oh come on Farrier I know you too well. What is it boy?” Canfield laughed.

“Some more came out last night,” he said quietly,

“Thought you might want to know, nothing seems the problem, I just know you worry,” Farrier said.

“Oh, shrapnel? Jesus boy. You’re okay?” Canfield began to stand before Farrier waved his hands to sit back down.

“I’m fine, absolutely fine. It wasn’t that big,” he said.

“How big?” Canfield pressed.

“Inch or so?” Farrier said, looking at Canfield’s expression of worry, clearly not thinking that should be considered ‘small’. The older man sighed.

“As long as you’re fine, thank you for telling me though,” he said,

“Of course, I’m heading back up now,” Farrier started out the door.

“Okay, see you,” Canfield said, replied to with the raising of a hand as Farrier left.
The boys forgot to go on their jog that evening, instead playing cards until dinner, and then again afterwards.

Tuesday. Like every other day, Farrier got dressed and washed his face with cold water. Trudging down to breakfast he anticipated the upcoming engineering class he had to teach, by far not his favourite subject, but at least his favourite pupil would be there.

Collins was pleased to see a faint smile on Farrier’s face as their eyes met across the dining room, time had helped whatever went on between them. He was almost as pleased to be served hot porridge and honey.

“Morning Canfield” Farrier said as the older man walked in slightly late.

“Hello, how are we all?” he addressed the table, a chorus of “good” answered.

Collins walked into class and was relieved to see Farrier, glad there was no longer any reason to be angry with him. The day passed easily enough, only in the afternoon did Dawson pipe up with,

“Oh, we didn’t jog yesterday” not that any of them minded a week off.

That night, Collins realised his friends didn’t know when his birthday was. The RAF was strange like that, you could be close friends with people and not know things like birthdays, first names or family. You didn’t talk much about your past or personal life, it was more about having a ‘present’ friendship he supposed, the less you knew about their lives outside the RAF the better.

“Hey lads, my birthday is this week.” He said as they talked in his room instead of Dawson’s for a change, not that it made a difference as the rooms were set out exactly the same.

“Oh, when?” Timson asked,

“This Thursday”

“Why didn’t ya tell us?” Dawson laughed

“Dunno, never came up! Anyway do you two wanna do anythin’?” Collins asked.

“I mean we could go out for a drink” Wingnut said,

“Yeah just something small ya know?” Collins agreed. He wished it was normal to invite Farrier, but he knew it wasn’t and restrained himself from doing so as he saw him in the hallway before bed that night.

Wednesday passed quickly, the boys went to the usual sandwich store, and the physical education class was cancelled due to the weather so the whole class spent the time trying to make the best paper plane they could, testing them down the hallway. Canfield won, managing to hit Farrier in the shoulder as he exited a classroom much further down the hall than anyone assumed the plane would reach. He threw it back angrily and walked on. On Thursday morning however, Collins was woken by a knock at his door. He lazily opened it to see a very excited Wingnut and Dawson.

“Happy birthday mate!” Dawson said, seconded by Timson. The boys pushed their way in giving Collins a hug each as they passed.

“Lads, do ya know what the time is?” Collins yawned.
“Yep we do, but look!” Timson said, holding something wrapped in brown butcher’s paper. Collins smiled bashfully.

“You didn’t have tae do that” he said as he was handed the gift.

“And” Dawson said, holding up another object wrapped in paper, obviously a bottle.

“Aw thanks boys” Collins said as he sat on the bed and opened Dawson’s first, an expensive whiskey.

“Not gonna ask how much this was mate, but thank you” he said to Dawson before setting it on his bedside table. He then started on Timson’s present.

“They’re both kinda from both of us” Dawson said,

“Ah yae” Collins said as he unwrapped. There was a box under the brown paper, and when he lifted the small lid he saw a watch inside. His face lit up as he took it out of the packaging.

“Thank you so much guys, I needed one!” Collins smiled. It had a brown leather band and a small glass face. He slipped it on his right arm and did it up.

“Wow, I didn’t expect anythin’ so thanks lads” he said.

“You’re welcome, where would we be without this idiot? May as well spoil him” Wingnut said, earning an eye rolling from Dawson and a playful shove from Collins.

“Let’s go eat” Collins said as he stood. The day seemed to drag on for Collins, probably because of his excitement for the night. At least the work was somewhat interesting today, stopping his fidgeting for the most part. The boys decided to skip dinner that night and go out for food instead.

“let’s open it now!” Wingnut said in Collins’ room as he held up the alcohol Collins had received. Dawson entered and saw Wingnut holding the bottle.

“That wasn’t for you mate” he laughed,

“Aye he was considerin’ we have some to get started before we go, save money” Collins said.

“I mean, yeah it’s up to you though” he said to Collins.

“Aight, let’s have a bit now” he said and opened the bottle. He drank until he was slightly light in the head and had more of a spring in his step.

“Okay we should stop, not too much” he said and took the bottle away from Dawson.

“Go get ready lads, not going oot in your uniforms” Collins ushered the giggling boys away. He waited for them with his back against his closed door, standing in the hallway. He heard faint footsteps coming around the corner, he looked to see Farrier and felt his cheeks get warm. Damn the alcohol.

“Hey” he said to Collins as he walked past to his door.

“Hello” Collins smiled,

Farrier paused before opening his door and inhaled.

“Have you been drinking?”
“A bit, me an the lads goin’ oot” Collins answered.

“Ah. Thought I smelled something strong” he laughed.

“Ya” Collins said at the floor.

“So… You’re missing dinner?” Farrier turned to him,

“Yeah I am” Collins answered. Farrier raised his eyebrows slightly,

“Bit unlike you” he said with a somehow cold smile.

“What do ya mean?” Collins crossed his arms and stood up to accentuate the height difference. Farrier chuckled and smiled.

“Just that you don’t go out much, well at all as far as I know since the uniform party, and it’s not even a Friday or Saturday, you’ve got plenty of classes tomorrow” he said, not fazed by Collins looking down his nose at him.

“You’re not in charge of me Farrier” he scoffed,

“Not in charge of your personal life, rather. No I’m not, but I just thought an exemplary student like yourself might have thought more about classroom life when deciding when to go out” Farrier answered, Collins stooped over slightly causing Farrier to take a step back, still with the cold smile on his face.

“It’s my birthday.”

The hostile smile dropped and Farrier couldn’t maintain eye contact. He went to say something but Collins turned away and huffed. Farrier had meant his comments as playful but clearly they hadn’t come across that way. And how could he have forgotten his birthday? It was written on Collins’ damned application that he personally read. How could he be so stupid, Farrier asked himself.

Dawson came out of his room and Collins quickly walked to him, muttering a “let’s go mate” as they walked off. Farrier sighed and entered his room. He had a lot of students, and couldn’t possibly remember all the birthdays, but felt guilty for not remembering Collins’ in particular.

After meeting up with Wingnut the three boys stepped out into the cold evening air. They caught the train into London and decided to go somewhere new. The boys swaggered into a new looking club that was humming with activity.

“Let’s grab some food lads, I’m starving” Wingnut said. After they’d eaten a night of celebration began.

Farrier sat up in bed trying to read the morning’s paper that he’d never gotten around to, but guilt plagued him, and he hated the fact that Collins’ emotions had such an effect on him. It was a weakness.

“Dawson what’s the time?” Collins yelled over the music, Dawson grabbed his wrist and shoved it in his face with a laugh. He kept forgetting he now had a watch, and when he looked at the small watch face, somehow it was already past eleven. Collins had been drinking more than he anticipated, and when he started it was hard to stop. As per usual when he went out, Collins spent a
fair amount of the time dancing to the music, at Wingnut’s request he attempted to teach his drunk friend some dance moves, but unable to follow them Wingnut decided to watch with Dawson instead. When Collins had exhausted himself he stepped over to his friends,

“Aye lads, fancy another drink?” he smirked,

“Sure” Dawson said, and Wingnut nodded and the three continued to buy drinks until they’d spent almost all the money they had on them.

“We need train tickets remember mate” Dawson said in Collins’ ear, almost causing the blonde to shiver at the sensation of breath on his neck.

“Yay a I know” he said over the music, trying to shake thoughts of Dawson from his head. Collins was more drunk than he planned, a lot more drunk.

“Aye, when do ya wanna be back?” he asked his two friends,

“I think we should go for the train soon, yeah?” Wingnut asked,

“Yeah works for me” Dawson answered.

“Sure. Well the train our to Gatwick is every hour so we just missed this one, so we’ll have to get the one o’clock one” Collins said as he checked his watch, just past twelve.

“Suppose we should leave soon to walk there” Wingnut said, wobbling.

“Aye, one more drink and we’ll go” Collins said before ordering another strong drink for himself. He was feeling very warm and not very much in control of himself at all, but it had been a while since he’d been properly drunk, if he didn’t count the uncomfortable situation that was the uniform party.

The three walked drunkenly down The Strand, the traffic was quiet, and the clouds were a minimum revealing the bright moon. The boys walked along the quiet street, staggering off the footpath at times, leaning on each other making jokes and laughing in the cold air.

“Mate we’re gonna be fucked tomorrow” Dawson said,

“Maybe you two” Collins laughed,

“Oh yeah Mr?” Dawson laughed,

“Yeah what makes you think you won’t be screwed?” Wingnut laughed,

“I’m Scottish” Collins laughed

“Well we shall see won’t we” Dawson said, and then he and Collins watched Wingnut fall down completely onto the damp footpath. After a good amount of laughter they helped him up, and soon had arrived at the train station.

Farrier was still awake, he wanted to know Collins had gotten back safely. Not that he was really tired enough to sleep anyway. He’d showered, gotten ready for bed and realised he was too nervous to ever sleep. Then he heard a door downstairs open, his heart now began to race if it hadn’t been already. He heard loud voices walking up the stairs. Should he go out into the corridor? How could he justify that? He got off his bed without really thinking and opened his
door, there were many reasons he could say he went out there if he asked, shower, bathroom, forgot something in his office. He looked down the corridor and saw two distinct blondes.

“Night then, hope you had a good day mate,” Dawson said, before retiring to his room and leaving Collins in the corridor. He looked up it to Farrier, who couldn’t help but smile as he saw the boy happy.

“Hiya,” Collins said in an overly friendly way,

“Hello Collins. Did you have a nice evening?” Farrier asked, wary that he may still be angry at him.

“Yeah, really good.” The Scot answered, then he took a step towards Farrier, who this time didn’t step back.

“Would’ve been better if you were there” he rumbled. Farrier’s heart lurched, Collins was drunk, obviously, he didn’t mean what he said.

“I wasn’t invited” he smirked, back leaning on the frame of Collins’ door, Collins turned his body to his door to try and open it.

“Biggest mistake of my night then” he said as he fumbled with the handle, then his footing stumbled and he slightly lost his balance. Regaining it he chuckled,

“Drank too much” he smiled with blue eyes and dimples at Farrier, who couldn’t do anything but smile back. Collins was obviously struggling with the door handle,

“Here, let me” Farrier moved closer to Collins and turned the handle for him. He looked up to see Collins looking softly at him. Collins was too drunk for his own good, he wasn’t sure if this was actually happening or if he was imagining it. Maybe he’d wake up and realise he never saw Farrier before bed but in that moment, he couldn’t take his eyes off the man. His olive skin in the moonlight, and he was close enough he could feel the heat radiating off him, his smell intoxicating. Just his smell this time, not mixed with something like the other night. Collins began to lean in closer, not thinking, just feeling. He could have imagined it but he thought Farrier began to as well, before,

“I think it’s bedtime for you Collins.” Farrier said softly with a husky voice. Collins looked to the ceiling with a chuckle. He knew that was coming, he didn’t think Farrier would let it happen. He raised his eyebrows in disbelief before entering his room.

“Night Farrier”

“Night Collins. Happy birthday” Farrier managed, but he could feel the heat on his cheeks. He glanced one more time at Collins’ calm smile before the man shut his door quietly. Fuck, did we nearly kiss? Farrier couldn’t believe it. How could he nearly do that? He could have screamed at himself.

The brunette shut his door quietly and sat down on his bed. This wasn’t like entering into a normal relationship, he told himself. This one, was illegal, because it was homosexual. Forbidden, and punishable by law. He sighed and swung his legs up onto the bed and lay down. He didn’t know what to do now, his attraction to Collins was real, and it was growing.

Miraculously, Collins didn’t forget to set his alarm clock and woke at eight in the morning with a rotten feeling in his stomach and a very slight headache, to his surprise. He groggily got dressed and walked down the corridor in his green spotted socks and baby blue pyjamas. He knocked on
Dawson’s door and heard a groan as an answer.

“Unlock yer door aye?” he said in, hearing the croakiness in his voice. A minute or so passed before Dawson opened his door.

“Bad idea, last night” he breathed,

“Nah, you’re fine mate. Come on then” Collins grabbed him by the shoulder and they walked around the corner. Dawson sighed,

“You could out drink anyone I reckon” he laughed at Collins, who smiled at the ground,

“Well, I’m not feelin’ perfect today to be honest but thank ye” he said as they reached Wingnut’s room.

“Shall I do the honours?” Dawson asked, Collins beckoned him forward. Dawson banged three times on the door,

“No” was heard from the other side, the two blondes raised their eyebrows.

“I’m comin’ in there if you dunnae get up now Wingnut” Collins warned,

“Calm down idiots. Gimme a minute to get me bloody clothes on” Timson said from inside. He opened the door soon after,

“Fuck’s sake” he said and walked with his two friends. A few moments passed before Collins piped up,

“I’m guessin’ by yer walkin’ that yer still drunk Wingnut” he said trying to hide a grin, the brunette visibly tried to walk in a straighter line but said nothing. Dawson chuckled.

“My head is terrible, dunno about you two” he said,

“Eh, mine’s a bit fuzzy” Collins said,

“How’s he do it?” Dawson asked Wingnut, who shrugged,

“Dunno but it isn’t fair” he smiled. The boys entered the dining room which was already full of chatter and smells of food. Today was fresh fruit and yoghurt. Collins went up to get his bowl of food and spotted Farrier, who actually smiled softly at him before setting his gaze back to his own food. Collins’ stomach fluttered as he went to sit back down.

“So, ready for class boys?” Collins asked,

“As much as I can be” Wingnut said,

“I second that” Dawson laughed and took a spoonful of yoghurt.

Farrier was happy. He’d decided it was a good thing that something nearly happened but didn’t, now he knew how Collins felt, not that he didn’t already see signs, but they hadn’t done anything wrong, or rather, too wrong. He knew they could never do anything together, it would compromise everything he’d worked for to get this far, if they were found out they’d be charged and losing this job wasn’t an option. Still, it was all so comforting to know for sure that the feelings were mutual. Farrier couldn’t shake the warm feeling inside him, and it was impossible not to smile as he saw the lanky blonde trudge through the doors of the hall. Canfield wasn’t paying any attention, and the other officers were finished breakfast and gone to begin lessons, he took all the time he wanted to
gaze upon Collins as he walked in, his messy blonde hair falling into his eyes, those blue, blue eyes that were so magnetic Farrier thought he might get pulled out of his chair if he stared too long. He hoped Collins remembered what happened last night.

As Collins ate, he realised he had no recollection of what happened last night.

“Lads, what did we do last night after we started dancin’?” he asked,

“I dunno, had a few more drinks then came back and went to sleep basically” Dawson said, Timson hummed in agreement.

“Weird, I never get blackouts but I cannae remember that part o’ the night” Collins said at his bowl.

“Well I guess you’re not immortal then” Dawson chuckled.

“Guess not” Collins said as he ate some yoghurt. It was annoying him, he needed to keep thinking until he could actually recall the events, it wasn’t good enough to have them told to him.

He was still thinking into the first lesson with Canfield,

“Now gentlemen, we will be doing your physical lesson today as the weather was bad yesterday. At noon meet in the quadrangle.” wished they didn’t have to today of all days. As they left the room he saw Farrier walking down the hall towards him, the man gave a warm smile as the two passed, Collins tried to return it but could feel the redness in his cheeks. He heard a small chuckle behind him from Farrier as the man walked off. Why was he being so nice? Collins didn’t question it any further as he walked off to lunch.

Farrier made a mental note to stop being so happy around Collins. He didn’t seem to connect his mood with the events that nearly transpired between them, and besides nothing would come of it so he should stop acting suspicious.

Finally physical education rolled around, last class of the day. All they did was some sort of obstacle course, but Collins couldn’t complain, though he spent most of it still trying to remember the good chunk of the night that had left his memory. It was only when they were ending the lesson when he finally managed to follow the string of thoughts past getting off the train at the Gatwick station. *We went into base, oh and Farrier was there! And Collins had been walking at the back of the class deep in thought, but when his mind realised Farrier had been there, and he’d gotten some sort of hazy vision of something happening outside his doorway, he stopped. Farrier stood with his back against the wall watching the class walk in, Collins seemed to be thinking about something, and then he stopped and almost gasped. Farrier watched as colour crept into the lanky blonde’s face and he just knew what he’d remembered. He couldn’t hide the smirk on his lips as Collins slowly walked up to him with a heated gaze.*

“Farrier, can I ask ye somethin’?” he said quietly, surprisingly intense look in his eyes.

“Sure” Farrier remained with his arms crossed.

“Did anythin’ happen last night after I got back?” he asked, shifting his eyes around. Farrier tried to remain calm but his heartbeat had sped up significantly seeing the blonde so uncomfortable and shy.

“Like what?” Farrier said amusedly. Collins almost rolled his eyes, not wanting to spell it out,
never mind nobody else being around.

“Somethin’… Between us” Collins’ gaze met the older man’s, and now it was Farrier’s turn to blush. He held the blonde's gaze for a moment before sighing,

“No, nothing happened” He said with a small, if sad smile. Collins almost sighed,

“Okay, I just had to make sure.” he said before stalking inside. Farrier let out a breath he didn't know he was holding after Collins walked away. To hell with the law, he wished something had happened last night.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading everyone! Let me know what you thought, I'd love to hear it <3
As always my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat, so until nex week, happy reading, all!
The next few weeks passed without incident. Training was getting more complicated, and Collins’ feelings for Farrier were constant. He kept telling himself no, and knew at the bottom of his heart that nothing would ever come of it, but he just couldn’t deny himself the simple pleasures of glancing at the man every now and then, ‘accidentally’ seeing him at their doorways at night, stealing secret smiles across the hallways and secret chats after class and before bed. And so it continued that Collins did the classwork to the best of his abilities while looking dreamily either out the window at the planes, or at his teacher. Neither of them would admit anything, but didn’t deny it either.

It was an ordinary Saturday night, a game of questions and commands among the three boys ensued.

“Right Collins. Here’s one I bet you cannot wait to answer” Dawson said, handing the blonde the alcohol pre-emptively. Collins took it slowly and gave him a questioning look.

“Who do you fancy?” after Dawson said it, Wingnut chuckled and Collins went to swig.

“Ah” Dawson said, stopping Collins before the bottle touched his lips, raising one blonde eyebrow in question.

“That means you do fancy someone.” Dawson stated smugly. Collins sighed and went back to sip the drink.

“Hey c’mon mate, how long’ve you known us? Little trust ya know?” Dawson said, “This is private stuff guys” Collins said, struggling to keep the redness out of his cheeks.

“I’ll tell you mine if you tell me yours?” Wingnut said.

“I know who you fancy mate, that lady from the kitchen” Collins laughed As Timson went red.

“Come on, you can drink if ya like but, we’re not gonna do anything with the information mate, it’s all trust here, you know that” Dawson said. Collins sighed.

“Aight. But no jokin’ around” he said, the two nodded. Collins sat in silence before he spoke.

“It’s Farrier.”

Collins swallowed and looked up, first at Wingnut who had his eyebrows raised looking at the floor, and then to Dawson, who had a sad smile on his face as he locked blue eyes with Collins. It was stupid how much Collins was willing to tell them, dangerous. Yet it was so easy to do so, his best friends who he trusted with all his heart could surely keep a secret. Still, it was scary.

The Scot cleared his throat,

“Thought you knew that already actually” he directed at Dawson,

“I kinda did actually, wanted to know for sure though” he smiled.

“I hadn’t a clue, how’d you know?” Timson asked Dawson,

“You really do miss all the signs mate” Dawson chuckled.

“Collins?” Dawson said to get his attention, Collins had been staring at the floor with flushed
“Ya?” he said, looking up,
“Secret’s safe with us, isn’t it Wingnut” Dawson said,
“Sure is buddy, won’t tell a soul” Wingnut smiled.
“So… Why him?” Dawson asked,
“Ugh come on” Collins said as he let an embarrassed smile creep onto his face,
“Well he’s a right bit older than us, not to mention kinda stressed out it seems” Wingnut said with a grin.
“I dunno why, I just do mate, cannae be helped” Collins said. His many many reasons were something Collins rightly judged a tad too personal to share.
“Yeah, well I don’t think anything can happen with you two mate, I’m sorry” Dawson said, causing a forced laugh from Collins.
“I know tha’, no matter who I fancy nothin’ could ever come of it, it’s illegal!” Collins said with a sad smile. Dawson patted his shoulder,
“Let’s keep playing, ey? Your turn” he said.
“Yeah” Collins sighed.

The following Monday, the class were asked a peculiar question by Canfield.
“Can everybody swim?” he said.
“Raise your hand if you can’t” and when nobody did, he added,
“Good, your preliminary training should have taught you anyway. Now you’re all wondering why the old man is asking you this” he said, the class collectively chuckled.
“We hold annual swimming days. We need to make sure our boys can swim of course, and yours is coming up in two weeks to the day, which you’d all know if you read the bulletin wall, I’m assuming by the looks of surprise that this was new news to you all.”
“What if we don’t have swimming trunks?” someone asked,
“I’m glad you asked. You don’t need them for this exercise. The point of this is to ensure you can swim confidently in your flight gear, so you’ll be in coverups and will be taking your underclothes off, so not to worry about swimming trunks for now, although later in your training we do a swimming carnival which is more of a fun event, you may want to invest in some before then as the RAF does not supply swimming trunks, unfortunately” Canfield stated.

“Do you lads like swimming?” Wingnut asked as they left class,
“Yeah, did a lot back in Weymouth” Dawson said,
“Aye I like it too, although I think most o’ my swimmin’ experiences were a wee colder than the shores of Weymouth” Collins laughed.
“D’ya like swimmin’ Wingnut?” he asked,
“Yeah it’s alright, not my favourite thing though”
“Once me an’ a mate jumped into a lake and swam across it in winter because someone had hit a ball into it” Collins said with a smirk.
“You idiot!” Dawson laughed,
“Who got the ball then?” Wingnut asked,
“Well, I would ‘ave if he didn’t push me head under” Collins smirked.

He didn’t tell them that his ‘mate’ was actually his first kiss. He tried to push the thought from his mind.
The boys walked and ate their sandwiches at lunch.
“So going for a jog tonight? Good weather” Collins said,
“Yeah course mate” Dawson said.
It turned out that jog was their longest yet, and Collins woke on Tuesday with sore legs and stomach muscles. After breakfast, Collins’ grumbling was forgotten in Farrier’s very confusing
class of engine care.
“Does anyone have questions?”
“Many” Collins laughed as he looked at his page of notes that he’d copied from the board without understanding.
“Same here” someone else said, and a chorus of agreement erupted.
“Why didn’t anyone pipe up before?” Farrier sighed.
“Collins, what are your questions?”
“Well firstly, is it possible to over, or under pump the engine when you’re startin’ the plane?” he asked,
“It’s possible to under pump, but not over. Pumping three or four times is enough, if you keep going there’s really no point and you’re wasting time.” Farrier said.
“and your other questions?” Farrier asked,
“Well the rest was basically ‘what the fook does this mean’” Collins laughed and some other boys laughed with him. Farrier exhaled,
“See me after class, some of you may need extra help and that’s not to be ashamed of. Not all of you will become RAF engineers after all. Anyone else struggling with concepts see me afterwards.” He said. Collins tried not to look like he was in an elevated state of consciousness at the thought of seeing Farrier after class.
Dawson tried several times during the class to help Collins but to no avail.
“Guess you’ll just have to stay behind” he smirked, earning him a kick in the leg under the table. Class finished and a small group of boys including Collins crowded around Farrier.
“Now boys, let’s just write down the parts you didn’t understand”. The list was made on the blackboard, and they worked from there. In half an hour, Collins had more of an understanding than before, but it was still somewhat skeletal. Farrier dismissed the boys and began tidying his desk.
“thanks” Collins said quietly as he left.
“You’re welcome” Farrier said with a smile.
Collins loved how intelligent Farrier was. He remembered when he’d first met him, the man looked more physical than mental, but for every muscle in his body he had a piece of knowledge too, it seemed. And there was a lot of muscle.

A couple of weeks later, it was swimming day. All the men in the school of military aeronautics walked down to the local pool. It was the first swimming pool Collins had seen, it was outdoors and smelled of chemicals, the water looked strangely blue.
“You going in then?” Canfield chuckled to Farrier.
“If you are!” the man laughed back, knowing Canfield wouldn’t.
“What d’ya suppose we’ll do?” Collins asked Wingnut,
“Swim I guess” he said, Collins almost rolled his eyes. They all walked up to a grassy area on the side of the pool following Canfield and Farrier at the front of the group.
“Right men. Today we are going to test your swimming abilities, as well as ensure that you’re all able to swim with a coverup on, in place of your heavy uniforms.” Farrier said. Canfield continued,
“An outline of today’s activities is this. You will first all swim one-hundred metres, which is up and back in the pool, in the coverup, and then you will all need to confidently haul yourself out of the pool with the coverup on. We will then hold a competition for who can tread water the longest in it, everyone must surpass five minutes, but we will keep going until one man remains. We will repeat this twice to see how your performance differs after exhaustion. Does everyone follow?”
The man asked, with some nodding in response.
“Oh also, we’ll be doing the laps in groups of ten to accommodate for the amount of lanes, but the other activities we can do all together.” The older man added.
“So are you two joining us?” Charles asked, earning a laugh from Farrier.
“Well if Canfield does, I’ve said I will” he said, folding his arms. What Farrier didn’t expect was a
chorus of ‘ooh’s’ from the boys,  
“C’mon then Canfield!” one said,  
“Yeah, you gotta show us how it’s done!” another shouted. Canfield chuckled to himself.  
“I suppose that if I’m to teach you it would be beneficial for you to know that I’m not a helpless old man. Alright, I’ll join!” he said, Farrier’s stomach dropped, he didn’t actually expect Canfield to say yes. There were cheers from the group of boys and some clapping, he wasn’t sure who they were more excited to see join in, him or Canfield.  
“Don’t go too hard Michael” he murmured to Canfield, who in response patted his shoulder. Farrier addressed the group,  
“Right men, you’ll all find racks of coverups and shorts in the change rooms, put them on and meet back on the grass to be split into groups. Luckily today it’s nice and sunny so you’d be fine keeping your underwear on beneath the shorts, should dry off.” He said, and the group began towards the changing rooms.  
“Anyone bring money?” Canfield said, a few answered yes,  
“There’s a kiosk here if you want food while you’re waiting for your group’s turn” he pointed out.  
“I got some” Collins said to Dawson and Wingnut,  
“Same here” Dawson said,  
“Yeah me too” Wingnut added.  
The boys entered the change rooms to see racks of navy coverups and shorts with elastic bands in the same colour. They all grabbed one of each and made their way to the benches around the walls of the room. Collins changed as quickly as he could and didn’t look up at all in fear of being seen looking. One of the many mundane tasks he had to be careful doing because of his homosexuality, just in case anyone thought he was looking deliberately. He piled his clothes neatly and rolled his bright green socks up on the top so he could tell which uniform was his. When they all walked out again Farrier and Canfield were already changed and waiting, Collins guessed they had the luxury of using the staff bathrooms or something.  
“Right boys, line up along the grass and we’ll put you in your groups.” Farrier said.  
“Line up nine people away from each other, then we’ll be together!” Wingnut said to Collins and Dawson. Collins chuckled but agreed, and it worked, when Canfield walked along numbering them they were all in number ten.  
“Well, looks like we got rather lucky with the numbers, shall we say I’m in nine and you’re in ten? Then we’ve got ten in each” Canfield said.  
“Yeah” Farrier said without realising who was in his group.  
“Okay, group one come to the blocks” Canfield said, and a group followed him and Farrier to the top of the pool, as well as a decent chunk of the other students who just wanted to watch. Collins looked on as the first men dunked themselves into the water, and the coverups did look heavy. They all held one arm on the wall and upon Canfield blowing a whistle, they all took off. The group standing watching cheered on.  
“Does look heavy” Collins said as the three sat on the grass soaking in the warm sun.  
“Yeah, they’re going fast enough so it should be fine” Dawson said. The boys reached the other end of the pool and all turned and started swimming back. By the time they’d gotten back they’d slowed significantly. The three boys then watched as they pulled themselves out of the pool and it looked rather difficult to Collins, he hoped all the visits to the gym had paid off.  
“Why don’t you go sit down Tom, it’s a one-man job here.” Canfield said,  
“Oh, you’re sure?” Farrier asked,  
“Of course, go sit in the sun” Canfield smiled.  
Collins seized up with nerves when he saw Farrier walking back to the grass, he relaxed slightly when the man stopped at a tree on the edge of the grass and stood against it in his typical arms-crossed stance.  
“Why don’t ya go talk to him?” Wingnut elbowed Collins, who shot him a look,  
“Woah sorry” Wingnut said in defence.  
“Did I no say no jokin’?” Collins hissed.
“Okay, sorry mate” Wingnut said earnestly, Collins looked away back at the pool, where the first group were walking from, dripping wet. Maybe he shouldn’t have told them, this was no lighthearted matter.

“Group two!” Canfield said happily as the group of drenched boys sat down, including Johnson who went to sit with his usual group, Collins noticed. The wet boys began taking their coverups off the tops of their bodies to warm up and Collins quickly diverted his gaze to the grass he was playing with.

After a long while of sitting playing with the grass and talking about nothing in particular, Collins saw Canfield come back once again.

“Group nine, you’re with me!” he chirped, at this Farrier walked over to him, most likely to take over as whistle-blower. The men walked to the pool and Collins noted how spritely Canfield got into the water,

“Not bad for an old man” Dawson chuckled to Wingnut, who laughed back. The race began as the whistle was blown, and Canfield wasn’t that far behind the younger men, however Collins was really impressed when at the halfway mark Canfield was right on the tails of them. Some students had stood up and walked to the edge to watch, and Collins did the same beckoning his friends.

Canfield was a good swimmer, he had proper form and seemed to be coping with the weight of the coverup well enough. Granted he finished last, but not my all that much. When the old man popped his head above the water everyone cheered and he laughed, hauling himself out of the pool with no help from Farrier, though the man definitely looked ready to give some.

“I’ve got to admit I didn’t think you had that in you” Farrier said as he walked with the sopping wet older man,

“I know you didn’t, that’s why I had to show you!” he laughed. “Now, I’m getting an ice cream” Canfield said and walked to the kiosk.

Farrier cleared his throat,

“Group ten, with me” he said, and a knot appeared in his stomach when he saw Collins rise.

Canfield came padding over with a vanilla ice cream in a cone, grinning at Farrier who shook his head with a smile.

“You’re worse than a child” he laughed at Canfield, “Why?” Canfield chuckled back,

“Because you’re all happy now that you have your ice cream after competing in your big race!” Farrier said,

“Well, fair enough I suppose” Canfield said as he hit the edge of the cone. They reached the head of the pool and each took a lane, Dawson was between Collins and Farrier, and Wingnut was on Collins’ other side.

“Right lads, in you get!” Canfield said. Collins lowered himself in slowly and was surprised that the water was somewhat warm.

“I’m going to count you down, and then freestyle all the way down and up again, okay? Get ready” Canfield said, getting the whistle ready. Collins held onto the wall with one arm and was ready to kick off.

The whistle blew, and Collins shot forwards and began to swim. He could immediately feel the weight of the coverup and knew it was making him slower than usual, though seeing Wingnut ahead of him on one side and Dawson ahead on the other was disheartening. He kept swimming, trying to focus on his breathing and pacing himself rather than speed, but his eyes were beginning to sting. They reached the wall and Collins briefly saw that he’d caught up to Dawson. The swim back was more difficult, the coverup severely impairing his swimming abilities and Collins was distracted by his sore eyes. The blonde tried his hardest to keep going, arms aching with every stroke, but after realising pure speed wasn’t the smartest tactic it got a little easier. He was about tied with Dawson until the last quartre where his friend began to draw ahead of him. At least, Collins thought, he was most likely ahead of Wingnut.

Then his hand hit the wall and he’d finished. He popped his head up to see Dawson and Farrier already finished, and Timson finished only a second after Collins but the blonde wasn’t taking
notice of much except for Farrier, who was wet and already hauling himself out of the pool with ease. Collins forcefully looked away as he saw Dawson looking at him in his peripheral. Collins then began to pull himself out of the pool, which was a lot harder than Farrier made it look.

“Well done lads” Canfield said,

“Swim somehow made my eyes sting” Collins laughed at the old man,

“Of course it did my boy, I think everyone’s are a bit” he said, finishing his ice cream. Collins cocked his head,

“Why? That’s no’ normal” he said, trying not to rub his eyes which he’d realised made it worse, the group along with Canfield began to walk back to the grass, Farrier had fallen in step with the older man.

“Collins, it’s chlorinated water! Of course it’s normal! Don’t open your eyes under the water next time boy!” Canfield laughed.

“Chlorinated water?” Collins queried, then a tap on the back came from Wingnut giving him a confused look,

“What? A’ve never been in a pool before!” he said to Wingnut,

“You’ve wha- goodness Collins!” Canfield laughed, Farrier smiled something between amusedly and sympathetically.

“We all swam in the loch near Aviemore”! Collins tried to defend himself,

“It’s a wee town there’s no pool there!” he said, trying to cover his embarrassment with a laugh.

“Not to worry Collins, now you know that swimming pools have chlorine in them, it keeps the water clean” Canfield smiled. Farrier couldn’t believe how innocent Collins sometimes was, and also couldn’t believe how warm the thought that he’d never seen a pool before was making him despite the wet coverup clinging to his skin.

The group walked back to the other students and they all went back to the pool together for the treading water exercise with only ten minutes of rest.

“No’ fair the others got more rest than us” Collins said to Wingnut,

“Yeah I know” he said,

“Tired boys?” Dawson chuckled.

“You’ve got too much energy Dawson” Collins replied as they slipped back into the water.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks everyone, hope you enjoyed! Always feel free to let me know what you thought, idc if you’ve commented before I love reading comments and I always reply!

If anyone wants to chat I’m on tumblr as s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com

Until next chapter ❤
“Now lads, I’ve got Timothy here from the kiosk to time us because we’re all going in together now.” Canfield said, as a lanky boy waved nervously to the group. Everyone was clinging to the edges of the pool, “Now when I say go, everyone let go of the edge. I’ll call five minutes when it’s up, then feel free to get out whenever you want” the lad said, looking at his watch, waiting for the second hand to reach twelve. “And go!” Timothy said. Collins let go of the edge and began to float, he tried to keep his lungs as full as possible to be buoyant, but still needed to use his arms and legs to hold the weight of himself and the coverup. He soon realised it was easier to let his legs come forwards, and while in the coverup they were too heavy to reach the surface to star float, they weren’t straight down. “Five minutes!” the boy called, taking Collins by surprise, “Oh” he quietly laughed at his friends, “Yeah I wasn’t expecting that” Wingnut said. The boys continued to float, watching a few men get out of the water. After another minute or so, Canfield began to swim to the edge “I’m done boys, nothing more I need to prove!” he said as he took the steps out. Farrier wasn’t finding it that difficult, but he was finding Collins’ mess of wet blonde hair quite distracting from the task at hand. He’d found the best way was to keep his heart-rate slow, but Collins was jeopardising any chances he had of doing that. Now he was laughing with his friends, with that innocent smile. Farrier turned himself around so he couldn’t see Collins, instead focusing on his breathing. “Now if the race taught you lads anything about stamina and pacing yourselves, I trust that nobody is trying to exhaust themselves early with this exercise.” Canfield said from the poolside. Collins noticed more people get out, and they kept getting out, a few every minute or so until it was a very small group of them left. “It also helps not to be too heavy, but of course the coverups are” Canfield smiled. “You could’ve lasted longer” Farrier said with a slightly strained voice to Canfield, “I know, but why exhaust myself for the point of pride?” he said knowingly. “Is that what I’m doing?” Farrier laughed. “Yes my boy, and now I’m relaxing in the sun while you’re struggling in the water because I don’t care that the students beat me” Canfield said back, causing a huffed laugh from the younger man. Farrier looked around to see four other students still in the pool, looking out over the pool edge he could see most had walked back to the grass, and most alarmingly a lot were wearing the top of the coverups around their waists, exposing their torsos to the warm sun. Farrier looked away and tried to concentrate more on the task at hand. Collins had closed his eyes in concentration, he was trying to imagine himself back in the loch near his hometown. He knew he was getting near the end of his abilities, but imagining he was somewhere else helped a bit. “I’m out” he heard Timson say, and his eyes snapped open to see his friend clambering out of the pool, Canfield patted him on the back and he walked over to the grass.
“Well” Dawson panted, Collins smiled back but didn’t expend any energy by answering. Then the other boy that Collins didn’t know got out, leaving just him, Dawson and Farrier competing.

“Wanna pull out together?” Dawson asked Collins,

‘Ya sure, I cannae last much longer” he said,

“Alright, let’s go now then” Dawson replied and they both began to swim to the steps.

“You win Farrier” Dawson said as they both climbed out,

“You did well boys, good job” Farrier said as he climbed out behind them.

“Well done lads, now we have about half an hour of rest” Canfield said to both of them, Collins could only smile in response.

“Farrier, you push your body too hard, and show off needlessly!” Canfield smiled and patted Farrier’s shoulder,

“I need to know where my limits are” he smiled,

“And I didn’t get a flare up then, so it’s good” he continued.

“Well I’m glad of that boy but we aren’t exactly trying to get one are we, how would you react if some shrapnel came through in water?” he said sternly.

“You worry too much” Farrier chuckled.

Collins and Dawson walked together back to Wingnut

“Could you have lasted longer?” Collins asked,

“Only like, less than a minute I’d say” Dawson replied,

“I wasn’t sure if it would have been good if you’d been left with him, that’s why I said pull out together.” He said earnestly to his friend. Collins felt a jolt of embarrassment in his stomach, but then he felt a feeling of gratitude,

“That’s.. Thank you, Dawson, that was very nice of ye” he said embarrassedly,

“No problem mate, glad I did the right thing” he smiled.

“Ya, who knows what stupid thing I might’ve said if you’d left me with him” Collins laughed.

Wingnut walked up to them with the top half of his coverup wrapped around his waist.

“Hey guys, good job!” he said, slinging an arm around both of them.

“Thanks, exhausting stuff” Dawson said,

“Ye, it was” Collins added before shivering.

“You guys should get those off a bit, it’s so warm those are makin’ you cold” Wingnut said,

“Yeah s’pose” Dawson said, before unbuttoning the top half and shrugging it off his shoulders.

Collins was hesitant, he still wasn’t all that happy with his body and apparently that was obvious on his face.

“C’mon Collins, everyone else is doing it” said Wingnut, so the blonde relented on account of it being the ‘normal’ thing to do.

“See? You look better than last I saw” Dawson said, Collins looked down and indeed, he wasn’t as skinny as he’d remembered himself, he could almost see the outlines of his muscles through the skin, and when he clenched his stomach, he could see them clearer than ever. He was snapped out of his selfish gaze when Wingnut tapped his upper arm,

“You look fine mate. Now, anyone wanna come to the kiosk?”

Collins was still self-conscious next to his two much fitter friends.

Farrier sat next to Canfield on the grass and relaxed in the sun.

“Been reading the papers?” Farrier asked,

“Of course, why?” Canfield answered.

“Just.. Well, some things seem imminent don’t they” Farrier said, leaning back on his elbows.

“You have to have some hope though, surely” Canfield copied Farrier’s lazy position.

“Yes, but you also have to be ready, I just hope all these men are” Farrier said,

“Well that’s why we’re training them the way we are, we’re making sure they are ready” Canfield said.

“You worry too much” he added, and Farrier sighed,
“Maybe I do.”

Collins ended up getting some hot chips from the kiosk, mentally noting that he shouldn’t have spent so much on a snack. The boys went to sit back down, and Collins couldn’t do anything to hide his body like he wanted to when they walked along the concrete path between the grass and the pool, in front of where Farrier and Canfield were sat at the front of the grassy hill.

“So lads, are we still goin’ for a jog tonight ya think?” Collins asked, desperate to make conversation and look confident while he walked past,

“I mean, I don’t actually mind, we did enough swimming today to make up for a jog, but I’d still be up for it” Dawson said,

“Of course you would be” Wingnut laughed, causing a grin to appear on Collins’ face, though inside he didn’t want to jog tonight.

Farrier had been idly watching the pool workers fish leaves out of the water, when in his peripheral saw a familiar blonde walking past, his eyes darted towards Collins, and he couldn’t help but stare at the pale lean skin of his torso. He knew he shouldn’t look, but he couldn’t help it. Collins was all long limbs and slender waist, his skin didn’t have a single blemish, just perfect porcelain.

Farrier drank in the sight, and when he looked up to Collins’ face, he was smiling, in some banter with his friends, but Farrier didn’t miss it when those blue eyes darted to him. He wished he could have held eye contact but Farrier quickly averted his gaze, mentally telling himself off for staring.

Collins and the group walked up to the middle of the grass to sit and eat.

“I can’t believe you’ve never been in a pool” Dawson said,

“Aye stop bringin’ it up!” Collins laughed.

“No I’m not teasing, it’s just interesting. What else do you find weird here?” he asked,

“Well puttin’ a train in a tunnel is just stupid” Collins laughed,

“The tunnels have vents, what you see is mostly steam, not smoke” Wingnut added,

“Ya but it still smells like smoke, and it’s just.. Weird comin’ from a place where we didn’t need to put them underground, we had more than enough space.” Collins said. He watched as Farrier and Canfield laughed together.

“Very nice day, isn’t it?” Canfield remarked,

“Indeed, I’m even considering taking this damn coverup off like the boys, it’s making me cold and I want to enjoy the warmth” Farrier said. “I’m glad you’re getting better with your body” Canfield said,

“You know, sometimes you’re a little too personal” Farrier laughed as he unbuttoned the front,

“My apologies. It just makes me glad that you’re okay with it” Canfield said,

“Yeah I know what you mean” Farrier smiled,

“It’s healing well, nothing more I can do” he said as he shrugged it off his shoulders.

If Collins was going to list another strange thing about being in a city, it was lost in his mind when he saw Farrier shrugging down the top part of the coverup. He was golden, and broad and strong. Farrier fell back and rested on his elbows, the muscles on his upper back bunched and his skin creased along his spine.

“Okay, I guess that is pretty impressive” Dawson said, Collins snapped his head to the side to look at his friend who was smirking, Collins shoved him earning a laugh, and felt his cheeks getting red.

“So, any more strange things in this city?” Wingnut tried to distract Collins,

“Uh” he tried to think, but with Farrier shirtless in front of him it was exponentially more difficult.

“Oh, here we go boys” Dawson said, Canfield was wrapping the top of his coverup around his waist as well, earning a sniggering from Dawson and Wingnut,

“Ey let him go, he’s just like us, wants to feel the warm sun” Collins smiled at the old man.

“Yeah yeah fair enough” Dawson said.

Farrier let his eyes shut as he soaked in the sunlight.

“I’ll police the races again, not to worry” Canfield said,
“Oh no, you can’t, it’s not fair” Farrier protested.
“Nonsense, you stay here until your group Farrier” Canfield said as he began to pull the top of his coverup back on.
“Are you absolutely sure?” Farrier asked,
“Yes Tom. It’s easy, it’s standing there blowing a whistle!” Canfield smiled and stood up slowly, Farrier sighed.
“Thank you Canfield, I appreciate it” he said as he lay his head against the grass.
“Of course” Canfield said before blowing the whistle he still had.
“Group one be ready for your second race please!” he announced before making his way to the head of the pool once more.

Farrier actually nearly fell asleep in the sun, until some boys ran past yelling at each other, after which he sat up quickly and blinked the sleep away. Johnson and Charles, of course.
“Cut it out you two, you’re not children!” he yelled after them, but they didn’t stop. He made eye contact with Canfield who was standing at the pool edge and the older man smiled as if to say, what can I do, earning a chuckle from Farrier. Then he stood up, deciding to visit the kiosk. Collins tried his hardest to look away as the man in front of him stood up revealing his side as he walked away to the kiosk.
“This place is pretty dangerous for you mate” Dawson said, Collins looked to him expecting to see a joking expression but there wasn’t one, instead a sad look on his face.
“Well, it’s my fault, I’m pretty terrible at hiding anything” he said with a sigh,
“Well you can’t control who you fancy” Wingnut said,
“Ya, it’s just difficult ya know? I can never be in a relationship or anything” Collins said,
“Can we no’ talk about this lads?” Collins asked,
“Yeah, sorry mate” Wingnut said, Dawson patted him on the back.
“Anyone want more food?” Dawson asked,
“No’ really, might get a stitch when we swim if we eat too much” Collins said,
“Ah you’ll be fine, c’mon” he urged,
“Sorry Dawson, stayin’ here” Collins said lying down.
“Fine, Timson?” he asked,
“Nah you’re alright” he said and lay back like Collins.
The two boys lay in the sun for a few minutes before Collins felt a familiar feeling,
“I’m gonna get so burnt today” he said, sitting up.
“Yeah you are” Wingnut smiled, Collins put his coverup back on properly, as nice as the sun was.
Dawson was walking back now with a small white paper bag, Farrier wasn’t far behind him, the man had also pulled his coverup back onto his torso and was in the process of buttoning it back up, yet Collins still couldn’t stop his gaze from drifting down the expanse of his front. A light covering of dark hair spread across his chest, and as Collins eyes dipped lower he saw something that made his stomach drop. A long scar dragged over the muscles of the man’s lower torso, it was big, and jagged. Seeing that, Collins just couldn’t focus on the strong muscles that covered Farrier’s body, he looked up to see Farrier’s blue eyes looking at him already, Collins looked away, it was already getting to the blonde to see that on Farrier’s body, he didn’t want to think about it anymore.
He looked sad Farrier thought of Collins, he himself would be too seeing the mess on his torso, Farrier thought. He quickly buttoned his coverup again and walked back to the tree he was leaning against earlier. Granted, he’d felt comfortable enough having it off for a while but he didn’t need Collins seeing him, seeing his scar which was absolutely impossible to hide while shirtless. Farrier unwrapped and stuck a Mintie in his mouth from the small bag of them he’d bought.
“Jeez” Wingnut said quietly,
“What?” Collins asked,
“Did ya see Farrier’s scar just then? Thought that’s what you were looking at” he said,
“Oh, yae it was” Collins murmured.
“Wonder what happened” Wingnut said, before Collins could answer Dawson was with them,
“Want some?” he held out the white paper bag full of snake sweets.

Before Collins knew it Canfield was calling them for their next race. Collins was back in the pool, the water was still unnaturally warm and smelled strange. The whistle blew, and Collins made sure not to push off as hard as he had last time, pacing himself from the beginning. He also made a point of not opening his eyes under the water. When they reached the other end of the pool, he saw that he was ahead of Dawson and Timson, as well as some of the others racing. Spirits lifted he kept pushing, but was beginning to tire when he was halfway back to the start, the blonde supposed maybe the extra push at the start was worth it after all. Collins reached the finish line behind both Dawson and Timson, as well as Farrier and some of the other competitors, but not by much.

“Well done boys” Canfield said to them all as they got out of the pool again.

“Actually pretty tiring, innit” Farrier laughed with Canfield as they walked back to the grass, “Yes, I was fashionably last again in mine” the older man said, Farrier patted his shoulder.

“At least you finished” he said.

A few minutes later they were all back in the pool floating again, though at the five minute mark Farrier got out with Canfield, earning a fair amount of playful jabs to which he responded, “I was literally the last person in the pool in the first round, I can’t be bothered”.

As expected Collins didn’t last as long as he had the first time, although he came close, getting out just after Wingnut and just before Dawson.

“Right men, you can go and get changed now, we’ve got a bit of time to hang about so don’t rush. We’ll let you know when we’re leaving soon” Canfield said as the boys walked off together.

“Hey, you know how I bought some sweets earlier?” Dawson asked, “Yeah? What of it?” Wingnut replied, “And how Farrier was there, and how we all had our coverups down?” he pressed, “Where’s this going, Dawson?” Wingnut asked.

“Well, on one of his arms were some scars.” Dawson left the sentence hanging. “Well yeah, he’s a veteran, did you not notice his stomach?” Wingnut almost laughed. “Yeah I did, but no I mean like… Scars, deliberate looking. Ya know?” Dawson had a stern expression, “Oh” a little sad word escaped Wingnut. “That’s really sad” said the brunette.

“Yeah, it is. But do we tell-” Dawson motioned to the lanky blonde ordering something from the kiosk.

“No, well, I don’t know, maybe” Wingnut said, “I think he should know, but I dunno how to say it” Dawson said, “Yeah, I mean we can tell him later tonight or something” Wingnut said.

“Yeah, but it’ll hurt him.” Dawson said as he watched Collins happily plod along the grass towards him eating sweets.

“He should know.” Wingnut murmured.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): Implied/references self harm/scars
Well there ya have it, last chapter before Christmas. Hope you all enjoyed reading and have a wonderfully festive week ahead!

My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat.

Until next chapter everyone ❤
MERRY CHRISTMAS!! I know I’m awful at uploading on time I’m sorry, I was cooking all day for Christmas lmao sonow it’s actually the early hours of Tuesday.
Beware, this chapter is a little sad, didn’t mean for its upload to coincide with Christmas :/ anyway, hopefully it’s still enjoyable to read❤

Trigger warning(s) listed in end notes.

“Wha’ yae talkin about then?” Collins asked, holding the bag of sweets out to share with the two boys sitting on the grass before him.
“Nothing important mate” Dawson covered.
“Not getting’ away that easily” Collins said, but didn’t push.
The boys soon got changed out of the wet coverups. Collins’ uniform felt uncomfortable against his damp skin, but he convinced himself he’d dry on the walk back to base.
The boys still went jogging that night, exhausted as they were, it ended up being rather short and earlier than usual. At dinner they ate hungrily.
“Swimming makes you so hungry” Dawson remarked,
“Sure does” Wingnut said back.

Collins had a sinking feeling all afternoon, he wasn’t sure what those two had been talking about when he’d walked up to them, but he assumed it was about him since they abruptly stopped when he got close and looked awfully nervous. He ate in silence, trying to work out what they could have been saying about him.
“What is it mate?” Wingnut ended up asking.

Collins thought before answering,
“What were yae sayin’ about me at the pool?” he asked, baby blue eyes boring into them both.
“Oh, we weren’t talking about you” Wingnut said defensively.
“No? Why’d yae stop when I got there and gave me this weird look?” Collins pressed, irritated.
“Mate, we’ll tell you but not here” Dawson said. His expression was earnest. Collins sighed,
“Fine” he relented.

Later that night, Collins rounded them both into his room for a game of cards, completely forgotten was the topic the two had been talking about behind his back.
“Ya know, to be honest I’m getting tired, from the swimming I think. Wanna call it a night?” Collins asked,
“Yeah, but you should know what we were talking about” Dawson said, putting his cards down.
“Oh yeat I forgot, okay what then?” Collins asked, stacking the cards together and giving them to Wingnut, the owner.

Dawson and Timson looked at each other not knowing how to start, Dawson was always better with words so Wingnut gestured to him to begin. The blonde took a deep breath in.
“So you probably saw Farrier today with less on than usual” Dawson began,
“Oh what’s this aboot?” Collins embarrassedly laughed,
“No, listen mate.” Wingnut said,
“You saw the scar on his front yeah?” the brunette continued.
“Uh yeah, kinda soured my mood” Collins admitted, his friends quietened,
“Oh?” Wingnut said to keep the conversation going. “I dunno, just looks bad, ya know?” Collins said sadly looking at the floor. Timson’s heart ached, he really didn’t want to tell Collins anymore, it was going to cause him more pain, and why was it necessary in the first place to tell him?

“Maybe we can save this for another time then, yeah?” Wingnut suggested, “Nae, you’ve gotten yourself in too deep my friend, tell me” Collins said. Timson looked slightly panicked and looked to Dawson for help. The blonde began, “We saw… Well I saw” he fidgeted. “C’mon” Collins said, “I saw… Scars on his wrist.” Dawson relented, and hung his head. Collins looked at him, and then Wingnut, with a blank expression, “Okay? He’s got quite a few, he’s a veteran” Collins said, confused as to why this was important. “These ones, Collins, looked very deliberate” Dawson said solemnly.

“How could they be deliberate? Donae make sense. I don’t get it boys, yae he’s got scars, I know that” Collins said, “So can I sleep now, is that all?” he added. Dawson wanted to back out, but knew they’d said too much. Pulling up his sleeve, he used his fingernail to mark white lines across his wrist, “They looked like this Collins, are you following me?” he said slowly, Collins watched Dawson’s movement, “Must’ve been a weird injury I guess?” Collins said, his voice going up at the end, now unsure of what he was being told.

“Mate… we think.. Well we basically know…” Wingnut tried and Dawson took over. “Collins, have you ever heard of self harm?” he was careful with his tone, keeping it quiet and soft. An alarm went off in Collins’ mind, “No, never” he said, and he genuinely hadn’t, but it wasn’t hard to imagine what it was. “It’s something that can happen when somebody gets very… Depressed. Or when someone has shell shock. Or, well, it’s like a coping mechanism from what I can gather.” Wingnut said, fiddling with the deck of cards. The boys sat on the floor of Collins’ room in silence.

Farrier entered his room and shut the door behind him, immediately putting the heater on and closing his curtains. He was tired from the day, and regretted taking the coverup off partially, as much as he enjoyed the sun on his skin again and seeing Canfield’s happiness at his confidence he went back into his shell when Collins entered the picture, wishing he’d seen nothing.

“Farrier’s no’ depressed or shell shocked lads, donae try and tell me that” he began to freak out. “No no, we aren’t” Dawson put his hands out to try and calm the boy. “We’re just saying, that maybe he was once” Dawson tried. “No he cannae, I won’t-” Collins tried to say, his thoughts were clouding his sentences and he began to withdraw inside his mind, there were a million things whizzing through his brain, he couldn’t do anything.

“Be calm Collins. They were scars not new cuts yeah? That’s a good thing” Wingnut said placing a hand on Collins’ shoulder. That thought didn’t help at all.

Farrier heard something in the next room, possibly the first time he had. Collins had always kept to his word about being quiet, but he heard the boy’s voice. It sounded strained, not happy. Farrier told himself to stop listening out as he changed out of his uniform, but he didn’t stop, if anything he moved slowly and quietly to listen more.

Collins felt his eyes burning, he wasn’t sure if he was sad or angry. “Hey it’s okay mate!” Dawson shook him in an attempt to stop the tears. “I wannae be alone, go.” Collins said quietly, his voice cracked. The two boys resigned and left his room, Collins he crawled into bed, letting the tears fall from his eyes. He wished he didn’t know, but also couldn’t bear the thought of being in the dark about this.
He so desperately wanted to talk to Farrier about it, he needed to know he’d stopped and was happy and then another thought occurred to Collins. He was concerned about Farrier’s happiness, he wanted him to be happy, genuinely, and wanted to see him happy. Somehow that thought made him sad, thinking about a time when Farrier was sad enough to hurt himself.

Farrier walked out into the hallway, hoping for another ‘accidental’ meeting with the blonde Scot that had almost completely occupied his mind for many months. Collins was out here at some point almost every night, so he had high hopes.

The blonde’s mind was racing, he was struggling to process what he’d been told, struggling to believe it. He knew Farrier was quiet, could be somewhat cold and distant, but he never imagined this may be why. He’d stopped allowing tears to fall, forcing himself into composure, but he felt numb inside. Collins didn’t consider himself someone who cried often, but he put it down to the little games he’d been playing with Farrier since he arrived, the subtle hints they’d been dropping each other without saying anything, that made him really care about the man, care enough to bring himself to tears over the knowledge that Farrier might not be happy. He rubbed his face and decided to go downstairs and wash it with cold water. There was some arbitrary thought about toughening up as he left his room, but it was forgotten when he saw just the person he didn’t want to see looking out into the quadrangle from the hallway.

“Hello Collins” the man said, his voice was so soft, so full of trust and content, Collins couldn’t walk away from that.

“Hiya” he tried to say, it came out as more of a crackle so he cleared his throat nervously and tried again.

“Hiya, Farrier” he didn’t get too close, Collins could feel his cheeks were red and didn’t want any prodding questions.

“You did well today, so did your friends” Farrier said.

“Thanks, warm water makes it easy” he said, looking out the window instead of at Farrier.

“I gather you didn’t have that up there?” Farrier said, crossing his arms with a smile.

“Nae, swam in the near freezing loch, or river all year round, whichever was warmer. Both dinnae get what you’d call ‘warm’” Collins replied, almost smiling at the memory.

“Sounds absolutely lovely” Farrier sarcastically chuckled.

“Was” Collins said seriously, still looking out the window.

“Scottish people are… quite different” Farrier remarked.

“Aye to you lot we are” Collins said, not sure if he should be offended by the odd comment or not.

“We’re different to each other too, us Scots, school excursion took us to Glasgow once, some lad said “Where the fuck are you from?” to the teacher!” Collins chuckled.

“Aye Am from the Highlands!” he impersonated the even thicker accent of the teacher, causing a deep rumbling laugh from Farrier.

“Aye from the Highlands, we have the strongest accent o’ course. Seem to be losin’ it down here though” the blonde said.

“No you’re not” Farrier said fondly.

Collins’ origins were a common topic of interest to Farrier, the blonde had picked up. So far they’d discussed accents, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and small town life.

“You ever been to Scotland?” Collins asked, curiosity getting the better of him.

“No, I’ve never left England apart from my time in the war” Farrier chuckled, Collins met his eyes, and immediately regretted it. They were full of joy, openness, trust. Such contrast to the information he’d been told about the man by his friends.

“Ya, but that was in the plane yae?” Collins crossed his arms.

“Well mostly, you don’t always land where you want to” Farrier smiled but nervously scratched the back of his head.
“You’ve crashed?” Collins asked shyly, not sure if he was overstepping something.
“Yeah I did once, I made a lucky bail as well, once. Both times happened in France, and I was lucky enough that the allies got to me before the others did.” Farrier said, he was still smiling but Collins could tell it was plastered on to hide something else.
“Were you okay?” Collins asked, somewhat knowing it would make Farrier uncomfortable, but he was too curious.
“Ah, nothing I couldn’t walk off” Farrier smiled warmly at him, Collins wasn’t sure he believed it. Farrier looked over at the blonde, he looked uncomfortable, he was shifting his weight from leg to leg and his eyes were looking out to the courtyard, but Farrier could tell he wasn’t really looking at anything.
Collins glanced at Farrier’s left wrist instinctually, he’d tried not to but his eyes had darted down anyway. There was nothing he could see because the man was in long sleeves, but he almost wished he could see, to have confirmation. Farrier didn’t miss the glance Collins threw down at his arm, and hoped his gut feeling about why was wrong.
“What’s on your mind?” Farrier said softly, turning his body to face Collins.
“Oh, just.. Ya know, stuff” Collins mumbled, there was no way he could work up the courage to actually tell Farrier.
“Well,” he patted Collins’ shoulder,
“I hope you figure your ‘stuff’ out.” he smiled.
“Thanks” Collins said quietly, trying not to look at Farrier in the eyes.
“I’m off to bed now, see you tomorrow.” Farrier said as he walked into his room.
“Night” Collins called back. When Farrier’s door shut the blonde made his way downstairs to wash his face.

The next day the sky was a brilliant blue and there wasn’t a cloud in sight, Collins had swallowed his pity, Farrier was fine now he thought, he’d seen the man laughing at breakfast, and Collins put his own emotions last night down to exhaustion. Though he still had trouble pushing the new information about Farriee out of his mind.
“Right class, today we’ll be learning about safety in and around planes” Canfield broke through Collins’ thoughts.
“Here we go” Dawson muttered to Collins. Indeed, it seemed like there was an awful lot of safety procedures to remember, so much that Collins thought it seemed a bit over the top.
“So depending on the if the plane has any, you will have to take the canvas covers off before starting anything” Canfield said, Wingnut yawned.
“Mr Timson, am I boring you?” the older man asked,
“No sir, not at all” Wingnut went red-faced and Canfield smiled a small smile.
“So who can tell me the first thing to do after taking any covers off the plane?” Canfield asked. Collins left his hand down though he knew the answer.
“Peterson” Canfield pointed with the chalk for the board.
“You need to check that everything looks correct inside, but don’t start the engine” the boy said.
“Very good, yes.” Canfield replied.
“Why can’t we start the engine if we’re ready?” asked Anderson.
“Because the ground crew still need to check the plane. You may be ready, but the bird mightn’t be. That, and the ground crew will be in front of the plane inspecting the engine and propeller, so if
you start the engine that could be very serious indeed” Canfield said. The lesson ended and the three friends walked out feeling burdened with safety procedures, Canfield didn’t even get time to describe anything past getting into the plane. “I had no clue it was that well thought out, I thought you just got in and went. That’s how we did it in civil flying school” Wingnut said, “Yeah same, I guess they got everything ready for us to just get in, but now we’re learning what they did” Dawson agreed. “I do think its good we know all this, but fuck that was a borin’ lesson” Collins said as they walked to the sandwich bar for lunch. A cool wind had begun to blow though the sky was still blue. The boys sat outside the store on a bench as they ate. “So you’re okay now mate?” Dawson asked Collins. “Yeah, just needed to think on it a bit, I’ll be okay” Collins smiled, though it wasn’t something he wanted to talk about. “You two going anywhere for the holidays?” Wingnut asked. “Holidays?” Collins repeated. “Do you never look at the calendar? We have a week off at the end of the month before we go into our first course in the training department station” Dawson said with an amused look. “Oh, that’s great” Collins said with a mouthful of sandwich. “Well I obviously haven’t planned anything” he added. “I might go back to Weymouth and see my family I think, gotta go swimming again before it gets too cold.” Dawson said. “I might try and get back to Scotland, dunno” Collin thought out loud, “I like it here so much, and my parents might not be so accommodating” he laughed. “Yeah, why’s that?” Wingnut asked, “Ah they just…” Collins thought of the right words. “They’re kinda disappointed in me” he said, looking Wingnut in the eye, he saw sadness in his friend’s expression. “I mean maybe I’ll go visit, we’ll see” Collins took another bite of food. “They got nothing to be disappointed about, their boy’s in the RAF!” Dawson said, trying to cheer Collins, “Ya I think so too, it’s that I’m a homosexual, guys” Collins said quietly. “Can’t it be overlooked?” Wingnut asked, “Well I wish, but mae Daw especially cannae see me as a proper man” Collins sighed. “Let’s walk back” he added, standing up with the remainder of his lunch. After lunch they had a class with one of the officers who they hadn’t even met before. “Greetings class, I’m officer Maxwell. I’m filling in for Canfield as he has an appointment” the man said. He was average looking in every way to Collins. “What appointment might that be? Johnson asked leaning back in his chair. “An appointment that doesn’t concern the students” the man said. He was average looking in every way to Collins. “Greetings class, I’m officer Maxwell. I’m filling in for Canfield as he has an appointment” the man said. He was average looking in every way to Collins. “Now, I’ve been instructed to continue on safety from the previous lesson.” The class groaned. “If you don’t know how to get into a plane safely, you’re putting yourself in just as much danger as you are flying into enemy fire.” Maxwell said in a stern voice. Collins was in more of a learning mood now than before, and was subsequently less bored. “So you got up to entering the plane?” Maxwell asked, a few nods around the classroom confirmed. “Okay, so you need to pay attention to the ground crew, they signal when it’s okay to start the engine and what-not.” He said. “So be watching out of both sides of the cockpit canopy for them to give you the all go. Then you can close the canopy by pulling the wire. Do not close it by holding the actual canopy, and do not slam it any harder than you need to.” He said, and began to write the points in short on the board, Collins copied them down with the rest of the class.
Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): implied/referenced self harm/scar

Thank you everyone for reading, hope some of it wasn’t too heavy for you. Hope everyone’s enjoying the festivities, see you next chapter!
Canfield sat in his office on the phone to the Air Ministry.
“We would like to convert RAF Gatwick into a functioning air base, we would of course preserve the training, but when the inevitable happens Officer Canfield, we will need every available landing ground we can get our hands on.” A crackly voice came over the telephone. Canfield’s chest welled up with excitement.

“Oh yes, if squadrons needed to stay here we could house four quite comfortably, five if need be” Canfield said, Farrier walked into the office and Canfield put a finger to his mouth to tell the man to be quiet. Farrier put his hands up in mock surrender and smiled. He rummaged around Canfield’s desk and got his hands swatted away, so he waited in the seat opposite the man’s desk until his phone call had finished.

“Yes the underground dining area is a bunker” Canfield said over the phone, earning him a quizzical look from Farrier, which he ignored.

“Indeed, I had heard there was some construction going on for future conflicts but I never did get the details.” The man said.

“Very well!” the man chuckled.

“The Air Ministry wants to convert Gatwick into a full time base in the near future in preparations for another conflict. They’re going to be sending the Chief of the Air Staff in a few months for evaluation.” Canfield said matter-of-factly. After a few seconds he let a smile creep onto his face, and Farrier followed.

“Jesus” Farrier said and stood up, the men embraced.

“That’s amazing!” Farrier said.
“Yes, I had no expectations for it at all!” Canfield laughed.
“Now, what were you looking for?” Canfield asked.
“I can’t find my watch” Farrier said absent-mindedly.
“Checked your bedside drawer?” Canfield asked.
“Yes, checked everywhere. I hope it didn’t somehow fall off somewhere stupid” Farrier said.
“I’m sure it’ll turn up somewhere, Tom” Canfield smiled.
“Yes” Farrier said.
“So your meeting is over?”
“Yes, went a lot faster than I expected, usually when the Ministry calls it’s for forty minutes or more. Maybe I should go and take my class” Canfield chuckled, they both made for the door.
“How’s Miller?” the old man asked.
“Haven’t had much chance to talk to him, but Maxwell says he’s fine, which is great to hear” Farrier said as they walked up the corridor to Canfield’s classroom.
“You don’t have a class right now?” Canfield asked.
“No, I’ve got a break” Farrier said.
“Why don’t you go see if the kitchen is still empty, see what we can do about it, no good if students can’t cook for themselves here.” Canfield said.
“Okay” Farrier smiled and continued down the hall when Canfield entered his classroom.
“Hello Maxwell” he said.
“Oh, Hello Canfield. Your meeting is over?” he asked.
Canfield nodded and walked into the room over to his desk.
“Thanks for taking over for me, even if only for half the lesson.” He said,
“How’s Miller?” the old man asked.
“Fairly self-explanatory I think” Charles said with a smirk.
“Fair enough” Canfield chuckled.
Farrier checked every cupboard, and didn’t find anything except for some old teabags and stale crackers. He got some paper from his office and began a list of food to put into the kitchen, that would be used and that would last a long time. He also made a mental note to put a sign up for the students in the kitchen about keeping it clean, and replacing food yourself to contribute to the communal kitchen. After completing his list and leaving it on Canfield’s desk, along with a note to take it out of Farrier’s own pay knowing otherwise Canfield would pay for it all, he decided to go and check the newly repaired plane.
The brunette walked out onto the grass and over the landing strip to the hangar that the Harvard was in.
Collins saw Farrier walking outside, he followed where the man was walking but realised he’d been looking away from the front for suspiciously long, so he pulled his eyes from Farrier and back to the board.
The plane looked great, it had been polished and painted and the fuselage looked just as it was supposed to.
The class was finally over, and Collins internally sighed, it had been a long lesson. He walked down the hall, well behind his friends who had run off after each other. He liked walking in the empty halls, the base was a very nice building to Collins, all dark wood and ornate embellishes. He meandered down the hall looking out the window into the courtyard, half a thought passed through his mind about what the physical lesson this week would be. He approached the corner, walking past the door which led to the locker room and shower and subsequently outside, remembering
getting measured by Farrier there. As if the thought had some magical effect, the door swung inward quickly, and Farrier stepped out. Collins was startled but didn’t jump this time.

“Oh, sorry” Farrier said, but his voice trailed off upon realising how close in proximity he was to Collins. His eyes trailed down to the boy’s lips but then darted back up to his eyes. Collins couldn’t be bothered taking his eyes off Farrier, who was slightly mesmerised looking up at Collins, who was crowding him in the doorway. Farrier had to end this moment, it was far too heated and both of them knew it, it was a miracle nobody had walked past and seen them. Farrier gently put his hand on Collins’ side, he felt him jump underneath his touch and saw heat rise in Collins’ cheeks. Farrier pushed him to the side with the hand that was holding him. He smirked back at Collins as he walked off down the hallway. All Collins could do was brace an arm on the wall and exhale.

Collins walked upstairs and sat in his room. He was usually not in a particularly social mood, but his friends always dragged him into games, this was an opportunity to be by himself because miraculously they hadn’t asked him to play anything, yet. He wanted to draw, but Collins just lay on his bed reliving Farrier’s touch on his body. His hand was big and warm, and strong. If Collins imagined hard enough, he could still feel it. He wanted to feel it again, and more.

The next day Collins was alerted that he had mail, it was from his parents. The letter didn’t hold any particular value, except that his house had purchased a telephone and it was now hooked up to the town phone line. Upon reading the number Collins told Canfield so he had an emergency contact, and then made a very expensive call to them that afternoon.

“Aye this is Don Collins speaking?” Collins’ father’s voice came through the telephone and a wave of nerves hit Collins’ stomach, “Da, it’s me” he said excitedly.

“Jack! Great of yae to call, lad. How’s work doon there?” Don’s husky voice rang through.

“Ya it’s great, the base is so big and there’s so much to do, it’s so good” he said, smiling though nobody could see.

“How’s Ma?” Collins asked, “Aye she’s well, cannae complain.” His father said. The wind blew outside the telephone box and Collins shivered.

“I was ringin’ to say that, ah, we have a week of holidays soon. I was wonderin’ if I could come up” he nervously fiddled with the phone cord.

“Well of course you can lad! When will it be?” his father sounded happy, but not elated.

“Last week of this month” Collins said, “Great! You gonna catch the train or?” Don asked.

“Train ye, it’ll be nice to see you two again” Collins said before adding, “Yae know, this phone call is costing a lot Da, I might have tae go soon” Collins heard a chuckle through the line.

“Of course son, and nae it’s not cheap. We’ll see you soon then!” he said.

“Sure will, love you Da” Collins said.

“Love you too son.” Don said before hanging the phone up. It was cold outside the phone box but Collins felt warm from the conversation.

The remaining weeks of the term passed with, to both Collins’ and Farrier’s disappointment, no more happenings. There were a few chats they shared outside their rooms as usual, but it was strictly business, Farrier made a point of not asking personal questions as much as he could upon realising how very hard he had fallen.

Until Collins’ second to last night being at the base before leaving for Aviemore, when he found the opportunity to finally tell Farrier he was going away. It was another night time conversation in the corridor, when everyone else was fast asleep. Collins had genuinely gone into the corridor with the intention of drawing, fed up with the view from his bedroom window. Inevitably, Farrier had come out soon after hearing the blonde’s door, staging it as an accident as usual.

“So” Farrier said, leaning against the windowsill, he waited for Collins to look over at him before
“Are you going away for the holidays?” he asked, he held a calm smile but his stomach churned in anticipation.

“Actually I am” Collins said, he was happy but it hurt to say it to Farrier. The man’s smile didn’t leave his face, but Collins knew Farrier wasn’t glad to hear he was going. Farrier hummed to himself and looked down at his clasped hands in front of him.

“Where?” he asked, not looking up.

“Home” Collins couldn’t keep the smile from his mouth. He looked down from Farrier to the sketchbook he never opened.

“For the whole week?” Farrier asked,

“Yeah” Collins replied, not really knowing what else to say. After a silence he decided on,

“Are you going away?”

“No, nowhere to go really” Farrier laughed and looked at Collins with a sad smile.

“Ah, sure yae got somewhere” Collins smiled.

“Not really” Farrier said sighing, he didn’t mind but it was a fact.

“Not even with yer parents?” Collins pressed, but immediately regretted doing so when Farrier began shifting around uncomfortably.

“Well my father and I don’t really have a healthy relationship, unfortunately.” Farrier said, with half a smile on his face, Collins didn’t know how to make the situation better.

“Wha’ about yer mum?” he arrived at. There was a silence and Farrier looked through the window, moonlight illuminating his face. His eyes fell and looked down at the courtyard.

“My mum’s dead.” His voice was quiet, and full of sadness. Collins felt winded, there was nothing coming to his mouth to say, he couldn’t believe he’d brought this conversation to such an awful point.

“Farrier…” he began, the man looked at him, his eyes clear but his face showing too much sorrow, Collins wished he’d never gone down this path of questions.

“Farrier I’m so, so sorry” Collins couldn’t maintain eye contact.

“It.. It’s okay” Farrier stammered, clearing his throat.

“She was very sick, but she kept it from me because I was so young, I believed her healthy until-” he stopped talking after that, he was looking up to stop tears falling.

“What was she like?” Collins asked quietly, hoping this would somehow remedy the conversation.

“The best” Farrier replied with a small nostalgic smile,

“She loved me no matter what I did or said, or wanted to do or say.” he almost laughed and then looked into Collins’ eyes, the blonde couldn’t look away, Collins was almost certain he was referring to his sexual preference and that she didn’t care.

“I suppose thanks to Mum I have this job, actually” Farrier continued, looking out the window again. The moonlight caught the scattered few scars on his head, illuminating the pale skin.

“Oh ya? How’s that?” Collins asked, relieved the mood had lightened somewhat.

“Well Canfield is an old family friend actually, and as a young man I was really struggling to get employed. Canfield owned a plane and flew it in fairs and the like. My mother asked him if I could help him with it, not even necessarily fly it but just help with the upkeep and what-not. He already had a few other men that helped and also flew their own planes, and they got paid for their work. Of course Canfield agreed to take me on” Farrier explained using his hands.

“Oh that’s great” Collins smiled.

“Yes it was incredibly kind of him. So I would learn to do the engine work, polish the plane, that kind of thing, so he didn’t have to. He got enough from all the fairs, flying events and the like that he didn’t mind paying me a bit.” Farrier smiled downwards.

“So he would get paid for flyin?” Collins asked.

“Yeah, they used to hold competitions, who was the fastest, who could do this or that trick better, that kind of thing. Eventually he began letting me fly sometimes, and that’s how it started.” Farrier explained.

“The novelty of planes kind of stopped when the war broke out though and they realised they could
weaponise them” he added.
“I can imagine” Collins said, though the fascination hadn’t yet worn off on him.
“So how did that transition into Squadron Leader?” Collins wondered aloud.
“Well do you know how the RAF started?” Farrier asked.
“No’ really” Collins replied scratching the back of his neck.
Farrier fondly smiled out the window.
“Well in 1912, the army realised it could use planes in war, so it formed a branch called the Royal
Flying Corps. Most of the pilots were men like Canfield and I, who had experience flying in events
and as hobbies, and when they began training more pilots for the war it wasn’t like this regimental
stuff you’re doing, it was very much touch and go” Farrier explained.
“Interesting. So you two learned from experience, none of this studying?” Collins joked.
“Unfortunately we didn’t have the luxury of this studying, we were thrust into dangerous machines
with little idea what we were doing” Farrier smiled back, causing Collins to huff in jest.
“But yeah anyway, that turned into the RAF in 1918 when it branched away from the army and
became a separate thing, and here we are” Farrier smiled and crossed his arms.
“Right then” Collins said smiling back.
“I should get to bed” Collins said after a moment of just looking at each other.
“Okay, you don’t want to stay up any longer?” Farrier found himself asking, he wanted Collins to
stay later, selfishly.
“i mean, i can” Collins smiled.
“Wanna see some of my work?” he added. He felt like Farrier wouldn’t judge his art.
“Yes please” Farrier said softly, moving closer to Collins, who was immensely glad of the fact. He
flipped through his older work to his newest pages.
“So this is my watch, of course” he showed a sketch of his watch sitting on a table.
“Is that a new watch?” Farrier asked, eyeing out the real thing on Collins’ arm.
“Kinda, for my birthday” he smiled before turning the page.
“Who gave it to you?” Farrier asked,
“Ah Wingnut an’ Dawson” Collins answered. Farrier only smiled in response, happy inside that it
wasn’t a secret admirer.
“An’ this is just somethin’ for practice I did” Collins said as he turned the page to a pair of hands,
one wringing the wrist of the other.
“Sometimes I struggle with drawing people, I mean I never draw their faces but ye” Collins said,
“Why not draw faces?” Farrier asked, leaning against the windowsill.
“Well, s’pose they’ve got too many aspects, perfections, imperfections, I cannae capture the
complexity so I donnae try because-“ he looked at Farrier, who wasn’t looking at the book as
Collins thought, but at him.
“Won’t be perfect, not even close to perfect” the blonde finished, blue eyes looking into blue eyes.
Farrier’s lips twitched up on one side into the faintest of smiles. Collins found it very hard to pull
his gaze off those plump lips, but he did. Clearing his throat he began,
“I should get some sleep” hearing his voice sounded too loud in the silence.
“Me too. Night Collins” Farrier said and began to walk off.
“And thank you” he added.
“Wha’ for?” Collins smiled as he reached his door,
“Listening to me drabble on” Farrier smiled,
“I’ll be willing to listen to you drabble on any time” Collins said, but quickly darted inside his
room upon realising how stupid a thing it was to say aloud. He shut the door and his cheeks felt
warm. Farrier smiled contentedly. It was amusing how Collins didn’t seem to have much control
over his words, just another little thing that had Farrier completely awestruck. He was just so pure
and happy, Farrier realised perhaps that was a reason he fancied him, he wanted to be more like
Collins. The man crawled into bed before he could dissect the thought any further.
Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): Parental death

Well I hope everyone enjoyed! Thanks to all of you who leave kudos and comments, it really means the world to me!! Until next chapter guys 💕
Arrival in Aviemore

Chapter Notes

Yeah it’s a bit late because of new year but here’s the next chapter everyone, hope you all enjoy ❤
Fun fact I’ve been to Aviemore several times, can’t remember if I’ve already mentioned that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Before Collins was entirely ready, it was the day he planned to depart. His suitcase was almost packed, it was seven in the morning and he couldn’t find his pencils. Granted, he hadn’t left his room yet so he exited into the hallway and found them all on the windowsill, internally scolding himself for leaving his belongings around he gathered them up. He went down to breakfast for the last time for a week.

“Well have fun up there mate” Dawson said, “Ye you two have good times as well” Collins said to Wingnut and Dawson as they ate. “Is it gonna be cold?” Wingnut asked, “Hopefully” Collins laughed. “But it will be colder than here undoubtedly” he added.

Farrier watched as Collins joked with his friends at the breakfast table, he had a heavy feeling inside him that this was the last time he was going to see him all week. “What is it?” Canfield asked, seeing Farrier staring seemingly into space. “Oh, nothing. Just daydreaming” Farrier said, beginning to eat so he wouldn’t have to talk. Then it was time to go for Collins, he exited his room with his suitcase, he was wearing his full uniform as it was a colder day and a completely woollen uniform did wonders. That, and it looked good.

“Looking dapper for the parents?” Dawson asked as he walked with Collins, “Ah, doubt they’d care for that kind of thing, just cold today, and up there especially” Collins explained. “Ah they’ll love the uniform, everyone does” Wingnut added. The friends had decided they’d leave base at the same time, all were visiting their families and as the trains from Gatwick were going hourly it made sense. “You two go on ahead, I forgot somethin’” Collins muttered as they reached the front door. “Well be quick, the train won’t wait for us!” Wingnut called after Collins as he jogged back up the stairs. He had forgotten something, he hadn’t said goodbye to Farrier. He knew it was stupid, but still he ran upstairs and tentatively knocked on Farrier’s door. “Who is it?” Came from the other side. “Ah, me” Collins said through the wooden door. It swung inwards to reveal Farrier in the same casual clothes he was in at breakfast, light blue pyjama pants with a deep blue turtleneck. Not the spitting image of fashion, but definitely comfortable. “Hello Collins, thought you had a train to catch” Farrier said, “Ya I do, but I just wanted tae say bye to ya.” Collins mumbled. Farrier’s features went soft at the blonde’s words. Forehead creases disappeared and blue eyes lit up with surprise. “Thank you, I didn’t think I was in your thoughts that much that you’d care to say goodbye” Farrier
said and leant on the doorframe. He continued,

"Though I’d hoped I was"

the brunette risked a glance at Collins, his expression was telling that he’d tried to come up with one of his flirtatious little retorts, but it seemed this time he was rather too flustered. He just stood there, rosy cheeked but smiling.

“Well I’ll be off, hope your holidays are well” Collins said quickly after too long a pause.

“Thanks Collins, you too. Don’t get into too much trouble, something very important is happening when you get back, as you should know.” Farrier smiled knowingly.

“What?” Collins couldn’t help but say.

“Ah I shouldn’t tell you, you’ll blab, not sure why you don’t know already to be honest” Farrier chuckled, crossing his arms.

“Nae I won’t blab! C’mon” Collins cocked his head to the side playfully, his hair flopped along with it.

Farrier sighed, and told him not because he thought he should, but just to see his face.

“I was just going to say, the first course at the training department station, what you’ll be beginning when you’re all back from holiday, is when you go into the planes” he said very matter—of-factly. Collins could do nothing but beam, causing Farrier to break out into a smile also.

Collins glanced at his watch and realised he couldn’t stay.

“I have to go!” Collins said, and began off down the hall.

“Bye Collins, see you next week.” Farrier chuckled after him. Shaking his head Farrier went back into his bedroom, marvelling at how excited the boy was. If he’d only read the pamphlets and weekly bulletins properly he’d have known already, it was amusing that this was Collins’ first time hearing the information, Farrier had just staged it as a secret for fun, but he did wonder if Collins would keep it to himself or not.

It was all Collins could do not to tell Wingnut and Dawson as soon as he saw them.

“Got whatever you needed?” Dawson asked.

“Ya” Collins replied, getting his sketch book out from the inside pocket of his blazer, acting as if he didn’t have it before.

“Let’s go then!” Wingnut said, almost jogging down the road in the direction of the train station. The sky was cloudy and by the time the boys reached the Gatwick train station it was beginning to rain slightly. They all boarded the train to London Victoria with a minute to spare, earning them a scornful look from the conductor. Collins caught a small smile on the man’s face as they boarded before he blew the whistle though.

“So Wingnut, you’re just gonnae get off in London and go?” Collins asked.

“Yeah, I need to go catch the underground for a bit as well, but yeah my parents live pretty close to London Victoria so it’s not too bad” he explained.

“An’ you?” Collins asked Dawson,

“Well I’m gettin’ on an overground train that departs from London Victoria, so I just need to change platforms. You?” Dawson asked.

“Mine departs from Kings Cross, so I need to find my way there” Collins answered.

“Hey Collins, I think I know what train yours is. Is it that one called… Uh, something…” Wingnut tried to think. Collins laughed,"

“Aye it has a name, it’s the Flying Scotsman!” he said.

“Ah that’s it! Yeah I thought it’d be the one with a funny name, come to think of it I don’t know any other trains that go to Scotland” Wingnut added.

“There aren’t really any that go from doon here, just the Flying Scotsman that goes from London once a day at ten in the Morrow” Collins said with a smile.

“Once a day? Wow” Dawson said in disbelief,
“Well, once in each direction” Collins added, Dawson scoffed.
“How long will that take?” Wingnut asked.
“My train? Seven hours twenty minutes I believe is the new quoted time they’re giving it to get to Edinburgh. Now that food’s allowed on it doesn’t stop in York for so long, just to refuel” Collins said, Dawson and Wingnut exchanged looks.
“Then I got my second train from Edinburgh into the highlands, an’ that’s two hours.” He added, secretly enjoying how surprised his friends were.
“Well have fun on your almost ten hour journey” Dawson chuckled.
“Thanks, I will” Collins said unsarcastically. The train pulled up in central London and the blondes both hugged Wingnut as he walked off to the underground part of the station. Dawson then left to his train, and Collins asked a conductor how to get to Kings Cross, and it turned out he did need to take the underground to it which was an experience in itself, but he arrived and boarded the Flying Scotsman with time to spare.

The train ride was beautiful. Collins enjoyed it almost as much as the one he’d taken down to London, as it was raining then and rain was one of his favourite things, as well as Scotland, drawing, the RAF, and the relatively new addition to his favourite things, Farrier.
“Anythin’ for ya?” a carriage attendant asked, wheeling a tray of food along.
“Nae, thanks though” Collins responded, the woman was eyeing his uniform, he realised.
“You’re in the air force?” she asked.
“Ya” he smiled as genuinely as he could.
“Which base then?” she asked.
“London Gatwick, aye” Collins answered.
“No’ any base in Scotland for yae?” She pressed. Collins cleared his throat and tried to think of an answer.
“Ah just lookin’ for a change” he arrived at. She shrugged and continued wheeling the food cart along. After many hours of staring out the window, drawing, and thinking, the train arrived at York. Collins hadn’t been there before, having stayed on the train for the lunch stop when coming down to London. He decided to get out and stretch his legs this time, opting to take his blazer off and stow it in his suitcase on the train while doing so as to be less conspicuous.

York turned out to be cute, it was a tiny town and had, Collins learned, the best preserved medieval street in the world according to the man at the pastry shop he went into. It also had a big stone wall around the city that Collins walked part way along before heading back to the train.

The blonde watched as the rolling green hills of England gave way to the rugged but beautiful landscape of his homeland. Resting his head against the window Collins watched the train wind through the hills around Edinburgh, making out Arthur’s Seat in the distance, the sun low in the sky. The train pulled into the station some minutes later. The sun was setting over Edinburgh Castle when Collins left the station to go find some food. He had almost an hour wait for the next train to the north, so he decided to look around a bit. Granted he had to take his suitcase around, but at least the man could stretch his legs. Collins eventually found some sort of deli at which he purchased a cheap sandwich and ate it on a bench on the footpath. Finally it was time to board. Collins hauled his suitcase onto the train and sat down. It was almost dark outside but Collins could make
out the vague shapes of hills and some buildings as they left Edinburgh. At some point on the trip he realised he didn’t know if he was being met at the train station by his parents or not, but it didn’t matter much to him, not like they had a car to drive him back, not like the town was large enough to warrant one. As the train got further north, the cold began to seep through the windows of the ill-heated train. Collins got out his leather gauntlets from his suitcase. Never worn, still flat together, he slipped them onto his cold hands. The leather was soft, much more comfortable than he expected, and they were oh-so-warm. Collins’ fingers warmed up in minutes, no wonder they issued these to the RAF. Even on summer nights like these it wasn’t particularly warm in the highlands. The very tip of his nose wouldn’t warm up, neither would his cheeks or ears. Wishing he had a warm drink, the blonde noticed the train was slowing. It was so dark he didn’t realise he was close to his destination. He got out of the train at the familiar small station of Aviemore.

Collins couldn’t keep the content smile from his face. Thanking the train conductor as he walked off, he smiled down the road to his house. The walk was dream-like, even in the cold dark night he knew every store and every house on the street, knew where the bumps in the pavement were, he knew everything so well. Collins turned off the main street onto a smaller one, and continued right to the end at which there was his house, on the very edge of the town, his backyard was the hills surrounding Aviemore.

Collins stood at his front door, suitcase at his feet. He ran a hand through his blonde locks nervously before knocking. He waited for a while, and there was no answer. Collins was beginning to get nervous when his mother opened the door. As soon as she saw him she beamed and threw her arms around him.

“So good to see you Jack” she mumbled into the hug.
“You too, maw” Collins smiled, his name almost sounded strange to him after being called by his last name exclusively back at base.
“Mind lettin’ me in?” he added when she didn’t let go.
“Of course, of course, cold out” she said, taking his suitcase.
“It’s okay, maw, I got it” Collins happily took the case inside. He put it by the door and let his mother hang his RAF blazer up on the coat rack inside the door. Collins felt like he might wake up and be back at the base, it was a strange surreal feeling seeing his home for the first time in months, just how he left it. Collins’ father was waiting in the lounge room, and sturdily walked towards his son as soon as he saw him.

“So good to have yae back, son” he said as they hugged.
“Good tae be back” Collins replied. The room was warm from the fireplace, that as well as small oil lamps illuminating the old stone walls.
“You have to tell us all about it!” Collins’ mother said as they sat around the dinner table eating roast pheasant, no doubt bought just for the occasion.
“What yae wanna know?” Collins said between mouthfuls.
“Well there was nae problem getting in?” his dad asked.
“Nae, like I said, record’s donnae get passed outside the country, so they didnae know who I was” Collins said, and took a bite.
“Took my civil flying certificate in and they accepted it,” he swallowed.
“An’ tha’ was tha’” he finished.
“Excellent, son” his father said.
“Yae it is, really happy with the trainin’ they’re givin’ me too” Collins said.
“What’re yae doing?” his mum asked.
“Well” Collins swallowed again, slightly irritated that he couldn’t just eat his food.
“We havn’ae gone in the planes yet, but we do a lot of theory, aerodynamics, mathematics, physics, some safety lessons, and also physical activity every week” he listed, realising he spoke more scots with his parents than with his English friends.
“Sounds very technical” his mum said,
“Aye, is” Collins said as he shoved more food in his mouth.
“Goon’ up in the planes sometime soon after I get back though” he added.

“that’ll be good news for yae” Collins’ dad chuckled earning a smile from the blonde.

“Yae the officers say they’re very different to the ones anyone trained in at civil flying school so
we need to know a lot more, an’ that in civil training they got the plane all ready for us to just go
up in, but now we’re learnin’ how tae prepare them for flight ourselves” Collins said. His mind
went back to Farrier. He wondered how he was doing, what he was up to at this moment, almost
wishing he was here with him, but the thought of Farrier and his parents in the same room wasn’t a
comfortable one.

After dinner all Collins wanted to do was retire to his old bedroom, but of course his parents
wanted to talk more.

“So ‘ave yae met any friends there?” his father asked.

“Aye, two good friends. Dawson and Wingnut, both also boarding” Collins answered.

“Wingnut’s his name?” Collins’ mother asked. Collins laughed,

“Nae, his name’s Timson, we just call him that because of his ears” the blonde chuckled. They sat
for a while longer asking menial questions about what Collins had been up to, before his mother
eventually excused herself to go to sleep.

“Night maw” Collins called after her,

“Night son, sleep well” she replied.

Collins sat at the fire watching it flicker for a while before his father spoke.

“So, son” he began. Collins knew what he was going to say.

“I’m very glad yer back, but I just wanted tae clear somethin’ up, aye?” he said. Collins nodded,
making brief eye contact before looking back at the fire. He felt like a boy again, being scolded,
couldn’t his father wait one night before bringing it up?

“I just hope, that yer bein’ sensible in this job of men, we’ve gone over this, an’ what happened
with Benjamin, but that’s not gonna happen again, is it son?” he said, uncomfortable.

“I know, Da, it won’t happen again, I know I cannae do anythin’ about it aye? I just have tae keep
my feelings to myself, it’s all I can do.” Collins explained. He’d always tried to be as open as he
could with his parents, but they would never understand this.

“Can’t yae try with lasses Jack?” he asked.

Collins just sighed,

“I have, doesn’ae work. Look, I need some sleep Da” he said, trying to get out of the conversation.

“Of course. See yae in the morrow son” his father replied.

He wished his parents never found out, it had separated Collins from them both, his father more so
than his mother. The blonde lay in bed hoping Benjamin didn’t run into him while he was staying
there. Then Collins’ mind drifted back to when Benjamin had kissed him the first time, his first
kiss. Collins had no real idea it was going to happen, they’d just gotten out of the water from racing
to get the ball that had been thrown into it by a nearby group of schoolboys, when Benjamin had
taken a route away from the boys playing which involved walking behind a small fishing shed,
shielding them from any prying eyes, not that there were many. Suddenly Collins noticed things he
hadn’t before, just how tall Ben was, just how green his eyes were, how dark his hair was, and then
Benjamin had kissed him, wet from the water but warm, soft and unsure. There were a few more
times after that, always Ben initiated, Collins was shy, more so than nowadays. But then Collins
remembered taking Benjamin back to his house when his parents were out after summing up the
courage, how Ben had taken control of the situation and how that was the night Collins had his
first sexual encounter with another person. Benjamin had been good, so good and Collins never
wanted it to end, he didn’t let it escalate as far as Ben wanted it to, something told him it was
wrong, rushed. Afterwards they had sat on the couch together, lazily kissing, messy and wetly.
Collins could tell now that there weren’t any real feelings, it was just experimentation. Now that he
knew what it was like to have real feelings for someone. The night with Ben was interrupted when
Collins’ parents abruptly arrived home early, and that was how he was discovered. Ben’s parents
weren’t as close with him, Benjamin would come and go as he pleased, either they never found out or didn’t care much because they didn’t see their son that much anyway. Not like the strong bond Collins had with his parents before that fateful night. The blonde tried to shake the memory from his head as he listened to the wind outside the house. It was rare for there to be two homosexuals in one town, Collins never was sure if it was good or bad, now that Farrier had entered the picture he supposed it didn’t matter anymore.

Farrier lay in bed listening to soft rain on the window. He didn’t like the holidays as much as he knew he should, he got bored and never knew how to have fun or what to do with all the spare time and ended up at the pub more than necessary. He hoped all the students were having fun wherever they were, and the man eventually fell asleep of thoughts of how to preoccupy himself for the next week.

He woke the next day and as soon as he looked around the room he knew it was much later than his usual waking time. He sat up slowly and blinked at the desk clock, 11:49AM. Instinctually he jumped out of bed, still in routine of being up early to begin teaching, and it was only when he was halfway into his trousers that he realised he had no classes. Farrier continued to dress and then lazily opened the window to the cool morning air. The sky was blue and he could hear traffic in the distance. Farrier hummed to himself as he closed the window and walked out of his bedroom. He’d have to find something to do or he’d go mad.

Chapter End Notes

Ahh feels good to upload another chapter, only means things are getting closer to beginning between our flyboys right??
Let me know what you thought, I’m interested to read!
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com if you need more dunkirk goodness.

And remember, I upload at least 1 chapter a week here!

See you all for the next chapter, and happy 2019!
Collins was woken up by knocking on his door.
“Ello?” he said weakly in a grumbly voice.
“Mornin’ son, thought you might want tae come to market” it was Collins’ mother.
“Aye lemme wake up” Collins yelled through the closed door. The blonde sat up and ran a hand through messy hair, which felt a bit too long to be regimental anymore. He managed to drag himself out of bed and eat breakfast with relative speed, and when his mother ushered him out the front door he realised it was somewhat later than he’d been used to getting up at base. Collins checked his watch to see it was past midday and now understood why he was being rushed.

They walked down the street together and made their way to the lawn on which the market was held.
“Bet everyone’ll be happy to se yae Jack” she remarked.
“Yae” was all Collins could manage, he didn’t think particularly much of the sentence until he realised Benjamin would probably see him at some point.
“What we getting at the market?” he asked to distract himself.
“Ah just vegetables for the soup tonight” his mum replied.

They walked around the market stalls for the good part of an hour, with plenty of people coming up and greeting Collins, all of which seemed to think he’d grown in the few months he’d been away. After they’d done the rounds of the stalls and gotten everything for dinner, Collins and his mother walked back home and Collins internally sighed in relief as they entered the front door, that he hadn’t run into Ben. That night he helped his mother cook the dinner and then relished in another homecooked meal, one of only a handful he’d get before it was back to the mass-cooked food at base.

“You” Canfield began, waiting for Farrier to look up.
“Need a hobby” he finished when the younger man finally gave his attention.
“I have hobbies, plenty” Farrier answered pointedly, he had been trying to do some reading up on the new plans for the base when Canfield had entered his office asking if he wanted to play chess.
“What are they?” Canfield asked.
“Well, theres…” Farrier was ashamed he actually had to think about his hobbies.
“Flying” he answered after thought,
“That’s your job, next” Canfield said.
“I read sometimes” Farrier answered sheepishly. Canfield sighed.
“Come and play chess, you used to love it as a lad, don’t know where that version of you went but now you just want to sit and stress yourself out” the older man said. Farrier sighed and relented. He put the papers in a pile and got up.
“Alright, but only one game” he said as they walked upstairs to Canfield’s room where the chess board was.

As Collins ate he noticed his father was hurrying,
“Why yae eatin’ so fast?” Collins asked with a slight smile.
“Gotta go oot after” his father mumbled in response.
“He’s goin’ huntin’ with his mates, mightn’t be back for a while” his mother smiled across the table at her husband.
After dinner his father left and his mother sat on the couch knitting. Collins considered going out but couldn’t be bothered and decided to retire early.

Surprisingly he survived the week in his hometown without incident.

His father didn’t bring up any past experiences except the time he had on the first night, and so Collins just enjoyed the relaxed feeling of Aviemore as he remembered it. Everyone was slower, he hadn’t realised it but in Gatwick and central London everyone seemed to hurry through their day, always somewhere to be or something to do. He’d forgotten that in Aviemore as small as it was that everyone took their time going about their activities, and Collins missed that. Before he knew it, it was the final night before he headed back to base. Because it took essentially an entire day to travel back to Gatwick he had to leave on Sunday to arrive for the day on Monday, which was the first day back and was a full day of classes. After pacing around the house for some time Collins decided he may as well visit the pub, he used to most weeks, so for old time’s sake, he thought he would again now.

So out he went, down the cold dark streets to the only pub of note in town. He checked his watch, 7:38pm. After reaching the pub, he was greeted warmly by the staff who all knew him.
“Where’s the uniform then?” the owner, Mackenzie asked.
“Ah not wearin’ it, too much attention” Collins laughed. After the train ride up he’d decided it best to stay in casual clothes and was therefore in his navy turtleneck. Collins sat down, but before he could order anything Benjamin walked in the door. Collins’ stomach dropped, after a week of not seeing him he’d somewhat forgotten it was even a possibility. The dark haired man hadn’t spotted him yet and Collins tried to look away but he couldn’t. Ben had grown a slight beard since he last saw, and looked rougher. Then green eyes met blue, and that was the kick Collins needed to finally look away. The blonde froze and tried to act normal, he didn’t know if he should try and leave or not, and before he knew it a warm hand was on his shoulder.
“Jack!” Benjamin said with a warm smile. Collins managed a small smile and they embraced, however much Collins hadn’t wanted to.
“How are we then?” Ben took the seat next to Collins at the bar.
“Yae great, you?” Collins said.
“Aye good, how long’ve you been here? I daenae even know you were till just now mate” Ben almost laughed.
“Ah I’ve been here a week, my last night tonight though” Collins said.
“Fook well then, better have some fun!” Ben laughed, but Collins knew what he was implying. Music began playing somewhat loudly, Collins was grateful for the distraction. The barman came back and Collins ordered his usual Yorkshire pudding. Ben didn’t leave while he ate, instead kept trying to instigate conversation.
“C’mon tell me what it’s like!” he nudged Collins causing the blonde to feel that familiar butterfly feeling in his belly.
“I mean, haven’t been flying yet even, just lessons in classrooms and learning to fight” he answered between mouthfuls.
“Learning to fight?” Ben laughed.
“Wha’s funny?” Collins snapped without looking up from his food. Benjamin had a look in those green eyes that Collins couldn’t place.
“Maybe you’ll have to show me” he said in a low voice, the brunette’s mouth twisted into a smirk. Now Collins knew that look, he huffed and returned to eating. After his last night being dampened by seeing the person he didn’t want to, Collins excused himself from the pub as soon as he’d
finished eating, instead of having a few drinks like he’d planned. Of course Benjamin followed him out of the pub and down the road. Collins thought to himself, as long as he acted as just a friend it would be okay.

“So Jack, when yae gonnae tell me more about what you’ve been up to?”
“I did Ben” Collins smiled,
“I mean” he said, stepping in front of Collins on the empty footpath.
“When are we gonnae get some time to catch up properly?” he said. Collins didn’t have to look upwards to many people at over six feet tall himself, but Benjamin was one of them. The blonde sighed and pushed past.
“I’m not here to do that, aye? We’re just mates Ben” he said. He heard a deep chuckle.
“We both know that’s not how you really feel” he said sternly. Collins just frowned at him but before he could continue walking Ben grabbed his arm and pulled him into a side street. Collins already knew where they were going, he knew every street and road in town. He begrudgingly walked with Ben so he’d stop dragging him by the arm. They reached the end of the street and walked down a small gap between two houses and continued through grass and trees until they’d reached the river, and it was beautiful in the moonlight. Collins just looked for a moment out at the shimmering water and suddenly he didn’t feel so bad. He felt a hand on his back,
“Well, I know yae’ve been here for a week, but it’s good to have yae back” Ben said.
“Thanks Ben, but as I said” Collins stopped away from the man’s hand,
“I’m here as a friend now”.
With the trees covering them from view from the town there was nothing stopping them now, except Collins’ conscious.
“Why just as a friend? Nothing changed” Benjamin sounded disappointed but Collins knew he wasn’t done persuading. He also didn’t know how to respond to the question, so he sat down at the water’s edge, listening to it lap against the stones a few feet in front of him. Benjamin sat next to him and rested a hand on Collins’ face, turning it to face his.
“There’s someone” Collins managed, his gaze dropped and he turned his head away. Ben retracted his hand,
“Really?” he said, almost unconvinced, but Collins didn’t answer.
“What’s he like then?” the brunette asked.
“Uh, nice I s’pose” Collins answered, not entirely sure he wanted to talk about Farrier with Benjamin, never having fully trusted him. There was always an edge to Ben, some tucked away part that was wild and unpredictable but not in the same closed off way as Farrier. With Farrier, Collins imagined if you got to know him closely it would be different, he’d be open, at least that’s what he wished for. Collins had known Benjamin for years and still felt like he was part stranger, this ‘cool guy’ type that never really got close to anyone.
Collins looked along the vast expanse of wilderness in front of them, the town several hundred metres behind them.
“Nice you suppose. Thought I was nice ey?” Ben pushed.
“Yae Ben, you know what I mean” Collins said.
“Well you seein’ him then?” the brunette asked.
Another huff from Collins.
“No. Just sweet on” he answered eventually. What Benjamin did next didn’t come as a shock to Collins at all. Ben’s hand wandered to Collins’ thigh and the man moved close to Collins.
“Then he doesn’t have to know. You’ve got nothin’ to feel guilty aboot, he’s not even yours” Benjamin purred. Collins tried not to feel, he knew Farrier wasn’t and could never be his, but in his mind he couldn’t help but feel like he was betraying him if he did anything with Benjamin. Collins felt hot breath on his neck,
“C’mmon Jacky, just like we used to” Benjamin breathed. Collins jerked away and made intense eye contact with the man next to him. That was a mistake, he thought it would break Benjamin’s mood but instead it made him hungrier.
“Oh fuck” Ben breathed,
"I forgot how blue they were" he said with a softer voice. Ben moved closer still, his green eyes not once leaving Collins’ blue. Then it was Collins who gave the sign to continue, and completely by accident too. His eyes flicked down to the other man’s lips for a split second before looking back up, but as he did Benjamin moved in and closed the space between them completely, pressing his warm lips to Collins’. The kiss wasn’t rushed or heated, it was safe, and comforting. Ben knew how to handle Collins, he’d give him that, but even so the blonde broke away with a sad feeling inside. He looked down like a hurt dog.

“Ben I said no” Collins murmured.

“Your eyes said yes” Benjamin said, still pushing. Collins did admire his forwardness, something he had found attractive about Benjamin in the past. Collins thought to himself. Was it so bad?

Farrier lay in bed frustrated with the failed chess game. He’d started off well, but when his mind wandered he could never play properly, especially not with the amount of playful insults Canfield gave about his playing style. He admitted he wasn’t the best, but he wasn’t good at losing. As he lay he wondered what the students were doing, if they’d all enjoyed their holidays. the nightly chess games he and Canfield had been having were admittedly the most excitement he’d had over the week off. Farrier supposed he liked being busy, he enjoyed the regimental feeling of being at work on a base, but even more he enjoyed flying, it was always a highlight of the week when he got to fly with one of the groups, which was almost every week, and on multiple days. Farrier’s mind wandered thinking of the highlights of his weeks and his thoughts arrived back at that lanky blonde that had been plaguing his mind. He hoped he’d had a good week off, but selfishly the man noted, he wanted him back on base, Farrier missed Collins.

Benjamin was halfway on top of Collins on the ground, breathing down the blonde’s neck. He loved how Jack just fell apart in his arms, how easy it was to undo him. Collins was very much struggling to control himself, his neck was so sensitive and in the cool air Benjamin’s breath felt even hotter on his skin. Then he felt teeth clamp down on the soft skin. Collins could do nothing but let his head fall back in pleasure. Benjamin pushed his chest until Collins lay on his back, the other man’s mouth still biting his neck. Benjamin licked and sucked the side of his neck, and it was all the blonde could manage not to make a sound. Then Benjamin moved down to where he knew Collins couldn’t control himself, the crook of his neck and shoulder. At first lightly kissing, then licking and then scraping his teeth against it and it was at that, that Collins couldn’t stop the low groan that left his throat, Benjamin feeling it as well as hearing it, he chuckled against the skin and bit harder. Collins rolled his hips into the man above him and groaned again. He’d lost any control now, and he was in too much pleasure to feel guilt. Ben’s hand moved down his body to his trousers. Immediately Collins eyes snapped open, Ben knew that look, it was the same one Collins gave him the first time they were intimate. Fear.

“It’s okay, Jacky, as slow as you want yae?” Ben said, giving him one more kiss on the lips. Collins nodded and watched as Ben undid his pants and moved down next to his hardening member. The blonde propped himself up on his elbows and looked down to the man before him. It had been a long time and he wasn’t at all used to it. Benjamin unzipped the fly of his trousers and with warm hands reached under Collins’ underwear and grabbed him. Any second thoughts were then forgotten as Collins let himself be undone. His boxers were pulled down and his now completely hard cock was in the open. Benjamin stopped briefly just to admire, but then began to slowly pump up and down. A shiver ran down Collins’ body at the touch and he whimpered.

“No’ here, it’s too open” Collins managed, causing Benjamin to stop and put him away. Collins zipped up and sat up a bit.

“Okay, come on then” Benjamin stood up. Collins followed him to one of the few small sheds along the water’s edge. They knew who each one belonged to, some private fishing equipment storage, some for school sport equipment. Collins also knew which one Ben was walking to, it was the sports storage shed for their old school. Not like any of the sheds were locked, in such a small town you couldn’t really steal anything and not be found out, but the school sports shed had even
less likeliness of someone entering than a fishing shed on a Saturday night. Benjamin got out a small packet of matches that Collins didn’t realise he was carrying, but then again he knew Ben smoked a lot, and the brunette lit the few oil lanterns inside the shed, shutting the door behind them and wedging a wooden box of metal tent pegs against it so it couldn’t be opened. Then he turned to Collins with a look of hunger in his eyes. Collins still looked like a cornered sheep but he knew the blonde would warm up like he always did. Collins backed into the wooden wall of the shed, eyes still on Ben, who followed him. Benjamin ran a now cool hand down Collins’ cheek, and let his cold fingers rest on the man’s neck causing Collins’ eyes to flutter shut again. Benjamin scratched his nails across the skin and relished the way the blonde’s head fell back against the wall. He let his hand drop to Collins’ waist, and he kissed him. Slowly and deeply on the lips, enjoying every second. Ben let his tongue slide out and taste Collins’ bottom lip, he felt the man tense and then relax again, and meet the gesture with his own tongue. Collins ran his tongue along Ben’s inner top lip, he opened his eyes lazily and they both stared for a second into each other’s eyes, and at that their mouths were open and desperate again. Collins grabbed at Benjamin’s clothes without breaking the kiss, he undid the buttons of the brunette’s shirt until he felt skin under his palms. Benjamin groaned and pushed into Collins with his pelvis, the blonde now flush against the wall. They ground into each other with pent up arousal, kissing and biting. Then it was Collins who moved down to Benjamin’s neck, his tongue circled around and then he opened his mouth to graze the soft skin with his teeth. Benjamin hissed and grabbed a handful of Collins’ golden hair, the blonde visibly faltered at this, another weak spot Benjamin knew just how to exploit. The brunette ran his fingers through Collins’ hair encouragingly, so Collins resumed the assault on his neck, biting harder and more deliberately than before. Benjamin moaned into Collins’ neck, sagging against the blonde and pushing him harder into the wall. Then he pulled Collins’ hair until the blonde stopped at his neck and looked into his eyes again. The blonde knew he wouldn’t be able to stand and do this, his legs would give out. By the looks of it Ben knew this too, he was looking around the room, they both spotted the old sports bench along one of the walls at the same time, and Ben basically dragged Collins to it and plonked him down. They didn’t break eye contact as Benjamin lowered himself to his knees in front of Collins. Benjamin wasted no time in taking Collins out of his pants, and before the blonde was entirely ready, he took Collins’ cock in his mouth, they both let out a moan in unison, and Benjamin began to lick all the way down Collins’ length until he held all of it inside his mouth. He looked up with dark eyes and Collins looked down at the man, he took a hand and ran it through Ben’s dark hair, permission.

The man began moving slowly up and down the shaft, his tongue licking the underside as he went. Collins’ brow furrowed, he let his head tip back and his eyes slid closed.

Chapter End Notes

Phew, thanks for reading everyone. As always I appreciate your kudos and comments to no end, and honestly feel so happy that my readers interact with me. My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat to me!

Until next chapter folks, happy reading! ❤️
Control

Chapter Notes

I felt like this chapter has to go hand in hand with the previous, so here’s another chapter a day later! (Fun fact, I’ve been to Aviemore 3 times!) (yes it’s lovely and adorable and totally somewhere Collins would live)

Enjoy this one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was late. Farrier wandered aimlessly along the corridor, he couldn’t sleep, and he didn’t want to drink for once either. He walked downstairs to the bathrooms and looked in the mirror. He looked tired, not from lack of sleep but from life. He noticed all the things he never had time to, the beginnings of wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, grey hairs here and there, some sort of long stubble from a week without shaving, but most of all he noticed sadness in his eyes. He knew why, but couldn’t admit it to himself. If he was sad it should be about something like the war, or the situation Europe was in. He couldn’t admit that he’d let his emotions become subject to the presence of another person. He hated the fact that without that certain blonde at the base, he didn’t feel the same, he was ashamed he needed another person to feel normal now. It was a weakness. Farrier took some steps back to see more of himself in the mirror and slowly lifted up his pyjama top revealing the ugly scar on his torso. He still wasn’t used to it, sometimes he forgot it was there and then he’d feel a pang in his gut and remember, it still wasn’t something he associated with himself. He shook his head and tried not to think of it. It was his least favourite memory next to his mother’s passing, the day he got that scar. He walked back to bed but didn’t sleep, he grabbed his box of cigarettes and matches and walked down to his secret place behind the furthest shed. As he sat he looked out at the fields in the moonlight. It was so peaceful he could have slept outside, plus it took his mind off his inner thoughts. As he smoked he thought about Collins, as much as he told himself he shouldn’t be. It was at that moment Farrier decided that what they did, flitting around each other and pretending there was nothing was sort of sweet, in a completely messed up and verging on illegal kind of way. Then Farrier thought about flying, he couldn’t remember the last time he’d flown for fun. Always teaching, instructing, before that it was flying in war. His mind recalled the last time he flew for fun, it was at a local fair in a competition for the plane that could stay up the longest. He hadn’t won in the wooden thing he and Canfield entered, but it was fun. Eventually the man wandered back to his room and found light sleep.

Collins panted and wiped the sweaty hair back from his forehead, eyes closed in exhaustion from a strong orgasm, his first in too long. Benjamin clambered onto the bench beside him and lay his head in the crook of Collins’ neck.

“How’s that Jacky?” he cooed.

Collins was about to answer, but then that guilty feeling from before returned and caught his throat. He swallowed, “Good, Ben, good” he managed, running a tired hand through Ben’s hair. Collins swallowed again and opened his eyes. As he came down from his high he had one name on his mind, and it wasn’t the name of the man who’d just sucked him off. Benjamin seemed to notice Collins was thinking. Ben knew that when Collins’ mind was elsewhere his mouth twitched like he was thinking of talking. He never did say what was on his mind unless he was asked.

“What’s on yer mind mate, wanna give me my turn?” Benjamin said plainly.
Collins couldn’t just say no, but he really didn’t want to return the favour. He felt like he shouldn’t have let anything happen tonight in the first place. He shifted uncomfortably and put himself away. Benjamin huffed.

“Second thoughts?” he asked. Collins sighed and looked forwards without answering.

“Aight, not your fault mate. Just wish it wasn’t this way” Ben said. Collins looked at him sideways.

“Really? Thought you were too horny to care a minute ago” the blonde snarked.

“If you really dunnae want to, I’m not gonna push yae Jack” Ben said. Collins knew he’d made the boy disappointed, but he couldn’t help it.

“I mean, I had a feelin’ you wouldnae want tae after I got ye off, guess I know yae too well ey blondie” Ben jested and rubbed Collins’ hair. For some reason, his words struck a nerve with Collins, maybe the fact that he’d assumed he knew Collins well, the man pulled his head away because Ben was messing his hair up, not that it was currently neat.

“Ben, you dunnae know me that well” Collins said honestly, making eye contact. Ben just smirked.

“Yae I do, Jacky.” He said, Collins got annoyed at the pet name, he always had, and it showed on his face.

“I know everything about yae, I know what yae love, what yae hate” Ben continued.

“I know that yae want someone to lead, because you want to follow. That’s why you joined the air force, and that’s why you let me get yae off jus’ now” Benjamin delivered the sentence as a joke but Collins was having none of it.

“That’s where yer wrong Ben. I joined the air force because I love freedom, and I love being in charge of myself, in yer own plane yae get that. When you’re in the air, you’re free. You dunnae know me anymore Ben, an’ yae cannae predict me anymore” he said. He was angry, but he had developed some sort of aroused mood again. Collins breathed hotly on Benjamin’s neck, whose breath he heard hitch at the motion. The blonde moved a hand onto Ben’s crotch and pressed lightly. He was surprised when Ben’s hand tried to push his away.

“You don’t want this” Ben said,

“You don’t know what I want” Collins replied before descending on the brunette’s neck. Benjamin suppressed a groan, it appeared he didn’t want to give Collins the gratitude of knowing he was getting pleasure out of it, this only served to harden Collins’ resolve. Collins unzipped Ben and felt the hardness underneath his boxers. He lowered himself down to be level with Ben’s length and then did something he hadn’t done for all too long, he took it in his mouth. Ben moaned and instinctually put his hand in Collins’ hair to direct him, but the blonde took Ben’s hand and pinned it down next to him on the bench. Collins began to move up and down, slowly at first, he’d only done it once before, with Ben that time as well, but he’d been pretty good according to the brunette. He must have been doing something right because Benjamin eventually stopped making moves to regain control. Collins relished in the power he felt, the man above him writhing and moaning because of him and what he was doing, so then Collins stopped abruptly.

Ben looked down in surprise,

“Donnae stop now!” he breathed.

“Why?” Collins smirked, earning him an eye roll.

“Seriously, keep going Jack” Ben said,

“What’s the magic word?” Collins pressed,

“Yae think I’m gonnae beg I won’t” Ben laughed.

“Aight Ben” Collins said, and moved to get up. This alarmed the brunette,

“No, please Jack. Please” he said finally. That was all Collins wanted to hear, he descended again, but this time he didn’t stop when Ben’s length hit the back of his throat, he relaxed himself and took it further, the brunette arched his back and gasped at the sensation. Collins held it for as long as he could and then resumed moving his mouth up and down the shaft, but as soon as he was ready he took it in further again, this time swallowing around Ben’s girth earning a shocked sound from the man above him. Collins hummed around the cock in his mouth, knowing how the vibrations would feel. He hadn’t even realised Ben was close, but the man’s breathing began to get
erratic so Collins stopped again.
“Fuck!” Ben exclaimed in annoyance. Collins smiled,
“What’s wrong now?” the blonde played,
“Keep going, damn yae” Ben grumbled down at him. Collins reached a hand up and caressed
Ben’s cheek.
“You’ll have to be more specific” Collins hummed.
“Keep sucking yae eejit!” Ben said louder.
“Say it” Collins said, no smile on his face anymore, but his blue eyes were completely blown with
arousal.
“Please Jack.” Ben managed.
Collins lowered his mouth almost down to the tip of Ben’s cock again, he breathed on the head but
didn’t touch it.
“Again.” He demanded.
“Please” Ben said again. Collins didn’t move but looked up to him.
“Please. Please Jack.” Ben said in resignation, desperation in his eyes as well as his voice. And
then Collins took him once more in his mouth, no holding back this time as he took the entire
length in to the hilt and sucked hard. Ben tried thrusting into the blonde’s mouth but strong hands
came down on his hips and held him in place. The brunette couldn’t resist it any longer, he came
hard in Collins’ mouth and let out a staggered moan, gasping as he rode out his orgasm, unable to
stop his arms from grabbing Collins’ shoulders. Collins swallowed eagerly and then let Ben’s
length fall out of his mouth, flicking the head with his tongue as he did so, earning one last wimper.
He licked his lips and looked up at the man in front of him. Collins leant over Ben and kissed him
hard, making sure he’d taste himself before pulling back.
“Well you gave me what I wanted Jacky” Ben panted.
“It doesn’t matter, I win. I made you lose control. That there? Was me holding power over you,
something you never thought I’d do. Something you never thought I’d be capable of doing, I told
you, you don’t know me anymore.” Collins replied in a low voice. He knew he’d mostly done it to
prove a point, but damn it felt good to have a cock in his mouth again. He’d missed it.

As the two walked back to the town in silence, Ben realised that maybe he didn’t know Collins as
well as he thought he did and that the blonde was right.
“Jack…” he began, Collins turned to him.
“I needed tonight” the brunette said, sounding relieved.
“Yae me too, but I won’t be up here that often so donnae get used to it” Collins replied. He didn’t
need tonight, it was a straight lie, but what was he to say?
“Yeah” his friend answered. They reached the small path that took them from the wilderness into
the town.
“Well I’m goin’ tomorrow mornin’ so I mightn’t see ya again” Collins said, he was somewhat
saddened by this, but it was forgotten when he remembered the mean and controlling streak that
Ben couldn’t seem to shake, and that usually it wasn’t something Collins enjoyed at all.
“Okay, well, good luck” Ben said. The two stood in silence for a beat before Collins outstretched
his arms and the two embraced. They exchanged sad smiles before walking back into civilisation
and parting ways. Little did Collins know, he’d never see Benjamin again.

Collins was on the train early the next day, having said all his goodbyes to his parents and packing
everything, including a new turtleneck from them. He had very mixed feelings about his stay back
home. On one hand, he of course enjoyed seeing his parents and the townsfolk again, but on the
other, multiple times his father and mother had said underhanded comments about his sexuality,
not direct confrontations but little hints here and there in their sentences that they hoped he’d ‘fix’
himself, and then there was the last night with Ben. Collins still wasn’t sure if it was the right thing
to do. It felt right at the time, but now as he was actually travelling back to base, and the realisation
that he was seeing Farrier today, if not then definitely in class tomorrow, it felt wrong, like he’d cheated. Collins mentally scorned himself, it couldn’t be cheating if they weren’t together, and that meant that the blonde had already mentally claimed Farrier as his, and that couldn’t be right.

Farrier woke early to his alarm, trying to get himself back into the habit of an 0700 start. Good thing he did, as he drearily made his way down to his office to neaten everything up for the next day the phone rang in Canfield’s office. Knowing the old man was still fast asleep he walked down the hall into the office and picked the phone up himself.

“RAF Gatwick this is Squadron Leader Farrier” the standard opening he’d learnt to give over the years.

“Squadron Leader Farrier this is Air Chief Marshall Dowding.”

Farrier’s face went white and he sat down quickly. The highest ranking member of the RAF was on the phone to him.

“Good morning Air Chief Marshall” he said, Canfield always took the calls, it was lucky Farrier even remembered the exact sentences to say to senior officers at all, he never took calls.

“Now I had a word to officer Canfield some time ago about the Gatwick site, had he filled you in on any of it?” the crackly voice asked.

“Yes indeed, he informed me that with the oncoming threats from across the channel, we of course need as many bases as possible so Gatwick was going to be converted into a fully functional base, not just a training centre.” Farrier said,

“Yes that was the gist of it. I also informed him that we would not be able to visit for some time, but it has been decided that the matter requires urgent attention, so we would arrange a site visit as soon as practicable, Squadron Leader.” The Air Chief Marshall said.

“Absolutely, any time at all, sir” Farrier said, glancing through the calendar on the desk to check, he saw today’s date as he did so, Sunday July 3rd. he tried to forget that he’d seen that date. Now that he knew it, today wasn’t going to be as good as he’d hoped.

“Excellent, I’ll send a representative down on… Does Wednesday suit?” the man asked,

“Yes most definitely, Wednesday the 6th, at what time should we expect you?” Farrier replied.

“Does ten-thirty suit?” the man said,

“Yes that will be fine, thank you Air Chief Marshall” Farrier replied.

“Well, I’ll see you and Canfield then, good day to you, Squadron Leader Farrier.” Said the man,

“And to you, Air Chief Marshall, thank you.” Farrier said and then put the phone down with a sigh. He wrote it in large writing on the desk calendar for Canfield to see, though undoubtedly he’d be telling him well before he even got to his office.

Collins had fallen asleep on the train and was awoken to someone tapping his shoulder. He lifted his head to see it was one of the women who worked on the train.

“Oh, sorry, we already at Edinburgh?” he asked,

“Yae we are, have been for ten minutes!” she chuckled kindly and walked off down the train.

Collins dragged his suitcase off the shelf above him and got off the train into the bustling station, aware his hair was a mess from sleeping in some awkward position that hurt his neck. After checking the timetable, the blonde realised he only had time to buy a pastry for lunch, not leave the station before the Flying Scotsman departed for the day to London. He didn’t mind too much, Collins was excited to see everyone again. He watched as the countryside changed, less hilly, lighter green, even the weather got slightly sunnier outside the window the further south the train went. Finally they reached York and the train set down, abstaining from leaving the train for fear of missing it when it took off again in ten minutes.

“Good morning Tom” Canfield said,

“I am wondering why you’re in my office however” he added.

“Morning Michael. Well before you were up, we received a call from the Ministry” Farrier said, Canfield gave him a nod,
“And the Air Chief Marshall is sending someone to come and see us this Wednesday” Farrier said, watching as the older man raised his eyebrows.
“Well we better get cleaning!” he joked, though Farrier could tell Canfield was nervous.
“So just cleaning? Nothing else we need to do in preparation?” Farrier asked, thinking they barely needed to do cleaning at all.
“I believe so, but I do think we should let everyone know to be on best behaviour” Canfield replied,
“That’s true” Farrier chuckled.
And just like that, Farrier spent his last day off cleaning the base, somewhat glad of a mindless task to occupy his time. Canfield said he was too old to bend over properly anymore though Farrier knew him better, still the old man stuck to light sweeping. Farrier picked up any litter he found, polished, dusted, and fixed the odd thing around the base as well as made sure all the planes were in correct storage in the hangars. Canfield loved to use Farrier as the fix-it man around base, somehow he had a knack for repairing things, ‘fiddling and fixing’ was what Canfield called it, Farrier thought that name laughable. As the brunette walked among the planes he wished he could fly them, as he cleaned some of the dustier ones. Flying for a lesson or even solo demonstration was one thing, but it couldn’t compare to being up there for pure enjoyment. He walked out of the hangars and into the bright sun of the field with the narrow strip or asphalt they called their runway. He mentally noted that they needed to fill in a pothole in said asphalt. Farrier headed inside through the locker room and squinted a little as his eyes adjusted to the dark interior compared to the sunny outdoors. Canfield walked down the hall to greet him.
“Why do you always frown?” he laughed, patting Farrier’s shoulder, who couldn’t be bothered explaining he was frowning more than usual because it was relatively dark inside, because he’d been told enough to know that apparently he usually looked worried or stressed.
Midday became afternoon and they, along with the help of anyone else who was at base for the holidays, finished the clean-up.
“Looks ten years younger!” Canfield remarked,
“Wish I could say the same for you” Farrier snarked, earning him a hearty laugh from the old man.
It was almost getting downright hot, Farrier and Canfield had gone for a walk down the road for something to do, the kitchen needed restocking anyway.
“So how do you think the group is progressing?” Canfield asked,
“Yeah good, some I think might be struggling but I think they’ll all get through it” Farrier answered, Canfield hummed in response. The two sat on a breezy bench enjoying pastries for late lunch before making a trip to the local grocer for some food for the kitchen.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading everyone, hope you liked it. I should say that in my mind this chapter is when things begin to speed up a bit so get keen!
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat or needs more Dunkirk content !

Till next chapter, happy reading all❤️❤️❤️
Collins had almost fallen asleep again, he was so warm still in the layers of clothing he was in from the cold Scottish morning. He took off his RAF blazer leaving him in his new woollen turtleneck from his mother. It was a very dark blue, almost black. Blue was a colour she seemed to have decided many years ago looked perfect on him and so most of her handmade clothes for him were a shade of it. Not that he minded, if anything he found it amusing that now he was in the RAF he’d be in blue every day. He shook his head to wake himself up a bit more and checked his watch, he assumed the train would arrive to London about 4, though sometimes it had been known to take longer than usual, he hoped today wasn’t one of those days. After more time sitting and looking out the window, Collins pulled out his sketch book and decided to draw to pass the time. At first he drew his suitcase sitting on the luggage rack, an old brown thing with scuff marks on the corners, then on the next page he drew some imagined scenery based on what he’d been seeing out the window as inspiration, and then began drawing from memory, the fields outside his window at Gatwick base, he even tried his hand at drawing a plane, but wasn’t all too happy with it. Deciding it was too bumpy on the train to draw, Collins resigned to looking out the window again.

The two men made it back to base as it was beginning to get cold.
“So Farrier, the Ministry sent me a list of every change that will be happening in order to make Gatwick a fully functioning base” Canfield said as they walked up the steps to the front doors of the base.
“Oh yeah?” Farrier answered.
“Yes, one of the items on the list was that we will soon be receiving a mass order of planes.” Canfield smiled as Farrier’s eyebrows raised.
“When?” he asked excitedly, for a second Canfield saw a younger Farrier, one that wasn’t plagued with stress, one that hadn’t seen war. This was exactly what Farrier needed to take his mind off the day’s date.
“No date advised yet, my boy. But, I do know that they’re going to be Hawker Hurricanes” Canfield said.
The two walked down the hallway towards Canfield’s office, Farrier mindlessly following him.
“Hang on” the brunette said.
“If we’re becoming a full time air base, does that mean that our legal flying hours and areas change?” Farrier asked.
“Yes, but we don’t know when or where yet either” Canfield answered.
“But does that mean we’ll be able to fly outside of allocated lessons… Just for fun?” Farrier pressed, jogging for a pace or two to make up for the older man’s long strides and only adding to the childish nature of the conversation.
“Yes Tom, you can fly freely” Canfield took the pleasure in answering, it caused Farrier to stop in his tracks. Canfield knew how much Farrier wanted free flying time, he’d said it enough times. Now the older man watched as Farrier grinned, Canfield chuckled and held his arms out for an embrace which Farrier took. Sometimes the younger man forgot that Canfield was a colleague, because he was also the father figure in his life. No matter how much Canfield irritated him or
pestered him, he loved Canfield. The man was family to Farrier, and as much as they butted heads when it came to training outside the classroom, Farrier always came back to Canfield.

“Tea?” Canfield offered, and in minutes the two were sitting in the older man’s office steeping a teapot.

“Michael” Farrier began as he spooned sugar into his teacup.

“Yes?” Canfield answered, taking the sugar spoon off Farrier after the third heaped spoon as he always did, still amazed at how sweet Farrier liked his tea. Canfield wondered how many spoons of sugar Farrier would have if the spoon wasn’t taken.

“I enjoy having you around here” Farrier said, painfully aware of how weird he sounded.

“Well I’m glad!” Canfield laughed.

“No I mean” Farrier said, but stopped to think, what did he mean?

“I suppose, thanks. For being here” Farrier said.

“Thanks for supporting me all this time. I dunno I suppose I don’t feel like I say it enough” Farrier continued.

“Of course my boy. I promised your mother I would look after you.” Canfield said. Farrier’s heart panged and he put his tea down.

“You’ve done a better job than she could have imagined.” he replied in a murmur, directed more at the floor than the man across the table. Canfield had no words, he felt touched. Then he realised what day it was. It was the date Farrier’s mother had passed away, 28 years ago. He reached and put a hand on Farrier’s shoulder, giving it a reassuring squeeze.

“She’d be proud of you, son.” Canfield said. He felt so comfortable calling anyone younger than him that, but when he called Farrier by the word it felt more important.

“I know” Farrier had a small smile on his face. The two men sat drinking their tea in comfortable silence until,

“What did she say to you? Before it happened. What did she say about you taking care of me?” Farrier asked something he’d never had the courage to before. It was a touchy enough subject, spending any elongated period of time on it usually ended badly with Farrier either getting angry for no good reason, or crying. But today the man felt like he was comfortable enough to ask about it. Maybe it was the news of the planes, maybe it was because he’d be seeing the students soon enough. He felt bolder.

“Well, when she was ill, one day she came to me and said ‘Michael, I want you to make sure Tom is okay’” Canfield said. Farrier had put his tea down to listen.

“I said, ‘what do you mean? He’ll be fine he’s a strong lad’ or something like that, I didn’t want to dampen her spirits, you know.” Canfield continued.

“She said she knew, and of course she did. Everyone knew you’d be okay, we did, everyone really did. But she said she…” Canfield stopped.

“What?” Farrier said softly. The older man had his eyes fixed on a point on the table, apparently trying to remain calm.

“Canfield please” Farrier said, a storm of emotions brewing just beneath the surface. He was struggling to keep a lid on things, he hadn’t been expecting Canfield to seize up.

“Listen, Farrier. There are some things maybe you don’t want to know.” Canfield said softly. This annoyed Farrier rather than make him sad.

“Canfield. I was twelve. I deserve to know.” He said solemnly. The older man sighed.

“She said she no longer trusted your father. She no longer trusted him to look after you properly.” He said quietly staring down his teacup. Farrier wasn’t sure what to think, on one hand he knew his father didn’t like him, or appeared not to at least, but he didn’t know his mother had doubts about him.

“So she wanted you to take over from him, and that’s why I went to live with you.” Farrier said.

“Yes Tom. I’m sorry, but you know how your dad was” Canfield said,

“Yeah, believe me I do.” Farrier replied. He knew his father could never accept him as a man, as
He could still hear him yelling at him if he concentrated. Could still feel the sting on his face from a slap. Farrier hadn’t known it wasn’t normal to hit your child, until when staying with Canfield, when it never happened.

“I am glad you took care of me, probably wouldn’t have the job if you hadn’t” Farrier lightened the mood.

“Well this is true” Canfield chuckled and then the men sat in silence for a few minutes sipping tea.

“You need a shave, Farrier.” Canfield said sternly.

“Yeah I know, it’s still technically the holidays, I’ll do it later” Farrier waved his hand at Canfield to tell him to stop fussing.

“So when the new term starts, are they going to be changing the structure of the classes or anything?” Farrier asked.

“Not as far as I’m aware, if anything we might do more flying since our hours have been extended.” Canfield replied.

“Oh good, I was hoping you’d say that.” Farrier smiled.

The train was pulling up and Collins’ could barely contain his nerves and excitement. He wondered if Farrier missed him, because Collins had missed Farrier and was way past trying to deny it to himself. As much as he’d had distractions over the week to keep his thoughts at bay, he did miss seeing that man every day. Especially the now almost nightly talks they’d had in the corridor outside their rooms. A routine Collins was looking forward to getting back into. He got off the train at Kings Cross, relieved he was back. Collins made his way back to London Victoria via the very crowded underground train and once there had to wait for the train back to Gatwick. As he waited the blonde bought himself a berry mince tart to pass the time. As he ate, Collins contemplated why he really wanted to be in he RAF aside from freedom as he’d told Ben. He decided that it was a matter of doing the right thing, and making a real difference. He’d never wanted to have an office job, doing the same thing every day which never made much of a difference to anything large scale anyway, Collins remembered that clearly. He supposed being in the sky was about as far away as you could get from that.

Then the train pulled up, Collins checked his watch, almost four-thirty. As he boarded the last of his four trains it began to rain, Collins sat and watched the rain patter on the window and looked up at the grey sky when the train left the station. He loved rain, it had a calming effect on him and he didn’t mind getting wet, he could never understand why activities had to be stopped because of the rain, at school they were ushered inside if they were out in the yard if it was raining, the blonde supposed the RAF would be different, and began wondering what challenges would present themselves taking off in the wet. Collins sat in peaceful thought for the remainder of the train ride, keeping his eyes on the sky as the clouds rolled in and the sky turned darker still.

By the time the train arrived at Gatwick it was getting late and the sun would soon be down. The rain had stopped for now leaving the footpaths wet and slippery, but through a break in the clouds shone a beautiful golden light, a weak wintery gold that could only happen just before sunset. Collins walked back slowly, enjoying the golden light and the still damp atmosphere. He rounded a corner and was at last on the street of Gatwick base. As he walked it began to spit again, only a little this time but enough to make his hair damp, reminding him he needed to get it cut soon as it caused drips to land on his nose as the front drooped over his eyes. Shaking his hair out of the way he made it up the steps to the front doors. Collins felt a little nervous returning- would his friends be there? Would Farrier? Part of him wanted to run up to his room and not see anyone until lessons tomorrow, but a larger part of him was excited for an ‘accidental’ meeting tonight.

Farrier left Canfield to finish the tea and organise for tomorrow, he was tired from cleaning the base and wanted to nap until dinner, and then sleep some more before his rather rude seven o’clock start tomorrow. The brunette went upstairs and let himself into his room. He sat on the chair next to his window and looked out at the wet airfields, the puddles illuminated by the weak afternoon
sun. It would be good to get back to a schedule, Farrier thought to himself. The thought reminded him that he hadn’t been to the pub at all these holidays, he wasn’t sure if that was good or bad. He arrived at good, after some thought, deciding it meant he didn’t feel the need to drink as much currently.

Collins opened the door to the dark wood of the building, illuminated by the late sun through the window turning the hallways auburn. He trudged up the stairs with his suitcase, the base was unusually quiet to him, being used to students and officers walking around all the time. Not bothering to knock on either of his friend’s doors out of sleepiness and unwillingness to socialise, not even sure if either of them were back yet, Collins continued to his room. After a long smile at the mere closeness to Farrier’s room, he opened his door to his own room. And through the wooden walls, Farrier heard it. Collins was back. Suddenly his stomach tightened and Farrier felt light, he was going to see Collins soon, finally. He mentally cursed himself but the thought faded as quick as it came. It was so strange that they were in the same building again, Farrier had to sit down again because he had begun to pace with worriedness. He took a deep breath and thought about what he should do. Should he stay here and wait until he maybe saw Collins at dinner? Yes, that would be sensible, that way he wouldn’t be able to speak to Collins, only glance from a distance. That was safe. But a tiny voice in the back of Farrier’s mind refused to be ignored. The man pushed on his knees and stood with a wince. He considered what he looked like, glancing in the mirror as he rarely did these days. Would he be acceptable? Not clean shaven, some old vaguely beige turtleneck, his flying boots which he used as slippers much to Canfield’s dismay, and dark trousers. He looked half in uniform and half not, Farrier considered changing but then realised how pedantic that would be. He walked towards the door and slowly opened it, closing it softly behind him. Farrier was going to wait in their spot, deciding he didn’t altogether care if Collins knew it was deliberate or not. He waited and Collins didn’t come out of his room, Farrier felt stupid for hoping he’d immediately meet him. He waited longer, wondering if the blonde would come out of his room. Farrier turned away from Collins’ door to look down into the courtyard. The shadows were becoming long across the dirt and the light was becoming more orange than gold now as the sun drooped lower in the sky. Farrier sighed quietly. He’d miss this quietness, it was already set in his head what was coming in the future, he knew what was going to happen. He remembered the feeling all too well, this strange tension in any political discussion, in any newspaper article, things that weren’t said but heavily implied. He knew. The man ran a hand through his short hair, his fingers catching on one of the few scars, running over it a few times feeling the smooth skin. He didn’t want peace to end, then the thought that Collins might go to war dawned on him and he felt slightly sick. Farrier cursed himself for being so un-patriotic, he was supposed to want to help his country in her time of need, should it come. Instead he wanted to be safe and sound, without having to worry about being shot at and falling thousands of feet from the air. The man still hadn’t forgiven himself for being out of action for part of the war, maybe that’s why he didn’t want to go back, he thought. He was afraid he’d be useless again. But then again Farrier knew that sometimes things could only be solved with conflict, it was out of his control so he tried to stop thinking about it. If there was a war, he had chosen to stay with the RAF and so he would be deployed and that was that.

Then a door opened behind Farrier, he turned to see a surprised looking Collins. Farrier’s stomach lurched at the sight, there really were no imperfections to this boy, he was all pale skin and golden hair and- that hair is too long to be regimental the man thought to himself with a smile.

“Afternoon” Collins said, shoving his hands in his pockets with a shy smile.

Farrier was amused, being gone for a week and just a simple ‘afternoon’ as if he hadn’t seen him for a few hours. The man smiled,

“Good afternoon, Collins” he replied.

Collins couldn’t take his eyes off the stubble. It suited Farrier’s ruggedness, he wasn’t sure which look he liked more. The blonde wanted to touch Farrier desperately, even in just a friendly manner. He was in front of him, after being for all it mattered half a world away all week. Collins knew he shouldn’t though, so he made do with striding across the hall and standing next to the man, their
backs both against the windowsill. Collins looked better than Farrier remembered. And smelled better too. They both stood smiling for a second before Farrier turned to the window and rested his arms on the ledge.

“Did you have a good week?” he asked.

“Aye yae, was alrigh’” Collins smiled and ran a hand through his hair. Farrier chuckled.

“Ah, yae bein’ back up there seemed tae ‘ave reset my Scots” Collins laughed.

“So easy tae slip back into, donae worry I’m aware I sound like a crazy person to yae” he added.

“I hadn’t noticed you’d lost any of it to be honest” Farrier said, Collins relished in his deep voice, finally able to hear it again.

“How was your holiday then?” the blonde asked.

“Oh, you know” Farrier said, turning to smile at Collins, who merely cocked his head to the side and smiled back.

“It wasn’t bad” Farrier said.

“Bit lonely” he added, looking back at the blonde, who standing straight next to Farrier’s hunched over figure exemplified his slender figure.

“Aye, mine too” Collins admitted. The thought of Ben crossed his mind for the first time since getting back, but then he was lost once more in those sea blue eyes. How had he forgotten all of this about Farrier? His mind couldn’t come close to remembering how amazing the man was in real life. Farrier cleared his throat,

“Have you seen your friends yet?” he asked.

“Nae, wanted tae take a quiet afternoon before they try any shenanigans” he answered,

“Fair enough” Farrier replied.

“Eejits’ll probably try an’ get me out tonight even!” Collins added,

“Ah they shouldn’t want to be doing that” the man beside him laughed.

“it’s good to have you back.” Farrier said earnestly, the sun lighting up his face as he smiled. Collins felt a pang of nerves in his chest at the sincerity of the words.

“Good tae be back” he answered. They stood in silence for a few more moments, Collins looked out at the courtyard as the sun got lower still.

“So what’s happenin’ in the morrow?” the blonde asked.

“Well, you’ve reached the stage of training where it all begins to get a little… regimental.” Farrier said. Thinking about it made him nervous, he wondered if Collins would care if he went and got a smoke.

“Ah yae, so more strict?” Collins broke his thoughts.

“Yes a bit, but also you’ll learn how to stand in formation and march, salute, that kind of thing, how to act towards superior officers, how to conduct yourselves and there’s also obviously the flying.” Farrier continued, his fingers drumming at the thought of the new order of Hurricanes coming in. From what he’d heard of them they were good planes, but the man wasn’t looking forward to seeing the sand and spinach paint colours on them.

“Sounds like fun then.” Collins smiled out the window,

“Good” Farrier mumbled.

“Do we keep doin’ the physical activities?” Collins asked.

“Overall? Yes a bit. There’ll be another swimming lesson at some point, it’s more of a fun carnival day to be honest, to make sure you can all swim is all. As for the fight training you had, no. We give basic hand to hand combat lessons, but pilots are not to carry any guns except the flare gun in the plane so we don’t teach anything beyond fighting with your hands, the most you do in the quadrangle now is learning to march and that.” Farrier answered absent-mindedly. He was trying not to stare at Collins, he had gotten used to not being able to over the holidays, now the blonde was here and seemingly more striking than before in Farrier’s eyes.

“Are we swimmin’ in winter?” Collins asked, not out of fear of doing so, but mere curiosity. If anything it would be more fun that way.

“No, ‘course not!” Farrier laughed.

“We do it next summer, it’d be freezing in winter Collins.” Farrier was amused, what a different
life it must be in some small town in the middle of nowhere, where you swim year round in water that’s probably always half frozen anyway, and don’t know that regular pools are chlorinated. He smiled at the memory of Collins not realising there was chlorine in the pool. 

“Wha’?” the blonde asked.

“Ah nothing, I should get on.”

“Alright,” Collins drew out the word to sound unconvinced that it was nothing. They could kiss right now and nobody would ever know, Collins thought to himself. As soon as the thought came he realised how stupid it was, and yet he found himself staring at Farrier in fondness. They were alone in the hallway, the building was silent, and the way Farrier’s eyes and golden skin were lighting up in the evening sun was mesmerizing. The two leaned with their backs against the windowsill. Farrier stared back, taking this small chance to really take in everything that was Collins, with nobody to watch or judge, gone were the worry lines on his forehead, instead a peaceful smile.

Collins’ gaze shifted from Farrier’s eyes quickly down to his lips then back up, and then he wasn’t sure if he was imagining moving a fraction of an inch closer.

Farrier’s heart leapt and he quickly looked down and away. Shit Collins thought to himself. What had he done? His insides turned to liquid hoping he hadn’t just ruined whatever they had going, that little mind game they were playing constantly. Something as small as a change in gaze was something terrible in the world they lived in. Every little movement had to be careful constructed for the public eye, and Collins just overstepped the line. Even though there was nobody around it wasn’t safe.

Farrier smiled at the ground.

“I’m sorry.” He said to Collins while maintaining a smile, the blonde looked away and breathed out deeply.

“No, I am” Collins replied. He was so, so sorry.

“We’re not allowed to.” The brunette said, eyes full of longing, they flicked down to Collins’ downturned mouth, teasing the notion in his mind.

“I know.” Collins replied. And it was agonizing.

“I should go” Collins said quietly.

“Okay Collins” Farrier replied.

“See you at dinner, Farrier.” Collins added as he began walking down the hallway.

“See you then.” Farrier replied as he went back to his room.

Chapter End Notes

As always thanks for reading everyone, your support means so much to me. ♥️ If anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com

Until next chapter guys! (Btw things start to pick up a bit from here)
Collins was still somewhat tired from his long train ride, Collins knocked on Dawson’s door, there was no answer. He then tried down the hall at Wingnut’s, to which there was an elated boy on the other side.

“Collins!” he exclaimed as he threw his arms around the blonde.

“Good tae see you too Wingnut” Collins laughed, his mind immediately distracted from the earlier encounter with Farrier.

“Dawson’s no’ in yet” he added,

“Yeah I tried his door a while back, guess he’ll be in later.” Wingnut replied. The boys walked back to the sandwich bar down the street for some snacks, for old time’s sake, and then spent the rest of the afternoon playing card games in Collins’ room.

Farrier wasn’t sure what to feel. He was elated of course, Collins had shown him something genuine and something intimate, shown more interest in the man than the lad had previously, ever. Farrier was in disbelief that this wasn’t some sort of elaborate joke, that someone was actually interested in the likes of him. But the other half of him was utterly ashamed. Collins was a student, Collins was another male, Collins was very much younger than he. It was all wrong, all of it. But it felt so sacred and special, how could it be?

Eventually the two boys made their way down to the mess hall for dinner, Wingnut apparently had gotten the idea from somewhere or someone that the kitchen staff begin cooking dinner one night before semester goes back for the boarders specifically. To Collins’ amazement the lad was right about something. They sat in their usual spot, minus Dawson. The room was a lot emptier, there were only about fifteen other men, including Canfield and Farrier sitting in their usual spot also. Collins let his eyes wander over to them, relishing in the feeling that the meal time glances in Farrier’s direction were now back, he was feeling a little better about their earlier meeting, mainly because Farrier didn’t seem to take it too badly.

“Hello there mate” Wingnut waved a hand in front of Collins’ face, snapping him out of his gaze. He chuckled nervously and his friend merely shook his head in amusement. The boys saw Canfield get up slowly and walk to the front.

“Thank you men!” he said to get everyone’s attention.

“I trust you all had an enjoyable week off, we’ll be glad to see you back in classes tomorrow bright and early. Now, we’re serving up the food soon, don’t forget to say a big thank you to the lovely kitchen ladies when you collect your food please.”

All the while Canfield was speaking Farrier was watching Collins. He was mesmerised, he wanted
nothing but him. A pang in the chest was felt when Farrier thought about the fact that he never would have him, and thankfully his thoughts were interrupted when everyone got up for food. After eating, Wingnut and Collins made to leave the dining hall, Collins noticed both officers had stayed back and were speaking to the ladies at the kitchen.

“So ladies, as you know we very much appreciate all your lovely work you do for us around the place.” Farrier began, mainly directing it at Ms. Downing.

“The times are, unfortunately, changing, I trust you all know the hostile nature of the current political landscape.” He said, a few nods in response.

“Gatwick is to be converted into a fully operational base. We’ll be getting more men on sight, more planes, more freedom. But, you ladies all know why the mess hall is underground don’t you?” he asked, to which he got shaking heads.

“Oh” he said, smiling at Canfield, who took over.

“Yes, this mess hall is also a shelter. It is of solid concrete to protect against bombing. But, if in the event of war, we would assumedly be using RDF here at Gatwick. Here arises a job opportunity for you all. By no means do you need to take it, but we would like to know who of you would be willing to undergo training to receive radio signals in the event of war.” Canfield said.

“I will” Ms Downing said.

“As will I” said another, until every woman had agreed to the proposition.

“You ladies truly are marvellously brave, thank you all.” Canfield said.

“It really means a great deal to us that you’re willing to do this, thank you.” Farrier said. The men said their goodnights and the ladies began to gossip about the prospects of the future as they cleaned the kitchen.

It was only around 8:00 that there was a knock on Wingnut’s door, he and Collins had been inside playing questions and commands again, Collins was beginning to think he probably shouldn’t be playing at his age, but he knew Wingnut loved it. Collins was just thankful Wingnut hadn't asked about Farrier so far.

The person at the door was Dawson.

“Hey guys!” he said as he threw his suitcase into the room so he could embrace them both.

“Back late!” Collins remarked,

“Yeah, wanted to have dinner with the family, the trains run late so I was able to stay there a little longer.” He answered.

“Good on ya, suppose nobody’s up for going out then?” Wingnut asked, only getting laughs in response. Dawson was tired, as was Collins, though Timson as usual seemed to have never ending energy. The boys called the night off soon after Dawson arrived, and Collins had to admit he himself wouldn’t have chosen to walk straight in to his friends after getting back, it seemed he was the least social of the three. Not that he minded, Collins was peaceful when he was alone. After he left his friends for the night, Collins saw an empty hallway where he’d hoped to see Farrier. Something in the back of his mind told him it was because he messed up earlier, but he banished the thought. Maybe he’d stay out there for a bit, just in case. The blonde collected his drawing things and put on his pyjamas. Tonight he sat cross legged against the front of his door in the
corridor to doodle. Nobody every came out into the hallway, there were so little boarders, and on the off chance someone did come wandering in search of the bathroom, the building was so old you'd hear them creaking down the hall from a mile away. It was, in relative terms, a safe meeting place.

Farrier knew he was out there, he heard him. He didn’t know if tonight was a good night to see him though. The man’s heart hadn’t calmed from their almost-moment earlier, and wasn’t sure what facing the blonde again would do, if he’d be able to control himself. That’s when it dawned on Farrier, as a definite thought. It had always been there, he just hadn’t put much thought towards the fact. Collins was different because he didn’t just see him as a man he’d gladly fuck, which of course he would, but Farrier had feelings for him beyond that. The man was put out, he didn’t really have soft feelings, it wasn’t his thing. At least until now, apparently. Farrier just liked being around the blonde, liked seeing him, wanted to get to know him, and just be in his company.

Collins had a blank mind, he couldn’t draw. He sat in the moonlight pondering if he’d done the right thing. He couldn’t help it, it had been months on end of this torturous game, pretending nothing was there and then every night chatting, every night getting closer and closer, finding out more about the other, becoming more comfortable. It wasn’t fair, Collins wanted nothing more than to show Farrier how he felt. Even flying right now, was second to this. To hell with the laws, it was cruel and downright depressing. At that moment the door to Farrier’s room opened causing him to jump slightly, even though several feet away.

“Hello down there” Farrier smiled warmly as he saw the man sitting down. Farrier shut his door and walked over to Collins, wincing as his knees bent to sit beside him.

“Hiya.” Collins tried to smile, but it hurt inside, somewhere deep.

Farrier sighed.

“I said, it’s okay.” At the words Collins looked over, he could feel that his expression looked like a hurt puppy.

“It’s not. I stepped over a boundary today Farrier, it’s no’ okay.” Collins said.

Another sigh from Farrier,

“Perhaps we should speak of other things. But, I didn’t mind.” He said with a small smile. That made Collins feel a bit better.

“What are you drawing tonight?” the man then asked, peering over at the blank page in front of Collins.

“Ah, nothin’. Cannae think” the blonde said.

The two sat in silence for a few moments.

“Can I tell you something? It’s about the future of Gatwick RAF.” Farrier said out of the blue.

“Uh, okay?” Collins answered.

“It’s not, well I might not be supposed to tell you but anyway. We’re being converted to a full time airdrome. This means a few things. Firstly, there’ll be a lot more men here than usual. Secondly, we’re getting a shipment of fighter planes. And thirdly, well it means Britain is gearing up for war.” Farrier said. Collins was unsure how to respond,
“Okay” he arrived at.

“Thank yae for telling me” he added.

“No problem. It’s been on my mind since I got the news. War isn’t something I’m looking forward to.” Farrier said.

“We’re having a visit from the Air Ministry on Wednesday, they’re coming to survey the block and make sure everything is in order.” He said, chatting nervously.

“Good things come from war, too” Collins said, not that he knew much on the matter.

“I know. And sometimes it’s inevitable. Just didn’t have a great time in the last one.” Farrier smiled sadly.

“What was it like?” Collins probed.

“The war? It was war. At the start I didn’t know what to expect, I was excited, after doing flying in fairs with Canfield I thought it would be like that. A lot of the planes back then had a gunner and a pilot, two jobs. The gunner would stand precariously shooting the thing around while the pilot would fly. At first I was a gunner actually, but they tried me as a pilot and seemed to like me there more. But the first time you have to shoot at another human being is… Something else.” Farrier said, looking at Collins, who looked intrigued but disturbed.

“And the first time you get shot at, is the scariest thing that’ll have ever happened in your life at that point.” He added.

“All open cockpits back then mind you, nothing to protect you against the machine guns, and the bombs.” Farrier said quietly.

“We donnae have to talk about war” Collins suggested.

“Canfield says it’s good for me to get used to it.” Farrier said back, looking out the window across the hallway from them.

“So the planes were a lot different, yeah?” Collins asked.

“Very. They were mostly biplanes, some triplanes too. Wooden frames, little to no metal back then, two bladed wooden propellers, sometimes four bladed ones were fitted for the aces because they heated the engine up so much. With four blades the prop only has to spin half as fast.” Farrier grinned.

“Was that you then?” Collins smirked. He got a response in the form of a cheeky smile at the floor. The blonde was taken-aback, he was joking when he’d asked. Farrier was an ace?

“You were?” Collins asked, wide eyed.

“Um, yeah.” Farrier smiled.

“You were an ace?” Collins repeated,

“Yes, Collins.” Farrier chuckled. Collins’ blue eyes were full of admiration as they stared in awe. He’d never met an ace before, but here was one, right beside him the whole time.

“The novelty wears off” the man said wearily.
“Sure it does” Collins said in disbelief.

“No, it does, really. When you think about why you’re an ace, who paid the price for your title, it’s not as… shiny.” Farrier said, Collins supposed this was true. Even so, it didn’t stop him from having even more respect for Farrier than before, and he didn’t even think that was possible.

“How many?” Collins asked. It was a while before Farrier answered,

“Twenty-three.” Now he had to be joking.

“You’ve gotta be one of the highest scoring aces in the war!” Collins said,

“No, not at all. From Britain maybe, just maybe. But you’re forgetting about a lot of them” Farrier said.

“Like who?” the blonde persisted,

“The Red Baron, for one.” Farrier replied.

“Well how many did he get?”

“Over eighty.” The brunette replied.

“You shoulda shot him doon, too” Collins laughed. Farrier hummed uncomfortably.

In reality he’d tried to.

“There must be something yae enjoyed about the war though” Collins said.

“Well, I did like flying in formation, that was fun. The views were nice if you tried to forget what was going on” Farrier said nostalgically, thankful the conversation was changing.

“Flying outside of wartime is better.” He said definitively to Collins.

“Do you remember much about the war?” Farrier asked.

“No’ really, food rations, giving stuff to the local depot to use, not much more than that really. Aviemore is pretty far removed from most things” Collins chuckled.

“Sounds like it” Farrier replied.

“Well, we should get to bed. Class tomorrow” Farrier added.

“Aye, alright.” Collins said getting up. Farrier did the same with a wince, Collins resisted the urge to ask if he was okay.

“Well, it’s been a nice night” Farrier said,

“Aye” Collins responded. The men both walked back into their rooms trying to hide their smiles.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading as always everyone, I feel like after the previous chapter this one
was so tame! But not every chapter can be filled with juicy stuff right? And tbh I love just writing serious plot, all the stuff about WW1 was true, god those planes were dangerous, but I digress.
Thanks for all your lovely feedback btw!
If anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com
Until next chapter <3
Hey all, hope everyone has had a good week since last update.

It was back to the usual early morning wakeup for Collins, who wasn’t pleased about the cold floor beneath his feet. He trudged around the room getting ready as the sun got higher and the air warmer, conscious he needed a haircut as he swept the blonde mess out of his eyes. As the man walked down to the mess hall for breakfast he was glad to get back to the regime, even if it was too early. A few minutes passed before he saw Dawson come through the door.

“Mornin’” Collins smiled,

“Good morning” Dawson yawned.

“Where’s Timson?” Dawson asked,

“No’ here yet. Bugger probably slept in” Collins chuckled.

“Yeah. More food for us then” Dawson replied before walking off to the front for cereal, Collins followed suit.

“You really need to stop wearing those as slippers, boy!” Canfield said, pointing under the table at Farrier’s flying boots.

“They’re warm” he countered, hiding his face in his mug of tea, noticing the blue rim had a chip in the paint. And they were warm, sheepskin was very warm, that’s why actual slippers were made out of the stuff, so his flying boots were essentially long slippers, Farrier thought to himself.

“That’s no excuse, you’ll wear them out before you even get into the planes.” Canfield said as he ate. Farrier shrugged in response.

“Then I’ll get new ones” he said after a mouthful. Canfield just sighed, Farrier looked up and saw a small smile on the man’s face.

“So the Air Ministry called at some ungodly hour this morning.” Canfield said,

“Mm?” Farrier had his mouth full.

“They specified that they’re sending Hugh Dowding in to see Gatwick, they couldn’t find a representative free at that time so he’s coming in person.” The older man continued. Farrier nearly choked on his tea.

“Shit.” Was all he could manage.

“As in, Air Chief Marshall?” Farrier thought he ought to specify.

“Yes.” Canfield breathed. Farrier rubbed his forehead with his hand and stopped eating.
“He’s not going to promote us to a full time base.” Farrier said,

“Why?” asked Canfield.

“Look at the place, it still looks like the school it used to be, it’s not a military base at all!” Farrier stressed.

“Relax boy. Nothing we can do now but hope.” Canfield said.

“We better have a big word to the boys then.” Farrier said before having another mouthful of cereal. It was at that moment that a very frazzled Timson burst through the doors, Collins and Dawson rolled their eyes at him as he ran to the front for food. He had his trousers on backwards.

First class of the day was with Canfield.

“Right class, it’s oh-eight-thirty hours!” he said, earning a few quizzical looks.

“Now that you’re in the first course at your training department station, as well as obviously splitting up into the actual roles you will fulfil, there are a few lifestyle changes that need to take place.” He said.

“First, is that you must refer to the time in twenty-four hour. This is because when flying we refer to things around the plane using numbers on a clock face. Something’s right in front of you, it’s at your twelve o’clock. So we need to distinguish time from that, so the time is twelve-hundred hours.” Canfield explained.

“Secondly, in the coming months you’ll learn to march, salute and properly address superior officers. It’s actually very easy if you’re willing to cooperate.” He continued. Some of the students faces began to drop.

“Oh, come on. It has to be done, you’re in the military after all!” Canfield laughed. Sometimes Collins forgot if he was honest with himself, it was too much fun.

“How will we split you into your roles within the RAF I hear you ask?” Canfield said, nobody asked and he continued.

“Well, it will involve many different activities and trials, whatever you excel in will lead us towards your best suited role here. Even if you really want to be something, if you’re not going to be good at that then there’s really no point you undertaking that job at all.” He said.

“Which is why as soon as we can we’ll get you into the planes, now that you know enough about aerodynamics and the engineering side of things.” He added. At this there was an eruption of cheers.

“Settle down boys! Settle down.” The old man chuckled and continued with the lesson.

Farrier had been assigned with one of the more experienced groups on account of their usual officer being ill.

“Right boys, now I don’t know what you’ve been taught yet, but you’re up to navigating correct?” Farrier addressed the group of fifteen or so.

“Yeah” a few said,
“Right. Have you done the lesson in the Oxford without being able to see out the windows?” he asked. Nobody responded.

“Right, guess we’re doing that today then. So I’ll go up with groups, we won’t worry about formal positions in the plane. Everyone gets a map of the area, we put curtains on all the windows and you try and show on the map where you are, using nothing but the instrument panel to guide you. We won’t be able to go very far because of airway restrictions, but it’ll be enough.” He finished. Then Farrier realised one of the boys in the group was Miller, the boy who’d been in the crash months ago. As the group split roughly in half Farrier walked over to the boy.

“Miller. How are you? Haven’t really seen you since your accident.” He said,

“I’m well, and I suppose it was a good lesson. I wasn’t hurt, just shaken up.” The blonde answered.

“You’re right, accidents are actually a very good way to learn, but I’m glad you weren’t hurt, don’t know what we’d do with the legal work if a student was injured flying by himself!” Farrier coaxed a laugh out of the boy.

“Yeah, again I’m really sorry.” Miller said,

“And again, it’s fine. I’ve done much worse damage to planes, and it’s already been repaired so don’t worry. The only thing that matters is that you didn’t get hurt, it would have put you out of action for a long time Miller. Something you, well something you hopefully won’t come to learn about plane crashes is that you either get out fine, or you get out badly, there’s no small bumps or cuts, it’s one extreme or the other.” Farrier said.

“Yeah?” the boy said.

“Yeah.”

“How’s that?” he asked.

“Well, planes are just dangerous, if something goes wrong for you, it’ll likely be major.” Farrier said as they began walking to the Oxford.

“Now, you lot wait around here and study the maps while we go up.” Farrier instructed.

“I’ll tell you about my first crash some time.” Farrier said with a smile.

“Okay, Farrier” Miller smiled and went to sit on the grass with the other boys.

The first group put their helmets and radio gear on and got into the plane.

“Do you men want me to take off, or would someone like to try?” Farrier asked. No answers.

“Anyone?” Farrier asked again.

“Alright, I’ll give it a try.” A brunette said.

“Excellent, now I don’t believe I’ve worked with you before, you are?” Farrier asked.

“My name’s Godfrey. Nice to meet you Squadron Leader.” The boy held a hand to shake, which Farrier took.

“Likewise, Godfrey. Now, you’ve taken of in this before?”
“Yes, twice.” The boy answered.

“Right. I’ll just watch then.” Farrier sat in the second seat next to the primary pilot.

Godfrey was doing well, if a little shaky on the controls, Farrier thought to himself. He tried not to intervene though. Eventually the plane was lined up on the runway and Godfrey pushed the throttle forwards. The twin engines roared as the heavy plane began to move at speed,

“Ah-“ Farrier said, he had to grab the joystick and pull back on it slightly, the plane was going fast enough that it had begun to tip forwards.

“When you feel that first lean forwards, that’s when you pull back, otherwise you’ll drive us into the ground.” Farrier said over the radio now that the engines were running, he was only half joking.

“Sorry” the boy muttered.

“Not a worry, that’s why I’m here.” Replied Farrier, who watched as the plane left the ground and Godfrey retracted the wheels.

‘Next time retract the landing gear a little later, but good work!” Farrier said.

“Thank you, Farrier” Godfrey replied.

“Right, now I’ll take the pilot’s seat in a second, you boys pull down all the window covers.” Farrier instructed as he watched Godfrey fly.

Collins yet again was looking out the window rather than listening to Canfield. They were flying the bomber trainer, it sounded so loud and heavy, he couldn’t imagine what it would be like to fly, his base only had three small planes.

“Collins.” Canfield said, the blonde didn’t appear to hear. Then Wingnut shoved him to get his attention, Collins looked at his friend in annoyance, who then gestured to the front where Canfield was, Collins followed Wingnut’s gaze to a disappointed looking Wing Commander.

“Sorry” Collins muttered. Canfield sighed with a smile.

“You’ll get there, but please, am I that boring?” he asked,

“No no! I just, agh it’s just distracting when that’s goin’ on outside the window.” Collins explained, pointing.

“Yes I know. God, I remember when I was that excited to fly.” He said.

“Why aren’t yae anymore?” Collins asked. The old man thought.

“Actually, come to think of it, I think I still am. It’s not as new and shiny, but it’s still just as special.” Canfield smiled.

“When did you start flying?” someone asked,

“Oh, that would have to be when I was thirty, or around then I believe.” Canfield answered.

“In fairs, righ’?” Collins asked.

“Yes, actually.” Canfield gave him a quizzical look.
“Ah, Farrier told me” Collins clarified.

“Did he now? Well, did he tell you I always won?” the man smiled.

“Nae” Collins chuckled, he felt wrong for letting that tiny sliver of information slip, letting Canfield know he’d been talking about private life with Farrier.

“Well, I almost always won. You see class, flying used to be a novelty, nothing more. Before the idea to militarise a plane had even been conceived they were just for pleasure. Farrier and I would fly them in local fairs, win money for competing in competitions.” He explained to the class. Then he began explaining what Collins already knew from Farrier, how he came to work for the RAF through the fairground flying.

“Right, we’re at decent altitude now boys. I’m going to take over flying, I want each of you to take one last look out the windows so you know where we are.” Farrier said and took the seat after Godfrey got up.

“Now, we’ll fly for five minutes, all come and watch the controls, keep note of airspeed indicator, compass and directional gyroscope, and then you’ll all tell me where we are.” He said. They turned on the lights inside the dark plane after Farrier put down the blind on the front windscreen, the boys crowded around his seat to look at the controls. He was used to it, he knew how to navigate but Farrier imagined the boys were nervous about not seeing out the windows. The five minutes passed.

“Right, where are we?” he asked.

“Should just be coming over the church?” one said,

“No we’re nearly at the Thames!” said Godfrey. Everyone had a different answer, much to Farrier’s dismay.

“Open the blinds.” He said. They looked down to see the river.

“I was right!” Godfrey exclaimed over the radio.

“Yes, well done. Now we’ll fly again for five minutes, I’m going to make a turn so watch the turn indicator and artificial horizon.” Farrier suggested. Eyes flicked between the dials on the plane and the maps they all held. He made a turn to port, almost completely back in the direction they’d come from but not quite.

“Right, now where are we?” he asked again.

“Are we back?” Godfrey asked. That was the answer Farrier had hoped one would get, an old trick to confuse them was to make an almost 180 degree turn but not quite, they usually seemed to think the turn had been completed.

“I dunno, I think we’re near the train station.” Said another boy.

“Let’s see.” Farrier said and pulled up the main blind revealing the station in front of them.

“Well done, how did you know?”

“Compass” the boy answered.
“Good. Men take note, you’d be surprised how often pilots forget about the compass when they can see, but to be perfectly accurate you have to know exactly where you face.” He said.

“Look, there’s base” Farrier pointed out and there was a small chorus of ‘ah’s as they all realised where they were.


“Last chance” he said, no answers again.

“Alright, go sit down and strap in then lads.” He said.

“But you need to get used to doing it sometime soon.” He added.

Collins had finally begun to get into the zone of learning again, he blamed the week off for his lack of attention, when he heard a roaring engine above the classroom.

“Jeez” someone said.

“Aye, louder than usual.” he said, looking at Canfield for confirmation that it was normal.

“Don’t worry, that’s just the Oxford coming back. Judging by the sound Farrier’s probably flying it, bit close to the roof in my opinion.” He laughed.

“Thought you said he was a good flyer?” someone asked.

“He is, he’s a very, very good flyer but he’s a fighter pilot, sometimes he forgets bombers need more room. Or maybe he doesn’t, he can be reckless with his flying too, so either he didn’t anticipate being that close to the roof, or he did and is fine with being this close.” Canfield said.

“Is that bad, to be reckless?” Dawson asked.

“Good question, actually. Sometimes it is, sometimes it isn’t. Farrier’s recklessness has gotten him more good than bad in his time, but yet some wouldn’t approve of his style.” Canfield answered.

“Wouldn’t picture him to be a reckless pilot!” someone laughed, Collins knew it was Anderson without turning around.

“Hmm, okay well let’s call it confidence, not recklessness. Yes, that word fits better.” Canfield said.

“Wouldn’t picture that either.” Anderson replied.

“I can imagine none of you would, he’s a cheeky bugger when you get to know him.” Canfield laughed.

“He’s a great pilot, he takes risks that a lot wouldn’t, the ground crews never liked him much, he put too much stress on the engine!” Canfield added. Collins shook his head thinking of the four-bladed propeller Farrier had to get.

“Were we too close to the roof?” Godfrey asked.
“What? Nah, course not. We had miles of room, don’t worry.” Farrier said. He could tell that wasn’t convincing.

“Once you get to really know the plane, you know exactly how much room you have to work with. Of course some would say it’s good to be over cautious, but why? There was no possible chance we were going to hit the roof, I promise you. I imagine we had maybe five-hundred feet, at least. It looks like less when you’re flying but I know how much the plane dips below.” He said.

“Now, we have to make quite a harsh turn here because of our air restrictions and I need to line the plane up for the runway, so hold tight.” Farrier said. He’d be glad when the restrictions changed, it was always so difficult to turn the big planes around to land. He pulled hard on the joystick to the right and put his right foot down, lifting his left completely off the pedal. He put the landing flaps up on one wing to help speed things along too.

The class had abandoned the lesson, even Canfield had his arms folded and was watching out the window.

“Far out, look at that!” Wingnut said to Dawson.

“That tight turn, actually isn’t his fault. Our air restrictions make it very hard to turn the bigger planes around to land them, Farrier’s actually doing a good job boys.” Canfield said.

“How can yae tell it’s him for sure?” Collins asked.

“When you know a man as long as I have, you know his flying when you see it. They want us all to fly the same, but it will never be so, we’re built to be individuals. All pilots try and learn the same way, but they each turn out very differently.” Canfield replied. The class watched as the Oxford landed on the runway without incident. It was the first time Collins knowingly saw Farrier fly.

The plane landed on the runway and Farrier sat back in the seat. He taxied it over and stopped.

“Right boys, out you get, next lot’s turn.” He said. The boys scrambled out and the next group got in. Farrier still needed to fix that pothole in the runway.

“Well this has been a productive lesson” Canfield mumbled to himself.

“Oh, before you all go, something very important is happening on Wednesday, I can’t believe it’s slipped my mind until now!” Canfield said, everyone getting up sat back down to listen.

“Now this is good, but also bad news. The bad news, is that the reason this is happening is because it’s looking like Britain is in fact, going to war, it’s inevitable by now I think. But, the good news is that Gatwick is going to be surveyed on Wednesday to see if it is suitable to become a full time RAF station for fighter command. This means a few things for you lot, firstly it will mean that you won’t need to go off to the Cranwell college to complete your training, you can stay here if you plan on continuing in fighter command and not joining the bombers or ground crew. Also, it means that the airspace we have will be greatly expanded, so we won’t have to do difficult turns like what you just saw, and we can go on longer flights. It also means you’ll need to prepare for more men to be here than usual, and that we’ll be getting shipments of warplanes. Now I know Wednesday is only a survey of the site, but it’s looking quite confident that Gatwick will run full time, even if the site isn’t perfect, simply because of the need for more stations.” He finished. The crowd was mixed, some were excited, some were nervous. Collins wasn’t sure where he fit in, although he
knew most of it from Farrier’s inability to keep it to himself, he still didn’t know what to make of the prospect of war.

“But the main thing, is that the man coming to see us on Wednesday is Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding.” Canfield said.

_Shit_ was all Collins could think to himself.

Chapter End Notes

As always thanks for reading, I appreciate it so much! And thank you for all the lovely feedback too <3 If anyone wants to chat, my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com

Until next update, happy reading!
Preparations for Inspection

Chapter Notes

Hey all, guess I felt like I needed a mid week chapter! Hope you enjoy this one, it’s kinda plot heavy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was Wednesday, July 6th. Farrier awoke stressed already. He bolted out of bed and got ready for the day, almost running down the stairs to have an early breakfast. Canfield was already there thankfully.

“Are we supposed to be in full uniform for him?” Farrier asked as soon as he sat down at the table. “No rules, but I will be, it’s respectful.” Canfield answered.

“Yes, of course.”

“Have you ever met him?” Farrier asked Canfield.

“No, have you?”

“No” Farrier replied,

“Well, at least that makes both of us.” The old man chuckled.

The other officers began to gather at the table.

“Men, today we’re in full uniform greeting the Air Chief Marshal at the front door, yes?” Farrier said, they began talking about the event that was greeting the Air Chief Marshal, should there be tea on hand for him? Who should escort and who should continue teaching the classes? Farrier couldn’t believe this stuff hadn’t been sorted out already, and his mood only slightly lightened when he saw a certain blonde yawn through the doors.

“Can’t believe we’re gonna see him!” Wingnut said,

“Yeah, I’m nervous” Dawson said,

“Aye me too.” Collins replied.

“I hope he likes the base” he added.

“He will, and even if he doesn’t, like Canfield said they need another airbase anyway, he doesn’t have to like it.” Wingnut chimed in.

Farrier ended up having to be the one to teach a class before the arrival of Hugh Dowding, he wasn’t pleased about it but Canfield convinced him on the grounds that he was the least nervous. No he wasn’t, he just didn’t show it like the others were.

He was drumming his fingers on the desk when Collins walked into the room. Farrier wished he could just go and smoke a cigarette and not worry about this. When everyone was seated he addressed the class.

“Morning boys, today we’re actually going to be going out and learning to stand in formation, so out into the quadrangle.” He said. The class walked out into the dirt.

“Now, the way you line up is that we need ten men across, there must be one large step’s distance between the line behind you when marching but today for the sake of practice have more than that, and if you remember how we spaced ourselves out when we did the physical training, your left arm out to the side with a clenched fist should be almost at the shoulder of the man next to you.” He explained. Everyone shuffled around and Collins was thankful he didn’t end up in the front line.

“Now we’re going to learn about body placement and I’m going to give you some basic
“commands.” Said Farrier.
“So the first thing you need to know is how to stand to attention.” He said.
“So, heels together and your feet turned outwards. Your knees must be straight. Now your hands, clenched fists facing inwards with your thumbs at the front, they have to be immediately behind the seams of your trousers.” Farrier continued, the group moved to follow.
“Your shoulders need to be square, pushed back and down a bit, but don’t strain them, and let your arms just fall from the shoulders. Stand up straight lads, and don’t let your head hang at all.” He said.
“Now, it should look like this.” Said Farrier, and he stood to attention. After a few moments he relaxed,
“Now I’m going to do a quick walk around to check, keep your eyes looking their own height, and straight forwards, don’t get distracted by anything.” He said.
Collins took a quick look down to make sure his feet were in the correct position before straightening as much as he could. Farrier began walking slowly between the rows of men, straightening one up, pushing another’s shoulders back more, until they were all good enough in his eyes. Collins was sure disappointment was the wrong emotion to feel when Farrier didn’t need to fix his posture as he walked past the blonde. The man returned to the front of the group.
“Good. Now relax men.” He said,
“Now, the next command I’ll show you is standing at ease. Contrary to what you might think, it doesn’t mean relax. What you do now, is that your hands will be behind your back, the right hand in the palm of the left, both hands are open. So your left hand should be touching your back, with your right hand in it. The next part to standing at ease is that you must step out with your left leg so that your feet are shoulder width apart. Stand at ease, like stand to attention, permits no movement.” Farrier said.
“So, stand at ease.” He commanded. The men did as they were told and Farrier walked around them again. Collins ignored his urge to look at Farrier as he passed, even though Farrier tried to make it difficult by lingering his gaze on Collins.
“Now, the third one is stand easy. It’s the same as stand at ease, but you can relax your body. You cannot move your feet from their position, but you can move your arms, look around, but a slouching attitude isn’t permitted, and you can’t talk either.” Farrier said. Collins decided he liked it when Farrier was in work mode. He wondered if he would enjoy Farrier giving him direct orders or not. He tried to stop thinking about it when his cheeks got hot.
“Now we’ll try those three. Okay?” Farrier said with some nervous chuckles in response.
“Attention!” he said loudly, Collins moved as quickly as he could to the position, partially because he was startled by the sudden instruction. He did like it when Farrier gave him a direct order. Farrier looked around the group.
“At ease!” he said equally as loud, Collins stepped out quickly with his left leg as instructed and folded his hands behind his back.
“Good, now stand easy.” Farrier ended. Collins let his shoulder slump and looked sideways at Dawson, who tried not to giggle.
“Now, we’re going to touch on saluting, then we’re done.” The man said.
“Your right arm has to come out to the side when you lift it up, not forwards at all. Your middle finger should be touching your temple. When you bring your salute down, you should bring your arm down in the shortest possible way.” Farrier said. He then demonstrated.
“When you’re saluting to the left or right instead of the front, it’s exactly the same except your head is turned in that direction, but we’re just focusing on saluting to the front today.” He added.
“So now we’ll try it. To the front, and, arms!” Farrier commanded, and at that the men saluted. They finished their practices and went back into the classroom.
“Now, unfortunately you boys aren’t having classes until after lunch, all the officers will be busy with the Air Chief Marshal’s visit.” Farrier said, to which there was a cheer.
“Yes yes, very fun, good for you lot. But please, and I say this with complete seriousness, act orderly. Do not step out of line. If he sees students wandering about being rowdy he won’t be
impressed. You all need to be on best behaviour, okay?” Farrier said. He honestly wished he could hide all he students away somewhere just in case some of them wanted to act out. That got him thinking.

“Actually if you want to clear off the campus for a few hours, feel very free to.” He said to which he got a laugh from the class. He checked where his watch usually was on his arm, then upon remembering he’d lost it he then looked up at the clock on the wall. Farrier didn’t usually finish early at all, the opposite happened a lot in which he would have to cut the lesson short at the bell. Not knowing what to do he dismissed the class a few minutes early, much to Collins’ very clearly observable disappointment.

“What’ll we do?” Collins asked his friends as they left,

“Dunno, should we go up into our rooms or is he gonna inspect them?” Wingnut asked.

“I don’t know, he might I mean, if it’s turning into a proper base they might want to look at the rooms to see if they can fit more men into one?” Dawson chimed in.

“Yae but let’s just go in mine, it’s the last in line out of us three, surely if they come upstairs they’ll look into the first ones then leave.” Collins reasoned.

Farrier walked to Canfield’s office where he was told to go after his class. Just before he touched the door handle the man felt a sharp pang in his stomach. *Not again*, he thought, *not today*. After bracing himself on the door for a few seconds with his hand to his torso, Farrier walked in. The room had Canfield, and the two other officers inside, all worrying about the event.

“Ah, Squadron Leader.” Canfield said.

“Yes, hello lads. All ready?” he asked, stomach still hurting.

“Yes, you and Canfield will greet at the door and Davis and I will be posted at the runway ready for the tour of the hangars.” Said Stevenson to Farrier.

“Okay, that’s fine. So I suppose we just hang about for half an hour then.” He said, not entirely pleased they had to sit and stress for half an hour more.

“Guess so.” Said Davis.

“Why don’t we just sit on the roof? Then there’s no way he’ll barge in on us!” Wingnut suggested.

“Timson, sometimes I genuinely wonder about you.” Dawson said in complete sincerity, earning a laugh from Collins and a red face from the boy in question.

“Nae just come to my room, it’ll be fine.” The Scot said. So the three boys walked upstairs and into Collins’ room.

“Wow, it’s so neat!” Dawson said as they walked in, admittedly Collins did know his was the neatest, he realised that because the other two weren’t in his room often, only once before he could think of, they probably didn’t know how neat he kept it.

“Ah thanks” he said absent-mindedly, trying to forget the conversation that had taken place about Farrier’s mental health, and physical scars, last time they were all in his room together. They all sat crossed-legged on the floor, not really knowing what to do with the event.

“So, we have to be holed up in here for hours?” Wingnut asked.

“I suppose if we’re not going to leave the base we should probably try and stay in here yeah.” Dawson replied.

“Maybe we should leave then.” Collins suggested. He didn’t get an answer because Wingnut spotted his sketch book laying open on his bedside table.

“What’s that?” the brunette asked, getting up to reach for it. Collins was too fast, he got in front of the boy and picked it up himself, shutting it quickly.

“Oh okay, something we shouldn’t see in there maybe?” Wingnut jested.

“Yeah probably.” Collins laughed back, Dawson gave some sort of resigned smile. Collins knew he knew what was in the book, Dawson seemed to always know. Of course Collins’ pencil had wandered some nights, never a face on these drawings but details, hands, shirt collars, Dawson
would understand immediately if he saw them, but he didn’t even need to see to know who they were of. Collins liked that about him, where Wingnut was crazy and full of energy, Dawson was reflective and much more observant and intuitive.

As Farrier leaned against the closed door of the office he couldn’t stop checking the clock, minutes felt like hours, he wanted a smoke, he wanted to know where his watch went, he wanted to lie down, he wanted Collins. Then he was distracted by another pang in his gut, it almost made him double over.

“Fuck!” he wheezed, out of shock more than pain. All the men around him seemed to take a worried step towards Farrier.

“Farrier?” Davis said, seeing the man’s hand go straight to his stomach and well aware of his injury as all the officers were.

“I’ll be fine, don’t worry men.” Farrier said. He took his hand off his torso and stood up straight again, instinctively checking his hand as he did most times after holding his stomach during a particularly painful episode. He was surprised when, contrary to usual, there was actually blood on his fingers.

“Shit.” He said and looked up at Canfield, who was looking down at Farrier’s torso, the brunette followed his gaze to a small blotch of deep red on the front of his blue shirt.

“Fuck’s sake, this only happened a month or so ago! And it had to happen again today!” he said loudly.

“Got any bandages in that drawer?” he added to Canfield.

“No, go to the hospital building.” The older man instructed.

Farrier stormed out of the room down the hall. He couldn’t feel much pain in his stomach now, he didn’t know if it was because he was used to the pain of bits of shrapnel coming out, or because there was enough adrenalin that he couldn’t feel it. He left the main building via the front door and walked as quickly as he could to the hospital building which was on the side of the base, hidden away by the fence. It was a small brick building, they never had much use for it but occasionally there would be an accident in a plane. Most of the time they used it as a place to hold all the records and files, but there were trained staff there too. He opened the doors and walked through the wing, not bothering to find anyone to help.

“Excuse me Squadron Leader?” a woman called after him, he turned.

“Do you need something?” she asked.

“I just need some square band aids if you have them.” He answered, not wanting to divulge.

“Oh, come with me.” She said. They walked the way Farrier was going anyway. She went into a chest of drawers in a storage room.

“Like these?” she asked, holding a band aid that looked large enough to cover a child’s entire knee.

“Perfect, thank you.” He said, taking it. It was then that the woman looked down and saw blood on his shirt.

“Are you okay? Why don’t you sit down?” she asked.

“No time, but I appreciate the concern. I really must get back to the main building.” He said, Farrier felt bad for rushing off but there was no time for niceties. As he walked he untucked his shirt from his pants and pulled it up a bit. He ran a finger over the open wound and could feel the corner of a piece of shrapnel. No time. He left it in and put the band aid over the top. He walked as quickly as his pain threshold permitted back to the main building and upstairs to his bedroom and changed shirts. He hoped the stain would miraculously come out but he knew blood, he’d need a new shirt now. He slipped on his blazer and grabbed his hat.

The three boys heard someone hurry past into the next room, Collins knew Farrier’s footsteps by now. Dawson watched the tense expression on Collins’ face and deducted who had walked past from that.
“Wonder what he’s doing up here.” Dawson remarked.
“Aye” Collins said. They didn’t have time to dwell on it any longer as the man could be heard walking back towards the stairs.
Wingnut shrugged.
“So are we staying here?” he asked.
“I dunno but we need to decide before the Air Chief Marshal arrives.” Dawson said.

Farrier met with the other officers back in Canfield’s office.
“You alright son?” the old man asked.
“Yeah, I’m fine.” Farrier shrugged off any pain he could feel.
He checked the place his watch usually was on his arm. Damn. Checked the clock. Twenty minutes past the hour.
“We need to assume positions.” He said tersely.
“Yes. Men, to your posts.” Canfield said. Canfield strode out of the office with Farrier on his heels.
Davis and Stevenson headed back to the airstrip. Canfield and Farrier stood to attention one either side of the double front doors, both in full service dress.
They waited. Farrier looked around the streets, there was nobody to tell him to keep his eyes straight ahead, so why should he? There was a cool breeze blowing down the road, but nobody in sight. He resisted the urge to check his stomach. The minutes went by painstakingly slow, Farrier was restless and his torso was in pain again, he could feel it twinge in time with his pulse but he couldn’t break his form.
Then Farrier heard something, a car in the distance. Without turning his head he looked as far as he could down the road to confirm what he heard, it was a black car, its lights were on in the dark cloudy conditions. As if Farrier couldn’t tell, Canfield let out a very ominous, “He’s here.”

Chapter End Notes

As always thank you to everyone who reads my work, I hope this one was a goodie!
Thanks for all your lovely feedback, it means the world to me ❤️ If anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com
Until next chapter, happy reading!
Arrival of the Air Chief Marshal

Hey guys, hope everyone had a good week. We’re meeting the Air Chief Marshal this chapter, the first real person to enter my fic!

The Air Chief Marshall arrived at the gate, Canfield and Farrier saluted in unison. The man saluted back, then walked up to the stairs, the two men at the top of them dropped their salutes after the minimum three seconds they knew they had to hold it, and resumed standing to attention. The Air Chief Marshal reached the top step, “Morning gentlemen, rest.” He said. His voice was harsh and formal, his face stern. Canfield outstretched a hand. “Good morning Air Chief Marshal Dowding.” He said following formal speech opening for officers, Dowding took his hand and shook, “Good to finally meet you, Wing Commander Canfield. He turned to Farrier who offered his hand and said the same sentence. “Good morning to you Squadron Leader Farrier.” Dowding said. “Would you like to come in?” Canfield offered. “Yes. I must be gone by 1400 hours, but I assume we’ll be finished well before then.” Dowding said. “Yes I imagine so.” Canfield replied, and the three men walked inside. “Would you like any tea, Air Chief Marshal?” Canfield offered as they closed the door. “Oh, yes please.” He said as he tucked his hat under his arm, Canfield and Farrier followed. Farrier noticed the man hadn’t smiled yet. They all went into Canfield’s office and had a cup of tea together, Farrier refrained from dumping copious amounts of sugar into his in front of Dowding, noticing Canfield’s small smile at realising this. “So, shall we begin downstairs?” Canfield asked. “We could, yes.” The man answered. “So, how many more instructors do you have at Gatwick?” Dowding directed his speaking at Farrier for the first time. “We have two other full time instructors, and two more part time.” He said. “Well!” Dowding laughed, but it didn’t seem like a happy laugh. “I didn’t realise Gatwick was so small, indeed when things are upgraded here you’ll need about fifteen or more full time to cope with the amount of men you’ll have here.” He said. “Yes, well we have plenty of room for them all here.” Farrier said, he knew that it sounded a little rude, like he was talking back somehow. He was no good at speaking to superiors, even if he’d said something normal he still thought it sounded bad and got nervous because of it. Back in the war he’d somehow managed to earn the reputation of a somewhat cocky pilot, not that he meant to, he just seemed to disagree with his superiors a lot. “Have we met before?” Dowding asked Farrier, the man’s stomach tightened somewhat. “No, I don’t believe we have, Air Chief Marshal.” Farrier responded. It began to rain outside. London, Farrier thought. “Oh, forgive me. I recognise your name is all.” Dowding said. “Oh, well I’m quite sure I’ve not met you before.” Farrier replied, “Indeed, I don’t recognise you, only your name.” Dowding said, and then finished his tea. The...
other two men gulped down theirs so they could leave the office.

“Downstairs then?” Dowding asked.

“Yes, right this way.” Canfield said and they walked out towards the dining hall.

They entered the dining hall which was empty of staff at this time of day.

“How many boarders do you have right now?” Dowding asked Farrier.

“Sixteen?” he said, looking at Canfield.

“Yes, sixteen, though this year has been quieter than usual.” He confirmed.

“How many rooms do you have?” Dowding asked.

“Forty, ten across each wing.” Canfield answered.

“Oh. Seems an awful waste doesn’t it? I’m glad someone brought the state of this place to my attention, Cranwell is busting at the seams and Gatwick is almost empty!” he laughed. Farrier wasn’t sure he liked the demeanour of the Air Chief Marshal, the only two times he’d smiled were when laughing at the base’s expense. They reached the top of the staircase.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.

“Where’s next?” he asked, Canfield answered.
classrooms.” Dowding said.

After a good amount of time looking in his room for them, Wingnut retrieved the cards. Then he realised he could hear voices, and was pretty sure it was from the room next to his. He peered out of his door and saw that indeed the door to the room next to his was ajar, and he could make out Canfield talking inside. Wingnut panicked and grabbed the cards, shutting his door as quietly as he could. He knew running on the wooden floor would be too noisy, so he walked as quickly as he could up the hall. He’d almost made it to the corner of the next hall when Farrier walked out and spotted him, giving him a confused look, the boy didn’t stop.

“Jesus guys, I nearly saw him!” Wingnut breathed as he got in.

“So they’re up here?” Collins asked.

“Yeah! They were in the room next to mine!” the brunette said.

“Wow, it’s like a celebrity’s in here!” Dawson said.

“I know!” said Wingnut.

“I guess now we have to stay in here!” Collins laughed.

“Yeah, Farrier saw me I think, he looked a bit confused.” Wingnut said.

The boys couldn’t play cards with the knowledge that the Air Chief Marshal was so close to them, it was Collins who decided they should peep around the corner for a glimpse. The three tiptoed around and looked down the hall as the three men exited the room next to Wingnut’s. Collins had never seen them with their hats before, they all carried them under their arm, he supposed it really was an extremely special occasion. Farrier was at the rear as they went down the stairs single file, he checked behind them to ensure everything was in order, as he looked down the hallway he saw one brunette and two blonde heads disappear from the corner. Hs shook his head and continued down the stairs.

“Idiot, he saw us!” Dawson shoved Collins.

“Lucky Dowding didn’t aye?” he said back. Now that the three men were gone the boys were finally relaxed enough to play their card game.

“Well, these rooms are well set up actually.” Dowding said eventually after seeing the classrooms. Finally, Farrier thought, a positive comment. Dowding was then led through the change rooms out to the airstrip.

“Why is this the only entrance to the back?” he asked.

“Not sure, it’s always been this way, even when Gatwick was a school the locker room was the exit to the back.” Canfield answered, earning not so much as a shrug from Dowding. As they reached the runway Davis and Stevenson saluted.

“Rest, men. How are you?” Dowding asked, shaking each of their hands in turn. After the introductions had been said they inspected each hangar and shed, even out to the little shoddy storage shed that Farrier would walk out and sit behind at night when he couldn’t sleep.

“We might even need to build some more hangars here, definitely got room for it in this field.” The Air Chief Marshal said.

The three boys watched out Collins’ bedroom window as the group walked around the airstrip and hangars. When they exited one such hangar Collins got his first glimpse of Dowding’s face. He looked stern, an older man, maybe Canfield’s age or a bit younger. He seemed quite uptight, but of course Collins couldn’t hear what was being said so he could have been wrong.

“Well men, it’s 1245 hours and I think we’ve finished the tour, yes?” he asked.

“Yes I’d say we have. We must thank you so much for coming down to see us today, Air Chief Commander.” Canfield said.

“The pleasure is all mine, thank you for showing me the grounds. I’ll have some words to the Ministry and see what will be done, someone will get back to you soon on the matter.” Dowding replied. At that moment Farrier’s injury decided to play up again. He tried his hardest not to wince
but he knew he’d visibly jolted slightly, more so at the surprise than the pain.
“My fellow, are you alright?” Dowding asked. Farrier was very embarrassed,
“Yes I’m quite fine, old injury playing up is all.” He said, trying to stay calm. Dowding didn’t
answer for a minute, instead looking like he was thinking of something, which worried Farrier.
“Oh! Now I know how I know you, Farrier.” Dowding said.
“You’re one of the top aces in the country lad!” he exclaimed, and smiled the first genuine smile
Farrier had seen on him all day.
“Oh, yeah I am. Thank you, Air Chief Marshal.” Farrier said bashfully.
“You did your country a great service. Actually an amusing story about how I know your name,
some point during the war I was on the phone to one of the officers who said ‘oh, we’ve lost one of
the aces’ to me, which, you somehow get used to these things so I didn’t dwell” he said to Canfield
who smiled all too knowingly,
“And then a week later, he calls again telling me that Farrier isn’t dead!” I had to put down my cup
of tea after hearing that” Dowding chuckled.
“Yeah it was pretty close they told me” Farrier said, uncomfortable at the memory brought up by
the conversation, and the fact that his severe injuries were of joking matter to the Air Chief
Marshal.
“Ah don’t worry lad, you’re here now.” Dowding said, and patted Farrier’s shoulder.
“Now I apologise, but I better get going.” He added.
“Of course, back through the lockers.” Farrier said.
The group walked back to the front door, and the officers saluted once more to the Air Chief
Marshal before he departed. Farrier just sighed and looked at Canfield.

“Glad that’s over with then?” the old man asked.
“Definitely.” Farrier responded before adding,
“Do I have to teach more classes today?” Canfield laughed,
“Why don’t you want to?” he asked.
“Still hurting.” Farrier said, gesturing to his stomach,
“Oh. I suppose it would be best then for you not to, but what shall we do with your students?” said
Canfield. Farrier breathed.
“I suppose I will, but if it gets bad I’m going upstairs to pull it out.” He said. They walked and sat
in Canfield’s office over the lunch time break.
“Why don’t you ever get the nurses to help you?” Canfield asked over a cup of tea, one which this
time Farrier had no hesitation in heaping sugar into until the spoon was once again taken from him
by Canfield.
“They hurt more than when I do it. And I don’t like people making a fuss over me, they’d probably
try and keep me there overnight or something stupid anyway.” He answered. The men sat in
silence sipping their tea for a while.
“Do you ever get jealous of the way people treat me because of my accomplishments in the war?”
Farrier asked bluntly. He’d been pondering the question for some time but didn’t know if it would
annoy Canfield.
“No, I’m filled with pride for you, my boy. It’s excellent to see you getting such recognition!”
Canfield smiled.
Canfield was too good sometimes, Farrier couldn’t understand how someone could be so kind-
hearted and selfless. He wished he were like that.
“Really?” the brunette asked,
“Of course.” Replied Canfield.
“Do you care that the students think I’m a better flyer?” Canfield asked.
“No they don’t!” Farrier laughed,
“They do!” said Canfield with a chuckle.
“Then yeah I do care! There’s a reason one of us is an ace!” Farrier laughed.
“There’s also a reason one of us has a mess of shrapnel through his torso.” Canfield said, souring the mood immediately, the man watched as Farrier’s smile dropped. “Lack of caution is the reason. Lack of caution is the reason you’re an ace and I’m not, why you’re injured and I’m not.” Canfield said. Farrier too calmly put down his teacup. Canfield knew when Farrier was about to get angry, he acted scarly calm. “What did you just say?” Farrier said slowly, eyeing Canfield very carefully. “Come on Tom. If I’d been as reckless as you I’d be an ace as well, I had something called common sense.” He said. “Did you just say, that this is my fault?” Farrier gestured to his torso. “Oh, you know what I meant, you know you fly wildly.” Canfield brushed it off. “I do not fly wildly. I fly with confidence, I’m not scared of my own aircraft, I know its limits. This is not my fault Canfield.” He said, standing up. Canfield huffed. “You’re only okay with me being an ace because in your mind you’re still better, that’s it?” Farrier said. “We’re equals. How about that?” Canfield said annoyedly. Farrier didn’t answer and began to walk away. Maybe Canfield wasn’t so good after all. Farrier changed his mind, he wasn’t walking away from this. “I can’t believe you think this is my fault!” he said loudly turning around. “Well, tell me it isn’t!” Canfield raising his voice to meet. “It’s not! Any one of us could’ve been hit, it’s war!” Farrier yelled. “I’m fairly certain they’d go for the man off by himself ignoring regulation, Farrier!” Canfield was yelling now. “The fuck is that supposed to mean Michael?” Farrier yelled back. Canfield’s face wasn’t what he expected, the man looked confused. “You sound like you don’t remember what you did. Go have a rest or something Farrier.” He dismissed him, Farrier didn’t leave. “What did they tell you happened?” he asked Canfield in a speaking tone. “They said the formation broke and you went for the Baron head on, that you didn’t stick to where you were supposed to break for and just went for it. That’s the stupidest thing you could’ve done Tom.” He said, crossing his arms. Farrier had to just stop and look at Canfield to make sure he was being serious before answering, “Well it’s a good thing I didn’t fucking do that then, isn’t it. All these years you’ve been thinking I’d do something like that? Against someone like him? Jesus Christ.” Farrier almost laughed. “Why would they tell me you did that if you didn’t?” Canfield asked raising his voice Farrier was looking out the window with his arms crossed. “It would have looked that way if you didn’t see the whole thing.” He said very, very quietly. Canfield got up and put a hand on Farrier’s shoulder. “Come, your tea’s getting cold. What happened, really?” he asked. They sat together, and once again Farrier forwent the previous yelling match and sat with the man. “Well, we were in formation and we saw his squadron up ahead flying across our 12 to port. Then they all took the high air so we broke. I was on the port side so I went for the Baron, got some shots in as he flew across my 12 but then he did this thing I hadn’t seen done before. He kind of just threw the plane sideways, don’t know how it didn’t break the rudder or the alerions, or how it didn’t stall, but then he was facing me. He’s the one who turned to face me, and as soon as I realised he was I pulled hard starboard to try and go into a turn and get behind him, but by then it was way too late.” Farrier said. Canfield sat in silence. “I’m sorry Farrier. Why didn’t you say earlier?” he asked. “I thought surely you had the story straight, surely someone saw it, guess not.” Farrier said and finished his lukewarm tea. “He must’ve done something to the plane, they couldn’t turn that sharply.” Canfield said in thought. “Probably, nothing wrong with altering your plane I guess” Farrier replied absently.
Thanks so much for reading! If anyone’s curious what the Air Chief Marshal looks like, Google him! It was interesting for me to put a real person into my story, I’ve no idea what he was really like but from his appearance I gathered this. My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone’s looking for some dunkirk content. Until next chapter ❤️
“Think he’s gone yet?” Wingnut asked,
“I guess” Collins replied. The boys walked downstairs and into the kitchen. They’d stocked it with an assortment of lunch food to the boys’ delight, but Collins decided to eat the hardboiled sweets instead of something decent.

Farrier didn’t know if he could be bothered taking the bandage off his stomach and getting to the shrapnel after all that. It’d come out by itself in time, he was just never patient enough. As he sat in Canfield’s office he untucked his shirt just to make sure there wasn’t any blood leaking through. To his relief there wasn’t, then it had probably clotted for now. He tucked his shirt back in as Canfield read the paper.

“We’re going to war, you know.” Canfield said, well aware of the inevitability, well aware of Farrier’s refusal to accept it.

“Maybe not. Maybe it’ll stay in Europe.” He said,
“Chamberlain doesn’t seem to want anything to do with Europe anyway” he added.

“I suppose you’re right about that” Canfield said and continued to read, knowing the conversation was fruitless.

“Chess?” he asked after a while.

“Not today, maybe some other time Canfield.” Farrier said, and got up to leave.

“Oh Farrier?” the old man called after him.

“How do you think we did today?” he asked.

“Ah, I think we did alright” Farrier smiled, he still disliked that the Air Chief Marshal knew who he was, but there was nothing he could do about it. As he walked down the hall he peered into the kitchen from which he could hear cheerful talk and laughter. He spotted Collins and his two friends seated around the small table making use of the restocked supplies. Upon looking closer he noted how utterly nutritious Collins’ lunch was, a large pile of lollies. Chuckling, he continued down the hall and up the stairs to his room.

Collins had gotten mildly full off sweets, and was somewhat disgusted by the fact. But they tasted good, so he decided it didn’t matter. He remembered they hadn’t gone on the run on Monday, and that nobody had brought it up. He wondered if they’d go to the gym tomorrow night, part of Collins hoped not, it he’d rather be tucked in bed reading or drawing, but he knew it was best to keep healthy.

Afternoon classes were easy, Canfield had some sheets of airplanes and they had to learn which was which, and be able to tell from silhouette only. He used them as flashcards and would only show each for a few seconds before hiding it and asking which plane everyone thought it was.

Farrier was having a smoke out his window. He still needed to fix that pothole in the runway. He was in some sort of fidgety mood, and wasn’t sure why until he looked into the hangar that held the two fighter trainers. He missed the air, more than usual at this moment. To be up there freely without worrying about students. He supposed he’d get that in war. But then Farrier thought, he wouldn’t mind teaching Collins to fly. Now, that would be far from a chore. He’d teach Collins for
hours on end to be the best pilot he could be. Something akin to protectiveness welled up inside Farrier as he imagined Collins flying during wartime, he’d have to be assigned to the same squadron, Farrier wouldn’t let it happen any other way. He’d fight to have Collins in the same flight of three as him, and the more he thought about it the less crazy it sounded, considering they were always two experienced pilots and one relative novice. Farrier thought back to when he’d fly in formation in the war, which got him thinking back to his years before the war, school even. The prestigious boys school he’d been sent to against his will after his mother’s passing, somehow supposed to make it easier to keep going with a new school, unbeknownst to his father just how much of a hinderance a boys school would be. His father didn’t knew he was homosexual, forced it out of him when he wasn’t coming home with girls on his arms. He remembered beginning to realise how to pick others out at school, the nervous looks, the way they acted. Every gay man Farrier had met had a mask. They had to hide themselves so completely behind it, and Farrier knew he had one too, he simply acted like when he was flying, but all the time. So many times he’d been called cold, boring, stressed. You had to be that way in the air, no banter between pilots, or professional ones at least, some of the young boys probably laughed about. It was easy for him to use that as a façade to hide behind on the ground too. He wished he could show his normal side sometimes, but it was just too risky, he couldn’t get comfortable around people like that, what if a word slipped? What if he looked at someone the wrong way? It would be the end of him. So Farrier hid his mischief and charm for the most part behind a wall. Though Collins had been slowly chipping away at it. Sometimes Farrier wished things could be as easy as school nowadays, he supposed he was still at school, but this time as a teacher rather than student. He was picked on at school sometimes, for being too good, at everything really. Not that he cared, Farrier tended away from people anyway, probably why he ended up being in fighters by himself rather than bombers in a team, he chuckled at the thought. A particular thought played through his mind, it was always fun when at the end of the day the teacher couldn’t think of anything else to do, the class would just go out and do a PE lesson. He wished it were that simple now. Then Farrier had an idea, rather a stupid one but nonetheless he put out his cigarette and walked downstairs to see Canfield. He knew he was teaching but he couldn’t shake the thought, maybe it was still that simple. And both God and Canfield alike knew Farrier would do almost anything to get in the air whenever possible.

Collins was pleasantly surprised to see Farrier appear in the doorway halfway through Canfield’s long-winded explanation of the different kinds of flying goggles that he’d worn and which he preferred, another story that had begun because everyone had gotten fairly confident at knowing the aircraft on the cards and decided to go off-track. As more and more students noticed the man in the door they began sniggering at Canfield’s lack of notice. Farrier leaned on the doorframe with a smirk, Canfield still hadn’t seen him and was continuing the story.

“And those pesky folding ones! Folded in half so they’d fit in your pocket, well what a waste of energy that was!” he laughed, and then finally spotted Farrier.

“I thought those were quite useful, myself” he smiled. Canfield chuckled as he noticed the man.

“What do you have a moment?” asked Farrier, Canfield looked confused but walked out into the hallway with him away from the listening ears of his class.

“What have you alright, chap?” he asked, now obviously concerned this was about Farrier’s shrapnel.

“Yes I’m fine. Look, I’ve had an idea for the afternoon. Let’s take them up in the planes, just for a short while. Just so they can get a feel for it!” he said eagerly. Canfield laughed.

“They don’t even know how to put their kits on, Farrier.

“Yes they should, if their civil training taught them anything. Come on, it’s only 1500 hours. Your lesson is finished. Surely they’ll want to stick around for a couple of hours for some fun.” He said.

“Where has this sudden urge come from?” Canfield laughed.

“I dunno, I can just imagine how boring it is being in here while others are out there, we didn’t have to do this.” Farrier said. Canfield was actually considering. He huffed.
“Only in the fighters, no bombers, no groups. One officer with one student, less stress.” Canfield eventually said with a small smile.
Farrier began to beam.
“And they must have full kit on first!” he added.
“I knew you’d come ‘round!” Farrier laughed and patted his shoulder.
“Go tell them, they’ll be running outside in no time.” Farrier said. The two men walked back into a very confused looking class.

“Well class, your favourite teacher has had an idea.” Canfield said, earning some argument from the class as not to hurt Canfield’s feelings, in reality the men liked both of them for different reasons. Canfield’s teaching methods were pretty static, he’d have the structured lesson plan set out and then if there was time he’d always tell stories or riddles, which Collins loved. Farrier was more dynamic, sometimes he just couldn’t be bothered teaching, much to the delight of the students, so they’d sit around chatting. Sometimes he was in a stricter mood so the lesson would be structured, or he wouldn’t banter, but he was generally the lessons were more casual, though he always finished on time, never early. He was seen differently now than when they’d first begun. He’d really come out of his shell with the group Collins pondered, and it wasn’t the first time he’d thought about it either, everyone joked about with Farrier now and the blonde was beginning to see a different side of him, something past the stony front he put on. Though Farrier never let anyone see too far past that, only a peak here and there.

“Ah I don’t think they have a favourite” Farrier laughed.
“Let’s not make them choose on the spot, it’ll skew their answer!” the old man chuckled.
“Anyway, who wants to go flying today?” Canfield asked. The class collectively shrieked in joy.
The two men rounded the boys into the locker rooms and they both went into the storage room connected to them.

“Cannae believe they sprung it on us!” Collins laughed.
‘I think Farrier sprung it on Canfield!” Dawson laughed. The men emerged with flying kits.
“Now, who doesn’t know how to put on one of these?” Farrier asked. Nobody put their hand up.
“Okay, well there’s only a few in here, we’ve got to go get them from the hangars so follow me. We’ll check you all before you go up to make sure they’re on properly though.” He said. They dumped about five flying kits on the benches and Anderson’s group pushed to get three of them first. Then everyone followed Farrier outside to the hangars. Collins could barely contain his excitement, and looking around neither could anyone else. He looked to the front to see Farrier laughing along with Canfield. They reached the shed, inside which were boxes of flying kits, everyone grabbed one and got it on.
“Now men, once you get your wings you’ll get your own kit, these are training ones.” Canfield said above the noise of everyone scrambling and chatting.
“You think it matters they’re not in flying boots and most of them aren’t wearing their blazer?” Farrier asked.
“Well, I suppose not. Your idea so you’re responsible anyway.” Canfield replied, earning a laugh from the younger man.
“These are different to what I had in Scotland, can yae lads help?” Collins asked.
“How are they different? We had these exact ones” Wingnut replied, Dawson nodded in agreement.
“Well, the straps aren’t the same. Ours you had to tie together with buckles too, this round buckle thing, they all go into that?” he asked, looking at the heavy piece of metal at the front.
“Yeah.” Dawson said.
“And what, you sit on the parachute?” Collins laughed.
“What on earth were you doing up there mate?” Asked Wingnut.
“Our parachutes were like backpacks, they just sat behind us” he answered.

“Jeez you had some old gear up there. Nah, it’s like a cushion.” The brunette answered.

“How do yae get out of the kit?” he asked Dawson.

“Press the buckle.” He answered, trying to conceal a small laugh. Collins tried, it didn’t work. He pushed it harder with both hands and then it worked, releasing the four straps it held.

“Got it.” He laughed nervously.

“Just take one of the maggies up?” Farrier asked.

“Yes, I think so.” Canfield replied.

Farrier could see Collins wasn’t sure about the kit, but didn’t question it.

“Should have gotten my jacket!” Farrier laughed to Canfield.

“Oh, speaking of! Irvin is releasing a new one soon, I hear.” He said.

“I like mine, I don’t need another.” Replied Farrier,

“I didn’t expect you’d say anything else.” Canfield laughed. Eventually everyone seemed to be ready to go.

“Right. You wanna be first?” Farrier asked Canfield.

“After all this you don’t want to be?” he laughed.

“Of course I do, but I was being nice.” Farrier smiled.

“Ah, being nice. Well no, you can be first.” Canfield chuckled and patted his shoulder. Farrier then addressed the group.

“Who’s coming up with me first?” he asked. There was a lot of pushing and shoving and Farrier just turned with a grin to Canfield, who shrugged like it wasn’t his problem.

“Alright, get in a line or something!” Farrier laughed.

They tried to, but everyone was so pushy. Collins didn’t feel like being pushy, he just stood there waiting for everyone to organise themselves, he wished they’d hurry up though.

“Okay, alphabetical it is. Anderson.” Farrier said eventually, also sick of the boys’ inability to let someone go first without quarrel. With a few shouts of encouragement from his friends Anderson walked to one of the little yellow planes with Farrier. Some selfish part of Collins protested the sight but he tried his best to swallow it.

“So Anderson you’re going to be in the front seat and myself behind, my controls override yours but not vice versa. Understood?” Farrier asked as he climbed into the open cockpit, the only protection, a small windshield before each of the seats.

“Yeah, got it.” The boy said. They slipped on the flying helmets and goggles.

“Now, you used radio systems in your civil training?” Farrier confirmed.

“Yeah a little bit” the boy replied.

“Just keep the mask on and you’ll be talking to the radio” said Farrier.

“Now the men out on the airstrip will be directing the plane and helping you to taxi out, but I’m going to help over the radio as well because I don’t know how much actual taxiing you’ve done, yes?” he asked.

“Yep.” Anderson said, he’d seemed to have lost a lot of his smugness upon getting in, Farrier was grateful for.

“Why aren’t they going?” asked Johnson to Canfield.

“He’s showing him the controls and how to check the levels, they don’t teach you that in civil training.” The old man replied.

Eventually the plane rumbled and started up. There were a few cheers from the group at the event. One of the officers took the chocks away and the plane began to steadily move forward out of the hangar. The group moved with it, it was mesmerising, the closest Collins had been to a moving plane in so many months, and it was going to be him soon enough. It reached the runway and the rest of the class sat down on the grass surrounding.

It began to move faster down the airstrip, faster and faster until, the wheels left the earth. Collins felt a rush through him as he watched it, flying was somehow other-worldly, even just watching. It
flew gracefully around, dipping in and out of sight in the distance, and the blonde didn’t take his
eyes off it once. The yellow paint turned gold in the late sun as the plane returned. Collins checked
his watch, it had been flying for all of ten minutes. He supposed that was all anyone would get
today, but it was more than enough. It bounced onto the runway, then the wheels lifted again, but
the second time they stuck and the plane completed the run, taxiing to the side. Anderson jumped
out and Farrier followed suit, both leaving the flying helmets on the seats. Canfield began towards
the plane with Charles next, and it was then that Collins realised he’d lucked out and would fly
with Farrier. He smiled to himself at the thought and continued to watch the next flight. It was a
little more seemingly random than the last, and of course Collins didn’t know if that was due to
Canfield or Charles, but he had to admit the landing was better.

Then it was his turn.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! As always your comments and kudos mean the world to me, thank
you ❤
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat.
Until next chapter!
“Afternoon” Collins smiled to Farrier.
“Yes, good afternoon Collins. Ready?” Farrier smiled back as they walked towards the plane.
“I’ve been ready for months,” Collins replied. They got in, Collins in the front. Even sitting in a plane felt so good.
“So Collins, if you look at the dials in front of you, I’ll tell you what to do.” Farrier said over the radio into the headphones of the helmet. Collins looked at the dashboard,
“So at the bottom you should see a little brass button. Push it a few times, that’s pumping the fuel, just makes sure the fuel’s ready.” Farrier’s voice sounded crackly in Collins ears, but it was surprisingly intimate hearing it in the headset. The blonde pumped the button a few times.
“Yae?” Collins said upon completion.
“Good, now set the little lever that’s called ‘fuel mix’ to forward.” He said. Collins felt his stomach getting light at the voice, but he swallowed the feeling as best he could. Farrier had him do a few more things, flick some switches, turn some knobs,
“Now, hold down the two buttons on the starboard side of the interior, called ‘starter’ and ‘boost’.” The man instructed.
“Okay” Collins said.
“Now, let go of ‘starter’ but keep holding boost until the engine turns on.” Farrier said. Collins did as he was told and after a few seconds the plane roared to life, and suddenly Collins remembered every little thing he knew about flying. It was loud in the cockpit, not that Collins cared a bit. He was so ready to fly.
“Now, I trust you know how to increase throttle safely?” asked Farrier through the radio.
“Yep.” Collins replied,
“Then off we go” the man said, Collins could hear the smile. They taxied out until they were straight on the runway, Farrier stayed quiet to observe. Collins pushed the throttle lever forwards to 75% as he’d been taught, and the plane gained speed. When the tail began to lift the blonde gently eased back on the joystick so the plane didn’t nose over. one hand on the throttle and the other on the joystick Collins pushed the throttle up to 80%, and the aircraft left the earth. You could always tell the second it did, it was unmistakeable. The rumble of the ground beneath the wheels stopped, and there was the familiar feeling of gravity pushing you down into your seat as the plane began its vertical ascent. Collins didn’t smile as he imagined he would, instead he was overcome by a feeling of complete peace, everything was right, now. He flew up over the fields that he’d never explored, never even walked to, past the runway. Still the grounds of the base, but unknown to him, and certainly now he had the best view of them. He let out a small hum, forgetting he was hooked up to a radio.
“That was a very smooth take-off, well done Collins” Farrier said, with surprise in his voice.
“Thanks” the blonde replied, somewhat preoccupied with the scenery beneath them. It was windy up here with an open cockpit, but nothing was going to dishearten Collins now, his mood was golden. He put his right foot down on the pedal and lifted his left, and pulled the joystick to the right too. The plane began to swoop gracefully to starboard, they flew over the hangars and out
above the town of Gatwick.

“Continue this turn a bit more, or you’ll reach our air boundary.” Farrier said, so Collins continued until they flew over the main building of the base, now flying the opposite direction to which they took off in. The plane’s wings glistened in the afternoon light, and Collins never wanted this to end. Never mind the incessant wind in his hair or the vibrating of the rattly seat. It was perfect. They flew over the little buildings and Collins could see the city of London in the distance.

“Can she glide?” he asked.

“Too heavy. You can’t glide can you?” Farrier responded.

“Can, actually” Collins bit back a chuckle. There was an impressed *hmph* on the radio. Collins’ civil training base had, as well as several regular training planes, some old glider thing with hugs canvas sails. He didn’t even know how old it was, he guessed the late 1800s, barely looked like a plane. but it flew, and it glided through the air easily, floated almost. The two flew for some time, peacefully over Gatwick.

“Right Collins, take us home.” came the husky voice in his ears. Home. That’s right, it was their home. Their home. Collins came to the realisation that in some sort of roundabout way they did live together, and it was special. The tingles in his stomach returned and could be easily felt above all the jolts from the plane’s power. He did another sweeping turn and returned to base. The plane flew over the runway once more and turned around to face it. Collins lowered the throttle and pushed the nose down slightly until the plane was significantly lower, coming in so it was as horizontal as he could make the approach. The wheels touched the ground and the plane jolted at the sudden friction. Collins taxied and finally it came to an end. He couldn’t believe it was only ten minutes.

The two men climbed out, leaving the headsets on the seats for the next users.

“Excellent take-off and landing, you proved your civil certificate right.” Farrier smiled.

“Thank you.” Collins said, but it was so earnest, it was obvious he meant to thank Farrier for the flight in its entirety. Farrier just looked away and smiled forwards. He was so good at it, acting this way when others were around, Collins somewhat wished he could do that too.

It was when he saw his friends that Collins finally got a grin on his face.

“Here he is! Good flyin’ mate!” Dawson said and shook Collins by the shoulders.

“Yeah, so much better than the other two” Wingnut laughed.

“Really?” Collins wasn’t sure how much of this was hyperbole.

“No seriously, they were so shaky, you could see it in their turns. And they didn’t take off and land as well as you either!” Dawson explained.

“Whatever they taught you up there in the highlands, it bloody well worked Collins!” Wingnut added. They all sat down on the grass to watch the next flyer. Farrier walked over and sat next to Collins, which surprised all three boys.

“Excited for your turns, boys?” he asked Dawson and Wingnut.

“Yes!” Wingnut answered,

“Sure am, been too long” Dawson said.

“Gee whiz though, Collins was good ey?” Wingnut said excitedly.

“Yes, almost concerningly so” Farrier laughed.

Dawson’s turn was one student after Collins’, and it was good. Collins watched as he flew and even though he didn’t know what his flight looked like, he was fairly certain Dawson’s was better. They all sat on the grass, Farrier periodically getting up and flying his turn with another student, sometimes going back and sitting with other groups, but he kept coming back to sit with Collins and friends when he deemed it inconspicuous enough.

Wingnut went up with Canfield, he was heavier handed than Collins thought he should have been, but didn’t say anything negative to him upon arrival back on the grass.
Finally, all the students had done a short flight and the sun was going down.

“Well class, I take you all enjoyed that?” Canfield asked the group, it was met with a chorus of agreement.

“Canfield, I need someone to help get the plane back in!” Farrier called from next to the magister.

“Oh, I’ll help you.” The old man said.

“Nah don’t you worry, one of them can be useful!” Farrier smiled.

“Alright, someone go and help Farrier get the plane back into the hangar.” Canfield said. Nobody moved and Anderson had already walked off inside with his two friends.

“Come on lads, two people are needed to push a plane back, you’ll have to do it sometime!” Canfield said. Collins wanted to, but he knew he shouldn’t. He’d never hear the end of it from his friends either.

The decision was made for him when Wingnut elbowed him hard in the gut.

“Go on then, be helpful!” he said loudly.

“You know what? Fine” Collins laughed, his stomach still somewhat hurting. Timson wasn’t one for subtlety or elegant interactions.

“See you two soon then” he said as he walked off towards Farrier.

“Thanks for volunteering.” Farrier chuckled as Collins arrived at the side of the plane, the rest of the group almost inside already.

“Welcome” he replied sarcastically.

“Just need a bit of help pushing her back into the shed, then you can go” Farrier smiled, and the men began to push, one behind each wing. It was heavy, but not completely impossible. By the time they got to the hangar Collins was quite glad it was over.

“Ah, not too bad?” Farrier said.

“Could say that” the blonde chuckled. Farrier walked over to him,

“You did really well, Collins.” The man said much more quietly.

“Thanks” Collins replied, feeling heat rise in his cheeks. The sun was almost setting, it had been setting earlier lately, a sure sign the worst of the heat was over for the year.

“Just need to put the chocks back” said Farrier as he looked around for them. The hangar door was open and it was letting in the orange light of the evening. Collins pulled himself out of his dazed state of simply watching Farrier and looked for the chocks too. It was Collins that eventually found them near the wall discarded on the ground.

“Here” he said, holding them.

“Oh, thanks Collins” said Farrier, taking them.

The men finished with the plane and headed for the exit of the hangar.

“Thanks for taking us up today Farrier. I know yae dinnae plan it, but thank you.” Collins said, stopping the man before he went outside.

“Ah, it’s no problem. I’d hate being in your situation, and I was, well, bored.” he chuckled. The two began to walk out of the hangar together, Farrier didn’t mean to at all, it just happened subconsciously, he brushed the small of Collins’ back gently with his hand to guide the boy in front of him. The blonde visibly stiffened and turned to him with a blush, Farrier didn’t meet his eyes. Past the embarrassment of his actions Farrier was amused, for all the forwardness that was Collins and his questionably innocent flirtations, if Farrier so much as touched him that was all gone and replaced with someone much shyer, quieter. It was sweet, the man thought to himself.

This thing they had, unspoken, and it always would be. But they knew, both of them knew. If only Collins would stop pushing it to be something more, but then again, Farrier didn’t know if he really didn’t want that after all. Was there a way to have something, and hide it? Keep it a secret? He tried to banish the thoughts as he hauled the shed door closed behind them.

Collins and the boys couldn’t stop talking about their short flights at dinner.
“Canfield said I did good turns!” Wingnut said with a mouthful of broccoli.
“Yeah Farrier said that to me too” Dawson replied.
“Didnae mention my turns” Collins laughed.
“But, said my take-off and landing were great” he added.
“Could see London from where I went.” Collins said after a while of silence save for the sounds of eating and chatter around them.
“Oh cool! I probably could’ve but I couldn’t look for it, too busy staring at the controls.” Wingnut laughed.
“Didn’t your hands move when you looked away from the joystick?” the brunette asked Collins.
“Nae, just take note not to move them and the’ll stay where they should. Try it next time.” He said with a smile.

“They were actually quite good today.” Canfield told the table of officers after explaining the last minute decision to fly.
“At least the ones that I flew with were” he chuckled and added.
“Yes, mine were very good too, hopefully lots will make it to become pilots” Farrier said.
“Dawson and Collins were the best of my lot, especially Dawson. He’s a real smooth flyer.” Farrier said,
“I couldn’t tell you who was best of mine, none stood out at least!” Canfield replied.
After dinner, Canfield asked for a game of chess and Farrier felt too guilty to say no. they sat in the Wing Commander’s room and played at his small coffee table. Farrier took on board what he’d been told to move his pieces around more and not be so guarded, and it made a noticeable difference.
“How’s everything?” Canfield asked.
“How’s everything?” Farrier clarified.
“Yes, everything.” The old man replied.
“Uh, well, shrapnel stopped bleeding, I think, hasn’t hurt for a while. Gonna check when the band-aid comes off I suppose. Spoke with Miller at dinner, had a bit of a chat about my first crash to help him feel better about his. He’s still a bit nervous about what happened I think, but he’ll get over it. Nothing else to report, I don’t think.” Farrier answered, more concerned with the game at hand than idle chit-chat.
“Collins?” Canfield asked. Farrier could almost not be bothered answering.
“He’s well?” was all he said.
“Still fancy him then.” Canfield murmured as he put Farrier in check on the board.
“Sort of.” Farrier answered as he moved himself out of danger, not willing to answer any more truthfully than that, in truth he fancied the lad more than ever. They continued to play with a more tense air between them.
“Been seeing more men in the streets lately. Soldiers.” Farrier said after a long while.
“Indeed. The country is gearing up for war, that’s for sure” Canfield replied.
“The warplanes will be here soon. I got a call this afternoon from the ministry. We are to expect them within a few months.” The old man said. Farrier got a worried feeling in his stomach and leaned back from the chess board to contemplate.
“Tom, there’s nothing you can do. Sometimes war is actually what a country needs.” Canfield urged.
“There’s no use pretending it won’t happen, Farrier.” He added.
The man ran a hand through his short brown hair.
“I know, I just don’t want it to.” He said, aware that wasn’t a very useful answer.
They played some more, and Farrier began to feel like he might be in the lead.
“How many Hurricanes?” he asked out of the blue, alerting Canfield to the fact that his mind hadn’t strayed from the topic in the twenty or so minutes they’d been silent.
“Twelve.” He answered. Farrier pondered the number, a good number.
“So enough for a squadron.” he thought aloud.
“Yes, I’d hoped for more but one will do.” Canfield said. Farrier disagreed, but didn’t voice his opinion. Farrier ended up winning chess, somehow Canfield had overlooked the game, probably lost in thought. Whatever it was Farrier didn’t think he could have won if Canfield was paying full attention.

“I’ll head to bed” he said getting up.

“Good night Tom. Don’t pull that band-aid off before it’s ready!” Canfield called after him.

Instead of heading to bed, Farrier walked past his room and down the hall. He went outside and out to the last shed, to his thinking spot.

And indeed there was a lot to think about. Farrier knew at the bottom of his heart the country would go to war. But he wasn’t ready to accept it, less so now than perhaps he would have been in some alternate universe in which there was no Collins, but Farrier didn’t want to know about that universe. He then began to wonder, how he’d touched him today. How Collins had tried to kiss him after getting back from the holidays. Would they be able to keep up the act? Now that was a big question, and one Farrier didn’t have time to answer as the skies opened up above him, drenching him in seconds.

Collins lay in bed in his striped blue and white pyjamas, still feeling the plane’s vibrations in his body from the short flight. It was raining, quite heavily as well, he got up and stood at the window, it was too dark to see anything until a clap of lightning lit up the sky. It didn’t scare Collins, he saw it as a thing of beauty, he’d always been fascinated by anything to do with nature. He stood watching the coming storm for quite some time, until he heard heavy footsteps in the hallway and checked his watch. It was 2330 hours, he said to himself to drum the twenty-four hour time into his head. He ducked out into the hall and nobody was there, but there were wet footprints on the wooden floor leading into the room next to his. Collins smiled and wondered whether he should wait for Farrier tonight. They did most nights now, but sometimes he felt like he was impeding. Collins didn’t have the chance to decide because the man in question walked back out of the room, in his sky blue pyjamas now, with wet hair.

“Evening” he said quietly.

“Evenin’ yourself” Collins smiled back.

“Shall we?” Farrier gestured to the windows opposite them, to which Collins walked to and leant on the sill as usual.

“Thanks again for taking us flying” he said.

“It’s nothing really, you were going up at the end of the week anyway” Farrier smiled at the floor, noticing Collins’ bright green and orange spotted socks and wondering what possessed the boy to choose those.

“Oh” Collins said with surprise, hearing this news.

“Thought we’d never get up there” he added, the older man chuckled.

“Got caught out?” Collins asked.

“Yeah, unfortunately.” Farrier replied, running a hand through wet hair, Collins wished it was his hand.

“What were yae doin’ outside?” he asked.

“Ah nothing really. Just checking the sheds and that.” Farrier lied. He wasn’t ready to give up his secret spot, and he thought Collins would pry.

“Ah yeah” Collins said, not convinced.

“S’pose you like this weather, then” Farrier said.

“Yeah, never liked summer” Collins answered. They stood in silence for a while, Collins could smell Farrier’s wet hair and needed more. Boldly, even for him, he moved closer to the man until their arms nearly touched as they both rested on the windowsill. Farrier smiled out the window and took a deep breath in.
“Collins…” he tutted. The blonde hummed in response.
“We can’t keep doing this.” Said Farrier.
“We’re not doin’ anything” Collins replied with a smirk. With both of them leaning on their forearms on the windowsill they were the same height.
Farrier didn’t know what to say. He didn’t want to stop doing whatever ‘this’ was, but it was going to get too far one day, he could tell. Then it wouldn’t be something they could hide.
“And you donnae want to stop, I know that.” Collins murmured close to Farrier’s ear, it took every ounce of his will not to melt at the blonde’s surprisingly deep voice. He turned his head slightly and looked Collins in the eyes. They weren’t looking as innocent as usual now.
“Collins, no.” was all he could manage and he straightened his back to put distance between them. Collins didn’t appear fazed, he still held some kind of hopeful look.
“Can’t run from this forever, Farrier.” He said as he stood to his full height.
“Have to Collins. There’s no other way.” He replied. The blonde huffed and went back into his bedroom.
“Night” he called behind him,
“Night Collins.” Farrier sighed, letting out a breath he didn’t know he was holding.
That night Farrier’s bandage came off, and there was, as suspected, a piece of shrapnel. Stuck to his stomach with dry blood but at least this time completely dislodged by itself. Smaller than the last time, Farrier hoped that after this it would be a while before he’d have to deal with any shrapnel again.

Chapter End Notes

Well that’s it for this chapter, I had heaps of fun writing this one. As always your comments and kudos are so appreciated, thank you.
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat!
Until next chapter ❤
It was almost September and with regular flying now, Farrier and Canfield had really begun to shape the young men into respectable pilots. They were confidently marching and saluting, following orders, and everyone was wearing uniform correctly, no illegal haircuts, no bad behaviour going on. It didn’t seem like any of the craziness Air Chief Marshal Dowding had spoken of was happening, there was talk of more officers and maybe more men, warplanes arriving soon, but Canfield and Farrier realised that Dowding was, in fact, not in charge of what happened to Gatwick and seemingly was trying to make Gatwick sound bad by suggesting all these improvements it needed. It made Farrier happy that he wasn’t going to get what he wanted. The regular flying was good, for everyone. Collins didn’t realise what an effect flying regularly would have on him, but it took over his thoughts, even in the mere week they’d been going up every day he could feel the difference. His sketches were now of planes, of sights he’d seen while flying, no longer memories and scenes from on the ground. His head turned up to the heavens whenever he heard a plane nowadays, and now with actual confidence that he could recognise what it was. Canfield liked quotes, he’d once said, “For once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return.”. Canfield said the words were from Leonardo Da Vinci, and though Collins hadn’t heard the quote before, it was one of the truest things he’d been told in his life.

Farrier seemed to be perking up too, not that Collins wasn’t already beginning to see his soft side, but with the rest of the lads he was different now. Joking around and genuinely wanting to get to know more of them. He’d gone from the strict and stressful teacher to the fun one. Collins didn’t know if Farrier always started off tense and got more relaxed with each group he taught or if it was only this group he was relaxing around.

It was after a particularly long game of cards that Collins retired to his bedroom for the night. He lay on his bed, the vibrations of the plane earlier today still humming in his body. Being the end of August, the weather was cooling down definitively now, thank god. The blonde lay there, thinking about everything and nothing, mainly nothing. Until he heard Farrier’s door open, and with that sound his head cleared and instinctually he got up and went to exit his room. To Collins’ surprise Farrier wasn’t waiting in the hall for a chat, but was almost at the stairs. Collins didn’t call out, though this was the third or fourth time this month the man had gone somewhere at night. Collins imagined he might be overthinking slightly, there were a dozen things he could be doing, going to his office, going to the bathrooms, none of it was Collins’ business but still he found himself closer and closer to asking where he was going.

Farrier was going to his spot behind the hangars. He knew Collins had seen him leave, but didn’t
really mind unless the blonde followed him, which he didn’t.

He arrived and hoped it didn’t rain like last time. He’d been in his room, fidgeting and he couldn’t sit still. It was mainly the war and his time in it that was on his mind. It was Friday, Canfield had actually asked if he wanted to go out for a drink, and for once Farrier declined. He wasn’t in a mood to be about with Canfield, he mostly just wanted to be alone right now. He sat in the grass and listened to the wind as it blew over the fields. He sat thinking about war. Maybe it was a good thing. That was the first time that thought had crossed his mind and he hadn’t rejected it. The man sat pulling out clumps of grass, his visits so often now that the grass hadn’t grown back completely from last time. Farrier had, over the past few weeks begun to realise he hadn’t done anything wrong in the war, it was war after all. Not everyone got to fight the whole thing, and that he was lucky, some would say. Maybe he’d fight the whole time in this one, if it came. But then again, sacrificing oneself for one’s country, and freedom of that country shouldn’t be a bad thing, should it? Because that’s what he’d done in the war essentially, he realised. The brunette considered, would he ever do it willingly? And the answer scared him. He would. Canfield had always said Farrier was too selfless, he was too good. Not that the man felt that was accurate at all usually, he realised that if he was even considering self-sacrifice then maybe it did have some truth. Even if it meant not seeing Collins every day, he’d do it if it meant the blonde could live a safe life. That damned boy that couldn’t stop staring, flirting even, that outrageous Scot that had waltzed into the halls of Gatwick that day, and who Farrier knew he’d not be forgetting, he didn’t think he’d ever be able to forget Collins. Nothing was allowed to happen between them, yet even so Farrier could imagine himself, old and grey, thinking about the lanky blonde who couldn’t keep those big blue eyes off him. The nerve of Collins was so striking, unlike anything he’d ever before, and Farrier couldn’t get enough. That’s why he’d lay himself down. For Collins. Farrier decided, if he could make the world a better place for Collins to live in, safer maybe, then it was worth it. Collins had to be safe, happy and healthy. The brunette knew this was dangerous. You weren’t meant to think this way, it was detrimental for obvious reasons. But Farrier knew his thoughts would never change. Then why, he asked himself, was he still bothering trying to stop what Collins was trying to start? The man sighed to himself and stopped playing with the grass on account of his fingers getting too cold. It was always a strange topic, Collins. Even by himself out here behind the shed, the thoughts felt wrong, felt like he might be found out simply by thinking about Collins. but the thoughts till didn’t go away. On the one hand, maybe it could work, he thought daringly. Maybe they could have something, something secret and entirely their own. But on the other, it could never happen, not in the craziest of worlds, not in peacetime, not in wartime would it ever be conceivable to happen. Farrier winced as he got up and his knees ached, he walked back inside with some sort of resolve to spend the rest of the evening doing something other than idly thinking about the blonde. He managed to slip into his room without the blonde waiting in the hall, which while he was disappointed, knew it was probably good. Farrier checked his clock, thankful he at least had that while his watch was still lost, it was almost 23:00. It was too early for him to be able to sleep so he reached for the mostly empty bottle of over proofed alcohol still sitting in his bedside drawer. But when he picked it up, for some reason or another the man didn’t want to drink it. He hadn’t had a drink since before the holidays, maybe because of how out of hand it had gotten last time, maybe not. Whatever the reason, Farrier put the bottle back. But he was still restless.

Collins had the sketchbook out once again, but the page was blank. He couldn’t concentrate or think of anything meaningful to draw. In the book so far he’d drawn all the planes in the hangars, some that Gatwick didn’t even have. He’d drawn the fields surrounding his home, some objects scattered around the base, views from the sky, and nothing else had come to mind tonight. Maybe it wasn’t a drawing night, he thought. But then what kind of night was it? It was one of those nights on which he didn’t want to do anything, Collins decided. He opened the window and let the cold air in, hoping it would refresh him.
Farrier considered himself someone who made good decisions, so when he walked out of base to his car with the intention to visit James at the underground brothel, he knew it was the right thing. He wasn’t going to get laid this time, that’s why it was a good idea. He needed advice, and Canfield would never understand, as much as he understood Tom for what he was, he couldn’t talk to him about it without it turning into a lecture, or just a really awkward time. Usually both. As he drove it began to rain lightly. Finally he arrived at the decrepit bar and found his way downstairs. As usual there was a haze of James’ smoke to squint through to the desk.

“Tommy!” the scrawny man called.

“Hi, James.” Farrier smiled and leaned a strong arm on the counter.

“Didn’t expect you back for a while, how’s things?” the man asked.

“Yeah, alright, s’pose. Can’t complain. How’s everyone here?” Farrier asked.

“They’re well, I’m well, you know Leo actually asked if you’d be back!” James laughed but began to splutter on his smoke.

“Did he now” Farrier said absently.

“I can go tell him if you like, I know you got on well last time, god knows why.” James said.

“Uh, no thanks. Look James I’m not actually here for sex tonight. I was wondering if I could just talk to you?” Farrier said, trying his best to see through the dim light and smoke from James’ cigar.

“Oh?” said the man, putting the smoke out.

“Well, yes of course darling.” He said, stepping out from behind the counter and putting a hand on the small of Farrier’s back, not taking it away when the man stiffened at the touch. That was James, clingy and a bit odd at times, but trustworthy in Farrier’s eyes. They sat down on a couch against the wall.

“What is it?” he asked as soon as they sat.

“Well, you know why I came here last time, to try and stop feeling something that I didn’t need to be feeling?” Farrier began, the sinewy man nodded.

“Didn’t work.”

James just smiled.

“Is it so bad?” he asked after a while.

“Yes. I mean no, I mean” Farrier sighed,

“It’s wonderful. It really is. It’s the first time I’ve genuinely fancied someone for more than what’s in their pants. First time. But I can’t keep it secret, it’s too hard. I can’t stop looking for excuses to talk to him, to see him. And he’s not making it easy to keep in my thoughts only, I don’t think he understands the seriousness of the situation, he makes… Advances, at times.” Farrier explained.

“So he fancies you too, Tom.” James said. Hearing it out loud made Farrier’s stomach churn.

“I’m fairly certain.” He said, unable to keep the smile from creeping onto his face, and neither was James.
“Can it not exist in secret?” the man asked.

“That’s the problem. I know it can’t be, if we ever did something, it would be found out somehow. And if it was, there goes my entire career with the RAF, just like that.” Said Farrier.

“I can’t risk my career for him.” He added quietly. They sat in silence for a while, a man exited one of the rooms and gave a wave to James before leaving the premises.

“I need advice. I won’t do anything, but I can’t keep it up how it is. He’s wearing my patience thin, he knows something’s going on, he plays around with flirting even. It’s ridiculous and dangerous, I need to stop responding but I can’t.” Farrier said. James had pulled out another cigar from his jacket and lit it, he offered one to Farrier who took it gladly. James puffed and thought.

“Have you tried downright ignoring him?” he asked, knowing it was far too simple and that Farrier definitely had, but worth asking anyway.

“Yeah. Ate me up inside, I felt too guilty, I couldn’t keep it up longer than a few days. It tore him up too, he looked like he hadn’t slept at all, I couldn’t do that to him again.” He said. He still felt guilty about the days after the uniform party.

“Tried telling him to stop?” James asked.

“Yeah, he doesn’t listen.” Farrier responded. James didn’t answer for a while before,

“What’s he like?”

Farrier thought for a while.

“He’s amazing.” Was all he could come up with. He wasn’t good with this ‘feeling’ stuff.

“Oh come on, darling. An ‘amazing’ man is flirting with you, oh dear, what a calamity. Tell me more about him, I’m sure he’s wonderful, give me more!” James laughed.

“Okay, okay” Farrier chuckled back.

“Well, he’s Scottish. He’s from some small town in the highlands, he’s still got this sort of culture shock thing sometimes, he’s not used to living in a city, even though Gatwick’s sort of removed from London.” The brunette started.

“Culture shock?” James clarified, waving his hand to clear the smoke between them.

“Yeah, he’s had a different upbringing, I guess. An example would be when we did the swimming lessons for the men, he didn’t know the water had chlorine in it so he got it in his eyes, and then told us all that he’d only ever been swimming in the river, and the loch near his town.” Farrier chuckled at the memory, so did James.

“Loch?” the older man asked.

“Like a lake from what I gather, but very deep, like a crevice in the mountains filled with water.” Farrier answered.

“So he’s a small town boy, with big dreams of being a pilot.” James said,

“Yeah, I guess at surface level maybe.” Farrier answered.

“And what do you see in him, Tom?” the question threw Farrier off, it was deep, much deeper than
the things James usually said.

“Well, a number of things. But he’s so good, he’s just so good. He’s pure, and he’s got a big heart, he’s generous, I dunno, I think I see in him what I wish I could be.” Farrier said, he had let the cigar go out as he held it.

“What does he see in you?” James asked, relighting Farrier’s cigar.

“I don’t know.” Farrier said after a pause.

“You don’t know?” James asked.

“No, I really don’t know. In my eyes I’m not a likeable person at all, even just as a friend.”

“Well I’m your friend, and hell, just ask him why he likes you darling.” The man said waving his cigar.

“I can’t do that James!” Farrier protested.

“Well, by the sounds of it you two are flitting around each other playing a game of flirt without being seen, or at least he is and you can’t get him to stop, not that you really want him to it seems.” James said, eyeing Farrier as he smoked. The brunette stared ahead and raised his eyebrows as if to agree in some sort of vacant way.

“And if you’re unwilling to go through with anything, maybe if you find out what he likes, you can stop being those things.” James said.

“I don’t want to not be me, though.” Said Farrier.

“Maybe he fancies things about you that he doesn’t really know about, maybe parts of you that are more part of your, shall we call it a protective wall?” James mocked, earning daggers from Farrier.

“Or, maybe you should tell him something that might scare him just a little, about you and your personal troubles” the man said as if it wasn’t something serious.

“I think he knows some of it already, he knows about my arm at least, somehow, I certainly didn’t tell him. I don’t think he knows how I got the scar on my tummy but he’s seen it. Plus, that could backfire and make him more curious.” Farrier said.

“Well, then I’m sorry to say you drove all this way, but I don’t know what else to say, not like I’ve ever been in this situation.” The man said. Farrier sighed,

“It’s okay, but thank you for letting me come and chat anyway.” He said, running a nervous hand through his hair.

“It’s no matter at all, this is exciting to talk about!” James replied as the men stood up.

Farrier left feeling a little less restless, but no clearer on what to do about Collins. as he drove back to base he contemplated telling Collins more seriously to stop, but he couldn’t do that. Not only to Collins, but he couldn’t do it to himself. The man parked on the gravel to the side of the main building and walked inside. He knew he’d be in the hallway before he even got up the stairs. It was incessant, and Farrier loved it. He loved how excited Collins was to see him, speak to him. For someone to be genuinely happy to be with Farrier was new territory for him, excepting Canfield. Most people either saw him as the weapon he was when he was in the air and were borderli afraid of him, or someone who was cold and emotionless and couldn’t keep normal conversation
going. Or both at once. To be fair Farrier didn’t think he was amazing at small talk. As he rounded
the corner of the hall, sure as day was the blonde, slumped against the door to his room. As Farrier
got closer he realised Collins was- asleep? It was true, Collins had gone to sit in the hall, not
waiting for anyone in particular of course, now that would be ridiculous. But soon enough he fell
into a doze. Farrier was as quiet as he could be, he walked up to Collins and bobbed down next to
him. He knew it was wrong, to watch him sleep. But Collins looked every part absolutely beautiful
in the moonlight. His blonde hair fell in locks down his forehead, his eyes closed and blonde
eyelashes touching his cheeks. Farrier’s breath faltered as he observed Collins. The boy was cross-
legged, and his hands rested in his lap, head falling back against the door. It was so innocent.

It was as if the whole conversation with James had gone in one ear and out the other, and to be fair
that wasn’t far from what had happened. Farrier sat next to Collins and decided to wake him, or
else he might be woken from the man opening his door, and then he’d know he’d seen him asleep.
It was better to wake him up, what if he slept here all night? His neck would be sore, Farrier
thought. That was how Farrier spun it in his mind to be in Collins’ best interest to be woken up, not
because of his own selfish desires.

“Collins?” he said as quietly as he could as they sat. No movement. He tried again only a little
louder,

“Collins, wake up.” Farrier said.

“Mmmm” was the only response, coupled with a reshuffling against the door.

“Collins, you’re on the floor.” Farrier tried once more.

“Farri…” Collins mumbled, his eyes rapidly moved under his eyelids and then a smile appeared on
the blonde’s lips. The man sighed and supressed a smile of his own. Farrier tried his hardest not to,
but his hand reached out and lightly touched Collins’ shoulder. He could feel his skin through the
cotton pyjamas, he was warm. He gave Collins a light shake, but all it did was cause Collins to try
and nuzzle into Farrier’s hand and arm with his face. Eventually Collins let his head flop down
onto the hand on top of his shoulder. His cheek was soft, much softer than Farrier had expected,
and the hair on his head was long enough that it tickled his arm as Collins rested. It took an
enormous effort to move his hand away. The blonde’s head then moved off his shoulder and rested
forwards.

“Collins, wake up.” Farrier said louder and closer to Collins’ ear. Finally, the blonde stirred. He
swallowed and blinked twice before he realised there was someone next to him, and when he did
his pupils dilated and he jumped slightly.

“Woah, uh, hiya” he said with a soft, sleepy voice, eyes big and blue as ever.

“Evening, Collins. You were asleep.” Farrier smiled. Collins seemed slightly disorientated but
stood up nonetheless, Farrier joined him.

“Wha’s time?” he mumbled.

"Check your watch, Collins” Farrier answered. The blonde blinked wearily at the tiny watch face,
Farrier caught a glimpse and saw it was half past midnight. Collins groaned at the time, he stood
up slowly and Farrier rose with him.

“I’m goon to bed then. Thanks fer wakin’ me” he said quietly as he opened his door slowly.

“No problem, sleep well Collins.” Farrier said, the blonde was speaking more Scots than usual,
maybe that happened when he was tired, Farrier thought.

“You too, Farrier.” He mumbled as he walked back into his room. Farrier felt tingly inside, and any thoughts of telling Collins to stop were forgotten, they may not have anything together, but this ‘nothing’ was more than enough.

Farrier slept well that night.

Chapter End Notes

Well, hope you all enjoyed! As always I can't thank you all enough for the kudos and comments you leave!!
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat.
Until next chapter!
The Hurricanes arrived on the second Saturday of September. Farrier awoke suddenly to something that at first he thought was an invasion, but then realised they were their planes being flown in from the factory. He watched out his window as the Hurricanes landed on the runway and all taxied into a line at the end. Even he had to admit they sounded beautiful, looked it too. He hummed to himself in content. As much as he complained about the war and not wanting another, he’d somewhat forgotten the feeling of watching warplanes in formation. It was powerful and beautiful both at once.

Collins was filled with excitement, and he imagined everyone on base was as well. They sounded so wonderful, rich deep vibrations cut loudly through the air from the engines of twelve planes all flying into Gatwick. He pulled his eyes away from the window and got his slippers on, ran down the hall to Dawson’s room and banged on the door. He was greeted by an equally excited man on the other side.

“Beautiful aren’t they?” Dawson asked,

“Aye they are!” Collins replied. They watched until they’d all landed.

“Let’s go get Wingnut!” Collins said.

The two bounded around the corner to see Wingnut already in the hallway looking around.

“What was that? Couldn’t see from my window, faces the wrong way.” He said.

“The warplanes have arrived!” Dawson said. The three ran outside in their pyjamas to look. So had some of the other boarders and Canfield was there too, although he was dressed in his uniform rather than pyjamas.

“Morning lads, apologies for the noise, doubt you could sleep in through this!” the old man laughed.

“Doubt we’d want to!” Dawson replied.

Collins got quite the surprise as he saw women climbing out of the cockpits of the twelve Hurricanes.

“Cor look over there!” Collins heard Wingnut say to Dawson. The two seemed completely enamoured by the girls. Collins pretended to be as well for the sake of Canfield being there. One of the women walked up to the group.

“Morning!” she said excitedly, taking off her flight helmet. She was dressed in dark blue trousers, a light blue shirt and tie matching the trouser colour, the female version of the uniform Collins realised, she removed her brown leather flying gauntlets and shook hands with Canfield.
“Morning Lucy. How are you all this morning?” he asked.

“Very well sir, all twelve got here without incident, but we’ve gotta get off to Cranwell soon to deliver some Spits.” She smiled. She had dark brown hair pinned back from her face, and bright eyes. She looked over to the boys in pyjamas standing next to Canfield.

“Morning boys.” She smiled. The students all said some sort of nervous sentence, Collins, his usual “Hiya”.

“Didn’t know women flew too.” Wingnut said to her, surprising Dawson and Collins.

“Yep, and we’re darn good at it too!” She said with a smile on her red painted lips. She turned back to Canfield.

“Just need to you check the planes off.” She said, pulling a small piece of paper out of her pocket along with a pen.

“Ah, of course.” He signed on a line at the bottom.

“Do you have a second?” she asked. Canfield was momentarily confused.

“Uh- yes, there’s no rush, dear.” He said. Lucy laughed.

“A second in command, a deputy? We need two to sign off.” She said with a smile.

“Oh! Yes yes, my apologies, this is actually Gatwick’s first order of warplanes, I’m not too sure about the nitty-gritty.” Canfield chuckled.

“Give me a moment.” He added. He turned back to the building scanning for Farrier who he knew would be looking out his window. Upon spotting the man he waved him down, to which Farrier put a hand up signalling to give him a moment to get ready.

“He should be down soon.” Canfield said to Lucy.

The rest of the students had gone to look at the planes and girls flying them, leaving Canfield with Collins, Dawson and Timson.

“Early morning for you lot, looks like!” the girl jested to their pyjamas.

“Aye, hard tae sleep wi’ those flyin’ in.” Collins laughed.

“Oh! You’re Scottish?” Lucy asked.

“How’d yae know?” Collins chuckled.

“So you’ve got a lot of work, Lucy?” Canfield asked.

“Yeah we do, we keep getting more and more! Right now we work about twelve days and get two days leave. It’s getting pretty busy, but it’s good. The girls love it.” She said.

“Gee, how d’you keep up?” Dawson laughed.

“Have you been in planes yet?” she asked.

“Yeah.” Wingnut answered for them,
“Then you know how addictive flying is. It’s not work at all.” She smiled at Wingnut who smiled back.

Then they turned to see a sleepy Farrier walking up to them, in his light blue pyjamas and flying boots. Collins tried to hide a smirk but Dawson managed to see, jabbing him in the side discreetly. “Morning then.” Farrier said in a grumpy voice.

“Ah yes, he didn’t have classes till afternoon. May have let it slip you’d be here.” Canfield tutted to Lucy.

“Morning!” She said to Farrier, who nodded wearily in her direction.

“Are you the second in command?” she asked,

“That I am, Squadron Leader Farrier.” He said, clearing his throat.

“Ah, perfect. Just need you to sign here, and that will be all.” The page was handed to Farrier, and he signed as well as he could considering he’d just woken up.

“Thanks Lucy.” He said, handing it back.

“Okay, I think that’s everything. Suppose we’ll get to the train then!” she said and shook hands with both officers,

“How do they fly?” Farrier asked.

“They’re beautiful. Very smooth, not too heavy, quite manoeuvrable. Of course we only flew them in straight lines, but they’ll be good. They feel strong.” She said.

“Good, that’s what we need.” The man replied. The woman began to turn to leave with a smile,

“Bye” she said, specifically to Wingnut, before she turned and walked off to the group of women around the planes. Collins turned to his brunette friend to see him very red in the face, with a look of sheer shock.

“Lass actually gave yae some attention!” he laughed.

“I know!” Wingnut said in response. Canfield laughed,

“Go on lads, back inside. Go have breakfast.” He said to them.

It was a relaxing Saturday, the boys walked to the sandwich shop for a late lunch, class wasn’t until 15:00 so they lazed around out the back of the building watching the new planes have an inspection. Farrier, Canfield and the other officers were walking around the planes. Farrier had the engine flap up on one and was looking inside the plane, Canfield was making sure the rudders worked on all the planes’ tails.

“They look so nice.” Dawson mumbled.

“Aye, good paint jobs.” Collins replied, according to Canfield the colour scheme was called ‘sand and spinach’ which amused Collins. They had bright roundels on the body and wings, but the underbelly was the most interesting part to Collins. It was half black and half white, divided down the length of the plane, it was quite striking.
“Hope we can go up in them soon then.” Wingnut said to nobody in particular. He still looked slightly dazed from speaking to a female.

It was cloudy, and the wind was blowing hard, contrary to the tame morning they’d had.

“Think I could get one up in this?” Farrier asked Canfield.

“Always the first to ask to fly, aren’t you.” He smirked.

“Come on, you know I’d be the least likely to have anything happen in these conditions anyway.” Farrier pushed. His answer came in the form of a sigh and a smile from the old man.

“You owe me a game of chess tonight! Oh and Farrier, the air regulations have changed with the addition of these planes. Now you’ve got all of group 11’s area to fly in!” Canfield said to Farrier before he grinned and jogged off to the main building to get his flight gear. He smiled to himself as he jogged. It was strange, how much he hadn’t wanted the planes to come, and now how excited he was. But for now, his mind couldn’t focus on much except how quickly he could go and get his flight gear from his room.

“What’s gotten into him?” Wingnut asked the other two as they watched Farrier jog happily by into the building behind them.

“Dunno.” Collins replied peacefully as he finished his sandwich, happy to see a smile on the man’s face. He glanced sideways to see Dawson smiling at him. Not a big grin, but a small smile of acceptance. For once no snarky comment came out of Collins’ mouth, he just smiled back. He knew exactly why the blonde was smiling at him, and while a great deal of him was embarrassed, a small part was happy that Dawson seemed to think it was sweet. It wasn’t common to come across someone as casual about the subject as Dawson, so Collins just sat back and appreciated that he was his friend.

Sometimes Collins felt guilty, he’d met Timson first, but had somehow become closer with Dawson. He supposed it was just that Wingnut had too much energy, no off switch. That, and it was more difficult to have a normal conversation with him, always joking about. Dawson was much more intuitive and thoughtful, but still had that streak of fun.

Farrier went upstairs as fast as he could and opened his cupboard to retrieve his Irvin flying jacket. He kicked off his shoes and replaced them with his flying boots come slippers in the peacetime. He shrugged the jacket on and then opened a drawer on his dressing table that contained very few items, a draw that was a little stuck from lack of use. Inside was his old flying helmet, gloves and goggles from the war, his old watch that no longer worked and had a cracked face, and a photo of his mother holding him as a toddler. It was originally just a drawer he used to store things he didn’t know where else to put, but somehow not much had wound up in there, probably something to do with his compartmentalisation of ‘work’ and ‘not work’ spilling into a need to organise everything. He grabbed the flight gear, went back downstairs and outside.

“That looks warm.” Wingnut remarked quietly as the man passed the three on his way back to the hangars.

“Yeah. I know about those. They give them to you when you become a flying officer. Irvin makes them, pure sheepskin.” Dawson said. Collins hummed in response. It did look warm, and soft, and very attractive on Farrier.
“Officer’s privilege” he said quietly.

“Indeed.” Dawson replied.

“Ah, look at you!” Canfield exclaimed as Farrier got within talking distance. The brunette chuckled.

“You don’t look a day over twenty!” Canfield said, eliciting a bigger laugh from Farrier.

“Thanks Michael. Good to wear it all again.” He said. Canfield smiled, glad the lad was finally showing some sort of interest in the inevitable wartime flying,

“Now get up there!” he said. Farrier didn’t need any encouragement.

“Oh, he’s going for a fly!” Wingnut said. Dawson rolled his eyes at Collins,

“What did you think he was doing in flying gear, Wingnut?” he asked with a laugh.

“I dunno, didn’t think about it.” He replied with a chuckle. Sometimes Collins did wonder about his friend.

Farrier climbed up into one of the Hurricanes and put the helmet, then goggles, then gloves on. He connected himself up to the radio, although he knew nobody would be on the other end. He gave Canfield the all clear and he got off the runway. Farrier pulled the canopy shut above him. He took a moment to look about the controls. The most interesting thing was the control column, it had a ring for a handle, with a brass button on the top, it had two words written in tiny writing on a small ring around said button, ‘safe’ and ‘fire’. He twisted the ring to confirm his suspicions, the word at the top was the setting the control column was in. He turned it so that ‘safe’ was up, more for mental comfort than anything. It had been a long time since Farrier had been in an armed plane, and though he knew this one didn’t have any ammunition, seeing the word ‘fire’ on the button was enough to make him sit back in the seat for a moment. It was real. The war was going to happen. He sighed and tried not to think about it too much or he’d get dragged into his own thoughts. He scanned the controls to find out where everything was, relatively similar to most planes. Right, brakes off he thought to himself, and as he did so the plane inched forward, mainly from the wind. He pushed the ‘pump engine’ button a few times to prepare it. The Rolls Royce Merlin engine, that’s what was in the plane Canfield said. The engine he’d been trying to read the instruction book of when Dawson screamed down the hall that night. God that was ages ago, thought Farrier as he held the ‘starter’ and ‘boost’ buttons down until the engine started. It was a low rumble, loud. Farrier couldn’t see all that much over the nose, he’d been warned some of the new fighters might be like this, apparently it made the vision better in the air though. He opened the throttle just a little, and the engine roared into life. It did sound wondrously powerful, he taxied left and right, snaking to the middle of the runway. He checked the rear view mirror, he could just make out four figures by the building. Good. Nobody near the plane. He looked at what he could see of the treetops out the sides of the canopy to get an idea of the wind. Crosswind, that’s fun. He thought. Then Farrier opened the throttle more. 20%, 50%, up to 80%. The Hurricane rumbled down the runway, gaining speed at an almost alarming rate. It was invigorating, exciting, it made Farrier feel alive. He pulled the control column back a little as he felt the tailwheel leave the ground, finally he could see in front of himself. He pulled back a little more as the plane got up to speed, and just like that the wheels left the earth and he was off.
Thank you all for reading!! And thank you to everyone who gave kudos/commented, I love u all! (Don't be afraid to comment, even if it's just you screaming, I love interacting with everyone, let me know what you think!)
Next chapter will be up tomorrow as per upload Monday.
If anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com
Until next chapter!
The plane soared upwards, pushing Farrier back into the seat, pushing him back more than any of the weaker training planes had. He flew over the fields behind the airstrip, something he’d previously not been able to do thanks to the air restrictions. Farrier started a wide sweeping turn to starboard until he was facing the main building again. The controls were sturdy, not difficult and they felt strong, just like Lucy had told them. He flew back towards base and dropped the nose a little, just for show, pushing the control ring away from himself. He knew Canfield would make some comment to the boys but he didn’t really care. He pushed the throttle stick forwards just a little more until he felt the wire pushing against the front of the stick telling him he’d reached 100% power, not that you were meant to fly on full power, but he was testing the plane. As he headed back he realised the teaching would have to speed up now that the planes were here, none of them knew what War Emergency Power was, he realised. And that was one of his favourite things to test out on new planes.

“He’s already done?” Collins asked Canfield as they watched Farrier coming back towards the runway. Immediately he realised he wasn’t done because the landing gear was still up.

“Oh no lad, he’s just showing off!” the man laughed. The plane had dipped down, not low enough to land on the runway, but it had lost decent altitude. The engine roared above the wind and they all watched as Farrier pulled the plane back up and it swooped up and over the building with ease. The engine rumbled in Collins’ chest, it was loud and powerful, and beautiful.

“And off he goes. I’m heading inside lads, see you later.” Canfield said and slowly walked towards the door, still stalling and listening to the engine.

Farrier chuckled, he wondered what they’d thought of that little stunt. He’d need to get used to pulling G’s like that again, it was admittedly a bit of a strain to come out of the dive, shallow as it was, and go back up over the building. Nonetheless the man kept flying. Canfield would no doubt tut, but maybe it gave the lads a bit of a surprise. Hopefully. Checking fuel gauges, checking rear view mirror, it was all coming back now, as if it never left. There wasn’t the slightest doubt in his mind where he was going, Farrier was heading to the sea. He considered, what would they think if he tested the War Emergency Power? It meant pushing the throttle lever hard forward until the wire snapped, therefore using more than 100% throttle. You could hear from a mile away whenever a plane went into WEP. It was meant for emergencies though, hence the name. Farrier decided if he was going to fly, he may as well test the plane properly. He gave a hard push and felt
the wire snap at the front of the throttle lever, giving him some extra room to push it forward. The plane lurched as the speed increased, and the engine growled even louder than it already was. Using the extra power to climb higher into the sky, Farrier could just begin to make out the distinct skyline of London nearby.

Canfield heard the plane’s engine rev, somewhere in the air above the streets in front of the main building. Soon after he saw it appear in the near distance, climbing higher into the air. He chuckled and shook his head.

“Wha you laughing about?” Wingnut asked.

“Oh. It’s just that I know he’s going to throw the plane around a bit to test it. Did you boys hear the engine sound change?” the old man asked, the three nodded.

“That was called War Emergency Power. It’s a throttle setting for, you guessed, emergencies. It gives the plane more power than normal so you can zoom away from danger if necessary, you have to be sure not to use it for too long or it’ll burn out the engine, though. Farrier’s just testing it for fun. But you’ll learn about WEP later.” He said.

“I’ve changed my mind, considering the conditions I’ll be staying here to make sure he lands safely, you lads feel free to head off.” He added.

“I’ll stay, nothing much else tae do till lessons.” Collins said, assuming his friends would sit with him, but they both made their excuses and went back into the building, leaving Collins to stand with Canfield and wait for Farrier. He felt like they’d done that deliberately, though they probably meant well.

“So, young Collins. How are things for you?” Canfield asked as they stood against the wall.

“Yae, good. Cannae complain, good tae be flyin’ again.” He answered, wary that Canfield might ask something about Farrier.

“Good to hear it. I suppose you’re looking forward to the prospects of war?” Canfield asked. Collins was somewhat baffled.

“Should I be?” he asked, hoping he didn’t sound rude.

“Oh, most of the young lads seem thrilled by the idea of it. Aren’t you?” he said, surprised Collins had responded the way he did, but glad the lad was more mature in his answer than most.

“I mean, when yae put it that way I guess. Flying to protect your home is important, when I think about it I almost feel like the boots are too big to fill, yae know?” Collins chuckled.

“You think you’re not ready?” Canfield asked.

“I don’t think I’ll ever be ready, with respect sir.” The blonde said.

“Very true Collins. Very true. One is never ready for war, but still, we try.” Canfield smiled and looked over the rest of the Hurricanes.

Farrier was flying over fields now, he pulled the throttle back a little to stop the WEP and return to the usual 85% throttle. The engine was holding up well. No splutters even during the emergency power, very loud in his ears even with the radio hooked up, he knew the engines he was used to
both in the training planes they had and the planes he’d flown in the war were very weak compared to this, but it was still fascinating to be able to hear such a difference. This one made powerful, deep rumbles rather than the lighter, more ‘buzzy’ sound of the weaker engines. It was a real warplane engine, Farrier thought to himself. It was like some men with cars and their engines, the sound warplane engines made was downright seductive to a pilot. Farrier flew, unable to check his still missing watch, he assumed he’d only been in the air for maybe ten minutes, and he could already see the ocean in the distance. He smiled to himself. It had been too long since he’d been to a beach of any kind, always bogged down with work, or too tired, there was always a reason not to go on holiday, it seemed. This flight alone made up for all the holidays Farrier hadn’t taken in the past years, he thought. Finally, to be in a plane alone, without a student needing help. It was so perfect, even with the roar of the engine. Especially with the roar of the engine.

“Not that there will be a war.” Canfield said, realising he’d dampened the mood. Collins turned to look at the man, his eyes conveying everything he needed. They both knew it would happen, eventually. The old man sighed.

“Mind yae, Farrier donnae exactly make the prospects of war attractive.” Collins chuckled, upon realising it might have been taken as strange to bring Farrier up he wiped the smile off his face.

“Oh?” was all Canfield said.

“Ah nothin’. Just doesn’t seem so happy about the situation.” Collins said, hoping it wouldn’t be taken as weird.

“No, he isn’t. Though, he has more cause than most not to want to fly in war again, but I shouldn’t speak of such things.” Canfield said.

“I’m beginnin’ to piece it together, don’ worry.” Collins responded.

“How’s that? Do you two speak often?” Canfield probed.

“Eh, sorta. Not more than anyone else, I imagine. Banter in the classrooms mostly.” He answered, in his head thinking he’d done a good job of covering up. He was definitely not telling the senior officer that he had private conversations with Farrier almost every night in the hallway after everyone was asleep. Canfield was irked by the lad’s statement, not entirely sure that it was all true, but he didn’t want to push in case his suspicions were confirmed.

And then Farrier was over the white cliffs. They were still bright considering the clouds. He hadn’t seen the cliffs for, how long was it now? He realised it hadn’t been since 1917, when he was flying over to France. He sighed at the memory and made a mental note to come to Dover soon, on foot rather than in the air for once. Or any beach really, he’d be grateful for. Farrier loved the beach, the power of the waves was amazing and cooling off in them was a luxury he seldom had time for these days. Back when he was younger Canfield would take him to the beach. Before then, his mother would take him, at the protest of his father, who didn’t like the ocean at all and saw it as a of time. Farrier checked the fuel, barely down at all. Still, he knew he should head back. But not before doing a few tricks. He needed to get used to pulling G’s again, and why not? He thought. He deserved to have some proper fun in the plane anyway. He was back over land now, he angled the nose slightly down and after gaining a little speed, he pulled the control column back and the plane flew upwards. He held it until the plane was almost at stalling speed from flying vertically upwards before pulling the control back towards him even more to continue the loop. He felt light-headed, but the plane had easily done the manoeuvre so that was good. Now, some tight turns. He flew in a single direction, and threw the plane in the other, using ailerons and the rudder both at the
same time, it kind of hurt his neck to turn, but again the plane was sturdy. Now for the vertical corkspout. He dropped the nose once more to gain some speed, and sharply pulled the control stick towards him, once the plane nose was facing the heavens he increased the throttle right back up to WEP and the plane shot upwards, he pulled the control stick to port hard, and the plane began to corkspout into the air. It was a good twenty seconds by Farrier’s count before the plane began to stall, after which he pulled the control back towards him and the plane rolled back to arrive back in standard position and the man pulled back on the throttle once more. The engine revived itself from the stall as soon as the Hurricane was upright. After a few more maneouvers Farrier he headed back to base, he did have a class to teach after all.

Wingnut was no good at cards, but that didn't mean he ever said no to playing. The only way to get better was to play more.

"Do you have a strategy mate?" Dawson asked, trying to peak over to Timson’s cards.

"Yeah, I do! No looking!" he answered. He didn’t. They were sat on the floor of Dawson’s room playing. After a silence Wingnut spoke again.

"What do you think of Collins and Farrier?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" Dawson responded, not looking up from his cards. Only now did he realise he was holding a 7 of spades, not clubs. There goes that, he thought. Wingnut needed a win though, so he didn’t mind much.

"I mean what do you think of them?" Wingnut asked again. Dawson sighed,

"Well, I actually find it endearing that Collins is sweet on him, at the very least it gives him a reason to try his best in everything, to impress Farrier." Dawson said.

"Yeah, I mean it’s kind of weird, two men. I wanna be happy for our Scot of course, it’s just a strange thought, like I don’t see the appeal. Do you think anything’ll ever happen?" the brunette asked.

There was a silence and the boys looked at each other.

"I don’t know." Dawson eventually responded.

"Do you?" the blonde asked back.

"Dunno. I dunno if I want anything to, if I’m honest." Wingnut said. Dawson cleared his throat and held his cards up to himself to continue the game. He wasn’t in the mood to talk about Collins, not behind his back either. In the end, he didn’t know if he wanted anything to happen either. He supposed it was a little odd, homosexuality, the thought of two men together did irk him a bit, but there was a whole extra layer to it, the fact that they were both in the armed forces and the country was getting ready for war. What if one lost the other? He banished the thoughts and concentrated on the game at hand. He was happy that Collins was happy, and that was all there was to it.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, everyone! Hope you enjoyed how I wrote the flight, it's something
I haven't had much practice doing but I really should get used to it considering the profession of our boys here! (Not that it isn't a ton of fun to write, believe me it is) I'd love to know what everyone thought of this chapter, and thank you to everyone who left kudos/comments on previous ones, they mean the world to me and are the main way I get to interact with all of you!
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat!
Until next chapter <3
Landing

Chapter Notes

Holy moly has it already been a week since I uploaded? Time goes fast when you're back at uni I suppose. Hope everyone is doing well.

For all of you who are being torn to shreds by the slowest of slow burns, you're probably going to hate this chapter, thought I should give fair warning.

Also, thank you for the lovely comments, this week has been stressful getting back into the uni swing, your kind words are keeping me sane!
Anyway, happy reading, folks!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Soon the two men could hear a plane in the distance once more.

“Ah, here he comes.” Canfield said, walking away from the wall to look over the building.

“Aye.” Replied Collins, following Canfield. They watched as Farrier arced over the building, engine grumbling loudly above the wind. He flew a while away while making a sweeping 180 degree turn, and eventually he lined the plane up to land, wheels slowly swinging outwards from the undercarriage. It was strange, standing looking down the runway for Collins. He would have preferred to be on the side, but he supposed it was a good learning experience too, seeing it land from this angle. Just looked like it was flying straight towards him was all. Farrier dropped the nose and came down to the runway. Canfield noticed the wings quivering a little in the wind and mumbled something worried to himself.

“Alrigh’?” Collins asked,

“Hmm? Oh yes. Just the wind.” He responded, fidgeting with his hands in his pockets.

The wind hadn’t gotten any weaker since he took off, and it took considerable effort to keep the plane stable. Still, the landing wasn’t that difficult for him, the wheels hit the tarmac and the plane jolted at the friction. Suddenly it was a lot less likely the wind was going to blow the plane off course. As he taxied off he saw only two people outside, Canfield and Collins. Not sure how to feel about the conversation that probably ensued between them he continued until the Hurricane was back where it had started in line with the others.

Collins found it quite thrilling to watch Farrier fly. Even though he couldn’t see the man, the knowledge that he was controlling such a powerful plane, and flying it so well, was enough to make his stomach tighten. Farrier climbed out onto the wing and jumped off. He pulled his flight helmet and goggles off, running a gauntleted hand through his now messy hair. He walked over to the two,

“Afternoon.” He said more to Collins than Canfield, mocking the lad’s common phrase. It was the older man who responded,
“Had a good flight then?” Canfield asked.

“Yes very good. I went to Dover and back, and it only took, what, thirty minutes?” Farrier said.

“Yes, about thirty, good timing, very good, and no hiccups?” Canfield asked after checking his watch, well aware that Farrier still hadn’t found his.

“Nope, threw her around a bit too just to make sure. Everything’s fine, very strong planes.” Farrier answered.

“Excellent news.” Canfield said. The three walked inside out of the wind and Farrier unzipped his Irvin jacket.

“Good to get into a plane by myself again.” He said quietly to Canfield as Collins walked awkwardly along with them, feeling like he was intruding on an ‘officer only’ conversation.

“I can imagine, I might have to take one up soon!” the older man responded, he continued speaking as they walked into the hallway from the locker rooms,

“Well, I’ve got a scheduled phone call from the Ministry soon, so I should probably wait for that in my office.” Canfield said,

“Oh, what do they want now?” Farrier asked.

“Not sure, I think it’s about establishing radar in the mess hall.” Canfield said, Farrier hummed amusedly in response.

“Well, I’m going upstairs for a bit.” He said after a while.

“I will as well, my friends are up there.” Collins said, painfully aware of how awkward he sounded.

“Alright, see you two later then.” Canfield said, not really wanting to leave them alone together, and slightly annoyed he hadn’t gotten the chance to tell Farrier about the interesting conversation he’d had with Collins, but there was nothing he could do.

“You’re a great flier.” Collins blurted out when they reached the bottom of the stairs.

“Oh, glad you think so, Collins.” Farrier smiled.

“You’re actually very good for the amount you’ve flown, too.” He added,

“Yae think?” Collins almost laughed. He thought he was good, but didn’t realise that was something people other than him thought too.

“Yeah, I do think so.” Farrier said warmly as they ascended the stairs and he took his leather flying gauntlets off. They walked along the corridor in silence for a while, before Collins heard chattering and giggles from Dawson’s room.

“Ah, I should go join em’.” He said,

“Do… You have to?” Farrier asked, not knowing what possessed him to say that and immediately wishing he hadn’t. A shy smile crept onto Collins’ face,

“I guess not.” He said quietly. They walked along until they’d reached Farrier’s door. The man
opened it, Collins assumed he was putting his flight things away and they’d sit in the hallway like usual, but Farrier held the door open for Collins after him. The blonde looked at him, he must have looked a little shocked.

“It’s okay, I don’t think we should sit out there in daylight is all, too busy.” Farrier said. Collins nodded and took a few nervous steps into the room as the door was closed behind him. It was the first time he’d been in Farrier’s room. It felt too personal for him to be here, but he couldn’t help look around. It was somewhat similar to his own room, but it was larger, the bed was a double, or was that a queen? There was a little low table and chairs in front of the window with a set of teacups and a packet of biscuits on the top. There was also a wardrobe, a bedside table, a writing desk, a dressing table similar to Collins’ own, at which Farrier was currently depositing his flight helmet, goggles and gauntlets. The brunette was extremely annoyed at himself, or rather he would be if the adrenalin from the flight had stopped, which it hadn’t. Why would he say that to Collins? Something in the drawer he was putting his flight gear into distracted his thoughts.

“Want to see a photo?” he asked. Farrier’s voice seemed far away, as if he wasn’t thinking about what he’d said.

“Yeah, sure” Collins said quietly, walking up behind Farrier. The brunette’s heart fluttered as he felt Collins’ breath on the back of his neck, he could almost feel his warmth from how close they were. He put his flying gear away and got out the old photo that inhabited the same drawer. He turned around, almost wishing he hadn’t. Collins was way too close for his liking, or maybe he did like it. But it didn’t feel right, didn’t feel safe. He took a deep breath and stepped to the side a bit to put distance between them. Before Collins could protest he began talking.

“It’s me, and mum. I was two here.” He said, handing Collins the photo. The blonde’s eyes immediately lit up. Farrier was a chubby little boy with curly toddler hair and a huge grin on his face. His mother was beautiful, she had her eyes.

“You were so cute” Collins mumbled mainly to himself. Farrier rolled his eyes and smiled.

“Thank you.” Collins added, handing the photography back.

“For?” Farrier asked, leaving the photo on the dressing table instead of putting it away.

“Letting me see it.” The blonde shrugged.

“Ah it’s nothing. Just to pass the time.” Farrier said.

“Want a biscuit? I received another anonymous gift from the kitchen staff, same lass I think.” He said, picking up the biscuits from the small table.

“Oh, yes please.” Collins said taking one. They were shortbread biscuits this time.

“Shortbrea’” he said with a mouthful.

“Sco’ish recipe” he added after he’d swallowed some of his biscuit. Farrier hummed,

“Didn’t know that.” He said. He took a seat at the coffee table and Collins took the other.

“What was flying the Hurricane like?” Collins asked, grabbing another biscuit.

“It’s good. Feels sturdier than what we’re training you lot in, not as manoeuvrable as it’s heavier but definitely safer.” He said, grabbing a biscuit of his own.
“Aye, looked it. Canfield told us about WEP while you were flyin’ off.” Collins said, Farrier chuckled.

“Yeah, something they didn’t have in the war, only coming in now with these.” He said.

“I’ll teach you how to use it some day.” He added with a smile.

“I assumed so.” Collins replied,

“Oh on the contrary, while we’ll tell you how to use it, we’re not meant to show you or let you do it in the planes unless you’re in a wartime emergency. Puts too much strain on the engine, and if a beginner burns the engine out, could be disastrous.” Farrier said, Collins went a little serious.

“But, Canfield and I don’t share the same views all the time. I think we should be letting you all try it, you all know how to fly, and you can hear it in the engine anyway when you need to stop WEP anyway, starts rattling and spluttering awfully.” He said.

“Interestin’.” Collins replied, who was on his third biscuit.

“Nice biscuits these ones, aren’t they” Farrier laughed, the blonde hummed in response as he looked out the window.

“Farrier?” he asked after a while,

“Mm?”

“What are we doin’?” Collins asked resignedly. Farrier smiled down at the floor.

“What do you mean?” he said, knowing full well what the blonde meant.

“I mean,” Collins said, shifting his chair closer to Farrier’s.

“You know it can’t be more.” He said with a sigh. For the first time Farrier could remember since being told the pool was chlorinated Collins looked perplexed, genuinely confused.

“Collins. If it were to get out, I’d lose my job. I’ve worked all my life to get where I am now, it’s not worth the risk. It’s against the law.” He said.

“Nobody has tae know.” Collins pushed. Farrier eyed him cautiously, there were almost sharing breath at this point. Collins hadn’t broken eye contact and those blue orbs were positively glowing with excitement. Farrier felt himself leaning closer, his nose was almost touching the blonde’s, then Farrier gave himself a mental shake and straightened himself, putting distance between them.

“Get out.” He said.

“C’mon Farrier, yae cannae do that.” Collins whined.

“No. Out. Go be with your friends, I shouldn’t have invited you in. I was going to talk to you about whatever the hell you said to Canfield with your damned loud mouth and inability to keep things to
yourself, but as usual you derailed my intentions.” Farrier said, taking the biscuit packet out of the blonde’s hands. Collins huffed and walked out of the room quickly.

Collins stomped down the hallway to join his friends. That was just unfair, that was all on Farrier. How could he blame Collins for ‘derailing’ what he’d wanted to say? It was Farrier who invited him into his room in the first place, Collins was just going to play cards with Wingnut and Dawson initially.

Farrier felt fucking awful. That short interaction had taken all the happiness the plane flight had given him and replaced it with remorse. Why was he like this? How could he have snapped at Collins? More to the point, why did he? Farrier stopped eating the biscuits and lit a cigarette instead. He needed to figure something out soon, that was way too close, and this time it was not even Collins’ fault, it was his own. And that worried Farrier more than anything else.

Chapter End Notes

And that's it for upload Monday! Sorry it was a shorter chapter, I hope it was enjoyable to read nonetheless. Thank you to everyone who has been continually supporting this fic, it seriously means so much to me to see people genuinely enjoying my writing. My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat! Until next chapter <3
Upload Monday is here! I know everyone sort of died and screamed at me for the ending of the last chapter so I'm sorry, though I'm not sure if this makes up for it. (The title coinciding with the chapter number is annoying+amusing me)

It was Thursday the 15th September. It was Farrier's birthday. He still couldn't get out of his head what had almost happened the Saturday before with Collins. He was angry at himself for allowing it to go that far, for even inviting the boy into his room, it was all so stupid. He meandered downstairs to the dining hall for breakfast, which had already begun to take on the appearance of a radar room. He entered and Canfield got up out of his seat with his arms in the air, he could hear the man’s voice from the door excitedly yelling,

“Here he is!” Farrier had to smile at that. Canfield always got so excited when it was his birthday.

Wingnut sniggered at Canfield’s outburst.

“Someone’s excited to see him.” He said,

“Yeah, and not just our boy here” Dawson playfully nudged Collins, making sure nobody heard or saw. Collins looked down at his cereal and tried to keep the heat from his face.

“Happy birthday chap!” Canfield said as Farrier reached the staff table.

“Thanks, Michael.” Farrier chuckled as the older man embraced him.

The three boys heard it from where they were sat.

“Oh” Wingnut said, understanding now. Collins let a smile slip onto his face as he ate.

Later that day Farrier had the class he’d both been waiting for and dreading, one with Collins. As all the students piled in, Farrier’s anxiety spiked. Eventually Collins wandered in with a smile on his face upon seeing the man, the lad was like a puppy, he hadn’t even expressed much anger after the almost happening the previous Saturday. He was probably happy about it more than anything, even if he was annoyed immediately after. Once everyone had taken their seats Farrier attempted to begin the lesson, but not before-

“Happy birthday, Farrier!” Wingnut called out.

“Ah, yes. Thanks Timson.” He smiled politely.

“Oh, is it now? Come on everyone!” A lanky boy said, looking behind him at the class, and he began to sing. All the lads joined in and somehow the class sang happy birthday, not sounding completely awful either. If Collins hadn’t seen Farrier look completely mortified, he had now. The man tried his best to act normal, but did anyone really know how to act when the birthday song was being sung to them? Farrier didn’t think so. Finally the class finished and his eyes rested on Collins’ with a tired smile.
“Thank you class, now let’s get on, shall we?” he said.

“How old are ya then?” of course it was Anderson that asked. Collins was curious himself, of course.

“Twenty-one.” Farrier joked, and then continued the lesson, a rather interesting one on emergency landings.

“So, if your landing gear isn’t going down, just make absolutely sure that you land with your nose up more than usual, or the plane might catch and flip forwards.” Farrier explained.

“‘Ave you ever been in a crash?” someone asked.

“Yes, most pilots have.” Farrier answered curtly.

“And what happened then?” the same person asked. Collins turned around to discover that it was Johnson, Anderson’s quieter yet still somehow very annoying friend. Every time Collins ever heard Johnson speak it was a meaningless or offensive comment.

“Well, as you all know the planes in the Great War didn’t have any sort of canopy protection, if the plane had flipped and landed upside down, it’d have killed me without a doubt. But, it didn’t. Someone shot the core out of my engine and there was nowhere to land safely, we were over dense forest in France. The plane was going down, and there was nowhere good to put her, so I went through the trees. Wings came straight off, of course, the force of them being ripped from the fuselage threw the whole plane around. Luckily the prop didn’t come off as well because it would have probably decapitated me!” Farrier laughed, Collins didn’t.

“Anyway, plane landed minus wings, and because of the velocity and the fact that the plane wasn’t heading for the ground at a straight angle at all, one side dug down into the dirt and the plane did a sort of cartwheel I suppose, up onto the nose and then down onto where the other wing would have been and finally back down onto its belly. I had the seatbelt on of course so it just kind of threw me around in my seat. The plane stops moving, I get out and walk to where the nearest allied base is according to my map!” he chuckled, saying it aloud made it sound like some sort of eventful excursion day, which is not how it felt while it was happening.

“How’d the soldiers help you?” Dawson asked.

“They helped me contact the Royal Flying Corps, as it were in those days. Then they drove me to the nearest airbase and I took a plane from there and made my way back to my squadron’s base eventually.” He answered.

“Did you get hurt?” another boy asked. Farrier hesitated before answering,

“Yeah, fractured my shoulder unfortunately, put me out of flying for six weeks. Got a load of cuts on me from the wooden wings splintering off too.” He gestured to some on his head. Finally, Collins knew where they were from. The lesson drew to a close too soon for Collins, who was genuinely curious about both the stories of war and the lesson topic, and they went on to their next lesson with Canfield.

The day dragged on and Farrier didn’t see Collins again until dinner time. He took his seat at the staff table as usual,

“Doing anything tonight then?” Canfield asked.

“Course not, it’s Thursday!” Farrier laughed. The group of officers all wished him a happy
birthday, and of course Canfield let him get his food before anyone else.

“So how old do we think he is, then?” Wingnut bantered.

“Seriously?” Collins asked.

“Yeah, I reckon he’s nearing fifty.” The brunette answered.

“Nae I think he’d be near forty” Collins said.

“Well for good measure I guess I should say he’s in his mid forties then!” Dawson said.

“I’ll find oot later.” Collins mumbled.

“How?” Wingnut asked suggestively, earning him a puzzled look from both blondes.

“I’ll ask him, Wingnut.” Collins almost laughed.

And he did find out later, outside Farrier’s door.

“Had a good day?” the blonde asked. It was another one of their late night chats. Collins had been pondering Saturday’s happening, or not happening. He supposed he was somewhat annoyed, but the fact that they’d been that close to something overruled it.

Things had come and gone, going to the gym or jogging with his friends, going out celebrating, they didn’t do those things anymore. Collins didn’t draw as often, too much homework. Not enough time for things, too much work to be done, never the right mood. But there was always time for this, these stolen moments together at night when the world slept.

“Yeah it was alright, just classes as usual I guess.” Farrier smiled into the moonlight. The two were sat against the wall between their doors, they were both in their pyjamas, both comfortable enough to sit together in them, where once Collins had hated for anyone to see him in them.

“Collins, about Saturday. I’m sorry, really. I don’t know what I was thinking bringing you in there. But also I’m sorry for the way I spoke afterwards, it was harsh and well, downright rude.” Farrier said barely above a whisper. His eyes showed sorrow, he wasn’t just apologising so they could get on with each other’s company, he really did mean it.

“Oh, it’s fine. I understand why yae went off, I do. I pushed it.” He said, although he was still a little sore after being spoken to that way by Farrier, he knew the man wasn’t going to budge on what they could and couldn’t do, yet, and he’d pissed him off by trying to force something. The blonde elected to change the subject on the grounds of feeling like if they kept talking about it he might push Farrier too far again.

“Farrier, how old are yae?” he asked tentatively. The man smiled at him fondly.

“Forty.”

It hung in the air for a moment, the first time Collins had known how old Farrier was in all their months of knowing each other. He hummed as he processed it.

“Nae, it’s a good age.” Collins replied, thinking that he’d guessed the closest out of his friends.

“Look good for forty, you do.” He added shyly. Farrier smiled at the floor in front of them, his
cheeks a warm pink.

“Thank you” he said contentedly.

“Hang on, then you went to war at like sixteen!” Collins said, shocked.

“Yeah, almost everyone lied, didn’t seem to matter to anyone who knew my age.” Farrier scratched his head. Collins just sat for a moment. Farrier had been so young, and seen such things. It must have shown on his face.

“Hey” said Farrier, he placed a warm hand on Collins’ knee, counterintuitively to what he’d been apologising for not a few minutes ago.

“Don’t worry about it.” He said softly. The blonde’s eyes were full of emotion, as if something was lurking beneath the calm surface, he didn’t look like he wasn’t worrying about it.

“You were so young” was all Collins could manage.

“I know, but I’ve had years of rest from war, now I’m a man.” Farrier said, removing his hand. Collins immediately missed the warmth.

“So your crash you told us about, how old were you?” the blonde asked.

Farrier stared out into the hall and didn’t answer for a minute, he was trying to shake the image from his head. It was easier when you were telling a group, it was like some sort of elaborate and amusing story, and their reactions kept you from going inside yourself too much. But to just one person, it was much easier to go back down memory lane, and much harder to pull yourself away from it. He knew Collins didn’t mean anything by it, of course he was curious.

“Seventeen.” He eventually said. Farrier’s stomach was a pit of nerves now, the way the plane jerked his body around, no control over what was going to happen. It was terrifying, and it was all coming back now.

“Jesus Farrier.” Collins whispered. The lad didn’t look so chipper himself now.

“At seventeen I was at school, or helping ma and pa out at home, runnin’ newspapers around town. Not flying in war.” He said.

“I didn’t have a choice, country needed me, and the only person I had any real attachment to, Canfield, was going. I had to go with him.” Farrier said.

“You two really that close, he’s like a father to you, isn’t he.” Collins said.

“Sort of, I don’t think of him like a father, feels weird considering my relationship with my actual father. Me and Canfield, we clash a fair bit come to think of it, but he was there when I needed him to be.” Farrier replied, glad the subject had changed.

“He too old to fly now?” Collins asked, realising it sounded a bit rude aloud only after he said it.

“Yeah, he’s in the home reserves now.” Farrier answered.

“And thank god, he’d go down in his first sortie. His mind’s all there but not his body, I don’t think he’s got the sight or reflexes you need up there nowadays.” The brunette said. The two sat in silence for a while.

“How are your friends?” Farrier asked.
“Yeah good, cannae complain.” Collins replied.

“There’s a difficult set of lessons coming up.” Farrier said, but he wished he hadn’t, he wasn’t sure how to continue.

“Oh yeah?” Collins asked.

“Um, you know what, you’ll find out when they happen.” He said.

“Why’d you ask aboot my friends and then say that?” Collins pushed, somewhat confused.

Farrier sighed, why couldn’t he keep his mouth shut around Collins?

“Basically, pilots need to be really stony when flying. If someone in your flight or squadron goes down, you can’t give it a second thought. It’s the class that all students hate, and I hate doing it too. Collins, we get you ready for loss.” Farrier explained.

“How can yae prepare someone for that?”

“Basically we just watch a whole lot of films, all true stories about passing. Some years people come in to talk to the class, other years not. It’s all to try and get you used to the idea of death.” He said.

“Donnae sound good.” Collins said,

“It isn’t. But it’s necessary. I know if half you lot don’t go through this stage of getting used to it, you’d not be able to handle war.” He said tensely.

“Thankfully, there aren’t many classes on it, but it’s implied that you better get used to not being too close to people, in case the unthinkable happens.” He said quietly, refusing to let his mind consider if something would ever happen to the blonde. Collins looked ahead and smiled,

“And that’s just another reason why nothin’s happening here, isn’t it.” His words were plain and simple.

“Yes.”

Farrier put his hand on Collins’ thigh, which was stronger than he’d imagined it to feel, he felt Collins tense under his touch.

“Collins, you have no idea how much I want this, with you. No idea how hard it is for me to restrain myself, you… You’re… You’re beautiful.” Their eyes locked once more, but Farrier was sad.

“But it can’t happen, I fucking wish it could but it can’t.” he said, and removed his hand slowly. Collins couldn’t speak. He was completely enamoured by this man who, as much as he’d indirectly done it before, had just confessed feelings for him, for real, with actual words. Collins was unable to respond to the confession with one of his own, all that came out was,

“Yes it can.” Collins tried to say, but his voice wavered.

The brunette sighed,

“I can’t risk it. Something gets out, I’m done, we both are.” He said.

“Yae think it’s easy for me not to do anythin’ either? Think it’s easy to keep these feelings contained? C’mon Farrier. Maybe, if, if there’s a release, we won’t be clawin’ at each other in
public anymore, maybe we’ll be sated and it’ll be easier to contain.” the blonde said. Tentatively, ever so slowly his hand reached out and laid itself on Farrier’s thigh, as the man had done to him. it was warm, and strong under his touch.

“C’mon Farrier.” He said again in a much softer tone. Farrier rested his hand on Collins’.

“Don’t push me, Collins.” he said, trying to keep the want out of his voice.

“Push back.” Collins leaned in, but Farrier stood up quickly.

“Collins, this is serious. We can’t.” he said. The blonde stood up next to him and smiled a resigned smile,

“Happy birthday, Farrier.” Was all he said before disappearing into his bedroom, still not altogether fazed by the man’s words instead happy with the night’s interactions as a whole.

Farrier sat up in his bed contemplating. What Collins said about containment and release, had actually made sense. The man didn’t know what to do anymore. It couldn’t go on like this. Touching in the hallway? Unreasonable beyond doubt, too dangerous. And Collins wouldn’t stop, Farrier knew that. He didn’t want him to stop, either. In fact, the way Collins flirted so fearlessly made him feel old beyond his years, like he needed to be more active about his affections before it was too late. It was dangerous, so dangerous. But that feeling of Collins’ thigh under his hand tonight, even just the smell of that man drove Farrier wild, and in less innocent ways than he cared to admit. Yes, he fancied Collins, there was no denying that anymore. But the things he wanted to do with him, do to him, were unspeakably illicit. He sighed and tried to drop the idea as he fell into light sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you everyone for reading and supporting my fic, I love u all sm <3
Ironically chapter 40 is named 40 because Farrier was 40, wow should i type 40 one more time?
Anyway if anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com
Until next chapter!
Farrier had been avoiding Collins since his birthday last Thursday, it was Saturday now, ten days of trying to get the blonde out of his head. He hadn’t done this since early on in the lad’s training, but if he didn’t avoid him, Farrier was going to do something stupid. At the end of today was the first lesson of what Canfield liked to call ‘emotional training’. Everyone hated it but at least Collins got a heads up from him, Farrier thought to himself. He’d rather that than the lad go in with no clue what was happening like the rest of the cohort. Over breakfast that morning Canfield said something that disagreed with Farrier.

“Now I want you to come along to the class.”

“No. Why?”

“To make sure you’re fit to fly.”

“I am.” Farrier said shortly.

“Come on lad, if you’re fit to fly, come and prove it!” he said.

“No.”

“Why is it such a problem?” the old man asked,

“I don’t like going to those.” Farrier said, still not having made eye contact with anything but his cereal bowl.

“Tom, nobody does. You’re going, end of story.” The man said. Farrier scoffed but didn’t answer.

He did end up going, only because Canfield didn’t let him out of his sight, and stood over his shoulder as he sat in his office, clearly not going to leave until Farrier went to the damned class, so he did. But he wasn’t happy about it. Among the class of boys he saw Collins looking very tired. 

Fuck. He remembered last time he’d seen those circles under his eyes, it was when he was ignoring him after the uniform party. Now he just felt plain guilty, it was as if there was no way he could be safe now. Ignore Collins and the blonde would obviously take it out on himself, or at the very least not be able to sleep properly, most likely plagued with anxiety now the poor man. Or, Farrier could not ignore him, and something illegal and detrimental to his entire career could end up happening. He shook the thought and took a seat at the back of the class by himself. Canfield pulled the blinds down and put on some soppy thing about a dog and his owner, of course the dog died at the end. He remembered when he was this soft, though it was so very long ago. Nowadays really he only cried
about his own problems, selfish of him, Farrier thought. Not that he cried often either, only when he was drunk or in some depressive downwards spiral. Then Collins turned around to look at him, and in the dark room illuminated by the light from the projector he saw that his cheeks were stained with tears. It felt like someone had stabbed Farrier, he swallowed and looked down at the desk in front of him. Collins turned back around.

“You alright?” Dawson whispered.

“Yeah, yeah.” Collins answered taking a shaky breath. He was no good at this. He knew he was a bit soft, but he couldn’t help feeling things deeply. And he loved dogs. And Farrier was ignoring him again. It had been a long time since he’d done that. The blinds went back up and the projector was turned off, the sunlight temporarily blinding Collins’ blue eyes.

“Now, how did we all find that?” Canfield’s voice was too chipper for Collins’ liking. The older man looked around to see the lads looking unhappy for the most part.

“Well, this isn’t even a human, it was a dog!” he said, concerned they wouldn’t be emotionally ready at this rate.

“See? Farrier and I are fine, you lads best prepare yourselves for the next emotional training lesson, I want no tears!”

After Canfield wheeled the projector back to whatever storage it had come from the class departed.

“I’ll catch you guys up, yeah?” Collins said. He felt a little numb, and just wanted to sit quietly for a bit before leaving and collect his emotions. The room emptied itself around him, and Collins almost let out a sigh before he felt a pair of eyes on him. He turned around to see Farrier still sitting at the back, arms crossed and those worry lines ever-present.

“Collins, I think we should talk.” He said. A tiny part of Collins’ heart fluttered that this was probably Farrier’s bad apology coming his way after being ignored, but something stayed his mouth from answering something sensible.

“Fuck off.” The blonde said and pushed his chair out noisily from the desk.

“No!” said Farrier, and got up quickly after Collins. The blonde stormed quickly out of the room, he wasn’t getting off the hook that easy.

Collins had to teach himself to be hard? Then he’d walk away from Farrier, walk away instead of turning around and letting him explain. He needed to be hard? Then he’d stop his stupid ministrations and turn into a cut out of the perfect pilot, just the same as every other man, no emotions. Collins walked quickly up the stairs heading for his room, he almost made it to his door when Farrier grabbed his wrist.

“Collins. I’m serious.”

“So am I. Am not some plaything yae can go around dandy with and then when I piss yae off for whatever reason, not that I can think of one except bein’ fookin’ honest with my feelings, yae ignore me for a week and a half!” Collins shook his hand out of Farrier’s grip.

“Yae want us all to harden up? I will.” He said and slammed his door shut in the man’s face. Farrier exhaled and rested his forehead against the wood of Collins’ door.

Collins didn’t cry though, he almost had angry tears but he didn’t let them come to the surface, and for that he was proud of himself. He threw off his uniform and got into something comfortable,
some huge warm knit jumper from his mother.

The brunette found his way into his room and lay down on the bed. He almost pulled out that bottle of alcohol from his drawer, but his pride stopped him. If Collins was going to act that way it was childish to drink to stop thinking about him. The blonde was having a hissy fit, something like that should be laughable, Farrier thought.

Collins wasn’t sure, in the end, exactly why it had annoyed him to see Farrier when he turned around in class, but it had. He supposed it was because he obviously thought Collins would forgive and forget, but it was harder this time. Now they’d had almosts and what ifs. Collins had lost considerable sleep over the matter, maybe that contributed to his annoyance. Maybe it also contributed to his tears during the movie. He sat in his room and lost himself in thought until dinner.

“Hey mate, where’d you go?” Wingnut asked as they sat together.

“Ah, just wanted to be alone, yeah?” Collins answered.

“So, our group is starting the grief training.” Canfield told the table, the other officers groaned.

“Hate that we have to do that.” Davis said,

“Everyone does, but it can cause serious problems if you go to war unprepared, we know that, don’t we Farrier?” Canfield said, Farrier death stared him and didn’t say anything, in fact nobody at the table said anything after that.

“You men tried the Hurricanes?” Farrier asked after a while, they all had, and all thought they were magnificent. Eventually dinner drew to a close, and Collins couldn’t get out of there quick enough. He just wasn’t in the mood to deal with Farrier right now, whether he was going to keep ignoring him or try to make it up to him. Collins sat sulking in his room, his friends knew something was up, but he didn’t care either. The blonde just wanted to be alone, maybe draw some pictures in the rarity that was free time nowadays, most nights he had homework unfortunately. Mostly just reading to do, but still. Tonight he sat up in bed doodling until his hand was sore. It had somewhat soothed his temper from earlier, so Collins decided to brave the corridor to draw out there like he used to before it had become solely to see Farrier there. He walked out into the hall, not even having changed out of his clothes yet into pyjamas, to draw. He knew Farrier would probably come out there at some point, but he genuinely just wanted to draw there, the change of view from his room was nice.

Farrier knew he’d hurt Collins’ feelings, but the current situation was royally fucked and he knew it was all his fault, he was just so awful with his feelings it always ended up coming across rude or cold. He was so, so bad with expressing himself, he hated that this had happened because of him. Maybe he should go and think over properly how he was going to deal with the situation, because he sure as hell couldn’t leave it like this. Leaving his uniform trousers on, he shrugged on a turtleneck and put his flying boots on, reminding himself to call them flying boots and not slippers in his head now. He took a breath and opened his door to see Collins drawing in his little book. Farrier watched as the pencil in his hand stopped moving as Collins noticed Farrier’s presence.

“Where yae goin’?” Collins asked without turning around. Maybe this was the time, Farrier thought. Maybe he should take Collins to his thinking spot, perhaps it would quell whatever
happened between them. He sighed and waited for Collins to turn around, when he did so he looked tired, and mildly annoyed still.

“Get some shoes on, I’ll show you.” Farrier said. Collins slowly closed his sketchbook and gave Farrier a quizzical look before walking back into his room. He emerged again minus his book, plus his shoes. Collins couldn’t deny the way he relished being around Farrier, even though he was trying not to be nice to him, it was hard not to be. The man in his doorway looked warm and welcoming. The blonde swallowed as he shut his bedroom door behind him and looked nervously at the man in front of him, he knew he’d forgive him now, even if he didn’t want to Collins wouldn’t be able to keep his front up now.

“Come on.” Farrier said, and led the way. Collins fell into step next to him. They walked downstairs and out to the back of the building through the changerooms. The pair walked through the long unkempt grass behind the hangars and out to the very last shed, and Farrier sat down. Collins joined him in the cool grass,

“What’s this place for?”

“Me. And now it’s for you, too.” Farrier said into the open air. Collins followed the man’s gaze over the fields ahead of them, the way the moonlight lit up the long grass as slivers of silver beneath the deep blue of the night sky.

“Why bring me here?” he probed, anger gone at last.

“One, you asked where I was going. Two, I felt ready to show someone my place. Sounds kind of weird that I come out here to sulk, dunnit.” Farrier let out a single laugh, the tips of Collins’ mouth turned upwards,

“But I do. I come here to think, I have been for years. It’s just somewhere nobody else comes, and it’s peaceful here, makes me forget my problems, just for a little while.” Farrier turned to the blonde and smiled. Collins smiled back.

“Am I a problem you come here to forget? He asked, his smile remaining but his insides had all but melted into an anxious mess. Farrier looked down at the grass in front of him, it had begun to grow back a bit from his incessant need to pull it out since he was last here, but nonetheless he pulled out a new chunk to fiddle with.

“Sort of” he mumbled. Collins’ heart sank again.

“Okay.” The blonde said, and began to stand.

“No, please” Farrier said quickly,

“Please stay.”

Collins sat back down tentatively.

“I meant, I come here when I don’t know what to do, I suppose. Like now, I was going to come here by myself to think about how to solve whatever’s happening between us.” Farrier said carefully.

Collins sighed.

“Sorry fer goin’ off at yae before Farrier.” He said, somewhat surprising himself with the statement.
“I would have if I were you” Farrier smiled.

“Look, Collins.” the brunette turned himself to face the blonde more.

“I’m really awful with my feelings, okay? I don’t know how to deal with them, nor do I know how to express them. I’m sorry for the past week, more than week actually. Since my birthday.” Farrier sighed, Collins looked at him in sadness.

“It’s just, I can’t ignore you anymore that’s for sure, I couldn’t sleep properly the whole time, not that it’s a new concept for me, but even more so than usual I couldn’t rest. And look at you, look at the circles under your eyes, lad. Clearly you’ve had the same problem.” He said, Collins blinked wearily,

“Aye.” He said quietly.

“And, I’m scared of what will happen if I don’t ignore you…” he said, more quietly. Collins looked at him,  

“Scared?” he repeated,

“Yes, I’m scared.” Farrier said again. Admitting that he was scared to someone other than Canfield was very new territory for Farrier.

“But, we coulda done something here, now. Nobody would have ever known Farrier.” Collins shuffled closer to him.

“Collins, don’t.” Farrier managed, but his expression didn’t mirror his words.

“Just this once, perhaps.” Collins said.

“Collins, can’t we just be? Just be how it was before, where we both know what’s happening, and that’s it?” Farrier said.

“I want more.” The blonde said plainly. Farrier sighed,

“You think I don’t? You can’t seem to grasp how incredibly dangerous this is, Collins. Do you know how sure I am that nobody saw us come here? Completely, because I checked, paranoidly so. You didn’t look around once to make sure we weren’t being followed. Even just sitting here together is dangerous. Every time we’re out in the hall, I have my ears pricked listening for a creak up the hall, a footprint, I doubt you do the same, lad.” Collins looked down,

“I want so much more than what we are now Collins, more than you’ll ever know. But we can’t.” Farrier said.

The man wasn’t very good at resisting Collins’ puppy eyes. He wasn’t sure if the blonde knew when he was doing it or not either, which was maddening. He almost leaned in, but stopped himself before the thought became an action.

“Fuck!” he said aloud.

Farrier rested his head in his hands and looked away from Collins. This was so wrong, not only was he torturing himself but Collins as well. And what if he’d let something it happen? Then how would he hide it?
“Why don’t yae just do it?” Collins said quietly. Suddenly the air was colder, the atmosphere thinner, the mood, if there was any, was gone.

“I can’t.” Farrier looked at Collins again, Farrier hated this rut they were stuck in, and there was seemingly no way to solve it.

“You know it’ll be better off if yae do, no more tension because you’ve got what yae want. It’ll be even better hidden from everyone around because there’ll be no actin’ nervous or flirty or anythin’! No need when we can have what we want away from their prying eyes.” Collins explained, aware his words probably sounded superfluous.

“No. I need to go to bed, so do you. I’m not partaking in illegal activities just because it might ease our situation.” Farrier said, Collins almost chuckled. Farrier stood up and began to walk off.

Collins huffed and rested his head against the metal of the shed. He wanted anything but sleep right now.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): Mention of animal death, mention of sadness/depression, implied/referenced alcohol abuse, mentions of PTSD

Can you feel things getting closer?? Hope nobody is too mad that I cut the chapter where I did heh.
As always thank you so so much for the wonderful kudos and comments, I seriously love hearing what everyone thinks of my writing, and I’m always shocked at how positive the responses are from you all <3

If anyone wants to chat my tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r.tumblr.com!

Until next chapter!
Can't End Well

Chapter Notes

Another week, another chapter, feels like I uploaded like a day ago hahaha
Hope everyone has a good week ahead of them!
Trigger warning(s) in end notes.

Collins left the base after a long mental debate of whether to or not, he decided that since he hadn’t for so long he should. Why not? He walked around the Gatwick area until he’d found some pub called ‘The Golden Deer’. Everyone at base seemed to go to there, judging from conversations overheard at dinner, not that Collins would really know, being more of a stay-in-and-talk-to-Farrier kind of guy. He walked in and immediately wasn’t so sure he should have, Anderson, Charles and Johnson were there. The ringleader spotted him,

“Oh, hi Collins!” Anderson said in a friendly way. Immediately Collins remembered why he’d hung around with them that night, he was nice to you when he wanted to be, really nice in fact, just really rude otherwise.

“Uh, hiya.” Collins said nervously.

“How are ya?” Anderson held out a hand to shake,

“Yae not bad, you?” Collins asked, trying to shake his hand firmly, but not too firmly. It was such a strange concept, shaking hands. It has to be perfect, too soft and you were a poof, too hard and you were overbearing.

“No buddies tonight?” the brunette asked,

“Nae, just me tonight.” Collins answered.

“That’s alright, you can hang around with us if ya like.”

“Yeah, sure” Collins tried to make it sound convincing. He didn’t really know what he’d planned to do once he was out, he’d gotten so used to staying in. he supposed he’d get some drinks and just listen to the music and chat to Anderson and friends.

Farrier didn’t know what to feel. Angry at himself? Definitely. Angry at Collins? Impossible, the boy was just too pure, like a puppy that had done something wrong but was too cute to be mad at. Plus he couldn’t hold his anger towards Collins for repeated attempts to initiate something when he himself could barely keep his hands off the blonde. He huffed and lit a cigarette, smoking in bed. He wished there was someone useful to confide in, Canfield would never understand the predicament and would just get angry and probably weirded out at the mere concept. James was either too out of it or just too… James to be of any use most of the time. Farrier considered himself a walking contradiction, telling Collins to stop, but not being able to himself.
As Collins was up at the bar getting himself a drink, Anderson walked back to the table his friends were at.

“He’s a gay, ya know?” he said quietly.

“Ugh, you sure?” Johnson asked.

“Yep. He’s interested in old man Farrier!” Anderson stifled a laugh, Charles grimaced.

“You gonna make some fun out of it then?” Charles asked,

“Yeah maybe.” Anderson answered.

“It’s so wrong, should do something more than have fun, should bloody punish him.” Johnson said,

“I mean, I would but we’re in a busy bar mate.” Anderson said, Collins began to walk back over.

“Collins! Long time since we’ve had a good chat mate!” Johnson said with a smile,

“Aye, how’ve yae been?” the blonde asked sipping the froth off his pint.

“Good, good. Yourself?” he asked, Collins raised his eyebrows and nodded in response as he drank the cool liquid down.

“Good music tonight, don’t you think?” Charles asked Collins in his typically thoughtful sounding way. Collins hadn’t really taken notice of it until the man mentioned it, and it was good. Something on a clarinet, sounded nice.

“Aye, it is. Few more drinks I might go have a dance.” Collins mumbled, he hadn’t for so long, needed to get back into practice. Dancing was something he loved doing but rarely did, rarely had the time nowadays, as with most things it seemed.

“You lot no’ drinkin’?” he asked,

“Nah not tonight mate.” Anderson replied.

Farrier was tired, he only rarely noticed just how exhausted he got from teaching, most of the time he just kind of went on and didn’t think about himself or his wellbeing too much, Canfield always pestered him about not caring for himself enough. But now, as he lay relaxing, he realised how tired he was. He’d had worse than usual sleeps this past week or so, more restless, more bad dreams, more. Over the years Farrier had picked up on the fact that he had more flashbacks and bad dreams when he was in a negative headspace, which made sense of course. He tried to think of what would make him feel happier, and only two things came to mind, flying and Collins. That thought alone made him sad, there should be more things than that. He couldn’t fly in any planes here, none were equipped for night flying, and he of course couldn’t do anything with Collins. He didn’t want to play chess, didn’t want to read, didn’t want to go out, couldn’t fly, he just wanted to be with Collins, didn’t even care if it wasn’t romantically. He sighed and put the cigarette out.

After some idle chit chat and a few more sips of the pint Collins went over for a dance. There were a few others doing it already so he didn’t feel too strange as the movements flowed through him again. It all came back quickly, he’d done it enough that he couldn’t really get that out of practice,
the moves always came back.

“You boys ready?” Anderson said and pulled out a tiny bottle of liquid, he unscrewed the dropper lid.

“Sure am.” Charles said,

“Yeah” Johnson seconded.

“Wait. I know what we should do.” Anderson smirked towards Collins’ direction.

“He’s been drinking, can’t give someone opium when they’ve been drinking mate, that’s what you told us!” Johnson said,

“Well first of all this batch is a little spiced up. It’ll be more fun lads, in a kind of colourful, visual way ya know?” Anderson said,

“And yeah I know I’m not meant to give someone any of it if they’ve been drinking, can cause unconsciousness,” Anderson smiled and let a few drops fall into Collins’ drink,

“Respiratory failure,” another drop,

“Seizures,” another drop,

“Comas,” a fourth drop,

“And even death, in extreme cases.” A fifth and final drop, and then a squirt from the eyedropper for good measure. The boys were all smiling at his despicable actions.

“Among the other side effects of having that much opium by itself, goodness!” Anderson laughed at the amount he’d put in the drink. “You’re not planning to kill him are you?” Charles asked, genuinely scared.

“No! Am I a murder? I just want him to have fun tonight!” Anderson said sarcastically, Charles didn’t look so convinced.

“Mate, he won’t die. He just won’t have a good time yeah? It’s fine, he deserves it.” Anderson said. The blonde sighed.

“Alright. S’pose he does deserve it, homosexuals. God doesn’t want them, we don’t want them, nobody does.” He said.

“There’s the spirit, lad!” Anderson smiled.

“Except the other homosexuals” Johnson laughed in response to Charles’ statement,

“Don’t give me images, boys” Anderson chuckled.

“Right, not too much boys, yeah? This wasn’t cheap, and I wasn’t expecting you know who to arrive tonight.” He said as he passed the bottle around.

Farrier had realised over all this time, that it was his decision. He had the power to decide what to
do with Collins, the thought had been vaguely in his mind for a while but he hadn’t really addressed it. If he really wanted Collins to go away, he’d put his foot down, and properly. And if he didn’t want that, which he obviously didn’t, he had the power to initiate something. But that thought haunted him, it was bigger than any risk in a plane he’d taken in his opinion, in the air you either got out fine, got out injured, in which case eventually you’d probably recover, or you got out dead. If homosexual activity ever got out, Farrier would never be able to be employed with a criminal record like that, Collins wouldn’t either. It would be like living in hell. But Farrier was doing that now by resisting what he wanted. He sighed and wracked his brain for a magical solution.

Collins was getting very warm dancing, but the music was so good, and everyone else here was swing dancing too so it made him feel like he belonged, something thus far he’d only felt about the RAF. Collins wasn’t that good at being in groups, he was an outsider and preferred being alone. But dancing usually made him forget about that, it helped him stay in the moment, made him feel social for once. Finally the band stopped, announcing they were taking a break. Collins wearily walked back to the table with the boys.

“Well done, lad!” Anderson said, patting the blonde’s back.

“Aye, cheers.” Collins breathed and picked up his beer, he drank thirstily. Anderson watched his Adam’s apple bob as he drank and the boys exchanged subtly pleased looks around the table. He only put the drink down when it was almost empty. Then Collins took his seat at the table.

“So yer not dancin’, not drinkin’. What are yae all here for?” the scot laughed. Panic must have shown on Johnson’s face because Collins cocked his head, Anderson quickly answered, “Isn’t it obvious?” Collins shook his head,

“The ladies, of course!” Anderson laughed,

“Ah, the only good reason right lads?” he said,

“That’s right my boy, that’s right.” Anderson said, maintaining threatening eye contact with the blonde. Collins glared back at him but then decided it wasn’t worth it and finished his beer.

“So you all lookin’ to pick a bird up tonight?” he asked.

“Maybe, nice just to look as well.” Charles answered.

“Are you?” Johnson asked Collins,

“Ah me, hadn’t planned on it but if you lads are, sure” he smiled. Anderson noted the man’s foot tapping under the table. Collins wasn’t exactly thrilled with the prospects of fake flirting, but he had to in order to protect his secret, which Anderson probably knew, considering the altercation they had at the uniform party. Maybe if he was convincing enough Anderson would believe he was heterosexual, or at least bisexual. They went up to the bar where most of the ladies were chatting. The three boys easily slipped into conversation with the lasses, though Anderson was giving Collins the side eye, watching him. This was a test, and Collins assumed something bad would be at the end if he didn’t find a woman. He spotted one off to the side by herself, quite skinny with dark hair. He wandered over, attempting to swallow his nerves but to no avail. At least he had a silver tongue when under pressure.

“Hiya,” he said with a small smile. The woman downed the rest of whatever was in her glass.
“Hi yourself,” she smiled.

“Been up to much tonight?” he asked, taking the bar seat next to her.

“Oh, not really. Hold on, were you dancing before?” a glint in her brown eyes,

“Aye?”

“I was on stage, I saw you.” She said with a shy smile.

“Oh, you were playing the clarinet, sorry I dinnae notice sooner!” Collins said,

“You’re a good player” he smiled, genuinely.

“You’re a good dancer. What do I call you?” she asked,

“Co- Jack.” He said, she looked a little confused,

“Cohjack?” Collins let a laugh escape his lungs. He was actually feeling fine now, better than. It was as if this was one of the most stimulating conversations he’d ever had.

“Jack. I’m actually in the air force, we use last names there, just a habit. Nearly said my last name instead of my first, sorry.” He said.

“Oh are you now? Do you fly?” she asked.

“Yeah, I’m still in trainin’. Anyway yae didn’t tell me your name, lass.” He said.

“My names Stella.” She held out her hand with a shy smile. Collins took it and held eye contact as he kissed it gently. He could feel Anderson still watching, he had to be convincing. They continued talking, Collins felt bad, he was sure Stella was becoming interested in him for more than his chatter, but he just kept up the flirty conversation, not really willing to do anything more. He turned and noticed Anderson and his mates peering over more than a few times but tried his best to ignore them.

“So yae want another drink Stella?” he eventually asked,

“Oh, yes please.” She said the name of some obscure sounding drink, Collins ordered it and another pint for himself, the drink came and it was pink, he didn’t question it and gave it to the lass.

“Thank you Jack” she smiled. The fact that he wasn’t used to hearing his own first name was a very weird concept indeed. Stella was nice, Collins was enjoying her company a lot, in a platonic way. He thought she was physically attractive even though he was interested in men, and he liked that she was bold, she wasn’t some weak lass that only spoke when spoken to, In fact she reminded Collins of Lucy, the female Air Transport Auxiliary pilot he’d met. Both were confident women, and able to have a good laugh with. Collins learnt a decent amount about Stella, how she’d studied music all through school and now she was finally in a band and was loving it. How she loved to cook but wasn’t all that good at it, how she wished for the depression to end because it had forced her, her bandmates and another entire band into living together just to be able to pay for everything. In turn, she learnt about Collins’ heritage in the north, his love of the outdoors and of art, she learnt about some of his flying experience, little as it was, and how the depression in Scotland was the main reason (or so he said) that he’d come down here.

It wasn’t long after he’d finished his second pint that Collins began to feel a little drowsy. It was
odd, usually alcohol woke him up and it was only when he’d had a very large amount that the
drowsy effects caught up with him, not two pint’s worth, that and the drowsiness had come on
surprisingly fast.

“Look at him, god the poor girl, and he had to pick the ugliest one in the bar didn’t he!” Anderson
chuckled to Johnson who smirked in Collins’ direction.

“He’s trying, at least”

“It’s all an act mates, can see straight through it.” Charles said. They’d been conversing with
several women each over the night, not really caring enough about any of them to have decent
conversation.

“Our boy looks a bit tired, let’s get him away from that girl.” Anderson said and walked up to
Collins.

“Collins my boy, care for a game of cards with me and the lads?” he asked, putting a hand on
Collins’ shoulder in anything but a friendly manner.

“Yae alright, Stella I’ll talk to you in a bit yeah?” he said.

“Sure, enjoy your game boys.” She smiled.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): Homophobia, drug use, drink spiking.

Thank you for reading everyone, I hope it wasn't boring or anything lol (I like writing
chapters that focus on plot other than romance but I know they're not for everyone, esp
since I'm dragging everything out this much lmao)
Thank you for all your lovely comments and kudos, I'm always happy to see my work
appreciated.
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r if anyone wants to chat!
Until next chapter, happy reading!
Chapter Notes

So I decided to upload a second chapter this week because I'm feeling like it. I thought it was Wednesday for a while today, but I now know it's Friday so I can't call it a mid week upload, so have an end of week upload instead. (you guys won't like this one) Trigger warning(s) in end notes!!!!!!!!!!

The four men walked back to the table, Collins trailing slightly behind. When they sat Collins couldn’t be gladder, he felt like his legs would give out if he took a single step more. He turned around to see Stella being ushered by a group, at first he was worried but upon realising it was her band and that her break was probably over, he turned back to the table.

“So, cards?” Collins asked.

“Yeah,” Anderson said and got them out. He dealt them out but Collins was having trouble differentiating the card suits.

“Alright there?” Anderson asked upon seeing Collins staring intently at his cards, “Yeah, vision’s a bit funny.” He mumbled. Anderson didn’t risk a smile around the table, but as he made eye contact with his friends they all knew he was happy, and so were they. Not only was Collins unable to tell the diamonds and hearts apart and the clubs and spades apart, but the patterns on the cards were moving. He shook one of the cards slightly and the red blobs, he didn’t even try and decide if they were diamonds or hearts, moved as he shook it, he put the hand of cards down.

“Fuck,” he mumbled and rested his head on his hands, elbows on the table.


“Let’s just sit for a while then,” Anderson collected the cards back and shoved them in his coat inside pocket. As Collins had his head down Anderson chanced a smirk around the table, returned by both Charles and Johnson. After a minute or so more of Collins trying to concentrate on not falling asleep and trying to ignore the faint patterns that were appearing behind his eyelids, he pulled his head up and sat up properly. He looked around the room and the corners of everything looked sharper than usual, unfriendly, uninviting. He felt like he didn’t want to be here anymore, but didn’t think he was well enough to get up, he had no idea what was causing him to feel like this. The blonde was somewhat aware that the table wasn’t doing anything because of him, but he couldn’t react. Anderson was surprised by the pupils of Collins’ eyes, not realising it would be this severe this early on, he could barely make out the boy’s pupils at all in the dim light, they were so pinpoint.

It delighted him to see Collins struggle.

The scot let his head fall back and he stared at the ceiling, he was terrified. He felt half paralysed,
he could breathe, he could blink, he could sit, sort of. Maybe he was fine and he was being lazy, he thought. It was almost like he just didn’t want to, or couldn’t be bothered talking, so he decided to try,

“Wha’s happenin’?” he asked nobody in particular, it was so slurred he wasn’t sure they understood him, especially with his accent. He slumped forwards again, he was so tired. He still saw strange patterns while his eyes were shut, not knowing why or where they came from. It was like a kaleidoscope, but it was scary, the shapes melded together and pulled apart from each other at the same time, they were simple, yet infinitely intricate.

He looked around the table and to Collins’ sheer horror, the faces of the people around him were slowly melting into liquid. Their eye sockets drooping down their cheeks and their skulls showing underneath, their eyeballs falling out. He looked back down at the wood of the table, at least it didn’t have a face on it, the patterns went with the wood grain, as if it was water running in a wood coloured river. He tried to speak again,

“Boys what’s happenin’” he said, more clearly.

“Dunno mate, stay sitting down yeah?” Anderson said. Collins nodded and looked at him, his face was normal again. The blonde was scared witless. Collins turned his attention to his hands in front of him as they lay palms down on the surface of the table, they began sinking into it as he looked at them, he blinked and they were back on top of the wood, but as he continued to look they sank again. It seemed the only option was to close his eyes. He pushed his body back in his chair and his arms flopped down to his sides. Charles smirked to Anderson and nodded in the direction of the door, Anderson nodded in agreement.

“Collins, mate we’re leaving now. Have a good night yeah?” Anderson said in a very happy voice, the blonde's eyes snapped open and he reached a hand out in the air as the three walked away, Anderson popped his collar to prepare for the coldness of the night outside, and lingered at the table a second longer.

“Sorry Collins, nothing personal yeah? Just the way it has to be.” he said, before walking off.

Collins didn’t really process what the brunette had told him, but he was even more terrified now he was alone. The music began to play again but it sounded haunting, echoing and distant. He looked over to Stella at the front again with her clarinet, desperately wanting to reach out to her. But he looked again and she had melded into her clarinet, they were one object, and then suddenly she was a porcelain doll playing complete with cracks in the porcelain, which was deeply disturbing. He looked back at the table and tried to take a deep breath. But he couldn’t. Only small ones. His lungs weren't opening up to breathe as they should. Collins looked at his watch to check the time but the hands had disappeared and the numbers weren’t in order, very unhelpful he thought, even in his overdosed state. He assumed only ten minutes or so had passed since he stopped talking with Stella, in reality it had been almost an hour.

Farrier put his book away for the night, and it was an actual book this time instead of a manual. As much as he enjoyed daydreaming in bed, more and more his thoughts turned to Collins, and was unable to keep the blonde out of his mind. The solution? To read books until his brain was too tired to think, and then sleep. It didn’t work well, his mind was wandering away to Collins every page or so, but if Canfield wanted him to read, he’d try. Miraculously Farrier got to sleep before midnight, still plagued with guilt over what he’d said to Collins, still wishing he’d hear the blonde’s door open and they could chat in the hall and make up for the little argument, but somehow he slept.

Overly aware he probably looked like a madman slouching just about sideways in a chair alone,
Collins braved standing up to make it to a booth around the edge of the pub as not to be right in the middle of everything. As he stood everything shifted and blurred, his head light, he could only make out what he was directly looking at, everything else was unrecognisable and dark. He walked slowly to an empty booth, it felt like his feet weren’t touching the ground as he walked, as if he might have been imagining walking altogether. When he reached the red leather booth, to his disgust it wasn’t red leather, it was bleeding flesh. He reeled back and found his table again, the only safe place in the bar it seemed. His stomach wasn’t feeling so good now, it felt like there was something buzzing around inside it. He was going to be sick, frantically Collins looked around to find the WC sign, hoping it wasn’t an illusion when he did see it. He walked as fast as he was willing, not feeling anything but air in his hand as he pushed the door open, as if it was an imaginary door which was very worrying. He made it to the cubicle which he prayed was real, and shut the door just in time, not that he heard the loud slam it made, just silence in it’s place. Collins threw up into the bowl of the toilet, but he perceived it to be red blood. He wiped his mouth and stood focusing on breathing. His throat wheezed as he breathed and suddenly the walls of the cubicle were breathing with him. He squeezed his eyes shut and they prickled with tears. As he pushed his weight back into the closed door behind him it hit him, what Anderson had said. He’d done this to Collins. He didn’t know what exactly Anderson had done, but he was confident he’d caused it, the blonde felt his lower lip tremble, unsure out of sadness or fear, most likely both. His heart quivered then. It beat erratically, Collins almost fainted from shock but thankfully it righted itself. He almost fell over opening the door of the cubicle thinking there was a step where there wasn’t. Then Collins saw himself in the mirror. He looked normal at first glance, but as he walked closer he saw how small his pupils were and that spooked him. Upon even closer inspection it appeared that his skin was dancing in patterns, he poked his cheek and the pattern disappeared for a second where he’d touched but began soon after his finger had gone. This was a hellish night. He checked his watch again and this time there was an actual time on it. 00:35. Collins wasn’t sure if that was the true time or if it was another illusion, because last time he was able to check the time it had been around 22:00. He supposed it could make sense, just didn’t seem that long. He walked away from the mirrors and towards the door leading back into the rest of the pub, but then,

“Collins?” it was Farrier. The blonde turned in shock and the room was empty.

“Farrier?” he asked, nothing.

“I’m here.” The voice was in his head, the boy realised.

“Why are yae in my head?” he asked aloud.

“Farrier, are yae dead?” he whispered, beginning to hyperventilate.

“No.” came the voice. Loud and slightly grounding to Collins, only slightly.

“I need help” Collins whispered, squeezing his eyes shut and trying not to feel his heart convulse again and trying not to hear the awful wheeze his lungs were making.

“Yes you do need help, you’ll never be a good pilot at this rate.” The voice said,

“I’m sorry, it wasn’t my fault!” Collins said, choking on air.

“Oh well, it’s too late now I suppose. Don’t worry, you’ll be fine in ground crew, it’s not so bad you know.” The voice said, sounded more distant now.

“But I’m a good flier! And it was Anderson who did it!” Collins said, bracing himself against the sink.
“Blaming other students? I guess you’ll have to be expelled, unfortunately.” Farrier said. Collins’ knees buckled under him and he kneeled on the floor next to the sink.

“Yae cannae do that.” He said calmly, he knew Farrier didn’t have the authority to expel students.

“I just did, you’re not in your uniform are you.” the man’s voice said. Collins looked at his arms, and he wasn’t in his uniform, Farrier must have truly taken it away and put him in normal clothes. Collins had forgotten that he arrived at the pub in normal clothes, having changed at base. He took in the fact that he wasn’t in the RAF anymore, he was just a lost boy now. He decided he’d just have to go back to base and beg. Collins got up and Farrier’s voice said,

“Don’t bother coming back.” As if he’d heard Collins idea.

At this Collins finally began to cry. He doubled over and let his tears out. It hurt, especially coming from Farrier, especially knowing how close they were already. He sat with his back against the wall in the corner. He wiped his face and his hands were wet with, he thought it was tears but it looked red. He was crying blood, or so he thought. Desperately he tried to stop, concerned with crying all his blood away, frantically hyperventilating again. He eventually pushed his way out of the bathroom and was greeted with more people than he remembered being in the bar. All their faces melted away and Collins stared at the floor, which was wobbling and falling away in places now, making walking extremely difficult. He ran out of the bar as fast as he could, Stella was still playing at the front, but her arms and head were detached and floating a few inches away from her body, someone had pulled the porcelain doll apart. A fleeting thought of sympathy for the pain she must have gone through, and then Collins was out the door. Outside was very dark, he could barely make out the street in front of him, and good thing too because when Collins looked across the road into the shadows there were monsters.

He ran down the street, but he couldn’t be sure if he really was running because everything was moving so slowly around him, and he couldn’t feel the ground again, so maybe he was just slowly hovering down the road. He checked his watch again and it was completely white now.

“Time’s up” he mumbled to himself, his interpretation of the blank face. It was as if everything was up, as if he was on the edge of falling into nothing. But then the ground was on his cheek, he’d fallen over. It felt cool, but it was moving, rippling against his skin, crawling against it. He lay there for a decent while, his vision was completely black but he could feel himself blinking, his eyes had failed. He could hear himself wheezing with every breath. His heart was palpitating again, and Collins thought he was dying.

Suddenly his vision returned, so fast it scared him, but he was still alive and conscious. When he felt able he got up but was almost sick again so the blonde just stood for a while. It was scary staying still, it felt like the dark monsters were watching him. At least the patterns had stopped for now. He felt his face and pulled bits of bitumen off it. Deciding against running, Collins walked along the footpath, but then realised he wasn’t sure he was going the right way. He panicked but didn’t have a map on him, he saw a phone box and tried to call the base, but there were no buttons on the phone, or so he interpreted. He kept walking, shivering, trying to breathe properly, trying to walk through the pain his heart and lungs were causing him.

After wandering the dark streets, Collins found the airbase. It must have been his intuition that led him here through whatever trip he was experiencing. He knocked but then checked his watch. This time he could see it, albeit colours reversed. 02:48. He ran across the road, or did he float, to the phone box. This time he remembered they need coins to work, and luckily he had some. He couldn’t make out what they were so he shoved some in hoping to get lucky. He dialled the number, known off by heart thank whatever god there was, into this phone which thankfully did
have buttons. It began to ring and his heart fluttered, although the fluttering didn’t stop and Collins soon recognised it as heart palpitations. They began to get very painful.

“RAF Gatwick?” a crackly and sleepy sounding voice, but unmistakably Farrier, came through.

“Fuck, Farrier I’m sorry. Yae gotta let me back into the RAF, I’m too good to expel, please Farrier!” he wheezed and begged, as if the rest of his life depended on how convincing he was on this phone call.

“What? You’re not expelled Collins, what the fuck are you doing out there? I’ll let you in.” he said, You expelled me just then! When we spoke in the pub!” Collins wheezed into the telephone, attempting to yell but sounding more like he was tearing his own vocal cords.

“What the fuck? I’ve not been to a pub, and I didn’t expel you. Collins, I’m going to hang up and let you in now.” Farrier said,

“No don’t go!” Collins wheezed.

“Why? You need to come inside. What’s wrong Collins?” he asked, it sounded irritated but worried, and Farrier was extremely worried, what was wrong with the lad's voice? and why did he think they'd spoken in a pub for god's sake?

“I cannae breath properly, and I think the shadows are comin’ tae get me” he said. He heard Farrier swear on the other end of the line,

“Collins stay in the phone box okay? Don’t put the phone down.” He said,

“Right” Collins breathed. He held the phone for comfort as Farrier got his flight boots-come-slippers on as quickly as possible and ran downstairs. Collins couldn’t handle it. He dropped the phone and opened the door of the telephone box, there was no air in there and he was going to suffocate. As he stepped out he took a deep breath or air, a deep wheezing breath that went straight to his head and dizzied him. He walked across the road to the steps of the base and collapsed. His breathing was getting worse and his vision was spotted with black. He could feel the monsters watching him, and all he could hope was that he really hadn’t been expelled, that the phone call was real. Now his heart felt like it was beating out of his chest.

The door opened quickly and Farrier was there.

“Fuck Collins, what happened?” he ran to him, Collins was on the cold steps, he shuffled away from Farrier and looked terrified.

“Get away!” he yelled as a figure approached him. Farrier didn’t know what was going on, but Collins’ eyes didn’t look normal.

“It’s me!” he said.

“You’re just one of them!” Collins said, pointing out into the street at nothing.

“Collins. It’s Farrier. If I’m one of 'them', how do I know your name?” he said. Collins thought this was valid enough,

“Oh, Farrier” he breathed, but it came out as more of a wheeze, his chest was heaving and he was looking around like a madman.
“Let me help you” Farrier said quickly, he was clearly frightened by the situation, but even in Collins’ messed up state he knew Farrier was putting on the calm front he used while flying. It was a stress handling mechanism, it seemed, that all the best pilots had. He helped Collins up the stairs, slinging one of the lad’s arms around his own shoulders.

“Collins, what did you take?” Farrier asked.

“Nothin’ knowingly, it was Anderson.” he mumbled, before losing consciousness entirely.

“Canfield!” Farrier yelled into the building as he lay Collins in the recovery position. He wasn’t going in there, he couldn’t leave Collins alone. He searched the blonde’s pocket and found some coin, running across the road he used the phone box. He called base and after too many rings, Canfield finally picked up.

“RAF Gatwick” he said tiredly.

“Canfield, get outside now.” Farrier said frantically.

“Farrier, why?” the man said yawning.

“It’s Collins. He’s on the doorstep, he’s been drugged. He's unconscious, he was seeing things, I don't think he can breathe properly, I don’t know what’s happening. I couldn’t go inside and leave him, I just ran across the street to the phone box, I’m watching him but I need your help.” Farrier said, Canfield could hear the wobble in his voice.

“Goodness, I’ll be right down. Get back to the lad.” And then the phone was hung up. Farrier raced back across the road, Collins was still unconscious, his breathing was rattling. Farrier put two fingers to his neck, a very fast and uneven pulse. But thank goodness there was one.

“Oh no” Canfield said as he appeared in his dressing gown.

“What happened to him?” Canfield asked,

“He doesn’t know, from what I gather.” Farrier said. The older man sighed,

“He’s spending a night in the infirmary. You try and get him up, I’ll go wake the nurses.” And off Canfield went to the small brick building around the side of the base.

“Collins, come on Collins. Please” Farrier said quietly. He didn’t know how to wake an unconscious person. He tried shaking Collins a little and it didn’t work, this was terrifying. Collins was so cold.

“Collins, please wake up!” Farrier was almost crying. He clasped the blonde’s freezing hands together in his and tried to warm them. Then Finally Collins coughed, took a huge wheezing breath in, and woke up a little. He looked up at Farrier with scared blue eyes and pinpoint pupils.

“Come on,” Farrier tried to haul him up by the hands, he could tell Collins was trying to help but couldn’t. The frustration on the lad’s face was apparent. Eventually he got Collins into a standing position with one arm across Farrier’s shoulders.

“I’m not expelled?” he mumbled, eyes closed.

“No, you’ll never be expelled, Collins. I’ll make sure of it.” Farrier answered. He more carried than helped Collins walk to the infirmary and was directed to a bed with a curtain drawn around it. He put Collins down as gently as he could, he was heavier than Farrier had imagined. The nurses
busily swarmed around him, treating him like a specimen more than a human. Farrier was jittery, and rightly so.

“What did he say?” a nurse asked Farrier.

“At first he thought I was a spirit, or monster or something. He thought I was another one of ‘them’ and then he pointed at the empty street.” She looked disturbed. She shone a torch in his eyes, and there was no reaction, his pupils remained almost too small to see.

“His eyes should be trying to close at this light” she said worriedly. Collins was just staring into the torch.

“Am I dyin’?” he asked her in a wheeze.

“No, love” she said quietly, Farrier could tell in her voice that it was a front and that made him exhale in complete shock. This was a life or death situation?

“Get the nebuliser” she said to one of the other nurses.

“What’s wrong with him?” Canfield asked,

“Can’t say yet. Did he say anything else?” she asked Farrier.

“He thought he’d been expelled when he called at first, he said while he was at whatever pub he went to, I’d expelled him. I was in bed.” He said worriedly,

“Right. He’s had hallucinations and imaginary conversations then.” She said.

“I don’t think he knows what he took, he said he didn’t take anything knowingly, but um, he said it was Anderson.” Farrier said. Canfield stared at him.

“That’s a very serious accusation to make of another student. We best get more information out of him when he’s better.” The older man said sternly.

The nurse sighed,

“Okay, we need to pump his stomach in case there’s any remnants of whatever it is that hasn’t been digested yet. Might lessen the effects.” She said. The nebuliser appeared and she pushed the tip into Collins mouth and squeezed the bulb.

“Inhale, love” she said, but Collins wasn’t responding. His breathing was rapid and shallow.

“He needs to stay the night at least. Hopefully whatever he had will be gone from his system soon, but don’t let him fly, he might be nauseous. Give him the day off, if he’s not feeling up to it, the day after as well. If he’s not fine after that, he comes back. I’m praying there’s no permanent damage done to the boy, in fact I’m praying he even wakes up tomorrow.” She said to Canfield.

“Jesus Christ.” He said,

“We’ll let you know okay?” she said to Canfield, who nodded.

“Let’s let them do their job, Farrier.” Canfield said and grabbed Farrier’s arm. The man resisted, unable to take his eyes off Collins, and certainly unable to walk away from him,

“Farrier, now.” Canfield said. Farrier tried to shake him off,
"No! I'm staying here!" he snapped at Canfield

"Your student will be okay, but he needs to sleep here and he needs us around the bed at all times, you can't stay here Farrier. Get some rest, Squadron Leader." Ms. Anne said. Slowly Farrier turned, and forced himself to walk away.

"He'll be fine" Canfield said,

"They don't know that, Canfield.” Farrier said failing to keep his voice stable.

Farrier cried when he got to his room, he cried out of sheer worry for Collins. He cried hard into his pillow, though he didn’t care who could hear. His precious golden boy, whom he cared for so, so deeply. To see Collins unable to recognise him, unable to fucking breathe properly, then lying unconscious on the ground with an abnormal heartbeat was understandably hard for Farrier to stomach. Whoever did that to him would pay. Needless to say Farrier did not have a good sleep, periodically waking up still with wet tears on his face and his heart racing, he probably got a solid three hours all up. Eventually the light began to shine through his curtains, waking him, and he bolted out of bed.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s) drug overdose, scary hallucination details, blood, breathing issues, heart problems, hospitals.

Well this wasn't a happy chapter, I am well aware of that. Even so I hope some of you somehow enjoyed reading it, or at least respect by decision to write it.
Thank you to everyone who reads, leaves kudos or comments, I love u all!
I'm on tumblr as s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r if anyone needs some good good dunkirk content hehe
Until next chapter <3
Farrier reached the infirmary, still in his pyjamas and flight boots. He hoped his face wasn’t still tear stained.

“Is he okay?” he said to the first nurse he saw,

“For now. He’s still asleep, but he woke up a few times in the night.” She said, pointing to the same bed Collins had been delivered to. That was the most relieving news Farrier could have been told. Collins was *okay*. The curtains were drawn around the bed. Farrier pushed his way through the thin material to see Collins sleeping in the bed, sheets tucked up to his chin. He sighed in relief and walked closer. The lad looked paler than usual, and his hair was a mess. Farrier poked his head back through the curtains to see Ms. Anne, the head nurse walking along. She spotted Farrier and made a B line for him.

“It’s very early.” She said wearily.

“I know” Farrier said, the sun was barely even up.

“I’ve been up most of the night tending to him.” She said.

“Yeah and I’ve been up most of the night worrying about him” he said, somewhat wishing he hadn’t. The nurse sighed,

“He’ll be fine Farrier.” She said. Farrier’s heart soared at the news, and he felt like he might pass out.

“That’s… That’s good to hear.” He said in shock.

“Yes. The real danger with these cases is always in the hours they’re still overdosed. If they survive long enough for the drugs to subside, they’re usually okay. He’s a strong one, this lad” Ms Anne said. So it was definitely drugs, Farrier didn’t know what to say,

“Has he said anything?” he arrived at,

“Not anything useful, mumbling about hallucinations he saw mostly, absolutely terrifying.” She responded, moving over to Collins to check his pulse and temperature. Farrier stood silently behind her and watched.

“So, do you know what happened?” he asked quietly. The woman sighed and turned to him. She leaned into the conversation and spoke very quietly.

“We believe he was given opium laced with some sort of psychedelic last night, Farrier. The reason it went the way it did was because he’d been drinking, and that’s a deadly mixture.” She said. Farrier put his hands on his hips and nodded, trying to look like it hadn’t felt like a punch in the
“So he hasn’t said anything more about who did it apart from what he said when I was here last night?” he asked,

“No, he hasn’t been all here in the head whilst talking yet. He’s almost back, we think. Last he woke was about 0400 hours and he seemed almost normal.” She said. Farrier sighed and looked at him. So innocent, so beautiful as he lay there asleep. How could anyone do that to him willingly?

“I’ll leave you but if you are to stay with the patient and he wakes up, be mindful that he might not know where he is, or have amnesia of some sort, alright?” she said,

“Yeah, okay. I’ll be off soon anyway. Ms, Anne, thank you. I can’t even begin to explain how relieved I am that he’s okay” said Farrier.

“Just part of the job” she smiled nonchalantly as she left, closing the curtain around Farrier and Collins. Farrier sat carefully on Collins’ bed next to his body. He ghosted a hand over the blonde’s cheek, stroked it a few times. It was very soft, and thankfully it was warm now. He let his thumb brush up over Collins’ eyebrow and through his hair a little. It wasn’t fair what had been done to him, that was all there was to it. Farrier sighed and got up, he straightened the sheets to mask where he sat and left.

“Where is he?” Wingnut asked Dawson.

“Dunno, probably slept in” Dawson said with a mouthful of pancake.

“Too bad, he loves pancakes. All the more for us” Wingnut replied.

“Sure is mate” the blonde replied. Canfield sat tentatively at the officer’s table watching Collins’ two friends. The lad hadn’t made many friends, but at least those two were almost always at his side. It did irk him why they all weren’t out together last night, but the students’ private lives were not of his concern. Farrier burst through the doors at that moment, pyjamas and slippers, or rather flight boots used incorrectly, Canfield mentally corrected himself. He looked shaken, probably just gone to see Collins.

“He doesn’t look too good” Wingnut chuckled at Dawson, who shook his head in response, but wasn’t laughing. Farrier quickly went to collect a small breakfast and sat with Canfield. He was too nervous to eat.

“They gave him opium laced with psychedelics, and he was drinking.” Farrier said as soon as he sat down, unable to stop his voice shaking.

“Oh good lord. It’s a miracle he’s alive!” Canfield said worriedly.

“Have you told those two?” Farrier nodded in Dawson and Wingnut’s direction, who were both looking over at him after his probably quite startling entrance to the hall.

“Uh, no I, I haven’t found the time, and I didn’t know what was wrong with Collins so I thought I’d wait” Canfield muttered,

“What? You should have told them as soon as you saw them!” Farrier hissed and shoved food into his mouth.
“As soon as breakfast’s over. Don’t let them leave, get them over here. They need to know” Farrier said.

“I don’t take orders from you, Farrier” Canfield warned,

“Canfield, for god’s sake their friend could have died. Just do it.” He said and continued eating.

“What if something happened to Collins?” Dawson asked, his mind linking Farrier’s worriedness to his friend.

“Nah, he’ll be asleep still, don’t worry.” Wingnut said as he finished his food.

“I’m putting my plate up” the brunette said absent-mindedly as he walked to the front to give his empty plate. Dawson swallowed the last of his breakfast and hurried after Wingnut.

“Oh” Canfield said, alerting Farrier to the fact that the two students were about to leave. Canfield was done, Farrier nearly so.

“I’ll go catch them. Hurry up and eat, boy!” he said as he got up. Farrier did hurry up and eat, finishing in time to give Canfield his plate to take. He sat nervously drumming his fingers on the table as he watched Canfield approach Collins’ friends.

“Morning, you two” Canfield smiled and handed in his plate to the front. They smiled and said their good mornings back.

“You wouldn’t mind coming and having a chat with Farrier and I for a short minute would you?” Canfield asked,

“Uh, sure” Dawson said in surprise.

“Are we in trouble?” Timson asked,

“No, son, nothing of the sort. Just something that you both need to know is all.” He said ominously. They followed the old man back to the table and sat opposite the two officers.

“Morning lads” Farrier said tensely.

“What’s happening?” Wingnut blurted out. The two officers sighed in unison and looked at each other.

“It’s Collins. Look, boys. There’s no easy way of saying this” Canfield began, Farrier watched as Dawson seized up. Canfield’s words made it sound like they were about to be told Collins was dead.

“He had bit of a difficult night last night” Canfield said, and then looked at Farrier. Dawson untensed a little upon Canfield’s sentence being finished.

“Collins evidently went out somewhere without you two. While he was out,” Farrier took a breath,

“he was drugged with opium. Laced with a psychedelic drug. He was drinking as well at the time which severely enhanced the effects to an extremely dangerous level. He made it back here by himself and called the base as it was after lockout. When I found him outside he was in very bad shape.” Farrier couldn’t continue, nor could he look at either of the boys, Canfield took over.

“He’s here in the medical wing, but he won’t be attending classes today. You may visit him, but neither of you are granted permission to skip class today, you only have one anyway.” Canfield
said. Timson’s eyes were darting around the table, as if trying to put the pieces together in his head. Dawson slowly raised his gaze to Farrier’s.

“Who did it?” he asked quietly.

“We don’t know for certain” Canfield interjected before Farrier could answer.

“Any ideas?” Wingnut asked.

“Collins gave us a name last night, but until we’re able to find evidence we don’t know boys.” Canfield said.

“We just thought you two should know. Now go on, get out of here.” Farrier said. The two boys silently filed away.

They visited in the late hours of the morning, but Collins was still asleep. They stayed in their separate rooms until class at midday. The one thing that would take their minds off this event was that today they were flying, and apparently it would get their hours up by two or three each. Perks of Sunday school Dawson supposed, you spent all afternoon flying to reach those 75 hours you needed to get your wings. In all seriousness he knew they were cramming in flying because of the tension across the channel, but still, a welcome distraction from the thought of Collins being drugged.

Then baby blue eyes snapped open. Collins was alone, in a white bed with a white curtain around it. He sat up slowly, disorientated, and then he remembered what happened last night. He rubbed his face with his hand, and suddenly the curtain was pushed open.

“Oh!” a woman said. He looked at her blankly, then looked at his watch. Past midday.

“Where am I?” he asked.

“You’re in the RAF Gatwick medical wing, Collins.” the woman said.

“My name is Nurse Anne.” she added.

“What happened to me?” he asked. She sat on his bed where Farrier had been sitting, not that Collins or anyone else for that matter knew.

“Collins, I’m afraid you were given a high dosage of opium mixed with a psychedelic drug last night. Pair that with your drinking, and you had a very close call.” She said. He sighed, he knew it would be something bad.

“I feel fine now” he said,

“I’m so glad to hear that Collins. Do you recall waking up throughout the night while you were here?” she asked.

“No.” he said.

“Okay. Well, tell me what you do remember from your experience, we’ll start with that” she said,

“Well, I went out alone, met some of the lads from base at a pub by accident. They weren’t drinking which I thought odd, but I had a pint anyway. Bit o’ dancin’, bit o’ chattin’ to some lass. But then, I dunno. The pub started lookin’ all weird. And feelin’ less friendly. And I felt sick, and
the lads I was sitting with, their faces melted off” he said, and paused to recall what happened next. Ms Anne looked horrified.

“Then I felt really sick, threw up, but I cannae tell if I threw up pure blood or if I was seein’ things. Donnanæ sound like a normal thing, does it? Now that I say that out loud.” Collins chuckled, Anne was so relieved to see him smile, she nodded.

“Ah, oh. And then Farrier was talkin’ tae me in my head, he expelled me from the RAF, so I thought” he said, only as Collins was reciting his night aloud did he realise how unnatural and surreal it was.

“I walked back to base, think I passed out on the ground for a bit. There were monsters in the shadows, but I made it back and called base and Farrier and Canfield came and got me” he said. “That’s all I remember” he added. He began dissecting the night more in his head as he sat, and more and more details came back. Not that he wanted to divulge. Ms Anne sighed,

“Well I think that sounds like you didn’t forget much then. That’s a good thing. You’re very lucky, Collins.” she said.

“Yeah I know, thanks for lookin’ after me” he said.

“Not at all, my job. Now, you mentioned someone last night, someone you thought did it.” She said shyly.

“Oh, not a doubt in my mind who did it.” He answered.

“Well, you’d best let the officers know then” she said, “Intentin’ on it”. They sat in silence,

“Can I go?” he asked.

“I’m starvin’.”

“Soon. You need to sign the medical release form and we need to run some tests to make sure you’re fine. Now Collins, no flying today, you might still get nauseous in the air.” she said, he huffed,

“Aight”

“And no classes today.”

“Yeah, only class today was flyin’ so I guess I’m relaxing today then” he smiled.

“Don’t let my parents know. I know you’re meant to report on the students if something happens, but they’ll just worry.” He said,

“Oh, no we don’t unless we have instruction from the students or they’re likely not going to make it, otherwise we’d be making too many calls to count!” she said.

“You got better and better as the night went on and the drugs left your system, don’t worry. Your parents don’t have to know” she said.

Collins signed the medical form, and they shone a torch in his eyes, weighed him, made him walk, jump, looked at his tongue, and finally discharged him.
“Thank you so much, I seriously owe you” he smiled as he left.

“It’s fine Collins, we’re all just glad you’re feeling better” Ms Anne said, and the blonde walked out of the hospital and back to the main building.

Farrier sat in his room, his leg bobbing in anxiousness. Was Collins still asleep? He was trying to distract himself by watching Canfield’s class fly out the window. He could already tell who wouldn’t make it to fighter pilot status. It was all in the trust of the plane, trust the plane and it’d look after you, well, when flying in peace conditions. Farrier could tell when a student wasn’t ready, shaky turns, coming from being too nervous to pull harder on the control stick. Tight turns, from being nervous about not turning enough and having an accident. It was so easy for him, he’d almost forgotten what it was like to learn, though the birds he learnt in weren’t nearly as advanced as the ones they had them out in now, or the Hurricanes used by the Operational Training Unit for the graduated pilots.

Collins walked slowly upstairs, everyone was out in a lesson. He was glad he felt fine, albeit hungry and thirsty. It was the worst night of his life. He wished he could fly, but was grateful they’d given him the day off. He was still in his clothes from last night. Collins was about to enter his room, but thought he’d try something daring first.

Farrier turned to a knock on his door. His eyes widened and he got up from the coffee table at which he’d been seated looking out the window. A fleeting glance down over the window ledge confirmed it wasn’t Canfield at the door, he was out on the tarmac. Farrier’s heart sped up when he realised who it could be.

He opened the door to a tired but content looking Collins.

“Afternoon,” the blonde said nonchalantly, Farrier’s bottom lip trembled and he pulled Collins into a tight hug. He wrapped his arms around the lad, and Collins hugged back. Farrier exhaled, held Collins close and shut his eyes as he rested his chin on the blonde’s shoulder. They stood like that in the doorway for what felt like an age.

“You okay now?” he asked, letting go.

“Better than” he smiled, rosy cheeked.

“Come in” Farrier beckoned.

“Not this again” Collins joked, but went inside regardless. He could never refuse Farrier.

The brunette’s mind was buzzing, Collins was so fine it seemed hard to believe but he was over the moon nonetheless. Farrier shut the door and they sat together at his coffee table.

“Say Farrier, yae wouldn’t happen to have any more biscuits? I’m starvin’” Collins said as he watched the planes in the afternoon sun.

“Yeah I do, here.” He said, and got them out of a drawer next to his bed and put the on the table.

“Thanks” Collins mumbled as he grabbed a few and began to eat. Farrier sat in the chair next to him.
“So you’re fine now.” He said, in slight disbelief.

“Yeah, apparently I woke up a few times this morning, but now I’m fine. Slept it off I guess.” He said,

Farrier sighed,

“Good, it was really, well, very scary for me last night” he said, looking into Collins’ eyes.

“Oh ya?” the blonde said still eating.

“You weren’t really here. You didn’t recognise me, you were delusional and you couldn’t breathe properly. I had to listen to you wheezing trying to claw for breath, and when you passed out I had to try and wake you up, and you weren’t responding for a while, my thoughts went to the worst case scenario…” Farrier was visibly upset.

“Well, here I am” Collins smiled.

“Yeah” Farrier chuckled,

“And all you can say after a serious overdose is ‘afternoon’ as if nothing happened!” he laughed.

“Aye, said the same thing when I got back from Aviemore I believe” Collins smiled out the window.

“Oh, yes it was. Silly bugger” Farrier mumbled and took a biscuit.

“Anything I could drink?” Collins asked,

“Tea?” Farrier offered.

“Yes please” Collins smiled.

“Let me go get the teapot from downstairs. Won’t be a moment,” Farrier said, and patted Collins’ forearm before leaving the room. Collins relaxed into the chair and watched the planes whiz around outside. He’d seen the graduated pilots in the Hurricanes and the planes looked amazing, sounded beautiful too. Although these trainers were older they still felt sturdy to Collins, who’d racked up just as many hours as the next man. They felt like they could take a lot, not that he thrashed them, Canfield said Farrier was known as a ‘thrasher’. Someone who took the plane to its limits while testing, deliberately, Canfield said they were reckless but of course Farrier argued that the plane should have no difficulties doing what he makes them do. Collins considered himself somewhat on the cautious side of flying, but he prided himself on his smoothness of operations. Before that thought train could finish itself Farrier was back with a steaming teapot and a small jug of milk. He placed it on the small table and got out some teacups and saucers. Farrier shut the door and opened the window a crack in front of them, sitting down next to Collins again. Collins poured his tea, and Farrier began to chatter happily.

“I can’t explain how glad I am that you’re okay. I was so worried Collins, more than I care to admit.” He said, Collins smiled and felt roses bloom on his cheeks. Farrier prattled on a bit more about worry and care, Collins didn’t take as much notice as he usually would have due to the planes soaring outside and the concentration needed to pour his tea, once the task at hand was done he set the teacup down.

“You see Collins, I think you were right all along.” Farrier said,
“It could work.”

The words hung in the air and Collins actually hadn’t really registered what Farrier had meant until he felt the man’s arm recline along the back of his own chair, and turned to see Farrier’s face inches from his own. His green blue eyes held such a soft expression, and the blonde was so utterly lost in them that he wasn’t prepared when they closed, and Farrier’s lips touched his. He made a soft sound of surprise as Farrier kissed him, gently, caringly, and then his eyes fluttered shut too. God it was long awaited, the blonde never thought it would be this good when it finally came. And it was Farrier who broke away. Shit, he hadn’t entirely planned to do that, but he couldn’t believe how right it had felt. It was already his favourite kiss in his life. He stared at the blonde who stared back at him in total surprise. Farrier could feel himself blushing, but suddenly he didn’t care anymore, suddenly nothing else mattered. His eyes darted down at those lips again, and he went in for more. Surprising Collins again, though this time he kissed not to test the waters, but to make sure Collins could feel just how much he needed this. Needed him. Farrier moaned softly into the kiss and let his hand come up to cup the nape of Collins’ neck, to hold him close. The blonde kissed back, his hand tightening around Farrier’s forearm as his hand caressed the back of Collins' neck. They broke away again, this time leaning foreheads together, and somehow just looking into each other’s eyes was enough now. Farrier’s fingers played with the soft hair on the back of Collins’ head, and the lad smiled with his eyes shut. It was a good afternoon. Neither of them could stop smiling as they silently drank their tea and ate their biscuits, watching the planes outside the window.

“Only took a near death experience for yae tae finally kiss me, huh” Collins smiled. Farrier let out a laugh,

“Sounds bad when you say it that way, doesn’t it. But I don’t know what I would have done if something had happened, I dunno, seeing you in that state woke me up. What was I doing? Wasting time, is the answer. Life’s too short, Collins, especially in our line of work.” He said, dunking his biscuit. Collins smiled his sweet smile and relaxed back in the chair. Farrier put his tea down and they sat in a comfortable silence for a while. Then Collins felt Farrier’s warm hand on his. They held hands, fingers entwined resting on the arm of Collins’ chair. Farrier moved his own chair closer until the arms of both were touching. This was unreal.

“Now, I do have something we need to talk about.” He said, Collins tensed up, the man next to him felt it and began to run his thumb over the blonde’s knuckles. Protective.

“Was it really Anderson?” he asked. Collins exhaled,

“Yeah. No doubt.” the blonde said,

“How do you know? What happened?”

“Well, him and his mates were there at the bar, made me sit with them an’ that. I went off to dance, left my pint at the table” Farrier was smiling.

“What?” Collins asked affectionately,

“Sorry. You’re a good dancer” he hummed. Collins smiled shyly and continued,

“Anyway, got back tae the table and drank it doon. Started feeling strange after, didn’t link the two until I was sitting with the boys and was barely able to move, they all decided to leave me alone and go back home, Anderson said something about how he was sorry, and this was the way it had to be, nothin’ personal. I don’t think I was imaginin’ him sayin’ that.” Collins said. Farrier frowned out the window.
“I knew you didn’t get along, but what would have prompted him to do that?” he asked, watching Collins’ eyes as they looked from the planes outside, to the table, to their hands together, then sadly, into Farrier’s eyes.

“Take a guess” the blonde said. Farrier closed his eyes slowly and breathed out. He squeezed Collins’ hand,

“And how does he know that about you?”

“Must have just figured it out.” Collins mumbled.

“You aren’t exactly subtle, you know” Farrier smiled.

“I try” Collins countered.

“Well, you know what he did is illegal, and because his friends helped, they broke the law too?” Farrier asked.

“Hadnae thought about it yet, but I suppose, yeah” Collins said.

“Are you going to do anything about it?”

“No, I donnae want to see them again. Pressing charges just means I have to deal with them for longer” Collins said.

“We have to prove it was them if we have any hopes of getting rid of them, Collins. Is there someone that could identify them?” Farrier asked. Collins thought for a while,

“Yeah. Lass names Stella I was talkin’ to, she saw me with them. If she was told to point to them she could” he said.

“Hmm. I’ll talk to Canfield about it later, maybe. Or I’ll deal with it myself. Either way, later.” He said, and smiled. This time it was Collins who leaned in, pressing his lips to Farrier’s. The man let go of Collins’ hand and stretched it around the blonde’s body, pulling him in closer. The kiss was warm and soft and grounding. It was everything they both needed and more. Farrier sighed happily and didn’t pull away this time, waiting for Collins to do so. When he did, he looked deeply into Farrier’s eyes, and it startled the man just how much emotion he saw in those big blue orbs. As he stared back, he felt himself falling more for Collins, it was scary, new, unmapped completely in Farrier’s mind, what it meant to be this way with someone. Collins rested his head on Farrier’s shoulder, and Farrier rested his head atop Collins’. Farrier could have stayed that way forever and been happy, but forever couldn’t be, so he made do with sitting long enough that Collins fell asleep on him.

Eventually he had to wake the lad up, the class was coming inside soon, he best get back to his room. They checked the coast was clear, Farrier kissed Collins sweetly, more as a thank you than anything, a thank you for putting up with his nonsense, for pushing him to make a move, a thank you for pulling through last night’s ordeal. Farrier ran a hand through those beloved golden locks, and let Collins out of the door.

Chapter End Notes

Finally, it has happened. (Maybe everyone will stop yelling at me for a while now, lol)
Thanks for sticking around so long, folks. I know it was a long time coming. I'm on tumblr as s-n-o-w-p-i-e-c-e-r if anyone wants to chat! Can't think of much else to say!
Thank you all so much for reading, I'll see you next week for another chapter ❤️
That afternoon went fast for both Farrier and Collins. Farrier couldn’t stop the buzzing feeling in his gut, couldn’t wipe the smile from his face nor the happiness from his heart. He milled about his room, nothing was able to keep him entertained, all he wanted was Collins. Nothing felt normal, and nothing ever would again.

Collins had managed to excuse himself from the usual afternoon antics with Dawson and Wingnut and fairly so from the previous night’s ordeal, but not before hugs from them both and a lot of worried ‘glad you’re okay’s also. He lay on his bed thinking about Farrier. Thinking about how it felt, lips together, holding each other, it was so warm, and so new and exciting and amazing. He didn’t know what to call this, but it was something, where before there had been nothing.

Dinner rolled around and Collins walked down, he was fashionably late on account of getting nervous about seeing Farrier around others now after they’d kissed. Even the thought of it didn’t seem real, they’d kissed, it had really happened. Eventually he opened the dining room doors and to his relief, Collins couldn’t spot the man right away due to others standing around. He ducked towards his two friends and sat.

“Hey, you alright?” Dawson asked immediately.

“Yae, just really tired.” Collins answered,

“Ya know, the nurses told us they weren’t sure what way it was gonna go” Wingnut said,

Collins could tell from the way his voice jolted right at the end of ‘go’ that Dawson had done something to Wingnut under the table, probably kicked him, the blonde chuckled.

“Not surprised, I felt halfway gone. Just glad it’s over now” he said.

Farrier found it extremely difficult to stop the heat rising to his face. He was failing, that much he could feel in his cheeks. It wasn’t helping that Canfield was staring him down like a hawk.

“Did you see Collins this afternoon?” Canfield’s voice wafted through the air, it sounded like a very loaded question.

“No, I didn’t realise he’d been discharged until now” Farrier motioned to the back of the boy with his fork.

“I see” Canfield said. Farrier could hear in his voice that the lie had not gone unnoticed, so he chose to stare at his plate until he heard Canfield begin to converse with the other officers. It was the most uncomfortable dinner the brunette could remember, the entire time he couldn’t stop his mind wandering to what they’d done together earlier, something that he never thought he’d ever do, something that he’d never forget. But even thinking about it felt like Canfield would catch
Dinner ended, and Collins was glad for a big meal. Feeling guilty for turning his friends down earlier, he suggested a short game of cards to the lads in order to spend at least some time with them. They agreed of course.

“So, what happened? All they told us was that you were given opium while drinking” Wingnut asked, Dawson glared daggers at the brunette. Collins was about to answer,

“Ya know Dawson, what’s the problem you’ve got with me asking our mate here what the hell happened to him?” Wingnut asked, annoyed.

“You think he wants to talk about it? He could have died! Don’t you think you can curb your curiosity for that?” Dawson replied.

“Yae know, it’s okay Dawson. I’ll let you two know a little, but after tonight maybe we can calm down a bit about it yeah?” Collins said. They put the cards down.

“Well, was out at the bar, dunno really, just decided I wanted to go out and didn’t ask you guys. Guess I should have” he chuckled.

Farrier meanwhile, wanted to know where Collins was. It hadn’t been too long after dinner and it was way too early to meet, but he needed to know where he was now, because there was something between them now. Maybe he was being too protective? Probably. It felt like his job now, he had to know where he was, always. He wanted to be with him always too, but that wasn’t possible, and Farrier knew he was jumping miles ahead. It was just a kiss he told himself, except it wasn’t just a kiss, it was the kiss they’d both been wanting to have since meeting, even if they didn’t know it at the time.

“Anyway, got tae drinkin’, dancin’, came back to the table and finished the pint” Collins explained after having told the others who his company was for the night.

“And it was after I drank that doon that I felt weird. Anderson had some sort of game on that we all had to go find a woman to flirt with, so I did” Collins smiled, as did the others.

“She was nice actually, we got talkin’ decent chatter. Anyway, started feelin’ really woozy then and had tae sit back down” Collins explained.

He explained the visions, the dizziness, the lack of control over his movements, he didn’t go into his breathing issues or heart palpitations, but he’d gotten to the part where he threw up, and didn’t know if he should tell them about Farrier talking to him in his head. It must have shown on his face,

“I think the lad’s had enough, sounds bloody terrifying.” Dawson said, patting Collins’ knee.

“Oh, s’okeh. I’ll continue another time, maybe” he said. The card game didn’t really go on after that, there was a strange emotion that hung in the air, sadness perhaps, or worry. Collins excused himself and again the others didn’t seem to blame him.

“My god” Wingnut breathed when the blonde left,
“I know. That’s why I was telling ya not to ask, I was worried it’d be something like that” Dawson replied.

“Imagine not being able to tell up from down, real from imaginary” Wingnut pondered.

“I’d rather not” Dawson said, getting up from the floor where they sat.

“I think I’m gonna go do some reading, mind heading back down to your room?” Dawson asked, “Yeah, see ya, then” Wingnut said absent-mindedly as he left.

Although Dawson was indeed going to read, he just didn’t want to be around anyone. He was worried to death about Collins, who was too trusting for his own good, to kind for his own good, and too damned naive for his own good. He hated what had happened to his friend and couldn’t stop thinking about Collins’ recounting of the night.

Farrier heard Collins’ door open and close and in an instant he opened his, stupidly. There was nobody there, he triple checked the corridor and closed it again.

Collins heard it open and close, so he opened his, imagining the man would be out in the corridor. Bit early, but it wasn’t like he was complaining. To Collins’ confusion there was nobody there. He went to shut his door again when Farrier’s opened again next to his. The men stared at each other for a second, and then another.

“Get in here” Farrier whispered. Collins checked up and down and when he was certain there was nobody around he slipped past Farrier and back into the man’s bedroom for the second time in one day. The blonde’s heart was racing and he could feel it as if someone was banging a drum inside his chest. This was real. The door was closed behind him and Farrier went to sit at the same little table they’d been at earlier. Collins took his seat and Farrier began talking quietly, all the while Collins watched the man in ways he hadn’t before, in ways he’d been too nervous to before. The way his lips moved, how his forehead creased, and most of all how his beautiful eyes glinted in the dim light.

“I guess, now that we’re… Um…” Farrier began, unsure what word to use, “An item?” Collins interjected shyly, “Yeah, that perhaps the hallway isn’t the best place anymore” he said.

“Mm, it’s warmer in here anyway. Warmer than mine as well.” Collins remarked, “Yeah, I get one more heater than you, officer’s privilege.” Farrier smiled.

They sat in a comfortable silence, looking out through the window, not that they could see much besides the dark sky. Collins’ hand wandered over to Farrier’s and they entwined their fingers again. Even just holding hands was enough, more than enough in fact. Just the feeling of Collins’ fingers laced between Farrier’s was perfect.

“Farrier, why dae yae fancy me?” Collins blurted out. He almost visibly winced at his own question.

“Uh sorry, donnae answer that” he laughed. He desperately wanted to know, but he knew that sounded ridiculous.
“You’re everything I wish I was, Collins” Farrier answered after a moment of thought, much more honestly and deeply than Collins was imagining. They locked blue eyes,

“How’s that? You’re selfless and kind Farrier, and yae always push us to be our best” Collins said.

He wasn’t sure if he sounded dumb or not, but he thought Farrier should at least know some of items on the long long long list of reasons he fancied him. Collins thought himself to be a rather odd, awkward, or at the very least quiet individual, and was genuinely unsure why the man liked him, unless it was from pure pressure of his constant flirting.

“You’re just a really good person, you know? You do what’s right, you’re kind, you’re honest. You’re confident in yourself, or so it seems. You’re just, you have a pure heart, Collins, I’m kind of damaged goods if you know what I mean” Farrier chuckled.

“Firstly, yae aren’t damaged, don’t say that again. Secondly, I’m no’ half those things, Farrier.” Collins said,

Then his stomach lurched when he thought about it more. Honesty. There was one secret that now he seriously needed to tell Farrier about, and it was hung in his closet as they spoke. He hadn’t even told his friends, more out of forgetfulness than anything else however.

Farrier was getting to know Collins well enough to know when there was something he wasn’t saying. His mouth twitched as if he was about to speak, but he never did. He ran his hand up the blonde’s arm, relishing the feeling of his skin under the material of his clothes.

“What?” the brunette hummed.

Collins breathed out and thought, what was the worst that could happen? Would Farrier be angry he hadn’t told him? The blonde didn’t think his conscious would let him keep it a secret now even if he wanted to.

“I need tae show you something.” he said quietly. Farrier looked concerned,

“What?”

They silently crept from Farrier’s room to Collins’. The blonde’s hands shook as he opened his wardrobe doors, he cursed himself for keeping this damned uniform. Farrier was sat on his bed waiting, he looked around the room at all the little things Collins had, his first time in the lad’s room. The sketchbook on his bedside table, he recognised. So well loved, the pages were fraying, and half of them dog eared. Photos of him as a kid on the dresser, along with a family photo with his parents. A dried thistle lay near the photos, Farrier smiled amusedly at it. The bloody thing was printed on every possible Scottish uniform, paper, and company ever, not that they didn’t grow everywhere else in the UK too, of course. He wouldn’t be surprised if this one was from Scotland though, Farrier thought to himself. Then Collins came into view looking very nervous, and Farrier looked to see that he was holding an RAF uniform.

“What’s the big dea-“ he began,

Then realised that wasn’t Collins’ uniform. Or rather it was, but it wasn’t from here. Just as his mind had been wandering about the thistle being everywhere, sure enough it was on the RAF uniforms in Scotland, and here it was on this one.

Farrier sighed and looked down. It was a lot to take in.

“Farrier I’m sorry” Collins said, so quietly, Farrier looked up and saw that Collins was just about
on the verge of some sort of breakdown. He stood up quickly and pulled him into a hug.

“Don’t be” he murmured against the blonde’s shoulder.

“I lied. The one time you told me not to I did” Collins whispered.

“ Doesn’t matter. You’re here now, okay?” he stood back and held Collins by the shoulders.

“Yeah you should have told me, but there’s nothing we can do now. And I’m glad there’s nothing we can do now” Farrier said quietly.

“Why didn’t you tell me? Were you kicked out or something?” he asked, the blonde nodded and went to put the uniform away.

“Don’t let anyone see that thing. You shouldn’t have it, to be honest, but do what you want. Why were you kicked out?” Farrier asked,

“Same reason Anderson drugged me” Collins said sadly as he stuffed it back into the wardrobe, hidden from sight.

“Jesus Collins, you are absolutely awful at keeping it to yourself, aren’t you, lucky you haven’t been arrested or something!” Farrier said,

Collins thought by his words that he was annoyed, but he turned to see the brunette smiling affectionately.

“I thought I was rather good at hiding it” Collins said sarcastically, he perked up a little.

“No, you’re not” Farrier chuckled and threw an arm around his shoulders.

“Come back to my room, bed’s bigger” he murmured, close to Collins’ neck. So close the blonde could feel the hot breath and it made him shiver, but the words Farrier had said,

“Wait, what?” Collins stopped and took a small step away,

“You know,” Farrier said, suddenly close to Collins’ face again.

The man let his hands roam over Collins’ clothed body, over his shoulders, his chest. It was more than he could have ever asked to do with Collins, just to touch him this way.

“Bed’s bigger” he said again, looking at Collins’ lips.

“I, I dunn” Collins started, but Farrier met his protest with his mouth.

This time it was all about control, and Collins didn’t hold it for very long. The man before him, there was something about him that had Collins undone. It was all so new and amazing. Not like Ben. That was out of desperation of being the only other homosexual in town. This was different. This was special. Collins’ hands found Farrier’s waist as they kissed, and then Farrier let his tongue slide out and taste Collins’ bottom lip. The blonde whimpered,

“Shhh” Farrier said, before continuing to lick into his mouth.

It was so incredibly difficult to keep quiet, but when Collins felt Farrier’s hand ghost over the front of his trousers it became impossible. He gasped at the sensation and this time pulled away.

“Sorry, I just, sorry” he began,
“What?” Farrier breathed.

“It’s too sudden” was all Collins could say, aware that was a weak defence.

Farrier wanted to say something, but how could he? How could he say that when the war began, and it would, that one of them might not come back? That they were running on borrowed time already? That any night now could be the last night before war is declared and they’re sent off? He couldn’t say any of that, so he nodded his head.

“It’s okay. I’m sorry too, yeah?” he managed.

He acknowledged that he himself was probably too brash about it, being used to the brothel, normal people weren’t sex workers, and as much as he wanted Collins in the most intimate ways, the lad wasn’t ready. Even if they had limited time in Farrier’s mind, Collins’ happiness and comfort was paramount.

The blonde nodded,

“I’d best get back to mine then.” Farrier said,

“Yes. Farrier? Thank you, fer the uniform thing. I didnae know how you’d react and I was, well, pretty terrified.” Collins said,

“Don’t worry about it, lad. I won’t let anything happen to you this time, you’ll have your wings soon enough.” he replied. Farrier turned to leave,

“Farrier?”

“Yeah?”

And then Collins hugged him. It was warm and comforting, and innocent. Farrier sighed happily and let go.

“Get some sleep, I’ll see you tomorrow” he said, and slipped out the doorway.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading, your continued support means the world to me!! Reading your comments gets me through my week ❤️
I’m on tumblr as s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r if anyone wants to chat!
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
**Arrival of the Spitfires**

Chapter Notes

Hi all, happy Monday to you. I'm finally on a 2 week break from uni thank goodness, all the more time to write!

I very nearly uploaded the chapter AFTER this one, and as I was reading through it, it kept mentioning things that I couldn't remember being in the fic so far, and I was thinking "surely I didn't just assume this had been included, and it hadn't" but then I realised, duh, it's because I'm missing a chapter which mentions said things. Anyway, problemo solved, enjoy reading, folks.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was the first week of October 1938, one more month until the second course at the Training Department Station, and after that they’d have their wings. As usual Canfield and Farrier stressed that it wasn’t a big deal, but it felt like more of a big deal than previously switching departments. All this for that little patch sewn above the pocket, but all this was worth it for the coveted pilot's brevet, and in three months Collins would have his. It was an odd time, there was Farrier in Collins’ life now, and while that was amazing even in the short amount of time it had been going on, secret kisses and chats now instead of just secret chats, as Collins liked to think of it, there was also this whole issue with Anderson and his friends. Collins had only seen them once since the incident, they knew Collins knew, and that he’d told someone. They were sulking, not going to classes, barely. The blonde knew it wouldn’t go on forever, he just needed to find Stella and she’d surely help identify them if he said he wasn’t going to act further than have them expelled. And it wasn’t like Collins would usually want someone gone this bad, but the lad couldn’t focus. He didn’t feel safe around those boys at all, it was detrimental to his ability to learn, even.

And another thing, the Spitfires had come. A whole squadron’s worth of them had landed the morning after Farrier kissed Collins, all glinting in the sun with their fresh paint jobs. Dawson, Wingnut and Collins had gone down to see as they landed, and again Lucy had taken a liking to Wingnut, not that Collins or Dawson could really figure out why. Farrier had to come down and sign for them again, but he seemed to find it easy to slip behind that wall of his and hide anything he was feeling for the blonde beside him when need be. Collins just tried to look at the planes. It was easy to do, they were easily the most beautiful aircraft he’d ever seen with their sleek lines and semi elliptical wings, standing proud in a line as the morning sun reflected off them.

They’d spent that week learning about Spits for when they’d be able to fly them, not that they needed much education, the cockpits were very similar to what they’d trained in, though the handling was wildly different apparently. The Spitfire had less room, and the control stick wasn’t split like the Hurricane as they’d learnt from peering into cockpits when one of the officers was going flying with an older group, in which the bottom half of the control stick was always upright and the movement started halfway up at a joint. In Spitfires the whole control stick moved as one. Collins liked them more from what little he knew of them, Dawson liked the Hurricanes more. Wingnut didn’t like either. But they’d see when they were allowed to fly them, Collins thought.

“Both too manoeuvrable by the sounds of it, I say.” Wingnut said with a mouthful of his dinner on Friday night, Dawson cocked his head and didn’t say anything for a minute,
“Mate, they’re fighters. That’s kinda the point?” he said after giving Wingnut a chance to say something else, which he hadn’t.

“Yeah. Look guys, I dunno if I should be here.” The brunette said.

“Wingnut, you’re not leavin’ the RAF. We willnae let you” Collins said, putting his cutlery down in surprise.

“No no, I mean Fighter Command. When we go up in the bomber trainers, I like it more.” He said. They sat in silence as they contemplated their little group being broken up. It was so typical of Wingnut to bring it up in this way, casually with seemingly no thought put into the sentence at all. But Collins and Dawson both knew by now that Wingnut always said what he was thinking, so it must be true.

“Well, as much as I love hanging out with you, do what you feel best doing. You won’t be a good asset to the RAF if you’re not enjoying your work” Dawson said,

“Aye, it’ll be a sad day when Dawson and I have tae play cards without yae, but if that’s what you want mate” Collins said. There was a lump in his throat as he said it, both other boys could hear it. Wingnut was Collins’ first friend in the whole of England, after all.

That night Collins saw Farrier again in the older pilot's room.

“You know what the funniest thing is?” Farrier said,

“Eh?”

“The Spits don’t have any rear view mirrors!” Farrier laughed as they sat on his bed in their pyjamas together. Of course he’d been the first to take one up, overly eager to jump into a plane that beautiful and rightly so.

“Oh ya, didnae even notice” Collins smiled.

“Actually, Canfield was speaking to the Air Ministry and turns out all the bases that were given the Mk 1 Spits have the same issue. Everyone’s been taking them down to the local car garage and getting them to put side mirrors from cars on the top, and I think we’re going to have to do the same!” he chuckled.

“How do they handle then?” The blonde asked,

“They’re easily the best plane I’ve ever flown. When I was up in the air it was almost like she was flying herself, I just had to think and she’d move. They’re really light and sensitive, so some of the heavier handed lads might not like them as much as they’ll like the Hurricanes.” The brunette answered. Then Collins began doing that thing he did when he wanted to say something, where his lips would move in a way that appeared as if he were deep in thought, thinking in his mind. Farrier nudged him with his shoulder, the blonde took a long, shaky breath in.

“Wingnut wants to go to Bomber Command” he said quietly.

“Does he now?” Farrier said, Collins nodded sadly, he didn’t trust his voice.

“Good for him, Collins” Farrier said, squeezing the lad’s hand.

“Yae I know. Just wish he could stay here” the blonde mumbled and rested his head on Farrier’s
shoulder. The man lay back and pulled Collins with him until the blonde was laying next to him with a hand on his chest. Farrier looked at him, the lad was visibly upset, his blue eyes always crystal clear showing every emotion he was feeling.

“I told you not to get familiar Collins, better he goes to bombers and you never hear about him again than you see him get shot down. At least you get to say goodbye.” He said sternly. The sentence cut through the air and through the soft emotions. It was the harsh reality that Collins didn’t want to know about right now.

“Don’t get familiar?” Collins smirked, running his hand up to Farrier’s shoulder.

“Yeah, this is seriously dangerous. Seriously good, I wouldn’t change it for the world, but dangerous. I’d be kicking myself if I never did anything though, this is, well, it’s the happiest I’ve been since I can remember.” he said, his hand lazily playing with the blonde’s hair.

Farrier was better at hiding it when he had something on his mind, the lad still hadn’t picked up that his thoughts were only half present. Collins hummed and let his eyes shut as Farrier played with his hair. Collins was over the moon to hear that he made Farrier that happy. All the blonde wanted was to see him happy. Farrier couldn’t believe how precious this was, it was hanging in the balance, anything could end what they had, but for now it was a slice of pure heaven, Farrier was beginning to realise he’d probably rather sit with Collins than fly some days, and nothing had ever come before flying, until now.

“What’s your first name?” Collins asked quietly out of nowhere, he seemed nervous. It must have been playing on Collins’ mind. And it was weird now using first names, something as common as a first name had come to feel very personal. Farrier sat up slowly, Collins followed suit and they sat next to each other on the bed.

“Thomas, mm, Tom.” he said as he smiled softly at the blonde. Collins sat for a moment thinking, “Hi Thomas called Tom” he said, the name felt foreign in the blonde’s mouth, but it fit perfectly with who Farrier was.

“Hello Jack” Farrier smiled as he lay back down, pulling Collins with him, he rolled on top of him. It was the first time he’d said Jack’s name since he filled out the enrolment forms with him all that time ago.

“Jack” Collins said his own name aloud,

“Tom” Farrier said his.

Their faces were inches apart but they didn’t move closer, just looked into each other’s blue eyes. Farrier lay his weight on top of Collins, testing the waters. Tonight was the first time they’d lay down together, and right now was the first time one of them was on top of the other, it was uncharted territory, and Farrier was more than apprehensive after his last attempt to start something heated.

“I’m surprised you hadn’t heard Canfield using my name” Farrier said,

“Huh, didn’t even know he did” Collins replied. Farrier watched as Collins’ stared up at him, the man smiled and leaned down to kiss him. He sighed and ran a hand through Collins’ hair as he kissed, the blonde squirmed underneath him in happiness. A nagging thought was still on Farrier’s mind, but he didn’t want to stop this, not now. Farrier kissed softly, one hand moved now from the blonde’s hair to his cheek. Collins was an easy blusher, every time they so much as held hands he
would go red, and it was adorable. Farrier pulled back to just look at the man beneath him. The more he looked, the more he felt emotion well up inside his chest.

He had to stop staring or he’d cry.

It was a very abnormal feeling for the brunette, was that what people meant when they cried tears of joy? He’d never experienced that in his life, but when he looked at Collins, really looked, it was pure emotion that he felt. Raw and untainted by the daily stresses of life. He rolled next to Collins, he had to speak his mind, by now he could tell Collins wasn’t going to pick up on the fact that he was thinking of something.

“Collins,” he began, flattening a hand on the blonde’s belly.

“The emotional training continues next week.” He said. It was obvious he hadn’t found it easy to say.

“Ah. Alright, guess we’ll see if I’m any better this time ‘round eh?” Collins said, not entirely as bothered as Farrier thought he’d be.

“Yeah, guess so” Farrier said.

“Do yae know what it’s gonna be?” Collins asked, laying a hand on top of Farrier’s. The brunette didn’t answer. He was staring at a fixed point somewhere on the bed and his gaze didn’t move. He eventually answered,

“It’s a film of pilots from the war talking about their experiences.” he said quietly.

“Are you in it?” Collins asked, the only thing he could think of that would be making Farrier react this way.

“My friend is” he said, it was hard to read the emotion in his voice. Farrier was in it as well, but he knew Collins would see that anyway, and didn't feel like talking about it.

For once Collins didn’t pry, he knew exactly what Farrier meant now. This friend wasn’t around anymore. The blonde moved in closer to Farrier and slung an arm around his side. He pulled himself towards the brunette until they were pressed together.

“It’ll be okay” Collins whispered.

Farrier wasn’t sure about these emotions, he was feeling overwhelmed with happiness and protectiveness, and also nerves about the emotional training. He didn’t know how to deal with so many emotions all at once. Farrier settled with letting Collins cuddle and inhaling the blonde's smell, it had a remarkable calming effect on the man.

They lay in peace for a while, Collins was falling asleep in Farrier’s arms as the brunette was trying to make his mind shut up about things that didn’t matter. He didn’t want to stop the warm embrace, but it was late.

“C’mon lad, you need to get to your own bed” Farrier said, removing Collins’ arm from his body.

“Nae, I’m stayin’ here” the blonde said with a smile.

“Nice try Collins. Up.” Farrier said, sitting up himself to coax the blonde to do the same. He did. Farrier took Collins’ hand and led him to the door. Holding both his hands now he leaned in and kissed Collins one more time.
“I can’t tell you how much I love doing this, Collins” he mumbled.

“Neither, Farrier. I donnæe ever want to stop” the blonde replied. Though his mind was still somewhat stuck on the emotional training to come, if it worried Farrier, it was going to be bad.

“Get some sleep” Farrier said before embracing the blonde. He held him close, it was grounding and comforting, more than anything else either of them had ever experienced, hugging and being close to one another was like magic.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you guys for reading! Hopefully these past few happy chapters have at least somewhat made up for 45 odd chapters of slow burn.
Thank you to everyone who’s reading along, I’m so happy the story that I started on a whim is making people happy.

My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if you want to chat.
Until next chapter, happy reading.
Aaand it's Monday again. Last Monday of the holidays for me, next week it's back to uni (not a bad thing, I love it there)
This is the first of 2 chapters I'm uploading 2 chapters tonight, I felt like they needed to be together.
Trigger warning(s) in end notes.

It was the middle of the second week of October, and as much as Farrier wished he didn’t have to do any work and instead spend every living second with Collins, that wasn’t happening. He had to speak to Canfield about the lad being drugged, and he had to do the emotional training. As much as Canfield had to drag him along to the previous one, Farrier always went to the second one willingly. It felt disrespectful to Charlie, not watching ‘his’ film as Farrier called it in his head. It was something he still struggled to watch without getting emotional. It wasn’t like he was overly close with Charlie, but it was the way the film had to dramatize everything and make it all sadder than it already was. Charlie was part of his old squadron, and was there the day they took on the Baron.

Collins was glad the leaves were beginning to change colour, it was beautiful, especially in the rain he thought. It was Wednesday morning at the breakfast table.

“So Wingnut,” Dawson began,

“How do you join the bombers exactly?” he asked. The brunette swallowed his scrambled eggs.

“Well, I stay here until I get my wings. Then when everyone continuing into Fighter Command continues to their training units, or I guess ground crew if they don’t make it, I transfer to Bomber Command. I do a month or so conversion training, then I’m one of them.” He said nonchalantly.

Collins stopped eating,

“Timson,” he began, both his friends looked at him, they couldn’t remember the last time Collins had used Wingnut’s actual name.

“That’s in two and a half months.” he said.

“Yeah, I know. But I’m sure about it, I’ve been thinking a lot. I think I’ll be more useful there, guys.” He said, Collins kept quiet after that. He didn’t want their little group to get separated, but Collins had to remind himself to be happy for Wingnut that he was brave enough to branch out into what he really wanted to do.

After lunch, which was spent in the base kitchen as there was no time to walk to the sandwich store, was the lesson Farrier had mentioned to Collins. The brunette didn’t like the way it was meant to be some sort of secret when exactly the emotional training lessons were, it was unfair.

The students piled into the classroom, and were surprised to find both Canfield and Farrier chatting quietly at the front,
“But do we have to spring it on them like this?” Farrier mumbled,

“Death springs itself on you!” Canfield responded in a harsh whisper. Farrier looked at him disapprovingly but didn’t say anything.

“Go sit down and just watch the film Farrier. Don’t think about the students, just try and watch it the whole way through. I don’t want you storming out of the room like last year.” he said. Farrier sighed,

“I assume you want me at the back?” he asked,

“No, sit wherever you want” Canfield said as he began to move the projector,

“I’ll sit at the back, all by myself then.” Farrier said with a tinge of annoyance in his voice. This film always got him in a sour mood, and he had a habit of being catty towards Michael because of it. He really didn’t like that Canfield treated him like a child, scolding him for walking out last year. It was hard for him to watch, and last year it had triggered a flashback, not that Canfield appeared to care. It frustrated Farrier to no end, that the older man couldn’t understand how he felt, always telling him to just ‘forget about it’ and ‘cheer up’, but it wasn’t that easy. He supressed a sigh and took his seat.

Collins and his friends took their middle of the class seats, the blonde hated the fact that Anderson and his friends were behind him, that he couldn’t keep tabs on them. He knew Farrier and probably Canfield knew what they’d done. He knew they’d never do anything during learning hours, and that he was safe here. Still the thought that they could see him but he couldn’t see them irked Collins.

“Right class, round two of the emotional training exercises!” Canfield said, way too happily for the event. Farrier had his head resting on his hand, not really looking at the front, more so that blonde head of hair in the middle of the classroom, the hair he loved so much and wished he could just stand up and touch this instant.

“So we all remember the film about the little dog, yes? Very sad, I know. But today, we are watching something different. Today is a film about pilots that are no longer with us.” He said, any joking tone in his voice now gone.

“These are all real stories and real footage of the men, so be prepared.” he said as he walked to put the blinds down.

“I guess you’ll make it into one of these films soon then!” Anderson said smartly to Canfield, Farrier glared daggers at him across the room and it was enough to make the lad shuffle back in his chair so that his face was hidden from Farrier’s behind a sea of other men. As much as Farrier bickered with Canfield, nobody got to talk about him that way.

“On the contrary my boy, these are men who had their lives cut drastically short by war. I’ve lived a long and happy life, I cannot say the same for the men in the film.” the older man said as he closed the final blind.

“I might also add, you may recognise some faces if you watch closely!” Canfield added, before starting the projector up. Farrier wished he was invisible.

Collins braced himself for what emotional pain he knew was coming. He couldn’t imagine what pain Farrier must have been in though.

The film showcased four different men.
The first was Alexander Pickett.

He was a gunner who was friendly and confident, he was a daredevil and liked trying to push for different guns, different angles on the planes to make them more effective. He had a grenade go off in his face thrown from an enemy plane. His limp figure slumped over the gun mounted on the top wing for several minutes before it fell off the plane to the ground, never to be found, the pilot was traumatised from seeing it happen feet away from him, there was footage of him with the jitters, unable to calm down, staring around like someone was out to get him.

Farrier hated this film. Every single part of it he hated. Watching the pilot break down, even in silent film with ridiculously pompous and nationalistic music played over it, with a stupid voiceover in case he couldn’t already tell what was happening, it hurt to watch. He’d been in that situation, he’d been unable to stop shaking, stop thinking, stop seeing. And this film always brought that right back to the forefront of his mind. It was too close to home but he forced himself to keep watching it, for Charlie’s sake. Plus, if these young students had to, he had to.

Collins was shocked by the first story, but not as saddened as he was with the dog film. The footage of the first man was pure shock factor.

The second was a lad named Elliot Bellington.

He was a pilot, he never felt safe in the job, was unwillingly taken to war as he had some practice with planes in local events, he was 17 when he died of enemy fire. The entire plane went up in flames, it was a one-seater so he was the only casualty, not that it made it much better. His plane kept gliding a little ways while on fire, and the squadron could see his burnt corpse sitting upright still. The images were haunting for Collins, it was very clear where the man stopped and the fire began. Farrier hated to think that his plane had looked like that to the rest of his squadron that fateful day.

The third was a man called Frederick Muggs.

Another gunner, he had a sweet tooth. He would always take chocolate around for the whole squadron before take-off. Muggs loved being a gunner, he loved the freedom of it, loved standing on the plane, not being strapped in. Seemed to be a recurring theme with the gunners. He had a wife, who hadn’t wanted him to go to war in the first place. One day, the enemy had dangled barbed wire off their plane, and he got entangled in it so badly that he was carried away, screaming, crying, whilst being torn to shreds. His entire squadron had to watch him slowly die, and when his disfigured body finally fell through the barbed wire, it was barely recognisable as a person. There were pieces of him still stuck to the wire as it dangled from the enemy plane, scraps of bloody flesh blowing in the wind. His wife desperately wanted to see him when she heard the news, but of course nobody could let her. She wanted to see her Frederick one last time, but she never did. There was footage of her kicking and screaming and crying, Collins had to force himself not to look away.

The fourth and final man was Charlie Hart.

He was a pilot too, they showed a photo of him sitting with his squadron in a field, and the whole class made some collective noise of surprise, it took Collins a second to realise it was because Farrier was one of the other men. The blonde turned around to see Farrier looking quite embarrassed and not at all happy. Collins now realised that Charlie must be his friend he had mentioned. According to the film, Hart was the kind of person everyone loved. There was a short video of he and Farrier holding a map up together observing it, Farrier looked so incredibly young there, and dashing, not that he didn’t now as well. He looked happier, more carefree. Collins tried to focus on the film. Charlie was experienced with flying, so he was usually the lead pilot of the
squadron. Every day he would make the squadron tell him one thing that made them happy. He wasn’t any rank higher than them, but he had the kind of leadership qualities that meant it didn’t matter, they’d follow him. He was fun, and understanding. One day they went up against the Red Baron, the film explained, and it was met with surprised sounds from the class. Farrier’s stomach dropped as he began to panic. He looked for Canfield for reassurance, who was already looking at him. He nodded solemnly for Farrier to keep watching. He swallowed and looked back to the screen. He remembered that day clearly enough without having photos from the actual flight shoved in his face. Luckily there was no moving footage.

Charlie wasn’t shot down, but he was injured. The enemy had dropped a bomb into his lap. He flew the rest of the sortie, unable to be helpful but unwilling to abandon the squadron, and then came the video footage of the aftermath. The entire squadron carrying the man, half blown apart, to the base’s medical wing. Collins couldn’t see Farrier with them and began to worry slightly, he again forced himself to pay attention to the actual story. They got Charlie to the medical wing and then he was taken to the proper hospital. Charlie would never see again, his eyes were too damaged from the blast. He was hanging onto life, however. Every day possible, he would ring the base and ask the rest of his squadron to tell him something that made them happy, and in turn he would do the same. Every day of being in hospital he found something to be happy about, he couldn’t see, he wasn’t even allowed to leave the bed, but still in the midst of disaster, Charlie managed to be grateful. There was another short video of him lying in hospital, mainly covered in bandages, but Collins spotted something far more confronting in the bed next to Charlie.

It was Farrier.

He was asleep. The blanket was up to his chin and there was no obvious damage visible, but it was jolting enough to see him in a hospital bed. Farrier didn’t need a reminder of his time there either. He tried to watch the film for Charlie, though.

As the weeks continued, Charlie was recovering. He was almost able to take the bandages off his face, and they were doing experimental reconstructive surgery and skin grafting on him. Eventually he was allowed to walk, to build up more muscle. There were special benches outside the hospital painted blue, for men with disfigured faces to sit at. The public knew the men sitting there may be scary to look at. The blue paint was a warning to passers by that they may not want to turn their heads in that direction.

A week or so later, Charlie was back in the hospital bed with an infection of the blood. It was all going so well, he was still calling the squadron every single day, but then he stopped calling, and that was when the squadron knew something was seriously wrong. The very next time off they had, they all went to see Charlie, but his bed was vacant. He had died in the night of the blood infection and pneumonia. Charlie’s death concluded the film, and the narrator reiterated how important it is to hold onto hope, hold onto happiness, as Charlie Hart had, until the very last moment.

The blinds were pulled up, and Collins was teary. He’d shed a few during the last story, he admitted to himself. He tried his best to wipe them away. He turned around to look at how the rest of the class fared, most of them better than he unsurprisingly, but all looking visibly shaken. Collins found Farrier at the back, he was looking upwards to stop tears from falling. The man took a deep breath and looked forwards again, unable to stop one falling down his cheek. He found Collins, and all he could do was purse his lips as if to say, what did you expect? Farrier wiped his
eyes and tried to shake off his emotions. He wasn’t upset about Charlie, people died in war, he was upset about the memories the film had brought forth. At least this year it wasn’t a full on flashback, it was more an overarching dark feeling that had settled inside him.

Canfield slowly wheeled the projector back to the corner. He didn’t look so chipper now, either.

“Now, that’s to show you what can happen in war. It’s not a game, it’s the most serious thing there is. And if you’re not prepared for your wing mate to end up like one of these lot, you’re not ready.” He said plainly. Farrier was glad, at least, that the documentary hadn’t really mentioned him, or the rest of the squadron, even if he was in hospital with Charlie. This year, Canfield said something he hadn’t said to a group of students before.

“So class, this may interest you to know that the way they make these films, is that if they decide someone’s story is interesting enough to compile into a film, be that man still alive or already dead, they dig up the old archives and stick them together. There is generally enough film and photographs of any given squadron to form at least a very basic understanding, so that’s what they do. If the man is still alive and they think he’s soon to pass, they generally have even more footage as they hang around him with the camera a bit more waiting to see if he doesn’t make it, that’s what happened with Charlie, hence his story being much more in depth, they heard about what happened to him in the air, and the crew were right down there to greet the squadron as it landed. It’s gruesome and not very nice, but it makes for a pretty shocking documentary. There were very nearly five men starring in that film by the way lads.” he said.

Farrier’s head snapped up, eyes wide in shock, why would he say that? Now? In front of the whole class?

“So what happened then?” Anderson of course. There was silence.

“I survived.” came Farrier’s answer. Deep and solemn.

Collins couldn’t handle this. He stared at the desk and focused on not letting any tears come to the surface, he’d only just sorted himself out. He did not need to hear that from Farrier. Not in his already delicate mental state. Dawson covertly shifted his gaze to the Scot next to him upon hearing Farrier's answer, and it took everything in his power not to react to the look of shock on Collins' face.

“Yes, our lad here survived a frightful accident, believe me the cameras were at the ready had he not made it!” Canfield was already trying to turn it into a laugh. Some of the students chuckled along, and Farrier wasn’t sure if he was angry at them or grateful that the mood was getting lighter.

“Say Farrier, perhaps you’d share a little?” Canfield offered. He got his answer in the form of Farrier walking out of the classroom and slamming the door behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): Injury detail and gore, death, PTSD mentions/references.

I won't say "I hope you enjoyed", but I hope you respected my creative decisions lol. This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat.
Later that night Collins snuck into Farrier’s room. They hadn’t seen each other since the emotional training, save for some fleeting glances over the dinner table. The brunette stood up for a hug when he saw the blonde, he pulled him in tight and closed his eyes.

“Thank god you’re here, Collins,” he murmured.

The blonde allowed his eyes to flutter shut as they hugged, before letting go and sitting on the bed, Farrier joined. They sat facing each other, Farrier against his pillow and Collins sitting cross-legged in front of him.

“How was class today eh?” Collins began, toying with his pyjama sleeve,

“Not great,” Farrier smiled sadly, removing Collins’ hand from his pyjamas and holding onto it to stop him fidgeting.

“Yae looked very handsome back then,” Collins muttered, blushing from the mere words, trying to lighten the mood was all he meant by them. He shuffled to sit next to Farrier, both their backs against the headboard now.

“And I don’t now?” Farrier smiled,

“Oh of course you do now, arguably more,” Collins said, unable to maintain eye contact as he got nervous. There was something in the air around Farrier, something Collins couldn't pick. Farrier reached a strong arm around Collins’ shoulders and pulled him close.

“You’re not too bad yourself,” he said quietly, and kissed the blonde’s forehead. They sat in comfortable silence for a while, Collins let a hand lay on top of Farrier’s thigh. He loved doing that, it wasn’t so much contact that he got nervous or shy, but definitely enough to feel warm inside.

“Collins, I want to apologise on behalf of Canfield for mentioning me,” Farrier’s deep voice broke through the silence. Collins swallowed,

“’S’okeh,” he mumbled.

“It’s more important to me that you’re better now, Farrier,” he said, looking sideways at the brunette.

“I am, for the most part.” he said.

“For the most part?” Collins queried,
“Well, yeah. I have my off days, but I think I’m pretty good now,” Farrier smiled. It wasn’t cheering the blonde up.

“Collins, I’m okay,” Farrier insisted. Collins moved closer still to him but didn’t say anything.

“I appreciate that you care so much, I really do, but it takes time to heal, yeah?” Farrier pressed.

“Mmhmm.”

“Come on, pet,” Farrier said quietly, the hand that wasn’t wrapped around the blonde’s body began stroking Collins’ cheek until he turned to face him. Collins was blushing a deep red. That meant he’d liked the nickname. Farrier let a small smile creep onto his face. Seeing it made Collins smile too.

“Want to know what happened?” Farrier asked, Collins exhaled,

“I dunno. I mean of course, but I donnae want to make you uncomfortable,” he said. Collins’ hands resumed their fidgeting in his lap.

“I... Want to tell you, because I trust you Jack. Probably too much, but I really do.” Farrier said quietly. Collins looked up from his hands to a space in front of him. His name on Farrier’s lips sent a tingle down his spine.

“Ye trust me?” he asked,

“Of course. Do you trust me?”

“Yes, of course.” came the answer. Small and shy, but certain.

“Then I want to tell you. But, I need you to know that I might get a bit, well, I guess emotional is one word. I’ll try not to be, but it might happen.” Farrier huffed a single laugh.

“I’ll be here for you, I’m not leavin’ till I see a smile on your face again,” Collins said. His words softened Farrier’s gaze, he still couldn’t believe how pure and kind Collins was. He was selfless and brave, especially for being okay with Farrier venting to him. Farrier wished he was as good a person as Collins.

“Okay, well, it might not make you all that happy either, Collins,” he said.

“I donnae care. I’m honoured you want to talk about it with me, I’ll take it all, Farrier.” he said definitively. He wasn’t going to make Farrier feel like a burden, he wasn’t one. That was that. The brunette took a deep breath.

“I just feel like you need to know, to be with me this way. To me, it's only fair. Well, how much do you know, first of all?” he asked, and shuffled so that he was in the corner of the bedhead and the wall. Collins moved over to be close again.

“I think I know about that” Collins said, and threw a glance down to Farrier’s forearm, unwilling to say any words about it.

“Okay, is that it?” Farrier asked, pulling down his pyjama top so that he wasn’t showing any skin on his arm, he was still self conscious and hated that he'd even done anything to himself in the first place. Collins didn’t miss the small gesture.

“Uh, well I know about the crash ye had that fractured your shoulder, and I saw your scar on your
belly, that’s all,” the blonde said. It was strange to be put on the spot like this, to be asked specifics after all this time Farrier had seemed to want to run away from his past.

Farrier felt like if Collins knew about why he had issues, in his mind, that it would give him every opportunity to leave him. It felt like he was keeping a secret, and he didn't want to do that.

“Right. That crash wasn't the worst thing that happened to me, the bail I'm about to talk about is. Remember when the film showed us taking on the Red Baron’s squadron?” he asked tentatively, Collins nodded.

“I didn’t get out of there much better than Charlie did.”

The words hung in the air, and Collins could already feel his chest tightening. Farrier had been in an off mood all day thanks to Canfield and the film, he had been thinking about his ordeal ever since the class was over.

“Yeah well basically, the Red Baron’s squadron flew across our twelve to port. They had much more altitude than we did, they’d been hiding in the clouds so we didn’t get any notice. When we saw them they had the dominant position for the dog fight but we went in anyway. I was on the port side and the Baron had been leading the squadron so he was my target, we were in Sopwith Camels, one seater planes and engines at the front of the nose like they all are now. Known for being bastards to manoeuvre but I handled it well enough. Anyway, bit of a dogfight went on between us two, but Canfield believes that he’d changed the rudder or ailerons or something on his plane, because it turned at such a velocity I didn’t expect it to hold together, or maybe he just really knew his way around the thing which is obviously viable as well considering how formidable he was. Anyway, suddenly instead of me shooting his flank, we were head on,” Farrier explained. Collins was frozen, he wasn’t so sure if he was going to be as good a listener as he’d thought, but he’d try.

“I tried to pull away quickly, but he shot my plane straight through the engine. The planes back then were covered in canvas which is coated in this really flammable liquid to tighten it against the plane’s body, so you can imagine that when the engine sparked, the entire plane went up in flames.” he said, his voice was quieter than usual, and it was usually quiet in caution of someone hearing them. Farrier wanted to stop telling Collins, his baby blue eyes looked terrified hearing the story. Farrier knew the lad wouldn’t let him stop the tale now, though. So he continued,

“The prop was gone, and it wasn’t until the plane had lost significant altitude that I realise what had happened. I think the blast from the engine exploding had sort of dazed me.” he said, he began fidgeting, Collins went to grab his hands but Farrier pulled them away and crossed his arms. “I’d… I’d been impaled by part of the plane.” he said, his voice cracking along with his resolve to remain unemotional. He looked up to Collins, if the blonde didn’t look distraught before he sure did now.

“Collins, are you okay?” he asked. Collins nodded slowly, brows still furrowed and blue eyes still staring, Farrier wasn’t convinced but continued.

“I don’t remember if it was part of the dashboard, engine, or what. I only remember looking down as the plane spiralled towards the ground, and seeing a chunk of metal sticking out of me” he said. Then Farrier stopped. All of a sudden he looked like his thoughts were very far away. He was staring at a fixed point on the bed. Farrier’s thoughts were indeed very far away, they were back over France, back in the plane, back in the dogfight. His breathing quickened and Collins watched his crossed arms tense, his fingers tighten around his biceps.

“Farrier,” he said, and lay a hand on Farrier’s shoulder,
“You don’t have tae tell me, he whispered.

“I do. I’ll have to at some point Collins, I don’t want to keep it a secret,” he said, and then he went quiet again, Collins watched as Farrier stared at the fixed point on the bed. He looked pained, he looked scared. Farrier squeezed his eyes shut and ran his hands over his face. In the darkness behind his eyelids he saw the piece of metal inside him, as if it was still there. He jerked his eyes back open and stared at Collins. He was here, not there. He was here with Collins. He tried not to let himself crumble like this, the man reached for Collins’ hands and held them in his own. Looking down at them calmed him slightly, his breaths were still shaky, thoughts still far away. Farrier swallowed and looked into Collins’ eyes, the blonde looked unstable, but those blue eyes grounded Farrier like nothing else could.

“What just happened?” Collins asked, on edge after seeing Farrier snap.

“I, um… Sometimes my mind takes me back there,” he said, breathing deep and deliberate. Collins put on a brave face for Farrier, he nodded understandingly but he was not the least bit calm inside. It felt surreal, to hear all this, and to look at the brave, kind man before him and link the two together. The pain was exquisite, Collins couldn’t bear to imagine how Farrier was feeling. He didn’t want to tell Collins this at any given time, but also he needed to tell the lad, or Collins would be forever be asking about the scars littering his body, or worse he wouldn’t mention them, and then Farrier would be forever feeling guilty for not telling Collins about them.

“Um, I…” Farrier began, his hands tightening around Collins’. He cleared his throat and tried again,

“The plane was spiralling down, I didn’t have a parachute, nobody did back then. I… I couldn’t see a clear way out. There was nowhere to put her except in the water.” he said, barely above a whisper. Farrier let go of Collins’ hands and crossed his arms again.

“To this day I don’t know if it was a river or a lake, I’m fairly certain I had a concussion at the time,” he said, Collins laced his fingers together to prevent him from fidgeting more. All he wanted was to hug Farrier, to kiss him, to tell him that it’s okay, I’m here.

“So I ditched the plane in the water, I jumped out last minute because I could see the plane was going to land belly up, that would have been fatal. The water saved my life actually.” Farrier stopped again, and sighed to himself seemingly in frustration that he was finding this difficult.

“I remember… When I touched the water, when the metal was jerked sideways inside me, I remember that I felt nothing,” said Farrier solemnly. Collins’ mind was racing trying to process everything that had happened to Farrier. He didn’t realise it would be this bad, he thought maybe Farrier was just the way he was, it was part of him always, but as the man kept talking it became clear that he hadn't always been the person he was now.

“And that, I think, was when in my dazed state I realised this was definitely not okay. I hadn’t bled much until I got into the water mind you, but I remember swimming and seeing the water dark red around me.” Farrier looked at Collins again, checking to see if he was alright. His expression had changed from horrified to absolutely inconsolable. Farrier rubbed his own face again, this was going to ruin Collins’ week, if not longer. He knew he’d think himself into a depressive episode if he didn’t get it all out now. He didn’t know if he wouldn’t still think himself into one anyway.

“I dragged myself up onto the shore, and I walked. I didn’t know where I was going, or who I’d meet. But I just walked,” Farrier said, Collins watched as Farrier subconsciously held a hand to his torso, his fingers tracing where he knew the scar was over his pyjamas.
“The French found me, thank god. I would have… Well, I would have died.” The man said shortly. Collins couldn’t process that. He began breathing deeply, trying to calm down.

“I was put on a stretcher, I saw a trail of blood where I’d walked to the camp. And,” he began, and realised last time he’d thought about the event in detail, when he was drunk after the uniform party, he couldn’t remember this far, but he could now.

“I looked down and everything was red. Everything. They were all shouting in French, everyone was looking at me as I lay there. They put me on the ground and I felt like I couldn’t move. I was exhausted, I was losing blood, I just couldn’t do anything. I remember I lifted my head and saw the shard sticking out of me, and finally I think I passed out.” he finished.

Collins had his eyes closed, whether as not to be confronted by Farrier’s presence or so he could process everything, the man did not know. But when Collins opened his blue eyes it damn near broke Farrier to see them wearing the expression that they were. The one he knew all too well, the one he wore all too often. Pain.

Farrier reached for the blonde’s hand, taking it in his.

“I’m sorry. Collins, I’m so sorry. I should have never said anything,” he began, urgency in his voice. The blonde swallowed,

“What happened next?” he asked tentatively.

“Collins, you don’t want to hear all this, as good as it is for me to talk about it with someone, I can’t do this to you. I've made a mistake,” Farrier said, running circles over Collins’ knuckles.

“I’ll be okay. C’mon, Farrier.” he said, his expression hadn’t lifted, and it scared Farrier. He didn’t want to get used to seeing this look on Collins’ beautiful face.

“I woke up in hospital. They’d taken most of the metal out, but I’d lost a lot of blood, and there was still metal inside me. Still is.”

“Apparently I was in and out of sleep for about two weeks. They had me on a ventilator to help me breathe. I was incredibly weak, and I had a plethora of issues, including a partially collapsed lung, broken ribs, and of course the metal had perforated most of my organs.” Farrier had gone deep into his mind, deeper than emotion, now it was just reciting facts he’d been told time and time again. It wasn’t like that for Collins. Farrier watched as Collins moved impossibly closer to him, and the blonde’s eyes became glassy with tears.

“Eventually, I was discharged. The war had ended. Charlie, and many others I knew, had died. Though as you know from Canfield’s spiel today, I very well could have died there too. I did what I could to move on,” He murmured, squeezing Collins’ hand.

Farrier watched as Collins squeezed his eyes shut, his blonde eyelashes wet against his cheeks. No, Farrier thought, please don’t cry. Collins pulled his hands away from Farrier and wiped his eyes, sniffing. The blonde looked up at Farrier, cheeks flushed and eyes red. His bottom lip trembled, and it was that which broke Farrier’s wall down. He gave in, pulled Collins close, tears pricking his own eyes before falling onto the blonde’s shoulder.

“I’m so sorry,” he said,

“Farrier,” Collins sniffed,

“Don’t be sorry Farrier, please,” Collins said, and leaned back to look at the man. Thinking about
Farrier being dead was not a pleasant thought, looking at him now, seeing him here, and thinking that there was a good chance he wouldn’t be here if things had gone a different way, it wasn’t easy to stomach. Collins had only ever seen tears in Farrier’s eyes once before, and now that he was this emotionally invested in the man he couldn’t handle it, he’d never be as emotionally strong as Farrier, who watched as the blonde’s brows furrowed to stop himself from letting any more tears out, before being encased in an embrace so warm and comforting it almost made everything okay. Almost. They sat together like this, completely open, no barriers between them.

When Farrier finally drew back, he immediately wished he hadn’t. Collins’ blotchy red face, tears still dangerously close to falling, lips still trembling, his emotions displayed clear as ever like they always were, to see this was almost as painful as the plane crash itself.

“It’s okay, Collins. I’m here now,” Farrier tried, his weak voice betraying his calm sentence. Collins sniffed again and nodded curtly. He took a big, staggered breath,

“I know. But yae didnae deserve any of it,” he said,

“It’s war, Collins. Nobody deserves any of it,” he said, wiping his own tears away. He felt embarrassed for letting himself get into a state like this with someone else around, but that was forgotten when the blonde reached a tentative hand up to Farrier’s face, long fingers on his warm cheek, thumb caressing him. It was times like these that Farrier worried what he’d started between them was wrong. Yet his hand found its way onto Collins’, cupping it to his face as he let his eyes close for a moment of understanding, sympathy, and softness.

“Do I need to explain what the scars on my arm are?” he asked, eyes still closed.

“No. Wingnut and Dawson explained what they were, at first I.... I didnae know, hadn’t seen anything like that before. They told me it’s... It means you’re not… Happy,” Collins said, his breathing still shaky.

“I didn’t deal with what happened to me very well. I blamed myself for not being able to help my country for the rest of the war, thought I had been useless. I took it out on myself, I’m only just now beginning to play with the thought that maybe I wasn’t to blame, and that I shouldn’t be so harsh on myself,” Farrier said quietly.

“Are you happy now?” Collins asked in a shaky voice.

“I’m the happiest I’ve been since I was a boy, now,” he murmured.

And Collins kissed him.

It was messy and wet with tears, but it conveyed everything neither of them could say with words. Collins pulled away,

“Good” was all he could muster.

The two sat for a while, getting their emotions in check. Collins thought of bringing up Ben, but another time he thought. He’d had enough difficult conversation for one night.

Farrier had never, not once in his life, done something like this with anyone. Gotten this emotional, openly with someone. Only ever alone, shut in a room or in a far away place unable to be seen or heard. He’d never shared his emotions like this, so willingly with someone else. Contrary to what he expected, it felt freeing. Now he understood why Canfield told him to talk about the war more. He felt light inside, like years of stress had just been lifted, and he attributed a lot of that to the
blonde sitting next to him, currently drying his eyes and fixing his hair, freckled cheeks and knobbly knees and long fingers and a crooked pout. If Collins hadn’t waltzed into Gatwick that day, Farrier may never have found anyone he trusted enough to confide in.

The blonde was still in some state of shock about how open Farrier had been. He’d never expected the man to be open, he knew going into this that Farrier just wasn’t like that. But tonight he’d realised, maybe he was open, with the right person, and that made Collins the right person. As he watched Farrier sit and run a hand through his hair and fix his pyjama top which had become slightly uneven, he was overcome by a huge sense of gratitude. Farrier had chosen him to talk to about it. Him. Still not seeing what Farrier liked about him, Collins was just happy that he made Farrier happy, and that he was comfortable enough now to explain what had happened to him, something Collins knew was a closely guarded secret.

It was extremely difficult for Collins to leave Farrier’s room that night,

“Can I not sleep in here?” the blonde pleaded.

“No. That’s ridiculous, as much as I want that, Collins. Come on, back to your room,” Farrier ushered him to the door. The men embraced, it was strong and full of trust.

“Thank you for listening to me,” Farrier murmured into Collins’ shoulder,

“I’d do it again in a heartbeat, Tom,” the blonde replied, there was a pang of emotion in Farrier’s gut upon hearing his name and he smiled. Upon seeing the smile, Collins sighed in relief and happily accepted the kiss he received on the lips. He smiled back, and then slipped through the doorway.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): Injury detail, death, PTSD, self harm and depression mentions/references.

Feels good to get this chapter off my chest. Let me know what you thought, I’m not used to writing hurt/comfort sort of things.

Thank you to everyone who’s reading along, it makes me so happy to just think that my writing is being read by you!

This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat.
October was drawing to a close, Collins was still processing all that he’d been told the previous week about Farrier, but he was coping. Seeing Farrier every day helped him deal with it. Seeing him happy, helped him deal with it. It was after another day of flying, though they were mainly flying in the Harvard planes now as opposed to the smaller and weaker Miles Magisters. The Harvards were nicknamed the ‘pilot makers’ and were somewhat similar to Hurricanes according to Farrier and Canfield which was a relief to hear for the young cadets, jealous of watching the Operational Training Units at base always using the fighters. Collins was walking back inside with Dawson and Wingnut at his side, when Canfield approached him.

“Collins, my boy. Say, you wouldn’t mind coming to have a quick chat with me in my office, would you?” he asked, Collins panicked.

Canfield knew, he thought. He must, what else would it be about? Was he about to get expelled again?

“Sure.” Was what came out of the blonde’s mouth, not conveying any of the worry of his current thoughts.

“Great, I have to help pack the planes away but why don’t you go in and make yourself comfortable?” he said, before turning back to the hangars. When Collins and his friends got through the door into the locker room, the Scot had to stop walking.

“Guys, what if it’s aboot… Yae know.” he began.

Both of them looked worried which didn’t help Collins’ mental situation.

“Mate, could be about anything.” Dawson said.

Collins knew there were a few possibilities, but still the thought nagged.

“Guess I better go in then.” Collins said quietly.

Wingnut and Dawson went upstairs, as the blonde walked down the empty hall, it was eerie. It was like he was walking to the end of his flying career. He was terrified, but so much so, that he was numb to emotion.

That feeling was somewhat dissolved when he opened the door to Canfield’s office to find Farrier already seated.

“Fuck, why am I in here?” Collins blurted,
“It’s about the Anderson thing.” Farrier mumbled.

“Jesus, I was worried to death it was about somethin’ worse” Collins said as he took the seat next to Farrier.

“God, I wouldn’t be this calm if it was about that, lad.” Farrier chuckled.

He wanted to reach out and take the blonde’s hand in his, but with the possibility of Canfield walking in at any moment it wasn’t an option. Collins was trying to act normal, clearly. He had moved the chair slightly further away from Farrier’s, but he kept looking over like he wanted to move it back.

“You’ll need to do better than this when Canfield gets here.” Farrier tutted, but his words were delivered with a smile on his face. Collins huffed.

No sooner had the man said that when Canfield opened the door behind them. Collins jumped and gasped at the sound, causing Canfield to laugh.

“Relax, son, goodness!” he said as he took his seat opposite them behind his desk, still chuckling.

“Tea either of you?” Canfield asked, setting his tea set out and picking up the already steeped teapot.

“Yes please.” Farrier said, taking the sugar immediately.

“Uh, yae, thank you,” Collins said absent-mindedly as he stared at the amount of sugar Farrier was piling into the teacup.

“Farrier, I think Collins wants the sugar as well,” Canfield chuckled, taking the spoon away from a forlorn looking Farrier.

“Ah, donnae actually take any sugar in my tea. Just thought it was a rather large amount, sorry for staring.” he said, forcing himself to stare down his own teacup instead.

“Honestly lad, I’d stare too if I hadn’t seen Farrier do this a hundred times.” Canfield laughed, “Canfield, can we get on with more pressing matters than my tea preference?” Farrier asked while stirring said tea.

“Yes, yes. So Collins, you’re here because of what happened that night a few weeks ago. Can you confirm, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it was Anderson?” Canfield asked.

Any laughing matters were forgotten in an instant.

“Yes.”

“How?” the older man asked.

“He told me it wasn’t personal, and that it was the way it had to be.” Collins said carefully.

“He said that before he and his friends left me there, when I began getting high” He added.

“I see. And do you have any idea what might have spurred this?” Canfield asked, Collins could never say the real reason, that much he knew.

“Honestly, I donnae think there is anything behind it. I think they just pick on me, maybe because
I’m Scottish, I really don’t know. I think they just wanted to have some fun, malicious fun, but I think he was serious when he said it wasn’t personal, might have done it to anyone unfortunate enough to get roped into their card game that night, just happened to be me.” the blonde said, and sipped his tea.

“You can press charges, Collins.” Farrier said quietly. They had already had this conversation, the blonde knew he was saying it again just because Canfield was here. “I don’t want to. Just means I have to deal with them for longer, I just want tae forget about it.” he looked between Farrier and Canfield.

“Okay, well I suppose expulsion is the next step.” Canfield muttered to Farrier, who nodded into his teacup. Collins’ heart fluttered at the words. That would put an end to it for good.

“We need an eye witness for that, Canfield,” Farrier said, putting his tea down and crossing his arms.

“Indeed, it’s not enough to go off one student’s words, which of course Anderson will protest.”

“There’s an eye witness. Someone who can point to the three boys and say that it was them.” Collins said.

“Who then?” Canfield asked, putting his tea down with Farrier’s.

“Lass named Stella.” Collins said quietly. Farrier’s ears pricked up at this.

“So, perhaps we could arrange a meeting with her? Do you know where to find Stella?” Canfield asked.

“Not really, except the same pub. She was playing in the band there, all I can hope is that she plays again I s’pose” Collins said.

“Well, if you go in and find her, maybe get her contact information, we could arrange a meeting, that’s all we can hope for. I suppose otherwise you’d have to ask the bar staff if they recall.” Canfield said, thinking aloud more than anything.

“Yae, will do. I was there on a Saturday so maybe I’ll go in this Saturday and look for Stella.” Collins said and finished his tea.

“Excellent. And, thanks for speaking to us about this Collins, I’m aware it doesn’t bring back fond memories.” Canfield stood and stretched out a hand to shake, Collins took it.

“No problem, I’m glad you two want to help me.” the blonde said. Farrier stretched out his hand too,

“Yes, thanks for being so open with us. Let us know if you get a hold of Stella, or anyone else able to help.” He said, blue eyes once again hiding behind a perfectly built wall, only professionalism showed in them now.

“Will do Farrier. I’ll be off then, I suppose.” Collins said,

“Yes, thank you Collins.” Canfield said, and the blonde left the office.

Farrier sighed as soon as Collins left.

“Honestly, I can’t wait to get rid of those three,” he said.
“They aren’t exactly what I would expect for RAF cadets, no.” Canfield replied.

“That’s all you can say after they nearly killed Collins?” Farrier asked calmly, fiddling with his hands, a habit he’d picked up from the blonde himself.

“Well like every professional officer, I’m impartial to all students, Farrier.” Canfield said, and the brunette didn’t have time for his underhanded comments.

“I’m heading upstairs.” he said, and left the room.

Collins sat in Dawson’s room with his two friends, painfully aware that soon he would only be sitting with Dawson.

“They wanted to know about the night I was drugged.” he said.

“Well thank god it was that, not something else, right mate?” Dawson said,

“Oh yeah, I probably would have died there and then if it was about somethin’ else!” Collins laughed. The cards appeared as usual and Wingnut dealt absent-mindedly as they spoke. All three agreed that it was a great thing for Anderson’s lot to be gone. Wingnut didn’t think anyone liked them except each other, and the two blondes agreed.

“They want me to go back to the pub and find that lass I was talking to. They think she could be an eye witness.” Collins said as he picked up the cards he’d been dealt.

“Maybe we could come with this time, make sure you don’t fall down another rabbit hole?” Dawson suggested.

“Yae know what? Good idea. When’s the last time we went to a pub together?” Collins asked.

“Your birthday, mate.” Wingnut answered.

“That’s right. Ages ago.” Collins felt bad that they hadn’t done anything since then apart from walks to the little sandwich store.

So that Saturday, all three of them planned to go to the pub together.

“I’ll be fine, Wingnut and Dawson are comin’ too.” Collins murmured to Farrier as they sat on the older man’s bed.

“Just, be careful. I don’t want it to freak you out, going back there. Sometimes seeing the same place that a bad thing happened in can do that.” he said, hands rubbing up and down Collins’ arms.

“I willnae be on drugs this time, it’s just a normal shoddy bar, Farrier.” Collins persuaded. The brunette sighed, he put a hand on the nape of Collins’ neck and pulled the lad’s head down for a forehead kiss.

“Come back and let me know how it goes.” he said.

“You’ll be asleep by the time we’re back,” the blonde chuckled,

“Eh, probably not. Try my door, I’ll leave it unlocked for you, pet.” Farrier smiled.

Collins joined the others outside the base and they walked together to the bar.

“If you freak out, we’re here mate.” Dawson said just as they reached the door.
“Thanks, I think I’ll be fine. You two relax and have a drink or something’, I’m just here to find Stella.” Collins replied.

He took a deep breath and entered the bar. It was just as he remembered it when he was sober. Small, crowded, and thankfully there was beautiful clarinet music coming from the front. Collins waded through a crowd of people and it was Stella, completely entranced by her own music seemingly. Great, now he just needed to wait for her break. The three ordered some beers to begin with and sat in a booth. Collins looked at the red leather, the same leather that had appeared to be bleeding red flesh when he was here last. It was normal now.

“So she’s playing the clarinet at the front, yae see?” he asked as he sipped the froth off the top of the beer, knowing this time it would be fine to drink.

“She’s fine,” Dawson murmured. She was, although bony and somewhat lanky, a very pretty woman. Collins wasn’t sure he recalled Dawson actually voicing his attractions towards a woman before. “Aye,” Collins said. they drank and listened to Stella’s band, and one drink turned into a few. Collins had spotted the Scottish whiskey on the shelf and wanted some. The others tried some too, apparently it was ‘strong but not bad’. Collins thought it was absolutely the best in every way. They sat at the booth waiting for Stella to have her break, Collins painfully aware he had probably had one too many drinks for a good conversation with her. Eventually the music ended and Stella announced the band was taking a break.

“Right lads, I’ll be back in a bit.” Said the Scot and stumbled off. He found the brunette woman at the bar, drinking the strange pink drink again, same as he’d seen her last time.

“Stella?” Collins said curiously.

“Oh, hello you!” She smiled, dark curls bouncing as she turned to Collins to hug him. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and he gave her a squeeze, she smelled nice, like soap and sugar.

“How’ve yae been? Nice playin’.” the blonde said. “Yes I’ve been well, just been playing here every Saturday. Same old, but what about you? Didn’t see you for the rest of the night last time you were here!” She said, and sat back down to finish her drink.

“That’s actually why I’m here tonight.” Collins said, leaning an arm on the bar next to her.

“Oh?” she asked,

“How long’s your break?” the blonde replied.

“Only about ten more minutes, why?”

“Ah, when do yae finish tonight?” Collins asked, ten minutes wasn’t enough to explain, and he’d realised he probably shouldn’t dump this information on Stella if she had to perform again after.

“Jack, are you trying to ask me out?” she giggled,

“Wha? No! I,” Collins got red in the face.

“I need tae tell you somethin’. It’s not that.” He said more seriously. She smiled sweetly.

“Well, after my break I play for forty-five more minutes. Then we’re all finished.
“Mind comin’ tae see me later then?” he asked.

“I suppose so, it won’t take long will it? The rest of the band won’t want to wait around.” She said, finishing the pink drink.

“Probably not too long, I’m willin’ tae walk you home or pay for a cab if your band don’t want to wait.” Collins said, moving to go back to the table.

“You’re being awfully odd, Jack. I hope you unravel the mystery after I play,” she smiled.

“Yae, sorry lass. I’ll tell yae everything, promise.” he said, and walked off. She smiled at him as he went. Charming. Awkward, but charming, in an amusing way, Stella thought to herself. Not that she was interested in him, but still, a very nice man.

Collins arrived back to the booth,

“So?” Wingnut asked, looking too drunk already.

“Her break was only ten minutes, I want tae wait until she’s finished playing for the night to tell her. Should be in around forty-five minutes from when they start again.” he said. Dawson was watching her speak to the bartender. For once it was Collins’ turn to shove him, not the other way around.

“Ey mate, calm it down!” he laughed.

“She’s pretty, isn’t she” Collins said,

“Very,” Dawson replied, and downed the rest of his drink.

The boys listened to the band play, Collins thought about getting up to dance, but something stopped him. Eventually he worked out what it was, he wanted to spend as much time with Wingnut as he could. He didn’t want him to go to Bomber Command, as much as he tried to tell himself that he was happy for the man. A few rounds of drinks later, Collins asked a question,

“So Wingnut, still sweet on Lucy from the Air Transport Auxiliary?” he laughed as he asked, the brunette’s ears went red.

“We’ve been on two dates.”

Dawson spluttered on his drink.

“I’m sorry?” he asked,

“I said, we’ve been on two dates, Dawson.” Wingnut said measuredly.

“Jesus mate, why didn’t yae tell us?” Collins said, he was beaming, never in the world did he think Wingnut would get this lucky.

“I dunno, I wasn’t sure she would want anyone knowing, it’s just a quiet thing.” he said, a small smile creeping onto his face.

“Mate, I’m so happy for you, congratulations!” Dawson said, patting Wingnut excitedly on the back.

“Thanks guys, appreciate it.” He said awkwardly.
The three celebrated with yet another round of drinks.

Finally, the music ended. Everyone in the pub cheered, and Stella and the band all bowed. As beautiful as she was in the face, she didn’t have an altogether feminine body, nor did she carry herself like a woman. A woman would have curtsied, not bowed. Collins was just very interested in her as a person, she was very different to most women he’d met and he found it alluring.

“Right, I’m going to go get her,” Collins said. He found her leaving out the back door of the pub,

“Stella!” he called after her,

“Hang on Jack, just putting my clarinet away!” she yelled, Collins waited in the doorway and watched her bandmates pack everything into several suitcases on wheels. She had a word with them and then walked over to him. They sat down together at the booth inside,

“Stella, this is Wingnut, and Dawson.” Collins said,

“Interesting names?” she said, trying not to show a smirk on her face.

“Ah, oh. Sorry lass, those are their last names. Well, Wingnut is just a nickname,” Collins explained.

“Ah yes, the air force and their last names. Got it.” She smiled shyly,

“Well, hello Wingnut, hello Dawson.” she said politely, eyes lingering on Dawson’s, he was gazing at her, and now as Collins watched him smirk, freckles on his cheeks still apparent under the dim light and blue eyes curiously looking at the girl, he remembered why he felt sub-tier next to Dawson when they’d first met. Stella looked away shyly.

“So Jack, what do you want?” she asked, breaking the ice. It was the first time Dawson had heard Collins’ first name. The blondes made eye contact as they came to the shared realisation, and smiled. Jack was the perfect name for who Collins was, thought Dawson. It made so much sense now that he knew it.

“Well,” Collins began, and then he told Stella everything. It hurt to do, to watch her face go from her regular relaxed and happy expression to one of fear as he talked her through what had happened.

“I feel terrible Jack. I was on stage and I didn’t see anything happening. I was literally in the same room and I didn’t know anything was going wrong.” she said eventually.

“Hey,” Collins said, waiting for Stella to look up from her hands to him.

“This is not your fault Stella. But I am here to ask a favour of you. I need an eye witness in order to have them expelled. I need you to point at them and say, yes, it was them who did it.” Collins said. The woman beside him inhaled deeply.

“No charges. Just expulsion from the RAF. Nothing more, they willnae have criminal records or anything, just won’t be able to join the air force again. That’s all I want.” he said quietly. Stella thought for a moment before answering,

“Okay, I’ll do it.” she said. Collins smiled, as did the whole table.
“If yae give me your contact details I’ll pass them to my superior officers, I think they’ll want tae organise a meeting with you.” Collins said, opening his coat and revealing from the inside pocket, a blank page torn from his sketchbook and a pen. He laid them on the table and Stella wrote her name and letter address on the page. She had quite awful handwriting, it began horizontal albeit messy, but then slanted off to the side and was nearly diagonal by the time she’d finished, which surprised Collins who assumed her writing would be neat. He supposed he shouldn’t assume things like that of the fairer sex.

“There, I hope you can read it,” she giggled,

“Just.” the blonde replied. There was no phone number so Collins assumed she didn’t have one, not uncommon as he very well knew.

“Well I imagine they’ll send a letter out soon. Thanks for waiting around a bit to sort this out, you’ve no idea how relieving it is to me that someone can help.” Collins said as they all stood up.

“Oh of course! I love to help people, I didn’t know they’d done such a thing to you, but now I do know, I can’t just stand here and let them get away with it.” Stella said.

Collins was glad he could trust her.

The three boys wandered back to base after a few more rounds of drinks, not as late as Collins thought they’d be out but still a disrespectful hour. They tried not to trip up the stairs as the arrived, or at the very least do it quietly. The old building creaked as they walked along the corridors, Wingnut quietly opened his door and no sooner had it closed did the two blondes hear a crash, and then “fuck!” come from the other side. They could barely stifle a giggle, but kept walking knowing Wingnut had just bumped into something in his drunken state.

“Night mate,” Dawson said, and entered his own room once they’d reached it.

Collins remembered he was supposed to talk to Farrier about what had happened with Stella so he trudged past his door to the next one.

He tried to quietly open the door, not sure how successful he’d been which he attributed to his drunkenness. Collins wasn’t that bad, he’d definitely waltzed back to base more drunk than this, but that didn’t mean he was completely in control of himself now.

“Evening, lad.” Farrier murmured, looking up from, a book? The blonde hadn’t seen Farrier with a book before. Collins shut the door and walked over to the bed and snatched it playfully from Farrier, giving him a peck on the cheek.

“Yes, you can look at it?” Farrier laughed at Collins’ behaviour.

“Yae read?” he asked, flipping through the pages. It was a book on birds.

“I try to. Don’t usually, that’s one of Canfield’s that he’s given to me in the hopes of getting me to read more. I was mainly just looking at the pictures.” Farrier admitted.

“Can I have my book back?”

“Oh, yeah. ‘Course, sorry.” Collins handed it back, wobbling slightly as he stepped. There was the answer Farrier was looking for to explain the lad’s behaviour. Alcohol.

“So you’ve been drinking?” he asked, swinging his legs off the bed to stand. Collins stared, whilst the man was sitting in bed Collins assumed he was in full pyjamas under the blanket, but now he
saw that below the waist he was only in underwear. Farrier rolled his eyes and walked to put the book back on his dressing table. Collins couldn’t take his eyes off Farrier’s exposed legs. Strong, golden, and most definitely going to be instilled in Collins’ mind for the foreseeable future.

“Collins, relax. They’re just my legs,” Farrier chuckled, sitting back on the bed.

“Tell me about the lady. What did she say?” Farrier asked. Collins cleared his throat,

“Stella. She wants tae help. Got her address ‘ere.” he said, pulling the piece of paper out and giving it to the brunette. He took it and screwed his face up trying to decipher the words, turning the page sideways as the writing sloped off. He guessed this woman was not a secretary.

“Right. I’ll get this to Canfield tomorrow and we’ll send her a letter when we can. Good on you, lad” Farrier said. Collins was taking his shoes off,

“Ah, Collins. You can’t do that, put your shoes back on and get to bed.” Farrier smiled. Collins didn’t smile back, and he did not put his shoes back on, instead he also discarded his heavy coat. And of course he was wearing that damned blue turtleneck that Farrier had seen that night so long ago now at dinner, that turtleneck that clung so beautifully to his figure.

“I’ll come to bed, sure.” the blonde smirked. Farrier’s gut twisted at the words, and immediately he felt adrenalin pumping through his body. Collins walked over and lay down next to Farrier on the bed. His pupils were dilated, the brilliant blue now a thin ring around the black. Farrier lay a hand over Collins’ hip.

“You’re drunk.” he said plainly.

“So?” the blonde asked,

“So you’re not thinking straight, pet.” Farrier murmured, stroking the lad’s side up and down. Then with a hungry look in his eyes, Collins kissed him. It was unexpected, hard and needy. Farrier gripped the blonde’s hipbone as he kissed, pulling him in closer, unable to resist. Collins moaned and Farrier tried to swallow the sound as he kissed, he felt a hand come up onto his shoulder, pulling him closer. Collins got exactly what he wanted when Farrier rolled on top of him, weight pressing him down into the bed. The brunette felt bad doing this, Collins was drunk, but it felt so good. He cupped a hand to Collins’ face, and tried to drag his lips away from his. As Farrier reared his head up Collins sat up, refusing to break the kiss until Farrier pushed his chest down so that he lay beneath him.

“Farrier, why are yae stopping? Don’t yae want this?” Collins breathed, anything but innocence in his voice.

“Of course I want this, Collins. But not when you’re drunk, I want you to want me when you’re sober, okay?” he said, strain in his voice not going unnoticed by the blonde, who sat up again and reached up for another kiss. Farrier made some feeble attempt to stop it, but when he felt Collins’ tongue run along his bottom lip he couldn’t help but groan and push him back down into the mattress with his weight on top of him. Collins’ hands roamed Farrier’s back muscles over his pyjama top. Even through the cotton he could feel how strong the man on top of him was, and Collins liked that he knew he wouldn’t be able to overpower Farrier if he tried, that he wouldn’t be helpless. A thought that hadn’t so clearly presented itself in Collins’ mind before. His panting had gotten louder, then when Farrier’s tongue slithered across his own, and it took Collins’ breath away. He shivered against Farrier in anticipation, but Farrier seemed to have realised what was going on. He pulled away with a wet sound between their lips.
“Fuck,” Collins breathed,

“Collins, I need you to get to bed. Your own bed.” Farrier said, the blonde looked disappointed to say the least.

“I want this, I really do. But not when you’re drunk, and if you stay here I might just do something I regret doing while you’re in this state.” Farrier said, he sat up and pulled Collins into a sitting position next to him.

“Plus, who knows who’s out in the corridor. Not safe.” He said sadly, Collins stood up and collected his clothes.

“S’okeh, I understand.” he mumbled, Farrier wasn’t sure if he was just saying that because he was drunk or if he genuinely did understand. The blonde picked up his shoes and coat and wandered slowly to the door. He peered out, and threw a sleepy, drunk smile back at Farrier’s bare legs before he left the room.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): mentions of past hallucinations.
Well, hope everyone enjoyed this chapter, it was a little longer than usual! Thank you to everyone who leaves comments, they mean so much to me because I can interact with you lovely people! And thank you to everyone who leaves kudos, or is even just reading alone quietly!!

This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat.
Until next time, happy reading.
A Looming Departure

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday all! I've had a long day, I woke up at 5am to get to work at 6am. I finished at 1pm and literally went straight to uni, and wasn't home until 6:30pm!! I'm tired as heck but I'm glad I still made the time to upload this. Hope everyone's Mondays were ok!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a cool Sunday, November would be in a few days. The weather was colder, but the flying hadn’t ceased. The boys were racking their hours up to the golden 75, and they couldn’t be happier the closer they got to getting their wings. A letter had promptly been sent to Stella asking for a meeting between her, Collins and Canfield. She accepted, and it was today that she was to attend the meeting. All the boys on base were flitting about her as soon as she arrived, Collins felt bad for the lass as she clearly wasn’t enjoying the attention at all. The meeting went very quickly, Collins was pretty sure Canfield just wanted to meet her and make sure she knew what was happening. The date had been set for the expulsion, the 20th of December. Apparently, there was a lot more paperwork involved than Collins imagined, return of all uniforms, flight logbooks, discharging of military personnel, and a lot more garble that Collins was fairly certain Canfield was the only one in the room of the three of them who knew what he was talking about. There would be a sooner date to interview the three boys in question, and also separately interview Collins, both events tabled for the 15th of November. Then after that, Canfield had triangulated the visit of the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff from the Air Ministry, William Douglas, to be both for the reviewing and appointment of Gatwick as an official fighter station, as well as the final decision making regarding the three troublesome boys to all take place on the 1st of December. It was all snowballing, happening so fast but the blonde was glad. That said, Collins did feel bad that they were going to be expelled right before Christmas, and so close to getting their wings too, but when he thought about what they’d done to him any guilt was forgotten. Stella and Collins left the meeting together,

“Thanks for going through with all this Stella, I know yae don’t really know me, I really appreciate what you’re doin’.” Collins said to her in the hallway.

“I don’t have to know someone well to help them, Collins.” she said, a smirk on her face as she used his last name, something she was finding amusing to hear Canfield say during the meeting.

“Yer a good person, Stella.” Collins replied, and walked her to the front door of the base. She smiled kindly at the blonde and jabbed his arm playfully.

“Well, I’m probably playing at the bar for the foreseeable future I think,” she said,

“If I have the time I’ll come visit, otherwise we’ll see each other on the 1st of December, yeah?” the blonde said. he could tell Stella was nervous about all the formalities she would have to be part of, but nonetheless she didn’t show any signs of backing out.

“Yep, I’ll be there.” Stella said, and held her arms out for a hug which Collins gladly gave after the huge help she was being. He wasn’t sure yet if Stella fancied him or if she was just very friendly, but either way he liked her company.
After the meeting there was more flying to be done in the afternoon and it was in one of the Oxfords. Wingnut was full of excitement, it was bomber training after all. The three lads managed to get themselves into the same group as usual, plus Canfield. Wingnut had begun speaking to Canfield privately about his desires to transfer, so the man allowed him to pilot their flight today.

“Right Timson, both engines checked?” Came Canfield’s voice through the headsets to everyone,

“Yes.”

“Taxi out when safe.” The man said. Wingnut checked the airstrip for incoming planes, people walking, the coast was clear. He pushed the throttle lever forwards and the engines roared to life. Collins was the navigator today and Dawson was the wireless operator. They wouldn’t be communicating back to base but only within the plane itself. Canfield was hovering around checking everyone was on track, the plane began to rumble along the tarmac and soon was gathering speed. Sitting in his seat which was quite far from the nose, Collins couldn’t see the ground at all but he knew the exact moment the wheels left the earth. From his first plane flight to this one it was always unmistakable, absolutely unmissable. The sheer force of such a large mass moving upwards away from the earth pushed everyone down hard into their seats, coupled with the fact that Wingnut had been used to flying the fighter trainers so he took off at a steeper angle than was perhaps advisable, Collins’ neck was almost in pain from the downwards pressure.

“Ease off, lad.” he heard Canfield say over the intercom, he looked forward and the man was moving the control forwards a little to lessen the angle of the plane.

“Uh, sorry Canfield. Used to the fighter trainers I guess,” he said,

“It’s not to worry, nothing would have happened, just not so comfortable taking off at this angle.” he explained. The plane gained altitude, Timson careful not to sacrifice too much speed for height as they’d been told all about stalling in bombers, and how it wasn’t as easy to regain control of the plane as it was in fighters. Eventually, they reached 15,000 feet, the height at which they would train today.

“Collins, where are we lad?” Canfield’s voice crackled through the headphones in the helmet. The blonde checked the map in front of him,

“Over the fields still, are we not?” he asked,

“More specific than that!”

“Uh, over the fields and facing north?”

“Yes, that’ll do!” Canfield laughed. The rest of the flight was spent with Canfield lazily teaching some of the aspects to flying bombers, of which Wingnut was listening intently. They also took time to merely gaze out the front, it was easier to do in the bomber trainers, they weren’t as slight as the fighter trainers so one could almost forget about piloting for a few moments. The Harvards were very sensitive and nobody felt comfortable admiring the views in them in case the plane decided to fly through a pocket of air and drop a few feet, in a bomber these things were negligible. Timson liked that about the bigger planes, they were sturdy, he was always heavy handed with any sort of motor skill, so it made them much easier for him to fly properly. That, and he felt so much safer and less exposed in them. After about 45 minutes, it was time to turn the plane back around to land. They flew back over the fields and to base.

“You’ll be okay landing this one?” Canfield asked,
“Should be,” Wingnut laughed. He lined the plane up with the runway, let off the throttle enough that the weight of the plane began pulling it out of the air, while lowering the landing gear down. “Drop the nose a little more,” Canfield said, Timson did as instructed and at last, the familiar jolt of the plane touching down was felt, albeit clearly landing on the port wheel before the starboard, but a safe landing nonetheless. “Not perfect, but coulda been worse right?” Wingnut said, “It was very good actually, especially since you’ve been in the fighter trainers most of the time.” Canfield smiled at the lad. They all got out of the plane and took their kits off. Collins looked forward to owning his own soon. Soon. He thought, he’d be a qualified pilot soon. The thought alone was enough to send him giddy.

Later that night in the dining hall, which by now was cramped with half the tables being filled with radar technology, huge maps and clutter, the boys yet again spoke about Wingnut’s departure as they ate their vegetables. “So you’re absolutely sure.” Dawson said, “Yeah, I’ve talked to Canfield about it a few times, he doesn’t mind, he’s actually been in contact with Bomber Command for me to help with the transfer.” He said, Collins still wasn’t enjoying the prospects of his friend leaving. “Will we see you much?” he asked, “I don’t know. I’ll be living somewhere off base, there aren’t really any colleges like this one where there is board available, but surely we’ll both have time off yeah?” he asked around the table through noise of eating and chatter. “Yeah, hopefully you’re close to Gatwick though.” Dawson said. The two blondes shared a moment of sadness as Wingnut tucked into his food. A moment of knowing.

Everything would change once Timson was gone. “So is anyone actually sticking to having one shower a week?” Wingnut’s characteristically odd and out of the blue question broke the silence, Collins answered, “Yeah, yer meant to wash with a flannel at the sink every other day, but it’s too expensive for the base if everyone showers more than once.” He said, “Oh, I should probably stop then,” he grinned. “I mean, there’s nothing in place to police it.” Dawson pointed out, “Yae, but I feel bad wasting the base’s money, yae know?” Collins said. He genuinely did, and up in the highlands he was used to no showers at all, and a bath occasionally. It was the norm to wash at the sink in his house except for when they were able to boil enough water to make a bath worthwhile. Collins was glad he was an only child for that particular instance, there was never any squabble over who would get to bathe first while the water was warm. They didn’t have an overwhelming amount of money, no. Collins didn’t mind at all, and because of his upbringing, the showers here were heavenly, warm, and very peaceful he found, something he was not at all used to yet even after months of using them.

After dinner they played questions and commands for old time’s sake. Collins was in a particularly
nostalgic mood and Wingnut was at the forefront of his thoughts. Dawson and Collins of course preferred cards, but this childish game amused their friend to no end, so they played.

“Question or command, Dawson?” Timson asked.

“Question, I’m still scarred from being told to scream down the hallway that night” he laughed. A bottle of half finished alcohol had appeared, at the ready in case anyone backed out of a command.

“Okay, why do you fancy that skinny girl?” he asked.

“Donnae be rude about Stella,” Collins mumbled to the group,

“Yeah, she’s nice, and she’s not even that skinny. Even if she was, there’s nothing wrong with that.” Dawson said defensively.

“Hey mate, didn’t mean anything by it, just asking.” Wingnut said warily.

“Well, I suppose she’s sweet, but, I dunno. She’s kind of unique I guess, she didn’t look like she was trying to impress us all, she was just, happy being her.” He said. It was the first time Collins could remember Dawson being flustered. It was endearing.

The following Tuesday, it was finally November. The fact that it was the month that Anderson and his idiotic friends were to be expelled was so comforting to Collins, it had a profound effect on his ability to learn and pay attention in class, even though they still sat behind him in class, the knowledge that they’d be gone soon was relieving to say the least. Plus, everyone had now heard of the so-called Munich agreement, which to Collins’ limited knowledge of it, meant that Germany was given some land to please its tyrannical leader Hitler, and that they had been given that land to convince him not to make war over it. Collins never really read into politics at all and usually knew very little of what was going on, so that information had come from the broken description Wingnut had given him over breakfast, Dawson in too much laughter from the brunette’s shocking inability to explain anything properly to help explain it any better to Collins. The blonde was therefore unaware that Germany and Czechoslovakia were already at an undeclared low intensity war which had started on the 17th of September over said land, and unaware that Poland had moved its army units to the common border with Czechoslovakia in readiness.

It was raining hard, almost hail. Classes had finished for the day and Collins headed upstairs, bypassing his own room altogether in favour of Farrier’s. The brunette was inside, sitting at the little coffee table staring out at the grey skies and the rain pattering loudly against the glass. Collins shut the door quietly and walked up to Farrier, putting his hands on the man’s shoulders before leaning down and nuzzling into his neck.

“Hey Collins,” Farrier smiled, letting his head fall to the side so he could steal a kiss from the blonde.

“Hey yourself,” Collins smiled, and took the seat next to Farrier. The brunette loved how affectionate Collins was getting, he was so sweet and cuddly, especially when it was cold, it made Farrier feel like his heart was going to burst.

“Were yae thinking about somethin’?” Collins asked,

“Ah, nothing important, just worrying about the political climate,” Farrier chuckled.

“Yae need to stop worryin’ about that, it won’t change what happens.” Collins said, and reached a cold hand out to Farrier’s warm one.
“Might do,” Farrier smiled sadly. Collins stood up,

“I’ll be right back.” he said, before tip-toeing to the door and peeking out, slipping into the corridor when he was sure the coast was clear, Farrier could hear the lad’s own bedroom door open next to his over the hard rain. It was earlier than usual to be in Farrier’s room. The sun wasn’t even down, Collins checked his watch, only 15:48. He smiled at his own eagerness to see Farrier, and carried on doing what he was, which was collecting his sketchbook. He didn’t like to imagine Farrier worrying so much about the future, hopefully his drawings would calm the man down.

Collins returned looking nervous.

“Everything okay?” Farrier asked,

“Yes, everything is.” Collins said definitively. He was a little nervous to show Farrier his work, he’d seen a few here and there but not all of it. Collins had never gone through a full book of his work with anyone. He sat at the coffee table listening to the rain on the window. It was a beautiful sound, and the dull light that filled the room was calming. It wasn’t a strong light from a blue midday sky, just a bleak grey coming through the heavy clouds outside. He opened the book and gave it to Farrier.

“Look through this, maybe it’ll calm yae down.” he said quietly. Farrier carefully took the little book, it was getting scrappy from overuse, pages loose, the cover was warped, a few rips in the paper here and there. It was very well loved.

He smiled as he turned the first page to a thistle. Of course, what more could he expect from a Scotsman? It was very well drawn of course, a sharp lead pencil etching all the little details of the plant. Next Farrier turned to a drawing that appeared to be from a train window, the wooden frame was clear but the view was drawn very lightly and hazily.

“Uh, that was from my train ride doon here.” Collins mumbled, leaning over to look with Farrier.

“England or Scotland?” the man asked of the scene outside the window in the drawing,

“Scotland. Near the border though.” the blonde replied.

The next page Farrier flipped to was one of some flowers in a garden. It was incredulous how much detail the lad had put into this. Farrier huffed in amazement at the drawings. They were very, very good.

“How long have you been drawing?” he asked softly.

“Eh, lot of my life. Didnae have too many friends in school, would mainly sit by myself and draw.” Collins answered wistfully.

“Not that I minded bein’ a loner, I don’t mind my own company at all, in fact I think I’m great company!” he added. Farrier reached one hand out, other one still holding the book open, to rest on Collins’ leg.

“You are great company.” He mumbled as he scanned the book. His thumb caressed the material of Collins’ trousers as he smiled down at the drawing, then he retracted his hand to flip the page of the book once more. There were a lot of landscapes, some mountainous and obviously Scottish, others flat and English. There were drawings of houses in the suburbs of Gatwick, each brick deliberately sketched and detailed. As Farrier continued through the little book, there became more sketches of parts of the base, objects from Collins’ room such as his little clock, one drawing Farrier could remember being shown already. There were some of the night sky and at the bottom...
of the page, part of the building. Farrier recognised the view as being that from the windows in the
hallway outside their rooms. He smiled at the thought, and Collins leaned his head on Farrier’s
shoulder as he studied the stars drawn on the paper. There were drawings of the runways and little
sheds which could be seen from their bedroom windows. He was already halfway through the little
book, and now some planes were making their appearances on the pages, as well as bird’s eye
views, obviously which Collins had remembered from flying lessons. Farrier was getting near the
end of the book, when two drawings caught his interest. The first in the entire book of aspects of
people, the rest of it had been nature or objects. There was a crisp shirt collar and a dark tie, and the
beginnings of whoever’s neck was wearing the clothing. Then there was a sketch, looser in nature
than the others, much less refined, of a hand holding a pen which was writing on paper, and
another hand resting in a fist on the table beside the writing hand. He almost dismissed them before
he realised, they were of him. Farrier usually had his other hand in a fist while he wrote, it always
ended up that way due to concentrating on writing, it was the only detail that gave Collins’
drawings away. The brunette smiled warmly at the lad, who was blushing.

“Hope yae don’t think that’s weird,” he mumbled.

“I don’t. I think it’s lovely,” Farrier said. And he meant it, he was a little flustered, the drawings
were excellent, he was happy Collins felt so strongly as to make him the subject of two of them,
even though drawing people clearly wasn’t what Collins was interested in doing most of the time.
He turned the page to a proud drawing of the Hurricanes, all lined up together, the black and white
bellies visible on the closer ones. Farrier hummed, the boy had sure done the planes justice. He
turned the page again and it was another drawing of people, more complete than the ones of
Farrier, and much more obvious who it was. Three figures with their backs to the page, in full RAF
uniform. Two blondes, and one brunette. It was Collins and his friends. They were standing
together watching some planes fly in the sky above them, the image was more emotionally charged
than Farrier was expecting to find in this sketchbook, it tugged at his heartstrings to see the little
drawing of them all. He turned the page and realised he’d finished the book. The fact that Collins
had chosen to use his last page on his friends was touching.

“They were beautiful, Collins. All of them.” Farrier said, and handed the book back.

“Thanks” Collins smiled,

“Calmed yae down then?” he asked.

“Very much so.” the brunette breathed. He reached over and laced his fingers with Collins’ as he
smiled at the lad. Someone cared for him and not in the way Canfield did, this was very different.
Collins bringing his book of drawings to look at felt so personal, so special.

“Havnae shown anyone an entire book before.” the blonde muttered as if reading Farrier’s mind.
The older man’s lips twitched in sentiment and he squeezed Collins’ hand.

“I feel honoured,” he said.

“You’re the right person to show,” Collins said with a happy smile.

“Don’t happen to have any biscuits stashed away?” he added. Farrier chuckled,

“Not today, unfortunately. Think my admirer has gone shy after not getting anything back from
me,” he smiled.

Then their blue eyes locked, and in that moment, nothing else existed. Farrier leaned in slowly,
both of them smiling peacefully, and he kissed Collins on the lips. There was no urgency, he just
wanted to show Collins how much he appreciated him. And the blonde knew just how much, he could feel it, feel the emotion behind Farrier’s lips as they softly pressed against his own.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading, everyone, I love you all ❤️
My tumblr is s-n-o-w-p-i-e-r-c-e-r.tumblr.com if anyone wants to chat! (I'm trying to learn to embed hyperlinks into notes but sometimes I just fail ok sorry)
Until next time, happy reading ❤️
A Trip to Northolt

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday folks! As usual there are mountains of uni work for me to do but I have my priorities straight, upload Monday won't stop for anything (except when i lose track of how late it is and upload half past midnight heh)

I would strongly recommend you look up at least some pictures of an RAF link trainer before reading, things will make more sense.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The week had been filled with flying, both in fighter trainers and bomber trainers. Collins was finally getting used to Farrier’s voice over the radio enough that it didn’t send shivers down his spine whenever he heard it so intimately projected into his ears from the headset. The next week there was to be an excursion, attendance was compulsory. The entire group of new students were going to RAF Northholt base in London proper. As Canfield described it, it was unlike Gatwick in the sense that it wasn’t a boarding school, and it was more or less a few sheds and planes. They had something called a link trainer at Northholt though, the purpose of the excursion. Collins wasn’t entirely sure what to expect but from what he gathered it was an indoor fake plane which one sat in, and it was connected to the floor, and a lid was closed over the cockpit so all you could see were the controls, not the room around you. It was meant for testing navigational skills as well as general flight handling. There was some sort of table on which a map was projected, and the flight path the student in the link trainer was taking. The instructors could observe the table to see if said student was on track, but the student would have no clue how well he’d gone until he’d gotten out of the contraption and walked over to the table to see his progress. It all sounded terribly confusing and unnecessary to Collins, who was happy going up in the bomber trainers with the window flaps down to do navigation. But, the officers all seemed very much in favour of the link trainer.

“Nah they’re fun,” Farrier chatted to Collins on the Friday night before the Monday on which they’d go to Northholt. They lay on his bed together and listened to the rain,

“Sounds confusing, why not just go use the bomber trainers?” the blonde asked. Farrier took one of Collins’ hands in his own, tracing circles into his knuckles.

“The link trainer has no risk involved, you’re not flying. That, and its an amalgamation of all different kinds of planes in terms of handling. The bombers get you used to that specific plane, the link trainer doesn’t. It trains you for all of them.” He said. Collins huffed, of course Farrier was right, but he didn’t want to go on an excursion.

“I donnae wanna go,” he mumbled.

“Why ever not? It’s fun, like I said.” Farrier replied, sitting up to reach for a cigarette. Collins considered, why didn’t he want to go? He stayed silent as he thought about it,

“Want one?” Farrier offered a cigarette. Collins nodded, he hadn’t smoked in a while, maybe he’d like it more when he did it with Farrier. The man brought a small glass ashtray to sit between them and lit both cigarettes. Collins took it and puffed, continuing to think about why he didn’t want to
go. It dawned on him,

“I don’t wanna go because I’m scared of everythin’ escalating.” he said.

“You may have to be more specific, it’s a one day excursion, pet.” Farrier said as he tapped his smoke on the edge of the ashtray.

“I guess, goin’ on excursion first, wings next, Wingnut leavin’, then I’ll be off to an Operational Training Unit somewhere.” he mumbled, the smoke was somewhat calming his nerves, but also making his head a little woozy.

“You wish you could stay here at Gatwick forever?” Farrier asked.

“Mm-hmm.”

“Become a peacetime officer then, you’ll spend every day here teaching others!” he laughed. Collins didn’t look very amused with that idea. Farrier reached his free hand over and rested it on Collins’ knee.

“Collins, you really think I’d let you get transferred to an OTU that isn’t here at Gatwick?” he asked softly. The blonde’s eyes closed in content. The future had been hazy in his mind up until now, knowing the small size of Gatwick and being unsure if there would be a new OTU here at any time in the future.

“Didnae know you had power over it,” he said.

“’Course I bloody do, pet. I am a Squadron Leader after all.” Farrier smiled, and so did Collins.

“Well, that’s one less thing tae worry about.” He said.

“C’mon, the excursion is nothing to worry about. Are you worried you won’t do well? Is that on your mind?” Farrier asked,

“A little,”

“Well that’s just silly. I’ve already told you you’re a great flier, link trainers are easy.” Farrier said, inhaling deeply from the cigarette. Sitting here with Farrier was doing wonders for Collins’ nerves.

“I still don’t want Wingnut to go to Bomber Command,” he muttered and put his cigarette out in the ashtray, Farrier followed suit and moved said ashtray off the bed.

“It’s what’s best for him. If he thinks he’ll do better over there, he will. Trust that he knows that much about himself, Collins.” Farrier said, shuffling closer to Collins.

“It’s not that, I just enjoy his company. He’s one of my best friends. My only friends.”

“You’ll still see him here and there. Send him letters if you want, plenty of lads do that to their mates in other sections,” Farrier said, and looked into Collins’ eyes,

“At least you get the chance to say goodbye to him, Jack. Not everyone is that lucky.” he murmured.

Collins swallowed hard, he didn’t want to think about loss. He rolled over onto his belly,

“You’re right,” he huffed, and then lay his head on the pillow. It smelled wonderfully of Farrier, it was making Collins feel so peaceful he might fall asleep. A warm hand stroked his cheek, and the
mattress dipped as Farrier rolled over too, producing a small wince as he rolled onto his front. Collins lifted his head up in surprise at the sound,

“Yae alright?” he asked,

“Yeah I’m fine” Farrier smiled warmly. Collins wished he really was fine, it was still gnawing at the blonde’s mind all the things Farrier had told him about himself, and he hated that there was still shrapnel inside him, a physical ever present reminder of the events.

“I wish you could sleep here,” Farrier said softly.

“I could,” Collins replied, heart racing at the idea.

“Nah, sometimes Canfield speaks to me in the morning before we go down for brekkie. Wouldn’t want him finding you in here.” Farrier said, Collins pursed his lips in annoyance.

Then Monday rolled around, and it was time to visit Northolt.

“You know Dowding will be there, he frequents a lot of the bases and when Northholt told him we were coming, he got excited.” Canfield said at the breakfast table,

“I know,” Farrier said, absently staring into space thinking about Dowding’s precense as he nearly missed his mouth with his spoon of cereal. Canfield laughed at him.

“Seems like it’ll be an interesting day then,” Wingnut said,

“Indeed,” Dawson replied.

Breakfast was over fast, and soon the boys were all anxiously waiting in the hall by the front door for Farrier and Canfield. They appeared from Canfield’s office in full uniform, hats tucked under their arms. Collins looked at the floor to avoid being jabbed by one of his friends for staring or blushing. He was discreetly jabbed anyway by Dawson for looking at the floor, seemed it was inescapable.

“Right lads, off to the train!” Canfield said, and at those words the group began to move out of the building.

There was a sea of blue uniforms as they walked down the street, occupying the entire road and footpaths, the air was stiff and cold in the morning and the only sounds which could be heard above the footsteps of a hundred men were the occasional chirp of a nearby bird. They were still learning to march, but it wasn’t like they were going to be practicing marching to the train station. They arrived and in a very disorderly manner much to the officers’ dismay, all got their tickets.

The train was an overground to Collins’ happiness, it was much more enjoyable when he could see the surroundings rather than travel through an underground tunnel. The scenery was stunning, Collins would have drawn it if he had a new sketchbook to draw in. As the engine chugged along and the men all sat murmuring in the wooden carriages, Farrier thought back to what Collins had said that day about containment and release.

It was actually working.

No longer were they finding it so incredibly difficult not to flirt in public, to break uncomfortable eye contact, to act normal. It was easier to act ordinary and relaxed around each other. The blonde bastard was right. It made Farrier happy and mildly annoyed at the same time, that Collins had been correct in assuming the best for them both was to initiate something, going against everything
Farrier had been saying the whole time. He smiled out the window,

“What is it?” Canfield asked,

“Oh, nothing.” Farrier muttered. Canfield knew much about him, but he’d always have secrets from the man, secrets just for him, and now secrets that he shared with Collins.

The train pulled into the station and the group walked to Northolt. It was a flat field of very short grass with a few large sheds, hangars and a very small building that looked like actual classrooms. Canfield wasn’t wrong.

Air Chief Marshall Dowding was on the path leading towards all the sheds and buildings. Shite was the only word in Collins’ mind. He scrambled to remember exactly how to salute, resisting the urge to look for Farrier who was right at the front with Canfield. The two older men walked up the path, saluted at once, and Dowding saluted back.

“Rest, men.” he said.

They dropped their salutes neatly. Canfield reached to shake Dowding’s hand,

“Good to see you, Air Chief Marshall,” he said, Dowding shook his hand sternly,

“As for you, Canfield, and also you Farrier.” he said, a hint of a smile in his eye.

Dowding reached for Farrier’s hand which he took and shook also.

“Excellent to be here today. Thank you for allowing all the students the opportunity, Air Chief Marshall,” Farrier said,

“No bother at all. The state Gatwick is in these lads need all the help they can get!” he laughed. Farrier fought to keep his annoyance from showing on his face. Dowding was standing in front of a lot of sheds, Farrier thought. Gatwick was much better than this place, it was a lovely old building which was once the site of a beautiful school, turned into an RAF college. Just because Gatwick RAF didn’t pick the best of the best students from a sea of applications like the only other RAF college, Cranwell, didn’t mean it was invalid, certainly didn’t mean it was as awful as Dowding made it out to be. Farrier suppressed a sigh.

The two officers walked off into one of the sheds, and Dowding resumed a salute. The lads got into single file rather easily, and as each one walked up the path, they held a salute for three steps before, and three steps after reaching the Air Chief Marshall, as was customary when saluting whilst walking. Collins saluted just like everyone else, wishing he was allowed to look at Dowding properly whilst doing so. But alas he kept his eyes firmly fixated on the nothing in front of him. Then he was inside, and was dropping his salute.

The shed was essentially an empty gymnasium. Then Collins spied some older looking pilots marching past in perfect sync outside the window. He felt his heart in his chest, felt out of place and not ready enough to be here. The entire group eventually got inside after saluting Dowding, as was customary when saluting whilst walking. Collins saluted just like everyone else, wishing he was allowed to look at Dowding properly whilst doing so. But alas he kept his eyes firmly fixated on the nothing in front of him. Then he was inside, and was dropping his salute.

The shed was essentially an empty gymnasium. Then Collins spied some older looking pilots marching past in perfect sync outside the window. He felt his heart in his chest, felt out of place and not ready enough to be here. The entire group eventually got inside after saluting Dowding, possibly a more daunting task than flying in the awful winter conditions they’d been having as of late. Right in the middle of the room was the fabled link trainer. It looked like a poorly made plane with a metal hood over the top instead of a clean canopy, stuck onto a metal shaft attached to the ground with several cables running off in all directions. Nearby Collins saw the table on which the link trainer’s illusory location was shown.

“Now, Gatwick cohort. No doubt you know of the link trainer. This is a fine piece of modern technology, and today you will have the privilege of trying it.” Dowding addressed the group in a
The first to go in was actually Canfield. He got up into the contraption and the lid shut. The trainer began to move, like some sort of ride. The group heard Canfield laughing to himself from the inside.

“This is fun!” he shouted. Farrier shook his head as he walked over to the table to observe. Canfield was more of a child than he was these days.

“Canfield, I’ll need you to make a 90 degree turn to port!” Dowding said loudly. Farrier watched the projected map on the table, a dot was appearing in the direction Canfield was ‘flying’ in the trainer, and it was leaving a trail to show where he’d been. It was fascinating, and sure enough it turned sharply to the left.

“Up to 15,000 feet,” Dowding requested. On the edge of the map were several numbers, they flipped over as the trainer gained imaginary altitude to display the altitude and the airspeed.

Canfield only had a short run, he knew how to fly a plane already. The boys all lined up to try the trainer. Anderson had pushed his way to the front of the line with Johnson and Charles in tow, and it actually gave Collins a lot of joy to see the boy so excited to try the link trainer, knowing it would all be for nothing. Judging by the way the three troublesome men had been acting, they hadn’t the slightest idea that their lives were about to change, and any chances of a career with the RAF would be in the gutter for them.

“What are you smiling about?” Dawson murmured to Collins,

“They’ll be out of here soon enough.” he replied. Dawson slapped his back in gladness, and soon everyone settled as Anderson climbed into the link trainer. Farrier and Canfield were stood around the table watching the dot as it presented itself on the map, where Canfield’s dot was now completely gone. It was a sort of light emitting contraption, Farrier realised upon looking underneath the table. Of course, nobody who wasn’t standing at the table really knew how well the man inside the trainer was doing, but it was nonetheless interesting to watch the thing move about and whir as it was controlled from the inside.

Everyone was having a turn of around four minutes, “barely enough to determine anything about actual flying abilities,” as Dowding had put it, but there were roughly one hundred of them and if they wanted to be done within the day, it had to be that way. Collins, Dawson and Wingnut were unfortunately near the end of the group, and by the time half of the line had gone and had their turn, the rest of the line now sitting on the slightly dusty wooden floor instead of standing, it had already been around three hours.

Collins was starving, it was lunch time. They shuffled forwards on the floor as yet another student clambered out of the contraption for a very brief talk about his progress at the map table.

“Ave half a mind to ask if I can go get lunch, but I don’t know any of the stores around here.” Collins murmured to Wingnut.

“I’ll come with. Hey Dawson, want lunch?” he asked the other blonde,

“Sort of, but won’t we lose our place in line?” he said.

“Probably, I’m starving though.” Collins murmured, the gym was fairly quiet save for the mechanical sounds from the trainer and Dowding’s booming voice.

“Should we go up and ask if we can go?” Wingnut suggested.
“Yeah, let’s do it. Come on,” Dawson stood up and brushed his trousers down. Everyone looked at the three as they walked up to the map table where the three senior officers were watching intently at the small dot moving. Farrier looked up to see Collins and friends standing awkwardly at the side of the table. Their eyes were all following the little dot on the table like dogs following a stick being waved in front of them.

“Yes?” Farrier said, all three jolted.

“Eh, we were wonderin’ if we could maybe leave to find some lunch? We’d come right back.” Collins asked.

“Have you no manners, boy? Address your senior officer properly, now!” Dowding snapped. Collins was already pale but he was fairly certain his face had lost all pigmentation at that. He was scared into a salute, and he heard his friends follow suit behind him. Canfield looked at Farrier, who looked back at Canfield. They both chuckled,

“Rest, boys” Farrier laughed, he and Canfield hadn’t saluted back, the three lads dropped their salutes, still terrified of Dowding.

“Farrier?” Dowding asked calmly, though Collins could hear clear irritation through his strained voice.

“Dowding, with all respect, they’ve barely had any practice saluting, marching, addressing.” He said,

“You have, and you too Canfield. What’s the matter with you all at Gatwick? You treat it like it’s just a school with no military involvement! Salute, I say!” he said sharply, and saluted, Farrier and Canfield did the same, and as was customary even though they’d just done it already, Collins, Dawson and Wingnut saluted back. Once they all dropped their salutes, Canfield addressed Dowding,

“Now. Surely the lads can go get a bite to eat, they’ve been waiting in line three hours!” he chuckled.

“Yes, off you go lads. But nobody is saving your spot, you’ll be in the trainer last.” He said angrily.

“That’s fine, thank you.” Collins said, unsure if the words had all tumbled out of his mouth too fast or too heavily accented to be understood. The three stalked off out the door.

“Easy on them Dowding, they only started in May this year.” Farrier said.

“They’re not up to scratch at all. You will up the training.” He said. Farrier took a breath and crossed his arms, barely noticing the lad climbing out of the trainer and walking over to them. Dowding gave the boy a sentence or so about his flying, he hadn’t actually said anything positive to any of them, even though they were all fine. Canfield rested a hand on Farrier’s shoulder, well aware he was about to kick off at Dowding. The older man shook his head, and Farrier’s eyes said please, just this once. Canfield remained stoic, and when Farrier finally sighed and uncrossed his arms, shoving his hands in his pockets instead, he took his hand off the man’s shoulder.
This one was a bit longer and more plot heavy than the chapters have been as of late, but you can't blame a history buff for getting lost in this stuff!
It's always interesting when Dowding features in a chapter, writing a real person into a fic is an interesting experience.
As always, thank you all for reading and supporting me and my lil (big) fic!!

This is my tumblr if anyone wants to talk dunkirk with me!

Until next chapter, happy reading 💖
Collins, Dawson and Wingnut walked out of the training shed and back down the path to the street. The air was still crisp, the skies still grey. They didn’t have a clue where they would find food, so they aimlessly walked along the footpath. Suddenly Collins was hit with emotion, related to Wingnut’s transfer. He took a sharp breath and tried to continue walking with the others, but it was hard to pretend nothing was on his mind.

“Hope we find something soon,” Dawson said. The skies began to open up, tiny raindrops flew through the air, not yet heavy enough to fall downwards. The three walked along with hands shoved in pockets, noses getting cold, until they found what appeared to be the main drag of the area. Stores selling food, clothing, mechanical parts, all along one windy cobblestone street with barely a car in sight. Wingnut spotted somewhere advertising ‘warm food’ so they hurried in and were greeted by smells of rich, hearty soups and assorted lunches.

The three sat inside looking out through the window at what was now actual rain, they reasoned that the first around fifty students took three hours to get through their turns in the link trainer, so if they were okay with going last, they had three hours to kill until it would be their turns. To accommodate for other students who may have left for lunch too, they decided two hours out and they’d go back.

“This is probably the best soup I’ve ever had, excepting ma’s homemade beef stew,” Wingnut said, he’d ordered a beef and vegetable soup which looked incredibly filling, Dawson and Collins had opted for sandwiches which had been toasted and were piping hot. Collins was struggling to eat it due to the temperature, was probably going to burn his mouth, but it was so delicious and warm, and he was so hungry.

“You guys are the best!” Wingnut said, he’d stopped having his soup and was sitting proudly between the blondes. Collins put his food down,

“We’re gonnae miss yae.” he said, trying to smile.

“That we will, my friend.” Dawson said,

“But you’re moving onto better things, Wingnut. It’s gonna be fun, and it’s not like we won’t ever see you,” Dawson reasoned.

That made Collins feel a little better, Dawson was good at that. They sat and ate in comfortable silence until they’d finished. Collins was just concentrating on enjoying Wingnut’s loud, often hilarious and always amazing company. Dawson was watching Collins pick at the crust of his sandwich, he’d eaten it very quickly but halfway through he’d started just fiddling, like he wasn’t hungry after complaining of being starving, his whole demeanor had changed in fact. Dawson noticed things Wingnut didn’t, he was more in tune with the subtleties of other people than the brunette. He wanted to say something to Collins, but thought it better to wait for a more private
“You lads excited to try the trainer?” Wingnut asked, finishing his soup. Collins realised he was the only one still eating. He cleared his throat,

“Kinda, sounds like a regular plane but yae cannae see anythin’,” he said.

“Yeah, but it should be interesting to see how we go.” Dawson replied.

“I think it’ll be disorientating, it’ll show us if we really are as good as we think, not being able to rely on sight.” Wingnut said. The blondes agreed. Collins forced himself to finish his toasted sandwich, but he wasn’t hungry anymore.

“Say Wingnut, we should all go out before you go to bombers. You leave just after the graduation ceremony yae?” he asked.

“That’s right.” the brunette replied.

“Well we should make a point of doin’ something. Make sure nothing gets in the way so we can have a night oot,” Collins said,

“Definitely, if not more than one!” Wingnut laughed and threw an arm around each of his friends.

“Let’s go out tonight!” he said in typical Wingnut fashion. It was Monday.

“Yae know what the day is?” Collins laughed, god he’d miss this whacky lad.

“I know what day it is. It’s partying day!” he said. Dawson shook his head,

“Anything for you, Wingnut. Gotta make the most of your last days in fighters, so whatever you say goes!” he laughed.

“Whatever I say? In that case Dawson, go dance in the rain!” he laughed. Dawson stared at him with disbelief in his blue eyes. It was pouring. Then slowly he got up, much to the shock of Wingnut and Collins. He flashed a cheeky grin before walking out into the wet street and standing directly in front of the window his friends still sat at. Wingnut and Collins exchanged looks before Dawson indeed began to dance. He flung his arms around and span in circles in the street, the rain plastering his hair to his head and soaking his uniform. He had a huge smile on his face, it was pure happiness. He danced and danced, jumping about and flailing to an imaginary beat until finally, he walked tiredly back inside.

“There ya go mate,” he panted at Wingnut before sitting back down, dripping onto the floor and looking sheepishly at the wet trail of footsteps he’d left in the shop.

“I didn’t think you’d do it!” Wingnut laughed.

“It’s all about you mate, whatever you want, it’ll happen. The least we can do after all the laughs you’ve given us.” Dawson breathed, exhausted from his dancing. It seemed Collins had been roped into the game without expressing permission, not that he’d back down from this.

“Rightio then,” Wingnut rubbed his hands together.

“Collins, take the plates and my bowl back to the counter, but no hands.” he said. Dawson snorted.

“Aight lads, cannae be too hard,” the Scot smiled. Wingnut’s soup bowl went on top of Dawson’s plate, which he then precariously balanced on his head. He held his own plate in his mouth. With
the other two sniggering, he walked slowly to the counter, bending down to place his plate down on it from his mouth, being so tall it was a difficult task, then the lady behind the counter took the other items off his head for him while laughing to herself. Dawson was in stitches, Wingnut had an expression of sheer shock, like he’d just discovered he had a superpower, it being that Dawson and Collins did whatever he said today. They left the store soon after, clinging to the walls where stores had overhanging sunshades to escape the rain. They didn’t want to go back to the shed, they’d be sitting in line for over an hour still.

“Let’s go exploring near the Northolt base!” Wingnut said, the blondes shrugged, and so the young men walked around under the trees, through long grass around the outskirts of the land that was Northolt RAF.

Farrier yet again checked his wrist where his watch used to sit. Drat. He needed to get another watch and soon. He wanted to know where Collins and friends were, it didn’t take this long to get lunch.

There wasn’t much around where they explored, but at least the trees offered coverage from the rain. Wingnut had been listing off silly commands for his friends non stop,

“Collins, eat grass!” he laughed as his brown hair dripped water onto his nose.

Collins bobbed down, grabbed a few long strands of grass and ate them. They didn’t taste all that bad, it was just grass, but it amused Wingnut to no end. He doubled over laughing, and once again Collins felt a pang in his gut, watching Timson in this pure bliss, it was miserable that he wouldn’t get to see this every day. Farrier was right, at least he got to say goodbye to Wingnut, instead of reading a generic report from the air force which had probably been mass printed with a space for someone to write the name of the unfortunate sod who was KIA. He pushed the thought from his mind immediately, but as usual he wasn’t able to hide his emotions. Dawson was looking at him caringly while Timson continued his laughing fit, now leaning against a tree without a care in the world. Collins shook his head and tried to smile, Dawson dropped it, but he’d be asking the Scot what was wrong later that night, he made a mental note to do so before joining in the laughter.

“Should we go to London city centre? Like to the Strand maybe?” Wingnut asked after his laughter had finally ended.

“As much as I wanna please you mate, the train there takes an hour, and we have to be back in there in an hour,” Dawson said, pointing in the direction of the shed.

“You’re probably right, as much as I wanna mess with you guys, I don’t wanna get in too much trouble. I wanna go to London with you two again before I transfer though, in case things get hectic and we can’t find time when I’m in bombers.” he said.

“Kill two birds with one stone, go in for a party tonight,” Collins said.

“Brilliant! Okay boys, tonight, we are going into London centre to party.” Wingnut said definitively.

Somehow, they spent almost another hour walking through the wet grass under the trees, being told to eat various leaves, grass, even dirt in Dawson’s case, to dance, to sing, climb the trees, and a whole assortment of things by Wingnut.

It was time to go back to class.

They trudged directly through the long wet grass until they finally reached where it had been
trimmed back, their uniforms would not thank them for all this wet grass-walking, the bottoms of their trousers were especially saturated, from not only being rained on but walking through overgrown grass for an hour.

They walked inside the shed, bedraggled and giggling. Farrier looked disapprovingly at them before they took a seat on the floor at the end of the line, which was considerably shorter than last they saw. Farrier walked over to them, leaving Dowding and Canfield to assess the students in the trainer for a while.

“Just a quick lunch, boys?” he asked, arms crossed glancing down at them. They looked sheepish, all trying to hide a smile. The man chuckled and shook his head,

“You’re all drenched, so I hope whatever you did was worth that.” he said, and walked back to the table. He wasn’t mad, more amused.

Finally it was their turn in the trainer. Dawson took off his blazer as he didn’t want to wet the trainer too much, and it wasn’t like he could take his trousers off. Dowding barked his instructions, it seemed he’d gotten angrier, who wouldn’t after yelling at people for hours on end? Dawson got in and minutes later he got out and had a chat at the table, Collins noticed the boy was still dripping water. He chuckled to himself before getting up to have his turn, also removing his blazer, his shirt was somewhat wet merely from touching the heavy soaked wool. Farrier stared the mapping table down, he didn’t need to see Collins in a damp shirt right now, he’d never hear the end of it from Canfield. The lad climbed into the link trainer with his long legs, and shut the hood. Dowding went through the same movements he had with every other student. It was interesting, sitting inside. It was a normal dashboard like the other training planes, except he couldn’t see outside. Collins followed the instructions as best he could, it really was disorientating not being able to see the outside and when he climbed out and walked over to the table, he got worried as he looked at Dowding’s expression.

“Almost got the turning, need to focus more on the altitude.” was all he said. Collins nodded his head,

“Thank you,” he mumbled and walked off.

As Wingnut went to get into the trainer, seemingly unaware that his two friends had taken their blazers off as not to get it wet and therefor going in with full soaked uniform, Farrier caught Collins’ gaze and nodded, silent confirmation that his training had been fine.

On the train back the rain turned into hail. It pattered on the glass windows as the train rattled along. Collins was actually somewhat tired but he didn’t want to disappoint Wingnut so he shook himself awake, they were going to party tonight, for whatever reason.

They arrived back and the sun was almost down, it really was a full day excursion. Collins flopped onto his bed after taking off his wet clothes in favour of a warm turtleneck and soft trousers, and fell asleep. He didn’t mean to, but the all that walking in the cold had made him tired.

Farrier didn’t know where the lad was, but knew it wasn’t his place to be snooping around looking for him. Luckily it was almost dinner time, so he occupied himself for a short while with cleaning his office.
And that wraps up another week's update, time flies! Thank you all for reading along, I am ever thankful for your support 💖 Here is my [tumblr](https://www.tumblr.com).

Until next chapter, happy reading 💖
Staying In

Happy Monday folks! As usual I’ve had a packed day, but uploading a chapter makes me feel so happy, so I always find time to.

Dawson and Wingnut had no clue where Collins had gone, his door was locked, there was no answer and he hadn’t been at dinner. They were scouring the base for him, when they ran into Farrier.

“Mister Farrier?” Wingnut said, the man laughed.

“Yes Mister Timson?” Farrier said, Dawson tried to hide a snort.

“We can’t find Collins, do you know where he is?” Wingnut asked, unaware that Farrier had just mocked him.

“How should I know where the lad is? No idea, sorry boys” he smiled. Farrier continued walking to his room, wondering where the blonde was also. He’d missed him at dinner. Once in his room, Farrier got his answer. He walked close to their shared wall, the wall he knew Collins’ bed was against, and heard the faintest of snores. He smiled to himself, Collins must have collapsed after the day out.

Dawson and Wingnut felt bad going out without Collins, so they sat in Dawson’s room playing cards and chatting, they assumed Collins was asleep, it seemed the most reasonable explanation.

“ Been asleep for a while, do you think something’s wrong?” Wingnut asked.

“I don’t think so, he’s probably tired from walking around all day in the rain. I’m tired too.” the blonde replied.

“ Dawson, how long do you have to date a girl to go to the next level?” Wingnut asked without any warning that he was about to change the subject.

“You mean sex?”

“Mmhmm,”

Dawson chuckled.

“It’s probably different for each girl!” he smiled,

“But it’s just when you’re both comfortable with it, in my mind there isn’t a set date that it’s okay to do it.” he continued.

“Uh, okay.” Wingnut replied, sounding very unsure.

“Why?” Dawson asked,
“Well, I want to, but I dunno if Lucy does too.” he said.

“I’m gonna be honest mate, I don’t know what you did to charm her, but good work!” the blonde laughed. Wingnut went red.

“If she’s acting like she’s not ready then don’t force anything, just go with her pace, ya know?” Dawson said,

“Yeah, I will.” the brunette replied.

“Maybe you should ask Collins what he thinks whenever he wakes up,” Dawson chuckled.

It was at 20:45 that Collins woke. He bolted out of bed and ran to Dawson’s room. He banged loudly on the wood, forgetting people were probably getting ready to sleep soon. He heard two different laughs from the other side. Dawson opened the door,

“Mate, I’m sorry. I fell asleep and, Wingnut I didnae mean to ruin our London party night!” Collins blurted, still half asleep.

“No worries Collins. We had plenty of fun playing cards without you anyway. Another night, yeah?” the brunette said. Collins sat with them on the floor and was dealt his own cards. At least they still played this fairly regularly, with all the different training going on this was one of the rare stabilities in Collins’ life. This, and Farrier.

“So Dawson and I wanted to ask you,” Wingnut began, Collins put his cards down to listen.

“How long should a lad wait to go the next step with his girlfriend?”

“I’m gay, Wingnut.”

That sentence caused the brunette to laugh,

“I know mate, but surely you’ve got some sort of idea.” Wingnut said,

“I didn’t mean to offend you,” he added.

“No you didn’t offend me. But I really do have no clue, not like I’ve had a proper relationship before.” the blonde admitted as he went red thinking about Farrier.

“Ah, well Dawson here says there’s no certain time, that it depends on the girl” Wingnut continued,

“Sounds about right, yae.” Collins replied quietly, looking at his cards wasn’t helping to take the colour out of his cheeks.

“You alright mate?” Dawson asked. Collins probably looked slightly concerning, red in the face staring down his cards and barely breathing.

“Oh, yeah mate, I’m fine.” he said, trying to act more normal. Wingnut chimed in,

“He’s thinking about Farrier,” he said in a sing-song voice whilst grinning and elbowing Collins.

“Ey, knock it off ya eejit.” he said harshly. Wingnut did knock it off after a giggle.

Soon after the game had ended, Wingnut went to bed. They were all tired, Collins just happened to be the only one with so little self-control that he actually went to nap beforehand. The two blondes
sat on Dawson’s floor,

“What was up when we were being stupid out under the trees today?” Dawson asked quietly. Sometimes Collins found it hard to talk to Dawson, he was so nice that Collins felt like he was burdening him.

“Ah, nothin’” he said, Dawson put a hand on his shoulder.

“Tell me, please?” he removed his hand. Collins sighed.

“I just donnae want Wingnut to leave, that’s all. Seeing him so happy today made me realise how much I’ll miss him.” Dawson just looked sadly at Collins. they both felt the same way.

“At least we’ll see him around,” Dawson murmured. Collins nodded.

“Can’t believe he got with Lucy, I’m still gobsmacked about that.” Dawson said with a smile.

“Agreed. Didnae think he’d find a lass, what with his inability to speak to any of ‘em” Collins smiled back.

“And you, and Stella, eh?” he added.

“Ah she’s pretty, I don’t see how I’m gonna get to know her though,” Dawson said rubbing the back of his neck,

“Yae never know.” Collins said.

“No, you never do. I’m hopeful, but we’ll see.” Dawson said as he stood.

“So, on the topic of romance,” he said as Collins stood too. Just when the Scot had managed to fight the heat from his cheeks it returned as Dawson asked his next question,

“Do you still fancy him?”

After a split second decision to be honest with Dawson, since he was always so kind to Collins, the blonde nodded measuredly as he looked down at the floor.

“Just asking mate, I’m sorry, we don’t have to talk about it again.” Dawson said,

“It’s okeh, we can talk about it sometimes, but not all the time,” Collins said.

“I am sorry nothing can happen between you two. But, I do support your feelings for him, Collins.” Dawson said. Collins had no clue if it was obvious from his shocked face that something was indeed happening between them, but Dawson didn’t comment even if he had noticed. Collins was very surprised at how supportive Dawson was, in fact both of his friends. He had never expected anyone to show him any kindness on this subject.

“Thank you,” Collins said, finally making eye contact with his friend. Dawson pulled him in for a hug. It was warm and grounding, as Dawson’s always were.

Collins trudged back past his own room, checked the corridor as usual, and slipped inside Farrier’s, who had now decided to always leave his door unlocked, for Collins.

“Evening, pet,” the man smiled. He was sitting in bed smoking, already in his pyjamas. Collins sighed and let a tired smile slip onto his face as he kicked his shoes off.
“You slept through dinner. I could hear you snoring.” Farrier smiled and put the cigarette out, moving his ashtray off the bed.

“Oh, sorry.” Collins smiled, his dimples catching Farrier off guard for a moment. Sometimes, somehow, Farrier spent so much time looking at Collins that he forgot to take a step back, and realise how very attractive the blonde really was.

“What?” the blonde said, noticing Farrier staring.

“Nothing, as I’ve told you before, you’re beautiful Collins.” he said.

“Now get over here,”

Collins plonked himself down on the bed next to Farrier and was pulled by a strong arm around his shoulders, until they sat with their sides pressed together.

“You did well in the trainer today,” the brunette murmured into Collins’ golden locks.

“Thanks, Dowding didnae seem to think so.” Collins huffed in amusement.

“Ah he said the same stuff to everyone, don’t worry.” Farrier said.

“Yae know Wingnut is with Lucy, the air transport girl?” he said. Farrier started laughing, a hearty laugh from deep in his belly.

“I find it hard to believe that, Collins” he said quietly, taking the blonde’s hand in his.

“It’s true! He asked me an’ Dawson tonight how long tae wait tae fuck her!” Collins said, Farrier wheezed in laughter.

“And how long should he?” the brunette asked.

“I didnae know, Dawson said just wait till she’s actin’ ready”

“Yeah that’s probably for the best,” Farrier said. He’d all but given up trying to stop Collins calling Timson that stupid nickname.

“Farrier?” Collins asked, his blue eyes looked worried.

“What is it, lad?”

“I need tae tell you somethin’” he said, shuffling to face Farrier more.

“It was never a relationship with feelings, it was just messin’ around, but… There was someone.” he said, looking down to their still interlocked hands.

“I expected there would be at least one, you’re a very attractive man Collins,” Farrier said, he didn’t seem fazed, which confused Collins as he’d been assuming it would be a big deal to Farrier. He blushed at the compliment and cleared his throat,

“It was another man.”

“I assumed so,” the brunette squeezed Collins’ hand.

“Don’t worry, I’ve had men before you too,” he said.
“Men? Plural?” Collins asked, relieved Farrier didn’t care so much about Ben.

“Yeah, I’m forty you must remember,” Farrier laughed. Collins smiled,

“Well you are a very attractive man, Farrier.” the blonde copied his words, making himself blush more than Farrier.

“You knew about one of them. That night, and then the time after when I tried to ignore you,” Farrier began,

“Ah. Yeah, you stunk of sex Farrier. I dunno how yae expected someone not to notice.” Collins said playfully. Farrier chuckled.

“I’ve never had a meaningful relationship with anyone else though. Only one night stands which I paid for.” he said.

The bit about sex workers went straight over Collins’ head. He sat up straight and looked at Farrier in the eyes.

“Relationship?”

Farrier’s expression softened. He’d said it without even meaning to, and wouldn’t have even realised if Collins hadn’t picked up on it. A smile made its way onto Farrier’s mouth,

“Yes, a relationship.” He said. Collins looked like he might spontaneously combust, to be fair Farrier wasn’t far off it either. He’d said it. They were in a relationship. His stomach was a bundle of nerves, to remedy it he pulled the blonde into a tight hug, resting his chin on Collins’ shoulder. The lad hummed and nestled his head into the crook of Farrier’s neck. Collins’ smell calmed Farrier, lulling him into a feeling of complete peace and content.

“Today was a great day.” Collins smiled as he finally pulled back.

“Glad you thought so after all that complaining about the excursion,” Farrier smiled, and placed a kiss on Collins’ forehead.

“Yeah yeah,” Collins said as he shuffled under the covers of Farrier’s bed. Something he hadn’t done before, but he felt comfortable doing it tonight. That, and he was cold. Farrier did the same, they lay on their sides facing each other under the blanket. Farrier’s bed smelled like him, and it was wonderful.

“Must have been a great lunch to be gone two hours and come back drenched,” Farrier said, a warm hand resting on Collins’ waist.

“Ah, yae we didnae just eat lunch. We played in the long grass and trees.” he explained.

“You’re all five year olds. What do you mean ‘played’ Collins?” Farrier laughed, pulling the lad closer to him.

“I mean we played a game, Dawson and I would do anything Wingnut told us to. So we were doing stupid things that he told us to, like eating grass, singing, that kind of thing.” he said, his own hand coming to rest on Farrier’s bicep over the cotton of his pyjamas.

“You three are such a worry, ever since I saw Wingnut dangling out of the window I’ve had to keep a close eye on you all,” he said,
“You called him Wingnut,” Collins smiled, Farrier chuckled and pulled Collins in for a kiss. It was so warm, and the closeness of their bodies was damn near killing Farrier. He needed more of Collins, but the lad wasn’t ready, he could feel it, feel it in the way he kissed and didn’t let himself fall apart, in the way he didn’t pull himself closer, in the subtle way he squirmed under Farrier’s tightening grip on his waist. The brunette let his lips part, tongue sliding out to run along Collins’ own lips. The blonde sighed into the kiss, Farrier tasted like tea and cigarettes. His plump lips were so soft and the way the older pilot knew just how to handle Collins nearly sent the blonde into a trance. They broke the kiss and looked into each other’s blue eyes. Collins had a peaceful smile on his lips, Farrier had the same smile. Moments like these in which they could look at each other and know, just know that this was the right thing to do, were bliss.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading, I'm so grateful❤️
This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat!
Until next week, happy reading❤️
It was the 15th of November. Interview day. They were doing it after class, Anderson and his group had already kicked up a fuss about it twice since being told. Collins could see in Anderson’s eyes, that he was scared. He should be, the blonde thought as they sat in class listening to Farrier. He was talking about coding in letters, the different kinds you could do. They all had sheets of paper in front of them and they were supposed to write a coded letter. Something about taking every first letter of every word and grouping them in threes, coded words had to alternate between every fourth and fifth word, there was some sort of alphanumeric key to go by as well. It was safe to say not a single student understood what Farrier was trying to say, and everyone’s pages were blank.

“Men, you need to understand this. Code is the way information is given if you’re held captive, if you go undercover, and sometimes even if you’re safe and sound and need something to be heard. We’re going to have a couple more lessons on it, but in the meantime, I want everyone to take a copy of these instructions and write a coded letter, I don’t care how long it is but please try to get it done.” He said, holding up a wad of paper. Collins wasn’t sure if it was cheating to get Farrier to help with it in his spare time. He decided he’d give it a good crack by himself before he asked the man. After lunch at the sandwich store, for the three friends it was time for more flying, today in the fighters much to Wingnut’s disappointment.

Each student was only up for about thirty minutes but it added up quickly they’d found, today Collins flew with Canfield. He liked flying with both the officers, and bias for Farrier aside, Canfield was a very decent flight instructor. Sometimes he’d tell one of his fabled stories through the radio if something had sparked his memory, but usually he was quiet, he let Collins fly how he wanted. Then, when they’d landed, he’d debrief him. Farrier tended to do it more on the go, advising as he went, so when Collins had landed with him they could just hop out of the plane. He was unsure which technique he preferred, they felt very different. As well as that, Canfield and Farrier picked up on different things. Farrier tended to advise Collins if he wasn’t being precise enough with his angles, if he was being too ‘nice to the plane’ as Farrier had put it. As much as Canfield seemed to have issues with Farrier’s flying style, if Collins could say one thing about it from seeing it during the times Farrier controlled the plane to lead by example, it was that it was extremely effective. He was precise, fast, and had pinpoint accuracy and that was all attributed to the way he wasn’t afraid to use the plane because as much as he wasn’t afraid to really test the thing, when it came down to it Farrier had a very steady hand, and had no trouble carefully manoeuvring the plane those few inches that made all the difference.

Canfield of course, was the opposite, telling Collins to ease off on the throttle, make his turns less sharp, and although Collins would never say it to his face, he was beginning to see that Canfield wasn’t as good at fine tuning the aim of the plane as Farrier was. Perhaps he was once, but not anymore.
Getting to know the two men in the air was a very interesting experience, they were similar to how they were on the ground, but also different. Canfield as a person was always more laid back than Farrier, even now as Farrier had grown used to the group of students. In the air, they both dropped most of their relaxed attitudes, Farrier more so than Canfield though, unsurprisingly. He was extremely concentrated, in truth it made Farrier a little anxious to joke about in the air, he preferred to have complete control and fly with perfect order. He supposed it stemmed from his accidents, and felt like somehow he could stay safer if he didn’t relax. He knew it made so little of a difference because in an actual dogfight nobody was relaxed, it was more the flying to and from places, the in between that he was still tense in, still in fight mode, still running on instinct, and he knew it was silly. Keep your wits about you of course, but Farrier was a little further down the line than that. Still, the way he flew made him feel safer in his mind, so he kept at it.

Canfield got sad sometimes, Farrier used to be a very relaxed flyer, but no longer. Canfield thought Farrier flew aggressively and everyone on the base knew that by now, the way the older man laughed about Farrier’s flying, but he meant it. Looking at Farrier’s plane from the ground, even in formation with him, to Canfield it appeared as if he was flying while angry. He knew it wasn’t the case, the brunette was just so wired in the air that it appeared that way. He knew Farrier would probably say that his own flying style looked too loose, too casual, like he didn’t have his wits about him at all times, like he wasn’t ready for anything to spring at him. He was ready, he just displayed it differently in his flying style to Farrier. One thing was certain though, Canfield would never agree with Farrier’s flying style, neither would Farrier agree with Canfield’s.

Collins landed on the runway, not his best by a long shot, one wheel hit the tarmac then bounced back up into the air, then a few feet further down the runway the plane made contact again, this time staying on the ground. He struggled to get the nose to stay pointing ahead this time, the contact with one wheel had thrown the plane a little, but Collins had seen worse landings, his mind flashed back to Miller. He took a breath, remembering Canfield was behind him and able to control the plane too, Miller didn’t have that luxury. The Harvard ground to a halt and they took their gear off for the post-flight debriefing.

“That was a good one, Collins. I think you’re getting a lot better with the stalling speed, and coming out of a stall. Spooky isn’t it, to hear the plane stop!” he laughed,

“Aye, unsettling. Good tae know you’re sittin’ behind me,” Collins laughed,

“Indeed. You handled that landing well, but next time, and don’t worry boy, everyone lands like that sometimes, even me, control less with the ailerons and more with the rudder.” he said.

“Ah got it, thanks Canfield,” Collins said as he unstrapped and walked away.

Soon after, Wingnut flew in with Farrier. Before the older pilot could so much as catch a breath the next student was wandering up to the plane for his turn. Farrier didn’t look annoyed or tired though, he looked raring to go, excited even. It was nice, every time Collins had seen Farrier in a flying lesson he was happy. The blonde realised he was staring and dragged his eyes away from Farrier as he saw Wingnut make for him and Dawson, who were currently sat in the door of one of the hangars, neither of them trusting the sky not to rain as the clouds got darker. They watched the two officers whizz about in the little yellow planes with the other students.

“So you’ve got the thing today?” Wingnut said.

“Aye, that I do. My interview with Canfield and Farrier,” Collins replied, Dawson clamped a hand on his back,

“It’s not like you could make it up, what happened to you.” He said, Collins let out an empty laugh,
it was true though. He wasn’t sure if they would want him to go into detail about what happened to him while he was high, but even without that he probably had a compelling enough story.

“Wonder what shite Anderson and his mates’ll come up with,” Collins smiled.

“They won’t have any idea, probably just act dumb the whole time, pretending that they don’t know what happened, ya know?” Wingnut said, Collins nodded. He was still nervous. He was thankful at least, that he didn’t have to do the interview with the Charles, Johnson and Anderson watching him.

Eventually the whole class had done their short flight and were ushered back inside. Collins’ leg was bouncing under the table and Farrier knew why, all day the lad seemed jumpy. As soon as class had finished he walked up to him as he stood with his friends.

“See you in around an hour, then.” Farrier said, still holding the professional front.

“Yae, see you then,” Collins said, standing with Dawson and Wingnut. Farrier huffed at seeing the blonde so tense,

“He’ll be fine, tell him lads!” the man laughed, clapping Wingnut on the back,

“’Course you’ll be fine, Collins, you goof. You did nothing wrong mate!” he said. Farrier had gone by the time Collins looked away from his friend.

Farrier sat in the empty classroom with Canfield, who for some reason wouldn’t stop asking if he was hungry.

“Canfield, I am not hungry, and we’re about to interview the students,” he said, standing up to pace. Anderson would be here any minute.

“You’ve not eaten since breakfast!” Canfield pressed,

“Have you?”

“Yes, just now I had a sandwich from the kitchen.”

“Well I’ll eat later, happy?” Farrier said. It was incredulous how much Canfield still treated him like a kid.

“You know, I bet he’s got a cover story all worked out with them, he’ll have told them exactly what to say,” Canfield said. Farrier was very surprised because that sounded like something he himself would say, not Canfield. Canfield was too impartial to say those things,

“You dislike him more than I thought, to say that”. Farrier mumbled,

“I admit, he’s not my favourite. The main thing is he’s untrustworthy. He won’t tell the truth.” Canfield said,

“’Course he won’t. ‘yeah I deliberately drugged up another student’. That sounds like he’d get out clean doesn’t it,” Farrier said with a grin. He would be happy to see these three gone. They waited five minutes, then ten.

“He’s late.” Farrier tutted, staring at the clock on the wall.

Then the door creaked open, Anderson peered through.
“Good lad. Come in.” Canfield smiled. Farrier sat down behind the teachers’ desk, Canfield stood in front of it. Anderson, instead of taking a seat at the front which was very clearly what he was expected to do, he went to the second to last row of desks and took a seat.

“Can barely see you back there lad, come forward!” Canfield laughed. Farrier was glad he had been given the task of writing the interview transcript instead of conducting it, he might just have punched Anderson again if he’d had to deal with this boy. The memory of the physical education class brought a smile to his lips, even if he recalled Canfield shouting at him after he’d dealt with Anderson, it was worth it. Anderson smirked and took a seat directly in front of Canfield.

“Now, lad. Where were you on the night of the 24th of September? It was a Saturday night.” Canfield said. Anderson had been told he was being interviewed because of an unsafe situation a student had gotten in, and that a lot of students were being interviewed about it to see if they knew anything that could help. Of course he’d told Charles and Johnson not to mention any of the things they’d been doing, skipping classes, messing about with substances, getting into fights, including the events that transpired with Collins, none of that was coming to the surface today. Yet, he still didn’t know exactly what he was being interviewed about, he had to keep his wits about him, it could very well be something he and his mates did.

“Honestly, I can’t remember. Probably out somewhere considering it was a Saturday.” He said.

“Would it ring a bell to say you were at The Golden Deer?” Canfield asked. Farrier was writing all this down in shorthand, fast enough that he was also able to look up and watch it unfold before him, one thing he held above Canfield was his ability to write shorthand, something the older man could not do.

“Oh, I, it’s definitely a possibility. Like I said, I can’t remember that exact date. I go there a decent amount though, so yeah,” Anderson said, looking thoughtful. Whether real thoughtfulness or fake, Canfield couldn’t tell.

“I see. Well there was an incident involving another student there on that night. Do you usually go there with other students?” Canfield asked, channelling the same calmness he had in the air right now as he interviewed.

“Johnson and Charles, my wingmen.” Anderson smiled.

“And have you ever come across any other students there?”

“Of course, quite a few,” Canfield turned to Farrier, who raised his eyebrows to tell him to continue. There was no way Farrier was taking over.

“Do you remember seeing your peer, Collins, there at all?” Canfield asked casually. Farrier watched Anderson seize up.

“Oh, is he the Scottish one?”

“Yes.”

“Yeah he’s been there a few times I think” Anderson said, crossing his arms.

“Actually, he’s only been there once from what he tells us. And it was on the night of the 24th of September, Anderson.” Canfield tutted.

“Ah, then I must have been there then,” the brunette smiled.
“Well, then you may know something of what happened to Collins.” Canfield said, the response he got was a shake of the head and a confused smile.

“So when you saw him there you didn’t interact with him?”

“No we did, just didn’t know anything happened to him.” Anderson said.

“What did you do while you were there with him?” the man pressed, Farrier looked up from the page to see Anderson’s eyes flicking between him and Canfield. Nervous. Farrier cocked an eyebrow and tried to suppress a smirk, *come on lad, speak.*

“We just sat down together and had a pint, talked to some birds then went to play some cards.” Anderson said measuredly.

“Then what?” Canfield asked, Anderson was struggling not to go red as he lied through his teeth.

“Me and the lads decided to head home, Collins said he was going to stay longer so we said goodbye.”

There was silence.

“Is that all?” Canfield asked quietly.

“Yeah, what more should there be?” Anderson laughed.

“Something very serious happened to Collins, Anderson. He could have died that night and it’s because of someone at the bar with him. We need to find out who it was.” Canfield said.

“Well, shit.” Anderson bluffed shock. He ran a hand through his hair,

“I mean, I’m glad he’s alright, but I’m sorry I can’t help more.” he said. Canfield could see right through it, the lad didn’t look the least bit genuinely shocked.

Anderson’s knee began to bob.

Canfield turned to Farrier,

“I don’t know what to say, you take over.” he mumbled, and before Farrier could protest Canfield was pulling at the chair he was sitting on. He rolled his eyes and stood, walking around to lean on the front of the desk and face the lad.

“Why did Collins give us your name?” he asked plainly, he heard Canfield clear his throat in a very deliberate way behind him, wanting him to ask better questions most likely.

“I-I don’t know.” Anderson stammered. He then made the mistake of looking Farrier in the eye, he was met with a piercing blue stare, hawk-like, watching for any signs of weakness. The same look Farrier held in dogfights in the air. Anderson couldn’t hold eye contact and was forced to look back down at the floor.

“So you didn’t give it to him.” Farrier said angrily.

“No, I didn’t bloody give it to him! Why would I?” Anderson said. A more sensical response would have been to voice that he didn’t know Collins had been given something, to ask what ‘it’ was. Farrier let a smirk creep onto his face, he waited for Anderson to realise. A moment later the boy did, his face went red and he stared at the ground in front of him in terror. Farrier smiled and asked softly,
“Didn’t give him what, Anderson?”

“I dunno, whatever he was obviously given!” the boy replied, braving eye contact with Farrier again. His cold smirk was arguably even more unsettling than his focused glare.

“We hadn’t mentioned he was given anything before just now though. He could have been in a fight, fallen off something, what makes you think he was given something?” Farrier asked.

“You asked if I gave him something so I assumed.” Anderson said guardedly.

The interview ended soon after that, Anderson looked worried. Farrier opened the door to see Johnson waiting in the hallway. Farrier waited at the door so Anderson couldn’t tell Johnson anything.

The smaller lad sat down nervously. His interview followed a similar pattern, except this time Canfield directed the whole thing, now knowing how to get them to mess up thanks to Farrier. Though, Johnson’s story differed to Anderson’s, which was an even bigger tip off than the fact that he also denied giving Collins anything, even though he hadn’t been told he was given anything. According to Johnson he looked sick and tired before they’d left. The officers thanked him and shortly after, interviewed Charles. Again the story was slightly different, Charles’ version was that Collins left before they did after he was feeling dizzy. Again he denied having given Collins anything before he’d been told that Collins was drugged.

Then Collins meandered down to the classroom he’d been told to meet in. He waited outside the door and a few minutes after he’d arrived it swung open. Charles was let out, giving Collins an unfriendly stare as he walked past.

“Come on, lad.” Canfield said, and the blonde walked in and took a seat.

“So, on the 24th of September this year, you were at the Golden Deer?” the older man asked,

“Indeed.” Collins said. It was still a little uneasy to recall the events, but it was for the greater good that he go through this interview.

“And which students did you see there?”

“I saw Anderson, Johnson and Charles. No other students were there that I saw.”

Canfield hummed,

“And what happened that caused you to believe those three students are at fault?” he asked.

“I had a drink with them, and I’d left my drink on the table with them as I went to dance for a short while. When I came back I finished the drink, and soon after that I started feeling weird. I didn’t drink or eat anything else from the pub, only the drink on the table that I left with them.” Collins said measuredly, trying to focus on the calming sound of Farrier’s pen scratching on the page. Collins looked up to the brunette, noting that his left hand was balled into a fist as usual when he wrote, must be a concentration thing, Collins thought, remembering his drawings of it.

“I see. And how did you begin to feel?” Canfield asked. The blonde gulped,

“Eh, at first very stimulated, I was conversing with a lass, Stella actually, and it felt like the best conversation in the world even though it was just normal small talk. But then, kinda sluggish, and it got so bad I couldn’t lift my head off the table after I sat back down with the other students… Then I started seein’ things.” Collins said, he trailed off at the end and began fidgeting
Canfield sighed, he turned to Farrier who had a solemn expression on his face. Neither of them liked hearing what Collins had gone through, but for the sake of having the information in writing, the questions had to be asked.

“So you hallucinated, and that was when you realised something had been given to you?” Canfield asked.

“Nae actually. Was a bit later into the night.” Collins said.

“And how did you come to realise who it was?” Canfield asked.

“Well, as Anderson left, he said it was nothing personal and that it was just the way it had to be. At the time it sounded like he was just talking about the fact that he was leaving, but later I realised, he was probably eluding to something more sinister.” Collins said. His mouth was dry, and it was making him jittery talking about it.

“So Anderson says he only saw you at the bar, and didn’t interact. How do we know that isn’t true?” Canfield asked.

“Well, I guess that’s where Stella comes in.” Collins chuckled,

“But, eh, I guess I donnae have any real evidence for yae, we played cards together, they had a game on about talkin’ tae birds, we all had to go chat to one which is how I met Stella. Sounds very characteristic of Anderson, doesn’t it?” Collins smiled. Canfield let a small smile onto his face, though still quite saddened by the fact that Collins had been taken advantage of and that it may have cost him his life.

“I think we have everything we need. Thank you Collins.” he concluded.

“Thank you too, both of yae.” The blonde said, standing.

“Collins,” Farrier started,

“I think I speak for both Canfield and myself when I say… We both believe you, you know. We just have to have it all done formally.”

Canfield nodded,

“Yes of course, we’re on your side, lad.” The older man smiled.

“Thank you. I appreciate that you’re willing to help.” Collins laughed, Canfield patted him on the back as he walked out of the room. Then both officers sighed at once.

“Right, glad that’s over with.” Canfield said.

“Me too,” Farrier replied, handing him the shorthand notes that they’d go through together at some point and transfer into regular writing so Canfield could read it. He hoped Collins was okay, he hadn’t even heard the full extent of the things Collins saw and did, he imagined he never would. Farrier just wanted to make sure Collins was alright, so when he headed upstairs that late afternoon, he didn’t head for his room, instead ducking into the door before his. To his surprise Collins’ room was empty, bed made, everything was very neat to Farrier’s approval.

Collins was in Wingnut’s room for a change, which was extremely messy compared to Dawson’s,
which was rather messy compared to his own room. He just wanted to talk about other things to take his mind off the interviews and everything about the ordeal that night. Wingnut was good at that, jumping from crazy subject to crazy subject as they attempted a card game. Playing cards regularly was helping Collins to disassociate the negative emotions he had been attributing to cards for a few days after the incident. It was during a game of cards after all, that the effects began to make themselves known.

Feeling strange lingering in Collins’ room without him there, Farrier left. Only at dinner did they see each other. Fleeting glances when nobody was looking, raised eyebrows from Farrier and a silent mouthing of “okay?” with a very worried expression to accompany, a boyish smile and a nod from Collins to soothe Farrier’s anxiety over the matter. They didn’t see each other that night, Collins was in an introverted mood, the older man of course didn’t mind. Anything to make Collins happy.

Chapter End Notes

Trigger warning(s): mentions of drug use/overdose.
phew! Another week, another chapter. Hopefully everyone who despises Anderson and his friends enjoyed this one hehe.
This is my tumblr

Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
Chapter Notes

Happy Monday all! I was worried I wouldn’t be able to upload this due to uni work, but I got it all done in time so this is my reward to myself. Hope everyone loves reading about planes flying as much as I do!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Collins hadn’t seen Stella since last she was at the base to meet the officers, he had said he’d try and see her at the bar again but he’d been too busy, and when he wasn’t busy he was with his friends or with Farrier. Today was the 1st of December, a Thursday. It was crazy to think, this was their last month as pilots in training. At the end of the month those who were successful would be getting their pilots’ brevets, their wings. It made Collins feel a little dizzy, to think that soon his uniform would be adorned with the little patch that meant he was an actual pilot. He knew he’d pass, it was very obvious from the way his flying was spoken about not only by Farrier but Canfield as well. There would be a decent amount of lads who would get called up to graduate who wouldn’t receive their wings, and would be graduating as ground crew instead and today as well as all this, was the official day that Gatwick was being appointed a fighter station. Having already received two shipments of warplanes, and having already had their air boundaries opened up to encompass most of the south east coast, there was only the official ceremony left to do, and it was happening over the lunch break.

It was pancakes for breakfast today, Collins poured honey onto his as he collected them from the front.

“Morning,” Farrier said sleepily. Collins jumped at the proximity, why wasn’t he at the start of the line for food like he always was?
“Oh, morning Farrier.” Collins said, well aware that he was surrounded by other students.
“Where’s Canfield?” the blonde asked,

“Early morning phone call to the Air Ministry interrupted his brekkie, he has to sort out something with the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff or something. All the more pancakes for me.” Farrier smiled.

“An’ why aren’t yae at the start of the line like usual?” Collins asked, passing the honey to Farrier who was staring at it like he needed it to live.

“Oh, I was. I just wanted more honey on my pancakes so I’m coming back again to get some,” he said. Collins still wasn’t over how sweet Farrier liked his tea, now his pancakes were drowning in honey it was a whole new ordeal he’d have to get used to. The blonde chuckled as he was handed back the honey, Farrier innocently licking his finger of the stuff as he walked away, Collins took his plate and went to sit down soon after. Cute wasn’t a word he often associated with Farrier, but whenever the blonde recalled the man’s insatiable sweet tooth, cute was very much a word that fit.

“Early morning good luck charm for today?” Wingnut asked, pointing his fork at Farrier.

“Push off, mate.” Collins smiled, not really meaning it in any other way than playful.
The next class rolled around, Canfield was looking around disappointedly at the lack of coded letters he could see on the desks and Collins was trying to figure out why the older man was in flying boots instead of his normal shoes.

“Men, I thought Farrier told you to code a letter!” he laughed.

“He did, but we couldn’t understand him!” someone said, a chorus of agreement erupted. Canfield restrained from rolling his eyes and attempted a crash course on coding. It was still difficult, but somehow Canfield’s different method of explaining actually worked for Collins. He peered out the window at some point to see Farrier and one of the other officers that taught another group, and someone who looked important. The Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, Collins realised after recalling seeing a photo of the man on the bulletin board at some point.

Class ended and the blonde had half a note scrawled that didn’t really make sense, but he’d coded a sentence into it that did half make sense and for that, he was quite proud. Everyone was told to go out onto the tarmac for the ceremony. Canfield joined Farrier, Davis and Maxwell on either side of the two more senior officers. Collins looked around, everyone was here. Not just his training cohort, all of the students of Gatwick. Hundreds of them in a sea of blue. Collins stuck close to Wingnut and Dawson as not to get swept away. Farrier yelled above the noise to line up facing the front with the youngest year at the front. The brunette’s raised voice wasn’t meant to make Collins’ knees weak, but it did. The three boys made their way to the front and got their first proper look at William Douglas from the Air Ministry. He wasn’t tall, nor short. He wasn’t angry looking, nor calm. But he did look like he had a wealth of experience and knowledge. Before Collins could properly grasp the fact that all four of the officers were in flying boots and not just Canfield, Douglas opened his mouth without warning,

“Men stand to attention!” he yelled extremely loudly in the front row’s face, drawing out the word ‘attention’ until everyone was indeed, standing to attention, from practice for the older students and from being scared stiff for the younger.

“Order, arms!” he yelled. Collins was almost caught off guard by it, but got his salute up in time. He was almost caught off guard again as he saw Farrier salute in his peripheral, strong and sure. The blonde wished he could have turned around and looked behind him, it sounded like everyone saluted perfectly at the same time, one clean sound from the entire group.

“And, arms!” Douglas said, everyone dropped their salutes.

“And, rest!” he finally said, and Collins let himself relax. It was going to take a lot of getting used to, following orders like this.

“Now, I’m sure you all know why you’re here. Gatwick training centre is officially, as of today, appointed an RAF fighter station! Gatwick will run like clockwork, it is now a real branch of Fighter Command. There will be squadrons based here, Operational Training Units, and a great deal more!” he said, and there were a few cheers from the group of men.

Farrier and Canfield exchanged looks, Collins watched Farrier raise his eyebrows, seemingly in disbelief. And disbelief it was, he had lived here for years with Canfield, it was always just a little training station. This promotion to a full time base felt so surreal. It was really happening, and it was happening right now. Farrier had to dig his nails into his palms to keep himself in the moment and pay attention to the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff.

“Now this doesn’t mean an awful lot for you men, who will continue your training here. It does mean however, that you may be placed in an Operational Training Unit right here at Gatwick. Or alternatively down the line you may join a squadron based here.” He explained, Collins’ heart
leapt into his throat, that was what Farrier was talking about when he said he wouldn’t let them put him at a different base. He tried not to smile like a crazy person.

“Now, we will be doing a very short aerobatics show, as per the customary ‘baptism’ for new fighter bases. Those who wish to watch, may do so.” Douglas said. Of course Collins now realised why they were all in flying boots. He felt like Wingnut for not realising something that obvious. Davis, Maxwell, Farrier and Canfield walked off to one of the hangars, opening the doors to reveal four of the Hurricanes lined up at the door. Collins was actually expecting the Spitfires to be the plane of choice considering how highly Farrier spoke of them, but he supposed the officers had gotten more used to the Hurricanes having been here a little longer, plus Collins imagined Davis and Maxwell may not have been as confident in the more agile Spits as Farrier and Canfield.

Farrier was very happy to do this, honoured even. It had been a very, very long time since he’d done any sort of aerobatics for anything other than purely testing planes. This was an actual show, he could barely get his flight helmet on fast enough. Flying in war was okay at times but stressful, flying in peacetime and doing tricks? That was pure bliss. They all climbed into the planes and hooked radios up.

“Ready all?” Canfield said, then the four engines grumbled to a start together, tiny licks of flames coming out of the exhaust before the airstream generated from the propellers put them out in a loud thunder.

If the pilots weren’t hooked up to the radios, as well as sitting inside the cockpits right behind the engines, they would have heard the cheer erupt from the group at the sound of the Hurricanes starting up.

“Yeah, we should probably start getting used to using these radios properly.” Farrier laughed.

“Indeed.” Said Maxwell,

“One of my students pulled me up on using names on the radio, I said it’s peacetime for god’s sake!” Davis chuckled.

“Well let’s use the ole’ Fortis today then, see how we go,” Farrier suggested over the radio.

“No, no, this is a fun show! I’m not getting bogged down using damn callsigns in peace time!” Canfield said,

“Well okay then!” Farrier laughed, surprised that Canfield was calling him too uptight with his flying regulations, something which very seldom happened.

They all taxied out onto the tarmac. Canfield was to lead, Farrier his second, and Maxwell and Davis on the port and starboard trailing edges.

Everyone had taken several paces back and a lot of them were leaning against the back of the building. These were very powerful birds, after all. Collins had no such luxury as the older students had all reached the wall first, so he, Wingnut and Dawson sat on the cold but dry ground.

“Now, Gatwick cohort. If I am correct in what I believe, Officer Canfield is leading the group, he is currently the inner port.” Douglas said, pointing to the plane second from the very left.

“Officer Farrier is the second, and he is on the inner starboard. Maxwell is the outside starboard, and Davis the outside port.” He said. Now that Collins had been told which Hurricane Farrier’s was, he wasn’t going to let it out of his sight.
Canfield was out in front, then Farrier swept into position behind, and then Maxwell, and Davis took the rear. The engines got louder, angrier, and the planes picked up speed as they all hurtled down the tarmac away from the group. Collins could feel the vibration from the engines’ sheer noise in his ribcage, it was the most wonderfully powerful feeling. He now understood why, although Farrier spoke ill of flying sometimes, the man still couldn’t tear himself away from it and took every opportunity to fly. It was addictive, there was some sort of crazed love of flight that all pilots shared no matter of past experiences with it.

The planes roared away and in perfect synchronisation lifted off in a gentle arc to starboard tailing each other. The arc continued well over the fields and rose higher and higher, it was one huge horizontal loop over the grounds of the base.

“Jesus, this is gonna be good.” Dawson muttered to Collins, who raised his eyebrows in agreement.

Of course they’d gone over what they’d do a few times in the office, it was on paper, a general outline scribbled down that all the officers knew how to follow. Canfield and Farrier were at the point in their flying that they didn’t need to practice it before they took off, though for Maxwell and especially Davis, it was just as much a test as it was a show.

“Ready everyone?” Canfield asked, he got confirmation from the others on radio. They were heading back towards the base’s main building, so they lined up in tight formation wing to wing as they flew over the building doing a low pass, the combined noise of four Merlin engines just about shaking the window panes out of their frames. Everyone watched as the Hurricanes flew over, black and white bellies flashing above them before they roared up over the roof of the building. The planes were only out of sight for a few seconds before they appeared again, much higher in the air, flying straight upwards into the weak winter sun. It was cold enough up there that they had begun to exude contrails. All at once the Hurricanes flipped onto their backs, then while still upside down flew several hundred feet before turning slowly back upright. Then the real show began.

“This is the only time I use WEP outside of an emergency,” Canfield laughed,

“Don’t worry, you get used to it,” Farrier said. At once both men pushed the throttle lever hard forwards, planes lurching ahead and engines growing impossibly louder as they roared straight through the air while Davis and Maxwell peeled off to the sides, orbiting around the base’s grounds while demonstrating aileron rolls with technical precision and excellence.

Collins chuckled as he heard the engines of the two superior officers and watched their Hurricanes speed ahead, they’d entered War Emergency Power. He didn’t think he’d ever see Canfield do that for fun. The two planes swooped upwards and began to enter corkscrews as their noses pointed up,

“Shit!” Dawson yelled above the noise of the engines and the excited crowd around them,

“Aye?” Collins said, eyes not leaving Farrier’s plane.

“Not an easy trick, that involves stalling one wing, plus doing it with the nose in the air, Christ!” Dawson said, very impressed. Collins was also impressed but there was also some sort of darker, more carnal emotion mixed in that he doubted a normal person would feel when being told someone was a capable flyer.

Farrier and Canfield flew up until they’d almost reached stalling speed, rolled back until the planes were again upside down, then flipped the planes and levelled out, flying straight and upright for a few hundred feet.

“Not too bad?” Farrier asked,
“Might need to get used to the old vertical corkscrew!” Canfield laughed. Then, as Davis and Maxwell flew up, Canfield and Farrier flew down until they’d met somewhere in the middle, wing to wing with each other once more. Finally, all four planes did a last loop up into the air above the group of students, and then lined back up behind one another and slowed to land, all the wheels coming down at once. The show had only lasted about ten minutes, but everyone’s hearts were racing from excitement. The officers jumped out of the plane and were greeted by applause, Farrier giggled to himself. It was the first ‘show’ he’d done since he was flying in carnivals with Canfield as a lad, and it felt bloody amazing.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading! I know there wasn't really any romance in this one, but I cannot express my love for vintage warplanes and sometimes my plane enthusiast runs wild so please forgive me lol. Thanks to everyone who leaves comments and kudos, and to all the readers who I know are there but might be too shy!
Here’s my tumblr if anyone wants to chat! Let me know what you all thought of this chapter, I hope I wasn't being too technical and boring describing the flying!! I forget that not everyone is *that* into aviation lol.
Anyway until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
Pointing the Finger

Chapter Notes

So yesterday was Monday I know, somehow I didn't realise what day it was until 5pm today, which is hilarious but also really bad, so yeah i missed upload Monday by a full 24 hours and I'm sorry !!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The ceremony was over. There were no classes for the rest of the day for Collins, though there were for everyone else. Attending the meeting with the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff was optional for everyone except Stella for some reason or another, so Anderson, Charles and Johnson all declined even though it served to worsen their already poor reputation with the officers. They were sulking, very well aware that they were in trouble, though this time if they ignored it their problems would not go away. The winter sun was high in the sky as Canfield, Farrier, and Douglas waited in Canfield’s office, it was the room immediately to the side of the entrance to the building, so there was a window looking out onto the street from his office. As the officers waited for Stella and Collins, Douglas read through the interview notes that Farrier had taken. He was shocked that this had happened to a student, that other students were so ill-mannered to deliberately do such a thing.

Collins straightened his tie and knocked on Canfield’s office door.

“Eh, hello?” he asked. The door was opened and he was greeted by Canfield.

“Thank you for coming in, Collins. We all very much appreciate your willingness to cooperate,” Douglas said, and held a hand out to shake which Collins took.

He was glad that not every higher up was like the cold and calculating Dowding. They all waited around in the room sitting on the several odd chairs, until a soft humming could be heard from out the front. Collins looked out the window to see a head of curly, albeit messy dark brown hair bobbing along. Stella.

“Shall I go let her in?” he asked,

“Oh, yes yes my boy” Canfield said, previously unaware that the woman outside was her. Collins walked out of the office to greet a shivering Stella.

“Where’s yae coat lass?” he laughed.

“Didn’t think it was this cold!” she jittered.

Once everyone was inside the office, tea was poured, and biscuits offered around. They all crowded around Canfield’s desk, on which was a photo of each of the three boys in question. They looked like their old school photos that they’d enrolled into Gatwick with. All looking slightly more well behaved.

“Now, Stella. I need you to confirm, in my presence, that it was these three who harmed Collins.” Officer Douglas said.
Stella looked at the photos for a long while. She could remember their faces, and although at the time she didn’t know it had happened, she of course trusted Collins and everything he had told her.

“It was them. I’m sure of it.” she said quietly. And like that, they were condemned. Collins tried to hide a smile, his blue eyes risked a glance up to Farrier, who looked more relaxed than he had in a long time.

“Thank you. That’s all we need, Stella. I hope you hadn’t travelled too far just to point the finger.” Douglas chuckled.

“Oh, no sir I live down the road!” she smiled.

“Aha, good thing you haven’t long to walk. As he said that it began to rain.

“Yes, a very good thing,” Stella laughed as she watched the rain patter on the window.

“Oh come now, you aren’t walking home in this. Just wait for the rain to pass, Stella.” Canfield said,

“O-okay, thank you. I wasn’t sure if I was welcome to stay, I appreciate it.” she said shyly.

“Course you’re welcome, help us eat these biscuits!” Farrier laughed and pushed the plate towards her.

“Thank you. You’re all too kind, really.” she said and took a small biscuit as not to seem greedy. Douglas walked to the coatrack and took his.

“Well, I drove here so I have no issue heading off. Busy days at the Air Ministry now, busy days. But I will take the matter up and get back to you. It would probably be in the form of a telephone call to advise on the next steps. But Collins?”

The blonde looked up from the biscuit plate, he was trying to decide which one he wanted.

“We’ve got them. They’ll be cut from the RAF, mark my words boy. For what they did, you should be pressing charges, but that isn’t my business.” Douglas said as he got his coat on.

“I-I” Collins stammered. He looked down and took a breath. To hear it from Douglas himself was another level.

“Thank you. For everythin’” the lad arrived at, running a nervous hand through his hair.

“Don’t mention it lad. I’m glad you’re such an outstanding student yourself, boys like them shouldn’t be in the RAF and I’m glad you had the courage to pursue this. I hate to think how many cases like this there are that we never heard of.” the man said, before shaking hands with everyone in the room.

“I’m sure I’ll see you Gatwick lot around in the future, bye now.”

Canfield, Farrier, Collins and Stella were in the room. Stella was the only one standing, she was nervous.

“Yae can sit doon,” Collins smiled, motioning to an empty chair.

“Oh, no it’s okay.” Stella smiled, wrapping her arms around herself. It was something she did to mentally protect herself. Not that any of these men were unkind, but she was never very good in social situations. Plus all of them in uniform next to her in her ratty old woollen skirt and top that
didn’t match all that well, made the girl feel quite out of place.

“Oh, lord” Canfield said, looking at his watch.

“What’s the time?” Farrier asked.

“Nearly 1500 hours!” Canfield said. Farrier chuckled,

“Well that means Davis has just finished taking my class, so I’m done for the day. Have fun.” he jested.

“Yes very funny. Don’t leave crumbs in my office!” he said as he left to take another class of students.

“Bye! And, thank you!” Stella called after Canfield, with no answer.

“Ah don’t mind him Stella, he’s getting on a bit.” Farrier smiled,

“Now that he’s out of the room however,” Farrier said, standing from his chair and walking behind Canfield’s desk,

“I’m going to sit in the most comfortable chair on the entire base!” he said, and promptly sat down in Canfield’s large ornate chair, Collins and Stella giggled.

“Okay, maybe I shall take a chair. But only until the rain stops.” she said, pulling a chair up next to Collins’ so that they both opposed Farrier. The rain continued.

“Bit different to the mornin’,” Collins remarked, earning a hum from Farrier.

“How’s the musical stuff going then?” he asked Stella more quietly.

“Oh, not too bad. It’s always quieter in the cold months, less of an audience, so in the meantime the band and myself sell food at some of the markets in central London to make ends meet. It’s nice actually,” she said.

“What food?” Collins asked.

“An assortment of things. Usually fresh bread, sometimes cakes or tarts, sometimes dried herb mixes or spices, that kind of thing.” Stella smiled.

“Sounds delicious, I’d pay yae well for it!” Collins laughed.

“Well we’re usually at Borough Market if you actually get curious. Most Saturdays we’re there.” she said shyly.

“Might have tae do that,” the blonde replied.

“That’s incredibly studious of you all. I’m curious what you do in your band Stella,” Farrier said, subtly moving the biscuit plate away from Collins a little and more towards himself.

“Oh, I play the clarinet!” she said. It was the first spark of genuine excitement Farrier had seen in her eyes all day.

“That’s great! What sorts of music do you play?”

“Usually jazz,” she replied.
“Bet Collins likes that,” Farrier smiled, the blonde went a little pink,

“Nothing wrong with dancin’, Farrier.” he muttered, trying to move the plate back towards himself but to no avail as the older man was still holding it firmly in place.

“No, I didn’t say there was. Dancing is good, music is good.” Farrier said,

“I think you’re the first musician I’ve met, Stella.” he added. Stella laughed,

“Do I live up to your expectations?” she asked shyly.

“Above and beyond, love.” Farrier smiled.

“Well, first musician unless you count the time Canfield was under the impression that he was able to play the trombone, in which case you’re the second.” Farrier cringed at the memory.

“What prompted him to believe that I wonder?” Collins asked, glad Stella was easing up a little.

“We were out one night in a pub having a drink and there was a trombone player in the band. For some reason the old man got hooked on learning it, only after half a year of blasting my bloody eardrums out he decided he’d stick to flying planes!” Farrier laughed.

“He seems a little eccentric,” Stella said quietly.

“Oh, he is very eccentric, he’s got a lot of odd quirks about him, old Canfield, but don’t we all.” Farrier said.

“Sure do,” Collins smiled and settled for taking a biscuit off the plate if he couldn’t move the whole thing closer to himself. Nobody had realised the rain had stopped until the only sound in the room was Collins’ chewing.

“Oh!” Stella said, she reached out to take one more biscuit as she stood, not because she really wanted one, but more so to be polite.

“Uh, thank you for helping set this all up.” she said to Farrier.

“No problem, I’ll see you to the door.” He said, standing.

“Do me a favour and don’t eat them all.” he muttered to Collins who was still eyeing the biscuits,

“Yeah yeah. I’ll be seein’ yae around Stella?” Collins asked.

“Of course, whenever we bump into each other next will be a good day.” She smiled. Farrier opened the door for her and she slipped out into the hallway.

“Stella, I need to thank you again for helping out.” he said quietly to her as they walked the short distance from Canfield’s office door to the exit of the base. She didn’t say anything but smiled politely. Farrier opened the door and the cool air hit them both.

“This means a lot to Collins, and all of us.” he said.

“I imagine it does. Even if I don’t really know you all very well, it means a lot to me as well.” She said, and began down the short flight of concrete steps.

Collins was suspicious as to why it took longer than thirty seconds to show Stella out of the building so he walked to the window. They were chatting, deciding that was normal he sat back
down and only then did he realise he had only left two biscuits on the plate.

“It’s just not right, what they did. I said this to Collins, I don’t think it matters if you’re close with someone or not, you should do the right thing and help them if they’re in need, so here I am.” She said plainly.

“I’m very glad you see it that way, but anyway I’m keeping you.” Farrier said,

“No bother, I’ve got nowhere to be right now.” Stella said, a small smile on her face.

“Alright, best get on before the rain starts again, might see you around someday. And again, I can’t thank you enough for being brave enough to point the finger, I can’t wait for the day those boys are discharged, and it’s thanks to you.” The man said.

“I was very happy to, I couldn’t live with the knowledge of what they did and not help.” Stella said and turned on her heels,

“I hope we see each other again,” she said sweetly as she left, soft humming beginning again as soon as she reached the footpath.

“ Took yae a while” Collins said as Farrier entered behind him,

“Where are all the biscuits?” Farrier countered.

“Eh, well” Collins began before feeling a light whack on his shoulder.

“You ate all the good ones too, cheeky bugger” Farrier said. The two sat in Canfield’s office for the remainder of the teaching day, Canfield was busy with his last class anyway so it wasn’t like he’d walk in, so the two sat talking over tea for the afternoon as it rained on and off against the glass. It was stolen moments like these that made all the hiding and secrecy worth it.

Chapter End Notes

That wraps up another chapter! Thank you sm for everyone for reading.
This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat!
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
December the 10th. It was freezing cold and a hard wind was blowing across the plains behind the base. No flying today, even Farrier who was arguably (definitely) the best at getting the planes up in the wind (only argued by Canfield, to everyone else it was very clear), was somewhat concerned of the weather. But today was the day Anderson, Charles and Johnson were being told of the Air Ministry’s decision.

It was 0700 and Canfield was already down in his office awaiting the call from Assistant Chief of the Air Staff William Douglas. He was somewhat irritated that he would miss most of the good stuff at breakfast, he’d get there and it would all be taken and he’d be left with the dregs of whatever the food was today, but he made do with his teapot for the time being.

Collins and friends were down in the dining hall, or rather the radar room that was still being used as a dining hall, not that there was really enough room anymore. The boys were buzzing over their graduation.

“I still cannae believe it’s so soon,” Collins said over his scrambled eggs.

“I know!” Dawson said, eyeing Wingnut.

“Don’t wanna leave you lads, I dunno what I’ll do over in bombers without you.” he said. Collins’ chest panged at the words. He barely wanted to think about Timson’s departure.

“How much do you two write to your families?” he asked quietly.

“Sure do.” Dawson replied.

“Can’t wait to write to my parents and tell them I got my wings!” Wingnut said happily.

“Me neither,” Dawson smiled. Collins realised, he was probably meant to be writing to his parents regularly. That was probably the norm,

“How much do you two write to your families?” he asked quietly.

“Probably once a month?” Dawson pondered, Wingnut hummed in agreement as he ate.

“Oh,”

“Why, do you write more or less?” Dawson asked.

“I donnae really write at all.” Collins said. He knew his mum was trying to mend their relationship,
“We, ah, aren’t on the best terms.” he mumbled to explain himself. Dawson cocked his head and a smirk played on his face.

“They’re your parents, mate. They’ll love you no matter what you are, no matter what you do with your life.” he said quietly.

“Yae don’t know my parents,” Collins mumbled.

“Tell me another time.” Dawson said, Wingnut chimed in.

“We respect your private life mate, it’ll feel better to talk about it, but I’ve kind of realised that here, you don’t know much about anyone’s private life. I guess even though we’re all best mates, we did follow Farrier’s instructions sort of, didn’t get too familiar.” he said. Collins hummed in agreement.

Canfield drummed his fingers on the table as he waited anxiously for the phone. With no idea how long he’d wait, only knowing it would be ‘early in the morning’, Canfield began to ponder the future, a common topic of his thinking these days. Everyone knew by now, at some point there would be a war. He didn’t know when, or the severity, didn’t even know if Britain would become involved yet, though of course everyone was preparing as if it would be. He’d be part of the home reserves now, well over the age of flying, and the man wasn’t sure how he felt about that. Canfield knew that Farrier, in his darker years would always think about how helpless he’d felt when he was in recovery during the war, and Canfield hoped he didn’t feel the same way being in the reserves. Then the phone rang over the high winds.

“RAF Gatwick this is Wing Commander Canfield.” he said,

“Wing Commander Canfield this is Assistant Chief of the Air Staff Douglas.” he heard come through the other end of the call.

“Good morning, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff.” Canfield replied as was customary.

“Morning to you as well, Canfield. Now the business regarding three of your cadets.” He said, Canfield sat down.

“What’s the verdict?” the man asked warily.

“The Ministry has accepted the proposal to expel them. It was deemed completely unsafe to have men like that on an airbase, and looking into their school history we can see that they are likely to become repeat offenders if suspended. They will be discharged without honours.” Douglas said, and suddenly everything was still, though the wind raged outside everything felt very calm to Canfield.

“Well, I’ll tell them today. Is there a date?”

“They have ten days from today to sign the release forms, return all their uniform, all that.” Douglas said.

“Right, thank you very much for escalating this, Douglas. We couldn’t have done it without you.” Canfield smiled, marking the date ten days in advance on his calendar for the day they’d be gone. “It’s not a problem at all. At first Air Chief Marshall Dowding was angling to have them merely unable to get their wings and have them in ground crew, but when I brought up the fact that they might deliberately tamper with planes, particularly planes of the student they took advantage of, his
mind was changed.” Douglas stated.

“We cannot thank you enough for that. It would have definitely been a real problem, fiddling with planes and continual targeting of students,” Canfield said.

He was back at breakfast in time to get decent food much to his joy, he told the officers of the Ministry’s decision.

“Thank god,” was all Farrier could say, although judging by his pale face he was in shock. Everyone knew they’d get expelled, but to hear that it had been approved was yet another step. Now it was as real as it could get.

“So when do we tell them?” Davis asked. He and Maxwell had been given a very much simplified version of what had happened to Collins, it was easier if all the officers were in on the situation though Canfield and Farrier weren’t sure how much Collins would have appreciated them knowing, so it was kept to a bare minimum, though considering the boys were now getting expelled the two slightly less experienced officers at least knew the magnitude of whatever Anderson, Charles and Johnson had done.

Because there was no flying today thanks to the high winds, and that it was a Saturday, technically nobody had any lessons though Anderson, Charles and Johnson didn’t know the flying was cancelled of course. Nobody did except those who were at breakfast when it was announced by Canfield, half of the students didn’t have a phone or telegram and it wasn’t like Gatwick was about to send them all a letter in the post that would arrive next week, telling them not to come in this afternoon. Collins, Dawson and Wingnut decided to walk to the sandwich bar for lunch, with nothing else to do, Collins wanted to spend the entire day with Farrier, but he couldn’t of course, and he also knew he would have felt guilty not spending at least some time with Wingnut. The thought jolted him as it did every time. It was his last month at Gatwick, and the month was already almost halfway done.

“Wingnut, we never went to London like yae wanted,” Collins said over his pumpkin soup at lunch. They were sitting inside the little shop today as opposed to walking back to base with their food or sitting on the bench on the footpath outside the store. The wind made those two options unimaginable.

“Mm, yeah!” Wingnut said enthusiastically, “Tonight will be perfect, wind and all.” he added.

“Well, whatever Wingnut says, goes! Isn’t that right Collins?” Dawson smiled, still playing the game.

“Aye, sure is mate.”

That afternoon the rest of the cohort trickled into base, expecting to be flying, all very unsure if they’d be able to, considering the conditions. As they were leaving disappointedly, Farrier stopped Anderson as he sulked away with his two friends by putting a strong hand on his shoulder.

“Mind coming and having a chat boys?” he asked, no smile on his face.

“Whatever you say, old man.” Anderson said, shrugging Farrier’s hand off.

“Canfield’s office then, now.”

Then Farrier smiled coldly, and it worried Anderson. Farrier saw it in the boy’s eyes before he did
it. He was about to bolt. Just as Anderson began to move the man grabbed him by his blazer arm.

“You’re not going anywhere except that office, let’s not have a repeat of physical education lessons, yes?” Farrier said, and shoved Anderson down the hall in the direction of the office.

After a lot of grumbling they were all inside the room. Canfield sat at the desk and Farrier stood at his side. The three boys looked across the desk at them, if they had tails they’d have been between their legs with the expressions of guilt on their faces.

“Now boys,” Canfield began, and cleared his throat. Anderson crossed his arms uncomfortably. Farrier had discreetly locked the door behind them just to be sure, but Anderson knew by now there was no use running.

“We know.” was all the older man said. Charles looked at the floor, Johnson went white, but Anderson still had that smug expression that made Farrier just want to punch him. Again. That day in physical education was still the best fun he’d had in a long time.

“So what?” he said. Farrier stifled a chuckle, the boy giving him what Farrier supposed was meant to be a threatening glare and a cock of the head, though Anderson should have known that there was no point in him trying to intimidate the likes of Farrier, all it did was make the man more infuriated.

“No, no don’t rile him up, Anderson, listen to me!” Canfield brought the conversation back to the centre of the room, Anderson still locking eyes with Farrier, who smirked as he anticipated Michael’s words to them.

“This behaviour can’t stand in the RAF. We’ve been in direct contact with the Air Ministry. And unfortunately, we’re letting you go, lads. We have no choice but to expel all three of you.” he said. There was no reason to drag the point out, it was a simple expulsion. The smug smirk on Anderson’s face dropped and he swallowed.

“Canfield, we didn’t mean anything by it.” he began,

“Anderson you poisoned another student, deliberately! What on earth could you mean when you say that you didn’t mean anything by it? We have an eye witness for goodness’ sake boy. You’re not getting out of this one.” he said with a raised voice. To see Canfield lose his temper at a student was a rare occurrence.

Collins dressed in a warm turtleneck and trousers, held up with suspenders. His waist was still slim, whatever muscle he’d built in the early days of him and his friends going to the gym was likely lost now. The lad was getting better at accepting his body, why should he be ashamed of it? Besides, Collins thought he looked rather good in turtlenecks. He left his room and waited in the hall for the others.

Canfield’s voice was the only sound which could be heard over the wind outside.

“So we’re leaving you three with ten days. In that time you are to fill out several forms discharging yourselves, you will not be able to get into the Royal Air Force anywhere else in the UK. England has the upper hand in this where our records are transferred everywhere in Britain, you try and apply in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland they won’t take you. Had you been expelled from one of those places, you could simply go to a different one and your record would not be tainted, but I digress. We expect full return of your uniforms on the tenth day.” He said, completely unaware that
Collins himself had done exactly what he just described in coming down to England to reapply. There was nothing more to say.

“Go home boys. Best start getting everything in order.” Canfield ended. Farrier walked silently behind them and unlocked the door, holding it open for them. For the first time he saw genuine sadness on Anderson’s face, but Farrier felt no remorse, no pity, absolutely nothing for the boy. The three left silently, in complete shock.

“You’ve got no idea how happy that made me.” Farrier said to Canfield.

“Oh my boy, I do know. It made me very glad to say the words,” he replied.

Soon Dawson appeared looking dapper in a very much similar outfit to Collins, though the turtleneck had been replaced with a cream button up shirt.

“Yae look like you scrubbed up better than me then.” Collins laughed, wondering if a turtleneck was appropriate.

“Ah don’t be silly, come on let’s find Wingnut!” the blonde said to Collins, and they walked off down the hall. Sure enough Wingnut was dressed outrageously in a striped orange button up shirt and a very loudly patterned tie.

“You two look so plain next to me!” he laughed,

“Well you’re the friend of honour aren’t you!” Dawson replied. The boys walked out of the building at some time near dinner, they’d dine out tonight. Onto the train and into London Collins was trying his hardest to be happy, he knew he’d have a good time tonight but the fact that it was because Wingnut was leaving soon was a looming thought. The train was being blown side to side with the wind, the boys were all quite glad when they got off onto the solid ground of the platform. Collins and Dawson decided to let Wingnut follow his nose and find a suitable place. He found it, very close to the station in fact. It was incredibly run down and looked closed, but it wasn’t so they went inside. Turned out to have very decently priced meals, so the boys ate well.

Farrier tried not to be too disheartened that Collins and friends weren’t at the dinner table, they were probably out having fun. They were young, after all. Canfield told the other officers of the meeting in his office at which he told the news to the perpetrators. Right from the start it was clear that none of those boys were in the RAF out of love for the job, it seemed like an odd choice for them and was most likely an attempt to get into a high paying job which didn’t require any sort of prior learning.

After dinner, Wingnut walked around again until he’d found a suitable partying venue. Inside was very warm and packed with people. Not Collins’ ideal place, he preferred the more interesting tucked away kinds of bars but as Dawson said, whatever Wingnut said was the law tonight and if he said they would celebrate here, then they would. They started with drinks, and this time Collins made absolutely sure not to let his drink out of sight, or even out of his hand.

“So Collins, you gonna teach me to dance tonight? I want to impress Lucy!” Wingnut said.

“Sure mate, though I cannae teach you partner dancing.” the scot replied,

“No worries, I’m keen to learn whatever I can!”

“Well let’s go!” and at that, Collins downed the rest of his drink and stood up.

“Dawson, you comin’?” he asked,
“I dunno, Wingnut am I?” the blonde looked to Wingnut for instruction.

“By royal decree, yes you will learn to dance as well!” Wingnut slurred. Collins chuckled at his already tipsy friend. It would be harder to teach him in this state but he’d try.

After nearly an hour of attempting to teach his friends how to dance in its most basic form, Collins gave up. Dawson wasn’t too bad though it was clear he wasn’t ever going to be a dancer, his movements weren’t flowing smoothly, and Wingnut was too far gone to really follow any of it. They enjoyed the music for a while longer before departing the bar onto the now dark streets of London, where the strong wind had finally died down to a breeze. They walked in the moonlight, it was still cold but in his turtleneck Collins didn’t mind, besides he always liked the cold weather.

They eventually reached the bank of the Thames.

“Dare me to jump in?” Wingnut said, still half drunk.

“No mate, we don’t” Dawson laughed.

“Oh go on, dare me!” the brunette pushed, half falling over his own feet.

“Thames is dirty Wingnut, yae donane want to go in there.” Collins said.

“It is?” Timson asked,

“I’m not even from England and I know that! People ‘ave died from the pollution in that thing Wingnut, you’re not jumpin’ in there!” Collins said.

“Fine, well we better find something else fun to do.” He said definitively. Dawson and Collins shared a look of slight tiredness, but happiness nonetheless. They walked along the bank, Wingnut telling them an elaborate story of the time he nearly got washed out to sea because he swam straight into a riptide, and Dawson scolding him, being from the coast he knew everything there was to know about swimming in the ocean, it was clear that Wingnut didn’t. Collins felt a little left out, he’d never swum in the ocean. He knew he’d get teased if he said anything though so he kept quiet, having learnt his lesson after admitting that he hadn’t swum in a chlorinated pool before.

“Isn’t that right Collins?” Wingnut said in reference to riptides not being visible at all. The blonde huffed,

“I wouldnae know,” he said, not being bothered to try and smother the ‘secret’.

“How’s that?” Wingnut asked.

“Never been in the sea, have I.” he replied, upset by the fact.

“What?!”

“Yae heard!”

“Well we have to get you in the ocean then!” Wingnut said,

“Dawson, when’s the next train to the sea? I don’t care which one.” Wingnut said, Dawson stopped walking, trying very hard not to laugh.

“Wingnut. Are you even vaguely aware of how far away the ocean is from you right now?” he asked.
“Surely an hour?”

“I mean, hour and a half, yeah to Brighton it’d be about that long,.”

“Then what’s the issue?”

Dawson begrudgingly supposed that Wingnut did have a point, checking his watch it was still only 20:15. They actually did have time.

“Collins, we have time to go there, it would be like, past midnight by the time we got back but we could do it.” he said to the other blonde. Collins considered this and then turned to Wingnut.

“Well lads, I think we all know what the answer is going to be when I say that it’s up to Wingnut.”

Then they were on the train to Brighton. It was crazy how spontaneous Wingnut was to Collins, who much preferred order and plans. Still, he was curious about the ocean. They arrived nearing 21:35, having been lucky enough that the next train was in the station when they arrived. Knowing the trains came at the hour, they planned to only be at the beach until 22:30 to give them time to get back to the station.

Once the boys reached the beach, sand silver in the moonlight and completely empty, Wingnut couldn’t wait to jump in the water. Dawson was going in as well to make sure he didn’t float off, the blonde now very worried about Wingnut’s inability to swim in open water after his story. Collins knew he should go swimming as well, see what it was like. It was freezing cold on the beach, but at least the wind was dead here.

“Strip down then lads!” Dawson said as he began taking his shoes off. Wingnut and Collins shrugged and did the same.

“We have to swim naked!” Wingnut declared.

“Wha? Why Wingnut?” Collins laughed, already only in his underwear and almost shivering.  

“Well I don’t want saltwater in my underwear for one,” he said, and turned away from them to take said item of clothing off, cupping his hands over himself and turning back around. Dawson was in fits of laughter, but did the same, explaining to Collins that saltwater was awful for clothing and that it would chafe later as well. The scot was glad that Dawson hadn’t laughed at him for not swimming in the sea before, as Timson had. Finally Collins followed suit, although very self-conscious. Hands covering their fronts they all waddled over the sand, Dawson was first into the water, then Wingnut, then Collins. The scot took a few tentative steps in at first, his friends already up to their waists.

“This isn’t gonnae hurt my eyes like the pool is it?” he asked.

“Just get in already!” Dawson said, splashing water at Collins almost causing him to move his hands up from where they were covering himself.

“Eejit!” he yelled, and then pushed himself to walk forwards until he was in the water with them. It was very cold, not the coldest Collins had swam in by far, but he could smell the salt, he could feel the difference in the water too.

“Heads under lads, three, two, one!” Wingnut said without warning. Collins watched as his two friends went underwater and quickly gulped some air to join them. He opened his eyes, couldn’t see much under the surface in the dark of course, but it didn’t hurt his eyes at least.
Canfield had roped Farrier into a game of checkers this time, since he was fairly certain Collins was out, he accepted. Chess was one thing and he was just getting the hang of Canfield’s playing style with that, but checkers was something else and he was doing very badly.

“Come on lad, you’re barely playing!” Canfield laughed,

I’m trying Michael, these games aren’t my favourite thing to do, you know.” he said.

“What is then?”

Farrier almost blurted out Collins’ name before muttering “flying” and making his move on the board.

“Okay, apart from that.” Canfield pushed. It was the age old question he asked Farrier all too much, what did he enjoy doing?

“Don’t mind reading, fixing things, uh… drinking?” that last part earnt him a slap across the knuckles.

“Not like that! Like actual social drinking Canfield!” he said, the older man chuckled.

“I know lad, don’t worry I’m teasing you.” he said. Farrier didn’t appreciate his drinking problems being teased, but said nothing.

They were still swimming in the cold ocean, Dawson was keeping an eye on their pile of clothing to make sure they weren’t drifting, a common trick for those who knew how to act at a beach.

“Bout time to hop out I think!” he yelled over to Collins and Wingnut.

They dragged themselves up onto the sand, with nothing to dry themselves with the lads had to stand and wait for the very faint breeze to dry them. It was very cold indeed, although at least it wasn’t raining Collins thought. Eventually the blonde deemed himself dry enough to get dressed again and his friends followed suit.

“Yae know Wingnut, would have saved us time if we’d gone to the beach from Gatwick considering it’s south of London. We had to go north then back south to get here!” Collins remarked.

“Yeah I know, but I had no clue we’d be at the beach did I!” Wingnut replied. Collins shrugged in agreement. He wondered how much of a clue Wingnut had about anything, but he still loved his company.

Finally they were on the train back to the base, Collins just wanted a shower, the salt was sticking to him and he didn’t like the texture of his hair because of it, and there was sand in his socks which was annoying him.

“So, what did you think of the ocean?” Dawson asked.

“I liked it. It’s nice to feel the waves, how they lift yae up as they come. And the smell is interesting, in a good way. Not liking the salty feeling now though,” he replied.

“Yeah, you get used to it living at the sea. Salt in the air ravages the house paint though, and most things come to think of it. he said.
Once they were back at base they showered, Collins had already had his weekly shower and felt bad for not merely using the flannel to wash himself with water, but after that swim he really just needed an actual shower. He turned the hot tap on and waited as it began to get lukewarm. Stepping under the now hot water almost scalded his skin, turning him pink. It was welcome after a cold windy day and an even colder night swim in the ocean. He wondered what Farrier had been up to while he was out, the alcohol was gone from Collins’ system, replaced with a content warm feeling inside. He was very glad that he’d gone out and had a good time with Dawson and Wingnut. He’d have regretted it if he hadn’t. The others had apparently already finished their showers, the room was empty when Collins stepped out, back in his clothes. His hair was still wet even though he’d tried to dry it with the towel. Maybe he could hold his head over Farrier’s heater for a while, and that was his main thought as he padded upstairs. Dumping his shoes, sandy socks and suspenders in his room, he checked the halls were silent before slipping into the room next door. What he wasn’t expecting, was that it was empty. Now what was he expected to do? The blonde didn’t know if he should stay in here or risk going back into his room, inevitably coming back in here again once he knew someone was inside. After a brief standing in front of the heater to dry his hair a little, Collins checked the hall and went back into his room as silently as he could. He sat on his bed, waiting for Farrier to get back which he realised was a little desperate. To occupy his time the blonde began attempting to write a coded letter, since he’d filled his sketch book up he could no longer use it until he bought a new one. It was difficult to hide words within others, you needed to include certain letters in the sentences which could be joined together to form the secret code and because of this, the sentences always seemed strange or forced because of the need to have certain letters present. The art was making the letters sound normal. It dawned on Collins that Christmas was around the corner. He wondered if his parents would send a letter down, maybe he should send one up to them. There would be Christmas holidays, perhaps visiting wouldn’t be such a bad thing. He sure wouldn’t be going for a whole week like last time. Collins thought that perhaps Farrier would want something for Christmas. Maybe he should get him a present, was it too soon? Too forward? The blonde also had no idea what Farrier might want, and wasn’t sure if he should ask or just guess. His thoughts were interrupted when Farrier’s door was heard opening and closing so naturally, he got out of bed to go and see him.

“I’m just glad all this is gonna be over with soon,” the blonde mumbled as Farrier flipped through a flight safety manual, Canfield had another word to him today over dinner about finding hobbies, if he was going to read he may as well read something useful instead of a book on bloody birds, said Canfield who was the one who’d given him the stupid bird book in the first place.

“Me too, I’m sorry we keep having to bring it to the forefront of your memory, lad. I’m sure you don’t want to think about it at all.” He said, one hand reaching out to caress the lad’s cheek.

“It’s not that bad. I wasn’t fully aware at the time I don’t think, if I was completely awake and sober and was seeing things and having trouble breathing it would have been worse. The fact that I know it was the drugs makes it a little better,” he said. Farrier put the instruction book away.

“You’re very brave, Collins.” he said, his blue eyes full of honesty. The blonde chuckled,

“Yae think?”

“Of course. You went through something awful, but you came out the other side, you’re okay.” Farrier said as he let Collins rest his head on his chest, his hand now playing with the blonde’s hair.

“Glad you think so. My main problem with that whole night is that I know why they did it. They know what I am, they don’t think I deserve any of what I have.” he said sleepily.

“You’re more deserving of anything than they’ll ever be. And we have each other. That’s what
matters.” Farrier said. Collins looked up, a tired smile on his face as he hummed in agreement. Farrier leaned forwards and kissed him softly, caringly. The blonde melted at the touch and brought his hands up to rest on Farrier’s broad shoulders. He broke the kiss and looked at Farrier, adoration shone in his eyes. Farrier hummed in content, he still couldn’t believe that Collins was his. Part of him was of course scared of what might become of them, if anyone found out, but he never could have known how amazing it would be if he hadn’t taken the chance that afternoon and kissed him. Even with the fact that it was dangerous, that if anyone found them out their careers would likely be ended, somehow, crazily, it was worth it.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading ! it honestly means the world to me that my writing makes people happy. This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat. (this chapter hasn't been proofread properly because I'm tired ((what's new)) so I'm really sorry if you find any mistakes in it)
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
Farrier returned from checkers, it had surprised him how late Canfield stayed up, he was usually asleep long before Farrier had even begun to think about sleeping, he supposed tonight the older man was up just to spend time with Farrier, which was sweet.

He retired to his room for the night, no sooner had he shut the door did he hear Collins’ own open. Farrier lay on his back with his eyes shut and smiled to himself. It was nice to be wanted, appreciated and liked by someone other than Canfield. It was also surreal to have a romantic partner, especially one so caring and beautiful as Collins.

“Evening,” he rumbled to the lad as he poked his blonde head cautiously through the door.

“Ello,” Collins muttered, shutting the door as quietly as possible behind him.

“Did you just get back?” Farrier asked, then he noticed Collins’ damp hair, his pupils widened at the sight.

“Not long ago. Went swimming in the ocean for the first time in me life!” the lad said excitedly.

There were so many things to unpack. They’d been at the sea on a day like today? Collins had never swum in the ocean?

“Good, you liked it?” was all Farrier said,

“Very much so. The waves are fun,” the blonde said. Farrier sometimes couldn’t believe the things Collins said were real. Fun waves, he was 26 years old.

“So why were you at the beach, may I ask?” Farrier murmured as Collins sat next to him, both propped up on the bedhead.

“Oh. Well we went into London town centre for dinner, bit of a drink and a dance. I tried to teach Dawson an’ Wingnut how to, didnae work that well. But then Wingnut said he wanted us to dare him to jump into the Thames. When we said no he said we should go to Brighton, so we did.” Collins explained matter of factly.

“Isn’t Timson from London?”

“Aye?”

“Then didn’t he know that jumping into the Thames is not something you dare people to do on a whim?”
“He had no idea.”

At that Farrier laughed,

“Honestly that boy, I wonder sometimes.” he said,

“We all do. You know when Dowding came to inspect the base and everyone was told to be on their best behaviour, Wingnut suggested we climb onto the roof so he couldn’t find us?” Collins recounted with a grin, Farrier wheezed in laughter and tried to keep his volume down.

“I’m very glad you didn’t go through with that marvellous plan,” he said, unable to wipe the smile from his face just thinking about it.

“Same. He says a few odd things like that, but at least he doesn’t give people opioids.” Collins muttered, meaning it as a joke but accidentally wiping that beautiful smile off Farrier’s face.

“Don’t say that, pet.” he murmured and rested his head against Collins’.

“I’m okay with it, I’m alright to think about it now.” the blonde said,

“But I’m not,” said Farrier. He looked worried, Collins leaned up from his slouch and kissed the brunette’s cheek.

“Well let us talk of nicer things,” he said.

“Like the fact that those three boys are going to be gone in ten days.” said Farrier. Ten days. A grin broke out on his face and he threw his arms around the man next to him.

“Can’t wait,” Collins said into Farrier’s shoulder, still smiling as the man’s arms tightened around him.

Several days later, Collins had finally come up with the perfect Christmas idea for Farrier. He was going to buy him a new watch. The man had been complaining about losing his for months now, and hadn’t gotten around to buying one himself. Collins knew he wouldn’t be able to afford the greatest new watch, but he hoped whatever he found would be enough for Farrier. Flying was at midday, and Collins went up with Farrier in the Harvard.

“I want you to try and roll her,” the brunette said over the intercom.

“Port or starboard?”

“Surprise me,”

So Collins did. He rolled the plane to port until it was completely sideways.

“Good. Keep this up a few hundred feet then continue the roll upside down.” Farrier said.

Collins did so, it was dizzying to fly sideways, and when he decided to roll the plane upside down completely, he felt faint.

“Eh, don’t feel great bein’ upside down.” he said.

“Need to get used to this, lad. Few hundred feet then you can turn her back up,” Farrier instructed. Collins huffed and focused on not moving the control stick. The plane acted completely differently upside down, it felt like it was trying to push its nose towards the ground, Collins had to push the control stick slightly forward to keep it level, which in itself felt strange because forwards meant
pushing the nose down, but of course up is down when one is flying belly up.

“Good. Right way up again, now.” came Farrier’s voice, and it couldn’t have come soon enough for the blonde. As he flipped the plane back the blood rushed from his head.

“You did well. Now we’re also doing some dives today.” Farrier’s voice crackled through the radio.

“Dives?” Collins repeated,

“They’ll be very shallow don’t worry. I’m going to control the first one, so hands off the controls okay?” he said. Collins took his hands off the controls as Farrier took hold of his own in the cockpit behind. It was very strange for the blonde to be seated in the plane and not have his hands on the throttle and control. The plane started tilting down, sitting at the front without controlling the plane was now somewhat scary. Collins’ breathing was audible over the radio.

“It’s fine Collins. Be ready.” Farrier said. Then the little plane swooped down gracefully, and very gently back upwards. The force pushed Collins back in his seat a little, but at least it didn’t hurt his neck as he’d heard would happen.

“Oh, that was fine.” he said.

“Told you. Now you try.”

Collins took hold of the controls again,

“Now, let the plane take itself downwards, when you pull back on the control to come out of the dive, increase the throttle a little to help her back into the air,” Farrier said. Collins nervously flexed his hand over the control stick. He pushed it forwards gently and the bright yellow plane began to look downwards. The world around them was very grey today, another cold one. It wasn’t warm in the plane, Farrier was in his Irvin jacket again, Collins didn’t have one so he had to make do with his usual uniform. When the Harvard had dipped enough for the blonde to his liking, he pulled the control stick back towards himself and pushed the throttle handle forwards simultaneously. The plane swooped upwards a little steeper than what Farrier had done in fact. The gravitational force pushed Collins back into his seat, he felt pressure in his neck and shoulders too.

“Very good, how was that for you?” Farrier asked.

“Eh not bad, felt it in my neck,” Collins muttered,

“You’ll get used to that.” Farrier said absent-mindedly. He was looking at the Perspex canopy, it was freezing over. Upon closer inspection he realised that there were actually tiny snowflakes landing on it.

“Collins, are you seeing what I am?” he said quietly.

“It’s snowin’.” the blonde replied.

“Indeed it is. We need to get down soon, that means.” Farrier said,

“Aye, I’ll take us back.” the blonde said. Farrier was impressed by his forwardness. He didn’t ask if Collins knew the way, he’d see if they arrived back at Gatwick or not.

Farrier shouldn’t have been surprised when they did arrive back at base, the snow was so bright in the air and it was getting heavier now, but Collins had still managed to keep track of where they
“I’m very impressed with you Collins, navigating us back here in these conditions,” he said. A nervous giggle came back across the radio.

“Thank yae.”

Farrier shook his head though the blonde couldn’t see.

“I’ll land her though.” he said, not wanting Collins to land on the snowy runway.

“I can do it, Farrier,” Collins insisted, eager to please him even more.

“Collins, not today. I’ll talk you through the differences in how I land in snow, but you’re not doing it.” Farrier said firmly. He heard Collins huff on the other end of the radio and smiled to himself, the lad had begun to get a little cocky in the planes lately. It was fine because he was very talented considering his experience, he could back up his confidence with actual skill. Farrier remembered when he was that cocky, then he remembered when he’d tried to tell Canfield that, and the old man’s voice rang through Farrier’s head saying “You still are”. He chuckled at the thought as he lined the plane up to land.

“Yae better not be laughin’ at me,”

“What? Oh, no I’m not. Just thinking to myself.”

“’Bout what?” Collins asked, looking sideways out the canopy observing snow fly all around them, contrasting against the yellow plane.

“Well, how you’re getting cocky in the planes, and how I can remember when I was like that. What made me laugh was when I realised I still am like that,” Farrier said, and heard Collins’ distinct chuckle over the radio. The wheels touched the ground and the plane skidded over the snow, black tire trails in the white behind them.

“Came in even slower than usual, and at a steeper angle, if you come in too flat you’ll just slip over the snow. You have to come down sharper so the force pushes the wheels down onto the tarmac, enough to slow it more than usual because you’ll slip forwards more than usual.” He explained.

“I could have done that,”

“You’ll do it next time we fly in snow, Collins.” he said kindly.

They got out of the Harvard and walked quickly to the rest of the class who were waiting in the door of one of the hangars out of the snow.

“Are we going to keep going?” Farrier asked Canfield.

“What do you think, boy?” Canfield laughed, causing some of the class to chuckle too, though Anderson, Johnson and Charles stayed very serious. Farrier pursed his lips at Canfield and mumbled something about snow being harmless before taking his flight gauntlets off.

“How was your snowy flight then?” Dawson asked as they walked off to the sandwich store in the snow, none of them really minding it. The snow had come on suddenly, Collins was the only one who’d flown in it, though today he hadn’t succeeded because of Anderson and his friends wanting to hang back, he had a habit of deliberately flying last, he enjoyed being the last one up. At least today he was still last due to the snow stopping the last three.
“Not bad, quite pretty actually.” he said.

“Difficult to fly in?” Wingnut asked.

“Sort of, obviously yae cannae see as much but it’s doable.”

They sat inside for lunch and watched as the streets turned white.

“You two going away for the Christmas holidays?” Collins asked.

“Sure am. I’m going back to Weymouth.” Dawson said,

“And I’m heading back into London.” Wingnut said, although Collins wasn’t entirely sure if it would actually happen, he told them he was going back to Aviemore, more to fit in with his friends than actual want to go back.

“I’m going to be gone for most of the holidays, same with you two I imagine?” Dawson asked.

“Oh, bit over half the time.” Wingnut answered. They both looked at Collins to hear his response.

“Havnae thought about it, but at least a few weeks,” he said. Not that he wanted to be there for that long, just saying out loud was enough to cause dread to seep in, thinking about his forced relationship with his parents and the issue that was Benjamin.

Afterwards, Collins had the difficult task of excusing himself so he could go and buy a watch for Farrier.

“So eh, I need tae duck off for a bit so you two get back to base.” he said.

“What?” Dawson said, blank faced.

“What?” the scot said with a smirk. He was planning to get Dawson and Wingnut something small too.

“Christmas stuff,” the scot said with a smirk. He was planning to get Dawson and Wingnut something small too.

“Ah I see. Well alright then.” Dawson smiled. Collins wandered around the clusters of stores up the main drag of Gatwick until he found a store which sold watches, ties, shoes and other gentleman’s items.

“Hello, chap. What can I do you for today?” a man with a large moustache said.

“Ello, I’m eh, lookin’ for a watch,” he said dumbly. The man looked around the store,

“You’re in the right place, northerner.” he laughed. Collins wasn’t sure if ‘northerner’ was an insult or not but nonetheless he knew his statement had been a pretty unhelpful one.

“Ehm, a watch for a pilot. Needs to be able to handle the pressure up there” and he pointed through the roof.

“Oh, I see. Should have known from the uniform,” the man said.

“Come, this is the cabinet for you lot.” and he directed Collins towards a glass cabinet with watches that ranged from very shabby to very fancy looking.

“All of these are aviation watches?” Collins said,

“Yes, pick any one you want.” The man smiled. Then the blonde bent down to look at the price tags, his heart sank. He wouldn’t be able to afford the kind of watch he’d wanted for Farrier. The
most he could afford was a little one with a green canvas strap and a small cream face rimmed with silver.

“Okay, think I’ve picked.” he said, and waited for the man to unlock the cabinet so he could take it. Collins was given a small box to keep it in, and he tucked it inside his blazer to keep it from getting snowed on. Now that he’d seen the prices of pilot’s watches, he was even more grateful that Dawson had bought him one. Leaving the store with very little money left to spend on his two friends, Collins searched for something worthwhile to get them.

Back at base, Farrier was helping move the Hurricanes into the hangar after a flight, the snow not letting up. He was nervous about Christmas this year, he always got Canfield a bottle of his favourite wine and whatever little thing the man had been mumbling about over breakfast. Canfield had a lot of little knick knacks, they seemed to be the only thing he really wanted whenever Christmas rolled around. This year he’d been going on about some little silver spoon collection he’d seen in a store somewhere that he wanted to hang on his wall. Farrier had already put it on hold so that nobody else would buy it. This year however, he had to buy for two people, he had to find something for Collins. As he pushed the last plane inside he made a note to go and look around for something the lad would like. He probably shouldn’t spend too much on it, didn’t want to freak him out by jumping into things.

Collins had found some very bright and unsightly cufflinks that Wingnut would probably think were the most fashionable cufflinks in the world, so he had to purchase those. Unsurprisingly they were very cheap. As for Dawson, Collins had found weighted tin containers, decorated with a white and blue floral design. The man in the shop had said they were usually put on boats because of the weights at the bottom, they tended to shift around less, so Collins knew he’d found the perfect gift for Dawson and his family. There were two of them, in Collins’ mind that meant one for sugar and one for tea.

He arrived back at base as it was getting dark, the street lamps illuminating the snow flying through the air. With a suspicious brown paper bag and a bulky box sitting in his blazer he jogged upstairs to deposit them all in his room, hidden inside his cupboard. The blonde ran back downstairs for dinner, snowflakes still in his hair. It was a warm soup tonight, which Collins was very thankful for after hours of walking around in the snow and the ill-heated shops.

“So did you get everything done then?” Wingnut asked.

“Yes, I did.” Collins replied smugly.

“Well we need to get a wriggle on then don’t we Wingnut!” Dawson laughed.

“Speak for yourself, I’ve already done my Christmas shopping lads!” the brunette smiled, much to the genuine surprise of both blondes.

After changing into his pyjamas after dinner, Collins played questions and commands with his mates, he could tell Dawson was getting sick of the childish game, but to an extent Collins liked it, and was still overly worried about losing his close friendship with Wingnut. The blondes weren’t choosing ‘command’ because Wingnut had been ordering them around anyway since the excursion to Northolt.

“Question.” Collins said, after being asked by Wingnut.

“Still fancy the old man?”

“He’s not even that old. Why are both of yae so obsessed with that?” he said, blushing.
“Oh I’m not. I was just wondering.” Wingnut said defensively,

“Wingnut, question or command?” Collins asked back, even though he was supposed to ask Dawson.

“Uh, how about question.”

“Have yae got it on with yer lass let?”

The room went silent as Wingnut’s ears went red. Dawson and Collins exchanged looks of elatedness.

“Mate!” Dawson said, grabbing Wingnut and shaking him around.

“Congratulations mate, I’m happy for you!” Collins laughed as he watched Wingnut attempt to disappear from thin air out of embarrassment. Though he was of course, happy for his friend it drew into sharp relief that which Collins hadn’t achieved in his life. Messing around with Ben didn’t count, not that they’d done anything past the odd blowjob that seemed to be more Ben trying to teach Collins to do it how he liked it more than anything else, but as he sat on the floor of Dawson’s room, Collins realised he wished he could say what Wingnut had.

“Is this making you uncomfortable?” Dawson asked, always paying such close attention to Collins’ and Wingnut’s emotions that it irked the scot sometimes.

“I’m fine,” he said and looked up, smiling to hide his illicit thinking. Dawson knew there was something up but he’d learnt that if Collins wanted to share, he would. He wished the scot was more open sometimes, but he’d never push him to be, that wasn’t what being friends was about.

The game ended and Wingnut went back to his room. Collins lingered, he wanted to tell Dawson what had been going on with him and Farrier.

“What’s wrong?” the boy asked him. Collins really did want to tell him, but he was scared of what he’d think. Scared of what Farrier would think, scared of how Dawson might see Farrier if he knew what they’d been up to. He began to breathe deeply.

“Mate, are you okay?” Dawson asked, a hand on the blonde’s shoulder.

“Don’t want Wingnut to go.” he said. He couldn’t do it. He couldn’t tell Dawson.

“He’s going to be happy in bombers, Collins. We’re still going to see him, mate. You’ve still got me.” Dawson laughed, coaxing a smile onto Collins’ face.

“It won’t be easy, but he’s still gonna be around, we’ll see him a bit still,” Dawson said,

“Yeah, yeah.” Collins nodded. He was pulled into a hug. Dawson’s arms tightened around him and one of his hands clapped Collins on the back.

“At least we get to say goodbye to him, Collins.” he said as he pulled back. The scot blinked, those were the same words Farrier had said to him about the situation. He sighed,

“You’re right. It’ll be okay.” the scot said, and bid Dawson goodnight.

As Collins got back to his room, a thought occurred to him. What if he was annoying Farrier by always going into his bedroom? It wasn’t like he ever asked, he just walked in. Half the time Farrier was in thought, or reading or doing something. So the blonde sat on his bed sulking. Farrier
had heard his door shut, he knew he was in there. After another half hour of the blonde not making an appearance the brunette got out of his cozy bed and checked the hallway was clear before slipping out of his room and carefully knocking on Collins’ locked door. The blonde answered it very quickly and upon seeing it was Farrier, stood to the side to let him in.

“Evening,” Farrier murmured,

“Evenin’ yourself” the blonde replied, locking his door again and going to sit on his bed. Farrier wrapped his arms around him before he reached the bed and pulled Collins until his back was against the brunette’s front.

“Where d’you think you’re going?” Farrier rumbled against Collins’ neck. The blonde shivered and tried to pull away to sit down.

“Let me sit doon!” he giggled,

“Mm-mm, not happening, pet.” he said, and Collins bit back a gasp as he felt hot lips on his neck. Farrier kissed him softly, carefully. Collins was frozen in disbelief, then his head fell back onto Farrier’s shoulder as he let the man kiss his sensitive skin and he poured all of his efforts into not making any sound.

“Didn’t feel like visiting me tonight?” Farrier asked quietly after giving the blonde one final kiss on his collarbone.

“I-I wasn’t sure if my visits were annoying you.” Collins said, half turning in Farrier’s arms to look at the man. The brunette smiled,

“It’s the best part of my day when I see you appear in my doorway Collins,” he said, and he turned the blonde in his arms to face him properly.

“I’m not annoyed by them, lad.” he said, and a hand cupped Collins’ cheek as he was pulled into a sweet kiss. The blonde hummed against Farrier’s lips and his hands came up to rest on the man’s chest. Farrier pulled their bodies close together and he let a hand snake up to the back of Collins’ head, fingers threading through his hair and holding him against his lips. The blonde was vaguely aware that he had been pushed backwards but it came into sharp realisation when the back of his legs hit the bed frame causing him to sit.

“There, I let you sit down.” Farrier chuckled, and sat next to him, one of his hands lingering on Collins’ thigh.

“Is your heater on?” Farrier asked,

“Of course, it’s snowin’” Collins replied, confusion on his face.

“It’s still cold in here is all,” Farrier said,

“Yae well you’re used to havin’ two heaters Farrier, my room is warm for me.” Collins said, the hand on his thigh squeezing in fondness, though the gesture was changing Collins’ mood into something a little darker than mere fondness.

“If you’re cold, let’s warm up,” he said, Farrier’s eyes snapped to his, the man surprised by the suddenly dark tone in the usually innocent voice of Collins. Farrier wanted to jump at the chance, wanted to crash his lips against the blonde’s and pin him down on the mattress. But he didn’t. He moved in and slowly kissed him, softly and deeply. It was more intimate than the harsh ideas in his head could ever have been, to kiss someone softly, longingly and so trustingly. Collins grabbed at
the man’s shoulder, pulling him closer, needing the warmth and the stability. Farrier broke the kiss but only to move himself completely onto Collins’ small bed lying back against the wall, the blonde lay next to him waiting for him to make the next move, too nervous to make it himself but needing it desperately. Farrier grabbed the blonde’s waist with a strong hand and pulled him gently closer, lips touching again. It was almost unbelievable for Collins already, that this was really happening. That he was with Farrier. The brunette’s hand on his waist tightened, pulled him even closer. Collins’ hand flew up to grip Farrier’s bicep, to ground him in case he floated off into the air because he felt like he very well might do. The brunette could feel how much Collins wanted him, and it only served to fuel the fire within. Farrier breathed hotly into the kiss and the blonde gripped his strong bicep harder, causing a dark chuckle to erupt from deep inside Farrier’s chest. The lad was already falling apart beneath him, and it was taking an enormous effort for Farrier not to follow suit. He let his tongue glide over Collins’ bottom lip, the blonde’s breathing faltered at the sensation.

Their eyes opened briefly, looking into each other’s, making sure it was okay, a moment of stillness was shared between the two men as they pulled away just enough to look at each other properly. Nothing but the sounds of their breathing. Collins reached up and pressed his lips against the older man’s, his tongue met Farrier’s in a silent plea. The brunette pulled Collins’ body closer still, chests bumping. Collins hooked a leg over Farrier’s hips, needing the closeness, and it was then that Farrier pushed Collins onto his back and rolled on top of him, their bodies pressed together, blue eyes staring into blue eyes, before Farrier leaned down and kissed him again.

Collins was burning up, the woollen blanket underneath them on the bed, his own clothing, the weak heater on the wall, Farrier’s body heat radiating off him, even the dim bedside lamp. He pushed Farrier’s chest until he knelt between the blonde’s sprawled legs, immediately worried.

“You okay?” Farrier breathed. He hoped he hadn’t done it again, pushed Collins before he was ready. Surely he was ready by now, surely that comment about warming up had meant what Farrier thought it meant. The lad was looking at him, still panting slightly, chest still heaving, and then without warning he pulled his pyjama top off over his head, revealing his pale torso lit by the yellow light of the lamp. Farrier couldn’t move for a moment, taken aback by the action, he stared at Collins’ body shamelessly. It was perfect, a light smattering of freckles graced the lad’s shoulders, he was so pale and lean, it was beautiful. The blonde’s expression not nervous, but hungry. He wasn’t self-conscious now, even with the exercise he and is friends had undertaken in the beginning having probably worn off completely, in this moment he couldn’t care less what he looked like when Farrier was staring at him like that with such a primal hunger in his eyes. Collins’ pyjama top was on the floor, and soon Farrier’s joined it. He sat for a moment more, Collins was blushing down to his collarbone, skin pink and hot. A faint trail of hair led down his torso and under his trousers and Farrier’s eyes followed it.

Collins found eye contact difficult with Farrier at the best of times, his gaze was always so intense, add on the fact that he was so attractive and the blonde could barely hold eye contact at all without going red. Now Farrier was shirtless in front of him, all golden skinned and muscles rolling underneath, Collins still felt too hot, he didn’t even bother to try and stop blushing as he looked at Farrier, the man’s deep blue eyes held the same look they did when they’d first met. Curiosity. But this time, they also held the unmistakable look of lust. Farrier climbed back over Collins, and slowly lowered himself back down onto him. Their torsos pressed together, finally skin on skin. Their kissing was slower now, but impossibly more heated. Their skin pressed together was warm and intense and Collins could barely believe it was real. Farrier’s lips moved to his cheek, then his jawline, and down onto Collins’ neck. He gasped and instinctively a hand flew up to the back of Farrier’s head, Collins felt him grin against his neck. Farrier kept kissing, slowly building, when Collins felt hot tongue swipe across his skin, he couldn’t hold back the whimper.

This was it. It was happening.
Farrier made a feeble attempt at shushing the blonde against his neck, but it only served to worsen the issue, he was way more sensitive than Farrier ever imagined, and imagined he had on many a night, but it was finally real, tangible, and it was **perfect**. Collins’ hand tightened around Farrier’s short hair, focusing on being quiet. Focusing on Farrier. Focusing on anything, but it was extremely difficult to do anything the way the brunette was kissing and sucking his neck, Collins felt like he might explode from the sensation. Farrier wished he could mark the man beneath him, suck his neck red so that everyone knew he was his. He wouldn’t risk that, but he dragged his teeth over the soft flesh, unable to contain his desire. Collins arched off the bed and bit back a groan as Farrier toyed with his skin, nibbling, licking. Farrier broke contact with Collins’ neck for a moment, breathing hotly against it as he steadied himself, and then rolled his hips experimentally. Collins inhaled sharply, jolting at the unexpected sensation. Farrier was looking at him, making sure he was okay. Trying his hardest to maintain eye contact, Collins tentatively pushed his own hips against the man above him, his body instantly flooded with pleasure as his hardness pushed into Farrier’s. A smirk played on the brunette’s lips and Collins watched his eyes cloud over with need. Farrier leaned in and kissed Collins on the mouth again. The blonde let his tongue glide against Farrier’s, he was ready for this. He felt safe, he felt good, he felt **ready**. Farrier let out a soft moan as he pushed himself against the blonde again, feeling the hardness of Collins against himself was dizzyingly satisfying. The blonde was almost writhing underneath Farrier already, this was better than anything he’d ever done with Ben, because this was with Farrier. This had real emotion tied to it. This wasn’t mucking around out of desperation, this was a choice, and this was definitely the right choice. Farrier rolled off Collins and onto his side, Collins immediately missed the weight on top of him. The man’s hand wandered down the blonde’s chest, fingers ever so lightly dragging over a nipple as they went, causing a shiver to run down Collins’ spine as he looked over at Farrier with flushed skin, desperation in his eyes. Farrier smirked at the reaction, so plainly painted on Collins’ face was the need he was feeling, it was driving Farrier mad to see Collins overwhelmed by pleasure as he lay there. He’d waited so long for this to happen, and he hadn’t expected it to tonight at all. Farrier’s hand reached the blonde’s trousers and they both stopped, stopped moving and almost stopped breathing. At first he smoothed his hand over the material, feeling the hard length beneath it as Collins’ mouth fell open and a shaky exhale left it. The brunette looked at him to make sure it was okay, still worried he was pushing the lad even though his own arousal was almost blinding. Collins propped himself up on his elbows, he was red in the face, and his eyes were dark. He kissed Farrier hard, too long had he been too nervous to act, and once not nervous anymore, too long had he looked at the man before him yearningly, too long had he wished for something to happen, but no longer. As they kissed, Farrier’s hand stroked over Collins’ thin pyjama trousers and he could feel almost everything through them, Farrier nearly groaned just from feeling him. The blonde whimpered into Farrier’s mouth as the man caressed him, causing Farrier to break the kiss and give a warning look to stay quiet, a look that did more to increase Collins’ arousal than anything else, before wetly sucking Collins’ bottom lip between his own. Collins supressed a moan, struggling greatly to keep quiet, but at the same time terrified if any passers-by would hear. He hated that they weren’t allowed to do this, it wasn’t right that this was wrong. The thought didn’t stay for long as Collins’ mind was yet again completely wiped of its ability to think as Farrier gave a squeeze over his trousers. Then Farrier’s hand moved from over his length and began to feel the hem of his trousers. He needed what was under that material. Collins didn’t need to draw this out any longer. He lifted his hips off the mattress as the brunette shuffled his pyjama pants down just enough to slip himself out of them, Farrier not once looking down, not once shifting his gaze from Collins’ beautiful face. The blonde, feeling overly exposed now as his length lay stiff against his belly out in the open, locked eyes with Farrier, and with the look in his eyes gave silent permission to keep going, to **please** keep going. Farrier let out a shaky breath and took Collins’ length in his hand. Collins’ mouth opened in a silent moan and his blue eyes stared up at Farrier, who gave him an equally heated, **hungry** gaze that sent Collins further into elation than he already was.
Farrier blinked twice to make sure this was real, and for the first time his eyes flicked down to what his hand was doing wrapped around Collins’ length, and it was an impressive length. Collins’ eyes followed his and it was a sight in itself to see Farrier’s hand holding him. They looked back to each other, blue eyes staring into blue eyes. Collins couldn’t take it any longer, he knew Farrier was being delicate but in this moment, he needed him more than anything.

“Please” he breathed.

At that Farrier dipped down and pressed their lips together once more as he gave a light tug on Collins’ length. He felt the blonde’s hips stutter, he repeated the motion. Slowly at first, testing the waters, getting to know Collins in such an intimate way. It was exquisite. Farrier broke the kiss, he exhaled heavily and looked at Collins’ swollen lips from his hungry kisses.

He swore under his breath, this was unimaginably better than he could ever have hoped. Collins’ breaths was stuttering, the lad bit down on his bottom lip as Farrier stroked harder, looking up at the man, lust plain as day on Collins’ flushed face. The blonde tilted his head up and caught Farrier’s lips in another heated kiss. He was pouring himself into this kiss, he had to or he’d be moaning loud enough to wake half the building. He thought Ben knew what he was doing, but Collins hadn’t a clue what it was like to be with a man who actually knew how to pleasure someone, and Farrier most certainly did know. The brunette’s pumping sped up, his hand gripped around Collins’ length harder and his tongue pushed its way into Collins’ mouth. The blonde exhaled in shock at the sensation, there was so much of it, and he was completely incapable of doing anything except lying there as Farrier stroked him, kissed him, explored him in the most intimate way. Farrier was still in somewhat disbelief that this was real as he kept going at his pace, neither slow nor relentless, but just enough that something was building inside Collins, and Farrier was alerted to this when the blonde’s kissing became softer, as his breathing became harsher, he was trying his hardest but he was drifting, his breaths were shaking and he was falling further and further. Farrier pulled back to look at the beautiful man beneath him, who couldn’t contain himself any longer.

“F-Farrier,” he moaned, the brunette had to bring his lips back to Collins’ to muffle the sounds the boy was making. He was whimpering against the Farrier’s mouth, he was getting closer. Hearing his own name moaned in pleasure was almost as arousing as what he was doing to Collins. Something he’d never heard before.

“Fuck,” the blonde breathed, and the brunette almost lost his rhythm hearing it.

“Shhh pet,” he whispered breathlessly as his hand continued to pump. Collins’ head fell back and the way his eyebrows bunched together as pleasure overran him was almost enough to bring Farrier to stop stroking completely just to admire him.

Collins could barely concentrate on anything. This had to be a dream, surely. He lifted his head, an enormous task, to look Farrier in the eyes, but got distracted when he looked down between them. Farrier’s strong hand pumping him up and down hard and fast, his bicep was flexing as he moved, Collins drank in the sight before shifting his weight onto one of his arms so he could move the other one to rest on Farrier’s shoulder, as if it was the only thing keeping him on earth. The brunette moved himself closer to Collins, hips bumping, noses almost touching, not once did he stop his strokes up and down Collins’ cock. The blonde looked into Farrier’s eyes, trying his best to keep his own open through the immense pleasure that was being elicited from him. The men were so close they were sharing breaths, and as Farrier looked deep into Collins blue eyes, studied how his pupils expanded, studied the patterns of his irises, Collins fell further into dreamland, unable to keep his eyes on Farrier’s now caring, but intense as always gaze as he rested his head on the brunette’s strong shoulder, Farrier knew Collins was right on the edge when a whimper left his
mouth as his eyes closed. Collins had lost all sense of where he was, that he had to keep down, that this was a secret. Nothing was getting through except the feeling of arousal, the feeling of closeness. His entire body was hot and his breathing ragged, he was too weak to even keep his eyes open, but one sentence spoken with a raspy voice cut through everything like a hot knife,

“Come on pet, that’s it,” Farrier coaxed, and no sooner had the words left his mouth that he felt hot liquid shoot out from the man beneath him. Collins had fallen silent against him, his whole body shuddered as his orgasm ripped through him.

Farrier was unable to speak as he watched Collins come to his climax, and it was because of him. Any words he could have wanted to say weren’t there, he was silent as he watched the man below him ride out his pleasure.

Collins was a mile high in the air, barely registering anything except Farrier’s strong grip around him as he spilled onto his own stomach. He couldn’t stop the shakings as they came, he was unaware of how hard he was gripping Farrier’s shoulder, unaware that the brunette was enamoured watching him as he orgasmed.

And finally, Collins came down from euphoria and lay tiredly on the bed, head still resting on Farrier, still half unaware of his surroundings, brows still slightly furrowed in pleasure. He opened his eyes to Farrier smiling at him, a soft protective smile. The man dipped his head to kiss Collins softly, warmly. Without saying anything he reached over the blonde to retrieve a handkerchief from atop the bedside table.

“Jesus,” Collins breathed as he took it to clean himself up with.

Collins looked around for where to put the soiled handkerchief, his laundry basket was the best option, and Collins managed to get it to land on the lid.

“Farrier, I, eh… Thank you” he stuttered.

Farrier snuggled up to him, draping a heavy leg over both of his. This was bliss. Of course he wanted Collins to help him get his own end off, but that could wait. The blonde was falling asleep already, Farrier would never disturb such a lovely thing.

“Well, see you tomorrow pet.” came the low voice of the brunette through Collins’ already sleep-clouded thoughts. Collins hummed and opened his eyes.

“Farrier, I think that was the best I’ve ever felt.” he said wearily as he swung his long legs off the bed and pulled his trousers up properly. The man chuckled behind Collins as the blonde picked up both their pyjama tops from the floor.

“Don’t laugh, I’m serious,” the lad said as he handed Farrier his top.

“Well, thanks I suppose. I’m glad.” he smiled, though it amused him that Collins felt the need to say this. The blonde plonked his lanky self down next to Farrier as they both slipped their pyjama tops back on.

“Well, you’ve got no idea how long I’ve wanted to do that to you.” Farrier murmured, his eyes still dark. The ‘to you’ part had Collins’ stomach in a knot. The tone of voice woke him up slightly.

“I dunno why I was so nervous now that it’s happened,” the blonde replied. They shared a trusting smile, Farrier reached a hand out and held onto Collins’ for a while. He needed to calm himself down or he’d be up half the night. Farrier leaned in and kissed Collins on the cheek and then stood up.
“Hey,” he said, pulling Collins to his feet for a hug. He didn’t even have time to initiate it for as soon as Collins was standing he wrapped his arms around Farrier, and the man was taken aback by it. He hugged Collins back, resting their heads together as he squeezed the blonde.

After he’d arrived back in his own room which felt very big and empty after what had just happened, Farrier had already begun to get soft in his pants, initially planning to wank off after, he instead opted to lay in bed and take in what had just happened.

Both Farrier and Collins had the best sleep they’d had in a long time.

Chapter End Notes

Aaand that concludes another monday! I hope everyone enjoyed reading, as always I very much appreciate your love for my writing. This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat! Until next chapter, happy reading ♥
It was Sunday, the next morning at breakfast it was incredibly difficult for Collins to act any sort of normal. Farrier seemed to be handling it a lot better, just not looking over at the lad and focusing on his food was enough to keep the heat from his cheeks. Even though Collins sat with his back to the officers’ table, he was still blushing just knowing that the brunette was sat behind him, he couldn’t stop thinking about last night.

“You alright buddy?” came Wingnut’s voice through Collins’ thoughts which were much too heated for the breakfast table.

“Wha? Oh, yeah I’m fine.” he mumbled, continuing to eat his cereal measuredly.

“You sure? Looks like you got sunburnt in December mate,” Dawson laughed.

“Maybe I did.” Collins replied, everyone dropped the clearly uncomfortable subject after that, but not before Wingnut and Dawson exchanged puzzled looks.

“Man, I’m excited to get back home for a while. It’s hard not seeing family for this long.” Dawson said to ease the tension. Collins hummed in agreement though he wasn’t sure how much he did agree.

“You’re an only child, aren’t you mate?” Dawson said to him.

“Ye,” Collins said.

“I’ve got a little sister!” Wingnut mentioned.

“Oh, you’ve never said that before,” Dawson said,

“Yeah, she’s eleven. She’s so cute, really into art right now.” he smiled a goofy smile.

“So it’ll be good to see her again, as well as my parents and that,” Wingnut said.

“Yeah, can’t wait to see my little brother again, give him a good squeeze I will. He’s in this book club in school, keeps bringing home different literature and he won’t stop going on about it.” Dawson smiled.

“He and his friend from the book club, this lad called George a couple years younger than him, they’re always together talking about books, they’re so into it.” he smiled. Collins smiled too,

“Reading’s a great hobby tae have.” he said.

“Yeah it is. He’s got heaps of hobbies, it’s like he wants to be everything at once, but he’s full of life and excitement, so I’m happy.” Dawson said. Hearing that made Collins almost wish he had a sibling. He was glad that the subject had been lightened from his ‘sunburn in December’, though.
Today the first lesson was with Canfield, which was not much better than if Farrier had been the teacher. Collins walked in avoiding eye contact with the man as best he could,

“Morning Collins, Timson, Dawson!” he called. Canfield always did that, it was his way of checking off the roll, saying hello instead of listing the names off once everyone was seated.

“Mornin’” Collins managed, in his head it sounded guilty but of course Canfield had no clue what he’d be guilty of, or did he? The blonde sat down trying not to overthink anything. The lesson was on engine work, something which although they didn’t have to know an awful lot about since the ground crew handled that, there was still chance that some of the men in the class wouldn’t graduate as pilots, and would indeed be ground crew. That, and Canfield stressed how important it was to know basic engine care so that if one was in a situation without anyone to help, they knew how to fix a plane. Collins did the worksheets with his head down and when the class was finally over, handed them up without a word to the old man.

The boys walked out to the sandwich store for lunch, it wasn’t snowing today but it was still cold.

“So, what was up with you this morning?” Wingnut pressed.

“Nothing, okay?” Collins said. Dawson didn’t push, but he gave Collins some sort of look which implied he felt sorry for him. Having no clue what Dawson was thinking Collins almost blurted out what he’d done the previous night in annoyance. His two friends looked at him like he was a crazy person, he had just made some sort of strangled sound to keep the sentence from coming out of his mouth and had also started staring at the ground aggressively.

“Okay, I guess nothing is up, let’s just get to the shop boys, my ears are frozen,” Dawson said.

Upon return to the base, Collins saw Farrier for the first time since breakfast. He steeled himself, he’d have to learn how to act normal again. He’d done it after they kissed, and now he’d do it just the same. Farrier was out on the tarmac, filling in a pothole with one of the ground crew by the looks of it. The boys usually went and sat against the back of the building after lunch if there was no class on. It was getting cold enough that the long grass of the fields past the runway were turning white with frost.

Farrier looked over as he heard soft conversation carried in the wind. It was Collins and his friends. He had to stop himself smiling as he watched the blonde sit down with the two by his side.

“Wonder what’s out there,” Collins said, watching the fields, grass frozen enough that it didn’t blow in the wind.

“Let’s go find out.” Dawson said. It was obvious that something was wrong with Collins and although he didn’t want to pry, he wanted to make it better, whatever means necessary.

“Ah, no we’ll stay here.” Collins said, not wanting to cause a fuss and also worried about the prospects of having to walk past Farrier.

“No,” Wingnut said,

“It’s still ‘What Wingnut Says, Goes’ and I say we are going out into the field!” he smiled at Collins and patted his back. The blonde couldn’t keep a smile from his face.

“Alright, alright.” he relented and stood.

“Ya can’t deny yourself what you want, mate. Just do it, ya know? That’s how I live, no filter on anything!” Wingnut said as they began to walk out away from the building. Collins tensed at the
wording and the implications his mind inflicted on the first part of the sentence.

“Aye,” he said. They walked past Farrier and he looked up.

“Where are you lads off to?” he said, voice raised above the wind, it looked like they were walking off to nowhere.

“Oh, just wanted to see what’s out in the fields!” Dawson said, Collins was eternally grateful that he hadn’t had to speak up.

“Alright, you won’t find much!” Farrier laughed, looking a little confused.

The boys walked over the tarmac and Collins tried not to look over at Farrier’s shed, as he’d dubbed it. The place Farrier said he went to think. He was happy to see that the grass had mostly grown back, which meant that he hadn’t been there for a while. Collins smiled to himself as the grass got longer around his trousers.

“Are we looking for anything in particular?” Dawson asked Wingnut.

“No, just for fun,” he replied. Dawson clapped him on the back and they continued to walk.

The frozen grass bent as the boys walked over, making three wiggly lines through the tall vegetation.

“Oh, look here!” Wingnut said, bending down. He picked up an old bolt, completely rusted.

“Nice,” Collins said sarcastically and kept walking.

Farrier watched as the men got smaller and smaller as they walked away into the field, the fog was coming down low now, he hoped they came back before flight lessons this afternoon. He knew they would, they were good kids. Men, not kids, he thought to himself, considering what he’d done to Collins last night Farrier was somewhat disgusted that he’d just thought of them as kids. They were in their twenties, they were just so happy-go-lucky and carefree, they acted so young and untouched by anything. Farrier wished he’d been like that instead of whisked away to war at their age. Then again, war was on the horizon now. He shook the thought from his head as he levelled out the wet asphalt in the pothole.

The boys found a few more strange objects in the fields, old pieces of farm equipment, bits from plane engines, Dawson found half a propeller blade which was stuck so hard into the ground he couldn’t remove it. If he could, he probably would have kept it.

Collins’ trousers were getting wet from the long grass,

“Lads, should we turn back?” he asked.

“If you want, I’m enjoying this.” Dawson said. They didn’t turn back, they were barely halfway to what looked like a fence in the distance marking the end of the seemingly infinite expanse of land Gatwick owned but didn’t use.

“Look at this!” Collins said as he held up yet another piece of nondescript metal.

“Fascinating.” Dawson droned sarcastically.

“Yae do wonder how all this shite got out here considering they don’t use it,”

“Yeah I suppose.” Dawson answered. Collins threw the metal across the field and it landed in the
grass, not to be seen for many more years probably. There was a single tree in the whole field growing, and the three boys had been subconsciously making their way to it. When they finally reached it, Wingnut spotted something hanging off one of the branches.

“Collins, can you reach it?”

“I may be tall but if yae want me to get that I’m gonna have tae climb the tree.” He said, earning a look from Wingnut that told him that yes, he was going to climb the tree.

It wasn’t difficult, the branches were growing perfectly for someone to climb them, Collins was up in no time, not that it was a particularly large tree. Finally he reached the branch Wingnut had been pointing to, and reached the thing hanging off it which until now, he couldn’t even make out what it, or rather they, were.

Two small rubber discs on strings looped around the branch, Collins picked them up and climbed down. The discs were only each the size of a coin, as he stood in the wet grass and held them the blonde realised what they were. They were identity discs. He read one of them,

1. T. Canfield  
   R.F.C.  
   Maj

It was Canfield’s of course, from the war when it was still the Royal Flying Corps, and Canfield had clearly been a Major at the time. Collins felt the disc in his hand, he’d never held one before. He knew they were made of the rubbery material because that way they would float in water and were supposedly fireproof as well. He dreaded to see the second tag, but he couldn’t hold his curiosity back.

1. L. Farrier  
   R.F.C  
   POff

Collins sighed as he read it. Back before the RFC had become the RAF and the ranking system had been overhauled, a Pilot Officer was the equivalent rank of Flying Officer. Farrier was only the ranking of what Collins would graduate to be.

“So what are they?” Wingnut asked after watching Collins read them.

“Dogtags.”

“Who from?”

“Canfield and Farrier.”

“Cool, let me see!” Wingnut yelled and grabbed them. After reading he passed them to Dawson, who also read them albeit less excitedly as Timson.

“Wonder what they’re doing out here,” He said, passing them back to Collins.

He flew that afternoon with the identity disks still in his pocket, it was a strange feeling as Canfield sat behind him in the Harvard, that he was holding his old identity disk. Collins felt like he’d stolen it, but it was sitting in the tree for whatever reason, so clearly they weren’t wanted. They came down to land through the wind,

“Now you know how to deal with this?” Canfield asked,
“Aye,” Collins replied over the radio, and he did. The landing wasn’t his best, but considering the plane was being blown sideways by the wind, he was quite happy with it.

“There we go!” he said happily as the wheels touched the ground.

“Very good my boy! Though you must wait until the plane has come to a complete halt, and you’re safely out of it, before you celebrate!” Canfield remarked.

“Ah yeah, sorry.” Collins smiled. The Harvard ground to a halt and the two men jumped out.

“There we go!” Collins repeated in exactly the same voice.

“Good lad.” Canfield laughed, patting him on the back.

At dinner that night, Collins was still holding onto the identity disks. Not really knowing what to do with them, he was fidgeting with them in his pocket and planned to put them away somewhere when he went upstairs. He wanted to keep them, they seemed important.

“So, how’d you guys go flying today?” Dawson asked.

“The usual, nothing to complain about.” Collins replied, Dawson scoffed.

“What? I cannae help that I’m meant to be a pilot,” Collins said, “No I know, it’s funny when you get all cocky,” Dawson chuckled.

“I know, I was jokin’. We all know you’re the star of the show, Dawson.” Collins smiled.

“Sure are mate, the envy of us all!” Wingnut said, Dawson shaking his head with a smile as he ate. He didn’t deny it though.

“Though lucky for me I don’t have to worry about being so agile and that, considering where I’m off to.” Wingnut added.

“Not long now,” Collins said, “Not long at all boys,” Wingnut said.

“Though lucky for me I don’t have to worry about being so agile and that, considering where I’m off to.” Wingnut added.

“Not long now,” Collins said, “Not long at all boys,” Wingnut said.

“There’s a bombers base I’m hoping to get transferred to that’s close to here though.”

“Well that’s a relief,” Collins muttered unhappily. Wingnut looked at Dawson for reassurance, it did sometimes get to him that Collins never seemed particularly positive about his moving. Dawson smiled a trusting, it’s okay smile. He knew the scot could be a little quiet with his feelings sometimes, but Wingnut was reassured by his expression that moving to bombers was the right thing to do.

Later that night, Collins cautiously made his way into Farrier’s room. The man was sitting up in bed fiddling with what looked like rolling paper. Collins closed the door behind him, “Evenin’,” he smiled.

“Evening yourself,” Farrier said, copying Collins’ common reply to his greetings. The blonde still had the identity disks on him, he’d stuffed them into the side of his sock now that he was in his pocketless pyjamas.

“Want one?” Farrier offered a rolled tobacco cigarette, Collins shook his head.
“Alright,” Farrier said, reaching for the lighter. Collins sat next to him in bed, wriggling closer until their hips touched. No sooner had Farrier had his first puff of the cigarette did Collins’ slender fingers reach and take it out of his grip.

“I asked if you wanted one!” Farrier chuckled as Collins took a draw,

“I don’t, I just wanted that.” he said, giving it back. Farrier hummed in fondness.

“Eh Farrier, when I was in the field today I found somethin’ interesting.”

“Oh yeah?”

Collins reached into his sock and pulled out the little discs. He didn’t expect Farrier’s eyes to glass over the way they did. Collins panicked, had he triggered something?

“Oh, I’m sorry Farrier, I didnae think—“ he began, stuffing them away.

“No no, it’s… It’s alright. I’m alright.” Farrier said, and brushed his hand through Collins’ hair. The blonde was warmed at the words, he nuzzled into Farrier’s neck and hummed but still was the feeling that he’d done the wrong thing.

“Can I see?” Farrier asked after another smoke. Collins held them out, the brunette took both of them, turning them over in his hand while holding the cigarette in his mouth. Collins still resting on his shoulder, could feel the man tense as he read his own identity disk.

“Canfield said he’d gotten rid of them. I guess that just meant he’d gone wandering and thrown them somewhere.” Farrier huffed.

“What a chance that you found them,” he added.

“He’d put them in the single tree in the field.” he said. Farrier huffed and reached over Collins to the bedside table to put the cigarette out. He kept looking at them, feeling them,

“I used to love this thing you know, I thought it was so cool that it was fireproof and buoyant, I loved reading my name stamped into it,” he mumbled. Collins hummed thoughtfully,

“It kind of wears off when the excitement does. When you wake up to the reality of war, you really just want nothing to do with it.” Farrier said, and he handed back the identity disks.

“What do you want me to do with them?” the blonde asked,

“What you want, lad. I don’t mind if you keep them, or throw them away again.” Farrier replied, reaching for Collins’ thigh. He gave it an affectionate squeeze,

“I’m glad I can talk to you like this, about issues.” he said quietly.

“Of course, I just want tae make you happy, Farrier,” Collins smiled, and was pulled into a hug.

“And I want the same for you, pet. If there’s ever anything, even if it’s ridiculous, I’m here.” he said and looked into Collins’ eyes. Farrier’s gaze wasn’t as intense as it usually was, it was comforting, it was grounding and if he kept looking, Collins thought he might become hypnotised.

Collins went back to his room wishing he had some pages left in his sketchbook. As much as Farrier made him feel like he was floating, like he was on top of the world, if Collins couldn’t draw he began to get restless. Reading was a good enough substitute, and the blonde picked up the pamphlet on behaviour and demeanour that they’d been given on their very first day. Flicking
through the pages made it feel like their first day had been years ago, it had only been about eight and a half months. A lot had happened since then.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading, it means a lot to me ❤️ and thank you as always to everyone who leaves kudos and comments on my work! This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat! Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
Happy Monday everyone! Hope everyone had a good week last week and another good one ahead of them ❤️

It was Tuesday the 20th of December. The day of the expulsion. The sun hung low in the winter sky and the air wasn’t going to warm up at all today, the windows would remain fogged and every surface that wasn’t directly next to a heater would remain cold to touch.

Ever since Collins had allowed Farrier to be intimate with him, it had been more difficult to act normal. Up until before Farrier had taken the next step, being together had genuinely worked to subdue their affections in front of others, but now Collins was all blushing cheeks and even less able to make eye contact than usual. Farrier was better with it, he didn’t want to slip into ignoring Collins again, even though this time the blonde would of course understand why, and he could explain it to him personally now that they were together. But Farrier was simply unwilling to ignore the blonde at this point, he was too close to him to bring himself to do so. Instead he opted for the sarcastic demeanour towards Collins, brushing his comments off more instead of giving into his ministrations in public. Thankfully things were getting a little more comfortable by now.

“So you two leavin’ soon to be home for Christmas?” Collins said over cereal at the breakfast table.

“Yeah. I’m leaving on Christmas Eve. I’ll be back on the 31st for the graduation of course though.” Dawson said.

“Hey me too, same plan!” Wingnut said as if it was the biggest coincidence he’d ever come across.

“Aren’t you, Collins?” Dawson asked.

“Well, we have classes on the day of Christmas Eve, I’ll miss the Flying Scotsman. If I take it on Christmas Day, I’ll still miss most of everythin’ by the time I arrive in Aviemore. I’m not even sure if it’s runnin’ on the day. I’m heading up at some point, my parents understand that it’s difficult to get up there in time for the actual day. I’ll just go sometime in the new year.” he said. in truth, he hadn’t even told is parents that he wouldn’t be there for Christmas, and while he felt guilty about that, he was also worried about telling them, what if they didn’t take no for an answer? Worse still, what if they did but Collins could tell that he’d disappointed them?

“Fair enough, it’s annoying how far away your lot are.” Wingnut said, Collins hummed in agreement.

“But I think I’ll go back to London soon after the graduation, spend a proper amount of time with the family,” Wingnut said,

“Woah, me too! What a crazy coincidence!” Dawson mocked Wingnut’s earlier surprise.

“Yeah yeah, very funny Dawson.” Wingnut said, ears red.
“So, today’s the day.” Collins said after a few minutes’ silence.

“Day for what?” Wingnut asked, Collins rolled his eyes.

“Day Anderson and his awful friends get the boot for good!” he said. Collins couldn’t believe it even as he said it that he had been the cause of this, and it became even more surreal when he walked into his first class for the day to see Anderson, Johnson and Charles already there in casual clothes, which had never happened before in his life. Every time they turned up to class they were later than everyone else, sometimes they didn’t even bother showing up, but today they were here with the rest of the cohort. They looked solemn, and now it was Collins’ turn to be happy while they weren’t. Farrier was at the front of the class, arms crossed leaning against the front of the teachers’ desk. He had a big cream turtleneck on beneath his blazer, looking at it made Collins shiver as he realised how chilly he was himself. Farrier chanced a cheeky smile at Collins, knowing how happy he must be to see the three boys finally going. The lesson was about engine failure and what to do in that situation, something Farrier wasn’t entirely comfortable teaching as it reminded him of his own experiences, but nonetheless he knew the students had to know the information, so he continued teaching but kept his own personal information private from the prying minds of the class.

“So by now you should all have some sort of basic understanding of the most common issues, and if you’re on the ground how to fix them at least temporarily,” he ended. Wingnut raised his hand,

“If a twin engine plane has issues with one engine, do you need to fix it to get it flying again? Because they can fly with one engine, can’t they?” he said. Someone sniggered, Timson turned to see that it was Johnson, Anderson’s friend. He sniggered back, because soon that boy would be gone and nothing would matter.

“Good question. Yes, they can technically fly with only one engine running, you have to be really heavy on the controls to do it, say the port engine is out, obviously the whole plane is going to start flying sideways in the air if you don’t pull it hard starboard. But, that’s when one engine has failed during flight. You can’t really get them off the ground successfully if they’re grounded and only have one working engine. The thing will just end up spinning out on you, so you do need to fix it, yes.” Farrier answered. Wingnut hummed as he thought about the response.

“Who’s planning on transferring to bombers?” Farrier asked, to his surprise Wingnut was the only one who raised his hand. Most years it was at least a handful of people.

“Oh, then who’s planning on being a fighter pilot?” he asked.

Everyone except Timson raised their hand, including Johnson, Charles and Anderson. Farrier gave Anderson an unimpressed look and the boy met it with a smirk.

“Still hope for us yet, old man” he said. Farrier sighed,

“Class dismissed.” he said, unwilling to address the issue of expulsion in front of the entire class, but rather unhappy that he hadn’t downright shut Anderson up.

It was a full day of classes, and whenever Farrier wasn’t teaching he was preparing papers for the graduation ceremony. There were a lot of students graduating, and each certificate needed a signature from both officers that taught them, as well as a small comment. Farrier had gotten to know the near fifty students well enough to at least comment something vague on their skills, but he’d put Collins’ to the side to do last. He had to think of something special to write on that one. The box of Pilot’s Brevets had arrived yesterday and it sat on the brunette’s desk, little patches of the British crown with wings, each ready to be put into a graduation package along with the
certificate, an expensive pen, and the Flying Officer arm insignia to be sewn around the lower part of the blazer arm, everyone who attended a college be it Gatwick or Cranwell and successfully graduated as a pilot graduated as a Flying Officer, graduate at any other regular base and one had to transfer to such a college for a month to gain that privilege. Of course some of the graduation boxes did not include the Flying Officer insignia or the Pilot’s Brevet, those were for the men who’d graduate as ground crew.

Farrier affectionately looked at his own rank insignia on his blazer arm, Squadron Leader. He was proud of how far he’d come. His thoughts were distracted as he came across Charles’ graduation certificate, without signing it he discarded it into the rubbish bin. The three lads had turned in their forms and uniforms this morning, they were all sat in a heap on Canfield’s desk. Farrier checked his watch wrist and groaned as yet again it was drawn to his attention that he’d lost it. He was still annoyed that he’d managed to do that, no idea how or when it had happened. The watch hadn’t been cheap either, all pilot’s watches were ridiculous prices, but if you didn’t want your watch to explode from the air pressure you had to fork out the money. Looking at all the paper on his desk and the pen in his hand gave Farrier an idea, a rather wonderful one at that. He knew what to get Collins for Christmas, it was obvious now that he thought about it. He smiled as he continued to write the certificates. He’d go out tonight and look for the gift, and probably buy Canfield’s as well.

Collins was enjoying classes today, knowing it was the last day he’d have to be wondering if Anderson and friends were talking about him behind his back was beyond reassuring. Canfield was going off on a tangent yet again, this time about the different ‘flying machines’ or primitive planes he’d seen in his years in fairs. Some of them sounded atrocious. There was even a plane with twenty-one wings at some point.

When the lesson was over, Collins took great pleasure in walking out of the classroom. For it would be the last time he went to class with Anderson, Charles or Johnson. The blonde and his friends were the last to leave as usual, and Canfield shared a smile with Collins as he walked out.

It was 16:00. Canfield and Farrier stood in Canfield’s office signing the final release forms for the lads as they stood in the corner looking genuinely hurt. Good, Farrier thought. Because they hurt Collins, and that wouldn’t stand. It was cold outside, the wind was blowing around the odd snowflake that had been stuck in a crevice somewhere and not yet melted.

“So, looks like we’re done boys.” Canfield said, his voice cut through the silence. He turned to see Anderson still with his ever-present smirk,

“No worries, we’ll get on fine old man,” he said. Canfield scoffed, right up until his last minutes in the base he was still being rude. Farrier walked behind the boys and opened the door into the hallway.

“Come on lads,” He said,

“Time to go.”

They filed out. They each gave Farrier their own dirty look as they passed him, he didn’t care in the least. He and Canfield walked to the front doors of the building and opened them, each man holding a door as the three filed out into the cold air.

“See you two around then,” Anderson smiled, Farrier unsuccessfully held back a scoff. The three walked down the stairs but didn’t get far before Anderson stopped and turned.

“We gonna get a salute then?” he asked,
“No, Anderson.” Canfield replied solemnly.

“Why? We’re leaving, it’s good manners.” He replied. Farrier was completely over these three,

“Because, Anderson, you’re getting discharged without honours. We’ve been over this.” He said sternly.

“That means you get nothing except what you see here. The officers seeing you out of the building, which is generous considering what you three did.” He said. He could feel Canfield’s eyes on him but ignored it.

“Fine, fine. Well, have fun up there then. Least I’m glad there’ll be some good lads up there protecting us.” Anderson said, pointing to the sky. It sounded half genuine. Farrier’s resolve softened a little at his words,

“We will. I hope you three find something worthwhile to do with yourselves.” He said. Anderson smiled. Not a smirk, a smile that was genuine and hopeful and sad all at once. Then he turned and walked off with his friends, never to walk the halls of Gatwick ever again.

Collins was upstairs in Dawson’s room. They weren’t playing cards, nor were they playing Questions or Commands. For once they were just chatting.

“So I guess we won’t be seeing Anderson’s lot again.” Dawson said, looking at his watch. It was 17:00, definitely late enough that they’d be gone.

“Thank bloody god.” Collins muttered.

“Cheers to that, I say!” Wingnut said, pointing to the drawer in which he knew Dawson kept his alcohol in.

“Okay as much as it’s ‘everyone does what Wingnut says’ month seeing as you’re leaving, I’m not drinking anything right now.” Dawson laughed. Collins had gone quiet, but the others knew it was for good reason, the scot had a small smile on his face as he looked out the window. The expulsion had been weighing on the lad, and now that it had happened and the awful boys were gone, Collins was free again.

It had had been done. They were gone. Farrier and Canfield headed back inside for a pot of tea together in Canfield’s office.

“I’m glad that’s over. I’d hate to think what would have happened if we’d put those lads in fighters.” Canfield said as he poured his cup.

“Yes, I still don’t know what they thought they were going to achieve in the RAF if they were going to act like that,” Farrier answered, moving the sugar bowl close to himself in anticipation of the tea.

As soon as he was finished his tea, the brunette shrugged his RAF blazer off, leaving him in navy trousers and a cream turtleneck. He made some sort of excuse to leave the base, Canfield saw right through it however, it was obvious that Farrier was about to go Christmas shopping.

“The set of fifteen! It’s on the back wall!” Canfield called after him regarding the spoon set he wanted.

“You’re spoiled!” Farrier called back, and then he left through the same doors they’d just expelled three students from.
Farrier wasn’t a huge fan of being out and about with full uniform on, he was treated differently, it felt like shop vendors were being overly nervous or cautious around him just because they could see that he was in the military. He never wore the badges or medals he’d been given, they were too precious to wear every day, but more importantly they drew even more attention to him. It was cold and he missed the warmth of his blazer, and if someone looked at his outfit long enough they might be able to figure it out anyway, but nonetheless he left the building. Slamming the door of his car, he drove off into the heart of London to find the decrepit old store that was selling Canfield’s damned spoon set. The brunette hadn’t a clue why the old man was wandering around London when he’d seen the spoon set, but he didn’t question it. Farrier found a parking space down one of the thousands of tiny alleyways that hid all over the city, and walked into the store. The floorboards were warped with age, the wallpaper was peeling off and the place smelled like an amalgamation of several different teas, Farrier may have been rough around the edges but as an Englishman nonetheless, he didn’t appreciate mixing teas together. The same man was behind the counter as was there the day he’d put the spoon set on hold.

“Afternoon,” Farrier said and as soon as the word had left his mouth, thoughts of a certain lanky blonde entered his mind. The lad had a habit of saying it after something major had happened and it half drove Farrier up the wall, but deep down he liked it.

“Hello sir, what can I do for you?” the man asked.

“I had the spoon set on hold.” Farrier replied, the man gave him a look,

“Christmas present for someone.” the brunette added to explain that it was definitely not for him.

“I was wondering, you don’t exactly look like a spoon collector,” he said. Farrier was half tempted to ask what he did look like, if not a spoon collector, but dropped it and settled for a hum of agreement instead. He paid the cash over the counter and was handed the spoon set. There were fifteen little spoons all with unique designs birds painted into each bowl, and the same floral vine engraved down the front of each of their handles. They were set inside a chestnut case with a glass front, they were quite nice, he admitted. Farrier took it by the brass handle on the top of the box and carried it like a briefcase. He smiled to himself as he pondered Canfield’s interests, collecting junk was one of them, reading and writing was another, but he especially liked birds. Anything with a bird on it had a higher chance of being bought by Canfield than if it didn’t have the design on it, hence the spoon set and also hence Farrier being given a bird book to read. He still hadn’t read it, only looked at the pictures. Farrier was about to leave when he realised that his present for Collins may be in here also. Carrying the spoon set precariously through the overstocked store, careful not to bump it against a crammed shelf or delicate display he made his way around the place. It was a lot larger than Farrier imagined, the store went right back from the road.

It was dimly lit and the sun was going down behind grey clouds, but all pilots had very keen eyes, Farrier was no exception so when a stack of sketchbooks caught his eye, he made a beeline for them. They were different sizes, and different colours of leather. Farrier set the spoons down to look properly at them. There were brown, deep red, a black and a deep blue one. Thinking that the blue looked too much like an RAF logbook or something, the red didn’t strike Farrier as the colour for Collins, the black too depressing, Farrier settled on the plain leather. It was the same colour as Collins’ old sketchbook, so he guessed there was a reason the lad had picked the plain one. He opened the thing, unwinding the leather strap that held it shut, he noticed how soft it was. This was a nice book. The pages were a cream colour and were perfectly crisp. Inside the front cover was a pocket in the leather to store loose paper, Farrier assumed. He wound the leather strap back around it and picked up the spoon case.
“I’d like this as well.” he said to the man at the counter, presenting the book.

“Didn’t pin you for an artist, is this another gift?” the man laughed.

“Yes, it is.” Farrier answered, again very tempted to ask the man what he pinned him for, but again he said nothing.

“Would you be wanting some paint then?” he asked.

“I beg your pardon?”

“Paint, boy. This is watercolour paper, it’s designed so that you can paint on it without the stuff seeping through or warping the page.” the man said.

“Oh,” Farrier said quietly, he didn’t realise this artist stuff was so in depth.

“Yeah, maybe, then.” he said.

“Well is this book for a painter or not?” the man laughed.

“No, it’s for a pencil sketcher, but maybe they’ll like painting too.” Farrier said.

“Well, here’s the small set.” the man said and pushed past Farrier, disappearing into the depths of the store. The brunette stood at the counter awkwardly with his spoon set and overly fancy sounding sketchbook, he hoped Collins liked it. He hoped the fancy watercolour paper wasn’t going to do something bad with Collins’ pencils, the man really had no clue about this kind of thing. The store owner returned with a small flat rectangular tin. He opened it to reveal twelve little squares of paint set in it, a long thin paintbrush and a few empty spaces to mix colours together.

“This is just the basic one, but there’s nothing wrong with it, just not much paint.” he said. Farrier didn’t even care how much it was, he’d pay it, just on the off chance that Collins liked it. He was however, surprised at the number when the man said it, not expecting something like this to be as expensive as it was, but drawing meant a lot to Collins, and Farrier was curious if he liked painting too. He thanked the man and finally left the little store. From the outside it didn’t look like much, but now that Farrier knew how huge it was inside, and how many strange and varied items it had, it was clear why Canfield was in there, right up the old man’s alley.

It was raining which was no surprise. Collins was now in his own room, watching the water patter on his window, down on the tarmac there was a group trying to push the Spitfires into the sheds as quickly as they could. One of the older groups had been flying them today, Collins couldn’t wait until he had his wings, then he’d be joined with an Operational Training Unit and there he would finally learn how to fly in an actual fighter. The trainers were great, but just the mere fact that the Hurricanes and Spitfires had guns, and the raw power of them that was so clearly felt as well as heard when their engines started up, was truly breathtaking.

Farrier hurried to the car with the spoons, book and paint set. He probably looked ridiculous. He managed to reach the car just as a clap of thunder was heard overhead. Glad he wasn’t flying in this weather, the man got into his car and drove out of London town centre heading back to Gatwick, picking up a bottle of Canfield’s favourite wine on the way.

Chapter End Notes
I just realised that it's July and I'm uploading the Christmas stuff now, so it's Christmas in July hehe please clap

Thank you all for reading!! It means the world to me that you all enjoy my work enough to still be here 💖

This is my tumblr if anyone's curious.

Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
Monday again! I'm going into my last week of holidays before uni goes back, I'm just enjoying the lazy life while I still can lol. Hope everyone has a good week ahead of them ❤

ALSO: There are some techical plane landing terms in this one so if you aren't sure what I'm talking about, [this video](#) should help as it's what I used to dust off my landing knowledge (I did try to simplify it but as a plane nerd I'm sometimes not sure what is too technical and what isn't, sorry!!)

Today was Christmas Eve. Farrier couldn’t believe the year had gone that fast, it seemed like only a week or so ago he’d even met Collins, and only a month or so ago that last Christmas had been here. As he meandered down to the mess hall for breakfast the man had some vague thought that Christmas Day would be falling on a Sunday this year and that it might cause issues for the church and their Sunday services, not that Farrier went to church or was even remotely religious. Being homosexual did that, when you were shunned by religion for what you were, one tended to turn their back on it. Farrier’s household, like everyone’s, had been religious and right up until he’d moved out with Canfield he’d pretended that he was too. Canfield was vaguely religious as well, though he didn’t go to church which was unusual although Farrier was glad of it, only having to put up with prayers at the dinner table and what-not.

Collins bolted out of bed and was subsequently one of the first in the dining hall. It was beginning to feel like they were impeding on the radar mess that was taking up most of the room, but they needed to eat somewhere.

“Morning, chap!” Canfield called over to him.

“Morning!” Collins replied. The blonde loved Christmas, he loved the special foods that came along with it, he loved giving presents and seeing people’s faces light up, and he loved the decorations and atmosphere that always accompanied the holiday. Part of him felt bad for getting so excited for a religious holiday, but the thought was forgotten when Farrier stepped through the doors. Collins forced himself to look down at the wood of the table before him, with no friends to distract him easily from staring. Canfield took note of the strange behaviour but didn’t say anything. He wasn’t as sharp as he once was, but the man knew by now that Collins definitely fancied Farrier, and he wasn’t happy about the fact.

“Morning,” Farrier said as he sat, watching the cooks busily mill about the kitchen at the front.

“Morning, Tom.” Canfield smiled.

“Nearly the day, isn’t it.” Farrier mumbled.

“Christmas? Yes!”

“No, graduation!” the brunette laughed as he looked around the room at the few students already here, vision homing in on the blonde head of Collins.
“Oh, yes that too. You signed all those forms?” Canfield asked.

“They’re not forms, they’re certificates. There’s a difference. And almost.” Farrier replied. The only one he had left was Collins’ and everything he’d thought to write for the comment either sounded way too personal or very much removed and cold. He sighed and sat waiting for the food to be ready.

“What’s wrong?” Canfield asked,

“Oh, nothing. Just hungry.” Farrier lied. He hated that Canfield always saw through his lies. The man pursed his lips but didn’t say anything.

“You’d tell me if something was wrong, wouldn’t you.” Canfield said. Farrier wanted to lie again and say yes, but he didn’t. Suddenly he was a young boy again, not wanting to lie and displease his father figure, and as much as he tried to tell people that Canfield wasn’t his, he was. He always would be.

“No.”

Canfield’s expression fell,

“Why?” he said quietly.

Collins’ two friends had now joined him and their faint laughter wafted over to the officers’ table.

“I’m grown. I don’t tell anyone everything about me Canfield. Not even you.” He said measuredly. Farrier didn’t know where this sudden spell of honesty came from, but it was probably for the best.

“Well, I’m always here, Farrier.” the old man said.

“I know, but I’m not little anymore.” Farrier said. There were some things he couldn’t talk about, and his recent activities with the blonde sat not ten metres away from him was one such thing. It disappointed him to say it to Canfield, but one day he had to do it, and it may as well be today. Canfield knew he’d always been too protective of Farrier, but the brunette rarely said things like that.

“Wonder what’s going on at base tomorrow then.” Dawson said, Collins hummed in agreement.

“Maybe you’ll get to fly the Spitfires!” Wingnut joked,

“What, you’d be jealous?” Collins asked,

“I dunno, a bit.” Wingnut answered.

“Can’t fly Spitfires in Bomber Command,” Dawson pointed out.

“I know, and I’m willing to forgo those planes to fly something like a Halifax or Lancaster.” he said happily.

“Well, you two have good safe journeys tonight,” Collins smiled.

“We will, hope you have a good time in Aviemore whenever you do go back up there mate.” Dawson replied.

“Say Wingnut, what’s going on with Lucy?” the Scot asked.
“Well since you asked so politely, she’s meeting me in London and she’s going to meet my family for Christmas lunch. She can’t stay much longer because the ATA girls don’t really get holidays, they get days on and off, and she isn’t even meant to take Christmas off, but she’s a bit cheeky like that.” he smiled, and his ears went red.

“That’s great Wingnut!” Collins smiled in surprise.

“Thanks mate, I’m nervous.” he said.

“Don’t be. They’ll love her I’m sure, and if your family is anything like you, she’ll love them!” Dawson said and clapped the brunette on the back.

With it being Saturday, there weren’t any lessons save for flying in the afternoon. Collins was up to 74 hours, and he was fairly certain he’d complete the minimum required hours today. 14 of his hours were solo, and he needed 15 of them to be in order to get his wings in a couple of days. A couple of days he thought to himself, it was surreal.

“I really want to let you do it in a Hurricane, finish your hours in one.” Farrier said to Collins. They were up in the hallway outside of their rooms, it was daytime but there was nobody around as usual, even less so considering most of the boarders had left to go home for the holidays.

“Let me up in one, I’ll show yae that I can handle it,” Collins said. The brunette chuckled, “Just because I want something doesn’t mean I’m going to act on it.” he smiled. Collins smirked back, wishing he could nudge Farrier but overly aware of how public they were right now, especially since their interactions had moved into their bedrooms and they no longer spent any noteworthy amount of time in the hall anymore, this felt even more out in the open.

“Acted on me though, didn’t yae.” the blonde smiled.

“That I did, but you’re the exception.” Farrier replied. They stood in silence, resting arms on the windowsill overlooking the dirt courtyard they trained in during the summer, memories of the obstacle course running through Collins’ mind.

“You goin’ away for the holidays?” Collins asked.

“Nope. Are you?”

“I should. Family would hate me if I didn’t make it up to Aviemore. I donnae want to,” he said.

“Why’s that?” Farrier asked, wishing he could touch the blonde in any way right now.

“Eh, they’re lovely folk when they want to be, but they know what I am, and aren’t very acceptin’ of it. I’m sure you know what I mean.” Collins arrived at. Farrier sighed,

“I know. Dad used to be awful to me because of it. As I’ve mentioned, well I guess never explicitly but I implied it, Mum was a lot better with it.” Farrier stopped talking after the mention of his mother.

“Mm. My Ma is better than my Da with it too, but I can see in her face that she’s trying her hardest to put a front on when I’m around, so I dunno how okay she really is with it. Plus, Benjamin lives in Aviemore and he’s always pushin’ to muck around with me, and of course I don’t want to, now especially.” Collins said.

“Benjamin’s the man you’ve been with?” Farrier clarified, Collins nodded. It somehow felt better to know his name, in Farrier’s mind.
“Well, I’m not very good with family so I wouldn’t do it if they made me uncomfortable, your happiness is paramount.” Farrier said. Collins blushed as he smiled at the floor,

“Mm, I mean what I really want is for you to come see Aviemore, but like you said, just because I want something, donnæ mean I’m going to act on it.” the blonde smiled.

Later in the afternoon, Collins was up in the air. Over the past few flying sessions the officers had been doing some new training techniques, mainly going up in a plane by themselves and having the student follow them, getting to know how close is too close to tail a plane, how far is too far away. Collins flew the Harvards with ease now, they were forgiving planes and Canfield insisted that they were the best trainer that had ever existed.

“Now, look at the trees around the fields. What do you see?” Farrier’s voice crackled through the radio.

“Uh, they’re blowin’” Collins replied.

“Which way?”

Collins’ stomach jolted as he realised. He’d have to land in a crosswind today, something he’d been lucky enough not to have to do up until now. The radio silence worried Farrier,

“You’ll be okay. Remember what you know, Collins. Just follow my lead.” Farrier said, Collins nodded before realising Farrier couldn’t see that.

“Yeah, I’ll be fine.” he shook himself of his thoughts. Miller had been unlucky, it wasn’t going to happen to every student. Collins steeled himself for the landing to come. He had to prove himself now. It was Christmas Eve, a special day. Plus he was flying with Farrier in front of him, Collins had luck on his side. The yellow Harvard in front of him which was being flown by the brunette came in to line up with the landing strip.

“Wait, Farrier? Which way are we doing it?” Collins asked. There were two ways to land in a crosswind and annoyingly yet unsurprisingly, Canfield and Farrier each preferred a different one. The first was that the plane faced into the wind, not towards the runway, so that it wasn’t blown off course, moving straight towards the runway even though not actually facing it, then just before touchdown the plane was rolled slightly into the wind so that the underside couldn’t catch and flip the plane, and then using the rudder it was yawed so that the plane would straighten out, facing the runway instead of the direction of the wind. It was called crabbing, it made the approach easy, but the landing more difficult. The other way to do it, slipping, was that the adjustments to the ailerons and rudder were made well before touchdown, so that the plane flew in facing the runway, albeit wings tipped slightly in the direction of the wind and the rudder held against the wind to keep it from blowing sideways. Then the approach was more difficult but landing was easier, just having to lift the nose a little before touchdown as with every landing. Collins hoped it was that one but had a funny feeling it wasn’t going to be. He hadn’t had the chance to practice either of them.

“Crabbing,” came the answer. Collins sent a silent thank you to whoever was listening that the crosswind wasn’t too strong.

“Right then. Yaw into the wind.” Collins said, more to himself than Farrier.

“Yes, let’s get to it.” he said, and the plane in front of Collins began to turn, nose facing directly into the wind. He did the same, and both of them drifted, while not facing the runway, directly down to it.
Canfield hummed in discontent as he stood inside the hangar with the rest of the class, “They’ll be okay, right?” Wingnut asked beside him.

“Yes my boy. Collins is in good hands. Just wish they’d opted for slipping, makes the landing much easier.” He explained.

“I hope this isn’t a repeat of Miller’s incident.” Dawson mumbled to Wingnut, who’d all but forgotten that Miller’s crash had been caused by a crosswind.

“Oh, oh no you’re right!” Wingnut said, panicked. Canfield heard,

“Men, Miller didn’t have an officer flying in front of him, and also did not exhibit correct procedure, even for normal landing conditions. Collins will be fine, stop fussing!” Canfield said. He knew the lad would be fine, he was one of the best in the group.

Collins watched as Farrier’s plane in front of him landed successfully. He manoeuvred his own Harvard into position, but as he lifted the nose slightly to land, an especially strong gust of wind came over the plane and caught the undercarriage, lifting the plane back up and pushing it several metres to the side of the runway.

“Jesus,” Collins breathed, trying frantically to stay calm and correct it. The wheels touched the tarmac and the plane landed, the jolt startling the blonde.

“Collins?” Farrier said, worry in his voice. He looked in the rear view mirror of his plane, and couldn’t see anything behind him on the runway. Doing something which Canfield would definitely advise against, Farrier checked over his shoulder while still guiding the plane down the runway as it taxied. He saw Collins’ Harvard almost on the grass to the side of the runway.

“Collins, don’t overcorrect. Don’t swerve back into the middle, alright? The plane’ll tip if you do that.” Farrier said sternly.

“I know. I’ve got it.” came the response. Farrier looked back to the front to taxi, worried that he wasn’t able to watch Collins correct his position.

He was doing okay, he’d stuck the landing even though it wasn’t centralised on the runway, the problem was gently moving the plane back into the middle, which meant moving it back into the wind and once the wheels touched the ground, all controls were much less effective. Collins opened the throttle a little, which wasn’t advised after landing, but if he didn’t the wind was going to stop the plane right at the edge of the runway and it’d be a nightmare to get all the way back into the shed. He pulled hard on the rudder, and luckily the Harvard had enough forward momentum that it worked, it began to turn back to the middle of the runway and the little amount of throttle gave the plane what it needed to continue down the middle, following Farrier’s plane once again. Collins closed the throttle again as soon as the plane was straight, almost sighing in relief.

“ Wouldn’t have happened in a bomber,” Wingnut mumbled to Dawson.

“They’re not invincible though, Timson. Remember that.” Canfield said. They had a habit of standing next to whatever instructor was on the ground, so Canfield often joined in their conversations.

“Yeah, but it probably wouldn’t have even been blown off course like that.” he said,

“While you’re correct, if it somehow had been, correcting wouldn’t be easy. It’s such a heavy aircraft and it’s so much less manoeuvrable, that you’d be a sitting duck if something went wrong.
That’s why we like fighters, you can get yourself out of trouble a lot easier than bombers.” The old man said.

“Shoot your way out in a bomber!” Wingnut laughed.

“You can try. You’ll see when you’re in bombers, you’ll get to know them a lot more than I can talk to you about them.” Canfield said, watching the two yellow Harvards taxi closer to them.

Farrier jumped out, and Collins followed. He removed the flight gear and helmet to see Farrier already walking up to him with worry on his face.

“Afternoon!” Collins yelled out over the wind and letting a guilty chuckle escape him, Farrier’s resolve to tell Collins off softened and he let out a displeased sigh,

“You keep bloody saying ‘afternoon’ after something major has happened, like we’re just meeting for tea, you just nearly landed off the runway, you git!” Farrier said, at first Collins was worried that he was in genuine trouble, but a cheeky look in Farrier’s eyes told him otherwise.

They walked back to the group, Farrier making sure the distance between the two of them was a regular one, no closer than normal.

“Do you know why that happened?” he asked.

“Yes. As I lifted the nose I wasn’t careful enough, I didn’t keep the wings tipped enough into the wind.” Collins answered as they reached Canfield and the other students.

“Correct, but considering you’d never done a landing like that before, it was good.” Farrier said.

“I agree Collins. Wind is very unpredictable, that was a good landing for a first cross wind. You always get bad luck don’t you, going last boy! Snow, crosswind.” he said.

“Thank ye Canfield, I guess it’s just practice.” Collins smiled and went to join his friends.

“All our hours are done now!” Wingnut exclaimed.

“Oh yeah, we’re all finished!” Dawson smiled.

The boys exchanged giddy laughs and roughly shook each other’s shoulders in happiness, Canfield and Farrier looked back to them from where they were walking ahead and shared a smile of nostalgia.

“Remind me to order a windsock from the Air Ministry, save everyone from using the damned trees as a guide,” Canfield chuckled to Farrier.

At dinner that night, there was more discussion of graduation.

“So your lot are almost done.” Maxwell said to Canfield and Farrier.

“Yeah, I think they all have their hours now, just in time!” Canfield said.

“How are your training units?” Farrier asked both Maxwell and Davis.

“Good, mine are getting really good with the Hurricanes.” Davis answered,

“And mine with the Spitfires!” Maxwell added.
“I envy you men, wish we weren’t stuck in the Harvards with birds like those whizzing around,” Farrier laughed,

“Believe me I’ll be getting my fair share of fun out of them during these holidays, mark my words.” he added.

“Aren’t you going away?” Canfield asked. Farrier finished his mouthful.

“I dunno, maybe for a bit.” he arrived at. He didn’t actually plan to go away at all, but he’d be pestered by Canfield if he didn’t at least allude to it in some way.

“I’m thinking of heading down to Somerset for a while,” Canfield pondered,

“That’ll be nice.” Farrier mumbled, not actually caring. Canfield went there every year, he had siblings and nieces and nephews who lived down there and he went to visit his family for Christmas every year. Sometimes Farrier wondered what it must be like to have a good relationship with family, he pushed the thought from his mind.

“Don’t think we’re going anywhere special, but it’ll be nice to spend some more time with the girls.” Davis said, in reference to his two young daughters and his wife.

“Say hello to them all for us, then.” Farrier smiled. Though he’d never met Davis’ family, the way he spoke of them made them all sound like wonderful people.

Later that night, Wingnut and Dawson prepared to depart. They stood in the hallway with Collins. Dawson checked his watch,

“Well, we should be heading off fairly shortly, hey Wingnut?” he said.

“Yeah, I mean my trains are still frequent at this hour so it doesn’t matter for me, but fairly soon yeah.” he agreed.

“Shall we go get those things?” Dawson hinted to Wingnut.

“What thi-oh!” the brunette said, before quickly walking down the hall.

“Shite,” Collins said, realising what they were doing, they wouldn’t be around for Christmas Day, so he had to give them their presents now as they were clearly about to give him his.

“I’ll be right back!” he said and darted into his room as Dawson walked into his own.

Farrier could hear the boys chatting in the hallway, but was trying to distract himself by wrapping Collins’ present in the only paper he could find on the base, not having time to go out and buy any now. It was plain brown baking paper from the kitchen, he hoped Collins wouldn’t care about the paper, he was worried that he’d think he hadn’t put effort into the present. Upon realising that he was worrying about if Collins would like the paper he was using for his Christmas present, Farrier realised he was being stupid.

The blonde felt bad that he hadn’t wrapped them, he’d forgotten to get wrapping paper completely. He grabbed the cufflinks and tins from where he’d stuffed them in his cupboard and ran back into the hallway where the other two already waited.

“These are for you, Wingnut.” and he held out the little box the cufflinks were in. He opened it,

“These are amazing! How’d you know I’d like them?” he asked excitedly.
“They were the ugliest, brightest pair in the entire store, that’s how I knew.” Collins said, Dawson snorted.

“And these are for you Dawson.” he said, handing over the two blue patterned tins.

“Thanks mate,” he said, though Collins could see he wasn’t sure why he’d been gifted two tins.

“They’re weighted in the bottom. Specifically for use on boats, so they donnae fall over. I saw two, and thought one for tea, and one for sugar.” Collins explained.

“That’s incredibly thoughtful of you, thanks Collins,” he said.

“Same here, I appreciate that you were thinking of us, Merry Christmas Collins.” Wingnut said.

“Yeah, Merry Christmas Collins.” Dawson smiled.

“Merry Christmas to you both. I don’t wanna make you two late, better be catchin’ yae train, right?” he said. Dawson checked his watch again and inhaled deeply.

“Not before I’ve given you both your presents, too!” Wingnut said, holding out a small ornate cube shaped metal tin for Collins, and a small rectangular package for Dawson. Collins opened the tin, there were some sweets inside, though it was clear that the tin was the actual present.

“Not much, but I saw the thistle and immediately thought of you. Just somewhere to keep special things.” Wingnut said as Collins looked at the lid of the tin, it had a mountainous scene with one big purple thistle in the foreground printed onto it, slightly raised in texture from the rest of the lid.

“Aw, thank ye Wingnut, I love it!” Collins smiled, and then looked to see what was inside the brown package given to Dawson, who was in the process of removing the thin brown paper, inside was a brand new deck of cards.

“Oh wow, these are great! Thanks, Wingnut.” he said.

“Not a problem, save us from using my dodgy old cards now.” he laughed, causing a pang in Collins’ chest at the thought that the card games would probably be far and few now that they were finished training together.

“Well, I got you two some things as well, but don’t get your hopes up.” Dawson said. He got out of each of his trouser pockets two smallish boxes, and gave them to each of his friends. Collins turned his in his hand, it was making a sound like something was rolling around inside. He looked quizzically at Dawson, who just smiled, not giving anything away. Timson had already opened his, it was a new tie, equally as bright and awful looking as the cufflinks Collins had gotten him.

“Woah, are you lads sending me a message with all this fancy stuff?” he laughed.

“You’re not done yet.” Dawson said, turning the lid of the box in Wingnut’s hand so that he looked at the underside. There was a little sheet of paper with very cursive handwriting, Dawson’s, that Collins couldn’t read it was so small. He stopped trying to because it wasn’t for him to read anyway, mentally telling himself off for being nosy.

“Aw thanks mate!” Wingnut said after reading the note, undoubtedly a season’s greetings of sorts.

Collins opened his box, which was longer and flatter than Wingnut’s to see a brand new set of pencils.
“Oh!” he said, smiling at them.

“Saw the ruddy short thing you were using, looked like it might disappear into your sharpener soon!” he laughed.

“Aye it was about to, good timing that I finished my book as I did, otherwise wouldnae have anything to use!” he laughed.

“Well, when you get a new book, use these. Different leads, hard and soft according to the man in the shop.” Dawson said, having no idea about pencils.

“Oh, excellent!” Collins smiled.

“Turn the lid over,” Dawson said softly,

Collins did so and saw a note of similar size and just as impossibly cursive writing on it, the blonde had to squint to read it.

Dear Collins,

Merry Christmas. I’m glad to have had you by my side whilst training here at Gatwick, it’s been a blast boarding which is something I never thought I’d say. Thanks for the fun memories along the way, thank you for sticking by me and for trusting me. I can’t wait to continue into Fighter Command with you, hopefully we’ll be in the same squadron, hopefully I’ll learn a thing or two from you! Needless to say Collins, you are an amazing person, and I’m beyond glad to call you my best friend.

P.S. Wear a kilt to graduation.

Yours sincerely,

Dawson.

Collins giggled at the last part,

“Thank you, Dawson. That was really nice of ye to take the time to write.” He said, and was compelled to hug the blonde in front of him.

“It’s nothing really, I’m glad you liked it though.” Dawson said as he squeezed. He let go, patting Collins on the shoulder with a smile.

“Where’s mine?!” Wingnut said before all but launching himself onto both of them, pulling them into a messy group hug.

“Wingnut, yer an eejit, nearly made me drop my pencils!” Collins said, it was met with laughter. Finally the two blondes were released from Wingnut’s grip.

“Yae better get goin’ guys, trains to catch n’ that.” Collins smiled.

“Yep, we better go. See you at graduation then!” Dawson said.

“See you two then, Merry Christmas!” Collins called after them, with half a mind to do what
Dawson’s note had said to do at graduation.

Collins stood in the hallway watching his friends walk off downstairs.

Farrier made out the words ‘Merry Christmas’ along with several shouts and goodbyes being said, and quickly shoved the wrapped book and paint set under his bed. He quietly walked over to the door and opened it a crack. Collins was standing alone in the moonlight, looking down the hallway. Farrier cleared his throat to get the lad’s attention. Collins jumped at the sound, but his eyes softened when he saw Farrier. Checking both ways as if he was crossing a road, Collins walked towards Farrier’s room.

To hell with being asleep early for Father Christmas.

Chapter End Notes

There ya have it folks, another week another chapter. I hope everyone enjoyed! As always thank you so much to everyone who shows their support for me and my writing ❤

This is my tumblr if anyone’s curious.

Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
Christmas Morning

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday folks! Guess who bought their first car on the weekend!! So I'm very happy rn. I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them, I'm heading back to uni this week after a two month long holiday rip

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was Christmas morning. Canfield had been rapping on Farrier’s door at some ungodly hour,

“Coming, give me a minute.” Farrier mumbled groggily, no clue who this was or why they thought it was a good idea to wake him this early. He opened the door to Canfield standing in the hall, suitcase already packed sitting next to him.

“I’m off soon, thought I’d drop by.” He said quietly, aware that while there weren’t many, they did have boarding students.

“Ah, I hope you have a good time in Somerset, Michael. Let me get you the stupid spoon case.” Farrier laughed.

He retrieved it and the bottle of wine, and handed them both to Canfield.

“Oh, it’s lovely isn’t it? And the wine, perfect my boy.” He smiled and put both items down on either side of him, he picked up a box which had been sitting atop his suitcase.

“This is for you.” The older man smiled.

“You didn’t have to.” Farrier said as he took it,

“I know Tom, but I did anyway.”

Inside the box were some assorted items including a new belt, some hard boiled sweets,

“To fuel your ridiculous obsession with sugar, those are.” Canfield said pointing to them. Farrier smiled, he wouldn’t argue with that.

The last item was the most interesting, a new pair of flight goggles.

“Now these Farrier, are the Mark IVB goggles. They’re not meant to be released until early 1940, but I was sent a pair early!” Canfield said.

They had a little sun shield which could fold down over the glass, and also the glass itself wrapped around to the side to give more peripheral vision. He couldn’t thank Canfield enough.

“Jeez, why’d you give them to me?” Farrier asked.

“You don’t like your goggles, and I like mine. I thought you’d like some new ones, especially ones that aren’t properly released yet!” Canfield said.

“I… Thank you. Really, thank you.” Farrier said, holding the box under one arm he hugged
“You’re welcome, lad. I’m just happy that you’re happy. I wasn’t giving you any alcohol after, well… These are better presents, I think.” He said, letting go of Farrier and beginning the task of stuffing the wine bottle into his suitcase. The man had been referring to the fact that he would always give Farrier a bottle of some expensive spirit for Christmas until in February he’d found out about Farrier’s habit of drinking alone and for the complete wrong reasons.

“I agree, these are better.” Farrier said, and it was the truth.

“Well, sun’s about to come up, I shall be off. See you for the graduation!” Canfield said,

“That you will. Merry Christmas Michael.”

“Merry Christmas Tom.”

Collins woke with a smile of what was to come, he had a feeling this was going to be a very excellent Christmas. He got dressed in casual clothes for once, there were no classes today of course so there was no reason to be in uniform. The blonde slipped on some trousers and a big blue turtleneck, knitted by his mother. He was swimming in it, she sometimes deliberately made them too big because she liked the way he looked in them. Collins imagined it was something to do with her not wanting him to grow up. He padded downstairs in for once, colourful striped socks, unlike the plain ones he wore with the uniform in fear of someone seeing crazy socks if his trousers moved. Collins wished he could wear colourful socks every day.

There was barely anyone in the dining hall, Collins yawned as he walked over to his usual spot and it was only when he’d seated himself that he realised he was the only one on the entire table. He blinked sleepily around to see that there were only perhaps ten other people in the room. One of them was Farrier, who looked like he was trying to hide a smile from Collins, and the rest of them were other students that Collins only recognised by face.

After everyone had collected their breakfast, which Collins was excited to eat because it was pancakes, he sat opposite to where he usually did so he could look at Farrier. A Christmas treat, he told himself. He could see from his seat that the man had again drenched his breakfast in honey, it was cute to see such a hard man with a sweet tooth like that. Farrier looked up from his pancakes tentatively, watching all the other students to make sure they weren’t looking at him before he mouthed ‘Merry Christmas’ across the room to Collins, who broke out in a huge smile which he unsuccessfully hid behind the sleeve of a very large and very soft looking jumper. He mouthed the words back shyly, blushing. Farrier had said Merry Christmas to him! The fact was buzzing around his mind and the blonde could barely focus enough to eat, fully aware that he probably looked like an idiot sitting there smiling to himself and blushing when to an onlooker, nothing had happened to cause this. He tried to compose himself because he was hungry and the honey was soaking into the pancakes, which Collins didn’t like.

Farrier was more content than he had been in a long time, a nice big warm breakfast, a beautiful man to look at whilst he ate, and it was Christmas.

Pondering what to do with his old goggles, Farrier smiled to himself as he glanced at Collins every now and then, the blonde fighting to stop blushing, and it was an uphill battle with his beautiful pale skin. Farrier was glad there was barely anyone here, and the other students were all chatting in groups, unaware of his and Collins’ nonverbal communications. He knew what he’d do with the old goggles.

Collins didn’t know what he was going to do for the rest of the day, he had half a mind to shut
himself in his room so he wouldn’t be walking around blushing for twelve hours nonstop. Then he
realised he had a present to give Farrier, he didn’t know how to address the issue, but at some point
he’d have to give it to him. He was nervous just thinking about doing it, what if Farrier didn’t have
a present, which Collins didn’t mind, but it made him look too forward for having one. What if
Farrier didn’t like it? What if someone else had already given him a new watch?

Farrier also hadn’t a clue what to do with himself all day. He was going to take a Spitfire up for a
joyride of course, but wasn’t sure what else. Maybe he should go and see James, to say Merry
Christmas. Maybe buy him some gin or something, the man loved that stuff. He knew where he’d
be, James never took a day off, he loved his job too much.

After breakfast Collins ran upstairs and into his room. Soon after he heard a knock on his door, and
Farrier peeped in.

“Are you hiding?”

“Maybe.”

Farrier walked in and closed the door.

“From what?” he asked, Collins giggled.

“You,”

Farrier snorted in laughter and shook his head.

“I’m going flying today, thought you’d want to know.” He said as he sat on Collins’ bed. The
blonde sat with him,

“Can I as well?” he asked,

“I was thinking about that. I want to let you, I really do. But then what’s to stop all the other
students grabbing a plane and going off?” Farrier said, Collins sighed.

“I’ll be happy enough watching yae fly.” The blonde said quietly, Farrier smiled softly and kissed
his cheek. He’d expected Collins to put up more of a fight.

“You’re too kind for your own good,” the brunette said.

“Could say the same about you,” Collins retorted.

This would be the perfect time to give Farrier his present, Collins thought. And yet, he didn’t do it.

“Well, wanna help me push one of the Spits out of the hangar?” Farrier asked.

Soon enough Farrier was whizzing around in the sky above Collins’ head. The blonde sat outside
against the back of the building watching the Spitfire climb higher and higher, getting impossibly
smaller in the great blue winter sky. He hummed happily, it was nice to watch Farrier fly without
his friends sitting next to him, it felt like he could appreciate the flight more and not have to worry
about people judging him for smiling idiotically at a plane.

Today wasn’t a day for taking the plane to its absolute limits, today was a day for pure enjoyment.
Rolls, banks, climbs and dives, Farrier did it all. It was odd to him considering his usual takings to
the rougher planes, the Spitfire sure didn’t fit his usual description of a good plane to fly. It was
ridiculously light on the controls, extremely fast and very agile which was not what Farrier was
used to enjoying. It made more sense for Farrier to enjoy the burlier Hurricanes.

Then it dawned on Farrier why he liked Spitfires so much.

It wasn’t like flying a plane. It was like flying. Free and without hindrance, it was almost like all the man had to do was imagine the Spit doing what he wanted, and it would happen. It was as if the plane was an extension of him, he wasn’t held down by anything.

He wafted down from the sky, making a mental note to have this one topped back up with fuel, considering he’d burned through most of it.

Collins watched the Spitfire line back up to the runway, wheels extending down out of the wings. At the last minute, the plane’s nose lifted a little and Collins got a glimpse down the underside of the fuselage at the brilliant black and white paint. A little smoke from the tires as they made contact with the tarmac, and then Farrier’s joy flight was over. A few other students had gathered and were watching too, much to Collins’ disappointment.

As much as this wasn’t a private affair, when it was just him watching Farrier it had definitely felt like one.

The man got out of the plane grinning. Collins resisted rolling his eyes as the other men cheered.

“All right lads, back inside unless you want to help me get this thing back in the hangar!” he joked, although the men promptly laughed and walked quickly back inside the building, leaving Collins the ‘unfortunate’ sod that would have to help Farrier.

“Afternoon,” Farrier smiled,

“Yer using it wrong. Has to be after something big has happened!” Collins laughed as they each stood behind a wing and prepared to push.

“Something big did happen, I flew in a Spitfire for fun!” Farrier smiled. Collins shook his head and chuckled as they pushed the plane inside the hangar.

As much as the sky was blue when Farrier had been up, in typical British fashion it was now almost completely covered in cloud.

“Looks like rain,” Farrier muttered as they walked over the tarmac to the main building.

“Nae, it’s gonna snow,” Collins corrected,

“And how do you know that?”

“Because it’s freezing today. You just didn’t know because it was also sunny until a while ago, can be confusing.” Collins explained, Farrier raised his eyebrows,

“Are you suddenly a weather expert?”

“No, I’m just from a place a lot colder than here, Farrier.” He said. the older man smiled,

“Surely if I’m from a warmer place, I’d be more sensitive to the cold weather, and I’d know if it was to snow,” Farrier said,

“Well yae may be more sensitive to the cold, but when it snows as much as it does in Aviemore, you learn to predict when it’ll happen. Roads and train tracks need tae be cleared, people get
snowed in, there are problems that come with living in a cold place, so we know when to expect snow. Ma thought that as soon as it was my job to start clearing the yard of snow, that I’d start hating the stuff. That never happened, even with the work snow requires up there, I still love it.”

Collins said, he was smiling peacefully, and looked sideways to see Farrier already looking at him. Sometimes Farrier was still taken aback by Collins, and in the most mundane situations too. Now was one of them. The blonde hummed and smiled at the ground.

“Well I’m gonnae head down the road,” Collins said quietly.

“Where to?”

“Ah, just this little lunch shop me and the lads go to all the time.”

“Can I come?” Farrier asked tentatively as they reached the door into the building. Collins stopped as an anxious jolt went up his spine.

“Can we make that look normal?” he asked quietly, turning the handle. It was one thing to be inside a building with Farrier, it was another being in public, and Collins wasn’t sure he would cope.

“I mean, nothing’s weird about two mates going to have lunch, right? Do they do take-away? We could just take it back here.” Farrier said, he was insistent. This could be their first sort-of-date. That was the only thought in his mind, hence him pushing to go out in public with Collins, something he never thought in his wildest dreams he’d do. Plus, he wanted to see where those boys disappeared off to almost every day, it must have pretty good food if they kept returning. Collins relented,

“Alright, yae can come. But we’re walking there, getting food and walking back. That’s all,” Collins said, red in the face from the mere thought. Farrier shut the door to the tarmac behind them, and they were alone in the locker room.

“Then it’s a date,” Farrier smiled and pecked Collins’ cheek. Bold of him, they were alone, but they weren’t in the comfort of one of their bedrooms, or even in the immediate privacy of the usually empty hallway outside their rooms. Collins stared at Farrier, he was about to say something when the brunette slapped his arm playfully and shoved him in the back, making him walk out of the room in front of Farrier. As Collins walked a smile grew on his face.

“Never thought you’d be bolder than me when it comes to public displays of affection,” he mumbled,

“Neither did I, but here we are in an empty room, you expect me to keep my hands off you?” Farrier asked. The question was only meant as innocent but Collins’ mind twisted it into something that was anything but. He gulped as they walked out of the locker room, down the hallway and out the front doors of the base.

As they were walking, it began to snow as Collins predicted. He made a face at Farrier as they went, I told you so.

“Oh, get lost!” Farrier laughed as they left footprints in the light snow cover. Collins saw the man shiver,

“Bet yae wish you had your Irvin on now.” The blonde snarked,

“Yeah I bloody do wish I did, it wasn’t this cold when the sun was out,” he said.
Collins smiled as they reached the little store, illuminated by soft yellow lights from inside.

After some small talk with the store owner, who knew Collins and his friends from their frequent visits, the two ordered their food and took it with them on the way back to base, walking fast so that it didn’t get cold.

“Aren’t you going to be hungry after that?” Farrier asked, Collins had only bought a meat pie and Farrier wasn’t convinced it was enough for lunch.

“I’ll be fine, heaps of food in the kitchen which I plan to go get some of as well.” Collins said between mouthfuls, unable to wait to eat it.

“You gonna want dinner after that?” Collins remarked, mirroring Farrier’s mother hen tone.

“It’s just a sandwich, ‘course I’ll eat dinner!” Farrier laughed, it was a rather large sandwich packed with most of the ingredients that were listed on the menu. Come to think of it, Farrier hadn’t a clue what was happening at dinner. The mess hall staff had all gone home for Christmas, nothing was being cooked for him.

“Don’t even know what’s going to happen at dinner tonight, might go out and get something.” He said to Collins as they reached the airbase again. Collins hummed in agreement, a definite implication that he thought he’d be coming along with Farrier.

Chapter End Notes

This one was a bit short but I hope everyone liked it! As always, thank you to everyone who gave kudos/left comments, I love seeing that my work influences people that much. And for everyone who hasn't left anything, I know you're there and I appreciate you!
This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat.
Now I think this semester at uni is going to get really hectic, I'll try to upload every week, but if I get behind, I'm sorry. I always make a post on tumblr on Monday letting people know when a chapter is up though, so I'll keep you posted there if I need to miss a week or so. Thank you all again for supporting my writing!
Until next time, happy reading ❤
Presents

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday folks! I didn't forget to upload I know it's almost Tuesday, I got distracted making spotify playlists lmao. This is a long one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After both sitting in the kitchen and eating lunch, and a generous handful of the jubes in the cupboard, they went upstairs.

“And you say I have a sweet tooth,” Farrier said quietly, Collins had taken just as many lollies, if not more than he.

“You do, I never said that I don’t as well, though.” The blonde replied. They reached Farrier’s door and crept in.

“I love watching you fly,” Collins said as he sat on Farrier’s bed, waiting for the man to turn the heaters on.

“Is that so?” Farrier said lazily, Collins hummed.

“Well, what I love even more is when we fly together,” he said, now sitting next to Collins.

“Me too. I hope I’m in your squadron one day,” the blonde said,

“I hope so too.” Farrier replied before reaching under the bed.

Collins hadn’t noticed, instead he was watching the little delicate snowflakes build up in the corners of the glass on the window. He was happy it was snowing on Christmas, he’d been hoping it would. The sun was getting lower now, the clouds darker, the air colder. Collins had half a mind to get up and close the blind to stop the cold radiating through the glass, but the snow looked too nice.

“Merry Christmas, Collins.” came Farrier’s voice next to him.

Collins almost jumped at the proximity, he turned to see Farrier holding something wrapped in brown paper and tied with string.

“Oh, Farrier you didn’t have tae-“

“I know, but I wanted to. I hope this isn’t surprising you in a bad way, pet.” The brunette murmured.

“No, not at all. I’m very grateful, thank you.” The blonde said, taking the package carefully, glad he wasn’t the only one out of the two of them who’d gotten the other a present.

His long fingers carefully undid the string, removing the paper and being careful not to tear it. Collins was very surprised to see the contents of the present. When he did, he couldn’t contain his smile. A new drawing book and unexpectedly, a paint set. He set them down between he and Farrier and threw his arms around the man.
“I take you like them?” Farrier smiled,

“Mm-hmm, I do. Very much so, thank you Farrier,” he said into the brunette’s shoulder. Farrier squeezed tighter,

“I’m glad.” He let go of the blonde, instead opting to rest a warm hand on his thigh.

“I was originally only going to get the book, but I was told it’s watercolour paper, meaning I should be getting paint to use on it. I supposed you might have fun experimenting,” he explained.

“I will, ‘ave never painted that much so it’ll be great to learn, thank you again. I wasn’t expecting anything.” Collins blushed.

“Let’s put these down,” Farrier said, getting up to fix the blinds and curtains. He turned on his small bedside table lamp, illuminating the room in a soft yellow.

Collins now had to deal with something he wasn’t expecting to, the guilt that his present was smaller than what Farrier had given him.

“I eh, I got yae somethin’ as well.” Collins muttered, smiling to himself.

“Oh, Collins. Now you really didn’t have to do that.” Farrier said in slight disbelief.

“Let me get it, but don’t get your hopes up,” he joked.

He returned with a small box, unwrapped it was a deep blue, reminding Farrier of the shade of his uniform.

“Merry Christmas, Farrier.” Collins said warmly, holding out the little box to the man sat in front of him.

“Thank you,” Farrier said quietly, pulling Collins’ hand until he sat next to him on the bed again. He opened the box to see a watch inside.

“A watch!” he said in surprise, Collins smiled at Farrier’s joy.

“Sorry I couldn’t afford a nice fancy silver one like what yae used to wear, but it was the nicest one I could get. I hope you like it,” Collins said shyly. His remark was met with a tight hug.

“It’s perfect, pet. Thank you, I’ve been needing a watch for a long time now. I don’t care how expensive a watch is, it just needs to work. And this one is special because it’s from you, plus I actually do like the look of it too.” He said, taking it out of the box, now realising that the colour of the box had reminded him of the uniform because it was the box for a pilot’s watch, they were all Air Force Blue, an actual patented colour. He slipped it onto his left wrist. It was actually very nice, the canvas strap was soft, and the watch face wasn’t too big or heavy, it was very practical.

“Looks good,” Collins smiled, Farrier held his arm out to admire it, the blonde held his out next to it to compare watches.

“Why is yours on your right arm?” Farrier asked, now second guessing if Collins was in fact right handed.

“Oh, dunno. Easy to look at while I’m writing and drawin’ I guess. Never really thought about it.” He said,
“You’re right handed, aren’t you?”

“Aye?”

“Then the watch goes on your left arm, silly bugger!” Farrier chuckled, going to grab Collins’ watch. The blonde held his arm over his head so it couldn’t be reached.

“No rules for watch arms, Farrier.” Collins smiled,

“But there are the Gentleman’s Rules, Collins,” he tutted.

“The what?”

“You know, watch on your opposite arm, shoes always shiny, having to wear a belt if you plan on tucking your shirt into your trousers, all that.” Farrier mused. Collins looked like he was about to burst out laughing.

“That’s the most English thing ‘ave ever heard. I’m no gentleman by those standards,” he said.

“What do we do for dinner?” the blonde asked, resting his head on Farrier’s shoulder.

“Well, unless you want cold sandwiches made from probably stale bread in the kitchen, I guess we go find somewhere.” Farrier said quietly.

“Like a date?” Collins perked up,

“Second one today, it seems.”

After seeing how fine it was going to the sandwich store with Farrier, Collins now felt ready to tackle something in public again.

“The place we went to for lunch is open till late, don’t know if that still applies on Christmas but I cannae imagine most places would be open at all today,” Collins pondered.

“Well we could go there, I know of one other place that’s open every day of the year.” Farrier thought.

“Where’s that?”

Farrier paused before answering,

“Just some dodgy little bar in London town centre, don’t think you’d be interested.” Said Farrier. The same tinge of irritation that had run through Collins when Ben had been saying he knew him like the back of his hand returned,

“You don’t know I wouldn’t be interested,” he said softly.

“Well, true. You might love it, but if we do go, I should let you know that, well…” Farrier hadn’t expected to have this conversation right now, Collins was quite glad Farrier had reacted the opposite way Ben had to being told he didn’t know everything about him.

“It’s the bar above a gay brothel.” Farrier said plainly.

“I see. So you know it from bein’ downstairs.” Collins said carefully,

“Indeed. But, they serve cheap and decent food upstairs. I’m also friends with the man at the
Farrier scratched the back of his neck.

“You friends with him from being there so often?” Collins asked. It wasn’t meant to be offensive but hearing it aloud rubbed Farrier the wrong way.

“Yes, obviously. Can we drop it? It’s a suggestion for dinner. I know the man at the counter downstairs.” He said shortly. Collins looked worried.

“I didn’t mean it that way.” He said measuredly. Farrier sighed,

“I’m sorry, it’s just a bit sad and embarrassing that I’ve become friends with someone for that reason,” he tried to laugh.

“I don’t judge you for it, we should go if you have a friend there and they serve food. Why not?” he said.

“Alright, we’ll head into London town then.” Farrier smiled.

“Is the bar for… You know, men like us, as well as downstairs?” Collins asked.

“Yes. Yes it is, pet. I guess we’re safer there than most other places.” Farrier said.

“Do we have to dress well?” Collins asked, aware that a large blue turtleneck and somewhat worn trousers weren’t exactly town attire.

“Oh, nah. Wear what you are,” Farrier said.

“What are you going to wear?” Collins asked.

“What I am right now,” Farrier replied, which was comically similar to Collins, a pair of dark trousers and a turtleneck, though his was his usual large cream one.

“We look like Tweedledum and Tweedledee!” Collins laughed.

“Well I’m not changing, this is RAF issued pure wool!” Farrier said, holding the material.

“Oh, I didn’t know that was part of the uniform.” Collins remarked,

“Yes. Optional, you can buy it yourself but it isn’t in the pack.

So they went out both in turtlenecks. Collins had thrown on a long coat for good measure, and Farrier was in his Irvin jacket, it was getting colder as the night went on.

“Train’s this way, Farrier.” Collins said as they went down the front steps.

“Yeah, but my car’s this way,” he said. Collins got excited at that thought. He’d always seen a black Aston-Martin parked next to the building but hadn’t a clue why it was there or who it belonged to.

“All this time, I didn’t know this was your car,” he said.

“Yep, she’s mine, I’d open the door for you but I hope you understand that I won’t be. Not here, not now.” Farrier said as he got into the driver’s seat. Collins sat next to him,

“I wasn’t expecting you to. But thank you,” he hummed, shutting the door. The engine revved to
life and Collins jumped.

“Farrier? ‘Ave never been in a car.”

Farrier rolled his eyes and started laughing.

“What?!” he laughed at the blonde,

“I’ve been in a bus though!” Collins said, hoping to remedy the situation.

“Your life sounds amazing, pet.” Was all the brunette said before driving off. And he meant it, he wished he got as excited as Collins was currently about the car, the blonde was watching his hand intently as it moved the gearstick.

“You’ll have tae teach me how to drive, one day.” Collins mumbled,

“I will,” Farrier smiled and placed a hand on the blonde’s thigh between gearshifts.

“When I go downstairs to say hello to my friend, would you like to come?” Farrier asked as they reached the outer edges of London town centre.

“Uh, yeah I mean, if yae want me to.” Collins mumbled,

“I do want you to, if you’re comfortable with it. His name is James, he’s an odd man but he’s alright.” Farrier said.

They drove down a small cobblestone street dimly lit by streetlamps.

Now Farrier did walk around the car and open Collins’ door for him. There was nobody around, it was late and it was Christmas Day, everyone was with their families. The blonde blushed as he stepped out of the car.

“There,” Farrier said softly. It was bizarre to see Farrier acting this way, especially out in a street. Collins supposed he felt very comfortable around this place. The blonde was ushered up a few steps by the brunette to a small door. He could feel Farrier right behind him, and trying not to let the heat reach his cheeks Collins turned the handle.

Inside it was almost empty. There were three other men sitting at a bar counter drinking, and the bartender. It was dingy to say the least, but if this was a place in which they could act more freely, Collins didn’t care at all. It wasn’t like he was used to the highlife anyway.

“Evenin’,” the barman said in a standoffish way,

“Uh, evenin’,” Collins replied clearing his throat. When Farrier appeared behind him in the doorway the man relaxed.

“Hey,” Farrier mumbled and shut the door behind him.

“Be worryin’ me bringing strangers in here, lad.” The man said, Farrier smiled but didn’t say anything.

“Still serving food?” he asked as he walked to the counter, Collins in lieu.

“Not tonight, mate.” He said. Farrier made a disappointed face to Collins, who shrugged.

“We might um, head downstairs then.” Farrier said, nodding his head towards some stairs leading
down towards another doorway which Collins hadn’t noticed before.

“Sure thing, mate.” The bartender said, and led them towards the stairs carrying a key.

“We’ll come back for dinner another time.” Farrier said quietly to Collins, though he saw the bartender smile to himself upon overhearing.

“Got yourself someone have you then?” he said as they reached the door down the stairs.

“Yeah, I have.” Farrier smiled, and put a hand on the small of Collins’ back, who smiled sweetly at him. This was so surreal, it was almost like a normal relationship. Collins didn’t know the barman and Farrier didn’t seem to know him well, and yet they’d just introduced themselves as a couple. A couple.

“Have fun then,” the man said, letting them through the door. Farrier wanted to explain that they weren’t there for that, but the bartender disappeared back upstairs. They walked through the characteristically smoke-filled entryway into the waiting room.

“Who’s that? Tom?” came James’ voice.

“Yeah it is. Hello James.” He said, they walked through the haze to see James leaning on the counter. He was a small wiry man who looked malnourished and very high, but Collins trusted Farrier’s judgement of character so he cleared his throat,

“Em, I’m Jack.” He said, reaching a hand out to shake. It felt very strange to introduce himself with his first name. James’ hand took his, it was very cold and weak, and it wasn’t making much of a shaking movement, more so just holding Collins’ hand awkwardly. The man behind the counter looked to Farrier, who nodded and smiled. James’ eyes widened.

“Oh!” then his shaking got very aggressive.

“It’s you!” he said, Collins chuckled.

“Do you know me?” he asked.

“I might’ve mentioned you,” Farrier muttered. James finally let go of Collins’ hand.

“So you’re, you’re both… It’s happening?!” he asked quickly.

“Yeah,” Farrier said, smiling at Collins.

“Anyway, we’re just here to say Merry Christmas, James. We’d hoped they were still serving food up there, but not tonight I guess. How’s things?” Farrier asked.

“Yes they’re getting lazy. Used to serve food every night, now they stop early every night except Friday and Saturday, and no food on public holidays. Down here business is great as usual, turnover’s huge as usual too.” James said, offering Farrier a cigar which he declined.

“Well, how did it,” James waved his cigar around to illustrate,

“start?” he asked.

Farrier and Collins looked at each other. Collins was amused by James, but he seemed friendly enough.

“Well, he kissed me.” The blonde blurted out. James let out a hearty laugh that turned into an
unhealthy sounding wheeze.

“Thank god. He was prattling on about how lovely you were and how it was so awful that you kept flirting and that he wasn’t going to do anything! I just yelled at him to bloody initiate something!” James laughed. Farrier was a little red, something Collins rarely saw but enjoyed very much.

“James, I just wanted to pop in and introduce you two, and say Merry Christmas.” Farrier smiled.

“Yes, of course lad. I’m so extremely happy for you both. But be careful, the world isn’t as friendly as the little haven we have here,” he said.

“We will be. All the best to you.” Farrier said,

“It was nice meetin’ ye, James.” Collins smiled,

“And it was excellent to meet you too, darling!” James smiled.

“Are you sure neither of you want anything?” he got out a pack of cigarettes and held them out,

“I’ve got plenty, thanks.” Farrier said.

“I’m not a huge smoker, sorry.” Collins excused.

“And nothing from,” James gestured to the closed doors of the rooms,

“Oh, no.” Collins said looking at Farrier, somewhat shocked by the sudden sexual implication.

“Stop trying to upsell to your friends, James. Bad business, now have a good night!” Farrier chuckled as he began to turn, taking Collins by the hand. Collins felt odd after being offered sex workers, he tried to focus on Farrier and the fact that they were holding hands.

“Well that trip wasn’t completely wasted in my eyes,” Farrier said as they drove back.

“Nae not at all. James seems nice.” Collins said as he looked out the window.

“He’s been hoping to meet you,” Farrier smiled.

They kept driving, it wasn’t too long to get back to the base. The blonde couldn’t help but think that he’d be able to please Farrier himself more than a sex worker. It wasn’t vanity, it was the knowledge that they were romantically interested in each other. Surely that would count for something that money couldn’t. The thought didn’t leave Collins’ mind, but he tried to distract himself.

“It’s a very nice car.” he remarked,

“Thank you, I like it too. Wasn’t cheap but I don’t have anything to spend money on, that’s the good thing about boarding. I’m aware a lot of the students find it very strange that Canfield and I stay there, but it takes a load off your shoulders and especially as veterans we look for things like that everywhere we can, make life easy for ourselves.” he laughed. Collins watched Farrier as he drove, practiced movements like he’d been driving his whole life. Collins guessed it came naturally when you flew planes, perhaps driving a car was a lot easier. The blonde blushed to himself as he looked at the man next to him. It had truly been amazing to be able to act that way in a bar, openly touch. It was strange and wonderful. He was grateful Farrier had taken him there, extremely so.

“Why’d you think I wouldn’t like it there? It was like we could act normal, Farrier.” He said.
“Mainly it was because I was worried you’d be weirded out by it, especially downstairs. I’m so
glad we went though, even though I’m starving,” he laughed.

“Same here,” Collins said quietly. He didn’t say that downstairs had changed his mood as Farrier
had suspected, though it wasn’t changed in the way the brunette had suspected at all.

They pulled into the base’s carparking space and walked inside over the thin layer of snow, already
half melting.

“Guess we salvage what we can from the kitchen?” Collins asked.

“Yeah. Sorry it isn’t better stocked,” Farrier said.

“S’okeh, nobody really uses it.” the blonde said.

They managed to find some bread that had been frozen, so after putting it in the oven for a bit they
ate it with jam. It wasn’t very dinner like, certainly not the Christmas dinner Collins was expecting,
but it was perfect nonetheless. He sat on the bench and Farrier leaned on it next to him. It was
bliss,

“This has been the best Christmas,” Collins said with a mouthful,

“I agree. And it’s not over yet,” Farrier smiled.

Once they’d finished, Collins had the privilege of using Farrier’s sink in the ensuite toilet he had to
brush his teeth, to save from having to go back downstairs.

“I’ve got one more present for you, Collins.” the man called. Collins wandered over to see Farrier
holding his flying goggles out,

“Farrier, you need those.” The blonde said.

“I got new ones. I want you to have these, they’re better than the training ones, I know that much.”
He said, and handed them over.

“Thank you, I can’t wait to use them.” Collins mumbled, he looked very surprised.

“They’re not new, they’re a 1935 model, but they get the job done.” Farrier said,

“I just didn’t want to chuck them out knowing what the training ones you have to use are like.” He
added.

“They’ll be great, I… I’m very grateful, Farrier.” Collins smiled softly. Then Farrier pulled
Collins’ hand until he stood close, and blue eyes gazing into blue eyes, Farrier leaned in. His lips
were warm and soft, Collins almost dropped the goggles as his whole body relaxed. He broke the
kiss and leaned his forehead against Farrier’s, untangling himself from the man’s arms to put the
goggles down on the bedside table.

“Well we best be getting to bed soon,” Farrier said as Collins put the goggles down. The blonde
turned back around to see Farrier taking off his trousers, sitting on the edge of the bed about to
replace his trousers with his pyjama pants. Collins couldn’t help but stare,

“Collins, you need to get used to seeing my legs,” he laughed,

“And I was serious, it’s getting late.” Farrier smiled, but the blonde had other plans.
He looked Farrier in the eyes, and sank to his knees in front of him.

“Collins…” Farrier began, but the sentence was forgotten when the blonde moved closer to him, hands resting on his thighs.

“Please,” Collins whispered. Farrier smirked,

“You don’t make my life easy, pet.” He chuckled, a hand moving through the blonde’s hair.

“Really?” Collins asked dryly. He shuffled forwards until he was kneeling between Farrier’s legs. The brunette looked down at him, hand leaving the blonde’s hair to rest on his shoulder instead. This man was a gift, Farrier thought. It was simply not possible for someone to be so perfect and want to be with him, and with that Collins put a hand on the back of Farrier’s neck and pulled him down into a kiss. It was slow, and deep. Collins’ breathing faltered at the sensation of Farrier’s tongue running across his bottom lip, still not used to the way Farrier was able to just undo him. Regaining his strength, the blonde moved a hand slowly up one of Farrier’s thighs until it rested over his boxers. The man above him inhaled sharply, Collins squeezed lightly and then settled himself between Farrier’s thighs once more, the man above him giving him an incredulous look.

“So what brought this on?” Farrier asked lowly.

“Well, seein’ James’ place I suppose. I just want you to know Farrier. Everythin’ yae could have with those men, you can have with me. I can please you.” Collins said, voice heavy with lust. His last sentence had done a number on the brunette, as he sat, dumbfounded at the blonde who was looking up at him with those puppy eyes, he steeled himself for what was to come. Collins may have been barely able to contain himself those nights ago, but Farrier was sure he’d be able to keep quiet. He was put to the test as Collins began to massage him over his boxers. He swallowed thickly and tried not to breathe too loudly. Collins was still a little nervous, but this time it fuelled the blonde, excited him. To see Farrier in a state like this, trying his hardest to stay quiet, it was unique, it was special. Collins felt incredibly lucky that he got to see the man so vulnerable. Then Farrier looked down at him and for a second, even with just his eye contact Farrier had taken all the control back. With one movement he slipped his boxers down over his legs, and now was completely exposed from the waist down. Collins tried not to stare, efforts in vain as he reddened. The man above him smirked, try as Collins might to act like he was in control, it was only until Farrier decided to take it back.

“You alright, pet?” he asked quietly. Collins cleared his throat and nodded. He was ready for this. Slowly he took Farrier’s length in his hand, it was already hard, not that Farrier was embarrassed about that at all, Collins might have gone weak at the knees every time he saw Farrier’s legs, but that didn’t mean Farrier didn’t get hot under the collar either. Collins pumped it a few times in his hand, elegant fingers wrapped around it, but a few more movements in the blonde realised he knew a much more effective way of pleasuring Farrier. He ran his tongue up the side from base to tip, watching as Farrier’s breath hitched and his body tensed. He licked again, Farrier exhaled measuredly, his hand hadn’t left Collins’ shoulder and it was gripping hard.

It had been too long since someone had paid proper attention to Farrier, since someone hadn’t been paid to pleasure him. The way Collins’ tongue looked sliding up his own cock was unbelievably illicit, but when the blonde flicked his eyes upwards briefly to look at Farrier and then wrapped his lips the tip, the man was unable to keep his eyes from closing in pure pleasure. A shiver ran down his spine as Collins licked and sucked his way down until his length hit the back of his throat. It was everything Farrier could do not to buck his hips hard into Collins’ mouth. The blonde slid back up, and let Farrier’s length fall from his mouth with a pop, before taking it in his hand and bringing it back, tongue toying with the tip before he sucked it inside again. Farrier bit back a groan, and his
Collins was amazed at how lucid the experience was, he half expected Farrier not to make a sound and sit there like nothing was happening, this was much more than he’d hoped for. The hand on the back of his head only raised his own arousal, it was a clear reminder of who was really in control, and Collins loved it. Ben may have been right that night, he thought. Maybe he did like it when someone else was in control of him. Though any thoughts of Benjamin quickly dissipated as Collins realised what he was doing currently. It was so dream like it barely felt real, and yet at the same time felt like the realest thing he’d ever done. He sucked, tongue flat against the underside of Farrier’s cock. Watching the blonde work his mouth up and down his shaft was maddening for Farrier, who as much as he’d tried to deny it, he’d wanted this for so long. Denied himself even thinking about it for so long, and now it was happening. He let his head fall back as Collins moved up and down, wet sounds escaping his mouth as he sucked. Collins was having more fun than he had in ages, but he wanted to take Farrier deeper but there was an inkling of doubt that he’d be able to, if it would hurt his throat though that thought in itself turned the blonde on.

He worked Farrier as best he could with his mouth, jaw already hurting from holding his mouth open so wide but watching the man above him, the way his brows were knitted together, how silent moans fell from his lips at every breath, it was so worth it.

Farrier could barely contain himself, it was harder than he imagined it would be to stay silent, especially when the blonde was surprisingly capable in his movements. It was still unbelievable, that this was even happening. Collins was sucking him off, and he was really fucking good at it. The blonde was in his own world exploring a new side to his and Farrier’s relationship. This wasn’t just for pleasure as it always was at James’ place, it was also the next step in what they had together.

Collins relaxed his throat muscles and as he moved his mouth down Farrier’s length again, and this time he let it slide further, swallowing it down to the hilt. Farrier gasped, his eyes flew open and looked down, the sight just about finished him. Collins hummed around his cock and the amount of time he was holding it down his throat had Farrier almost shaking. Finally, Collins let it slide back up and out of his mouth, breathing deeply and looking to Farrier. The man looked wrecked, the hand on the back of Collins’ head tightened around his hair, and so he went back down. He took Farrier all the way in again, and the brunette stifled a moan.

Collins had to breathe but he was getting impatient, he wanted to go faster. Taking a big lungful of air, he pushed his way down Farrier’s length again, this time working it while keeping it down his throat, swallowing around it. Farrier was trying desperately not to, but Collins wasn’t unaware of the fact that the hand on his head had begun gently pushing him down harder onto the cock in his mouth. It was exciting. He finally let Farrier’s length out of the tight grasp of his throat and came up for air, panting and letting the man’s length slide almost out of his mouth, keeping the head sucked perfectly between his lips, toying with it with his tongue like a lollypop, the man above him shuddered and rolled his hips ever so slightly, he needed more of this. How Collins knew how to do this was beyond Farrier, but right now all he cared about was getting his cock back down the blonde’s throat. Slowly, carefully, he pushed the back of Collins’ head, the lad gratefully obeying and swallowing his length again with a hum. Then he picked up the pace. His jaw was aching and his eyes were beginning to water, but watching Farrier become undone before him was the most beautiful thing he’d ever seen, next to the highlands of Scotland. The man couldn’t hold back his heavy breaths, one hand gripping Collins’ hair and the other gripping the sheets beside him. Then the hand on the back of Collins’ head slackened, Farrier let his eyes shut in bliss as he got closer. Collins was relentless, seeing Farrier in this state was the most arousing thing that had ever happened to him and he wasn’t about to stop, sore jaw or not.
He couldn’t control it anymore, Farrier bucked his hips into Collins’ mouth, the blonde looking up in alarm. It hadn’t hurt, but it was unexpected. Farrier opened his eyes to see Collins staring at him,

“Please,” the brunette whispered, mirroring Collins’ earlier word. The blonde gave the closest thing to a nod he could with Farrier’s dick halfway down his throat, and gently the brunette thrust again as Collins sucked him in deeper. There was a rhythm to it, but after a few tries they had it, Collins’ ragged breaths between each thrust down his throat were music to Farrier’s ears, and he was too far gone to tell Collins to shut up. Thoughts were clouded with lust, watching Collins was dizzying and soon he could feel himself nearing his end.

“Collins,” he began, the blonde looked up to see Farrier watching with a hooded gaze, but no sooner had they made eye contact did the brunette’s eyes squeeze shut, his mouth fell open and Collins felt a hot jet hit the back of his throat, and he heard a single quiet moan leave Farrier’s mouth, quite possibly the most beautiful sound Collins had ever heard. He kept sucking as he swallowed, kept watching the man above him. His hips were still bucking under him albeit more erratically. When the hand left his head, Collins knew the job was done. He let Farrier’s length fall out of his mouth, looking up to the brunette who was still in a state of ecstasy. He let himself fall back onto the bed, not bothering to pull his boxers back up. Collins crawled up next to him.

“Fuck,” the brunette breathed, grabbing Collins’ hip and dragging him into a heavy hug.

“Merry Christmas,” Collins snarked, and tried to leave before an arm slung itself around his waist and pulled him back.

“Where the hell did you learn all that?” Farrier breathed, eyes still closed in bliss as he lay on his back.

“Just practice with the lad in my town. he seemed to be very much into the idea of me doin’ it, so he taught me how to. Now I can see that it worked. And don’t worry about doing me tonight.” Collins said, knowing how understanding Farrier had been with him, and the blonde hadn’t entirely expected Farrier to be in such bliss after the fact.

If Farrier were in a clearer state of mind he’d have wondered how he felt about another man teaching Collins how to do that, he would have worried if they’d been too loud just now, but he was still in a state of half consciousness.

“Well, it’s late like you said.” Collins murmured,

“Yeah,” Farrier breathed.

The blonde went to leave his room but as he reached the door he turned around,

“Farrier?”

“Mm?”

“Can I wear my kilt to graduation?”

A weary smile appeared on Farrier’s face as he finally sat up, reaching down and pulling his boxers up.

“Don’t see why not,” he smiled. The blonde’s face lit up as he slipped out of the room.

It was the best Christmas either of them had ever had, and it was the last one that would fall in peacetime for 6 years.
Another week another chapter! I hope you all enjoyed this one as much as I enjoyed writing it. Thank you to everyone who shows their love for my writing, it makes me feel so happy to know there are people who enjoy reading it. ❤
This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat!
Until next chapter, happy reading. ❤
Awards

Chapter Notes

Monday again! Found out that something is due for uni on Thursday which I had no idea about, so I did a week's worth of uni work in about 2 hours lmao
Hope everyone has a good week ahead of them ❤

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was the last day of 1938.

Collins woke sleepily to see the tarmac white instead of black, it had snowed overnight. He wearily got dressed for the day and wandered downstairs. The kitchen staff wouldn’t be back until term started next year, Gatwick was interesting in that it kept its boarding house open over the holidays, yet there were no real permanent staff there. There would be the occasional check-up, but nobody was cooking meals for the students. Thankfully, Farrier had the foresight to restock the kitchen with essential cooking ingredients. The man in question was already downstairs in uniform for the first time in a few days.

“Mornin’” came the lazy voice of Collins as he wandered into said kitchen.

“Morning, pet.” Farrier replied. All he’d made was a cup of tea for himself,

“Want somethin’?” Collins asked, opening the fridge.

“Oh, you don’t have to do that. I was going to make myself toast.” Farrier said.

“Why don’t I make you eggs instead?” the blonde offered. Farrier stood with arms crossed, but he couldn’t stop a smile creeping onto his face.

“Sounds like you want to.” He said,

“I do. Very much so, Farrier.” Collins replied.

So he did, cooked both of them eggs while Farrier had the very arduous task of making toast to go with them. Still overly worried about being seen and looking too close, Farrier stood leaning against the kitchen counter eating whilst Collins sat at the small table in the centre of the room.

“I’m nervous about tonight,” he said as he ate.

“Don’t be. It’s just walking up there, collecting the damned thing and then walking back off the stage. It’s nothing.” Farrier said, realising he’d forgotten one critical thing to stock the kitchen with. Sugar.

“Wait, I’ll be back.” He said, and put his plate down, wandering off down the hall to Canfield’s office from which he retrieved the sugar jar and put it in the kitchen, before adding several spoons of it to his tea. Collins shook his head and smiled,

“Just ruined a good cup of tea, Farrier.” He jested, for which he earned a laugh.
“What time do your friends get in?” Farrier asked, resuming breakfast.

“No idea,”

Dawson ended up arriving quite early in the day. It was still cold and white, the temperature not yet risen enough for the snow to melt away as the blonde made his way back to Gatwick from the train. Christmas with his family had been lovely as always, his father had taken great joy in putting the weighted tins from Collins straight into their boat.

“C’mon, nobody’s even here! Who’d know if I went up in a fighter, just for a few minutes? I’m goanna be going up in them as soon as I’m posted to an OTU anyway!” Collins pleaded. They sat in Farrier’s room looking out the window from the little table.

“I know, but what if Canfield gets back and sees you? I’d be in big trouble.” Farrier replied. Collins knew it was true, but he was impatient.

Dawson trudged up the stairs and dumped his things in his room. It was strange being back, it was so quiet. He’d decided to stay in Gatwick for the night after the ceremony, who knew how out of hand it could very well get and if he’d even be capable of catching a train alone back down to Weymouth. After throwing his suitcase on his bed, he began wandering in search of Collins, who he knew had stayed here over Christmas. Dawson couldn’t help but worry that the Scot hadn’t had a very nice Christmas milling about here at the base, and wasn’t sure if it was a bad idea to ask him, whenever it was he found him.

Farrier heard a floorboard creak, and shushed Collins.

“Wha-?” Collins began, before Farrier’s finger came up to his mouth to quiet him. The blonde had half a mind to just bite it for a laugh, but didn’t, because he heard why Farrier was shushing him. Footsteps. The brunette looked at him with that piercing gaze and carefully took his finger away from Collins’ soft lips. Collins went pink just watching Farrier’s intense expression as the brunette listened. The footsteps faded.

“Canfield?” Collins whispered to Farrier.

“No, he’s coming back later. I don’t know who that was.” Farrier replied,

“Why don’t I go see?” Collins suggested.

“Make sure they’re gone before you leave my room, nobody can see you coming out of a different door than your own.” Farrier warned.

Collins ducked out of the room to see Dawson disappear down the stairs.

“It’s Dawson! I’m goanna go chase him up,” Collins whispered back to Farrier, who smiled sweetly at Collins’ affection for his friends, as well as sheer relief.

The blonde strode down the steps and caught Dawson at the bottom of them.

“Hello, you!” the Scot said,

“Oh, don’t creep up on me!” Dawson laughed.

They walked upstairs back to Dawson’s room, Collins sat on the bed as his friend unpacked his things.
“Have a good Christmas with the family?” Collins asked.

“Yeah I did, it was really lovely. My dad says thank you for the weighted tins by the way, he was right excited to go and put them straight in the boat!” Dawson chuckled as he unpacked.

“Mine was nice too,” Collins mumbled to himself.

“Just moping about here by yourself?” Dawson laughed, Collins almost told Dawson that he wasn’t by himself but he stopped himself and smiled instead. Dawson saw right through it, and Collins knew it. The way Dawson smiled back with sad eyes said it all. He wished Collins would tell him everything, but he knew the Scot just wasn’t like that, and he respected it. Especially with the subject of whether or not Collins had a nice Christmas, Dawson didn’t want to push it.

Not long after the unpacking had finished, clomping steps were heard in the hallway which belonged to none other than Wingnut. He banged loudly on Dawson’s bedroom door.

“Guess who it is!” he yelled,

“We know who it bloody is, Wingnut!” Dawson laughed and let him in.

And then it was just like old times, as the three sat on the floor of Dawson’s bedroom and got out the cards. They played for what felt like hours, only having one break to walk to the sandwich store and back, and it wasn’t until Collins realised it was 16:00 that he decided he should ask what was probably an important question.

“Where’s the ceremony tonight?”

Wingnut and Dawson sniggered,

“How do you not know these things? Worse than me, mate!” Wingnut laughed, Dawson shook his head,

“It’s in the London Guildhall,” Dawson said. Collins raised his eyebrows,

“Didnae realise it was that fancy of an occasion,” he said.

“Do you never look at the bulletin board in the hall?” Dawson laughed.

The Scot excused himself after another round of cards, and walked downstairs to actually look at the bulletin board.

1938 cadets’ graduation ceremony:

19:00-21:00 at the Guildhall, London.

Collins huffed, typical no-nonsense information, not so much as an actual invitation sent to each of them, just a simple message on the board. There was some more information as well such as full uniform which Collins skipped over, though he did have confirmation from a senior officer that he would be alright to wear a kilt. The blonde checked his watch, it was 16:10. A pang of excitement ran through him as he realised how close it was. Graduating had somehow taken a back seat in his mind considering developments with Farrier, but it was brought right back seeing the little message on the board. He hurried upstairs and into his room.

Collins hadn’t worn his kilt for many years, the last time was at a birthday of one of his mother’s friends, everyone wore their kilts on occasions in Aviemore, as did they everywhere else in
Scotland. Still apprehensive as to how it would be taken down here, Collins nervously slipped his shoes off, wanting to try it on even though of course it would still fit. He padded over to his cupboard and got it out. It was a vibrant green, checked with red, black and white overlapping each other to make the tartan. It wasn’t the Aviemore Dress tartan, nor was it the standard Aviemore Check, it was the Aviemore Highland tartan. When Collins had picked it out, he clearly remembered his father telling him that while he didn’t need the dress tartan, a bright pink, that he should definitely be purchasing the Aviemore Check, a duller green with thicker white checks.

Collins had fallen in love with the Highland Tartan as soon as he laid eyes on it and had to buy it. It was unique, and some of the city folk wouldn’t have had any idea which tartan it was, but the highlanders all knew, not that it bothered Collins who knew and who didn’t, wearing a kilt was a matter of personal pride in one’s heritage, not a way to show off. Collins knew what he was representing, and that was that, even if nobody else knew. He slipped his trousers off and quickly wrapped the kilt around his slim waist, shivering as he felt himself shrink from the cold air.

Perhaps it wasn’t such a grand idea to wear a kilt out in the cold, but as soon as Collins registered that he’d even had that thought, his mind was made up. English winter was nothing, surely he wasn’t getting that soft, he thought to himself. He found his black kilt hose, his flashes which were the same green as the kilt, black sporran, his Sgian Dubh, kilt pin and finally his Ghillie Brogues, not bothering to put any of that on until he was actually getting ready. Collins chuckled to himself that he’d brought the whole outfit down with him, though he decided he wouldn’t be a true Scotsman if he hadn’t, it was all or nothing. He smiled as he took the kilt off and hung it back up.

He wondered how Farrier would fare in the winters in the highlands. Then another thought crossed the blonde’s mind, if he had to go up many stairs in the kilt. Ducking into Farrier’s room, Collins was surprised to see him in full RAF dress.

“Oh,” he let out, smiling as he admired Farrier. The uniform did wonders for him.

“What is it, I was just putting everything together.” Farrier smiled. Almost always wearing his uniform without any of the medals or badges, Collins had forgotten what they looked like. The last time he’d seen Farrier with all his decorations was on the first day of training. Now he stood in complete uniform with every award he was ever given on full display. Collins slowly walked over to him, he kept eye contact. Farrier looked vulnerable.

“I forgot how decorated you are.” Collins mumbled.

“I try to as well,” the brunette responded.

Carefully, Collins reached a slender hand out and smoothed it over Farrier’s lapel, before brushing his fingers over the bar of awards that sat on the breast of the blazer, for the first time actually looking at what the awards were, Collins didn’t know what some of them were and had a feeling Farrier wouldn’t want to be asked, but some stood out to the blonde. The Air Efficiency award, for 10 years’ service, the Distinguished Flying Cross, for officers who’d performed acts of valour and bravery, at seeing that Collins’ stomach churned, that was a very prestigious award. Then, and Collins couldn’t believe he’d never realised, was a Victoria Cross.

His eyes flashed up to Farrier’s.

“I, I didn’t…” the blonde began, Farrier took Collins’ hand away from his uniform,

“Not an important thing to know, pet. It’s just an award. I didn’t like being awarded it, nor do I like wearing it, but protocol is protocol, and tonight is graduation night, so here it is.” He said plainly. Collins stammered,

“Y-you’re one of thirteen men with that,” he said quietly, staring at it, having never seen a Victoria Cross in the flesh.
"I know."

"Farrier, you’re an ace, you have the DFC with two bars, why have I never heard of you before?"

"Because I don’t like being a war hero. I don’t cosy up to the journalists, I tell them to get lost. I never said yes to any interviews, photos, nothing. My name is on the plaques with the rest of them, but that’s all, and that’s already more than I want.” He said, and then paused before continuing.

"It’ll eat you up inside won’t it, if I don’t tell you.” He said, Collins didn’t have a chance to answer.

"The day I was shot down by the Baron, I managed to get a few shots on him. Enough that they had to turn back and apparently he was down for a week after the sortie. Horrible thing to be awarded something for.” Farrier said, wishing he could take it off.

"Did you need something, Collins?” he added.

"Uh, I was going tae ask if we have to go up many stairs tonight at the place, I’ve never been there.”

His question sounded very out of place and unimportant after the conversation they’d just had.

"There are a few steps out the front to enter the building, not really any apart from that at ‘the place’, but why?” Farrier asked, smiling at Collins calling the London Guildhall ‘the place’.

"Eh, the kilt,” he said. Farrier smirked and looked at the floor,

"It’s true then,” he said lowly, glad the conversation had changed.

"Well, only in the highlands actually. Started in the highland regiments of the military, still hasn’t worked its way down to the cities yet. That’s why it’s called going regimental, or going commando, but in answer to your question, yes. It’s true.” Collins rambled, going red.

"So I guess it’s good you’re a small town lad from way up there, just my luck,” Farrier said, pulling Collins closer with a smile.

"Farrier, I know you probably donnae want to talk about it, but when you say that you don’t even want your name on plaques, you don’t mean you don’t want to be remembered, do you?” he asked nervously, earning him a kiss on the forehead.

“That’s not what I meant, I meant I don’t want to be remembered for killing people, for being a weapon. I’m more than that.” He murmured.

“Yes, you are,” Collins reassured. They leaned their foreheads together for a while, enjoying the closeness of another person.

“How are you getting to the Guildhall?” Farrier asked as the blonde made to leave,

“Hadn’t thought about it, probably the train with Dawson and Wingnut.” Collins answered,

“You?” he asked,

“I’m driving myself and the other officers in,” Farrier said,

“Wish I’d get to be driven in.” Collins huffed, Farrier chuckled.

“You know very well I can’t do that. Now, I best keep getting ready, as should you, pet.” Farrier
said, a vague thought on his mind that he should have had his uniform pressed before today, but it was way too late for that now.

“Alright, well I’ll see you later, Farrier.” Collins smiled, and just like that, Farrier was alone again. He looked at himself in the mirror. It was strange, seeing all the medals on the uniform and attributing them to him, sometimes he almost forgot what he looked like with them all, like he wasn’t the same person who earned them. He tried not to dissect the thought any further.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading, it makes me so happy that there are people out there who enjoy my work ❤️
This is my tumblr.
Fun fact, those weighted tins that Collins gave Dawson that got put on his dad's boat? You can actually see one of them in frame in the movie, ya girl doesn't muck around when it comes to subtle movie references.
(There are some fireworks going off near my house rn for no reason, just thought you guys might want to know that)
Anyway until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
Finally, it's time!
Hope everyone has a good week ahead of them.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Finally, it was time to head into London to graduate.

Farrier had eventually stopped complaining to Canfield about having to wear his medals and was ushering the officers into his car, when he saw Collins and friends walking off down the street in direction of the train station. Collins was in his kilt.

Forcing himself to look away as he got into the driver’s seat wasn’t enough to get the mental image out of his head. Canfield sat next to him and cleared his throat obviously.

“Shall we head in?” The older man asked,

“Yes, yeah.”

The car started up and began grumbling down the street, passing the trio of troublemakers as it went.

“Aren’t your legs cold?” Wingnut asked as they went,

“A little, all in the name of Scottish pride though, my friend,” Collins laughed.

“I didn’t know how involved it was wearing a kilt, you know. I thought it was just the kilt but you’ve got fancy socks on and everything!” Dawson said, pointing.

“Aye it’s a whole getup. The kilt hose has to have flashes to match the tartan, has tae have a Sgian Dhubh as well,” he said pointing to the small black knife which was tucked into one of his black socks, which were exemplifying his pale flesh, if only showing off the strip between his upper calves and lower thighs. Dawson wasn’t even going to try and re-pronounce whatever Collins had just called the little knife.

“An then there’s the Sporran!” Collins said, gesturing to the interesting looking bag hanging securely at the front of the kilt. Dawson seemed genuinely interested, but Wingnut was laughing.

“The Art of kilt wearing!” He chuckled.

“Yes Indeed Wingnut,”

“Though I’m not sure I’m supposed to be wearing it with an RAF blazer because, probably to your amusement there’s a special shirt and blazer to wear with a kilt, it’s an entire outfit. I guess if my head’s in the right place and I’m wearin’ it for the right reason, donnae matter too much though,” Collins pondered as they walked.
They soon reached the train station as tiny water drops began to fly through the strong wind blowing, it didn’t seem to matter if they rounded a corner of a street, there was no escaping their hair all getting messed up by the wind. Collins envied Farrier and the other officers in the car, who’d arrive looking pristine.

The train was crowded and cramped.

There weren’t any seats left anywhere so the three were left standing, glad the ride at least wasn’t too long.

“At least we got seats when we went to Northolt!” Dawson said, the others strongly agreeing. As they got off the train, people spilling out onto the platform in a sea of rushing and typical British reservedness both at once, Collins realised he was getting looked at by passers-by. Earlier in his training he might have confronted them, asked what they were looking at, like when Miller had taken issue with him being Scottish all those months ago, but that was no longer how the blonde was, he’d decided he very much liked the English, as different as they were to him. He didn’t mind being looked at, he was proud to come from a little town in the middle of the highlands of Scotland, and he pitied the Londoners for having to live on top of each other in a huge city, as beautiful as it was to walk around in.

Farrier parked in the space allocated by the Guildhall, parking spaces were popping up everywhere now that more and more people owned cars, it only made his life easier. All the officers got out and walked in. They were well earlier than the students, having to help set up and prepare the awards. They were in several boxes in the back of the car, and needed to all be set out on the large tables at the rear of the stage area to be collected by the officers and presented to each student.

Canfield loved graduation night, to see everyone at their best, ready to become a Flying Officer, it was wonderful. Plus, it gave him an excuse to pester Farrier who always had something to complain about, to tell the younger man to ‘cheer up, it’s graduation night!’. He did it because deep down, he missed the old Farrier. The young man who he knew like a son, the young man who hadn’t been through hell, who listened to him and obeyed him, almost like a father. Pestered the man gave Canfield a sense that the old Farrier was still there, underneath everything else, because the brunette still reacted the same to being pestered as he did all those years ago. He’d tell Canfield to push off, he’d get embarrassed and then he’d eventually come around.

He caught Farrier carrying one of the boxes of awards up the front steps with his characteristically stressed expression.

“What’s that look for?” Canfield chuckled,

“No look, just my face,” Farrier responded,

“Would you mind carrying a box in, instead of wandering around bullying me?” He added.

“As you wish, lad,” Canfield said with a smile, watching as farrier’s expression relaxed after being ‘bullied’. The old man smiled.

It didn’t take long to get all the awards out, lay them in their boxes in groups for each of the officers’ cohorts on the tables at the back of the stage and make sure everything was in order, and by that time the first students had begun to walk through the doors.

“What’s that look for?” Canfield chuckled,
“Very.” Wingnut responded.

“Thought you’d be feeling relaxed about this, considering,” Collins said,

“Considering what?”

“Just your general demeanour, you dona’e seem to be nervous about much excepting the lady friends,” Collins laughed,

“I’m nervous I’ll make a fool of myself, I know I’m the jokester of the group but I really don’t wanna mess this up,” Timson said measuredly.

“You’ll be fine mate, walk up, shake some hands, get your wings, then you’re done!” Dawson clapped him on the back,

“Yeah, I know I’m being silly. It’ll be fine,” Wingnut agreed.

Collins was nervous for a similar reason, though it was more about having to play the part of Student Who Isn’t Seeing His Teacher front of not only the officers but the entire cohort. He also knew he was being ridiculous because it wasn’t like the other students were going to be watching him like hawks, they’d probably lose interest after the first few men were given their certificates.

Wingnut was actually leading them towards the Guildhall, being from London he knew his way around better than the two blondes. They rounded one more corner and then he pointed at a large grand building,

“There it is.”

It was beautiful, a large light stone front with spires rising up on either side of a huge wooden medieval door.

“Ready to become pilots?” Dawson asked.

The interior was as magnificent as the exterior. A deep red carpet covered the entire floor, and dim yellow chandeliers hung from the stone arches overhead. It was like being in a castle to Collins. Most of the hall was set with rows of chairs looking towards the small raised stage area right at the back of the room, on the back wall was a projector screen, in front of which stood the officers all in full uniform organising what looked like pieces of paper and other small items which Collins couldn’t make out on the tables behind them, as well as sorting out the projector itself.

“How our certificates?” Collins asked Dawson, immediately wondering why he thought Dawson would know more than him about the situation. Collins had begun to do that over the months knowing Dawson, begun to look up to him, for advice, for understanding, for acceptance, and of course Dawson gave all of these and more.

“Yeah looks like it, probably some other rubbish they’re gonna give us, I remember my school gave us all a badge, who would wear a school badge?” he laughed.

“Mine gave us pens, but by the end of the event half of them had broken and leaked ink everywhere!” Wingnut laughed,

“My school gave us kilt pins with the school logo on them, nobody uses theirs to my knowledge.” Collins added,
“Is that what that is?” Dawson asked, pointing to the small silver pin attached to the blonde’s kilt.

“Sure is, this one was a Christmas present when I was 18,” he explained. It was a small pin in the shape of a long thin point with a thistle decorating the top end.

The three sat in what was approximately the equivalent of where they usually sat in the classroom, somewhere in the middle and a bit off centre, though this time there were around a hundred chairs as opposed to twenty. Soon the hall was filled with the sounds of men walking in, chattering and taking their seats.

As soon as everyone was seated, the big wooden doors closed with a loud boom, and Canfield’s voice a few moments after wasn’t much quieter. He spoke through a microphone at the front,

“Thank you all for coming. We have been on quite the journey together, wouldn’t you say?”

The chandeliers dimmed and the projector began to roll a film. It began with the RAF marchpast song, a cheerful pompous piece which Collins didn’t altogether dislike. The film showcased bits and pieces from previous years, a classroom full of men writing papers, then the godforsaken obstacle course, swimming day, and then finally the film cut to trainer planes flying confidently through the clouds in formation. Not all of the footage was from Gatwick, Collins could tell that much, but every pilot from every base had been through a similar journey to get their wings, he imagined. The film was over within minutes, and Canfield returned to the microphone.

“First of all, we’d like to thank each and every one of you for trying your hardest, for striving for excellence, and for achieving above and beyond. Each of you men has turned into a fine cadet, soon to be accredited members of the RAF. Gatwick may be small, it may not be as well-known or famed as Cranwell college, but it is the only other Royal Air Force college. We are proud to have trained you all here at Gatwick, and hope you are proud to have learned here. Tonight, some of you will leave as Flying Officers, a title which not every newly minted pilot can claim, only those who attend a college. Though we stress at every point we can, do not allow yourself to believe that you have failed if you do not graduate to become a pilot. The only reason the RAF can stay in the air is because of men on the ground, remember that. Now, in order to make this ordeal as timely as possible, we will call up each of the teaching groups, please order yourselves alphabetically according to surname along the side here,”

Canfield pointed to the right of the stage, where a long walkway had been left clear of chairs.

“And when your name is called, walk up to receive your rank, wait for everyone from your group to be on stage, and then you will take a bow. Please return to your seat after that so the next group may come up. Oh and please wait until the entire group is on stage before you clap for them!” He said.

It was happening, Collins thought it had already hit him but he was wrong, because the fact that he was about to be presented with his wings after all this time hit him with the force of a train now and he had to dig his fingers into his palms to stop himself from spontaneously combusting.

“Those in Maxwell and Davis’ group!” Canfield said loudly. Collins could feel his heart beating out of his chest as he watched the first group stand and line up in surname order. He didn’t know any of them by name, but recognised them all by face.

“Think I should try and line up as ‘Wingnut’?” the brunette murmured to Dawson alongside Collins, who desperately tried to stop giggling at the comment.

“Nathan Allan.” The first name was called.
A tall boy with olive skin and dark hair walked onto the stage, the audience wanted to clap but nobody did and the hall stayed silent save for the tap of shoes across the floor. The lad shook Davis’, then Maxwell’s, then Farrier’s and finally Canfield’s hand, all officers offering him a short congratulations and Canfield giving him a small deep blue box, presumably containing his new qualification, among other things. He took his place at the front of the stage, and the next name was called. A boy with mouse brown hair stepped up, and the process repeated until the entire group was on stage, lined up and standing proud. Slowly but surely the hall began to erupt, clapping and cheering for each and every one of the men stood proudly in front of them. None of them knew yet if they were pilots or not, the answer lay in their boxes for them to open whenever they chose. They took a somewhat synchronised bow, and filtered off the stage the same way they came up. Collins didn’t consider himself a nervous person, but he felt like he might pass out any minute now, he could feel the adrenalin in his veins, and it was making him giddy.

“Myself and Farrier’s group!” Canfield called.

It was happening.

Collins chanced a nervous look at Wingnut and Dawson, and in the soft murmur of the students all rising, heard Dawson quietly say,

“Wingnut, do not line up as Wingnut,”

The brunette smiled and patted his friend’s back, reassuring him that while he was a jokester, he wasn’t going to act up tonight. They lined up, and Collins was third. It calmed his nerves a tad to remember that Anderson and Charles would have both been in front of him, but weren’t.

“Riley Anston,” Canfield called, and the man at the front of the line stepped up, and the line shuffled forwards. He shook hands with Davis, Maxwell, Farrier and Canfield and once he received his box, stood at the front of the stage waiting.

“David Brown,” Canfield called, and the man in front of Collins walked up. The blonde couldn’t help but turn to Dawson, who was luckily right behind him in line.

“You’re alright, mate.” He said under his breath to Collins, who took a deep breath and turned back to see that Brown was already taking his place next to Anston.

“Jack Collins,”

And then he was walking in a dream state onto the stage. This wasn’t real, and yet it was incredibly real. Collins shook Davis’ hand and at the motion he was woken up and became hyper aware of what was going on. He was graduating.

“Well done, Collins.” Davis said with a smile.

“Thanks,” the blonde half mumbled in surprise. He walked on to Maxwell,

“Good job,” he said as they shook.

“Thanks,” Collins repeated. He walked to Farrier,

“Congratulations, Collins.” Farrier said warmly and genuinely as they shook hands, and just as they had the first time they ever shook, they held it for a beat too long.

“Thank you,” Collins smiled as his hand was let go of. He finally walked to Canfield and took his hand,
“Congratulations, lad.” The man said happily, handing him his blue box with the other hand.

“Thank you, Canfield.” He said, and took his place in line on the stage.

“Alexander Dawson,”

It came as a surprise, Collins still buzzing on adrenalin. Alexander was his name. He’d never heard it before and now he had, it was like being told a very personal fact about him, something as normal and common as a first name. Now that Collins looked at him, of course he was called Alexander, it made so much sense. It just fit. Dawson walked onto the stage and shook hands with the officers as Collins had just done, collected his box as he shook hands with Canfield, and stood next to the Scot. Somehow Collins felt even closer to him now that he knew his name, even after knowing Dawson this long, it was like their friendship was different now that they both knew each other’s names. Granted Collins’ name had been given out completely by accident when Stella had said it in front of Dawson, but now the trio all knew their first names. It was very strange, the fact that first names were something of a personal fact.

Collins had been lost in thought about names and hadn’t realised that almost the entire group had already come up to stand in a line, his thoughts were broken when he heard,

“William Timson,”

The brunette walked up and shook the hands of the officers with a smile, he collected his box and stood in line, incident free surprisingly.

There were a few more men after Wingnut, and then soon followed the steadily rising sound of clapping from the men sitting down, it rose until it was almost deafening, and a few cheers were thrown in for good measure. The blonde looked sideways and saw the group begin to bow, so he followed, trying to keep in time with everyone.

And just like that, it was over.

Everyone took their seats again and while they were in the same hall, in the same chairs next to the same people, their lives had all just changed.

Chapter End Notes

They've done it! Thank you all for reading, it makes me so happy that I'm able to improve people's days with writing.
For those curious, Collins' kilt pin is this one. I also own this, I bought it while in Scotland and it's so beautiful I wanted to incorporate it into my story somehow. Also, I had a galaxy brain moment when I wrote in that Canfield wanted a spoon set because guess what I found under my bed which I 100% forgot I owned?? The exact spoon set I had been imagining in my head, that's what. This is my tumblr. Anyway, I hope everyone enjoyed this week's reading. Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
New Year, New Rank

Chapter Notes

It's that time again! I hope everyone had a good week last week, and another good one to come.
(I was smiling as I wrote this chapter)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After the ceremony there was to be a dinner of optional attendance at a restaurant which Collins had unsurprisingly, never heard of. It was just around the corner from the Guildhall, and although there was a sea of men in uniform to follow, Wingnut was under the impression that it was down to him to help Collins and Dawson find it, since he grew up in London, after all.

“When are you opening your box?” Collins asked Dawson as they walked, Wingnut was seemingly half oblivious to his surrounding friends on account of being their city guide, guiding them around a corner.

“Probably after dinner,”

“I’ll do it then as well,” Collins said.

“I think that’s when everyone’ll do it!” Wingnut yelled over his shoulder to them, alerting the blondes to the fact that he was actually listening.

They arrived, and it was very fancy, almost as much as the Guildhall itself.

“I never get tired of this place.” Canfield said,

“You wouldn’t,” Farrier laughed as they found a table. Of course they’d called ahead weeks in advance to let the restaurant know, but after years of it being the dedicated celebratory dinner venue, the staff knew the Gatwick cohort would be here tonight. It was a little too upmarket for Farrier’s liking, the portions a little too small for their price. Nonetheless he always enjoyed coming here, but it wasn’t for the food or the beautiful building, it was because it was where almost all of the students opened their boxes. He got to see their reactions firsthand, and this year he had the privilege of watching seeing Collins open his, knowing full well what the blonde would discover inside.

Dinner went quickly, none of the boys expecting the prices to be as high as they were, though the food was worth it in Collins’ opinion.

“Well lads, we know what time it is now then,” Wingnut said excitedly, putting his blue box on top of the table.

Collins looked around and saw more and more of the blue boxes appear on the tables as the students finished their food. As his eyes swept the room, they found Farrier already looking at him. A soft smile played on the man’s face as he anticipated Collins’ reaction.

“Nervous?” Dawson asked,
“Very much so,” Collins replied. In his heart he knew he’d open it and see the pilot’s brevet, his wings. There was no way he wasn’t going to be a pilot considering the praise he’d been receiving. Still, his stomach was a pit of nerves. Suddenly, there was a shout of happiness from another table. The first box had been opened, and the hall began to cheer for the lad who’d clearly gotten what he wanted, undoubtedly his wings. More and more lids popped open, some men cheered, some men smiled, albeit slightly disappointedly, a sign they hadn’t gotten their wings. Collins didn’t want to imagine how disheartening it would feel to become ground crew after all this, though he knew they were important roles, it would be crushing not to be able to fly for a living after going so far through training because you enjoyed it so much. The blonde turned back to the table, his box was staring him down.

“On three,” Dawson said to him and Wingnut.

“One,” Dawson said, all three boys looked nervous.

“Two,” said Wingnut, looking between his friends and his box. There was a beat of silence, a gap in the cheers around the room as most of the men had already seen the contents of the box, Collins took the opportunity.

“Three.”

And then he lifted the lid.

Farrier watched as Collins and his friends opened their boxes, significantly later than everyone else in the room interestingly. Some of the men from the other tables had turned around upon realising they were yet to see their results.

Collins looked into his box, and there were his wings staring up at him.

He was awoken from his daze by a shriek of happiness from Wingnut, who was now standing.

“Yes lads!” he laughed loudly, holding his pilot’s brevet up in his hand, Dawson and the surrounding tables congratulated him.

“You too?” Wingnut asked Dawson, “Course mate!” he replied standing up too, holding his own wings up for all to see. Collins was frozen in his seat.

Farrier didn’t know why Collins hadn’t jumped out of his seat like the others. Did they get the boxes mixed up? He looked like he wasn’t feeling anything. Farrier waited, still watching from his own table.

“I think young Collins is a little shocked,” Canfield chuckled softly.

“Looks like it,” Farrier replied absentmindedly.

“Collins, you’ve got your wings right?” Wingnut asked, and it was a moment before Collins replied.

“Yeah. I did it.” He said quietly.

“We knew you’d do it, mate!” Dawson through an arm around his shoulders, somewhat waking him from his trance. Finally a smile broke out on his face, and Farrier couldn’t have been gladder, he was beginning to genuinely think there’d been a mistake in the boxes.
“Ah there he goes,” Canfield chimed in. Farrier finally let his eyes wander away from Collins and smiled down at his lap. Another year, another group, they were all finished with now, and unless they were posted to an Operational Training Unit at Gatwick, he’d probably never see them again, or only in passing. It was amazing to see the difference in the men from the first uniform party to graduation, they had all matured so much.

Collins was grinning ear to ear. He had his wings. He was a pilot, not just a pilot, a Flying Officer. After receiving haphazard hugs and slaps on the back from several other students, he finally sat back down. The blonde began to look into what else was in the box. There were two long cuff ribbons denoting his new rank laid neatly inside, ready to be sewn onto his uniform along with the brevet. There was an expensive looking pen engraved with RAF Gatwick, and at the bottom was a certificate. He lifted it carefully out of the box. Printed with the Fighter Command badge and RAF Gatwick at the top, it read simply,

This is to certify that

Jack Collins
has graduated as
Flying Officer

On the bottom of the certificate was space in which both Canfield and Farrier had written notes and signed off. Collins read Canfield’s first.

Excellent to have you in the RAF Collins. Very proud of you and your efforts, you will make a very fine pilot. Well done.

The blonde smiled to himself, then glanced up at the officers’ table to Canfield to see if he could catch his eye. No such chance as the man was downing a glass of wine whilst trying not to laugh at something Farrier had said. The blonde turned his attention back to Farrier’s note.

I’m honoured to have been your instructor over these past months Collins. You possess exceptional skill and determination, and I have not a doubt in my mind that you’ll go places. See you in the air.

Collins beamed. He looked over to the officers’ table once more to see the man he’d hoped to be looking at him was indeed. Farrier smiled, seeing the certificate in Collins’ hands.

‘Thank you’ the blonde mouthed, Farrier gave a small nod of his head before turning back to the table. Collins sighed a happy sigh. He’d made it, he was in for good. A pilot.

“Well men, I think we’re almost done here, no?” Wingnut said, an arm around each of them.

“Aye, think so,” Collins replied.

“What say you that we go drop these boxes off at the base, and head out for some partying?” the brunette asked, though already standing up it was clear that he was going to be going out no matter what the blondes’ answers.

“Well, it is New Year’s Eve,” Dawson said, shrugging to Collins.
“Sure is,” the Scot replied.

Farrier gave them a smirk as they left, a lot of the other students had already done so. He hoped he’d see Collins wander in later tonight.

After a train ride back to Gatwick to drop their boxes off, the three headed straight back out in their uniforms.

“So where are we off to this fine New Year?” Dawson asked.

“Should we just go to the place Stella works?” Wingnut suggested.

“I like that idea, plus it’s walkin’ distance anyway.” Collins seconded. Dawson blushed, but nodded.

Soon enough the sounds of a clarinet solo could be heard above the louder than usual chatter of the bar. The three walked through the door to see Stella and her band up the front having what looked like the time of their lives. Collins was glad he’d been here and had some positive experiences after the horrid one with Anderson and friends, it was beginning to appear as a more friendly place to him now. The three sat pints in hand, watching the band. Finally they finished their set, and announced their break. Stella spotted them and as soon as she’d put the clarinet down, headed for them. Collins stifled a chuckle as he heard Dawson clear his throat nervously.

“Hello, you three!” she said, still out of breath from the set.

“Evening,” Dawson smiled,

“Good tae see you Stella.” Collins said,

“Yeah, it is!” Wingnut chimed in.

“What brings you three troublemakers to these parts?” she asked, still breathing heavily from the performance.

“Well, funny yae should say,” Collins began, but not before Stella held a hand up for him to stop,

“Maybe explain after I get a Mary Pickford,” she said. Dawson stood,

“Allow me,” he said before offering his arm for her to take, which hesitantly she did, chancing a nervous look back to Collins before walking off with him.

“He really knows what he’s doing,” Wingnut said.

“Sure does,” Collins said, though he was preoccupied with wondering what, or who, Mary Pickford was. Once the two reappeared at the table, Stella with the same pink drink as always in her hand, it clicked.

“Oh, it’s the drink,” Collins mumbled.

“What did you think? I was going to come back with the corpse of the actual Mary Pickford?” she laughed.

“Now what were you saying?” she asked once seated, Collins looked around the table to see if either of the others were going to say it first. Looked like they were leaving it up to him, Stella was
Collins wasn’t sure if Stella liked Dawson back, he supposed it might be too early to tell.

The three sat listening to the music, ordered a few more rounds of drinks, before Collins got the familiar urge to get up and dance.

“Come on lads, give it a go!” he said as he stood. Wingnut followed, as did Dawson this time. Collins took them to the space in front of the stage, and by the end of the song the three were grooving along to the music, not altogether caring what they looked like but just letting out the excitement of being newly minted pilots, Stella trying not to smile too ridiculously as she played. She liked these boys, they were very sweet and kind to her.

It was nearly midnight, and everyone had gone outside because there was a chance of seeing the fireworks in the distance which were being let off in central London. The boys stood in the cold with drinks in hand, Stella stood a few feet ahead of them with her band members. The group of pub goers walked down the street until they had a somewhat unobstructed view of the sky.

Someone started counting down.

“Fifty-nine! Fifty-eight!” they began, it was the last minute of 1938. It wasn’t long until the entire group was counting down as well, some more drunkenly than others, and before Collins was entirely ready he realised they had ten seconds left. Then five. One.

And then a beautiful explosion of light in the sky erupted from the horizon of London, and the group broke out into a chorus of cheers, screams, laughs and ‘Happy New Year’s. Collins was launched onto by both of his friends at once,

“Happy New Year, lads!” he laughed with them.

The fireworks show was amazing, flashes of every colour of the rainbow, Collins hadn’t seen many firework displays before, save for smaller ones near Edinburgh when the family would travel down there for events.

After the show Stella came wandering back to the boys,

“Well boys, I’d like you to meet my band.” she said, and the three other members stood next to her.

“This is Charlie, the pianist,” she said as a tall lanky man with brown messy hair and a drunken smile stepped forwards, shaking all their hands.

“And James, he plays the double bass.”

An averagely tall and averagely built man with mouse brown hair and dark eyes shook their hands,

“Nice to meet you all,” he said in a husky but friendly voice.
“And this is Daniel, who plays the drums,” Stella said, a well-built man with an impressive moustache shook the hands of the pilots,

“And me of course,” Stella smiled.

“Very nice to meet you all. Must say yae all play grand music,” Collins smiled.

“Good to meet you too, Stella kept talking about this pilot she’d met and was helping him with a case at the local airbase, we half thought she was going off the deep end until now,” Charlie laughed.

“Well, we’re real!” Wingnut laughed,

“Indeed, and we’ll be glad to have you when the inevitable happens,” Daniel said.

“Thank you. It’s nice to meet you all as well,” Dawson smiled, Collins saw him fidgeting, something Dawson didn’t do much.

“But yes, thought I should probably take this opportunity to introduce you all so the band doesn’t think I’m going mad!” the slight woman laughed,

“Anyway, I think they’re expecting us to play one more set tonight so we best get inside boys,” she said to the band.

After going back inside to watch Stella’s band perform their final set for the night, the pilots headed back to Gatwick base for the night.

“What’d yae think of the band members?” Collins asked as they walked through the gates up the steps into the building.

“Nice guys,” Wingnut said, Collins hummed in agreement.

“Yeah, they seem really decent.” Dawson said, obviously somewhat put out by meeting the males that Stella played with on stage. Collins patted his shoulder,

“I’m sure your charms will get through eventually,” he smiled.

The three trudged up the stairs and after wishing each other a happy New Year once more, entered their respective rooms, though Collins didn’t stay in his for long. Only long enough to change out of his uniform and into his pyjamas, and turn the heater on so his room was nice and toasty when he returned.

He peered out down the hallway, checking all around as he always had, before quickly slipping into the room next door.

Farrier’s light was off but the curtain was up, soft moonlight illuminating the room. Collins softly padded over to the bed, no real idea what it was he was doing in here except seeing Farrier. He got in under the covers next to the man who was fast asleep.

“Farrier,” Collins whispered,

“Farrier, it’s me,” he murmured. The man stirred but didn’t wake, Collins laid an arm on Farrier’s bicep, stroking softly as he said the man’s name until finally, he woke with a jump, turning quickly in bed and only relaxing as he heard murmurs in a thick accent telling him to ‘calm doon’.

“Collins, what time is it?” he said sleepily.
“Early hours of 1939. Happy New Year,” the blonde murmured happily, before feeling a strong arm come around his shoulders and pull him close.

“Happy New Year, Collins. Try not to sneak up on me, yeah?” he smiled.

It wasn’t easy leaving Farrier’s room that night, the bed was so warm from the man’s body heat and Collins wished for nothing more than to spend a night together, asleep in each other’s arms. At least his bedroom was warm enough when he returned to it.

Chapter End Notes

It's officially 1939, and our boys are officially Flying Officers!
I hope everyone enjoys reading as much as I enjoyed writing this one.
Thank you all for your continued support of me and my writing, I can't express how happy it makes me that people read my work at all ❤
This is my [tumblr](http://tumblr) if anyone wants to chat.
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
Knowing

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday everyone, I’m sorry this one may be a tad dry in terms of romance, I get carried away with plot a lot in case you couldn’t tell.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning when Farrier woke to the rude glare of sunlight on his face, he was alerted to the fact that he hadn’t closed his curtains last night. As he sat up and stretched, he remembered Collins last night and as he got dressed in casuals for the first time in a while, he still wasn’t completely sure if he’d dreamt the blonde’s visit or not.

As it turned out, most of the shops were shut on New Year’s Day, much to the boys’ annoyance.

“Well how are we gonna get our wings sewn on if the seamstress is shut?” Dawson said aloud in annoyance as they wandered the mostly empty streets.

“Let’s go see if my mum will do it!” Wingnut suggested.

And so they went into London town centre and into Wingnut’s family house. His parents Wendy and Michael were such polar opposites, Michael very serious and business minded, Wendy very kind and open, though both struck Collins as very smart and sensible people, so he wasn’t sure where Wingnut’s ridiculousness had come from. Before long, all three of their RAF blazers were adorned with the pilot’s brevet above the pocket, and their Flying Officer’s ranking on the bottom of each sleeve.

“Oh you must stay for at least a scone!” Wingnut’s mother said,

“Ma, we got things to do!” Wingnut protested,

“Nonsense, William. Sit down, all of you!” Wendy said, Dawson and Collins exchanging silent amused looks.

The scones were indeed delicious, they ate them with homemade jam.

“Thank yae for all this Wendy, sorry to barge in unannounced,” Collins said, who had felt bad for not asking before arriving, no matter how much Wingnut insisted they wouldn’t mind.

“Oh, not at all! I’m glad we finally get to meet you two, God knows William writes non-stop about you two in his letters back to us, doesn’t he?” she nudged Michael who had busied himself with the newspaper, he hummed in agreement.

After a more or less one sided conversation about Wingnut’s childhood which Dawson and Collins found endlessly amusing and Timson found extremely embarrassing, it was time to go. The sun was hiding behind the cloud, and the ambient light disappeared a little in the afternoon hours, wind whipping around the buildings in what seemed like every direction at once.

They arrived back at base just as it was getting dark, and good thing too because the clouds had begun to open up. The three stomped up the steps in their newly officiated blazers, the rain doing
nothing to sour their moods.

“Well it was nice to meet them,” Dawson said over dinner.

“Yeah. They’re nice people,” Collins agreed.

“I’m glad you met them too, just wish Ma didn’t have to divulge all the stupidest things I ever did as a boy,” Wingnut blushed.

“Ah, all mums do it, mate. Part of being a mum is to embarrass your kids in front of their friends!” Dawson laughed.

Collins looked over his shoulder briefly to the officers’ table. Farrier was smiling over at him. He had seen Collins’ wings as the lad had walked in, and they looked marvellous. He couldn’t wait until he could get a better look at them. Wingnut was too busy eating, and the hall was mostly empty save for the other boarders who hadn’t gone home for the holidays already, but Dawson didn’t miss the smile Collins had on his face for a split second as he turned back, and he knew what was behind Collins that the lad must have been smiling at. Collins looked back to the group, to his plate. He was blushing slightly but nobody said anything so he assumed he’d flown under the radar.

After dinner the three walked back upstairs to go to bed. Dawson and Collins always got a little longer to talk privately after Wingnut went off into his room, as it was a little further from theirs.

“Think you’ll be up in Aviemore this holidays?” Dawson asked quietly,

“‘Course. My Ma and Pa would kill me if I didn’t visit!” Collins laughed,

“I think I’ll go in the next few days, you goin’ down to see your family?” he added.

“Yeah, definitely. I didn’t really pack much to come up here for the graduation ceremony, I’m gonna head off late tomorrow I think.” Dawson said,

“Well, say hello to them all for me,”

“I will. You too with your family.” Dawson smiled as they reached his room.

“No problem. Hey, weird knowing your first name, now.” Collins said, having almost forgotten for the most part, yet it came sharply back into his thoughts at times and it was almost jarring. He’d always known that Wingnut was William, but this was new and strange.

“Weird knowing someone’s first name, what a strange issue to have, Jack.” Dawson said with a smirk, and Collins was slightly taken aback by his own name. He was only just getting used to Farrier occasionally using it. Dawson laughed,

“A strange issue it is, Alexander.” Collins countered, his friend looking more put out than he.

“Wow, that is weird.” Dawson said,

“Yae get used to it,” Collins said. Immediately his stomach dropped, Dawson wasn’t going to let that comment slide.

“Oh yeah?”

Collins panicked, what could he have meant other than someone else on the base using his first name?
“Uh, Wingnut sometimes uses my first name.” he said quickly. Too quickly. Dawson took a step towards him, not menacing, but concerned.

“Collins, you’re a horrid liar.” Was all he said, and Collins thought he was off the hook, but not before,

“So, are you gonna tell me what you were smiling at over my shoulder tonight?”

Suddenly the air was very tense between the two blondes. Dawson leaned an arm on his doorkframe. Nothing about him, not his open stance, not his trusting eyes, should have intimidated Collins at this point, but everything did. This was probably how Collins should have felt when he came out to Dawson and Wingnut, how he should have felt telling them he fancied Farrier, but his stupidity overrode his sensibility in both those instances and the information just slipped out. Information that shouldn’t have been told so lightly. Now he felt like a deer in the headlights, he felt like he was trapped.

“Collins, I won’t make you, just like I didn’t make you admit who you have feelings for. I’m just saying, you can tell me if there’s… Something else.” He said quietly, his blue eyes showing nothing but care in their expression.

“Tell you what?” the Scot said. Dawson didn’t answer with words, he just gave him this look. This awful knowing look. Collins began to breathe deeper, he had to stare at the floor to keep himself from hyperventilating. Dawson knew? How did Dawson know?

“I…” Collins began, but didn’t know how to keep going.

“I’m tired. I’m going to bed.” he said.

Dawson reached a hand out and grabbed his shoulder,

“It’s alright, mate. I’ll never force anything out of you, yeah? Just know that I’ll listen.” He said with that trusting smile he always wore. Collins sighed.

“Yeah, thank you Dawson.” He said, and quickly entered his own room.

Dawson sat on his bed contemplating. Collins had essentially just confirmed his suspicions. He’d been wondering for some months now, whether something was happening, and he didn’t think Collins would have reacted that way if nothing was going on. Then he asked himself a question. How did he feel about it? The answer presented itself quicker than Dawson imagined it would. Fine.

He felt fine about it, and it surprised him almost as much as seeing the Scot’s reaction not minutes ago. It wasn’t like it was ever explicitly told to him around the house that it was wrong, it was just never mentioned. Homosexuality. Through life he’d found that it was indeed wrong, and though Dawson wasn’t sure he wanted to think about the physicality of two men together, he always wanted all of his friends to be happy. If for Collins, his closest friend, it meant being with a man, he supposed it was fine. The blonde dissected the thought a little more, to realise that he was fine with it, but only at face value. Once he began thinking, imagining, he became slightly uncomfortable. Two men together, it might take a bit more time to be more okay with the thought, perhaps more time than he’d ever have. If he knew Collins and Farrier hadn’t done anything illicit, that they were ‘together’ and nothing more, it might be fine on a deeper level, but considering that was uncertain, ‘fine’ would have to stay a surface level description of the situation.
A few days later, Collins left for Aviemore. Not feeling all too good about leaving Dawson on an awkward note, not having resolved their conversation before he left for Weymouth, the blonde was glad to get back to the highlands. He’d been so caught up in the stressful event that was visiting family that he’d forgotten just how much he loved being up in the fresh air of Scotland. Plus, he had a brand new drawing book to use. He said goodbye to Farrier, and it wasn’t easy. It was the first time he’d gone back home since they had gotten together, a term that was still mind-boggling to the blonde. Together.

He was only going up for a week or so, then he’d be back. Farrier had been overly soft about the whole ordeal, not wanting to let Collins out of his arms, peppering him with kisses, actions that the blonde could have only dreamed of a few months ago.

Currently he was whizzing up the mainline on the Flying Scotsman, drawing his pilot’s brevet on the first page of his sketchbook.

“Tea or coffee, my love?” the woman asked as she wheeled the tray up the train,

“No thanks,” Collins replied, woken from his daze of drawing. He didn’t realise the time, he hadn’t even realised that the train had already made its stop in York and that it was over the Scottish border now. Not long after, it pulled up in Edinburgh, and Collins switched onto the train to the north.

As usual, it was completely dark by the time he reached Aviemore. His mother and father were at the station to greet him this time, having been told in advance when he’d arrive.

“Jack!” his mum ran towards him and threw her arms around the lanky blonde.

“Good tae see yae,” Collins mumbled. As much as things were often tense between he and his parents after them finding out about his sexuality, she would always be his mother. She took his small suitcase from him, refusing to let him carry it himself,

“Evenin’, Da.” Collins smiled, his father hugging him tightly.

“Good tae see yae again, son.” He said.

Over dinner they discussed Christmas, after a showing off of Collins’ brand new wings of course.

“So the whole town was there!” his mum enthusiastically recalled the Christmas Day picnic, most of the town was usually there at some point or another, all with their own foods from their households. It was bittersweet to hear, considering Collins missed it.

“Well Christmas Day was a quiet affair at the base, actually,” he said, somehow managing to keep the heat from his face as he thought of the reality which was that he’d sucked Farrier off on Christmas, a jolting thought juxtaposed to the calm dinner they were currently enjoying.

“Well, nearly the whole town was there, yer Maw forgets. Benjamin moved.” Collins’ father piped up. Collins’ stomach shouldn’t have dropped but it did. He supposed before they were friends with benefits, they were friends, and it still hurt to hear Ben had moved without saying goodbye properly. Now he knew why Ben had been so friendly and why he’d hugged him last they saw each other. It was his way of saying goodbye without saying it.

“Where?” the blonde asked,
“Kingussie. Moved to train with the army, they train hundreds of men out on the land around there,” his dad said. Kingussie was only the next town over, but somehow Collins wasn’t quite put out enough to want to visit Ben there. It was a strange feeling, to miss him and also be extremely relieved that he didn’t live in Aviemore anymore.

Due to that fact, Collins’ week up north was much more relaxing and enjoyable than he thought it would be. The heavy snow had come down early this year, the town was already covered completely, the lochs frozen, and everything the eye could see was white. There was still the tension at home, the unspoken feeling between Collins and his parents, they knew what could never be unlearned about their son, and they weren’t going to forget it.

Farrier would have been bored out of his damned mind if Canfield had left, but opting to stay for a few more days gave the brunette someone to talk to at least while Collins was away. He missed the blonde dearly, it was only a week or so but after seeing him every day it was torture, just like the first time he went back to Aviemore, but this time it was worse because this time they were together. But this time, Canfield didn’t ask once about Collins. It seemed that finally the old man had taken the bait and believed there were no feelings anymore.

Collins ended up staying for a week and a half. The opportunity didn’t arise much to come back home, and like Farrier complaining about flying and then liking it, Collins was enjoying his time back home as much as he’d said he didn’t want to go. He loved the lochs, the forests, the river running through town. He loved the open skies, having almost forgotten how little of the sky he could see down in Gatwick thanks to the taller buildings, that was when he wasn’t flying, of course. Collins liked how life was slower in Aviemore, people took more time on the streets, asking each other how they were. More care was taken whilst shopping, stopping to talk about wares instead of shoving them into the customers’ hands and asking for money. Everyone was less stressed, but soon Collins’ need to see Farrier began to outweigh his yearning for the highlands.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading. I may have already mentioned but Kingussie is where I stay whenever I'm in the highlands (I frequent Aviemore and the surrounding towns on day trips) so I felt like putting a little place that's special to me in my story. It also has unusually long train platforms, specifically built so that lots of soldiers could stand on the platform at a time to be loaded into long trains to be transported south. Obviously Ben is now one of these soldiers.
This is my tumblr if anyone’s interested.
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
Halfway through January, Collins departed for Gatwick.

“We love you son,” said his father.

“I know. I love you too,” Collins replied as he hugged him. As soon as he’d let go, Collins’ mother threw her arms around her son.

“It’s always a blessin’ to see yae up here, lad.” She said, tears not far off judging by her voice.

“I come as much as I can,” Collins said. And after such a good time in Aviemore, he took great happiness in saying the truth. He did come as often as he could. Perhaps not for as long each time, but both holiday seasons so far, he’d been up.

The train pulled up at the station.

“Yae should write more!” Collins’ mother called after him as he walked to the doors.

“I’ll try!” he smiled back. Collins hopped onto the train and found a seat. Soon after he’d taken it his parents appeared at the window as the train began to pull out from the platform. They waved and walked along the platform a little way as the train moved, Collins waved back until the train eventually left the platform, and the view of his parents was replaced by his hometown whizzing past as snowflakes began to fall.

Farrier didn’t know when Collins was coming back, and it was a problem. Canfield could only occupy Farrier’s time in short bursts nowadays, having spent much of his childhood with the man, Farrier was easily tired out by his antics.

“I’m going flying,” the brunette announced.

“Can I come?” Canfield asked. Farrier chuckled,

“Don’t have to ask me, Michael.”

So the two of them walked out onto the tarmac in full flight gear.

“Just like the good old days,” Canfield said,

“Yeah, back at the fairground,” Farrier responded.

They both knew that this was the calm before the storm that would sweep over the nation. They didn’t know when, but by now it was obvious, there was no escaping war, might as well fly while they could without a target in front of them as well as being one themselves.
The men hooked up the trolley accumulators to the engines, and started two of the planes up. They wheeled the trolleys away and climbed into the Spitfires, gave each other one more look before closing the canopies. There were no radios hooked up, no plans for how they would fly.

The train from the north pulled into Edinburgh, Collins alighted and after buying a small pastry for himself, hopped onto the Flying Scotsman. He hadn’t even gotten his sketchbook out at all during the journey home Collins realised, he was too lost in thought to draw. What woke him from his thoughts was the realisation that as he’d pondered the fact that he hadn’t got his sketchbook out, he’d called Gatwick home in his head. It was strange to feel that two places were his home, relatedly his recent visit to Aviemore was probably the best time he’d had there in a long time. Before he’d moved down to Gatwick it was plain stressful, and the last time he’d gone up, the worry that Ben would find him was there the entire time until Ben did find him, and Collins still wasn’t sure how he felt about the events that transpired between them that night. He definitely hadn’t done what he’d done for the right reason, to prove a point, of all things. The blonde scoffed at his own actions.

Eventually he was back in England, mountains had turned to rolling hills, and snow had turned to rain.

The planes shot up into the air. Canfield took off in one direction, Farrier in the other. So much for flying together, he thought. For once, Farrier wasn’t flying towards the ocean as he always did, he was flying north. Canfield was going in the direction of Somerset, he always did. Farrier decided he was going to fly over Scotland. He had time, of course he had plenty of time. There was a full tank of fuel in the plane, he knew he wouldn’t be able to make it to the highlands but he was going to see how far he could get. Maybe to Edinburgh, Britain was small after all. It was probably stupid considering the radios were off, but Farrier had never been that far north of London. He’d been to the continent of course in the war, but that was it. He told himself that this flight wasn’t some bizarre attempt to get closer to Collins.

He flew high into the rain, it got softer as he got closer to the clouds, still the brunette was thankful for the Perspex above his head and the oxygen mask over his face. He knew it would take a while, an hour each way was what he was going to do. Apparently the Spitfires could fly for two and a half, but he wasn’t about to test that. He liked throwing planes around but didn’t like running them out of fuel high in the air for an experiment. The rain may have been softer closer to the clouds, still not having gained the momentum the lower drops had, but Farrier reasoned it was probably better to fly above the clouds altogether.

Meanwhile Canfield’s flight was rather ordinary. The rain wasn’t too blinding, and he was flying considerably lower than he usually would, taking pleasure in looking at the landscape and buildings beneath him.

Collins reached London.

The train let off a hiss of steam as it pulled up, and the blonde lugged his suitcase off the carriage and onto the platform to navigate his way to the train out to Gatwick.

Farrier was amazed at how peaceful it was as soon as he crested over the clouds. It was later afternoon, the time when the sky was neither blue nor orange, but on the edge of both. He wanted to open the canopy, to feel the wind on his face while breathing the oxygen from the mask but he knew it would ruin the moment considering the speed he was going at and how cold the air would be.

Farrier had a lot of time to think in that plane, and most of it was spent thinking about Collins. The lad was still probably overwhelmed that after hearing everything he’d gone through, but he was
dealing with Farrier’s bad emotional and interpersonal skills, it baffled the brunette that someone still wanted to be with him. He wondered if he’d affected Collins in a bad way, he hoped not. Farrier didn’t want to see Collins grow up faster than he had to. Not like his generation who went to war, they all grew up very fast when they first saw combat. Missed their best years, acting as weapons instead of carefree young adults. Farrier didn’t want to see that happen to Collins, and while Farrier was only just coming to terms with the fact that nothing he could say would change the fact that a war was coming, it was a new thought entirely that the things he’d said to Collins about his own past may have had more of an effect than he first realised. Farrier hadn’t even thought about the price someone else might have to pay to be emotionally close to him. As he flew, the skies peaceful and still, all he wanted was to see Collins. Touch him. Tell him how much he needed him and most of all, make sure he wasn’t overstepping anything, make sure Collins was handling everything. He hoped he’d get back soon, he was happy the blonde was up with his family, but he missed him.

Said blonde meanwhile was just getting off at Gatwick station. The rain wasn’t letting up but the streetlamps were all beginning to turn on now, Collins didn’t want to stop in the rain and find a rain jacket in his case, so he walked briskly back to base in his RAF blazer. It was woollen anyway, the rain wouldn’t be able to soak all the way through in the walk from the station to base.

When he arrived, the front doors were locked, which was unusual. He knocked urgently on the door, wanting to be inside, in his own room, with the heater on immediately. Nobody came. Shite. Now this was a problem, his key only unlocked his room and he’d been told that because Gatwick was a full time boarding house, that someone would always be there to let him in, or in the lockout period he’d call from the phone box to be let in. Collins decided he should try just that, even if it wasn’t the lockout period, the doors were definitely locked. He quickly got himself inside the telephone box and dialled the number, but the phone rang out and it was wasted money.

“What thae fuck?” he murmured under his breath. He was going to wait in the telephone box until the rain lightened up a little. Why wasn’t anyone answering? Why were the doors locked at this hour? He waited for the best part of fifteen minutes and it got darker and colder, the rain didn’t let up. Collins began to feel the cold seeping under his blazer, he just wanted to be inside. Suddenly he heard the roar of an engine overhead. He jerked open the phone box and made out the faint silhouette of a plane against the deep blue sky, and it was coming in over the main building for a landing on the runway behind.

Canfield lined up to land and was glad the lights around base had gone on because it had gotten dark a lot faster than he’d anticipated. After an average landing, Canfield clambered out and shut the canopy of the plane, he’d have to wait for Farrier to return from wherever the hell he’d flown off to in order to get her back into the hangar. It took two to push a plane.

Collins deducted that if someone had just landed at Gatwick, then there was someone there now, and proceeded to call himself an idiot for working the fact out so slowly. He braved the rain and went back to knocking on the door. A few more minutes of standing in the rain and the small lamppost at the front of the building turned on, and then the hallway light turned on, Collins saw through the windows. Finally, Canfield arrived at the door in flight gear.

“Oh! My dear boy, have you been waiting long?” he said, clearly embarrassed.

“Not all that long. I tried the phone box, nobody answered.” Collins said, anxious to just get inside, Canfield realised he was blocking the doorway and stepped aside.

“Yes, well uh, Farrier and I took some planes for a whizz, we didn’t think anyone would be arriving and we didn’t plan to be out for long so I locked the doors as a precaution because there
aren’t any other officers here. Sorry lad, we aren’t meant to leave the base unattended, and I definitely shouldn’t have locked the doors.” He said,

“Oh, if yae were flying I don’t mind. Have yer fun,” he smiled. Canfield still seemed very sorry for the lad.

“Farrier still isn’t back, so I think I’m going to have to wait out by the landing strip for him, I think I’ll leave the door unlocked so I don’t accidentally keep any more of you out in the rain!” he said.

“It’s nearly dark, can our planes fly at night?” Collins asked,

“No. They can’t. No lights or means of seeing the controls inside the cockpit at all. They’re not night fighters. It got darker faster than I thought, so I can only hope that man lands very soon.” Canfield said, walking off down the hall.

Farrier had indeed turned back, before he even got to the boarder, the sun was going to beat him this time. One day he’d get to go on a longer flight. The sky was losing the last rays of orange, and was turning a deep pink. He slowly decreased altitude, but once he flew back down through the clouds his stomach dropped. He could barely see. Farrier cursed himself for being so stupid, oversight could go to hell. Angry for allowing himself to forget that it would be darker beneath the clouds, something ridiculously simple and absolutely crucial, he pushed the throttle hard forwards and the plane zoomed through the rain over the little lights of the cities. He could already make out an incredibly large built up area of lights in the distance, it had to be London. This would be a real test of his navigational skills.

Collins dumped his things, put his heater on and changed into some dry clothes, hanging his uniform up on the door of his cupboard. After a fleeting thought that he really should get rid of his old uniform which still hid within, the blonde leaned on his windowsill. The sky was almost completely black now, he was worried.

Farrier was worried too, he was nearly there, he could make out the larger buildings of central London so he was almost at Gatwick, but he’d have to fly incredibly low to be able to make out enough to know where the runway was. This was outside his comfort zone. Gatwick wasn’t a base built for night fighters, and he wasn’t sitting in a night fighter for god’s sake, meaning the runway did not have lights up the sides, meaning it had no illumination anywhere on the outside of the building except for the streetlamps at the front and any lights from rooms inside seen through windows.

Canfield was worried. This had been a stupid idea and he didn’t know why he’d said yes to it in the first place. Farrier wasn’t going to be able to land in this, how could he see anything? There had to be a way to illuminate the runway somehow. The older man wracked his brain for what lights they had. All he could think of were the old oil lamps that were kept in the dining and radar room for emergencies like if the electricity failed.

“Well, this is an emergency if I ever saw one,” he muttered as he jogged down to get them. There were 7 that he could find. It would have to do. They weren’t signalling oil lamps, the ones that directed and intensified the light into a strong beam, they were just oil lamps that let off a small orange glow. Canfield grabbed a box of matches and carried all 7 lamps to the door leading out the back through the locker room. He lit two, and carried them out into the rain. He set one down on each edge of the runway at the beginning and ran back for two more and did so until he had them stationed at regular intervals up the runway, and one in the middle at the end so that on the unlikely chance Farrier even saw the little lamps, he knew where to stop before the building.

The blood was rushing in Farrier’s ears. Everything was loud, yet silent. This was extremely
stressful and extremely dangerous. How the bloody hell did he think he was going to go to Edinburgh and back?! Still pissed off at his own ignorance of the winter sunsets and how fast they went, he continued to search for Gatwick. He’d flown south of London now, so he was near it. Farrier lowered the plane as much as he could. He was only several hundred feet above the roofs now, but if he was any higher he had no chance of finding the base at all. Lucky he’d lived here long enough to recognise the streets from the air.

Finally, he’d flown to the edge of the Gatwick built up area and could make out the fields behind the base, where any light pollution dropped sharply off. Farrier supposed if worst came to worst he could land in the fields, and hope he didn’t hit the single tree that grew in them.

“Idiot boy.” Canfield muttered to himself. He was beyond mad that Farrier had allowed himself to get far away enough from base that he arrived back in the dark. Farrier had too much experience to ever let this kind of thing happen.

Collins was still looking out of his window, he could see some very faintly illuminated lights on the sides of the runway. He’ll never see those. The blonde thought to himself of Farrier. Then he heard something over the rain, the distinct rumble of a plane engine. Sooner than Collins had been ready for, something, it was too dark to make out what, flew into sight far to the right. The plane arced over the fields behind base at an alarmingly low altitude.

Farrier did see the oil lamps. Quite by accident as he was scanning the fields for the tree that grew, he spotted light from some windows, and they had to be the windows of the bedrooms in the base. He knew roughly where he was over the fields so that was the only explanation. As his eyes swept back down from the lights on the second floor, he’d seen the dim little specks of yellow on the ground. He swung the plane around to face them and lowered the landing gear. He was embarrassed and scared that he had to land like this. He wasn’t going to let himself get carried away in his mind again whilst flying, it was a reminder that even though they were in peacetime, he still needed to be vigilant of what he was doing, and maybe not try to fly to Scotland as the sun was going down next time.

Collins had gone downstairs, watching the dark figure of the plane approach from his window was torturous. He appeared at Canfield’s side,

“Think he’s seen the lights?” Collins asked,

“Not a doubt. Otherwise he wouldn’t be lowering the plane yet.” Canfield replied, resisting the urge to call Farrier an idiot in front of a younger pilot who probably looked up to both of them.

It wasn’t easy, getting a plane down on the ground when you couldn’t see any of your controls, and could barely see the ground itself. Farrier hoped he wasn’t misjudging the distance, misjudging anything for that matter. The second he thought it right, he lifted the nose for the safest landing possible- and he did it. The wheels hit the ground hard, screeching across the wet tarmac and Farrier was thrown forwards against his harness as the familiar jolt of the ground shuddered through the plane. Even more so in the Spitfires than the Hurricanes, one had to take a curved approach because of the way the nose stuck up once the wheels were on the ground, you couldn’t see in front of you. So Farrier snaked up the runway as the plane slowed, making sure to stay as straight as he could, using more the bedroom lights than the lamps on the ground now. Finally it came to a halt, and Farrier, Canfield and Collins all breathed a sigh of relief. The brunette jumped out and slammed the canopy shut as to not let the rain in, no sooner had he carefully climbed off the slippery wing and began to briskly walk towards the building, did Canfield begin to walk towards him.

“What the bloody hell was that?!?” he yelled.
“I’m sorry! I’m sorry, Michael. I didn’t know,”

“Didn’t know what?!?” Canfield snapped, Collins watched from the doorway.

“Look can we just get the planes into the hangar?” Farrier asked, Canfield was about to yell again but stopped himself.

“You’re not off the hook.” He said, and helped Farrier push the planes in.

Collins knew it wasn’t his place to be standing there, so he left to go back to his room. What a reunion, he thought.

Once the planes were back in their hangars, Farrier was yelled at for several minutes by Canfield.

“You don’t do that! You just don’t do that!” the older man yelled as they sat in his office. It was like being told off at school.

“For fuck’s sake I know! I messed up, Canfield. It was scary for me too you know, I was the one landing in the bloody dark!” Farrier spat back. Canfield was, to say the least, unimpressed when he was told that Farrier had, for some reason or another, tried to fly to Scotland, above the clouds.

“You know it’s darker beneath the clouds, every single person in the world knows that, pilot or not, how’d you miss it?!”

“I don’t know.”

“Why were you even going that far?”

“I don’t know.”

Canfield realised he’d drained Farrier of all ability to respond. After all there were only so many times one could apologise.

“Get some sleep. Next time you go up for fun I want a full description of where you’re going and for how long. A logbook entry as well. Otherwise you’re not going up.”

“Canfield don’t be stupid,”

“No. I’m your senior officer. After tonight I’m not letting you fly unless I know exactly what you’re doing. And don’t think I can’t sniff out a lie from you, Thomas.” He said, Farrier restrained from huffing in amusement seeing as he’d been lying about him and Collins this whole time, and he walked out of the office.

Farrier stomped upstairs to change out of his wet gear. No sooner had he shut his door, it was opened again behind him by Collins.

“Don’t say it,” Farrier began, but was cut off by a snarky

“Afternoon,” from the scot.

“Can’t stop yourself, bastard!” Farrier laughed, and pulled him into a hug, knowing the blonde wouldn’t care that he got damp from Farrier’s clothes.

“I missed you,” Collins said.

“I missed you too.” Farrier hummed.

“Why were yae flying to Scotland?”
“Never been there, thought I had time.” Farrier answered matter-of-factly.

“Did you plan to land?” the blonde asked.

“No, just to look from above.” There was a silence, they were still stood in the room hugging.

“I’ll take yae there one day.” Collins said. Farrier hugged a little tighter at this.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading!!
Last night I actually made a Pinterest board for Afternoon! I laughed at myself because I was getting annoyed that I couldn't find accurate or enough historical photos but a good friend of mine told me to calm down and just pick photos for 'the vibe' so I did lol.

Decided making a pinterest board is much easier than making individual moodboards on tumblr, which I did start doing actually (they're here but they're kind of crap, just warning you.

This is my tumblr if anyone's interested.

Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
Monday again! I had a week off uni but this week I’m back. Hope everyone has a good week ahead of them too ❤️ This one delves into a bit of our boys’ philosophical views.

Those holidays, Farrier and Collins grew closer than either of them ever imagined they would. Canfield was gone, Timson and Dawson were gone, most of the other students departed and arrived back, but the base was peaceful for the most part and Farrier and Collins had, almost, complete freedom. It wasn’t just about physical intimacy, although they had begun to explore that side of their relationship more, they’d got to know each other well past any level anyone else before them had. They understood each other as people. They hadn’t gone up in the planes, with Canfield being gone and with the new restriction he’d placed upon Farrier’s flying, it was impossible. Farrier did wonder, if his flying hadn’t been restricted by Canfield, if he’d have taken Collins flying during those holidays for fun. He arrived at no, he wouldn’t have. It would have felt like he was giving Collins an advantage that the other pilots didn’t have.

At one point they’d taken a walk back to the tree that grew in the fields behind the base and put the old identity disks back on it. Farrier decided that while he didn’t want to have them on his person, he didn’t mind knowing where they were.

“Well, I suppose they’ll stay here forever,” Collins said as he hung them on a high branch, having climbed partway up the tree.

“Hopefully not,” Farrier laughed,

“Okay, hopefully they stay here and then disappear.”

“Perfect!”

They walked back through the half frosted grass and onto the tarmac.

“You’re coming to terms with the possibility of war,” Collins blurted out. Farrier gave him an incredulous look,

“Why do you say that?” he asked,

“Well, yae don’t talk about it as much as you used to, and when you do there’s this feeling that you’re accepting of it,” the blonde explained. It was true that Farrier hadn’t been thinking of it lately, and he supposed since getting back into the swing of flying warbirds instead of trainers he had gotten a little more used to the idea.

“Yeah, you’re right. I guess I just shouldn’t bother causing myself more worry over it, I can’t change what’s going to happen, you know?” he said as they walked inside.

“Yae I know, not with this particular thing,” Collins said.

“Can I change the future with other particular things then?” Farrier mused,
“Of course yae can. It was you that decided to kiss me, started all this didn’t it,” Collins said. Farrier hummed in agreement.

“So you believe that your fate is in your own hands, Collins?”

“To an extent. Like I said, not all things. I’m in the RAF, if we go to war I doubt I can control if I personally have tae fight in it, for example. But some things yes.” He pondered.

“Don’t you?” he added.

“I don’t tend to, no. I think everything is already set, whatever happens was bound to happen, and it was all for a reason.” Farrier answered. They’d reached the stairs to go up to the bedrooms.

“Shall we walk?” Farrier suggested, they hadn’t been out all that much during the holidays, and he knew Collins was getting cabin fever.

“That would be lovely,” the blonde answered.

And so they walked along the streets of the town, keeping an eye out not to walk too close to each other, to keep an open and friendly stance.

“So everything’s fated to happen, and yae can’t change anything?”

Farrier hummed in agreement again.

“So I got kicked out of the RAF in Scotland for a reason?” Collins asked, trying to find something Farrier would object to being fate. At this question he smiled fondly at Collins, conveying his answer.

“So we were fated to meet?”

“I guess so,” Farrier said, finding it amusing that Collins was so interested in his philosophical views.

“See I think it was my own stupid fault I lost the job in Scotland, and my own stupid fault that I did nae stop flirting with yae,” he said quietly, not that there was anyone on the streets. The grey pavement was beginning to become speckled dark with raindrops. A thought nearly stopped Collins in his tracks, but he didn’t know how to eloquently word it.

“So… Everythin’ that happened to you. Was that all fate?” he said, not game to look Farrier in the eyes. He heard a sigh next to him,

“In my opinion, yes. That’s not to say it happened to teach me a lesson or anything like that, just that it was going to happen no matter what. Of course if I think about it there could have been numerous lessons, maybe I had bad luck flying as punishment for who I am, what I am,” he said, looking at Collins who nodded in understanding of Farrier referencing sexuality, but his expression showed clear disagreement with the statement.

“Or, perhaps it was to show me that life is precious and that I shouldn’t take advantage of it, shouldn’t lose sight of what I’ve personally taken away from many men.” Farrier went on to say. Collins decided that Farrier’s mind was going in the wrong direction.

“Maybe it was a test, to see if you were strong enough to pull through.” He said, really unsure of how to remedy the situation, still learning how to help Farrier out of the moods he went into sometimes. Collins was glad that these moods didn’t happen that often, not nearly as often as
Farrier had described they used to be, and they were no longer his constant attitude as he’d described they were before they became just ‘a mood’.

“Whatever the reason, if there was one, I’m glad I’ve healed for the most part. Plus on a related note, haven’t had a flare up with the shrapnel for quite a while, so that’s good.” He said. Collins was grateful that Farrier was also learning to turn his own thinking around without help, because it wasn’t easy finding ways to help Farrier out of his own mind. The man could be very stubborn. Collins hoped it got easier in time, but he knew that his being with Farrier wasn’t a magical cure, he knew he’d have to deal with the man’s past through glimpses, probably forever. And he was okay with that.

“Glad you can see the positive side of things,” Collins smiled as they walked. The rain was a light drizzle, not bothering either of them, even making Collins slightly more relaxed than he otherwise would have been.

“Lunch?” Farrier offered,

“I’ll buy.” He added. At this the blonde blushed,

“Uh, alright. Thank ye.” He said quietly, trying not to smile too widely. They walked through the built up area near the base, Collins didn’t really know the food stores all that well save for the sandwich store he always went to.

“This is a nice place.” Farrier said, taking Collins by surprise as he ducked into a store which was very inconspicuous from the street. The blonde followed him inside and was hit with the aroma of wonderful cooking.

“What is this place?” he asked.

“Canfield and I found it one day. Best food in Gatwick, and tucked away so it’s never too busy.” Farrier smiled. It was all wood, very old looking. The timber structure was starting to warp, but it fit in with the place. There were strings holding handfuls of different herbs hanging from the ceiling behind the counter, lightbulbs with no lampshades over them hanging from the dining area. It was bare and run down, but somehow that made it seem inviting. Then Collins realised why.

“It reminds me of my house,” he said quietly. Farrier’s gait faltered at the blonde’s soft words. He almost put his hand on the small of Collins’ back to direct him to a corner table near the window, but instead cleared his throat and gestured in front of Collins which way they were going to walk to sit.

“Is that a good thing?” Farrier braved asking as they sat at the small table, wooden and slightly wobbly. The menus were already placed there, and Collins busied himself reading it.

“Pet?” Farrier asked quietly,

“Good and bad,” Collins said whilst still studying the menu. There was a lot of meat and warm hearty meals here, he was happy Farrier had shown him this place. The brunette in question made a thoughtful hum at Collins’ answer, bringing it to the attention of the blonde that he hadn’t really answered the question properly. He’d meant to, he’d been genuinely distracted by the food.

“Yeah well, we didnae have all that much. Basic stuff, and living on the outskirts of a town, yae don’t have the same opportunities one does in a big city or something. But all that said, I really like the family house. It’s homely, comforting in a humble way, I guess.” He said fondly, almost lost in his own thoughts, remembering their little house on the edge of Aviemore, with the little garden
and vegetable patch, with the wooden floorboards covered haphazardly with rugs of all sizes, with the bathtub which Collins could remember sitting in shivering as a lad waiting for the water to boil on the fire so it could be poured in with the cold to make a warm bath for the little boy. He remembered Ben, and the regretful events which were stumbled upon by his parents. As usual it must have shown on his face, Farrier raised an eyebrow, but then dropped it as a member of staff walked up to them asking what they’d like to eat.

It was a very interesting restaurant, if one could call it that. Being so rustic and downright rundown, yet still having the courtesy of coming to tables to take orders.

“What are we doing here, boys?” she asked as she wrote the orders, vaguely recognising Farrier.

“Officers’ meeting, love. Sometimes good to meet off base.” The brunette replied. She smiled,

“Did you used to come here?” she asked, pointing her pencil at Farrier instead of writing. Collins wasn’t surprised that the service was this personal at a place like this.

“Yes, I did actually. Working in the RAF can be unpredictable, been quite busy.” He said, “I bet it’s busy, and especially now as we look at what the future might hold!” she said, smiling sadly to Farrier.

“That’s right, but nothing we can do about it,” Farrier said, and watching him say it out loud, to an almost stranger, that he’d accepted it, gave Collins some sort of comfort.

“Well, I’d best not get in the way of business meetings!” she said, and was off after writing their orders. Farrier exhaled and smiled warmly across the table.

“Must have been here quite a bit for her to recognise ye,”

“I have been. It used to be a weekly thing, with Canfield. I guess we just got busy and stopped doing it,” Farrier said.

“Does your house look like this place a lot, or just a bit?” he asked, Collins smiled.

“Only a bit. More the feeling.” Collins replied,

“What did your house look like?” he asked. Farrier cleared his throat and an empty laugh left his mouth.

“Big. Too big. My father was a stockbroker, and he was good at his job. It was off in Bridgwater. We had too much land, too. The one good thing about it was that I could hide in that house, and not be found for hours,” Farrier recalled.

“Sounds like somewhere that’d be fun to visit, for someone who’s never seen a house like that.” Collins said, surprised that Farrier was from Somerset, though he should have pieced it together knowing Canfield was from there, and that he’d looked after Farrier for years.

“Well, I suppose yeah it would for you. To me it’s all excessive and stupid. We didn’t need a house that big, simple as that. I didn’t think about it until I grew older and moved in with Michael, of course, who owned a normal house like a normal person.” then Farrier stopped and giggled,

“I remember Mum looking for me for ages in the old house. Upstairs, downstairs, basement, I was always finding new places to hide and she never found me. I’d always jump out at her before she could find me and I’d spook her,” he said. He was smiling.
“Closest memory I have tae that is my Da chasin’ me with a rolled up newspaper because I slept in and forgot to get our groceries while the town market was still on!” Collins laughed, coaxing a chuckle out of Farrier.

“So this business meeting we’re on, what business is it?” Collins asked,

“Oh, that’s strictly need-to-know.” Farrier said, tapping the side of his nose.

“Need tae know, yes I do need tae know,” Collins said, perplexed, believing there was actual business.

Farrier smiled and sighed,

“It’s an expression, pet. There’s no business. Just good food, and even better company.” He said quietly, though nothing of their conversation could be heard above the ambient noise of the place anyway. He’d thought about generally Scotland before, but that moment in Collins’ head he decided that one day, somehow, he’d take Farrier to his home in Aviemore.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading! I hope you found it interesting, I hadn’t yet really written about Farrier’s nor Collins’ views on something like philosophy and fate, and as usual my writing got away from me and wrote itself! Thank you to everyone who comments, leaves kudos, and is just reading along quietly, I love you all! This is my tumblr if anyone’s interested. Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
I nearly forgot it was Monday today. I’ve been house sitting for the past 6 weeks and had been so preoccupied with coming back home today that I almost forgot to upload lol. I hope everyone has an interesting week ahead of them!

It was nearing the end of January and the cold weather hadn’t let up at all, much to Collins’ genuine delight.

“Think I’ll be off at the end of this week,” Canfield said to Farrier over breakfast shared at the small table in the kitchen. The dining hall staff had gone home for the break, though Canfield was fairly certain that soon after classes went back in the new semester, that there wouldn’t be any dining hall at all anymore due to the radar system.

“Well, say hello to everyone out in Somerset for me.” Farrier replied.

“You should come with this time. Everyone loves to see you, Tom.” Canfield said.

For the first time since he could remember, Farrier’s heart was torn two ways. Under any other circumstances he’d say yes in an instant, of course he’d go. It’d stop him moping about the base doing nothing, he’d get to see Canfield’s nephews and nieces and the rest of his family who were all very lovely people. But now there was Collins, if he went with Canfield he’d miss precious unsupervised time at the base with Collins. Maxwell and Davis were already gone and didn’t have plans to return until the semester began. Farrier sighed, he knew the easy answer and he knew he had to answer it fast or there’d be a questioning look in Canfield’s gaze followed by a ‘why not?’

“I’d love to come to Somerset with you, Michael. Of course I would.” Said Farrier. It wasn’t a lie, it just wasn’t easy to say it.

“Excellent! I’m going to be there probably until the end of the holidays as usual.” Canfield said,

“Well, I dunno if I’ll stay that long, can only take so much of them all,” Farrier joked.

It was just as difficult to break the news to Collins as it was agreeing to go to Somerset in the first place.

“You said yes?” the blonde asked as they sat together on Farrier’s bed.

“I had to. I knew he would have seen right through me if I’d said no.” Farrier replied, taking Collins’ hand.

“But, I want you to stay.” Collins said, looking at Farrier. It was hard to let Collins down with such a look in his eyes.

“You went to see your family, I missed you while you were gone. I need to go and see Canfield’s family and I won’t be gone longer than you were, I promise.” He said, the blonde supressed a sigh and nodded.
Though that week they tried to be with each other as much as possible, it was arguably more difficult than when classes were running. Canfield had nothing to do and was therefor bored, and would come looking for Farrier frequently. Despite it all, every night without fail the two would see each other, even if only for a little while.

On the morning that Canfield and Farrier were due to depart, the brunette got up extra early to say goodbye to Collins. The sun was just about to rise above the horizon, the air was still grey and cold and Collins was wrapped up in bed when Farrier walked in, closing the door as silently as he could behind him. He looked so peaceful as he slept, the first light of the day catching his blonde hair and pale skin through a sliver in his curtains.

“Morning, pet.” Farrier said quietly, kneeling down next to the bed. it took a few more tries before Collins finally stirred and opened his eyes sleepily.

“Mm, morning Farrier,” he said quietly.

“I’m leaving soon. Canfield’s probably already awake and packing. I’ve packed, and we’re going as soon as we’re both ready,” Farrier said.

In his sleepy state Collins had momentarily forgotten that they were going to Somerset today. He frowned upon remembering and propped himself up on one elbow.

“Have a nice time,” he said.

“I’ll try. Don’t get into trouble while I’m gone,” Farrier said, ruffling Collins’ hair just enough to make the lad chuckle and push his hand away.

“Week and a half, no more?” Collins asked.

“No more. Promise.”

Collins let his hand move to rest on Farrier’s, which was on the mattress between them, a small gesture but Farrier could tell Collins was worried about him leaving.

“Calm down Collins, it’s not like you haven’t left base for a while at times, like I told you last week!” the brunette smiled.

“Yeah but I had my family and the change of scenery to distract me while I was gone, now I just have my thoughts.” He said,

“Now you know what it was like for me while you were in Aviemore then,” Farrier countered. The blonde sat up and swung his legs out from under the blankets, Farrier sat with him.

“It’ll be fine.” Collins said, more as a confirmation to himself than anything else.

“Yes it will be.” The brunette replied. A warm hand appeared on Collins cheek, caressing softly, thumb dipping into Collins’ dimple as he smiled against the hand. Then Farrier took his hand away and kissed Collins’ cheek. His lips were warm and soft against it. He hovered an inch away from the blonde’s face, Collins looked into his eyes and then, without worry of repercussions as there had been before all this had begun, flicked his eyes down to Farrier’s lips, which were smiling softly. Then Farrier moved to close the gap between them. It lasted only a moment, but the touch of their lips was enough for them both.

The brunette stood up slowly and the blonde followed. Farrier’s arms wrapped themselves around Collins tightly, holding their bodies close.
“I’ll be back before you know it. Take my bedroom if you want while I’m gone,” Farrier murmured into the mess of blonde hair, its owner humming in content.

They said their goodbyes, and Collins sat back down on the bed, knowing he wouldn’t be able to get back to sleep. He supposed it was nice to see the early morning sunrise for once, having taken advantage of the holidays and slept in the majority of the time until the sun was well high in the air.

“Brisk morning,” Canfield commented as Farrier entered his room. The older man was almost finished packing, they’d agreed to get some food in the station or on the train, because Canfield wanted to leave as soon as they could.

“It is,” Farrier replied absent-mindedly as he helped Canfield pack the last of his items, including the spoon set which he couldn’t wait to show everyone.

“Shall we?” he asked, and the two departed Gatwick into the cold morning air.

Collins walked quickly downstairs, hoping to catch a glimpse of Farrier before he left, he walked into the kitchen which looked out onto the road, and as the first rays of sun made their way down to the ground he saw Farrier’s car drive past the window. He smiled and in his head, wished them both a good time in Somerset as he went about making himself a cup of tea.

Collins sat alone at the table drinking tea and eating toast, wondering what he’d do all week and wishing his feet would warm up inside his socks.

Later that day he discovered that all the plane hangars had been locked, much to his annoyance.

Canfield was the kind of person who could have an entire conversation without you saying a word in response, and that the current situation on the train.

“And I bet Callum has grown so much! He’ll nearly be as tall as you I’ll bet!” Canfield laughed at Farrier, at that comment the brunette chuckled.

“I’m not that much shorter than you Michael, and you’re shrinking every day!” he said back to the old man as the food trolley rolled past.

It was mid-morning by the time they arrived at the end of the train ride, and Canfield’s family were all there to greet the two men as they stepped onto the platform. Canfield had a brother and a sister, both married with children, who in turn had children of their own. Canfield was the odd one out, though his family were happy that he had a stable job which he loved, they always felt sorry that he’d never found anyone. Farrier always felt slightly uncomfortable around the extended family because he was seen as some sort of adopted child of Canfield’s, which was definitely not how he saw himself in his own head. Just because he lived with Canfield for some of his childhood and then went on to work closely with him, did not make him actual family in any way. It was why Farrier felt strangely about anyone calling Canfield his father figure, even if he essentially was.

“Michael! Oh and you’ve brought Thomas!” his sister Mary shrilled as she walked towards Canfield, her two young grandchildren running ahead of her, whose mother and father were running to catch them.

“Hello Callum, hello Lizzy!” Canfield chuckled and bent down to hug the two youngsters. Farrier smiled as he looked at Callum, he had grown since he last saw him, but he was six years old, hardly catching up to Farrier. Elizabeth was eight and tall for her age, perhaps he should be more worried about her, Farrier thought to himself.
“Good to see you, Mary.” Farrier smiled as the woman caught up to her grandkids who were still laughing around Canfield.

“You too, Tom. You look well!” she said,

“As do you, where’s Nigel?” Farrier replied, and then Callum and Elizabeth finished tackling Canfield and moved onto him.

“Fixing the car actually!” Mary said.

“Good to see you two!” Samantha said, Mary’s daughter and mother of the children currently tackling Farrier,

“Yes, glad you could come over for a bit!” her husband Nick said.

Farrier did like children, he laughed as they grabbed his legs and danced around him before their mother told them to behave themselves. Canfield’s brother Andrew was walking towards them now, having been preoccupied with helping his daughter Annabel out of the car, who had given birth barely over a week ago and was still incredibly sore from a difficult labour. Andrew walked slowly with Nina his wife, and they walked next to Annabel and her husband Richard. Annabel held a tiny baby in her arms all wrapped up in blankets. It brought a warm smile to everyone to see the baby, mother and father coming to greet Canfield. Andrew embraced his brother and then Farrier, and Nina tentatively pushed the blankets down from the tiny baby’s chin to show him to his great uncle.

“This is Timothy.” Annabel smiled, handing him to Canfield, who held him with great care.

“Heard you gave your mother a hard time!” He chuckled to the baby.

“He’s beautiful.” Canfield said, before unexpectedly handing the baby to Farrier, who wasn’t entirely prepared for the task, but took the tiny bundle of blankets nonetheless.

“He is,” Farrier agreed with Canfield upon looking at Timothy as he burbled in his sleep. The brunette smiled and handed him back to Anabelle, all this family business had caused a sudden pang in the man’s heart because it was that which he would never have because of the way he wished to live his life.

It was only halfway through the week and Collins was bored out of his mind. He’d gotten to the point where drawing was even boring to him. Having explored around the base, around the fields, and around the built up area of Gatwick, Collins decided it was time to head into London for something to do. He cursed himself for not remembering how to get to Timson’s house, otherwise he would have gone to see him. The blonde caught the train in, and once there was presented with an entirely new problem. Now instead of there being nothing to do, there was too much to do. He had no idea what direction to go in, and looked like a lost duckling as he stood outside London Victoria station. Realising that unless he did something he would probably continue to stand in the way until someone walked into him, Collins made a wild guess at what direction to walk in and then he did. Eventually his meandering path led him to a place he did know in London, The Strand. He enjoyed it there because some of the oldest buildings were set along it. The blonde spent the best part of the day wandering around the city, finding interesting tucked away alleys and stores, beautiful buildings and statues, and watching the Thames clippers.

At last it was golden hour, in Collins’ opinion the most beautiful time to see a city, the buildings lit
up in a golden orange light, the shadows were long on the streets, and the cars and buses had
turned their headlights on. Collins saw magic no-one else had time to see. In the hustle and bustle
of everyone rushing to get home he watched the shadows dance with the lights, watched the
gradually shifting colours as the sun went down, the umbrellas as they popped up all along the
street after the first few drops of rain fell from the sky, the lights’ reflections in the puddles as they
appeared on the ground. He made his way back to an underground station and found his way back
to London Victoria, glad he’d made an enjoyable day for himself.

It was dinner time at Mary’s house. All the siblings, their partners, children and grandchildren were
present. Canfield’s large family was difficult for Farrier to deal with at the best of times but now
they were all in one room chattering away together about family matters, and it made Farrier feel
like he should go sit at the kids’ table, maybe he’d have more fun there. Finally something that
interested Farrier was said,

“So Michael. Big news for Gatwick I hear!” Andrew said over the dining table.

“Yes indeed! We’re no longer known as a training base! Gatwick is officially a full time Fighter
Command base now.” He said very triumphantly. All around the table were cheers and
congratulations, not everyone had heard yet of the news.

“And you’re both still working there?” Nigel asked, directing his question at Farrier, meaning he’d
been noticeably quiet and that Nigel was deliberately trying to engage him. They all knew he’d had
a close call in the war of course, and though Farrier didn’t know the details, he imagined that
Canfield had told them a little about the dark years to follow for Farrier, considering how carefully
they all seemed to tread around the subject.

“Yes, very happy to be as well.” Farrier replied.

“So that means that you’re not reserve officers anymore, you’re on active duty?” Nina asked, and
somehow the thought actually hadn’t occurred to Farrier yet. He nodded as Michael answered for
him in his usual bubbly manner. The brunette felt absolutely stupid for not realising, he’d been so
caught up in the future possibility of a large scale conflict involving him, that he’d failed to realise
that there were other things that the RAF dealt with in peacetime which made him an active duty
officer once more. As lovely as the food was, Farrier wasn’t so hungry anymore. The people
around the table noticed.

“Tom, you realised that didn’t you?” asked Mary cautiously, overly aware of his earlier years and
struggles from one too many stories from Canfield, who didn’t seem to wonder if Farrier wanted
his personal history to be shared with the family.

“I… No, I hadn’t even thought about it. I’d been so preoccupied with the prospects of another war
we might be getting involved in that I hadn’t even thought what becoming a full time airbase meant
for me.” He admitted.

“Well, nothing much has changed, right?” Andrew said. Farrier chuckled,

“No, you’re right about that.” He smiled, and everyone got on with their dinner. Farrier had been
much more reclusive during his darker years, but everyone still knew what it had been like for
him, it wasn’t like Canfield to keep his mouth shut about much. The only thing none of them knew
was that Farrier wasn’t interested in women, they all just saw it as a strange coincidence that both
Canfield and him never found partners. At least in Michael’s case they’d at least seen girlfriends of
his over the years, but none of them stuck with him. Farrier did sometimes feel sorry for the man
for that reason, he really did deserve someone.

After dinner and dessert Canfield and Farrier went back to the hotel rooms they’d found for the week, quite close to Mary’s house, who had been kind enough to offer herself as the main guide and helping hand to get anywhere whilst the men stayed, not wanting to bother Andrew and Nina what with their daughter’s new baby and all.

At least they weren’t expected to be around all the time while there, over the years the family had realised that not only Farrier, but more surprisingly Canfield too wasn’t huge on socialisation. Both men weren’t antisocial altogether, but after a certain amount of time they both just got bored talking to most people. They tended to go and do their own thing whilst in Somerset. This particular week they borrowed Nigel’s car on a weekend when he didn’t need it and took themselves to Bath.

“Haven’t been here in so many years, nothing’s changed though.” Farrier said as they walked the streets.

“Want to see the Roman baths again, chap?” Canfield asked.

“‘Course I do! That’s why we’re here isn’t it?” Farrier smiled.

The baths were always interesting, the smell from all the minerals in the water, the colours of the floors from years of contact with water so mineral intensive, it was an interesting experience and Canfield loved anything even remotely like a museum, the amount of times he’d taken Farrier to the museums around London as a younger boy was astonishing, not because Farrier wanted to go but because Canfield himself wanted to.

And that’s how the time in Somerset went. Farrier would sit around until Canfield had a grand plan for the day, which usually didn’t take long. They didn’t see his family members every day that they were there, but enough to make it count.

Collins had realised how different it really was here compared to home over the time Farrier was away. It was the first decent amount of time which he’d been left to his own devices in England. Usually it was a few days, and usually Farrier or his friends were around to occupy him, but not this time. Now Collins realised just how different life was when you couldn’t just walk out of town and start hiking into the wilderness. You had to occupy yourself with sightseeing in the city, rather than sightseeing in nature. The blonde wasn’t sure how much he liked the difference. Nonetheless London itself was a beautiful place, and it seemed like every time he went in on the train he found something new to do there, so he was glad of that at least. The architecture was proving to be a fun experience to test out his new paints with as well, but more than anything Collins just wanted to see Farrier again. He’d taken Farrier’s suggestion up and slept in the brunette’s bed the entire time he’d been gone. As well as it being a bigger bed and a warmer room, it smelled like Farrier, and that was perhaps the best part of the time spent without the man himself for Collins.

Finally, it was time for Farrier and Canfield to go back home. They packed their bags and said their goodbyes, Canfield more emotionally than Farrier, and were driven to the train station by Mary and Nigel. It wasn’t that Farrier disliked any of them in particular, but they were all just so good and kind all the time, never actually divulging in anything personal or interesting but instead flitting about surface conversations, it was boring and exhausting at the same time. It began to rain as the train whizzed through the countryside.

“Enjoy that little getaway?” came Canfield’s voice wafting through Farrier’s thoughts.
“Mm? Yes, quite. Lovely people, aren’t they.” He said.

“Indeed, I’m very happy to call them family. And you know you can as well, Tom.”

“I know, but it doesn’t feel right.”

Canfield let the conversation end after that, not wanting to make a fuss for once. Instead he relaxed into his chair and fell into a light doze to Farrier’s amusement. The brunette just wanted to get back to Gatwick and see Collins again, not that the scot had any idea he was coming back today or at what time. He’d said he’d be gone roughly the same amount of time that Collins had been in Aviemore, but nothing more specific than that.

Collins had slept in, so his breakfast was at lunch time. Not that he was complaining, he’d had to go and buy his own bread twice and the milk more times than he could count while Farrier and Canfield had been gone, because the staff didn’t stock the kitchen in the holidays. Collins had, however had the opportunity to get closer with the owner of the sandwich store down the road. His name was Rodney, an older portly man who’d opened the store as a young lad and worked there ever since. Collins learned about his family, his wife and four children, about the successes and failures of the store, and in turn he told Rodney of his heritage in the highlands, of his training in the RAF, not that Rodney didn’t already know from seeing him in uniform, but now he knew what was involved in the training. It sounded like his son, the only boy of the four children was becoming interested in flying. Collins promised that he’d come over for dinner one night and talk to him about it. It was interesting being on a first name basis with the store owner after having gone there for so long not knowing the man at all. It felt like a more homely experience going to Rodney’s sandwich store now. He’d decided to walk down there for an afternoon snack.

“Well some of the officers get back soon, they’re on holiday.” he said to Rodney as he sat with Collins,

“Good. Does that mean anything changes?” the man asked in his gravelly voice.

“Not really, just means I’m not unsupervised in the base anymore,” Collins laughed.

“Unfortunately they locked the hangars with the planes in them while they were gone.” He added, causing Rodney to laugh.

Collins was unaware that the train pulled into Gatwick station as he was talking to Rodney, and as he walked back to the base didn’t realise that one of the cars that passed him was Farrier’s, having been parked at the station waiting for their return.

“Was that young Collins?” Canfield asked, pointing out the window at a lanky blonde man walking down the street.

“Yeah,” replied Farrier, fighting to keep the smile off his face and focus on the road ahead of him.

Collins arrived back to see Farrier’s car in its usual place. Immediately his heart began to beat faster and he hurried inside out of the cold.

Farrier was already upstairs unpacking, enjoying his breathing space from Canfield now that he was back. Collins was already halfway up the stairs, trying not to look like a complete lunatic considering there were still other students here boarding, but it was difficult to be slow and considered when he knew Farrier was back. Bursting through the man’s doors without a second thought Collins finally laid eyes on his partner, and as Farrier turned to see the blonde in the doorway, he really arrived home. Collins shut the door behind him and walked up to Farrier with a
“Afternoon,” Farrier said, beating Collins to it. The blonde gave him a very surprised look before being pulled into a strong hug by the man.

“Afternoon to you too.” He snarked into Farrier’s shoulder.

They stood like that for a while, forgetting all surroundings and just being in that moment together. They’d both accepted that their shared time together would always be in these stolen moments, and they had to make the best of them.

“I missed you,” Farrier murmured.

It was the side of Farrier that Collins only began to see after their first kiss. The softer side, the one who really did care, too much in fact. The side that was loyal to a fault and too selfless for his own good. The one that missed Collins after a week and a half, the one that sat by himself behind a shed when he felt sad, the one who was more than a pilot, more than an officer, more than his rank. The one who really, deep down, needed someone to care for him and to be with him. To understand him on a deeper level than Canfield ever would.

“I missed you too.” Collins smiled, dimples appearing as he pulled away just enough to look Farrier in the eyes. They were full of happiness, as were Collins’ own.

“Want to help me unpack?”

“If I can show yae my experimental paintings of London I did while you were away.”

Chapter End Notes

And we've reached the end of another chapter!
Thank you to everyone who's reading, as always. It makes me so so happy just to know that people enjoy my writing.
This is my tumblr if anyone's curious.
Check out my Afternoon pinterest board here! I did start doing tumblr moodboards which you can find here (they're pretty shocking ngl) but I abandoned the idea in favour of pinterest.
Until next chapter my lovelies, happy reading ❤
Okay, where I live it's technically the early hours of Tuesday, I watched 4 movies today and drew a Spitfire and completely forgot it was Monday, but hey I'm gonna use time zones to my advantage and assume most of you are still actually in Monday. Also, I'm not sure if I've said this publicly before, but I actually write 10-15 chapters ahead of the point of upload, so I'm writing way after this chapter. Going back to edit before uploading is always interesting because sometimes I forget what I've written. Case in point, this entire chapter. I have no recollection of writing this and considering it's got barely any plot (unusual for me as you know), I'm going to assume I was just horny when I wrote this?? Anyway, hope everyone had a good weekend and has a nice week ahead of them.

It turned out Collins was quite good with watercolour paint, he continued to experiment with it as a way to pass the time during the holidays, while Farrier spent his time fixing things on the base, namely the planes, as well as trying to pick up new hobbies such as reading and board games, as Canfield suggested all too frequently.

January was coming to a close, it was the coldest part of winter. Gatwick would never be cold enough for the snow to stay very long, for it not to get slushy within a week of it coming down from the sky. Collins took every opportunity to go out and be in the snow before it disappeared, he even managed to make a small snowman next to the runway much to Canfield and Farrier’s amusement. On a night when the wind howled outside the windows and the cold seeped through the glass itself, Collins lay under the covers with Farrier, staying warm.

“Farrier, I’ve been confused about something,”

“What’s that pet?”

“When I was new here, I’d see older students. If Gatwick wasn’t an operational base, who were they?”

Farrier smiled, wondering why it had taken almost a year for the lad to ask someone this question.

“Well, Gatwick used to do staggered introductions, one cohort every six months, so the older ones you saw had begun mid-year 1937, graduating halfway through last year.” He explained. It all sounded very simple now that someone had told Collins. He hummed in understanding.

“Another question.” He said after a while, Farrier’s hand resting on his hip.

“Go on?”

“If we’re an active base, are we on active duty?”

“I actually didn’t realise this until I was away with Michael, but when the term goes back, yes we are. We’ve been given these holidays not only as a courtesy but to give us time to gather more officers so that we can have enough staff for a full time base.”
Collins shuffled uncomfortably, blue eyes looking up at Farrier as he looked down at the blonde, playing with his hair as Collins rested on the pillow.

“Come now, you wanted to join the military Collins.” Farrier smiled,

“I know, and I was excited to be on active duty, but after hearing such bad stories from the war, from you as well as the film we watched, I’m not so sure I’m ready.” He said, Farrier lay down next to him on his side. A warm hand came up to cup Collins’ cheek.

“I can’t reassure you that you’re ready for war because trust me, nobody is. But, I can reassure you that you’re more than ready for active duty. You won’t be flying into any warzones just yet, the active squadrons in peacetime just keep an eye on things around the rest of the Empire, or what’s left of it. Dropping leaflets, supplies, checking in with officers, it’s nothing to worry about.” Farrier said,

“You sound like you’ve done it before.”

“Well I haven’t, after the war when Gatwick was built it was a training station always, until now. I haven’t been on active duty since 1917.” He said, and it was clear as the man said it that he hadn’t thought of that fact before. Farrier had realised he was on active duty while away with Canfield, but hadn’t realised how long it had been since he was last. Collins reached out and put a hand on his shoulder, squeezed.

“Cannae rest forever I suppose,” Collins said.

“No, definitely can’t. I think active service will do me well anyway.” He said, and with that it was clear Farrier was finished talking about service as he pulled Collins in against his body, holding him close.

“Canfield and I are drawing up the squadrons in our spare time these holidays.” he murmured. As much as Collins was enjoying being held against Farrier’s chest, he had to snap his head up and look the brunette in the eyes.

“Really?!” he said a little too loud, earning him a shush and a chuckle.

“Yes, there are going to be four squadrons based here. Two Hurricane and two Spitfire.” Farrier said, not sure if this was sensitive information, not caring if it was.

“Do you know where I’m going?”

“I do.”

“Are you going to tell me?” Collins asked, earning him a pinch on the cheek.

“Course not, I want to though.” Farrier smiled, earning him a pinch on the cheek back.

“Don’t think pinching me will get you what you want, pet.” He laughed.

“Then what will?” Collins asked,

“I’m not telling you! You’ll find out when the term goes back in a month.” He said.

Collins gave Farrier the most innocent, pleading smile he could. The older man sighed,

“I’ll say this. You’re in Dawson’s squadron.”

Collins could have squealed but instead he hugged Farrier tightly, before coming to a realisation.
“Does that mean you and I aren’t in the same squadron?” he asked quietly, Farrier pursed his lips, 

“’Fraid so.” He said disappointedly.

“But, squadrons can change over time.” The brunette added, giving Collins a glimmer of hope.

There were arguably less chances to be intimate during the holidays because Canfield seemed to follow Farrier around looking for something for the brunette to do, or asking him to help him with something, or play a game. Collins did however get more of a glimpse into their interesting relationship. It seemed Canfield hadn’t completely come to terms with the fact that Farrier was a grown man who didn’t need telling what to do, didn’t need help finding hobbies. It amused Collins slightly, but he could tell the brunette really didn’t like it.

Halfway through February, with only a few weeks left until the holidays ended, Canfield announced to Farrier that there was a band he was interested in seeing who were in London. Farrier wasn’t going to pass up an opportunity like this to stay at the base. With years of experience of dodging Canfield’s outings under his belt, he easily wriggled out of going to the band with Canfield.

“You sure you want to go?” Farrier asked as he walked with Canfield to the door, it was very windy and cold, but Farrier knew asking such a question would have no effect on whether Canfield went or not.

“Yes I’m still going, not long of a walk to the train anyway.” He muttered, shrugging a large coat on.

“Hope you have a good night then,” the brunette said as Canfield opened the door of the base, letting in a draft.

“You too, do something worthwhile, why don’t you.” Canfield tutted before walking out into the cold as the door was shut behind him. Farrier couldn’t keep the heat out of his cheeks, he would definitely be doing something worthwhile.

Collins was in the kitchen looking for snacks, not feeling like walking in the cold wind to go and get something he made do with a handful of crisps and some slightly hard jube lollies. As he ate, still looking through the cupboard for something to have relatively soon for dinner, two strong hands rested themselves on his hips and a warm body pressed against his back. Collins almost jumped, but upon realising what was going on, breathed out and turned his head to see Farrier smirking, fingers squeezing ever so slightly.

“Is it safe?” Collins asked quietly.

“Probably. Few other students around base as usual, but…” Farrier began, and leaned closer to Collins’ neck.

“No Canfield tonight.” He said barely above a whisper. Collins wasn’t hungry for food anymore.

“Suppose we should take advantage of that, now that yae won’t be off playing board games with him or talking all night,” he said, turning in Farrier’s arms to face the man, who hummed lowly in agreement.

It did more to Collins’ mood than he cared to admit hearing Farrier slam his bedroom door and lock it behind them. It excited Farrier to finally have Collins like this again, he still wasn’t used to the sheer beauty of the blonde’s physical form, when Collins glanced over his shoulder before beginning to unbutton his pyjama shirt, it took Farrier aback, breath hitching in his throat.
“You’re beautiful.” He said quietly, causing Collins to blush.

“You are.” The blonde countered, walking slowly backwards until he sat himself on Farrier’s bed, waiting. With an almost predatorial gaze, Farrier slowly walked towards Collins and sat down next to him. With one glance out the window to the rapidly darkening sky, he reached a hand up to Collins’ jaw, stroked his cheek with his thumb, before pulling him into a kiss. The same as it always was, Collins moaned against Farrier’s lips, but for once the brunette didn’t pull back and shush his partner. He didn’t care. His superior officer wasn’t here for one, meaning the chance of anyone staying outside the door long enough to hear anything was slim, and the wind had begun to bring rain with it, Collins’ sounds would be muffled by those of the elements. Farrier kissed deeper, his hand letting go of Collins’ jaw and finding a place in his hair. Collins wasn’t good at telling Farrier what he wanted, but his reactions gave the brunette a decent idea. It was how he knew Collins fell apart when his hair was played with, his inability to stop a whimper from escaping his lips every damned time Farrier did it drove the brunette wild, so why would he stop? Then Collins grinned against Farrier’s cheek,

“What?” he said, breathless.

“You.”

Collins frequently had to mentally step back from what they were doing just to check that it was real, because it was almost too good to be true.

Farrier stopped for a moment, slowed down. As much as they both wanted it, he still wanted it to be special, wanted every time to be special. The brunette leaned back and pushed Collins’ shirt off his shoulders, revealing his beautiful pale torso in all its perfection. He sighed and smiled. Collins leaned over and turned Farrier’s lamp on, then stood up to close his curtains. The room was lit in a pale yellow, and for a split second Farrier faltered. Wondered if what he was doing was right, if he was leading Collins down the wrong path. The two blue orbs staring at him let him know he was wrong. The look in Collins’ eyes told him everything Farrier needed to know. Collins wanted to be here just as much as he was wanted here.

“Farrier, I see that look in yer eyes.” He said. That took Farrier aback.

“You do?” he asked, genuinely surprised.

“Yae. I might not be as good at hiding my emotions as you, but spending considerable time with someone else reveals things about them. Like how when your thoughts are elsewhere, you stop what you’re doing and go still.” Collins said, reaching a hand out to take Farrier’s. He put it to his chest, and Farrier felt his heart beating strong under his palm. He exhaled, it was a simple gesture but it was powerful, more so than Collins thought it would be, he just wanted Farrier to feel how fast it was beating. The brunette’s eyes looked back to Collins’ and the scot knew he was back in the moment.

Farrier wasn’t leading Collins down the wrong path any more than the lad was walking down it, nay running down it, and would be anyway if Farrier was out of the picture. The ‘wrong path’ being the way they lived their lives, the sex they were interested in, the so-called ‘wrong’ decision, as if it was ever a decision in the first place.

“Kiss me,” Collins breathed,

And Farrier did.

He kissed his lips, his forehead, neck, shoulders. He lay Collins down gently, and took his own
shirt off, already burning up underneath the fabric. The man beneath him exhaled in excitement before Farrier descended upon him again, skin on skin finally. As the rain and wind howled against the window, Farrier allowed his barriers to fall. He let himself become so completely lost in the moment and it was bliss, something Farrier didn’t know not being in complete control could feel like.

For Collins, every time with Farrier was beyond mind blowing, the way the man just knew how to handle him, it was uncanny. A strong hand felt its way down his chest and came to rest on his hip, pulling Collins’ body impossibly closer. The kissing became more heated, passionate, desperate. Farrier couldn’t take it anymore, his lips moved from Collins’ lips back to his neck, and he sucked hard. The blonde arched underneath him and gasped,

“You can’t—” he began,

“I can.” Farrier growled against the sensitive skin, grazing his teeth over it before returning the suction, licking and grinning against the flesh as he felt Collins shiver against him. It rendered Collins helpless as he lay there, his thoughts hazed as Farrier sucked. A particularly hard one brought him back to the realisation of what the man was doing.

“Wait, Farrier!” Collins hissed, pushing the man’s chest until he stopped, but it was too late. Farrier sat back on his haunches and crossed his arms across his broad chest, a smug, pleased look on his face.

“You, you..” Collins began, getting redder in the face than he already was, a tentative hand feeling his own neck.

“You always wear turtlenecks anyway, pet.” Farrier said, coaxing a smile onto Collins’ face as he realised Farrier was right, especially in this weather.

“You owe me,” the blonde said, Farrier chuckled, “No I don’t,” he said, and one of his hands moved up Collins’ torso to his neck, pushing Collins’ head to the side to admire his work, an unmistakable red mark. His. Briefly Farrier’s hand closed around the front of Collins’ neck. Toying with the idea, fingers squeezing ever so slightly. By the look on the blonde’s face he didn’t mind at all, flushed cheeks and sultry blue eyes. He wanted to be this way. To be told, shown his place. It was an interesting dynamic, because up in the air Collins craved independence, in fact he wasn’t even sure how happy he was with flying in formation. Down here, he wanted nothing more than for Farrier to be in control. He never thought he’d want anyone to control him this way, but it was something about Farrier. It made Collins feel bliss. It made him feel safe. A hand on the front of his trousers brought his thoughts back to what was happening as Farrier’s teeth grazed over his bottom lip, then moved down over his chest, the rumble of a dark chuckle coming from the man. Farrier massaged the length which was already clearly felt through Collins’ trousers, stoking the fire, making the man beneath him writhe. Again Farrier reared up, this time to abruptly pull the trousers off the blonde’s long legs, leaving only a single garment of clothing on his body. The look of need in Collins’ eyes was plain as day, usually baby blue but now a dark storm of lust. He propped himself up on his elbows, but Farrier did something unexpected. Instead of leaning in, pressing their bodies close, grabbing Collins’ cock through his underwear and kissing him again, the man lay down on his stomach between the blonde’s sprawled legs, head hovering above Collins’ nether region.

There was no reason Farrier hadn’t been down here with anything apart from his hand yet, except from the fact that he loved being close to Collins, to see every inch of his beautiful face contort in pleasure. Down here he was further away from that, though with such a good looking hard-on staring at him from underneath boxers it was a little difficult to dissect his thoughts. Slowly,
Collins’ hands reached down and he hooked his thumbs under the boxers’ band, lifting his hips off the mattress just enough to slip the material down.

It was difficult not to just go straight at it, but Farrier slowed himself, he took Collins’ length in one hand, holding it up off the blonde’s belly, and the other hand massaged one of his hips. He slowly let his tongue slide from the base, right up to the tip. Testing the waters, Collins’ head had already fallen back. Clearly Farrier didn’t need to worry about starting easy in case he didn’t like it. The man steadied himself, admittedly he hadn’t done this in a while. Collins had just summed up the strength to lift his head and as he looked down, Farrier closed his lips around the head of his cock, sending shivers down his spine making Collins question if this was really happening. Farrier flicked his tongue, looking up to see the look in the blonde’s eyes, or rather to watch them close in ecstasy as his mouth fell open. Collins was like putty in his hands, or rather mouth, and it provided endless excitement. Slowly, painstakingly so, Farrier moved down the shaft until the blonde’s length hit the back of his throat. He’d need to work up to that. Using his hand on the bottom of Collins’ dick he worked the top with his mouth, trying his hardest to make it the best he’d done.

Collins couldn’t stop the sounds that fell from his mouth, eternally grateful for the stormy weather outside. He couldn’t stop his legs as they curled around Farrier’s broad body, nor the way his hips bucked underneath the man as he worked his length. A warning glance upwards from those storm blue eyes sent a pang of arousal through Collins’ chest, as Farrier let go of his cock with his hand, and slowly let the length slip further, deeper, until he’d swallowed down to the hilt. The blonde let out a single shaky exhale, unable to make a sound he was in such shock at the wave of sensation. Farrier’s hands pressed down over his hipbones stopping any ideas of bucking up into his mouth, try as the blonde might.

Farrier had missed the feeling if he was honest with himself. Though this time there was something more, the want to please the other person because he cared for them, like every time with Collins it was special because of that.

Suddenly it didn’t matter to Collins that Farrier used to visit James’ place for reasons other than to make friends with the strange weaselly man, because he knew what he was doing right now, and it was sending the blonde into the stars. His breathing ragged, Collins tried to sit up more, tried not to buck his hips, Farrier chuckled around his cock as he sucked, amused at how weak Collins became when he was being pleased.

He kept going. Kept going through the storm and through the endless line of quiet moans that fell from Collins’ mouth, until his jaw became sore from being held open, until his breathing was ragged like the Collins’, until he could feel the legs around his waist trembling. Kept going until finally, Collins’ hips stopped trying to thrust, until his legs slackened their grip, until Farrier heard the silence, followed by the single whimper from the blonde’s mouth, the same as it had been every time just as he reached the peak. Farrier watched as his partner’s head fell back against the pillow and his hands gripped the sheets with unexpected strength, and finally he felt the blonde’s orgasm hot down his throat, heard it through the gasps of air, and as he let Collins’ rapidly softening length fall from his mouth, saw it on the blonde’s face. Brows bunched together in pleasure, pale cheeks flushed a deep red, and eyes closed in bliss. Farrier would have been happy if that was the last thing he saw on earth because it was pure ecstasy, and he was the cause of it.

They basked in the comedown together, Farrier as certain as always that Collins did not have to repay the favour, because the blonde always got so tired after coming. That was just how it was and Farrier didn’t mind in the slightest. If Collins was the one to initiate something, which was less often than Farrier starting it, usually they’d both get their end away, but if Collins went first, he was too exhausted from orgasming to repay Farrier. It was endearing in Farrier’s eyes, and as repayment the brunette only asked to sit with him, to steal more moments with him.
Farrier hadn’t had a definite realisation about it, but his feelings towards Collins were changing. They were becoming stronger, more intense. The only thought the brunette had on the matter was that he’d gotten himself into more trouble than initially thought, and that was that.

Although Collins’ affections were also deepening, the blonde was characteristically completely oblivious to the fact.

Chapter End Notes

Aaand there ya have it folks! Not much to say about this chapter except it was a nice surprise when my short term memory failed and I got to essentially read this as if I hadn’t written it or seen it before lol. This is my tumblr if anyone wants to chat! I also have an Afternoon pinterest board if you wanna check it out. Thank you to everyone for kudos/comments as always!! Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
Monday again! This one was a public holiday for me, and it was my partner's birthday! I'm going back to uni this week after a two week teaching break, not sure how I feel about it tbh, I'm in holiday mode. I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them ❤️

The holidays had almost come to an end. Neither Collins nor Farrier were happy about it, but Canfield was over the moon. Not only was he uncomfortable with Farrier and Collins both milling around the base with nothing to do, even though nothing discernible was happening between them from what he could tell, he was glad that now there would be a lot more men around, a lot more jobs to do, a lot more to keep everyone busy. A week earlier everyone who was to be in an Operational Training Unit at Gatwick had been sent a letter informing of that. For Collins, that meant Canfield walking over to him at breakfast and slipping him a letter, trying to act as if he wasn’t doing anything so that it would be a ‘secret’. Turned out Collins was to join an OTU squadron on Hurricanes, the lead would be Officer Davis. There were only two OTUs to begin with, although Collins heard there’d be more. The other OTU squadron was on Spitfires, and Farrier was lead pilot. As had been mentioned to Collins, Canfield was in the reserves. For now, he wasn’t part of any squadron, instead he took care of the office work. Of course the man would be taking joyrides from time to time as well, no doubt.

As it turned out, Farrier had been under the wrong impression about having to go around policing the empire now that there were Operational Training Units at Gatwick. Having thought that they’d be off to Iraq to check on things, he was very confused when Canfield began talking about a temporary wall which would be installed in the middle of the fields to practice shooting the plane guns at.

“Aren’t the OTU squadrons going to train around the Empire?”

“No?” Canfield said, and upon receiving a confused look from Farrier he continued,

“Farrier for someone so obsessed with the idea of war, you don’t know a lot about recent RAF operations, do you.” Canfield said, earning him a sarcastic smile.

“But that’s what all the squadrons have been doing, haven’t they?” the brunette asked over breakfast a few days before the term was due to go back.

“The active squadrons used to do that, yes. There hasn’t been trouble anywhere for a few years now, so we just train them here, continue as we have done before except this time they are able to be called upon if need be, hence them being on active service. Nothing’s happening now that I know of, doubt they’d be called upon.” Canfield explained. Farrier wasn’t sure if he actually thought it was a good thing that the new training squadrons got to stay here, it meant that if, or more likely when a war did happen, they’d never have even flown anywhere but their home turf.
“There are good and bad aspects to this, but I think it’s for the best. Plus, it’s much easier to train them when you don’t have to fly around running errands in other countries,” Canfield said as if reading Farrier’s mind.

It was a whirlwind and before Collins knew it, Monday had arrived and classes were back, and so was Dawson.

“Good to see you again, mate!” he said as he hugged Collins in one of his characteristically tight hugs.

“You too, have fun back home?” Collins asked as they left the breakfast hall. Dawson had caught the early Monday train instead of the late Sunday train. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to go back to Gatwick, it was just that he enjoyed spending time with his family a great deal and tried to elongate it as much as he could.

“Indeed I did. Too cold to swim much but we went out on my dad’s boat and did quite a bit of fishing! We also made good use of those weighted tea tins you gave us!” he explained.

“And how was Aviemore?”

“Aviemore was the same as always. Quiet, small, but it was good.” Collins smiled.

This was how it would be now, Collins and Dawson and not Wingnut. The thought set in as they were halfway down the hallway to the classroom they were meeting Canfield, Farrier and Davis in before they’d be out on the tarmac.

“Weird, isn’t it.” Dawson said, knowing what Collins was thinking about.

“Yeah.”

They rounded the hallway and entered the room, where the officers stood chatting at the front of the room. Once everyone was inside and seated, Canfield began.

“Morning class, welcome back to Gatwick! I trust you all had a good holiday. Now, you should have all received a letter advising which squadron you’re in. Raise your hand, 102nd squadron.” He said, and Collins raised his hand, looking to the side to see Dawson also raise his as Farrier had told him. Dawson, not knowing before now, rubbed Collins’ back roughly in happiness as he looked around at the ten other men in their squadron, officer Davis included.

“Excellent. You men may follow Davis out onto the tarmac.” He said, so in a line they followed the officer out of the classroom and down the hall, but not before Farrier caught Collins’ eye, wishing they had been put in the same squadron. The brunette had done well to get the lad to stay at Gatwick at all, when the squadrons were being drawn up Collins was nearly sent to the midlands because some of the squadrons needed extra men, but upon Farrier pointing out that he boarded at Gatwick, it was settled as a matter of convenience for Collins to stay there.

102nd Hurricane squadron stood around on the tarmac. There were no planes out of the sheds yet, oddly enough.

“Now lads. Welcome to squadron life. From now on, you must trust the men around you with your life. If a squadron does not run like clockwork, lives will be lost, make that understood.” Davis began,

“Now today we aren’t flying, but we will be breaking into sections and flights. There are three
planes in a section, two sections in a flight, and two flights in a squadron. Twelve planes altogether. This is called the ‘Vic’ formation and it is how you will learn to fly.” The man said.

The group was then split into sections, and by some stroke of miracle, Dawson and Collins ended up in the same one along with a lad named Percival. They stood on the tarmac in the positions they would be in once they were in the planes. Each section had a colour, and each pilot within the section had a number. Dawson was Green 1, Collins Green 2, and a lad named Turner Green 3. The leader of the squadron was always Blue 1, used interchangeably with Blue Leader.

“Now in the rare case that you are only flying as a flight and nothing bigger, so three planes only, you can drop the colours. Our squadron callsign is going to be ‘Tannol’. They are all just random two syllable words that can be easily heard on the radio. So say for instance I wanted to address Dawson here. I would say, ‘Tannol Green 1, this is Blue Leader’. It’s easy,” Davis explained as the squadron stood silent around him.

They then played a name game by each saying their name, and then their squadron position.

“Collins, Tannol Green 2.”

After which, the pilots then tried to address everyone correctly using the callsign and squadron positions.

“Tannol Red 3, this is Green 2.” Collins said, and it continued until everyone understood how to get anyone’s attention over the radio.

Farrier’s squadron had also come outside, and Canfield had pulled a chair from somewhere and sat against the back wall of the building, watching the officers explain formation flying and radio language to the young pilots.

“107th Spitfire Squadron uses the callsign ‘Fortis’. That callsign has been used during the entire time Gatwick has been open as a training callsign, but now instead of training you to be in a squadron, you are in one. Fortis has been given to our squadron, so do me and Canfield proud, boys. We’ve used Fortis as a training word for a long time, now it’s finally being used in action.” He said, an unexpected bit of sentimentality surfacing. Farrier quickly swallowed it and continued explaining the Vic formation.

A decent portion of the day was spent out on the tarmac learning about formation flying and radio communications until both Davis and Farrier were confident that their new squadrons knew as much as they possibly could process in a single day.

“Right men, I think we’ve earned a break.” Farrier announced, and his group scattered. Davis saw and dismissed his as well.

“Are we going to the sandwich bar?” Collins asked Dawson.

“Why are you asking me? You’re the one who introduced the place to me, remember?” “Yeah, I guess. I dunno. I want to but,” Collins said, firstly unsure of why he had unloaded the responsibility of deciding where to have lunch to Dawson, and secondly wondering if Wingnut would be okay with them going there without him.

“We don’t have to. Maybe not on the first day back, yeah?” Dawson said, patting Collins’ back.

“Yeah,” he said quietly. They instead went to the understocked kitchen and made slightly stale sandwiches.
“It’s okay, you know?” Dawson said, it was obvious that Collins felt guilty that he didn’t want to go to the store without Wingnut.

“We’ll get there, just not today.” The Scot replied.

After a silent few minutes, the blondes watching the sun pour through the window onto the small table, Dawson spoke again.

“How lucky that we’re in the same section!” he exclaimed,

“I know! Everyone in our squadron seems great too.” Collins said as he finished eating.

“That they do. It’ll be interesting to trust them without really knowing them, in fact the whole military friendship thing as a whole is a bit interesting, don’t you agree?” he said, thinking aloud.

“I do agree. Like how we know each other, but not who we are outside the RAF, or not to a great extent at least,” Collins said.

The more Collins thought about it, the more he realised the extent it was true to. He knew Dawson, his first and last name in fact, he knew he had a family, and knew he was from Weymouth. There wasn’t much more to it than that. The others knew Collins was Scottish, that he was from a town in the highlands, that he liked drawing. That was that. They didn’t ask questions, neither did he. Don’t get familiar, Farrier’s words rang through Collins’ head. To some extent he supposed he’d followed instructions in that regard, except of course, for his relationship with Farrier himself which brought Collins to a mental dilemma. He still hadn’t told Dawson or Wingnut, and still honestly didn’t know if he could. Dawson was so damned perceptive that he’d half figured it out already, though Collins was positive that Wingnut was completely oblivious.

“What’s up?” came Dawson’s voice, Collins unaware that he’d been completely lost in his own thoughts.

“Just Wingnut, you know.” He lied, sort of. Dawson could tell it wasn’t the whole truth, but also knew Wingnut was on Collins’ mind.

“We’ll have to arrange to see him soon,” the blonde said to Collins, and beckoned him to follow him out of the kitchen.

Meanwhile, Wingnut was already in a bomber. He’d gone to Bomber Command one month early as instructed, which was actually the same time term went back for fighters, to do the month of conversional training. Currently he was part of a crew consisting of a pilot, a navigator which was him, and a wireless operator. There was an officer walking around the plane checking each station. They were rotating every twenty minutes, with the officer checking them in each different situation. These men were all here for their conversion training, from different fighter training stations. Wingnut was loving every second of it. They were in a Blenheim bomber, a real one. There weren’t even any bomber training planes here at RAF Wattisham. It was a lot further away than Timson had hoped to be, and it really was going out on a limb to move all the way here in the hopes that he’d like bombers as much as he thought. It had paid off though. The base was so much larger than Gatwick, it had over a thousand men there.

“So larger bombers have a mid upper gunner and sometimes a tail gunner as well men, as you may know.” The officer, and continued explaining differences between several different bombers. The base officially opened on the 5th of April, about a month hence the conversion training beginning. Wingnut did still wish he was with Collins and Dawson, he missed those two blondes already. As much fun as he was having, he wished he was having it with them.
Lunch came to an end so Collins and Dawson headed back to the classroom to meet Davis.

“I trust you all had a nice break, now for the rest of the day we’re unfortunately going to be doing some boring stuff,” he began, and the classroom was filled with groans from the squadron.

“Boring stuff like flying.” He finished, and was then met with shrill laughter.

“In Hurricanes?!” someone shrieked.

“Yes!” Davis laughed.

“At the end of the day, you’ll all need to put an order form in for a proper flying kit. Your own goggles, helmet, parachute, all that.” He said, and began walking out of the room.

Once the group reached the tarmac they saw that the Hurricanes had already been lined up ready to fly, and that there were men buzzing around checking them. Collins realised they must be some of the extra men he’d been told would be coming to Gatwick to help the base become fully operational. Upon even closer inspection, Collins realised he recognised most of them. Dawson said it before he could,

“Ground crew, from our cohort.”

They were the ones who didn’t get their wings.

“Now men, we aren’t going up as an entire squadron today. Flying in formation takes a lot of practice. We aren’t even going up in sections. Today will just be me, and one of you at a time. I’ll watch how you handle the Hurricane and just make sure everyone is alright with everything.”

“Davis?” someone asked, Collins realised how horrendous he was at remembering names when he turned and couldn’t name the lad who’d spoken.

“Yes, Butler?”

“Do we each get in the same plane every time?”

“Good question. Yes you will, unless the occasion presents itself that we need to, as it’s called, ‘scramble’ in which case you get to the first plane you can. But that won’t happen, it’s an invasion prevention tactic, only deployed when the base has confirmation of an enemy in the vicinity.” He explained.

Soon enough, the men were sitting around on the grass waiting for their turn in the air with Davis.

“Dawson, your turn!” he called, and the blonde excitedly slapped Collins’ knee beside him and got up off the grass, fixing his kit he’d gotten from the shed like everyone else as he walked off to the planes. Collins wasn’t wearing his, or rather Farrier’s goggles, he was worried if someone asked where he got them as they were different from the kits from the shed, they sat on his bedside table, Farrier still the last person to use them. He was dragged out of his thoughts when the two Hurricane engines roared to life behind him. He watched as Dawson and Davis taxied out, Dawson leading, and the planes both bolted down the runway. They truly were beautiful planes, it felt like an honour to fly them. The weather was slowly getting milder, the grass was no longer frozen for most of the day, but the air was still cold enough to chill Collins’ ears and nose, his fingers safe inside his pockets. Then, though the blonde wouldn’t admit it to himself, he did feel slightly warmer when he turned back to the main building to see Farrier’s squadron trickling out the door. The brunette striding along in his Irvin jacket, he looked confident and in control, he looked ready for anything as he walked towards their planes, flight gear tucked under his arm, laughing behind
him at some joke someone had cracked, just as that golden late afternoon sun began to appear on the red bricks of the building.

Collins hadn’t been paying attention to how long Dawson had been in the air for, and was startled when two planes flew between him and his line of vision to Farrier across the runway. The Hurricanes zoomed down the runway in perfect synchronisation, one behind the other. Once they’d reached the end Davis and Dawson jumped out, and men from ground crew took the planes, pushing them off the runway and checking the cockpits. As Dawson returned, Collins stood from where he’d been sat in the grass. Once again he’d managed to weasel his way to the last flight of his group for the day.

“You’ll love it,” Dawson said as they passed each other.

Collins walked up to Davis,

“Ah, my student from the north!” Davis laughed, Collins not sure if he liked that name

“Aye, it’s me.” Collins said,

“You get in that one, let’s see what you think of her.” Davis said, pointing to the Hurricane in front of the one he was walking towards. Collins felt like he wasn’t ready for this, he was being thrust straight into an actual fighter plane, but he reminded himself that this was what he’d been training for, and that the plane wasn’t that different to any other.

She was big, Collins was tall but the Hurricane towered over him, wings glinting in the late sun. P3817 was the plane’s serial number, painted in small black stencil at the end of the fuselage near the tail, and across the body was a new addition to the sand and spinach paint jobs. LF, the squadron’s code. Farrier’s group of Spitfires were painted with LC.

“What’s the code mean?” Collins asked, Davis’ plane close enough that he didn’t have to yell.

“Nothing, just a combination of letters to distinguish squadrons. Hop in!” he said as he climbed onto the wing.

Collins steeled himself. There was a small hole for a foot, and then another for a hand to help him climb up the body of the plane and onto the wing. He did so, careful not to scrape his boot along the body, to tread lightly. He lowered himself into the cockpit, and the first thing Collins noticed was how small it was inside, he had to use the hand lever beside him to put the seat down lower in the plane, lest his head be hit by the canopy closing. The blonde connected up the headset to the plane, strapped himself in, and sat back in a stillness born of anxiety and excitedness at once.

“Tannol one this is Tannol leader, do you read?” came the crackly voice through the radio, startling Collins as for the first time, he looked at the word fire on the control stick. The kill button, as Farrier had so nicely put it once. It was turned to safe, but the word fire was still there and Collins couldn’t stop looking at it.

“Tannol leader this is Tannol one. I read.” He said.

“Taxi out when ready, Tannol one.”

“Understood Tannol leader. Taxiing out now.” Collins said the words before he realised that they meant he had to start now.

His gloved hand reached up and pulled the canopy shut, now there was nothing but the sound of his breathing loud in his ears. He reached forwards to begin the process of starting the plane. He
pushed one brass button a few times to pump the engine fluid and prime it, a few more buttons to press which were in around about the same place they had been in the Harvards, thankfully. Then the last two buttons to be held down at once, starter and boost. Collins held them both down for a few seconds, then let go of starter as he knew to. A moment more of holding down the single button and the engine roared to life around him and his heart sped up to match. The ground crew disconnected the trolley-acc and the chocks, the plane was now free.

Collins then reached for the throttle, and slowly inched the lever forwards with his left hand, his right holding the control stick firmly.

The plane began to move, slowly at first but picking up speed with every second, it continued to move until both planes were pointing straight down the runway, Davis’ in front of Collins’.

“Tannol one, begin standard take-off procedure.” He said. It was as if Collins was working in a trance. He pushed the throttle forwards, keeping a firm hand on the control ring. The plane rumbled, the engine got louder and louder, his breathing faster and faster. He knew when the tailwheel had left the ground, so he pulled back on the control stick to level the plane, he knew when to increase throttle, and he most definitely knew when the Hurricane’s wheels left the ground.

“Wheels up!” Davis advised, and Collins obeyed. He’d been warned about Hurricanes and Spitfires and the layout of the cockpit. The general flying style was the left hand sitting on the throttle lever and the right on the control stick. Yet the lever to operate the landing gear was to the right of the control stick, so Collins had to let go of the throttle with his left hand and transfer his grip to the control stick, then let go of the control stick with his right hand in order to reach the landing gear lever. It wasn’t that complicated, but already those on the ground had noticed that it was visible when the pilot had switched hands, the plane did jump slightly from the change of grip, a testament to how light the controls were.

The actual flight wasn’t much different to flying in a trainer, Davis took Collins in a rough circle around the area. It didn’t last long and they didn’t do any manoeuvres, but it was enough to get a feel for the Hurricane. They came down from the flight, the light becoming more deep orange than golden now. Collins swapped his hands around to let the undercarriage down, and lined up for what was his best landing in a plane yet, somehow he got it perfect, and Farrier watched the whole thing. The brunette smiled to himself, the rest of his squadron had been dismissed for the say.

Since Davis was using the airstrip they’d practiced putting kits on and taking them off as well as talking more about formation flying. The man leaned against the end shed of the lot, the one which was mostly filled with junk and the one that he used to sulk behind. It actually had a great view of the touchdown point on the runway, most of the other sheds and hangars were looking out to the runway at points after which the planes had already landed, but from here Farrier could see the wheels touch the tarmac in front of him. It shocked him to see how nicely Collins had landed, it mirrored Davis’ much more experienced landing behind him. He smiled and told himself not to be so shocked, Collins was a good flier.

As soon as the blonde was out of the plane he was walking towards Dawson to gossip about their flights and how great Hurricanes were to fly. Farrier helped the ground crew push the planes back into the hangars, not having much else to do and being as selfless as he was. It was endearing to watch the two blondes hang at the back of the squadron talking and laughing. Farrier worried about how close those two were but realised he couldn’t talk all things considered, and busied himself with pushing the Hurricanes into the shed.
Thank you all so much for reading! I know this one was all plot and mostly Collins-centric, but I do hope you all still enjoyed. If you did, let me know! I love hearing what everyone thinks of my chapters ❤️
This is my tumblr if anyone is curious. I have made an Afternoon pinterest board here.
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
Happy Monday, folks! Hope everyone has a good week ahead of them❤️

Gatwick was now a busy place to be. There were officers which Collins didn’t know walking around, strangers in ground crew and aircrew alike from other bases who had been transferred here once it became operational. A few things remained the same though. One was the night meetings between Farrier and Collins. They’d had to pull their guard right back up with the introduction of more men to the base, meaning inevitably more boarding students. Canfield and Farrier were still the highest ranking officers there and still ran the place, so that hadn’t changed, still bickered like children together too. Some things however, had changed. Dawson and Collins had grown closer, they still played cards but it was different now. Not as many stupid jokes were cracked, and Questions and Commands had come to a halt entirely as Wingnut was no longer there. The sandwich store had a different feel about it now, it was missing something. The bright yellow Harvard trainers were gone.

Now the only planes Gatwick had were camouflaged, and armed.

Whispers of war were around every corner.

“I think Davis is planning on having your sections fly tomorrow,” Farrier said as he stroked Collins’ hip tenderly under his pyjamas. The lad had walked in and unloaded all his pent up anxiety about the future, to which Farrier regrettably could only agree. The horizon didn’t look peaceful. He’d rubbed Collins’ shoulders until the knots in his muscles loosened, stroked his hair until his frown disappeared.

“That’ll be fun. Dawson is in my section.” Collins mumbled as he pulled the covers higher up to cover his neck and shoulders.

“That’s good, pet. You’re very close with him, aren’t you.” He said, dark blue eyes meeting light blue.

“Yes, but you can’t judge, look at us Farrier.” Collins said,

“I’m not judging. I was actually going to ask if… He knows.” Farrier said, stroking movements on the blonde’s hip ceasing, replaced with a solid warm hand resting there.

“He knows I fancy you.”

Farrier sighed, but it turned into a smile,

“Does he know more than that though?” he asked.

“I, he… I’m not sure.” Collins stammered, not sure what answer Farrier wanted to hear. Farrier wasn’t sure either, but the truth was what he got, and he was glad of it.

“But you haven’t told him outright?”
“No. I, no.” Collins said, the look in his eyes telling Farrier that he had more to say.

“Is there a ‘but’ to that sentence, pet?” he said.

“You’re not in trouble. I just want to know, obviously things like this are important for us to keep open about, you know?” Farrier said, pulling Collins closer, his hand leaving the blonde’s bony hip in favour of his shoulder.

“I nearly told him.” Collins said, eyes bereft of any fake confidence masking his feelings. The blonde wanted to do what was right by Farrier, and he knew that almost telling Dawson wasn’t the right thing to do. Farrier sighed,

“I wish I could tell people. I wish I could tell everyone, shout it from a roof, pet. You know we can’t. What if Dawson told someone else?” Farrier said, saddened by Collins’ expression alone.

“I know. I stopped myself. But Farrier, Dawson would never, ever tell someone. He’s just so kind and just good, yae know? He just wouldn’t.” Collins said, long fingers dancing across Farrier’s torso over his pyjamas.

“Even if he didn’t. wouldn’t you worry that he’d think of you differently?”

“He knows what I am. He said he doesn’t think of me differently. He said he thinks if it doesn’t get in the way of anything, it shouldn’t be an issue.”

Farrier was somewhat dumbfounded by this.

“Then your friend is one of a very tiny minority that are accepting of it, Collins.”

“Wingnut too,” the blonde added.

“Then you’ve somehow made friends with the best two people in the world then, it seems. Not everyone is like that. Almost nobody is like that.” Farrier said,

“I know. Which is why I won’t tell. But Farrier, what if Dawson has maybe… Already put the pieces together?” he said quietly. There was no wind to take cover behind tonight, in fact it was so remarkably still and there wasn’t a cloud in the night sky.

“Then we’re in trouble.” Farrier exhaled. Collins seized up.

“No no Farrier, it’s not like a random person could figure it out. He only did because he, well because I, we’re friends. To an outsider it’s not obvious, I don’t think.” The blonde explained quickly.

“I hope you’re right. How’d he figure it out then?” Farrier asked. He felt like he was gruelling Collins over this, but it was important that he knew about it.

“Dawson’s good at picking up on when I’ve got somethin’ on my mind. If it’s ever you on my mind and he asks if I’m okay, I get flustered. Just that kind of thing.” Collins said, blushing. Farrier brushed a thumb over his cheek.

“I hope you’re right. How’d he figure it out then?” Farrier asked. He felt like he was gruelling Collins over this, but it was important that he knew about it.

“Dawson’s good at picking up on when I’ve got somethin’ on my mind. If it’s ever you on my mind and he asks if I’m okay, I get flustered. Just that kind of thing.” Collins said, blushing. Farrier brushed a thumb over his cheek.

“If you’re sure you can keep it contained, it’s alright. It’s just that this topic is something we need to talk about sometimes.” Farrier said, Collins nodded.

“So does anyone in your circle have their suspicions?” he asked.

“Actually, I don’t think so. Apart from James, but he’s a different story obviously. Canfield likes to
say he knows me inside out and always knows if I’m lying, but he hasn’t cottoned onto this at all yet. He knows I fancy you, but he definitely has no clue that anything’s going on. If he did, he’s the kind of man that would talk to me immediately about it.” he said.

“Well, you’re right that we should talk about it. I feel better now that you know the situation.” Collins smiled and shuffled further underneath the covers, prompting Farrier to snuggle down with him. Collins turned over and pushed his back against the brunette’s torso for warmth, a strong arm wrapped around his middle, hand splaying on his belly.

“Stay.” Farrier murmured, barely above a whisper. Collins half turned in the man’s arms to see the expression on his face. It was want, but not in any sort of heated way. In a soft, protective way instead.

“Stay here tonight, please?”

Not in a million years would Collins every say no to such a request. He turned back over with a smile and laying his head down on the pillow.

“Of course,” he mumbled, Farrier’s bed smelled like the man and it made Collins sleepy, made him feel safe.

Farrier had intended on waking up at some point in the night and sending Collins back to his own room. He woke up every night at least once, be it from a nightmare, shrapnel pains or the most often and most frustratingly, for no reason at all it seemed. It was why Farrier was so absolutely shocked when he woke to hear birds and see that the early morning sun was already streaming through a gap in his curtains. He’d slept through the entire night for the first time he could remember.

“Collins. Collins, wake up.” He said, immediately realising what he’d let happen was far too risky. The blonde turned over sleepily and mumbled something.

“Collins!” Farrier hissed, and at that Collins’ eyes snapped open.

“Morning, handsome.” He smiled, breaking through Farrier’s worry a little, the man’s face softened and he bumped foreheads with the blonde.

“Good morning,” he said, realising being harsh was wrong, and Collins in the morning was impossible to be harsh towards. His hair was messy and his eyes still held the look of sleepiness as they looked around, looked up at Farrier. The brunette sighed and pushed a hand through Collins’ soft hair.

“Better get up then,” Collins said after a comically loud gurgle from his stomach.

“Yeah, don’t want to miss breakfast.” Farrier agreed. Collins slipped out from underneath the blankets, slim figure walking towards the window. It was the first thing he did every day, peer out at the world before he began getting ready. It was refreshing, and reminded him how small he was in the grand scheme, a comforting feeling for him.

“Farrier, eh, someone’s doon there.” Collins said, voice croaky with sleep, thoughts still too hazy to realise he should stand back from the window.

“Who?”

“Canfield and someone else, maybe another new officer?”
“Well come away from the window, pet.” Farrier said, hauling himself off the bed, walking over to
the window himself, a hand on Collins’ hip to hold him back, the blonde still craning his neck to
look.

“Fuck, that’s an official from the Air Ministry.” Farrier said upon recognising the man vaguely,
and quickly went about pulling his pyjama top off over his head and opening his drawers manically
to get his uniform on.

“Wha’s he doin’ here?” Collins said, stretching and waking up at a much more leisurely pace.

“I dunno, but I can’t believe we woke up together and he was here! Canfield could have easily
knocked on the door this morning to wake me, lucky he didn’t or else, I dunno, you’d have had to
hide in my cupboard or something ridiculous!” Farrier said, getting a shirt on and looking for his
shoes and socks.

“Hey, he didn’t knock. He’s dealing with it himself, by the looks of it. Farrier, we slept together.”
Collins smiled. At those words, Farrier was stopped in his tracks, he hadn’t taken in the gravity of
what had happened until the blonde had said those words.

“I’ve never done that with anyone before.” Farrier said.

“Neither have I.” Collins replied.

And they shared a look of trust, closeness, comfort. This was real.

Farrier slowly walked up to Collins, looking him in the eye.

“We need to be careful.” He said. The blonde knew Farrier meant more than just the current
situation. Their relationship was always going to be like this, both of them knew that and had
somewhat accepted it.

“I know. Last night isn’t going to be every night. But it was beautiful.” Collins said softly. Farrier
sighed and brushed his lips against the blonde’s so softly and caringly that Collins wasn’t sure if
he’d been kissed by an angel. He reasoned that Farrier wasn’t far from it.

“Come on. Back in your own room, pet.” Farrier said, his fingers brushing Collins’ hair back off
his forehead.

“See yae later today,” he smiled as he left.

As Farrier continued to hurriedly get ready all he could think of was the fact that he’d fallen asleep
with Collins. He’d let his guard down so much that he’d allowed another person to fall asleep with
him in his bed. It felt like liberation, he felt like he could do anything today. Also the fact that
Collins’ Scots became more apparent in the moments after he’d just woken up was beyond
adorable in Farrier’s eyes.

He walked out onto the tarmac whilst everyone else got ready to go down to breakfast. The sun
was still only on the horizon, air still cool.

“Morning,” Farrier said to Canfield, who was a ways away from the ministry official.

“Ah, Tom. This is Mr. Spencer, he’s just here to give us the official transcript of Gatwick as an
operational fighter station, I’ve just sent him to go have a look in the hangars at the lovely planes.”
Canfield explained. Farrier nodded, pleased that apparently Canfield had no idea about what had
happened last night, not that he had any way of knowing but in any situation involving Collins
nowadays, Farrier worried that people could somehow figure something out even though they had no information or insight whatsoever. He knew he was being paranoid but considering the circumstances the brunette believed it was well placed.

The man walked out of the shed holding a clipboard and waved to Farrier, who nodded in his direction. If he was honest he was still half asleep.

“You must be Officer Farrier!” he said,

“You must be Mr. Spencer,” Farrier smiled back.

After a short conversation Canfield was handed a piece of paper, and Spencer was off.

“You didn’t have to come down here, Farrier.” Canfield said.

“I know, but I woke up and saw you here and thought I may as well.” The brunette replied, Canfield shrugged.

“So what’s the thing say?” Farrier asked as they both walked back inside, keen for breakfast.

“It’s just a list of what we already know to be happening at Gatwick. Four squadrons, two Hurricane and two Spitfire, the radar room, the fact that we now have all of section 11’s airspace to use, it all just has to be officially documented, you know how it is boy.” Canfield said, Farrier nodded. Maybe he should have stayed in bed with Collins after all, really didn’t seem like being down here was any ‘safer’ than being up there.

Dawson and Collins sat at the breakfast table together eating their soggy scrambled eggs. It was quieter than they were used to, no mindless droning on of random subjects from a certain brunette to fill the silence.

“Sleep well?” Dawson asked, Collins nearly choked on his food. Why Dawson was like this, he did not know. But the menial polite small-talk question the boy had chosen for this particular day was so coincidental it scared Collins.

“Uh, good. Sorry.” He said, swallowing his breakfast. Thankfully Dawson just laughed at him.

“I slept awfully. Couldn’t get comfortable, too hot then too cold.” He complained,

“That’s bad luck, what time did yae get to sleep then?” Collins asked.

“Something like 0300 I think. It could have been worse but for a weeknight you know?” he said, Collins nodded.

“Someone’s moved into Wingnut’s old room.” Dawson said, it was what had been really troubling him when he decided to go down the path of sleep complaints instead. He saw Collins’ face fall.

“Was gonnae happen eventually,” he said, surprising Dawson by how accepting he was.

“Yeah.”

Later that week, a large truck arrived at Gatwick.

“Is, is that a wall?” was all Dawson could say as he watched the massive thing drive through the carpark and back to the runways behind the building.

“I think so?” Collins replied.
It was set up that very day in the grassy field behind the runway. A reinforced wall with layers of different materials to ensure ammunition didn’t make its way through the wall to the field behind. Now Farrier and Canfield had the difficult task of figuring out how to make a moving target on a static wall, something they should have figured out in the ample time they’d been given to prepare.

“Maybe we could shine a torch?” Farrier suggested.

“What if it’s sunny?” Canfield countered.

“Helium balloons?” the older man added.

“I’m not getting close enough to the target wall to hold a balloon there with a plane shooting at it,” Farrier laughed.

Finally, they arrived at torchlight, but having a shade over the top so the light could be seen.

“Well how do they do it at Cranwell?” Farrier asked Canfield as they put the frames for a tarp around the wall.

“They had a shed built especially for it, so the wall was always in relative darkness.”

“‘Course they did,” Farrier laughed.

The shade cloth was over the wall in no time, and then it was able to be used somewhat effectively. The officers had some members of ground crew arm a Hurricane, and secure it to the ground so it wouldn’t move.

Collins’ squadron went second, so he had the pleasure of watching the first squadron shoot at the light which Canfield waved erratically around, they were only supposed to press fire when the light lined up with the target in the middle of the wall, but some of the men were trigger-happy and pressed when it wasn’t there, others were too cautious and didn’t fire when it was there.

For Farrier it was strange being allowed to fire in a plane for the first time in years, but as soon as he pressed the button and let loose several rounds into the wall, he remembered the crazed love pilots were known for, how even if they saw so much blood and violence and sadness, there was a nonsensical love for their planes, every aspect of them. It was satisfying to shoot, even if nobody would admit it. Perhaps Farrier would feel differently when he had to shoot at other men again. He pulled himself up on the fact that he’d just mentally implied that he already knew the war would happen, told himself there was still a sliver of hope.

Soon enough it was Collins’ turn. He’d never pressed the fire button on the planes, though he’d heard a lot of other pilots had whilst flying, knowing the planes weren’t armed they’d done it for fun. The blonde waited for the light to wander into the right place, and then just as he was taught, he pressed the button. The sensation shocked him, the entire plane shook as the cannons mounted on the wings fired into the wall, hitting the light. It was like he’d had ten cups of tea at once, he was more awake than he’d ever been before. The blonde shook himself and remembered what he’d been told, short bursts to save the ammunition and to ensure the guns don’t jam. He waited for Canfield to once again point the light into the target in the middle, and he sent a short squirt of bullets flying into it. As soon as it had begun, his turn was over, though Davis and Canfield both congratulated him, Canfield advising not to apprehend the light coming into the middle before it actually happened, as in real situations this would alert the enemy that they were about to fly into one’s bullets. Canfield had been impressed with Collins, he was the best in the squadron so far. Good reflexes. He was even more impressed with Dawson however, shooting like it wasn’t his first time firing off wing mounted machine guns.

“Guess I just have a knack for it, Canfield.” He smiled as he jumped out of the plane.
“Indeed you do, you’ll make a fine fighter pilot Dawson.” The old man smiled.

As they walked inside, Collins felt nothing but pride. Maybe once he would have felt jealous of Dawson and his skills, as he had once felt jealous about his physical appearance. That Collins was gone, replaced with a more generous one. One who was just happy to be friends with the best pilot in the squadron. Best friends, he corrected himself.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading! I personally really liked this chapter, I hope you all did too ❤️

Let me know how you felt about it, I love hearing from everyone, and if you didn't like it feel free to let me know as well! I'm always happy to hear criticism.

This is my tumblr if anyone's curious.
Also, I have made an Afternoon Pinterest board if you want to check it out.

Hope everyone enjoys the rest of their week.
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
A Letter from Bomber Command

Chapter Notes

Hello again, everyone! I hope you all have a wonderful week ahead of you, it's my birthday this Thursday!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a sunny morning. March was slowly coming to an end. For both Dawson and Collins it had felt like it had dragged on for ages, perhaps linked to the absence of their loud friend.

They sat at the breakfast table, this morning’s small talk conversation was the weather differences between southern England and northern Scotland, much less alarming than when Dawson had commented on sleeping patterns the morning after Collins had slept in Farrier’s bed. Both blondes turned to Canfield obviously clearing his throat at their table.

“Morning Canfield,” Collins said.

“Yes, good morning,” Dawson smiled.

“I have a letter addressed to the both of you. I can only guess judging by the handwriting.” He smiled, placing the letter down between the two blondes. Canfield walked back to the officers’ table, it was amusing to him how similar Dawson and Collins looked. They could almost be brothers.

“What are you doing?” Farrier asked as Canfield sat back down.

“The base received a letter from Timson.” The older man smiled,

“The letter didn’t even have a return address on it, or a name! The only way I knew who’d sent it was by the atrocious handwriting, and the fact that it was addressed to ‘My two idiot friends at Gatwick’.”

The entire table of officers laughed at that.

“Go on then!” Dawson said, pushing the letter towards Collins,

“Why me?”

“You were his friend first. One of us has to!” he reasoned. Collins sighed and picked it up, looking for the first time at what was written on the outside of the envelope.

“My two idiot friends at Gatwick” he said, and immediately started laughing, as did Dawson.

“It’s like he’s right here again,” Dawson said,

“Almost.” Collins replied, and tore open the envelope. He read the entire thing out loud, hoping the other pilots weren’t listening too much. If they were, they’d have a laugh.
To Dawson and Collins.

It’s me, Wingnut!

“As if we didn’t know!” Dawson interjected, Collins nodded and kept reading.

So I’m part of Bomber Command now. I’ve been assigned to an Operational Training Unit squadron, same as you guys! But mine is in a bomber of course. I’m glad I like it here, if I didn’t it would have been a massive waste of time and energy. The best part is that I’m all the way up at Upper Heyford away from you lot! I’m kidding, there were no closer bomber stations available to take me. This place is huge, I still don’t think I’ve seen everyone here, or even seen all the rooms here.

In case you were wondering, Lucy is lovely as always.

I still miss you guys heaps, I wish you could see me fly the bombers, I love them! I’m not sure what else to put here, playing cards by yourself isn’t easy that’s for sure. Hopefully now that you know I’m here we can organise something.

Hope Gatwick hasn’t changed much without me.

Wingnut

Collins finished the letter, and looked up with a bittersweet smile.

“Good to hear from him.” Dawson said.

That day they had more target practice at the wall, everyone was progressing rapidly, and they even convinced Canfield to get in and give it a go, proving to Farrier once and for all that he still had it, hitting the light without fail. It was astonishing how much the wall could handle, it didn’t look like hundreds of rounds of bullets had been shot into it.

At lunch, Dawson and Collins walked to the sandwich store, the Scot had reasoned that if he’d taken Farrier there it shouldn’t matter that it was only he and Dawson nowadays. It was just a store after all.

“Did he have to go so far away?” Dawson complained as they walked back to base, hot sandwiches in hands.

“I know, but as he said there weren’t any nearby bomber bases. He was really willing tae go out on a limb for this, I’m just glad he ended up liking it.” Collins replied, as much as he hated that Wingnut was gone, he was glad that his friend at least enjoyed what he’d gone through so much effort to get to.

“Yeah. I wonder how it’s affected him and Lucy,” Dawson thought aloud. She was part of the Air Transport Auxiliary but she flew fighters to fighter bases, the lass had nothing to do with bombers. Neither blondes had a clue where she lived, whether the ATA girls lived on a base during their
working days and just went home for their off days.

“I’m sure they’ll find a way to make it work.” Collins said, and then began to unwrap the hot sandwich before reaching the base, realising he never did quite make it back before digging into his food.

“Well someone’s in a chipper mood. You’re usually the one who mopes about Wingnut leaving, what gives?” Dawson asked.

“Not sure, actually. I just feel alright about it today. I guess maybe receiving a letter from him, just reassurance that at least he’s havin’ fun,” the blonde said.

They arrived back at Gatwick and sat out the back against the wall of the building. Farrier had begun to take his squadron up in sections following his plane, so there were four planes whizzing above the two blondes’ heads as they ate lunch. Their formation was loose, a safe distance away from each other. Collins did wish he’d been put in Farrier’s squadron, or even just put in a Spitfire squadron without Farrier. There was always so much more fanfare and amazement when someone mentioned a Spitfire as opposed to a Hurricane. Canfield had described them as the forgotten workhorse and the Spitfire was the award winning racehorse. Dawson insisted that Collins shouldn’t be thinking that way.

“It doesn’t matter what the reputation of the plane is, it’s the reputation of the pilot.” He said as they walked to class. Of course he was utterly right, so Collins begrudgingly agreed.

“102nd squadron, we’re in the air today.” Davis said. The men cheered and went outside. Collins was getting to know Davis more. He was the youngest of the four original officers at Gatwick, being Canfield, Farrier, Maxwell and Davis himself. He still seemed to need guidance at times, having never been in more of a leadership role than a teaching officer. He was kind, funny, and snarky in an amusing way.

They went up in sections, as Farrier’s squadron had earlier. After watching everyone else, it was time for Dawson, Green 1, Collins, Green 2, and Turner who was Green 3, to go up with Davis.

They took off in a line but once in the air assumed their positions, triangulated behind Davis’ Hurricane. It was easier than Collins had imagined, especially considering he was Green 2, he only had to watch one side of his plane next to Dawson’s, who was Green 1 and had to watch that both wings weren’t too close to either Turner or Collins, but he was handling it like a seasoned flyer.

They did a large lazy arc to port, seeing how everyone went on a turn.

“Very good, men. Let’s see if we can tighten the formation up a bit.” Davis’ voice crackled through the headsets of the three younger pilots.

By the end of the short flight the Green section had managed to get into formation as tight as only a metre between wing tips. It was tighter than would generally be necessary Davis advised, but they’d been so controlled he couldn’t help push the envelope and see how tightly the formation would go.

Once on the ground again, Turner walked up to Collins and Dawson.

“Hey there blondies, nice flying today!” he said, alerting the ‘blondies’ to the fact that he was Irish, having not spoken a proper sentence to either of them yet.

“You too!” Dawson said, and the brunette fell into step with them. Collins almost jolted at the realisation that now once again they were two blondes and a brunette. He told himself that it was a
ridiculously common occurrence to happen and to stop being silly. Turner spoke to them as they walked back to the hangar to take their flying kits off, telling them how his father is from the Republic but his mother is from London, how they live here but the accent rubbed off on him, likely from spending a lot of time with his father in his mechanics business.

“So where are you two from then?” he asked, for the first time turning the conversation to them. In unison Collins and Dawson said “Scotland” and “Weymouth” respectively, earning them a hearty laugh from Turner though he didn’t ask anything about either location before sitting down with some other students that he appeared to know, possibly from before becoming part of the squadron, they definitely didn’t come from Gatwick, like most of the cohort.

“Now, 102nd squadron, I have a few important things to say but firstly, very well done today flying in sections for the first time, I’m really impressed!” Davis said.

“Now what I was going to say were that now you’re in a squadron on active duty, you can’t use the training flying kit anymore, that’s reserved for those who are actually training, they’re being sent off to training bases now that we aren’t one. I have here the forms you’ll all need to fill out. Bring them back here before the end of the week with a deposit, and we’ll have them sent off. Hopefully soon after, your own kits arrive, and you should be able to pay it off easily, they always give you a long time to do it anyway.” He said, and placed a stack of forms on the front table.

“Also, every squadron needs a squadron insignia. We will hold an event night on which we will go through several different options and pick the best, like a ballot vote. There’ll be food and drinks and music too, so don’t worry about getting bored. That should be happening,”

He turned to look at the calendar on the desk behind him,

“In two weeks from this Saturday. Before then however, this is the suggestion box. The Air Ministry has insignias which will be presented on the night but if anyone drops ideas into this box, they will also be presented on the voting night and if they get enough, perhaps will even be incorporated into the final design!” Davis said.

While Collins didn’t have a specific idea yet, he did want to use his paints to make an entry. He imagined anything else in the ideas box would be written suggestions, not actual pieces of art. The thought excited him, designing his own squadron insignia.

The blonde reached his room and sat on his bed just as it began to rain lightly. It wasn’t too cold, the rain wasn’t too heavy but it was enough to make for a nice background sound while he sketched. Collins knew if he was to have any chance it would have to be a good design. There were a lot of squadrons in the world and a lot of already existing designs. It would have to be unique. He started with different medieval objects, a common squadron insignia centrepiece. Though none of them felt special to the blonde, there was no reason they should be tied to 102nd Hurricane squadron. He then moved onto animals, but most of the usual ones had already been used or just seemed overdone, like the lion which was one of the first animals that had come to the blonde’s mind. Collins hadn’t even gotten to the painting part which was what he had been excited for when he gave up for the day. It was harder than it had first sounded to come up with a good design, but he told himself to keep trying to think of them. He ended up going to see what Dawson was up to in the end.

“’Ello?” he said through his door, it was answered after a short wait and Collins looked past Dawson to see that he had been writing something on a piece of paper which was sitting on the floor.
“What’s that?” Collins asked as they both sat around the page,

“I was drafting a response letter to Wingnut, wanna help?” he asked,

“Of course!”

All that had been written so far was

Dear Wingnut,

“Well what else do yae want to say?” Collins asked.

“I don’t really know, just want to let him know we got the letter, we hope he’s having a good time, we miss him, the usual things you write in letters I suppose.” Dawson said.

As it turned out, drafting a letter to Wingnut conjured up almost as many laughs as when the brunette was actually with them, with jokes about what to write being thrown all over the shop. Only a few made it in, the blondes didn’t want to take up the entire page insulting Wingnut for laughs. In just over an hour, the letter was done.

Dear Wingnut.

We’re very happy to hear that you’re enjoying being part of Bomber Command, would have been a shame if you went all that way not to enjoy it. We’re also happy you’re so far away, means we won’t have to see you much at all! (We’re joking.)

We have been flying in sections, and also doing target practice at a wall using a plane fixed in place on the ground. Gatwick has changed a bit since you left, there are more officers and men here, it feels more regimental.

Hopefully we can see you soon, it would be interesting to hear how you find real bombers as
opposed to trainers. Hope you and Lucy are doing alright with the change in command station. Tell her we say hello!

From,

*Your two idiot friends*

*P.S. Don’t crash!*

The last part was an homage to the fact that Wingnut had many close calls on the runway at Gatwick, it was laughable to the blondes because he seemed so clueless about flying yet somehow earned his wings.

“It’s great.” Collins said of the letter,

“Yeah. I think we’ve said everything we need to, right?” Dawson asked,

“Mm. Time to seal it then!” the scot said.

After doing so, it was about dinner time so the blondes walked down to the mess hall.

As they ate their vegetables, Collins properly looked at the radar equipment for the first time. A lot of speakers, knobs and radio looking things which the blonde could only guess their function. There were also tabletop maps, and boxes of wooden pieces in the shape of planes ships and buildings, presumably to be placed atop the tables to coordinate things. Collins knew that they plotted enemy positions on the table, using information detected from the radar towers which stood all up the southeast coast of Britain, and then the pilots would receive the information through the radio as they flew. That was his very basic understanding of radar, but he reasoned he didn’t have to know any more because it wasn’t like he was going to be working in the radar room.

“Canfield told me this place can’t be used as a mess hall forever.” Dawson said,

“Why?”
“Need to properly set up the radar material, to do that they have to stop using it as a dining hall.” Dawson replied.

“Where do we eat then?” Collins said, disgruntled.

“I guess they’re gonna start stocking the kitchen properly?” Dawson thought aloud, though he didn’t know either.

“Well I guess our boarding fees will go down then!” Collins laughed, 

“Too right, mate.” Dawson agreed.

That night Collins didn’t see Farrier, he spent the night in Dawson’s room chatting with his fellow blonde. Now that Wingnut was gone, and he was always the glue of the friendship, Collins was making more of a conscious effort to see Dawson out of fear that if he didn’t, they’d drift.

That night, Farrier headed into Canfield’s room to challenge him to chess, since the blonde seemed not to be visiting tonight. The radio was on softly as they played,

“Shush, listen.” Canfield said to Farrier, who hadn’t been making any noise anyway. Britain had pledged the support of both itself and France to assure Polish independence. As soon as the radio presenter had said the sentence both men locked eyes. If there wasn’t a war on the horizon before, there was now.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading, I hope this chapter wasn't too boring.
If you want to tell me what you thought, don't be afraid to leave a comment! I like hearing what people think, and I always respond.

My tumblr
My Afternoon pinterest board

Again, thank you all so much for reading.

Next time I upload, I shall be one year older!

Until then, happy reading ❤️
Hello everyone! Happy Monday to you all, I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them. My birthday was last Thursday and I keep forgetting that I'm not the same age as I was before (I had a very good day if you were wondering!)

It was early morning the next day, Collins and Dawson had made a pact last night to set their alarms early so that they could go out and post Wingnut’s letter and still have time to have breakfast before class, or rather before another day of squadron life. It was strange not to refer to it as ‘class’ anymore, all the new pilots seemed to be struggling with it.

Collins dragged himself out of bed, it may have been the beginning of April, but the mornings were still very cold. The sun wasn’t up properly as he put his uniform on and walked out into the hallway to see Dawson already there,

“Morning,” he yawned, and the blondes walked off downstairs and outside. It was still early enough that the frost hadn’t melted from the grass, the air was foggy and the blondes’ breath condensed in front of them. They walked down the footpath away from the base in search of the letterbox, which was found easily enough amongst the misty streets, red paint sticking out like a sore thumb.

“Alright then,” Dawson said as they laid eyes on it. Once the blondes had reached it they stopped.

“Who’s going to post it?” Collins asked.

“You.”

“Me?”

“Yes.” Dawson said, handing the letter to Collins.

“Why?”

“Why not?”

“Because you wrote it.” Collins said, feeling inadequate and not worthy of posting the letter. He was being stupid, it was a letter.

“Exactly. I wrote it so you post it!” Dawson smiled,

“Come on, not a big deal mate.” He added.

Collins smiled in agreement and turned to the letterbox, with one last look at the letter, cursive writing addressing it to Wingnut, our idiot friend, he slipped it through the slit in the mailbox.

“Done,” he said with a sigh.

“Hopefully it gets to him soon,” Dawson said as they turned back.
“Hopefully his superiors see it and have a laugh at who it’s addressed to,” Collins added.

As they walked back down the street to base, the sun began to peak over the buildings, lines of warm light shone across the cold grey footpath, both boys slowing down slightly when a particularly large gap of sunlight shone over a bit of the footpath, trying to draw out the warmth they felt as they walked through it.

“This walk has been nice, woke me up properly too.” Collins said.

“I agree, we should do this more often,” Dawson said as they reached the gates of Gatwick.

“We should, but remember when we tried to make runnin’ the block a regular thing, and then the gym?” Collins said.

“Yeah, but we had homework then, we don’t have paperwork to do now, we aren’t students. We’re pilots.” Dawson said, smiling as he said the words.

“That we are.” The scot replied.

After such a cold morning walk, breakfast tasted especially delicious.

That day was filled with not only shooting at the wall, by now everyone had just about nailed the art of hitting the light when it crossed the centre target, but also flying in sections again. Davis was almost ready to take them up in flights, two sections together. Almost.

“Why do they get to go up in flights already?” Collins whinged to Davis as they all helped to push the Hurricanes back into the hangar, watching seven Spitfires fly overhead, a flight and Farrier’s plane.

“Because Farrier is choosing to let them.” Davis answered with a grunt as he pushed the plane along.

“Yae should choose tae let us!” Collins laughed as he pushed the other wing of the same plane.

“I will, boy! Pipe down or I’ll get harassed all afternoon by the whole squadron!” he laughed.

Collins liked Davis, he was quite relaxed to talk to even though he was still somewhat nervous when it came to the actual leadership role he’d been put in. He seemed a bit uneasy talking to the whole squadron and ordering them around, he definitely didn’t have the air of authority that Farrier held. One on one however, Davis was just like another one of the young pilots.

“Where’s the ground crew when you need them, hey?” Davis laughed, 

“Aye, Farrier thought when we became a full time base that we’d never have tae push another plane again!” Collins chucked, immediately wondering if he shouldn’t have let slip the tiny piece of information in fear that Davis would somehow know it was said in an unprofessional setting.

“Yeah, we all thought that. Ground crew still have other jobs. It’s not like all they do is push planes, plenty of other things they all need to be learning.” He said, and finally they’d reached the hangar.

“So how’d you get into the RAF?” Collins asked as they went back to push another Hurricane in, some of the squadron already having made themselves known to be slack when it came to picking up the ground crew’s work when they weren’t around.
“Well, it’s always been seen as a respectable job. I actually thought I’d make a good architect. I’m alright at drawing, mathematics, but the imagination is what I was lacking. You need to have a real knack for designing things which don’t exist yet, difficult stuff. So dad suggested I learn to fly, something completely different, and I did!” he laughed,

“Quite the change in profession,” Collins remarked.

“And what about you, then?” Davis asked the blonde.

“Well, freedom I suppose. Comin’ from a wee town you don’t get much of that. There was a small airbase near me, so I thought I’d give it a try and see what came of it. Turns out flying is addictive.” Collins smiled, Davis nodded.

“Then they wouldnae let me back in the planes for months once I got to Gatwick!” he said.

“Yeah it’s ridiculous. You do all this flight practice for your civil certificate, then as soon as you’re in the intermediate training with the RAF proper, they just sit you in a classroom for months!” Davis said,

“Glad you agree.”

“Oh I do, because I managed to get into it before the reforms and budget cuts happened to make it that way. I got to go from civil training to RAF pilot without all this classroom nonsense. Of course we learnt the theory still, but it was staggered between flying lessons.” He explained.

As much as it annoyed Collins to hear how all the older officers got into the RAF, he was a pilot now, he had to remind himself. Whatever he had to do in the classroom was behind him, because now Collins was flying Hurricanes and it didn’t matter that it took so long.

“Saw you chatting to Davis a bit today,” Farrier remarked that night.

“Saw you flying your Spitfire a bit today.” Collins snarked back.

“I was. Had to get her filled back up with fuel after I was done with her,” he smiled and rubbed circles into Collins’ hip, hand snaking under the blonde’s pyjamas.

“Why’d I get put into the Hurricane squadron?” Collins asked. It had been playing on his mind.

“Because you’re capable. You’re smart, quick to respond. Could have been put on one of the many other front line fighters and based somewhere else, but I argued with the board until they placed you at Gatwick on Hurricanes.” Farrier answered.

“Oh, well thanks. But why aren’t I in the Spitfire squadron?” he pushed. Farrier sighed,

“Pet, there are a lot more fighters than Hurricanes and Spitfires. To fly one of these two front-line planes is a privileged position in itself, they’re top of the line. The reason you aren’t in a Spitfire is because you just have a different flying style. As I’ve already told you, squadrons can change, and they do often.” Farrier answered, trying to cheer Collins up, not entirely sure why he was even hung up on the plane he was flying, the lad didn’t have enough experience to know what a good and bad plane was to fly anyway. Farrier thought perhaps it was like driving a prestigious car, even those who hadn’t driven one wished they had. On the other hand, the Hurricane was prestigious, if there even was prestige between fighters.
“So I should be grateful for flying the forgotten sister of the champion?” Collins said, he wasn’t making a joke, he was being serious.

“Jack. Don’t call them that. The Hurricane has been around a bit longer than the Spitfire and has been tried and tested. They’re bigger planes, they’re physically stronger, they’re powerfully built. The only reason you’re perceiving Spits as being these amazing flying machines that win all the fame is because of their damned wings. Yeah, Spitfires do look bloody nice, but none of these planes have been properly battle tested. You haven’t flown in fighting conditions, you don’t know-“

“Then let me fly one!” Collins cut Farrier off. The brunette just looked at him. It wasn’t anger, it wasn’t sadness. Perhaps a mixture.

“Collins,” he said, taking the blonde’s hand, but it was yanked away.

“How am I supposed to know what plane I’d be better at if I havnae tried them?” Collins hissed, surprising Farrier with his tone of voice.

“Calm down, for god’s sake.” Farrier almost laughed. Almost.

“Say it. Spitfire pilots are better pilots.”

“Collins, stop.”

“Why?”

“You’re not seeing it the right way.” Farrier said.

“Then why don’t yae let me up in one and I can see for myself?”

“You’re not ready.”

“Then it’s confirmed, I’m not good enough.” Collins said, aware that he sounded childish but after months at Gatwick and months in Scotland, adding up to years, just to be placed in the second rate fighter to the Spitfire was agonising.

“For fuck’s sake Collins! Let me explain!” Farrier finally snapped. His voice still wasn’t loud, they were in his room after all, but it was harsh enough to indeed make the blonde pipe down a notch.

“Spitfires are incredibly difficult to fly, okay? Even I find them ridiculously light on the controls, and you know how long I’ve been flying. They’re sensitive, they’re very, very, very fast. They have a long nose which makes it impossible to taxi out straight, you’ve seen us all zigzag up the runway. They’re hard to land in crosswinds because of how much surface area the wings have. Yes, once they’re in the air and once you get the hang of it, I have to say I think the Spitfires are the best planes I’ve ever flown.” Farrier said, earning a frown.

“But, none of my squadron are fresh out of flight school. They’d all been in Operational Training Units somewhere else before being transferred here. They all have more experience.” Farrier said, and after the fact had finally been stated, Collins relaxed a bit.

“So maybe one day I’ll fly them too?”

“Maybe one day, pet.” Farrier said, before continuing,

“But you can’t discredit Hurricanes like that, I really didn’t like hearing you speak about such
beautiful planes that way. No doubt the Spitfires are faster and more manoeuvrable, but that
doesn’t mean the pilots of the Hurricanes are worse. Being a good pilot is about learning your
plane and using everything it has to your own advantage. Show your leaders that you know
Hurricanes, that you know how to fly them well, that you really know what you’re doing and can
handle it like you’ve been flying for many years, and maybe you’ll be allowed to be tried on
Spitfires. But Collins, by that time you’re going to have fallen in love with your Hurricane, I’m
warning you.” Farrier said. Finally, a smile broke out on Collins’ face.

“We’ll see.” He said.

The next day, they were out again in the planes. Dawson and Collins agreed that all the time in the
classrooms was worth it. Davis was taking them up in flights, as Farrier had done with his squadron
yesterday, serving to make the blonde feel a little better after his little tantrum the previous night.
Being back in the air made him forget his pettiness, it was beautiful. The weather was fairer than it
had been in a long time, Collins was getting nice and warm in the cockpit from the sun coming
through the Perspex.

“Tighter formation, Green section!” came Davis’ voice through all three headsets of the Green
section. Collins tightened up to Dawson’s Hurricane, and Turner did the same on the other side.

“Better. Now Blue section, you too!” came the voice, and Collins watched through the windscreen
of his plane as the section of planes in front of them to their starboard tightened up. Ahead of them
was Davis’ lone plane, leading them.

Then everyone heard a yell through the radio. One of the planes in Blue section had touched wings
with another, it was the plane to port of Blue 1. It was pushed several feet away and downwards,

“Blue 2! Are you okay?” Davis yelled.

“Y-Yes, Tannol Leader. I’m okay.” Came a sheepish and scared voice.

“Bit too close formation, I think. Tannol ‘A’ flight, return to base. Follow my turn.” Davis said, and
began a large sweeping turn until the pilots could see Gatwick once again on the horizon, popping
in and out of vision through the clouds beneath the planes that were rapidly enlarging. It was easy
to spot, the last building on the edge of the fields that covered the surrounding land. Yes it was on
the street, but the runway cut back into the fields and it was unmissable. The planes were still
above cloud level, but once they dropped altitude Collins realised that it wasn’t in fact, a very nice
day anymore. They’d gone up and it had been sunny, but while they’d been flying the cloud cover
had become greater and greater, and now they were dark and heavy, ready to drop rain. By now,
there were no gaps in the cloud cover at all.

“‘A’ flight, landing single file.” Davis said. By now the pilots knew what this meant. The number
3 pilot of each section, who flew on the starboard side and who in Green’s case was Turner, lined
up behind number 2 pilot of the section, who was Collins, who in turn lined up behind number 1
pilot of the section, Dawson. There was also an order for the sections to line up. Blue, then Green,
then Yellow, then Red at the end. That was just the way it was.

As they came down to the runway drops began to run across the windscreens of the planes, typical
English weather, Collins thought to himself as he dropped the landing gear down. Then he realised
he’d done that by second nature, he hadn’t thought about the landing gear, he just knew when to
lower it now, and for that he was very happy with himself indeed.
Once on the tarmac, the ground crew went about bringing the Hurricanes in as quickly as they could. Collins spotted Canfield standing in the doorway heading inside with, something large and white in his hand. A sack? A piece of tarp? The thought was forgotten as Davis raised his voice and ordered his squadron to put their flying kits in the hangar and get inside the main building. They all sat down in one of the classrooms overlooking the runway. Collins remembered watching the planes fly out there when he was stuck inside, he was ever so glad he was now in one of said planes.

“Now, 102nd squadron. Everyone did extremely well today, I want to stress that. Half of you are probably wondering why I rushed us inside and that is because something happened in A flight today, B flight, I doubt you saw any of it. Not mentioning any names,” Davis said, although everyone knew what position the others were by now.

“We had a wing clip today between Blue 2 and Blue 1.”

“It was an accident.” Said one of them quietly, the one who had caused it. His name was Baker, he was a good flyer and nothing had happened to do with him yet to cause anyone to believe otherwise.

“I know. They happen, more than anything I’m glad you were able to correct it. I didn’t see too much damage to either wing from both planes involved, but I’ve brought you all inside because that could have been an extremely serious accident. Wing clipping is somewhat common when starting out, it’s okay.” Davis reinforced to Baker.

“But sometimes the consequences can be devastating, so I just want everyone to make sure they allow space. When I say tighten up, I need around four feet between wingtips. Any less than that and an air pocket might cause the plane to jump into the other,” Davis said, Baker nodded.

“That’s what happened.” He said.

“There we go. I just need everyone to understand that these are powerful machines, they are unforgiving at times. We have to have complete control and know our aircrafts, and know the conditions we fly them in and how they will react. Moral of the story, be careful, men.” Davis said, and waved his hand in the air to dismiss the squadron. Collins did agree with Dowding on one thing, he’d come to realise, it was that Gatwick didn’t take the military part of the RAF as seriously as Dowding made it seem like the other bases might be. Perhaps the officers were still in the same habits as they were when it was a training base, but usually Collins’ squadron only saluted at the beginning of the day when they grouped together with Davis for the first time, and at the end of the day when they were dismissed. Sometimes, like today, Davis just couldn’t be bothered so he waved his hand in the air instead, as if swatting a fly.

Collins walked up to him, Dawson on his trail.

“It wasn’t your fault,” he said to Davis.

“I know it wasn’t. But it did happen on my watch.” He countered, and walked off.

Farrier landed with his squadron, tires splashing through the water on the runway as they snaked down it.

Everyone got out of the Spitfires and the ground crew took care of the rest. Farrier was beginning to look at the serial numbers of the squadron, and had begun to try and take the same plane every time they flew.
He walked over to Canfield standing in the doorway with an ecstatic smile on his face.

“What on earth are you grinned about?” Farrier laughed as he unzipped his Irvin jacket.

“I bought us a windsock!” Canfield almost yelled, waving said windsock around to try and fill it with air. Farrier had to give it to Canfield, he sure hadn’t lost his youthful joy.

“That’s… Actually really great news.” The brunette smiled.

“Perhaps we’ll put it up when it decides not to rain.” He added, walking inside. As Farrier walked down the halls he saw Davis’ squadron dispersing from a classroom.

“Tea?” Canfield offered. Farrier was about to go and ask Davis why they’d been in a classroom, but he reasoned he would find out sooner or later from Collins.

“Tea would be lovely.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading! Don't be shy, let me know what you thought! It was interesting to write a little squabble between the flyboys.
This is my tumblr.
Here is my Afternoon pinterest board
Again, I hope you all have a splendid week.
Until next time, happy reading ❤️
A Break in the Clouds

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday everyone! I hope everyone has a good week to come.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was hard to believe that after months of doing nothing but classroom work, now Collins did nothing but fly and march. Dowding had decided to pay Gatwick a visit today, though he seemed in a much more optimistic mood than last Collins had seen of him. Everyone was on their best behaviour and now that Gatwick largely consisted of pilots who had already undergone training and had been monitored properly, the officers were much less worried about behavioural slipups.

“Well, that wasn’t too bad.” Farrier said to Canfield over afternoon tea once Dowding had left. The man seemed wholly impressed at the state of the base since last he saw.

“No, he seemed in quite the chipper mood today, even complimented your squadron!” Canfield smiled,

“Did he?”

“Yes, he said they looked very put together. He said Davis looked nervous!” the older man laughed, Farrier couldn’t but agree. Davis was a good officer, but he was still getting used to leading a squadron. Davis was a Flight Lieutenant, but the thing about rankings in the Air Force was that the name didn’t necessarily define the job. One didn’t have to be a Squadron Leader to be the lead flyer of a squadron, ranking didn’t really have to do with actual squadron position, it was interesting like that.

“Remember when Wingnut said we should hide on the roof?” Collins laughed as he walked with Dawson to the sandwich store.

“Yeah, crazy lad. I’m glad Dowding wasn’t as scary today.” He replied.

“Me too, I guess he likes how Gatwick is shaping up.”

“Hope so, it definitely feels a lot more regimental here now.” Dawson said as they arrived. Today had finally been a genuinely sunny day, not partially sunny and then rainy. Most were glad of it though Collins wasn’t so sure. He really did like winter, but it felt nice to have the sun on his face again. Dowding’s visit had been a surprise; he was like that. Surprise visits meant nobody had time to dress the base up to be something it usually wasn’t, meaning it would operate as it usually did and that was what Dowding was interested in seeing.

It was a late lunch, some would call it an afternoon snack. As the blondes walked out of the sandwich store they looked up. It had become second nature now, even if there were no signs of planes, to look up. Collins had developed more of an appreciation for the sky than he already had, and right now it was about to put on a show. He could see the beginnings of what would be a beautiful sunset, because for the first time in a very long time indeed, the evening sky wouldn’t be covered in thick clouds, only a few wispy white puffs here and there which only served to illuminate the beautifully blue sky, which was just on the edge of changing colour.
“It’s beautiful.” Dawson said quietly.

“It is.”

“Sometimes I forget to appreciate things like that, just walking home from the shops looking at the sky. It’s important to stop and smell the roses sometimes.” Dawson said,

“I agree, drawing makes you stop for the moments, you need to in order to draw them. It’s a good way tae appreciate the things around you.” Collins explained, Dawson looked interested.

“You should show us your drawings more,” he said.

“Us?”

“Ah, just me now, I suppose.” Dawson laughed, ‘us’ meaning he and Wingnut.

Both squadrons had the afternoon off, which wasn’t uncommon now that they had ample time to fly. Dawson and Collins went outside after they’d gotten back from the store, they stood on the runway watching the brand new windsock, it wasn’t moving much currently, but neither had even noticed it until now and had a feeling Davis hadn’t either because he hadn’ t mentioned it to them at all.

“Yeah I saw Canfield holding it last week, I didn’t know what it was at the time. Guess we’ve gotten so used to watching the trees blow,” Collins laughed, saying it out loud did exemplify how much Gatwick needed to change to become a fulltime base.

“Yeah, I mean once you get used to it, the trees are fine to use as guides, but I suppose for regulation we do need a windsock.” Dawson said.

It was a rare afternoon on which Dawson actually wanted to be alone, it wasn’t in an unfriendly way, but even those as social as Dawson needed their own downtime. Collins could tell his friend was just in a peaceful quiet mood. Plus, it gave the Scot as good a reason as any to go and bother Farrier. He knocked on his bedroom door, eager to get inside and away from prying eyes. The blonde walked away from the door and tried to act like he wasn’t waiting, in case someone walked past. Nobody did, and soon enough Farrier opened the door.

“Afternoon,” Collins said, getting to the word before Farrier, who was just about to say the same thing.

“Cheeky bugger,” he chuckled as the blonde walked through his doorway.

“Seen the sky?” Collins asked,

“Yes, nice isn’t it.” Farrier smiled and began to unbutton his blazer, revealing his cream turtleneck.

“I want one,” Collins mumbled.

“One what?”

“Jumper like yours,”

“Well, buy one!” Farrier laughed.

“Why are there bits of the uniform that you have tae buy separately?”

“Because they aren’t compulsory. It’s like any uniform, take school for example. I’m sure most schools had bells and whistles that not everybody bought or wore, but it was always an option.
Once you’ve been in the RAF as long as I have, you just sort of get things for the sake of it. It’s the same with the mess uniform, it’s so expensive most men hire it for the events because it’s so rare you wear it, but one day Michael and I just decided to bite the bullet.” He said,

“Is the jumper warm?”

“Very, it’s for winter flying. Do you want to try it on?” Farrier asked quietly, the way the blonde was staring at it was very amusing.

“Oh, I uh, that would be nice,” Collins mumbled. Farrier pulled it off over his head, Collins was taken off guard, not realising how little Farrier would be wearing underneath it, he was only in a white singlet. He’d imagined some more clothes than this, seeing Farrier’s golden arms, his shape hugged by the thin fabric of only a singlet, Collins just stared for a while.

“You’re cute,” the brunette said, eyes flicking up to Collins’ as he held out the jumper, the comment served to make them both blush.

“Why?”

“You’re always so surprised to see my body.”

“It’s very beautiful,” Collins said as he took the jumper, removing his own blazer and then shirt, Farrier soaked the sight in.

“As is yours,” the brunette said. Collins smiled a little nervous smile and quickly slipped the turtleneck on. Of course it was too big, stretched over time by Farrier’s frame, but otherwise it didn’t fit too badly at all. He wandered over to the mirror and let out a chuckle.

“I look like a commissioned officer,” he said,

Farrier appeared in the mirror beside him and lay a hand on Collins’ shoulder,

“One day you will be.” He said, and pulled the blonde’s gaze from the mirror, pivoting him around, strong hands on Collins’ waist.

“And you’ll be a great one,” He smiled, proud.

“Thanks, but I don’t know if I’m cut out to be a leader.”

“Well, I believe you’ll make a very strong leader, even if you don’t see it yourself.” The brunette said.

If only Farrier knew the effect his words would one day have.

Farrier began pulling on the bottom of his turtleneck, lifting it only a little so that his fingers could touch Collins’ lower belly. It tickled the blonde and he jumped away with a stifled giggle, realising the gesture was to imply Farrier wanted his jumper back. Once changed back into his own clothes, Collins took a seat at the little coffee table at which it had all began between them, looking out the same window he had been that day. Farrier joined him, they sat for a little while in silence, watching as the sky went from a light orange to a deeper almost pink shade, a few more clouds had joined the first few which dotted the sky, they were now illuminated gold under the setting sun.

“Collins?” came Farrier’s husky voice. The blonde looked at him when a warm hand came out to rest on his.
“Want to see something?”

Farrier led Collins into the upstairs storage room, the blonde had never even realised it was there, it had brooms, pans, bits and pieces, a manhole in the ceiling.

“Where are we going?” Collins asked.

“Where do you think, pet? Where do you think a hole in the top floor ceiling leads? Farrier asked, shaking his head and smiling.

“Yae I know that, but why?”

“Because it’s nice up there.”

“Can someone see?”

“Not from the ground unless we go to the edge. Nobody goes up there, it’s not somewhere people would look if they wanted to find one of us.” He said, that calmed Collins’ nerves. Farrier dragged a rusty metal ladder from against the wall, it opened in an A frame and he placed it under the manhole.

“Ready?” he asked, Collins nodded.

“You first.” Farrier said, holding the ladder still, even though it was supporting itself. He wanted to make sure while Collins climbed.

The blonde looked at Farrier with big blue curious eyes, a small smile on his lips, and then looked to the ladder. He climbed slowly up, and once he reached the top, pulled on the small handle on the square in the ceiling. The flap opened to reveal a short climb through the actual roof structure, it had been bricked in, almost like a chimney, and had metal steps jutting out. At the top was another trapdoor which presumably led out to the top.

“I’m right behind you,” Farrier said, now standing at the base of the ladder about to climb. Collins was at the top of the ladder, he made the step from it to the metal steps built into the internal roof, and leaned up to push the trapdoor open. It was heavy, but with one strong push Collins had done it. The door opened upwards and fell back onto the roof, leaving a square out of the building that Collins looked up through with wonder. Then his legs remembered that they could carry him out, so he climbed.

Farrier couldn’t see much of the sky from behind Collins on the ladder, but he made do with a view of the blonde’s superb behind. Once his lanky boyfriend had made it out onto the roof, and the brunette’s mind was still baffled at the term boyfriend, Farrier finally got a glimpse of the almost purple sky. This time of year did produce spectacular sunsets when the clouds didn’t get in the way. Then they were both out and standing on the roof. To Collins’ surprise, it was made to be stood on. It was concrete, there were boxes housing the electrical of the building, and around the edge were the brickwork crenulations that could be seen from the ground.

“I always thought yae couldn’t walk on here, didn’t realise it was actually easy to access like this.” Collins said, now that he had this information it made Wingnut’s idea to hide from Dowding on the roof half credible. He laughed at the thought.

“What’s funny?” Farrier asked, not looking at Collins but walking over to the edge of the building to look at the runway from the highest point which wasn’t in a plane.

“Oh, remember when I said Wingnut wanted to hide on the roof when Dowding first came here?”
“Yeah?”

“Knowing it’s like this up here, makes his idea half normal. I thought it would just be tiles or something ye couldn’t stand on.” He explained as he followed Farrier. Once he too reached the edge, the blonde was unable to say anything. From here, he could see the entire runway, all the hangars and sheds, and further. Out to the fields, now yellow and dancing in the sunlight instead of frozen stiff. He could see the wall they’d been shooting at a few hundred feet into the field, he could see the single tree that grew, that he’d found the identity disks on.

“It’s,” Collins began, and Farrier grabbed his hand, enveloping it in warmth, the blonde looked over to him.

“Beautiful.” Collins said, looking into Farrier’s eyes, now unsure which view he was talking about. The brunette took a step closer to him, it still gave Collins butterflies. Farrier took Collins’ other hand as well, warming them both in his. He smiled as the blonde’s hair blew lightly in the wind, how it looked almost strawberry blonde in this light, how his eyes were so impossibly blue all the time, it astonished Farrier to the point that he was sometimes unable to tear his vision away from them. This was one such moment. He couldn’t believe how lucky he was. Everything had fallen into place so perfectly. It was because of the nature of Gatwick that they even had these secret stolen moments, he doubted he’d be so lucky out at Cranwell. He was going to lean in going to press his lips to Collins’ and make sure the blonde knew the weight behind the gesture, but to Farrier’s surprise, Collins got to it first. Farrier sighed into the kiss, for once nobody was listening, nobody was going to walk past, he could enjoy Collins in all his entirety, just for this moment. Farrier let go of the blonde’s hands and moved his arms around Collins’ thin frame, pulling their bodies closer, closer until one of Farrier’s arms was wrapped almost entirely around Collins’ waist, hugging him to his own body, while the other hand was splayed between the blonde’s shoulder blades. Collins was making soft sounds as Farrier kissed him, the blonde’s hands came up to rest on his shoulders, Farrier could feel him smiling against his lips, and then he was smiling too. Because it was beautiful and special and something that was only theirs.

They broke apart but stayed within inches of each other. Collins was sure he was dreaming.

“Is this real?” he murmured. The sky was definitely a shade of purple, it was getting colder now too.

“I hope so, if it’s not then I’m going to be very sad when I wake up.” Farrier said with half a smile. He carefully ran his fingers through Collins’ hair, his chest felt heavy with emotion, yet in a good way. Farrier felt grounded by it. In the complete opposite way but just as intensely, Collins was completely lifted up by the feelings he had for the man before him. He felt like he could fly without a plane.

Chapter End Notes

Finally a chapter without too much angst, for some reason I find it hard not to write angst, it's really bad and I don't mean to write angst at all, it just sort of happens. Anyway, I hope everyone enjoyed this one, let me know what you thought! This is my tumblr if anyone's interested. Here is my Afternoon Pinterest board. Until next chapter, happy reading 😊
Happy Monday everyone. Yesterday I attended the first airshow in my state since 2007, and the last for most likely over a decade. It was beautiful. I saw so many different planes flying, though of course my favourite section was the vintage warbirds. I saw a Spitfire (!), Hurricane, Mustang, and a Kittyhawk fly together, as well as a handful of other WW2 fighters and bombers. There were also some WW1 planes and trainers, and some jets including an F35!
Anyway, hope this chapter is a good one❤

See the end of the chapter for more notes

April had whizzed by. Collins could only recall a few distinct moments from the entire month, including the magical evening on the roof with Farrier. Thinking about it made his stomach churn.
The blonde got out of bed and into his uniform as he did every day. Wandering down the hall he caught Dawson at the top of the stairs.
The blondes continued down together, but as they neared the bottom both of them slowed, listening. It was the faint but distinct buzz of engines.

“Merlins.” Dawson said, smiling.

The blondes veered away from their previous destination, the dining hall, in favour of the airfield.

Farrier was already awake but hadn’t bothered to go downstairs yet. His window was open a crack because there was a balmy breeze blowing and the air had been getting stale in his room. He could hear engines in the distance, he looked out the window and saw a swarm of planes, way too far to be able to tell what yet. He wished Canfield would tell him when they were getting deliveries, which is what he assumed this was. The brunette opened his window further and leaned on the sill, letting the morning air blow across his face. This was one of the best mornings he’d had in recent memory, the absolute best being the one on which he accidentally woke up with Collins in his bed. Realising he needed to be down to sign paperwork when the planes landed, Farrier left his window view and headed downstairs.
The two blondes reached the runway just as the planes, now distinguishable as Hurricanes were lining up to land single file.

“Hey!” Dawson yelled over their engines, all roaring at once.

“I wonder if Lucy will be here!” he said, Collins hadn’t thought of that, but the woman very well might be. The boys weren’t the only ones watching the planes land, several other men had come outside to observe as well. Once the twelve Hurricanes had stopped moving, Dawson and Collins looked closely to see who got out. As with every other time they’d had a delivery of planes, the pilots were all women. The ATA girls.

Lucy stepped confidently out of the leading plane, smiling as always with her bright red lips, immediately pulling her flight helmet off to reveal her messy but somehow still very lovely looking brown curls. It was easy to see why Wingnut fell for her, and the more Collins thought about it, the
easier it was to see why she fell for him. He was charming, in a dorky kind of way. The blondes had been too preoccupied watching Lucy and the others disembark the Hurricanes to notice that Canfield and Farrier were standing behind them, once the ATA girls had all gotten out of the planes the senior officers walked out onto the tarmac to greet Lucy.

“Morning officers!” she chirped, looking behind her to check that all her girls had safely dismounted.

“Good morning Lucy, nice flight?” Canfield asked.

“Yes, very much so Officer Canfield. Easy flying weather today,” she said, pointing at the sky.

“Yeah we’ve been trying to get the new squadrons up as much as possible,” Farrier said.

“Oh yes! How are they progressing?” she asked, looking behind the officers to see a group of young pilots standing sheepishly by the building. Two stood out, and upon closer inspection she realised they were Timson’s friends from Fighter Command.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, not waiting for Farrier to answer her question before waving her arm in the air for Collins and Dawson to come and say hello to her.

“Well, we have to now,” Dawson laughed, the two had been debating if they should go and see her or if it was best to let her do her job.

“Morning you two!” she exclaimed, to Farrier and Canfield’s surprise.

“Hey Lucy,” Collins smiled,

“Nice to see you again!” Dawson said

“Very nice to see you both as well! Been a while, hasn’t it.” said Lucy, walking away from the older officers and towards the young pilots.

“Sorry, but do you all know each other?” Canfield said, turning to engage in the conversation behind him,

“Oh! Yes, they’re friends of my boyfriend!” Lucy said.

“What, Wingnut?” Farrier said, knowing full well that the two blondes only had one other friend.

“Yes!”

Farrier tried his hardest not to laugh, but a giggle escaped his mouth, Canfield slapping his arm discreetly.

“I’m sorry love, it’s just that I didn’t imagine you with him is all.” Farrier tried to explain, but he was doing a poor job of remaining calm. Wingnut was a bloody idiot, and Lucy, well, she wasn’t.

“No I don’t mind, my William is a silly goose, and I know it must be funny to picture him with me but somehow it just works.” She smiled, and hearing her words brought smiles to everyone around her also.

“So how are yae coping with his change to Bomber Command?” Collins asked.

“Well, we don’t deliver bombers so I don’t see him on the job, but we make time. Right now he’s staying in the boarding house of the airbase he’s at, it’s separate to the airfield unlike here but of
course I can’t stay there, I live at the ATA base I work from. Some time soon we hope to begin property hunting though, we’re getting a bit old to be boarding at work!” she laughed. It was indeed funny considering the ages of Farrier and Canfield who still boarded, though it was the easiest thing for them to do, as Farrier had explained to Collins before.

“That’s amazing Lucy!” Dawson said, grinning.

“It is, we’re both very excited. Now, I’m sorry to push but we do have other places to deliver to today.” She smiled politely to Canfield,

“Oh, oh yes my dear.” He said, holding out his hand to be given the papers to sign, once doing so he handed them over to Farrier who signed them as well.

“It was very nice to see you all again,” Lucy said as she walked back to the group of other women and began rounding them up to get to the train station.

“So Timson is dating Lucy!” Canfield said, and clapped his hands together.

“Can’t believe it,” Farrier said, still grinning.

“It was definitely a shock when he told us,” Dawson laughed.

“I bet it was, that boy could barely land a plane, who knows how he landed such a beautiful woman!” Farrier laughed with Canfield.

“He wasn’t all that bad,” Collins interjected.

“I was jesting. I’m very happy for him in truth.” Farrier said, and there it was again. The cold front, the wall was slammed up in front of Collins, protecting he and Farrier’s relationship from the world. The blonde would need to work on his public front, he thought to himself as he, the officers and the other pilots went inside for breakfast.

That day nobody flew, instead marching and saluting was practiced again, as Canfield was overly worried that they were out of practice when Dowding had visited, even though the man hadn’t made any complaints. Collins didn’t make any complaints either, he liked it when Farrier gave orders.

At lunch time, the blondes opted to make lunch from the kitchen instead of going to the store just for a change. Canfield had been making more of an effort to keep food there, so they were able to make half decent sandwiches with several fillings instead of just old cheese and stale bread.

After lunch, the pilots were all ordered into classrooms. Being in a squadron, ‘lessons’ were more on an ad-hoc basis now, there was no schedule, there were just certain tasks which needed to be practiced in order to remain a good pilot, like flying, shooting, saluting. Canfield had decided that they should do something they hadn’t done since the earlier days of their cadet training, aircraft identification.

“It is very good to revisit old skills to make sure you still have them!” he said, and got out some posters from the desk drawer to show everyone. Collins was thoroughly disappointed that Farrier was taking the other two squadrons’ class. Canfield held the posters up, pointing to each silhouette of a different plane, British and other, waiting for men to shout out the answer. Collins knew what each was, though couldn’t really be bothered shouting out, he imagined if Wingnut were here he would be shouting the answers louder than anyone else. He would have gotten them all right though, he was great with identification.
One good thing about having Canfield in the room was that everyone got to enjoy one of his classic stories, something the pilots from different training schools hadn’t had the privilege of before. Today it was the story of how he first won an award for flying in an event, Collins had heard it before though the pilots who hadn’t were all very interested. The competitors all ran out of fuel, it was a long distance flying competition in a local fair, and Canfield had won, thanks to Farrier who at the last minute, had spotted a leak in the fuel tank and patched it up with duct tape.

After class, the day was technically over. It was already 17:00, so those who weren’t boarders left. Unfortunately, they missed something very exciting, which Dawson and Collins were alerted to as they headed upstairs. Buzzing. The same humming as the morning, in fact. What made it even more comical was that they were in the same place at the bottom of the stairs as they had been in the morning. Now in unison, the blondes said,

“Merlins,”

And they briskly walked off outside instead of into their rooms.

The air wasn’t altogether cold even though the sun was going down, in fact it was almost warm still. The humming got louder as the blondes leaned against the outside wall of the building, Canfield and Farrier as well as some other pilots nearby, all watching the distant cloud of planes approach, so far away that one might mistake them for a swarm of insects.

Collins watched as Farrier berated one of his squadron members for standing in the middle of the runway, he was laughing as he did it. Playful. Collins liked seeing Farrier like that, enjoying his time. It was in stark contrast to how the brunette acted when they’d first met, a lot could change in a year, Collins supposed. The planes got closer and the engines got louder, Farrier did another sweeping look of all the other men who had come to watch, and his eyes found Collins standing back against the wall. Dawson didn’t miss the way the older officer’s eyes lingered on his friend, and his stomach churned at the possibilities it employed. It was a blink and you’d miss it happening, for as soon as Dawson had realised he’d seen a shift in Farrier’s gaze, the man was turned around facing the planes again. He didn’t know what to think, was something going on? Had he just completely misinterpreted what was actually nothing? Only the low drone of the planes’ engines drowned out Dawson’s panicked thoughts.

Farrier knew it. He knew he’d slipped up, one thing that came from being a pilot for so long was extremely good peripheral vision. That, paired with humans’ innate knack for knowing when someone was looking at them, told him Dawson had seen him look at Collins, and try as he might, he knew he hadn’t been able to keep his gaze completely monotonous as he looked at his partner. His partner. Farrier shook the train of thoughts and focussed on the absolutely beautiful line of Spitfires which were flying in. The sunset illuminated the white half of their underbellies, lighting it up to an almost gold colour. In perfect timing one after the other, as was always the case with the ATA girls, the planes landed. They taxied left and right, snaking down the runway and then finally, came to a halt as the ground crew swarmed over to them. Once again Lucy popped her head out of the leading plane, smiling and waving to the officers and everyone else.

“Evening!” she said, her voice slightly raised as the last few planes’ engines slowing to an almost tractor sounding buzz before shutting off completely, propellers ceasing movement.

“Good evening, Lucy!” Canfield called.

“Busy today, aren’t you!” Farrier said,

“Yep! We only got a break for lunch, been flying everywhere today,” she said, jumping off the wing of the Spitfire with her clipboard in hand.
"They’re so beautiful," Collins said.

"Which birds?" Dawson laughed,

"Well, both, but I meant the planes." Collins said

"You find the women beautiful?" Dawson asked in a tone that nobody could possibly hear, not that anyone was standing near them.

"Yae, just because I’m not attracted to them doesn’t mean I can’t recognise if they’re beautiful." He said, Dawson shrugged, regretting asking the question because it had brought back to the forefront of his mind the lingering gaze Farrier had set upon Collins. He must be making something out of nothing, surely. Maybe he imagined it.

Everyone went inside, it was another beautiful sunset and Collins was glad he got to see two different squadrons worth of planes fly in. Lucy was more rushed the second time, with her and the other women walking briskly past the group around the side of the building, cutting through the carpark to the footpath, but not before a brief smile and wave of her hand towards the two blondes.

That night, Dawson asked for time alone. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to see Collins, it was that he needed time to think about if he was even going to bother saying anything. Time to think if he’d even seen anything happen in the first place. He spent his night writing a letter to send back home about how squadron life was going.

"I can’t believe you didn’t tell me!" Farrier said to Collins who was currently laying in his bed next to him drawing.

"I wasn’t sure if it was my place! Anyway, yae know now." Collins smiled, they were talking about Wingnut and Lucy.

"Sure is a pairing I never expected," the brunette said,

"Neither is this," Collins countered, earning a huffed laugh from Farrier.

"So what are you drawing tonight?" Farrier asked. Collins was on his belly, Farrier laying on his side propped up on his elbow next to the blonde.

"Planes,"

"Which kind?"

"Hurricanes." Collins said,

"Thought you liked Spitfires more," Farrier smiled, rolling half onto Collins’ back, wrapping an arm around him and leaning over the his shoulder to look.

"Maybe, but if I keep romanticising Hurricanes and finding things tae appreciate about them, then I might change my mind. I do fly them, so I shouldn’t be biased against them." He explained.

"Well, that’s a good view to have on it," Farrier said, impressed that Collins had so quickly moved past the huffy stage he was in of preferring the plane he didn’t fly.

"Glad ye think so." Collins said. He’d gotten quite good at drawing planes over his time at Gatwick. Collins was drawing his squadron of planes, lined up down the runway how they were when Lucy and the other ATA girls flew them in.
“Is drawing your favourite pastime?” Farrier asked.

“One of. Flying, drawing, exploring.” Collins listed definitively.

“Exploring what?”

“Places. Going on walks, discovering things.” He explained,

“Sounds fun.”

“It is.” Collins said, and looked up over his shoulder to Farrier, who was still resting half on top of him, though the blonde liked the weight.

“Would you take me exploring in Aviemore, if we ever could?” he asked.

“Farrier, of course! I’d show you all my favourite places, and let you find some of your own!” Collins said, very excited by the prospect that Farrier was interested in exploring his hometown.

“Would you take me exploring around places you know?” he asked Farrier.

“Yes, pet. Any time we could, I would.” He smiled, and a hand came up under Collins’ chin, holding his face in place as Farrier leant down to kiss him. Farrier’s kisses always held a weight behind them, Collins always knew how important he was to Farrier, he could feel the emotion through the man’s lips as they moved against his own. Collins broke the kiss, but only to put his drawing book and pencil on the bedside table. He turned back over to see Farrier sitting half up in bed, waiting patiently.

“Farrier,” Collins began before his brain had caught up with his mouth.

“Yes, pet?” he said, caring and careful voice.

“Ah, I’ll tell yae another time.” Collins said, brushing off Farrier’s attempts to get him to talk. He’d nearly said something that he wasn’t sure was okay to say.

“Well, over the next week or so, I think we should be… Careful,” Farrier said, realising that if Collins didn’t want to tell him whatever it was, he shouldn’t force it.

“Why? We already are.” Collins said.

“Yeah I know, but this afternoon when the new Spits came in, I was just looking around to see who’d come outside and your friend Dawson caught me looking at you.” Farrier said, his voice was tense but his body was relaxed.

“So? You’re very good at acting normal,"

“I know, but sometimes I slip up, and today I did. I think he saw me looking a little too long, I dunno maybe I’m being stupid. I felt his eyes on me though.” Farrier said as he traced his hand over Collins’ shoulder.

“Well, probably best to be safe than sorry,” the blonde said. Farrier hummed in agreement,

“That doesn’t mean anything for us behind closed doors, does it?” Collins asked, eyes flicking down to Farrier’s lips. They smirked at him and he looked back to the man’s eyes which held a look of mischief.

“It doesn’t have to, if you can keep it down.” Farrier said,
“I didnae just mean… Like that,” Collins said,

“I know. But that is a part of us behind closed doors,” Farrier said.

And then before Collins knew it they were rolling over, Farrier’s body on top of his, Farrier’s lips on his once again. It was the nature of their relationship, it had to be whenever possible, or risk it not happening at all. Farrier so desperately wished they had more time, time to set the mood, to make everything more comfortable. It was enough, more than, that he was with Collins, that he was able to call the beautiful man beneath him his own. He just wished it didn’t always have to be like this.

Collins was grateful for any time spent with Farrier, he barely minded that any illicit activity was done in such a manner. There would never be time to make it all special and perfect, but it was in their nature that it was an ad-hoc basis. Whenever it was relatively speaking safe and they had the opportunity. That was enough for them both. Farrier was burning up, his body temperature usually ran hot and whenever he was with Collins it exemplified it. The blonde was already writhing beneath him as he pressed their lips together, it was a sight to behold. It was then that Farrier decided, as if it wasn’t already clear in his head, that tonight was all about Collins. The brunette took his time as he he kissed, licked, sucked. His hand wandered down to the bottom of Collins’ pyjama shirt and began inching it upwards, exposing his beautiful pale skin underneath. Collins then pushed Farrier in the chest so that he sat up, only so the blonde could entirely remove said pyjama top, Farrier followed suit, glad to get rid of a layer. No sooner had Farrier taken his top off over his head did Collins lean forward and crash his lips back onto Farrier’s in a flurry of emotion and need.

They’d done this enough times now that Farrier was beginning to understand what Collins liked, what drove him crazy with lust. It clashed with Farrier’s want to get everything over quickly to be safe, but he knew the blonde got a certain level of enjoyment out of Farrier taking his time. So tonight he did just that, moving his way so slowly down the blonde’s body, kissing his soft skin as he went, splaying a hand over his chest, the one Collins worried didn’t have enough hair but to Farrier was perfect, gnawing a little on his hips, just enough to coax a moan to the surface. But Collins was getting better at keeping things quiet, he swallowed thickly and tried not to allow himself to make a sound. Farrier loved seeing the look on Collins’ face as he tried to suppress it, it was plain to see that it was an uphill battle. Farrier had only had the blonde’s cock in his mouth once before, and it had been too loud of an ordeal to warrant it happening frequently, complain as Collins might. Tonight however, the blonde seemed to be making a real effort, and Farrier didn’t think he could stop his mouth wandering down there if he tried. As he finally reached the band of Collins’ pyjama trousers he reared up to look at the beautiful man beneath him. The one who fell apart so easily, pupils already blown, skin flushed down to his chest. With an aggressive yank, Collins’ trousers were pulled down and completely removed, leaving the blonde feeling, well, naked. He still had something on his mind, he wanted to tell Farrier but couldn’t bring the words to come out of his mouth. Maybe it wasn’t important, Collins reminded himself to focus on the beautiful man in front of him, who was currently kneeling between his sprawled legs, one hand on Collins’ left thigh pushing it wider, the other about to grab his cock. It got Collins every time when he saw that damned smirk, the one Farrier had on his face every singly time without fail. Like he knew what he was doing, the pleasure he was causing, that he secretly enjoyed watching Collins struggle to keep his voice to a minimum. Not so secretly, Collins thought to himself. All thought processes halted shortly thereafter as Farrier finally grabbed Collins’ stiff length, grip strong he rolled his wrist a few times, and soon enough Collins began rolling his hips in time. Farrier hummed deep in his chest with satisfaction. But it wasn’t enough, not tonight. He slowly lowered himself between the blonde’s legs, Collins’ eyes widened a little at the sight.

“Farrier,” he said, going to protest that he mightn’t be able to keep silent.
“Shh,” was all he got in response.

It felt like an order and same as when they were marching out on the tarmac, Collins obeyed.

Silently he watched Farrier descend on him, it was torturous to keep sound from escaping, Collins felt like he was about to spontaneously combust and his only saving grace was the view before him.

He was weak, yet still managing only to let the occasional gasp escape. He was terrified of someone hearing, as was Farrier. That would never change, what was changing was that the blonde was learning not to make such a ruckus. It was difficult when Farrier knew just how to handle him, just what made him tick, what drove him crazy. Like the way he was flicking his tongue over the head of the blonde’s cock every time he let it slide almost out of his mouth, like the way he had one hand gripping a pale thigh and the other reaching up to tweak a nipple. Collins was too far gone to properly realise that the brunette’s hand had left his torso and traversed downwards to grab a handful of his arse. He was brought back to the moment when Farrier, painstakingly slowly let Collins’ cock slide out of his mouth completely, and was moving further down, his gaze honing in on what was below Collins’ cock.

“Hey, wha-“

“Trust me, you’ll like it.” Farrier said quietly, but quiet didn’t mean it wasn’t spoken with such a low husky voice, such a dark undertone that Collins’ stomach didn’t churn just hearing it. Farrier’s mind didn’t click that Collins hadn’t experienced it before. He licked all down the underside of the blonde’s length, further, further until finally he reached the tight curve of the blonde’s arse, and pushed his tongue between the cheeks to the ring of muscle that lay there. Collins choked on his gasp and his head snapped up, Farrier moved away from his body a moment to make sure it was okay. The look in Collins’ eyes said it all, he was clearly surprised by it, and had clearly enjoyed it. Farrier did it again. And again and again until the blonde let his head fall back against the pillow once more, Collins had never felt anything like this but it was calming and exciting all at once. He was relaxing into the sensation when a hand took his cock again, which he’d almost forgotten needed attention the way Farrier was licking into him. As the older pilot tugged on Collins’ prick he stopped his ministrations with his tongue against the blonde’s opening, instead a finger to his lips and sucking it into his mouth.

“Farrier I,” Collins whispered as he watched what was unfolding.

“Mm?”

“I’ve not done that before.”

At that Farrier halted,

“You’re… You’re a virgin?” he asked, failing to stop the wobble in his voice. Collins just looked up at him with those big blue vulnerable eyes.

All Farrier could do was lean over Collins and place a single kiss on his ever soft lips.

“If you don’t want to, tell me to stop.”

“I will.”

And just like that Farrier had laid himself down next to Collins, he wanted to be close to him, close to his face to see, to make sure everything really was okay. He somewhat wished Collins hadn’t just dropped the fact on him right now, but the fact that he’d chosen Farrier to become this close
with was an overwhelming thought. Farrier wasn’t one for emotion but he was quite brimming with it tonight. He swallowed heavily and let his hand slide down to Collins’ core. The blonde’s breath hitched, he tensed as Farrier began to caress him, but he knew it was okay. Farrier was being as careful as he could and Collins knew it. It felt strange as the brunette slid his finger inside. Farrier was watching him like a hawk looking for any sign of discomfort, but there wasn’t any. They let out a shared exhale of breath, and Farrier began a slow pace in and out.

“It’s okay?” he whispered,

“Mm, s’good.” Collins smiled.

Collins was incredibly tight, his body was clamped around Farrier’s finger and he wasn’t sure if the lad was going to loosen up at all, though he was definitely enjoying it, so Farrier chanced moving back to his original position between his sprawled legs. With his other hand he pumped Collins’ length a few times, more than anything to make sure Collins was aware that he was about to suck it into his mouth again. He couldn’t help it, Collins bucked his hips into Farrier’s throat as his mouth wrapped around his cock. The sensations were overwhelming. Farrier let Collins roll his hips into his mouth, it was nothing he couldn’t handle, in fact he enjoyed seeing Collins writhe like that. Deeper and deeper he pushed inside, and deeper and deeper he took Collins in his mouth, until-

“More,” a tiny broken voice came from the blonde mess himself.

Farrier was more than happy to oblige. He slicked up a second finger with his spit, and watched Collins’ face as he pushed both in at once. There was an element of pain, but somehow it was a good pain. Farrier didn’t have slender fingers like he, and two of them inside him was considerable girth. The blonde had a single fleeting thought about something even girthier being inside him but it dissipated as the brunette curled his fingers inside him, eliciting the first moan Collins had let out all night. Then Farrier did it again, all the while diligently sucking his cock hard. It was like the nights where Collins fell asleep while he was still thinking, he could feel his thoughts getting sleepy, less sensical. He could feel his body shutting down around him. It was like that now except instead of everything shutting down around a single emotion of peace, it was pleasure.

More than anything, Farrier felt extremely grateful that Collins had allowed him to do this. He was completely unaware that he hadn’t done anything more serious with the lad from his town, and the thought that he was the first elated him. To hell with the law, at that moment in time Farrier was pouring everything he had into pleasing another man. And it was paying off, Collins whined and his legs came up around Farrier’s back, holding him there. He was on the edge of the see-saw and it only took one particularly strong curl of Farrier’s fingers against his most sensitive spot deep in his body to push him over. Farrier felt it around his fingers before he tasted it down his throat. Collins’ body clamped impossibly tighter around his digits, the blonde’s hips stuttering and his mouth letting out laboured breaths. Bliss.

After carefully removing himself from inside and around Collins, Farrier sat back on his haunches to admire the man before him. Probably the best person Farrier had ever had the privilege of working with, and now more than. He corrected his thoughts, probably the best person he’d met, the only nuance being his mother. The blonde came back around, opening his eyes and blinking a few times before sitting.

“Jesus,” was all he could say.

The two lay together for some time, Farrier stroking Collins’ hair gently as the blonde stared up at the ceiling, half still in a state of surprise.

“Collins, thank you for being comfortable with me tonight.” Farrier said immediately without
registering that he was even about to speak.

“It felt right.” Said the blonde.

“I could tell,” Farrier smirked.

“Not that, but yes that,”

“You’re blushing.”

“Yer talkin’ too much.”

Farrier placed a soft kiss on Collins’ forehead.

“Did I hurt you?”

“Only a little. It felt more, inside.” Collins said, trying to describe the sensation only made it sound stupid.

“I know, stronger.” Farrier smiled.

“You know?”

“Yeah? You didn’t think I’d have tried it?” he laughed.

“And you liked it too?” Collins asked, the redness in his cheeks showing no signs of disappearing.

“Well, yeah I did. But I’m very rarely in the mood for that sort of thing,” he said.

Collins still wanted to tell Farrier what was on his mind, but he knew it wasn’t the sort of thing he should say.

“What’s wrong pet?” came Farrier’s voice, caring and soft and in stark contrast to the husky lust filled voice of mere minutes ago. Drat, Collins thought. Sometimes it was frustrating that Farrier always knew when he had something on his mind.

“Nothin, really.” Collins smiled, standing to get his discarded pyjamas.

“Just funny how much can go on behind closed doors,” he said. It wasn’t what he was going to say, but it also wasn’t untrue.

“Funny indeed, pet.” Farrier said, knowing that it wasn’t what Collins had on his mind. It didn’t matter, and Farrier’s train of thought was cut short by a searing pain from his torso.

“Fuck,” he hissed.

“What?” Collins immediately looked to see Farrier’s hand holding his stomach.

“Bad timing,” the brunette laughed.

“Will yae be alright?” Collins asked, clearly worried.

“Yeah, I’ll try and sleep it off. Maybe in the morning I’ll have a new souvenir.” He laughed,

“You keep your shrapnel?”

“Only the impressive bits. I’m aware that it’s weird.” Farrier said, taking his hand away and relieved that he hadn’t started bleeding. Maybe it was just a one off pain, he got those sometimes
“Maybe you could show me sometime,” Collins said, glad Farrier didn’t seem worried at all.

“I mean, yeah if you’re interested I can pet,” said Farrier, amused someone wanted to see.

That night Collins lay in bed thinking. It was truly frustrating and rather sad that there was nobody he could talk to about he and Farrier. Except maybe Farrier’s friend James, but he was Farrier’s friend, not Collins’. The blonde was worried if he said to Farrier what he wanted to, it would ruin the secret haven they had together. What if Farrier didn’t say it back?

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading, I appreciate every one of you. I'd love to hear what you guys think of my writing, don't be shy!

My Tumblr
Afternoon Pinterest board

So until next chapter everyone, happy reading ❤️
Happy Monday everyone! I hope everyone has a pleasant week ahead of them. I'm on uni holidays now so I have all the free time in the world, woo!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Collins bounded out of the bed feeling on top of the world. After what had transpired last night he felt like he could do anything. He walked down to the dining hall to see Dawson already sitting there.

“Good morning,” the scot said cheerily.

“Morning yourself,” Dawson smiled.

As they lined up for food Collins lay eyes on Farrier for the first time of the day. He looked like he’d slept well, the blonde thought. And for the first time since they’d began their secret endeavours, Collins didn’t feel embarrassed or especially worried the day after. Instead he felt like the secret was even better hidden somehow.

Farrier had indeed gotten a good sleep, the best in a long time which was funny because he’d been saying that to himself about most sleeps nowadays. Things just seemed to be looking up.

“You look well today,” Canfield said as they went to get breakfast.

“Yes, I am. Good thing too, considering the day.” Farrier said,

“Indeed. Better eat quickly then.” Canfield laughed.

“Can’t the other officers let them in?” Farrier grumbled.

“There may be other officers here now Farrier, but we’re still the senior officers. Wouldn’t do well for an officer to let them in and then not know what to do with them!” the old man said.

He was referencing the men who would make up the final two squadrons at Gatwick on the two dozen planes which had been flown in.

After breakfast Collins and Dawson met Davis outside for a day of practicing using the radios properly.

As the squadron stood on the tarmac listening to Davis, they heard synchronised footsteps behind them. Collins turned to see two perfectly grouped squadrons marching in time. Who did they think they were, marching onto the tarmac at Gatwick? It just wasn’t necessary, Collins had been assured that it wasn’t necessary at any aerodrome, that it wasn’t a Gatwick-being-lazy thing. He turned back and gave Davis a quizzical look.

“Those, men, are our two new squadrons. They’ve transferred from other bases.” He said,

“Which bases?” Collins asked.
“No idea, though judging by the fact that they’re marching without being asked to nor needing to, probably Cranwell. That base churns out so many pilots, they don’t have enough planes for them!” Davis laughed. For some reason, Collins didn’t like the two new squadrons. He supposed he shouldn’t judge them for marching out to their planes, if they were trained that way then that was what they knew to be normal. Maybe it stemmed from coming from a small house, one which couldn’t afford to look after more than one child, and that Collins knew to attend Cranwell one had to be extremely well off indeed. He told himself to be grateful for what he had, and from what little Farrier had told him about his past he was from a well of family, and Collins sure had no problems with him. The blonde shook the thought and tried to focus on the task at hand.

Today Davis took the entirety of 102 Squadron up into the air for the first time. It was invigorating to look around and see the Hurricanes all flying together, and Collins was so giddily happy at the controls, still not over being allowed to fly his own plane. The squadron did a sweeping flyover of London, they followed the Thames out almost to Tilbury, and finally back to Gatwick. The scenery was spectacular. Once landed, Farrier’s squadron took off into the sky, and were soon tiny dots too small to make out.

“Looks like they’re grounded today,” Dawson pointed out as both the new squadrons were having a ground talk by officers, presumably the same one about formations that Dawson and Collins had at the beginning of them joining a squadron.

As it turned out, the two new squadrons were filled with a lovely bunch of lads. Protest as Collins might, Dawson insisted they go and welcome the men to Gatwick after lunch.

“Oh, not all of us are from Cranwell.” One of them said, Bradley, who himself had come from Cranwell but claimed not to recognise everyone.

“What’s it like there?” Collins asked.

“It’s wonderful. They are very good instructors who know what they’re doing. They run a tight ship I’ll tell you that!” he laughed. He seemed nice, Collins thought.

“And what should I expect here at Gatwick?” he asked in an accent not unlike Canfield’s.

“The same!” Dawson laughed,

“Don’t have him on, Dawson.” Collins chuckled, as much as he wanted to create a good image for Gatwick, he knew it was no Cranwell.

“It’s nice here. It’s small, friendly I suppose. Probably won’t have the same big base feel as Cranwell.” Dawson said,

“Ye. We board here actually so we spend most of our lives in that building,” Collins said, turning and pointing to the main building, the upper storey of which housed them.

“Ah, I actually moved to the area here once I got transferred. I hadn’t bought, just renting so it wasn’t too much of a drastic change.” He explained. Dawson and Collins walked inside after a bit of socialising with the new squadrons after classes.

“See? Not that bad at all.” Dawson said,

“Yeah, I should have known better than to judge them on their training.” Collins said, embarrassed that he had.

“I mean, it did seem pretty pretentious that they marched over the tarmac when we all just walked.”
Dawson laughed.

“It did,” Collins agreed, and the blondes shared a laugh.

“Is Gatwick really that relaxed, or is Cranwell especially uptight?” he asked, again assuming Dawson knew somehow. Collins had realised that half the time Dawson actually did somehow have an answer.

“Bit of both I would say.”

It was about the answer Collins had in his head, though hearing it from someone else made it more valid in his eyes.

Dawson sneezed,

“Coming early this year!” he laughed, confusing Collins.

“What, your sneeze?” he asked before realising Dawson had been sneezing a fair few times today.

“Oh, hay fever?” he asked.

“Sure is my friend,” Dawson said, pulling a handkerchief out from his pocket.

“I’ve never had that.” Collins commented,

“Well good for you,” Dawson laughed.

Over dinner the officers’ table discussed the new squadrons. Their table had changed a bit since the base’s promotion. Maxwell no longer taught at Gatwick, having been transferred to the midlands. Now the table consisted of Canfield, Farrier, Davis, Grant, Hugh and Walker. Grant was the officer leading 124 squadron on Hurricanes, Hugh was leading 150 squadron on Spitfires, and Walker was the senior ground officer, which came at great amusement to the others considering his name.

“I think they did very well today,” Canfield remarked.

“Glad you think so. Had to let them know it was alright not to yell every single step they were taking in the cockpit,” Grant laughed,

“What, were they trying to tell you as they pushed each button and everything?” Farrier laughed,

“Some were, yes. Something about safety first, I told them it’s more distracting to hear twelve men yelling ‘priming fuel mix now!’” he laughed.

“I guess they run things a little differently at Cranwell,” Hugh said,

“I’ve been there. They do, but not in a bad way. It’s a very prestigious school of flight, they create wonderful pilots.” Canfield said,

“Oh I’m sure they do, I mean we saw today the men from Cranwell. They already knew what they were doing, the formation talks on the ground seemed boring to them!” Hugh laughed. Farrier wasn’t sure how much he liked the fact that Gatwick was changing so much, but at least the company remained excellent, he thought to himself. Gatwick had gotten a few bad eggs in terms of students, but the officers were always top notch.

“How’d your squadron go?” Collins asked as they lay together late at night. The blonde hadn’t
been able to avoid Dawson and if he was being honest with himself, he felt bad for even trying to. It was almost midnight but he was finally alone with Farrier, it felt like it had been an age since, in reality only a day.

“Yeah they were great. We got the formation quite tight in the end, I was very pleased. How did your squadron go?” he asked as he traced circles over Collins’ shoulders as the Scot doodled in his book.

“Ye good. I think we flew well, though Davis probably has a more substantial answer.” He smiled.

“Why are you drawing a horse?” Farrier asked, not laughing but subtly amused.

“You’ll find out in a few days.” Collins said, earning a huff from Farrier, but he didn’t protest, instead he changed the subject to the imminent loss of the mess hall.

“So, I think the radar room is going to be up and running quite soon,” the brunette said.

“Meaning no more dining room?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I suppose our board’ll go down if we aren’t paying for cooked meals,” Collins laughed,

“Yes actually it will,” Farrier chuckled.

“Guess I need tae get better at cooking more than claphot and mince.” Collins laughed, earning a ruffle of his hair from Farrier.

“I like your culture a great deal, you know.” His voice rumbled.

“I know yae do. Always making nice comments about it,” Collins smiled

“I’ve come to appreciate English culture as well. I didnae guess it would be so different from Scottish, but it is.” He said, Farrier hummed.

Farrier found it particularly difficult after Collins left his room that night to get to sleep, or even just to stop thinking about the blonde. He’d been thinking about Collins more and more recently, Farrier hadn’t realised it was possible to think about him more than he already was, but apparently it was possible because here he was, awake in bed at nearing 02:00 hours wishing Collins was next to him. Then that old feeling, which he didn’t get so much anymore, the feeling that he was way too close and that this entire thing was one big danger, one big mistake. The thought physically hurt, deep in his gut as it passed through Farrier’s mind, it took him a moment to realise it was his injury playing up. He reached down and to his annoyance more than anything else, a tiny shard of shrapnel had made its way out of his body. Nothing impressive enough to add to his morbid collection, but enough to hurt. He swore in annoyance and flicked it into the bin in the corner.

As time went on, Farrier was learning to care for himself more. Years ago he wouldn’t have done a thing about it, let it bleed openly, let his clothes stain, not done anything because what was the point? There was no point as far as he could tell, no point of anything. Now there was purpose in his life, not just Collins, of course that was one thing that made him feel positive, but being part of a squadron. Being the lead pilot of one, it made Farrier feel like he had something real to offer instead of milling around a training base that the bigger bases picked on for not being prestigious enough, for being one of the first bases to open its doors to anyone from any social class. So, he got out of bed and walked over to the little en-suite. He washed the wound with water, carefully making sure there were no other pieces of metal about to make an appearance. Then he got a
bandage out of his chest of drawers, he’d stocked up on them for a moment like this, so he wouldn’t have to wander down to the medical building. He took a cotton gauze and held it to his stomach as he readied the bandage with his other hand and then carefully, slowly stuck it down.

He felt good looking after himself.

Collins was fast asleep, and his last thought of the day had been the decision to not tell Farrier what he wanted to. It seemed like the kind of thing that would upset Farrier to hear, maybe even anger him. If it didn’t, then Collins still knew it was too dangerous a phrase to say, in the world they lived in.

In a few days’ time, the ceremony day for the Squadron insignia had come. Everyone was under strict instruction not to wear uniform to the event, interestingly enough. It was a social gathering, they just happened to be undertaking RAF squadron business while there. That’s how Davis had phrased it anyway.

“But why can’t they be held together?” Collins asked Farrier, he’d wandered into the older man’s bedroom to see what he was up to during the day, they’d been grounded from flying due to high winds not suitable for newly trained pilots apparently. Farrier had been in the middle of trying to find a nice outfit that wasn’t uniform and didn’t look exactly like uniform even though it wasn’t.

“Because it’s a squadron thing! It’s about getting to know your wingmen, all that.” Farrier answered as if it was completely obvious. Farrier’s squadron was having their ceremony on the same night, but at a different venue. Canfield figured if the two squadrons were formed at the same time they may as well decide on an insignia at the same time as well. Now he had the task of deciding which to tag along with, though something told him Farrier’s squadron, because apart from him being closest with Farrier than anyone else at the base, going with Farrier meant going in his car which Canfield absolutely loved.

“So where are you and your squadron going?” Collins asked.

“Oh some pub in London, Canfield decided, I couldn’t be bothered.” Farrier replied,

“That’s how Davis had phrased it anyway.

“Where are you going?”

“Dunno, I’ll have tae go look at the noticeboard. Davis said it was very local though,” the blonde replied.

“You’re funny, pet. You don’t seem to like spontaneity, so I’d have assumed it would make you nervous not to know.” He thought aloud as he rummaged through his cupboard.

“Well if it’s local, presumably I can get there walking so it donnae matter if I don’t know. I’d follow others from the squadron if I didn’t know how to get to it,” he explained, delicately running his hand over the various objects on Farrier’s dressing table.

“Well you should go have a look now. Shouldn’t be in here too long during the day, pet.” Farrier said, finally pulling a shirt out of the cupboard before huffing as he realised it was almost the same shade blue as the uniform. He couldn’t help that he liked blue even for civvies.

“Alright, well, I hope yae find something nice to wear.” Collins smiled.

The only reason he’d found time to duck into Farrier’s room at all during the day was because Dawson said he was off to post a letter, Collins assumed it was for his family so he said he’d stay
around the base. The blonde did feel slightly bad that he didn’t write to his family much, but Dawson just seemed to have a better relationship with his than Collins did. He wandered downstairs to look at the bulletin board. Sure enough there was a very unassuming, unceremonious piece of paper pinned to it. There was also one for the Spitfire squadron. The note which was relevant to 102 Squadron read:

*Squadron insignia/motto presentation night for 102 Hurricane Squadron

*Saturday 13th May, 1939 at The Golden Deer. 19:00-21:00. Casual dress.*

Collins mentally kicked himself for not checking sooner. It was Stella’s pub! The blonde chuckled as he walked back upstairs, it was indeed very local. Collins hadn’t realised until now that they would pick a squadron motto as well as an insignia tonight. He rushed up into his room, walking past Dawson’s room alerted the boy who had just gotten back from delivering his letter, that someone, probably Collins, was in the hallway. Nobody else seemed to wander around as much as they did, probably electing to spend most of their free time off base. Considering the fast pace of the footsteps, Dawson doubted it was one of the older officers, sounded much too spritely.

Collins got into his room and took out the drawing he’d done as his entry. It was a horse, symbolising strength, wildness and freedom in Collins’ eyes. He thought it fit a Hurricane squadron well, because their planes were sometimes known as the ‘workhorses’, and weren’t as sleek and slim as their younger cousin the Spitfire, they were built to be more robust and strong in appearance, kind of like a horse. Horses reminded Collins most of freedom out of all the words he’d associated with the animal for the sake of the insignia entry. He’d written a short explanation on the back of the page listing words which described horses and how they accurately represented the squadron’s nature. There were only a handful of wild horses in Scotland, they were very rare to see but sometimes around the mountains out of Aviemore, Collins had spotted them on his walks. They were always so beautiful and strong and completely untouched, he remembered sitting to watch them graze one day, they only stayed for a fleeting few minutes before all lifting their heads at a sound and galloping off into the wilderness. Collins was glad he had such opportunities during his upbringing in the highlands, he doubted Wingnut who grew up in London had such chances, except maybe on holiday. A sharp knock at his door brought Collins out of his thoughts.

“Collins?” it was Dawson.

“Aye, come in.”

The blonde came in with a grin on his face.

“Posted the letter to my family, hope they get it soon.” He said, and went to look at what his friend was holding.

“Good to hear, I’m sure they’ll love tae read it when it arrives.” He said.

“What’s that?” Dawson asked,

“Well, I decided I want to enter a painting into the insignia competition.

“It’s not a competition mate, I don’t even know if you can do that.” Dawson said. Collins realised he may have misinterpreted the whole thing.
“But the suggestions box, surely we can put things in it, like suggestions of entire designs?” he said, hoping all his efforts hadn’t been in vain. He’d even painted it with the paints from Farrier to show which colours he wanted it to be.

“Give it a go for sure, mate.” Dawson said, reaching out to be given the piece of paper, which Collins did.

“Mate, this is amazing.” Dawson said, the smile still having not left his face from the moment he’d walked into the room. Both blondes were in good moods today, it seemed.

“Thanks, took me a while to decide what to design.” He answered.

“Good choice, horses are great. I see similarities with the men in our squadron too,” he said. Collins hadn’t considered that. He’d been too preoccupied thinking about how to relate them to the planes themselves instead of the pilots.

“Oh ye? How?” he asked,

“Well, horses are intelligent, they’re social animals being in herds, they look out for each other, that sort of thing.” He explained, Collins would have to add this to the explanation on the back, he thought to himself.

“Very true,” he said.

“I need to think of a motto tae go along with the insignia.” He said to Dawson,

“Hmm, well most of them are in Latin aren’t they?” Dawson said, and Latin was something neither of them knew.

In the end, Dawson was the one to come up with something that might slide as a squadron motto. A while later they had a written translation in Latin from Canfield, who had promised not to tell Davis or anyone else what the motto idea was. The blondes walked back up to Collins’ room, and the scot carefully wrote the motto onto the yellow ribbon design below the insignia

“Done!” he said triumphantly.

“It looks well good, Collins.” Dawson smiled. The two hurried downstairs to stuff the entry into the box before heading back up to play a few rounds of cards to shake their nerves for the night. Collins because his entry might be picked, and Dawson because Stella may be there.

Farrier had finally found something to wear, and it didn’t look like it was uniform, a bonus because it meant Canfield wouldn’t be passive aggressive towards him for it. He sorely wished he could attend Collins’ squadron evening, but even so he was excited for his own. He’d never been to one of these before. His old squadron had been formed before he joined it, and back during the war there weren’t these celebration nights for all the bells and whistles. It was exciting.

Chapter End Notes

As always thank you all SO MUCH for reading. I love writing and it makes me very happy that others enjoy reading it.
This is my tumblr.
This is my Afternoon Pinterest board
And thank you to everyone who left kudos/comments, it makes my heart warm to see that I impact others in a positive way.
Until next chapter my loves, happy reading ❤️
Monday is here, bit more of a Collins' centred chapter this week.

Evening had finally crept around, and it was time to leave Gatwick for the ceremonies. Everyone was on best behaviour, if a little nervous.

“You’ll be fine!” Collins said to Dawson as he watched his friend fuss over his hair in the mirror.

“I know, I know. It’s just, you know.” Dawson said,

“Very descriptive,” Collins laughed.

“I think I want to ask Stella to dance tonight.” He said. It was the most nervous Collins had ever seen Dawson.

“Then do it!” he grinned,

“Dawson, yer the most chivalrous person I’ve met, if Wingnut can find a lady friend, you most definitely can. Plus, you’re dressed so well!” He reassured Dawson, “Hope you’re right.” He said, and they walked out into the hallway.

“You look fine as well,” Dawson said, half in a dazed state worrying about Stella.

“Oh, thanks.” Collins said, now worrying if he looked underdressed. Dawson didn’t say things he didn’t mean though, so that fact put the blonde’s mind at ease about his choice of clothing. Once they reached the bottom of the stairs, Canfield and Farrier came into view, chatting to each other by the front door. Collins’ steps nearly faltered at the sight of Farrier wearing a deep red button up. The second thought after the fact that he never knew red could make someone look that good, was that it was likely a statement so that Canfield wouldn’t pester him about looking like he was in uniform, a common complaint Farrier had about the older man whenever they went out. The blondes smiled and said their quick ‘hello’s before walking out the front door.

“So,” Dawson began.

“Don’t.” Collins said shortly. If there was one thing he didn’t want to talk about currently, it was if he still fancied Farrier, Dawson was usually very good with not talking about what Collins clearly didn’t want to, but that particular topic seemed overly interesting to him and Collins didn’t like that.

“I was going to ask if you have any tips for asking Stella to dance.” Dawson said,

“Oh,”

“What did you think I was going to ask?”

“Nothing. As for Stella, she’s shy. Don’t be too forward, don’t block her in so she can only answer
‘yes’. Make sure she knows she can say no if she wants.” Collins said, though he felt like he wasn’t really the authority on the matter.

When they arrived, the venue was packed, because as well as the usual amount of people there was a training squadron there, as well as some officers to help Davis through the process.

Dawson was glad of this because it meant he could blend in with the crowd when speaking to Stella.

“You’ll be fine!” Collins nudged Dawson as he spotted the woman on stage, already getting right into the groove of the song she was playing.

“I know, I’m being stupid.” Dawson almost laughed.

Once all twelve members of the OTU squadron had arrived, the event began with a round of drinks, setting the relaxed nature for the rest of the evening.

“Now, I know we’re all here to decide on the insignia and motto and all that, but that doesn’t mean we can’t enjoy ourselves and get to know one another more!” Davis said in the break between sets from Stella and her band. Dawson was trying to listen to Davis, but was also trying to slip away to see Stella. All he could see from his seat next to Collins was the dark mess of her short hair. She never seemed to do much to it, not like the other woman who looked like they spent hours making their hair perfect, curly and shiny, hers was just a bit frazzled and completely natural looking. He imagined it might be unattractive to some, but Dawson didn’t mind.

After an announcement from Davis that all the men should make sure any suggestions are in the box, he gave some time for everyone to go up and write anything they needed to and place it in the box, and Dawson took the time to duck off and catch Stella as she was having her Mary Pickford.

“Stella?” he said nervously. Her eyes widened and she looked to who had said her name.

“Oh! It’s you Dawson!” she smiled, putting her drink down.

“How are you?” he asked, realising she appeared nervous.

“I’m well, what are you doing here?” she smiled, playing with the hem of her long skirt.

“Ah, my training squadron is having some sort of event night, we’re choosing the squadron insignia and motto, but just going out to have a good time as well.” He explained.

“Oh! Are you and Jack in the same squadron?” she asked, now looking around. Her eyes landed on Collins, who was looking over to see how they were going, upon being spotted he waved.

“Oh he is! Are you two still good friends?” she asked, wondering why Collins hadn’t come to see her as well considering she knew him a lot more than Dawson.

“Best friends, yes.” Dawson smiled. Stella took another drink,

“What’s your first name?” she asked. The question surprised Dawson a lot, which in turn amused him because it was such a normal question.

“Alexander.”

“It’s a nice name, are you ever Alex?”

“No. Always Alexander if you don’t mind,” he smiled and Stella nodded.
“So, do you play all night here?” he asked.

“Not all night, but we have two more sets to do.” She explained,

“Must be exhausting, your breaks aren’t long are they?”

“Not usually, ten to twenty minutes,” she smiled.

“Do you come here when you aren’t playing then?” Dawson asked, realising if she was performing for most of tonight then he wouldn’t get a chance. He was half relieved.

“Sometimes, more often other pubs though. This one just feels like a sort of work area since it’s where I perform. Why?” she asked, she was trying to maintain a smile but was nervous as to why Alexander was asking her all this.

“Well, maybe you’d like to come here, or somewhere else, with me as company.” He said. Dawson hadn’t planned on going all the way to asking her on a date tonight, but a dance didn’t seem like it was on the table.

“Oh, do you fancy me?” Stella asked bluntly. She was looking away now, blushing.

“Maybe I do.” Dawson said, dipping his head a little to coax her to look back up. She did so, but her gaze was shifting around.

“Stella, if you don’t want to, it’s okay, I don’t mind.” He said, remembering what Collins had told him.

“Well, it’s just that I’m already spoken for.” She said quietly.

“I’m sorry.” She added, and she looked very genuinely sorry for hurting Dawson’s feelings.

“It’s alright, whoever he is has gotten himself a real gem, Stella.” He smiled, hiding his embarrassment and disappointment.

“Thanks,” she said, a small smile tugging at her lips.

“Break’s almost over.” she added, implying she wanted Dawson to go back to his group.

“Oh, I’ll let you get back to it. I hope you have a lovely evening Stella.” He said,

“Same to you.” She smiled, though as soon as he’d turned around the smile dropped sharply off her face. It had felt truly awful to say no to Alexander, who was a very lovely gentleman, but it simply wasn’t an option to string him along if she had someone already.

“So?” Collins asked, struggling to contain a grin.

“She’s spoken for.” Dawson said quietly.

“Oh. Dawson, I didnae know, I would have said something-”

“It’s… It’s fine mate. Let’s just enjoy the night.” Dawson cut him off, something he didn’t tend to do, which was what alerted Collins that it was not indeed fine.

“I know yae like her, mate. It’s alright not to be fine.” Collins said, but Dawson just put on a smile and brushed it off.
“Maybe we’ll talk about it later. I just want to enjoy the night, yeah?” he said, and of course Collins obliged.

Soon, Davis decided he’d given the pilots enough time to put their last minute suggestions into the box.

“Right 102 squadron, are we ready to start reviewing everything?” he asked, and the group quietened down. Davis had pulled a few tables together around which the men now crowded. On the tables laid out neatly were some templates and mottoes from the Air Ministry, as well as presumably everything that had been put inside the suggestion box. There was a lot more in it than Collins imagined there would be, but there was only one visual entry. His.

Farrier was less stressed than he should be, Canfield being who he was picked Farrier’s old favourite pub to have the ceremony in. The one he once frequented so much he knew the bartender almost like a friend. There were a few snarky comments in the suggestion box but nothing actually helpful, to the man’s disappointment.

“Well men, I suppose we’re picking from a template. But please, not a bloody lion. Britain has too many lions on their emblems,” he laughed, and everyone unanimously agreed.

There was a lined piece of paper on the table, and everyone was to list which design they liked. All had been numbered. On another piece of paper, they had to list which motto they liked, which had numbers as well. Collins’ design, since it incorporated Dawson’s motto idea on the same page, had been given two numbers. The other template designs were good, great in fact. They certainly didn’t have the very handmade look that Collins’ did.

“Who entered that?” Davis asked, pointing at it, waking the blonde from his thoughts. Everyone around the table shook their heads, including him. Maybe one day he’d reveal himself, but tonight Collins opted to remain the mystery artist.

Everyone wrote down their votes, Collins refused to look at the numbers on the page as he wrote his favourite down, which was his own, and Dawson’s motto to go with it. In his mind, they were a package deal.

There were more rounds of drinks before the winning design and motto were finally announced at the end of the night, Collins and Dawson alike both buzzing with anxiety, though for different reasons. Dawson realised he hadn’t thought it through, speaking to Stella. He hadn’t realised that she’d have to keep performing after, and she certainly didn’t look herself on stage. Gone was the woman who got so lost in the music her eyes would close, instead was a nervous looking girl, standing bolt upright playing the clarinet plainly. Dawson was glad most of the audience weren’t paying enough attention to bat an eye.

“Now men, according to out democratic voting system the winner is number 2, in both categories!” Davis said, holding up the piece of paper on which Collins’ design was painted, and Dawson’s motto written.

“Shit.” He said under his breath. The rest of the squadron began to cheer and clap, so he did the same to blend in, though Davis caught his eye just before he did so, and smiled a knowing smile. Collins tried to return it best he could, but he hadn’t honestly expected his entry to be taken seriously. It was a horse, and while a beautiful animal, were sometimes associated with working class, with lower standards. That and it was a bloody amateur painting, not a template from the Air Ministry. Certainly not the same golden image as the lion, there had been a scribbled comment on
a scrap of paper in the suggestion box stating ‘not a fucking lion.’ Which got a good laugh out of everyone, and even though it of course wasn’t counted as an entry, even got a few votes for it as a motto from some men apparently willing to forgo their vote for a joke instead.

“Well to the mystery man who entered this, congratulations!” Davis said, and proceeded to read out the text on the back of the page explaining the meaning behind the design.

A horse. It is a beautiful strong animal, one which the Hurricane shares a great deal of similarity with. They are capable, enduring, smart and fast. The workhouse, as we all know, is the nickname for the Hurricane. Horses also resonate with us as a squadron. They are herd animals, who look out for each other and keep together, they are strong in numbers, which isn’t to say they’re weak alone. Most of all, horses symbolise freedom, something which this squadron oozes.

The motto is ‘sumus coram tempestate’. It means ‘we are the eyes of the storm’. A play on words in a few ways, firstly that we pilot Hurricanes, we are the eyes of planes named after a storm. Also, the eye of the storm is the calmest point, offering refuge from the dangerous nature of everything around it. It could also mean we are watching over those in a storm, protecting from anything it brings.

Collins walked back to base in a dreamlike state, which worked well for Dawson who was in a quiet mood.

“Cannae believe it.” Collins said.

“I can, it was a bloody good design.” Said Dawson.

They walked along in silence for a while, a decent length behind the rest of the squadron.

“So, you’re fine with Stella saying no?” Collins asked,

“I mean, I can’t not be fine with it, can I? It’s not her fault, I’m disappointed yeah, but I can’t hold her to it.” he said,

“How are ye so nice to everyone?” Collins laughed,

“Well, it won’t do any good to misplace emotion. If I blamed Stella I’d be a fool,” he said.

Dawson felt a bit better after a game of cards that night, though was still ridden with guilt for making Stella perform with such weight on her slight shoulders, he blamed himself for not thinking that through.

“So, Dawson found out Stella is taken tonight,” Collins said to Farrier, watching the man undress from the red shirt which Collins had already scorned him for not wearing more often.

“Did he now? Well a smart young lass like her, it’s no wonder, she was lovely when I met her.” He said, Collins hummed in agreement.

“He seemed quite upset about it. Donnae think I’ve seen Dawson upset about something before.” The blonde pondered, Farrier came to sit next to him.
“Everyone gets upset, especially about sensitive topics including those of the heart, pet. He’ll get over it.” Farrier said, and hearing it from his deep rumbling voice made it so much more valid than hearing it in Collins’ thoughts. Then there was that familiar tugging feeling in Collins’ gut, a thought so powerful he could physically feel it. What he wanted to tell Farrier. He hadn’t admitted it properly to himself yet. He knew it was there, but he refused to give it a name, give it a voice. He knew exactly what the feeling was, but was scared that if he even thought the words, that he’d say them, and that it would mess everything up. Farrier nudged him and their eyes found each other’s. The brunette raised a questioning eyebrow, and Collins just looked at him. There was nothing to say, because if he opened his mouth he’d say it.

“Goodness, you’re beautiful.” Farrier murmured, to Collins’ relief breaking the tension in his mind.

“Yer not too bad yourself,” he smiled, earning him another nudge.

Farrier, though he didn’t know it, was still in emotional denial. If he wasn’t, he’d have realised what Collins had, long ago.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone made it this far, thanks for reading.

I honestly don't know at all if there's actually anybody still reading this story, but if you are, thank you.

tumblr
afternoon pinterest board
Combat Training

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday, everyone. Phew, the Christmas tree went up yesterday! Let's see how long we can go before one of the cats pulls it down.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“See the bulletin board?” Dawson asked Collins over breakfast. He shook his head,

“Says the mess hall won’t be a mess hall this time next week.” Dawson announced.

“Geez mate, you never check that board unless someone actually tells you to!” he laughed.

“Shite, well no I don’t. What are we supposed to do after next week then?”

“Get good at cooking I suppose.” Dawson said,

“It’s weird that it’ll be a base that offers boarding but not food, it almost feels like they’re trying to deter boarders but not explicitly kick us out.” Dawson thought aloud.

“Maybe they are. Maybe they can somehow run better as a fulltime base if there aren’t boarding students.” Collins replied.

“Yeah, that’s what I was thinking. Too bad I like boarding here, even if we don’t get served food there are showers here, and the kitchen I’m sure will be better stocked.” Dawson smiled.

“Cannae imagine trying to make myself breakfast with fifty other boarders in there.” Collins said, realising only now just how small the kitchen was.

“That’s true. I’m sure the senior officers’ll figure something out, mate.” Dawson said.

By the end of the week, the beaten up wall in the middle of the field had finally been taken away and replaced with a new one for the two newer squadrons. Today the original Hurricane and Spitfire squadrons began air combat training. Though Farrier had gotten his squadron flying sooner than Davis, they were at the same pace now, Davis put it down to Farrier being an older pilot and not being as apprehensive about teaching a whole squadron whilst in the air.

Today however, it was one young pilot with the officer at a time, it was an exercise of tailing, learning how far was too far and how close was too close. It was also the first day on which the new Flying Officers would be allowed to press the fire button on the control column. It wouldn’t fire bullets, of course, but each plane had a camera fixed inside the wing, and would take a picture with every tracer round, whether the guns were loaded or not.

“Collins, you’re up!” Davis called from his Hurricane, Collins made sure all his kit was on, with a fleeting thought of how much longer it would take for the personal kit he ordered to arrive, and jumped into the nearest Hurricane. Once in the air, Davis instructed him how far back to fly, Collins learned around 400 feet away was optimal, because the guns didn’t point straight out from the leading edge of the plane’s wings, they were concentrated in a small scattering around 400 feet away. Davis explained that they were aligned to be slightly scattered because if they were
concentrated on one spot, although the impact would be more severe, it would be much harder to get a hit.

“Fire when ready,” came the crackle of Davis’ voice through the radio, but as soon as he’d said it his plane dipped off sharply to the right.

“If you can catch me!” he laughed. Right, Collins thought. This was going to be a mock dogfight. He knew the controls, he knew the plane. He hadn’t tried anything like this yet though. He zoomed down after Davis, and when the body of the plane in front of him lined up with the crosshair, for a second everything stopped as he held his breath, and pushed the little brass button under his thumb. There was no sound, no deafening clatter of machine guns in the wings, nothing. But he’d pressed the trigger for the first time. A thousand thoughts came crashing into Collins’ mind all at once, the fact that he’d just pressed the ‘kill button’ as Farrier called it, that one day there would actually be bullets flying out of the plane, that one day it wouldn’t be a friendly senior officer in front of him, that one day it would be real.

“Wake up, Collins!” Davis’ voice rang through the headset, Collins hadn’t realised his instructor’s plane wasn’t ahead of him anymore, it was high up to his starboard.

“Right, sorry officer.” The blonde muttered and pulled the Hurricane into a climb to reach Davis and take another round of photos. He reached the other plane, and lined up again. This time he was ready, and pressed the fire button with sureness. A few more times, and their dance around the sky was over. The Hurricanes came floating down, wheels extending from the bellies of the planes. Their landing on the runway marked the completion of 102 squadron’s flying for the day, allowing Farrier with 107 squadron to occupy the sky.

“So how was all that, men?” Davis asked the group as they walked to put their kits away, he was answered with a chorus of enthused voices, though Collins’ wasn’t one of them.

“Now men, hang about for around two hours, and we’ll have the film developed. We’ll sit and watch what everyone did, and then we’ll put on some footage from planes in real dogfights to compare.” Davis announced.

“So Collins, liked it?” Dawson asked as they walked out the front of Gatwick up the street.

“I did, but at first it sort of had me, I dunno. Stuck.” He said.

“It did feel weird, to press the fire button. But mate, if the time comes and there’s an unfriendly foe ahead of you, don’t get stuck. It could spell victory for the other man,” Dawson warned.

“I know.”

“You’ll be fine, just don’t think too much.” Dawson said as they rounded the corner leading to the sandwich shop.

“I’ll try, anyway how’d ye go?” he asked directing the conversation away from himself.

“Good, good. I thought it was really fun to be able to properly follow Davis in a dogfight situation, felt like the first time we were given more control of the planes instead of just flying in bloody lines and circles!” he said.

Farrier was always frustrated by this exercise because he couldn’t tell when the man behind him was firing, he wanted to know when they were pushing that button and give immediate input and guidance.
It also frustrated him that he had to go easy in the mock dogfighting, because it was so much more fun when he flew as hard as he could but a new pilot wouldn’t be able to keep up with that. Nonetheless his entire squadron had given it a go by the end of the afternoon.

“Now men, wait a couple hours and your film will be done, then I want everyone inside to watch and get some feedback, and we’ll compare your footage to that of actual combat.” He explained just as Davis had.

After a wander around the grounds with Dawson, Collins deliberately walking them far from the tree on which the identity disks hung, they headed back to the classroom. Once there they found everyone already seated and the blinds already pulled down.

Watching their own actions in film was exciting and very helpful, Collins learned that he needed to put more of a lead on his aim, lest his bullets fall behind his target. Dawson learned that he needed less of one, as his would shoot ahead of any target. It was an interesting study on each of the men’s techniques, thankfully for Collins there was no mention of bad aim on his behalf, which he was proud of.

Farrier had hoped to catch Collins after his squadron had finished watching their films, but his own squadron’s film was ready so he ducked into the next classroom over and began to set the projector up.

This was by far the best part of the exercise, Farrier thought. Unlike being in the air and not being able to give instruction on the go, when they sat and watched the films together he was able to do exactly that, just how he liked to teach. He was glad that for the most part, his squadron pilots were doing exceedingly well. Some needed a little direction here and there, but nobody had any major issues with their aim, just learning how much of a lead to give which would of course, come naturally and was something most new pilots had to learn as they went. It made it more difficult to imagine the lead when there were no bullets coming out of the plane.

“So what did Davis have to say about you?” Farrier asked. Instead of sitting in bed doing nothing, they were attempting a game of chess with an old board Farrier had under his bed, much to Collins’ annoyance because he’d never mentioned it before, and the blonde liked board games. Eventually Farrier lost.

“Yer not concentrating!” Collins said, placing him in checkmate.

“Hard to, playing you.” Was all Farrier could muster before wiping the pieces off the board and into their box.

“Ah! What do yae do after a game?” Collins tutted, holding his right hand out.

“You shake hands,” Farrier said, rolling his eyes but taking Collins’ hand and shaking it. It was strange, to carry out such a typically platonic act with him now, as had it been when they’d shaken hands at graduation.

“Come on, another game.” The blonde said,

“No, chess takes ages!” Farrier said, taking the board.

“Only if you don’t pay attention!”

“Well my attention has run thin tonight, for this at least.” Farrier said, and if it weren’t for the very specific tone in the last part of his sentence Collins would have sat there without a care in the world, but he had a feeling Farrier had other plans for how he’d be positioned tonight.
How Collins loved the dark look in Farrier’s eyes, they said so much without words and if the blonde was even considering making some sort of stand, those eyes told him that he wasn’t going to be doing any such thing.

Both Farrier and Collins woke the next morning feeling completely sated, for it was the first time that both of them had gotten their end away on the same night together. Farrier had insisted Collins be first, and the blonde wasn’t in a mood to disagree. He trudged down to the dining hall, his mind not yet working fast enough to wonder why there was so much chatter coming from the direction of the kitchen and so little coming from the direction of the mess hall. It was only when he went down the flight of stairs and opened the door did Collins realise that he not only hadn’t ever read the bulletin board, but had forgotten what Dawson told him. The room was completely empty of people, and everything had been set up for radar use. There were machines everywhere, radios, headsets, mapping tables with the old dining room chairs situated around them. Well, Collins thought to himself. After a brief self-guided tour around the new radar room, the blonde headed back upstairs to the small kitchen. At least there were less men here now that Gatwick was an appointed fighter station with four squadrons, rather than hundreds of training cadets. Still, fifty men in one kitchen at once sounded like one big headache. Luckily, not all of them were boarders, which as much as it was a good thing in Collins’ mind, made the corridors quieter, it did irk him. Gatwick was a college, meaning it had the provisions to house pilots if need be as boarders. He thought most men would jump at the chance to live on base, he guessed not everyone was as thrilled to wake up and look onto a runway as soon as they opened their window every morning, though the blonde couldn’t imagine why not. He’d also overheard Canfield talking about how when Gatwick was a training station any of the students could come for the provided meals, boarders or not, but now that it was an operational base ad especially now that they had no mess hall, it was boarders only who could use the kitchen out of flying hours.

Farrier had elected to wait until the younger pilots had all eaten before even bothering to go into the kitchen. He sat in his office with a cup of tea reading the paper, something he’d begun to do recently which the brunette was finding enjoyable in some ways, and depressing in others. It seemed most of the news was bad news these days, though he felt better knowing what was going on in the world than waiting for news to filter down the line from Canfield, who was sometimes not altogether reliable in terms of keeping the story straight. Today he learned something which he was surprised he hadn’t been told personally by anyone, that the RAF had lost control of the Air Fleet Arm, and that the control was now being passed to the Royal Navy. He huffed and turned the page away from the annoyance, hoping to find something nicer to read about.

“It’s so unbelievable that we get to fly almost every day now!” Dawson said as he and Collins ate their toast whilst walking down the hallway, the kitchen feeling more like a crowded train with no seating areas and barely any standing areas left than an actual kitchen.

“It’s great, and honestly I’ve learned more in the planes than in the classroom, no surprise there.” Collins agreed,

“Wouldn’t want to tell the senior officers that,” Dawson laughed.

It was warming up enough that Collins didn’t wish he had his own Irvin jacket, something which had been frequenting his thoughts for most of the time he’d been flying in Hurricanes. Unfortunately for him, it was because of the warmer weather that Davis had chosen today to try out some altitude training, considering that even up at 20,000 feet it would be warmer today than it had been.
“I thought you said you were getting soft, thinking it’s ‘cold’ in England,” Dawson teased as they walked to the planes.

“I did say that, and I fear it’s true.” Collins laughed as they climbed up onto the wings and hopped into the cockpits, sharing one last grin before shutting the canopies.

It was still freezing up in the air, and Collins was very glad the uniforms were thick wool as they reached their highest altitude for the day. The corners of the windshield had begun to frost over, as sunny as it looked outside the blonde didn’t want to chance opening his canopy to find out how much colder it would be than it looked. For the most part, everyone was fine. Collins had never been one for motion sickness, but he did feel rather lightheaded as they came up to altitude, even with the oxygen mask on. Once they’d flown about for some time he felt better, though by that time the squadron began to lower the altitude causing the woozy feeling to return briefly.

After a debriefing on the ground and Collins being assured that everyone else excepting Davis had felt the same and that it was normal, they filled out their flying logbooks and disbanded.

It was getting harder for Collins to keep a lid on his feelings, by the end of the week, the thing he wasn’t saying felt like emotional baggage weighing him down. He felt like he was going to burst every second he was with Farrier, and it terrified the blonde to his very core that he just didn’t know if Farrier felt the same way at all. He was sat on the brunette’s bed half listening to him talk about the differences between being on active duty during peacetime and wartime, it seemed that now Farrier had finally realised without a doubt, that talking about things that made him nervous did actually help, he wasn’t just saying it in the hopes he’d believe himself, he genuinely did believe it now.

“What do you think pet?” he asked,

“Uh, about what?”

“What I just said.”

“Uh,”

“Were you listening?” Farrier laughed.

“I was trying tae. Lot on my mind.” Collins said. He didn’t often say things like that, alluding to things instead of just saying them. Farrier moved a hand to the Scot’s hip,

“Want to talk about it?” he asked, completely letting go of the fact that Collins hadn’t been listening to him.

“Maybe one day.” He said, now that worried Farrier.

“Collins, I respect you don’t want to tell me, but if it’s something I’ve done, or well, if it’s something about things I’ve told you. I dunno, if maybe you’re still processing things, I want to know.” He said, immediately his stomach dropped wondering if in fact his history really had affected the blonde more than he let on.

“What? No, it’s not that Farrier. Nothing tae do with that sort of thing.” He assured him. The brunette ruffled Collins’ hair,

“Well, if you ever want to speak about it, I’ll listen.” He smiled.

It had begun to weigh on Collins, and affect his mood for the worse that he had this thing that he so
desperately wanted to tell Farrier, that he was fairly certain he never could, or never should. Farrier was looking at him now, just looking. He wasn’t trying to figure out what Collins had to say or trying to get him to talk with a certain look. He was appreciating what he had in front of him. Collins really was a gift from above, and it made Farrier nervous that there was something he didn’t want to talk about, but he of course, respected privacy. The longer he looked at the blonde, who appeared to be trying to figure something out in his head, the more his emotions bubbled up to the top, he wasn’t used to feeling so happy, so good that he might spontaneously combust and due to the uncertainty of the mere feeling Farrier forced himself to look away. Had he allowed himself to just feel, perhaps he would have realised why his emotions were so strong. Yet, he was still subconsciously repressing it.

“I might get some kip,” Collins murmured and hopped off the bed. His hand was grabbed by Farrier’s.

“Hey, just tell me this. Are you okay?” he asked, worry lines deeper than usual.

“Yes, Farrier. I’m fine,” Collins smiled, turning back for a kiss goodnight.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone reading, I love all of you.
My Tumblr
Afternoon Pinterest board
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
The Truth Comes Out

Chapter Notes

Happy Monday everyone, I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Collins didn’t immediately go to sleep as he’d implied, the blonde needed some air. Maybe a drink. He changed out of his pyjamas and into something warm, tiptoed downstairs and wandered down the streets until he found Stella’s bar, as he’d deemed it. The Golden Deer was so ridiculously close to base that he almost laughed at himself for being so lost on the night he’d met Anderson and his friends there. Even with limited sense of the world he shouldn’t have managed to get so lost on the way back. Collins reached the bar’s door and was greeted by warmth and the smell of beer.

Farrier would be lying to himself if he said he wasn’t worried about Collins not telling him something, but there was nothing he could do.

Stella wasn’t on stage, none of her band were. Collins guessed it was too late, or maybe they didn’t play here every single Saturday. Collins walked up to the bar and it was only when Stella tapped him on the shoulder that he realised she was even in the vicinity.

“Oh, hiya!” he said,

“Evening Jack, here all alone?” she asked.

“Ah, yeah. Just comin’ tae relax a bit.” He said.

“Mind if I sit a while? We’re finished for the night, most of the band’s gone home already.” She said, Collins of course agreed. Soon enough there was a pint in his hand and a Mary Pickford in Stella’s.

“So what happened to warrant you needing to relax?” she asked, waving goodbye to the last member of her band leaving through the back door.

“Oh, everythin’ and nothing you know?” he smiled.

“I know, no need to explain.” She said.

Collins was somewhat put out that she didn’t ask. Perhaps deep down he’d wanted her to, hoping he could somehow confide in her, though considering his specific problem he realised he couldn’t confide in her, or anyone really. The only person he could imagine was James, and he didn’t really want to go all the way into London to speak to someone who wasn’t really his friend anyway.

“Want to talk about it though?” she asked, to Collins’ almost relief.

It was nice that she cared, but Collins couldn’t disclose it. He remembered the surprise on Wingnut
and Dawson’s faces when he’d come out to them without warning, and he knew Stella less than them.

“I do want to, but I shouldn’t,” he smiled.

“Shouldn’t?”

“Ye, not the kind of thing you’d understand.” He arrived at, sounding much ruder than he meant to in his head.

“Well, who are you to decide what I’d understand Jack?” Stella asked, she wasn’t offended, just disappointed that he wouldn’t confide in her.

“I, well, that’s not what I meant. It’s just difficult.” He said,

“Would it be easier outside?” she asked. Collins sighed, she was being persistent, too much for him to argue anymore.

“Maybe,”

They went out the back door, something Collins got a look from the bartender for doing, but he caught Stella smiling over her shoulder telling the man it was fine.

“Is this door not for everyone?” Collins asked.

“Not really, it’s for bands and acts and staff I think,” Stella answered, slipping a box of cigarettes out of her pocket.

“Want one?” she asked, Collins shrugged and took one, still not entirely used to the feeling of smoking.

They walked down the cold dark cobblestone in silence for a while, now that she was stood next to him, Collins realised how very small Stella was. Not just in height, in frame. It was almost worrying.

“So, what’s up? You don’t just wander into a bar alone for no reason, now do you?” She smiled as she smoked, pushing a hand back through the mess of her dark hair. Collins didn’t answer.

“Just so you know, I trust you. Probably too much considering how much we know each other, but I trusted you enough to help you through the drawn out process to expel your peers from the airbase, so that must count for something, right?” she said, and finally Collins relented.

“It’s something I cannae tell anyone though. But I guess to be vague, there’s something I want to tell someone, but doing it will probably hurt them, or hurt the friendship I have with them, so I can’t.” he said, having worked very hard to say the word ‘friendship’.

“I see. Well, sounds like it would be best for them to know, even if it hurts them. Am I right?” She said.

“I didn’t want tae debate it. I don’t want to tell them, I just wanted to vent, Stella.” Collins said pointedly.

“Alright then, enjoy your smoke and forget about it then.” she said, for the first time Collins could remember, sounding irritated.

“So heard you turned Dawson down.” He said, immediately regretting it.
“Yes. He was very nice, but I’m spoken for.” She said defensively.

“Must be an amazing man for yae to turn down the likes of Dawson,” Collins said, and didn’t know why but he was overcome by the urge to be argumentative, he attributed it to Stella’s closed body language.

“Fact is, I’m spoken for. As nice as Alexander is, I barely know him anyway!” she laughed, though it wasn’t friendly.

“So what’s his name?”

“Jack, stop it!” she said much more loudly than she usually spoke.

“What? Were you lying so that yae didn’t have tae go on a date with my best friend?” he asked, volume low but tone incredibly heated.

“No. I’m not lying and I don’t know why it’s such an issue to you, I didn’t have any obligation to say yes to a date with your friend, Jack!” Stella said, crossing her arms and trying to hide a shiver as they walked down the street, Collins didn’t know where they were going but he was managing to forget the stress of not telling Farrier it on the walk, so it didn’t matter.

“No obligation, I’m just saying he must be one hell of a man to turn down Dawson for,” Collins said, very aware that he was being a dick, but he couldn’t stop it. It was a way of letting out stress, and Stella just happened to be collateral.

“No matter what sort of person my partner is, it’s wrong to go on a date with someone else if you’re taken!” she spat.

“So tell me, I’ll ask again. What’s his name?” Collins asked with an unfriendly grin on his face.

“Why?!”

“So I know you’re at least not lying.”

“I don’t believe I have to tell you anything.”

“No, but it doesn’t make ye look particularly good if you can’t even say your boyfriend’s name, Stella.” He said,

“Collins, drop it. I don’t know why you’re attacking me like this.” she said, not defeated but wanting not to anger Collins further than she apparently already had.

“Say his name,” Collins said.

“Jack, stop!”

“Why? Is he no’ real?”

“I said stop.” Stella said, her voice was small again, anxiety had overrun anger.

“He’s imaginary isn’t he. Dawson was so cut up after you turned him down,” Collins said.

“Jack, it’s not that.” She said, and stopped walking. The nearest streetlamp was not all that near, and the wind was creeping around the buildings, slow but cold.

“Then what?”
Stella gulped and held her arms tighter around her body. For the first time in the entire argument, chancing a look up to Collins’ eyes. His gaze wasn’t angry, it was just emotional. Tired.

“I know you didn’t pick a fight for any good reason, Jack. You wanted to let your frustrations out, since you can’t tell the person whatever it is you need to tell them, you told me something that would get a reaction.” She said, reasoning with her own mind just as much as Collins’, convincing herself that Jack hadn’t just decided to hate her.

He sighed,

“Stella, I don’t know what’s happened to me tonight. I’m really sorry, I know it won’t fix me bein’ rude but I am genuinely sorry.” He said, seeing the fear in Stella’s eyes and realising that he really didn’t know her enough to be bickering like this at all.

“On a genuine note, what’s his name? He’s very lucky tae have you.” Collins said in a nicer tone, trying to lighten the mood whilst mentally kicking himself repeatedly. Stella was delicate, that much was obvious from the way she carried herself, the way she spoke in a small voice, the only time she seemed invincible was when she was playing clarinet.

“Jack, it’s difficult.” She said,

“Wait. Has this man done things to you? Things you didn’t want him to? Is that why yer afraid to name him?” Collins asked, jumping to one conclusion as to why she wouldn’t say his name. Stella took a deep, shaky breath.

“Jack, if I told you something illegal, terrible, something that would surely send me to jail, would you promise not to tell anyone else? You have to promise.” She said.

“Uh, I mean sure, ye I won’t tell anyone, is everythin’ okay?” he asked,

“Promise.” Stella repeated, holding her pinky finger out. Collins chuckled and linked it with his,

“Pinky promise Stella.”

“I’m really trusting you with this Jack. Don’t make me regret it because I’ll deny everything.” She said, almost shaking.

“I said I won’t tell!” Collins laughed, not sure why she was so worried that he’d blab. Stella kept breathing deeply, trying to get her breaths in check before she said anything more, trying her hardest not to hyperventilate, cry, or run away. Or all three. She wanted Collins to know, she wanted to be a good friend with him, and she thought it was wrong to pretend that this wasn’t a part of her, to hide it from someone who she wanted to be closer with.

“Jack. What if I told you,” she began but stopped. She uncrossed her arms and began fiddling with her fingers, looking around nervously.

“Stella, it’s okay. You don’t have to tell me. I was being stupid about you and Dawson, I don’t care,” he said, worried she was only telling him whatever it was because he’d argued with her.

“No I, you should know.” She said quietly, and took one more measured breath.

“I’m not interested in men.”
And then there was stillness between them. Nothing but the wind blowing around their ankles and Stella’s shuddering breaths could be heard. That sentence alone cleared Collins’ head of any ill thoughts from his bickering before, and all of a sudden he had an almost instinctual feeling to protect Stella.

He just looked at her, and she just looked at him. Stella waited to be judged, to see Jack’s face screw up in disgust, for him to walk away and never show his face at the bar again. None of those things happened, and she saw something in his eyes which she hadn’t expected to. Understanding.

“I am.”

This was probably how Collins should have felt when he’d told his friends, he realised. This was a completely rational and sensible way to act before telling someone this.

Then Stella smacked him in the face.

“Um,” he began, shocked.

“I say that, and you just say that in response?” she said, completely stunned.

“Well, I now know why you turned down Dawson,” he grinned goofily. Stella allowed a small smile to creep onto her face. She had not expected that response.

“So you’re not…” she began, and they resumed their walk.

“No. That’s sort of along the lines of what my thing is that I can’t say is about.” Collins said.

“Stella, thank you for telling me that.” He said, realising how difficult it had been for her to say.

“Somehow I feel better now.” She said,

“So do I. And I am sorry about going off at you, I was blowing off steam.” He explained,

“It’s okay, I understand Jack. And, thank you for telling me about yourself as well.” She said.

“So, I guess we could talk to each other about this sort of thing now?” Collins asked, realising he might have indeed found someone to confide in.

“I suppose we could, yes.”

“Then in that case, I’m also spoken for.” Collins took great excitement in saying.

“You don’t say!” Stella smiled.

“This feels weird, openly talking about it.” she added with a laugh.

“Yeah. Weird, but good.” Collins said, Stella hummed.

“So are you able to tell me what it was?” she asked. Collins gulped. He felt incredibly vulnerable saying all this, part of his mind wondered if Stella was tricking him and was about to tell the
police. He shook the thought.

“Well, you know when you’re with a person, and you’re very close. And, well… And ye realise you don’t just like them?” Collins said slowly, thinking about each word.

“Yes, I know that feeling very well. The love word, Jack! My partner and I share it.” she said, and her cheeks went rosy, as did Collins’. He hummed in agreement.

“So why can’t you tell him?” she asked, as if it was simple as that.

“He’s… I don’t think he’d take it well.” Collins said, in disbelief that he was talking about this with someone, and that in talking about this particular issue, he was giving it a voice, validating what he was feeling as real.

“I say tell him. It’s what my girlfriend did, and I liked it very much. So much that I said it back. Hadn’t really realised I was feeling that way until in that moment, it was obvious.” Stella said,

“Well, I’m over the moon for you two, but he just isn’t like that. He’ll think it’s too great an emotional compromise.” Collins sighed.

They didn’t resolve what to do about Collins’ issue, but the blonde walked with Stella all the way back to her house.

“Thanks for tonight,” he said,

“You too.” Stella replied.

“Even if you did yell at me.” She added with a smirk, opening the door.

“You slapped me in the face!” Collins called after her as she went inside, giving him one a smirk before the door was closed.

Collins didn’t mind that it was late, he didn’t mind that he was cold. He didn’t mind that telling Stella hadn’t been helpful with his situation regarding his feelings for Farrier. She’d told him, trusted him with it, not knowing how he’d react. Collins felt unworthy of such a pure person’s trust, but he was overjoyed that they shared something in that the people they chose to walk beside meant that they had to break the law to have any sort of meaningful romantic relationship.

He walked with his hands in his pockets back to base, the built up area of Gatwick was small enough that when not overdosed on opioids and psychedelics, one couldn’t really get lost.

He turned onto the street Gatwick airbase was on, the very back street before the fields took the place of the buildings. Walking back up the familiar footpath Collins’ mind was fuzzy with happiness, he was in a dream-state with the newly found closeness and similarity he and Stella shared and was barely paying any attention, so little in fact that he almost missed the tiny whimpering sound coming from his side. The blonde stopped and looked around, there was a small laneway only wide enough for one person to walk, it led between two brick walls out to the fields behind which indicated the end of the built up area. The whimpering persisted, and Collins walked slowly towards the laneway to investigate. As he got closer, the sound stopped. He wondered if, considering the cold wind and the hour, he should just turn back to the footpath instead of investigate whatever this was, might turn out to be a fox or something, meaning there was nothing to worry about. However, Collins was curious, he always had been to the point that he’d gotten into many an altercation because of it. So, he kept walking up the laneway, supposing the worst that could happen was that he waste five minutes, wasn’t like he was going to get assaulted or something, not that he reasoned anyway.
Up the path was a little cardboard box, damp from sitting there for who knew how long, and that was the source of the whining sound. Collins cautiously bobbed down and lifted a flap, and almost jumped back at the shock of an animal inside, several in fact. He’d been too quick to even know what it was, so he carefully lifted the flap of the box again to see a litter of puppies lying inside, though only one was moving. Tiny, damp, weak looking, scared. Collins was so shocked to find a box of puppies out here, it seemed so bizarre. He looked around for a house, maybe he should give it to someone nearby. Judging by the fact that there was a box here, someone had deliberately put it outside.

Collins had never had a pet in his life, but he couldn’t exactly leave a little puppy in a damp box in an alley.

“Hey there, little friend,” he said, and tried to pick the box up, but it was so sodden that the base began to break off of the box, leaving the pup on the ground with no box walls around it surrounded by its siblings who were all stiff, Collins knew they were dead just by looking at them and it hurt to see such tiny puppies left like this.

“Well, I might have tae take you with me.” Collins said, he had no other way of carrying it except in his arms. With nimble fingers, Collins slipped his hands around the belly of the little dog and plucked it from the cold wet cardboard. Its whole tiny body was freezing, and it was shivering, though it stopped whimpering.

“Who did this?” he asked the pup. It looked malnourished, and the look in the little animal’s eyes hurt Collins. He carried it carefully, wrapping what he could of his coat over it, holding the tiny body to his chest.

“It’s okay now, I’ll warm ye up.” He said, not knowing where this baby talking had come from. He supposed considering he’d never had an animal, and never known anyone who had, he shouldn’t expect to know how he’d react to one. The blonde couldn’t believe someone would do such a thing, he certainly wouldn’t have the guts to do it, emotional distress training or not. He remembered the film they’d watched about the dog, it was a sad film indeed but this was real life, and it made Collins angry. As he walked up the footpath nearing base, he looked down at the little pup in his arms. Although malnourished it still had all its fur, brown and thick. Its ears were flopped down against its head, and it had a small straight snout which was currently sniffing Collins’ clothing, maybe looking for a teat. Collins had no idea how old it was, and also had no idea at what point dogs stopped drinking milk. He had no idea about anything. Was he about to look after it? Smuggle it into base? Try and raise it? All of these questions he didn’t have an answer to, even as he reached the gates of Gatwick and walked up the steps his thoughts were all questions without answers.

“Now, yae have to be quiet now.” He whispered to the dog, grateful nobody was around to hear him. He walked upstairs and straight into his room with the puppy still held against his body. Someone would definitely find out about this, Collins was rubbish at keeping secrets, he and Farrier were one gigantic example of this. Collins put the tiny body down on his bed, and immediately shut his blinds, locked his door and turned the heater up to maximum. The dog opened its eyes, still shivering but now it was at least room temperature, so Collins didn’t know if it was cold or scared. Probably both.

“Now, what do I give yae?” he asked himself just as much as the puppy. He picked it up again and sat on his bed, the puppy in his lap. After a quick glance over the pup’s belly and nether region, he realised it was a boy.

“A wee boy!” he murmured, realising more each minute that he sounded like a lunatic parent, and
also that for some reason or another, he spoke more Scots while using this ‘pet voice’ than he did usually. It irked the blonde but he guessed maybe the voice was soothing the puppy. He hoped so anyway.

Farrier was just beginning to drift to sleep, early for him and especially early considering he’d been worried about Collins. He never just left his room like that, he knew something was wrong. He heard a door shut, sounded like it had vaguely come from somewhere near his room. Probably Collins, he thought to himself before sleep took him. The man’s last thoughts were of the light haired pilot that he was beginning to associate with home just as much as the very building he was in.

Collins didn’t have a clue what to do. Dog food? Somewhere for the puppy to do his business? Newspaper was the only clear answer that floated into Collins’ mind. He knew Farrier had begun reading the paper, and knew Canfield had always done so. Maybe their bins had some old papers in them? It was a low chance, high risk idea. It was the only idea he had.

“Can I leave yae here?” he asked the pup. Realising that he might start whimpering and whining again, Collins scooped him up and took him downstairs to the offices. First he searched Farrier’s, reasoning that in there he had less chance of being caught by anyone except Farrier. No newspapers to be seen except some half burnt pieces in the fireplace. Next was Canfield’s office, which Collins was much more nervous about. He was in luck, there was an entire newspaper rolled up in the bin under the desk. He took it, and hurried upstairs, hoping Canfield didn’t notice and think someone had snooped in his office, which they had. Collins filed that thought away, he had more important things to deal with.

He reached his room, and put the puppy back on his bed. he lay the newspaper out at the foot of it.

“Yae can sleep up here for tonight,” he said, moving the little brown ball halfway up the bed, making sure to lie on the edge to give the puppy room. He guessed if it started rummaging around in the night, he’d put it on the newspaper and hope for the best? Needless to say, Collins had a fitful sleep that night. After being warmed up, the pup got needy for other things like milk, which the blonde didn’t have obviously, had to take him to the showers for water because he didn’t like the idea of sneaking into the radar room in hopes that the kitchenware was still back there somewhere. He filled a sink and held the little pup up so he could drink.

This was going to be a long night.

Chapter End Notes

Well that was an eventful night lol. I know a few of you had ideas about Stella, i’m curious what you think now! Also did you think I could write this and not have a dog appear? Of course not. I’d love to know what everyone thought of this one!

Tumblr
Afternoon Pinterest
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
The sun finally broke through a gap in Collins’ curtains, rousing him from the worst sleep he’d had in a very long time. He imagined this was what parenthood was like with a newborn.

Then the panic of what he’d done set in. Had he stolen a puppy? No, nobody would put their dog in a box outside. But then, how on earth was he supposed to care for it? Collins realised, he didn’t have to. There was always the option of giving it to a pound, but somehow he didn’t feel like it would be cared for as well as he could care for it there, even with no experience. Maybe Dawson would know. Maybe Farrier would know. Maybe literally anyone else on base would know. As he got dressed, keeping a close eye on the pup as it gingerly walked around on his floor, tail wagging in the air as it sniffed different things, he worried that maybe, probably, it wasn’t allowed that someone had a pet on base.

It was going to be impossible to keep this hidden, and Collins wasn’t sure how kind-hearted Farrier would be about this, so he went to the one person who didn’t have a mean bone in his body. Dawson.

He knocked urgently on the door until his friend opened it with a yawn, giving Collins a confused look afterwards.

“I, eh…” he began,

“Good morning to you too, mate. Trying to beat the morning rush in the kitchen?” Dawson asked,

“I, no.” Collins said, he’d been very tempted to say yes, but this wasn’t the sort of problem he could ignore.

“Then, why did you wake me up so urgently, dare I ask?” Dawson said, about to laugh which wasn’t the reaction Collins imagined, but it was better than what he’d had in his head which was a grumpy Dawson.

“I, em… I found a… Dog.”

The laugh Dawson was holding burst out of his mouth, wasn’t expecting Collins to say that, but he couldn’t have stopped that laugh if he tried, no matter what his friend said. As soon as his brain had registered the fact that Collins had just told him he’d ‘found a dog’ he reeled the laugh back in and just stood there.

“What the fuck?” he asked too politely for his choice of words.

“I mean, last night I went for a walk. And I found a puppy. And it’s here now.” Collins said measuredly.
“Bloody hell mate. Come on, show me.”

It was the best reaction he could have hoped for.

The blondes stood in Collins’ room looking comically similar, with hands on hips looking down at the puppy who was currently chewing up the newspaper.

“So you’re keeping it?”

“Him, and I want to.”

“Have you ever had a dog?”

“Never any sort of animal, unless you count feeding the cows at the local estate,”

“I don’t,”

“Then no, I’ve never had any animal.” Collins said. Dawson walked over and picked the pup up, cradling him in his arms.

“He must be hungry. Do we tell anyone?” Dawson asked, realising he’d been pulled into this mess now.

“Dunno. I’m not sure if they allow pets here, I’m guessing not.” Collins said, going over to pat him.

“Well he can’t live in your room, you realise that?”

“I know, but where else?”

Dawson thought for a moment.

“I mean, we could take him out on walks, and maybe in the fields when it’s night-time or there’s nothing on, but it would have to be secret,” he said.

“I could take food from the kitchen this morning,” Dawson said.

“Good idea. But he’ll need to, you know, go after he’d eaten.” Collins said, looking at the newspaper and really not wanting anything to happen in his room. Dawson thought for a moment more.

“Okay how about this. We both grab something to eat right now, and get something for him to eat, then we run him out to the field before anyone can catch us.” Dawson said,

“Someone’ll see us on the way back, surely.” Collins said.

“Any other ideas?” Dawson asked,

There were no other ideas in sight, so that was what the boys did.

The sun was just coming up as the two boys crouched in the long grass with the pup as he wandered around. He was tiny, and they had to keep their eyes on him or he’d get lost in the long grass.

“Is he going tae do his business soon?” Collins asked.
“Don’t ask me, might not need to for half a day,” Dawson sighed. Collins pursed his lips and looked around at the horizons to make sure nobody was coming outside yet. Looking back to the main building and the line of hangars and sheds which stood to the side of the runway, his eyes stopped on the last shed of the lot, where Farrier sometimes sat.

“Say Dawson, could we keep him in one of the sheds for now?”

“I dunno. Risky, if one of the officers needs to go in.”

“Could we keep him in the field?”

“We could, but it’s cold at night.” Dawson said,

“Well, maybe in the day we could, I dunno, make some sort of pen for him. Far enough away that nobody could see it unless they went wandering?”

The men weren’t able to find anything to make a pen out of, so Collins took the pup back up to the upstairs storage room that lead onto the roof that Farrier had shown him, praying nobody would go in. The two managed to steal a bowl from the kitchen without it being noticed, so it was filled with water and put in there with the pup, along with a few small pieces of ham they were able to get their hands on before someone wanted to use it with their eggs for breakfast. The newspaper, or what was left of it was transferred into the storage room with the little dog, who was tired out after eating a bit of the ham and had begun to go to sleep.

“He’s cute,” Dawson said.

“I know, cannae believe he was out in a box.” Collins said sadly.

The rest of the morning was spent flying anxiously, waiting for lunch time. When lunch finally came, the boys found that the pup hadn’t got into any particular trouble, but were glad that if he’d made any noise, it apparently hadn’t been heard. He had made a mess in the corner which wasn’t on the newspaper, but was asleep next to the water bowl when they went to check.

“Could be worse,” Collins said.

“Yeah but he can’t live like this.” Dawson said, picking up a piece of newspaper to use as a scoop to clean the floor with.

“And now we have to go find a rag and some soapy water or something to clean the floor with.” He complained, and Collins could tell that under the surface he was annoyed.

“Have ye ever had a pet?”

“We’ve got a bird, not helpful for this though.” Dawson answered.

Collins had to let the secret out that night, it was one thing to keep his feelings from Farrier, but another thing entirely to keep an animal from him. Maybe he’d feel for the little pup and let Collins keep it.

After an afternoon spent sneaking out of the main building with Dawson and the puppy to go and sit in the fields for a bit, let the little guy walk around, the boys had to return the pup to the storage room.
“I’m going to tell one of the officers.” Collins said as they refilled the dog’s water bowl from the bathroom sink.

“Who?”

“Dunno. But maybe they’ll be kind,” Collins said.

“Well, I wouldn’t go to Davis, he seems like he’d blab to the higher ups.”

“I was going to go to one of the higher ups.” Collins interjected.

“Ah, Farrier?” Dawson guessed,

“Maybe, maybe not. What do you think?” Collins lied. It was always going to be Farrier.

“I think both him and Canfield have a high possibility of telling you to go give it to the pound.”

“We’ll see. Anyway why’d ye guess Farrier?”

“Oh, you just seem closer with him than Canfield.”

At that, Collins heart sank. He knew he was bad at hiding things, but if Dawson could tell that, surely anyone else could. Now was as good a time as ever.

“Is it that obvious?”

To that, all he got was a sigh, followed by an arm around his shoulders. Collins stood at the sink, fingers gripping the bowl in one hand, the cold porcelain of the sink in the other. He didn’t look up.

“To anyone who didn’t know you, they’d think you were good mates. You aren’t just mates though, are you.” Dawson said, his voice was quiet and gentle, but now Collins completely, with all of his being understood why Stella was so nervous. Thinking back on how he’d blurted out his sexuality to Wingnut and Dawson all those months ago, he realised how truly reckless he once was. Thinking about how openly flirtatious he was around Farrier before anything had happened shocked Collins, it was so ridiculously dangerous and detrimental to both he and Farrier, it ashamed him to think that he was the same person who had acted that way, acted so stupidly and riskily. He still hadn’t answered Dawson, his knuckles were white now as he gripped the bowl and the sink.

“It’s alright. Pretend I never said anything, yeah?” Dawson asked, taking the water bowl from Collins’ hand.

It was so difficult, he could absolutely take Dawson up on the offer and pretend he hadn’t asked, but Collins remembered how awkward it had been around Christmas, how Dawson already was sort of working it out. After now there wouldn’t be a doubt left in his mind, yet Collins wouldn’t have said anything and would have felt strange.

“Dawson,” he began,

“No, you really don’t have to tell me anything if you aren’t comfortable,” Dawson said,

“I don’t want to keep it from you any longer. You... You already know it’s happening Dawson, but, I guess I’m telling you that you were right,” Collins stammered.

They were alone in the bathrooms, but of course they didn’t know how long for.
“Let’s take this up to my room,” Dawson suggested.

They sat there with the puppy and the bowl of water on Dawson’s floor.

“I, I know yae said you were alright with the fact that I’m interested in men, but I just…” Collins had no clue how to put this, how did you tell your best friend that you thought they’d avoid you forever if you told them something?

“It… It’s okay. I mean, I’m not going to ask anything else, and I never meant to pry just for the sake of it. It’s just that sometimes I could tell you had something on your mind, and whenever I bring him up, you got weird about it, weirder than someone who just fancies someone else would get. I never meant to make you uncomfortable.” Dawson explained.

“The whole situation is a bit uncomfortable though, not to mention illegal.”

“Look mate. I’m happy that you’re happy. And I’m thankful that you don’t want to keep anything from me. Let’s just keep it as simple as we can. I don’t need to know any details, just that you’re happy.” Dawson said.

“Yeah,”

“Well goo-“ Dawson said, but the puppy whined loudly enough that anyone walking by would have heard.

“Cheeky boy!” he said, and picked up the little brown ball of fluff to cradle.

Collins’ heart was racing a mile a minute. The fact that Dawson knew, without a doubt now, and that he could never retract the confirmation he’d given, it was scary. Paired with the fact that his friend had very clearly stated that he didn’t want to know about anything at all except the base fact, meant that he probably wasn’t comfortable knowing anything more, and that worried Collins, that he’d made Dawson uncomfortable by telling him.

“Things will be the same between us, right?” Collins asked quietly, looking at the dog instead of his friend.

“Yes Collins. You’re happy, and now I know why sometimes you get all sulky and won’t talk. I mean I might have a bit of a hard time acting normal around Farrier for a few days, but I’m not in his squadron anyway.” He said, tickling the pup’s belly.

That night, Collins let the puppy stay in his room while he went to tell Farrier about it.

“Evening, pet.” The man said, he sat propped up in bed reading an engineering manual.

“Evening. Yae know for a pilot, you’re sure interested in engineering.” He commented, trying to avoid the dog topic.

“Yeah, I find it fascinating. If I wasn’t put in the RFC I would have probably become an engineer.” He said.

“That interests me,”

“Don’t I look like an engineer?”

“No,”

“Then what?” Farrier asked, putting the book down.
“I mean, I cannae picture you as anything but a pilot.” Collins explained. Farrier moved over and opened the bed covers to invite Collins to sit next to him.

“Actually Farrier, there’s something important I need to tell ye.” He said, shuffling on his feet and not taking the brunette up on the offer.

“Mm?”

“Uh. Well you see,” Collins said, and almost burst out laughing at how the situation must look, at how completely left of field what he was about to say was.

“In my room, there’s a… You know what, it might be better to show ye,” he arrived at.

“What’s in your room?” Farrier asked.

“Just come in and see.”

“Collins, what’s in your room?” Farrier asked again, almost laughing at the blonde’s inability to say it.

“Ye won’t like it if I tell you.” Collins said,

“Oh, it’s a surprise is it?”

“Um. Sure.”

Farrier and Collins entered the blonde’s room, and to Farrier’s confusion and Collins’ horror, it was empty.

“So?”

“Uh, let me look for it.” Collins said, immediately getting down and crawling. The puppy had gone under his bed and was asleep, he was flooded with relief that it wasn’t lost.

“Ah. Okay Farrier, please don’t be angry.” He said, before reaching under to get the little fluffball.

“This is extremely confusing, Collins,” Farrier said, arms crossed and half a smile on his face at the blonde’s arse sticking in the air, pyjamas doing nothing to hide it.

Then Collins let out a very stupid sounding chuckle that went on for too long for it to pass as normal, and ended up sounding slightly manic.

“Collins what on earth-“ Farrier began, but he was silenced when his partner turned around with a puppy in his hands.

“Is that a fucking dog?” he said with disbelief. Collins couldn’t read Farrier’s expression, but hoped that the puppy eyes coming from both him and the actual puppy would be enough that he didn’t get told off.

“Might be.”

“Why is there a dog in here?!’” Farrier hissed,

“Farrier I found him in a wet box outside in an alley! I was nae going to leave him there.” Collins said.
“How long has this been going on?”

“Only found him last night.”

“And he’s been in your room the entire time?”

“No, he’s been out in the field, and in the storage room that goes to the roof, and in Dawson’s room.”

Farrier crossed his arms.

“So he’s in on this as well.”

After a bit of back and forth, Farrier convinced Collins to let him hold the puppy, Collins unwilling because he was worried Farrier was going to walk off to his car with it or something. As soon as it was in his arms, somehow his argument crumpled. It was so small, he didn’t trust a pound to look after it properly. It seemed only right.

“He can stay for one night. After that I want you to look for a home for him.” Farrier said.

“Thank you Farrier, thank you. I will.” Collins said, relieved that it wasn’t an outright no, but disappointed nonetheless. Farrier was showing no signs of giving the puppy back to him.

“So, ye want to give him back?”

“In a bit. I’m holding him.” Farrier said, playing with the puppy’s ears with one hand and holding his entire tiny body in the other, soft belly turned upwards.

“He’s cute.” Said Farrier.

“Oh yeah?” Collins mused, not a minute had passed since Farrier wanted the dog out as soon as possible.

“I used to have a dog.” He said.

“Oh! You know more than me or Dawson then,”

“Well, I mean it was Michael’s dog. Old boy he was, I didn’t know him for that long but I remember playing with him. I love dogs.” Farrier said softly.

The puppy stayed longer than ‘one more night’, in fact the longer it stayed the more reluctant Farrier became to getting rid of it at all.

“So he’s staying?” Dawson asked one morning as the two ate their breakfast in the kitchen, sitting on the kitchen bench as the other pilots swarmed around them getting food for themselves.

“I think so. Farrier seems to like him even more than I do.” Collins laughed.

“Has he told Canfield or anyone else?”

“Don’t think so. I think we’ll have to soon, cannae keep a dog secret forever.” Collins said, grateful that nobody was paying attention to anything but breakfast and weren’t listening properly. He didn’t know how he’d have fended off questions about what dog? This early in the morning.

It was only a week later that Farrier came before Canfield to tell him what had been going on.
“Morning, Tom.” He said cheerfully as he read the paper at his office desk.

“Morning Michael, ah. I need to tell you something.” He said. The older man’s eyes looked up from the paper and he raised an eyebrow.

“There’s a dog that one of the pilots has been keeping on base.”

“There’s a what?” Canfield said, immediately standing.

“He’s only a little bugger, he’s tiny, actually. And what I came to tell you is that I think we should keep him.”

“Farrier!” Canfield said, angry.

“Where’s the dog?” he asked.

“He’s uh, I’ll go get man who found him,” Farrier said.

“For goodness’ sake Farrier, who brought a dog here?!?”

“Collins did.”

At that, Canfield got even more irritated.

“And I suppose you two were keeping this a secret, were you?”

“I mean, not just us. Collins has told his friends, but for one reason or another, told me before he told you.” Farrier said, choosing his words carefully.

“Why would he ask you?”

“I dunno, I was just as angry as you when he told me,” Farrier lied,

“Go get him.”

So Collins’ breakfast chat with Dawson was interrupted when Farrier barged into the kitchen, weaving through the pilots around him proving to be a difficult task with his broad build.

“You’re in for it now,” Was all he said to Collins, whose face showed more shock than it should have alerting Farrier to the fact that he probably thought he was getting in trouble for something much more serious and illegal than the dog.

“Canfield knows about the puppy. He’s not happy.” He said quietly as not to alert the other pilots. Dawson gave Collins a look of worry as the blonde hopped off the bench, his height barely changing as his shoes hit the floor from when he was seated.

“Bring the dog, he wants you in his office.” Farrier said as they left together. Collins turned and pursed his lips to Dawson, who smiled to try and convey that it would be okay.

Collins went up to get the puppy from his room, where he’d left it over breakfast. Farrier was at the bottom of the stairs with his arms crossed.

“So it went badly?” Collins asked,

“Yeah. He yelled at me and then told me to get you right away, with the dog.” Farrier said.
“Look, you wouldn’t have been able to keep it here without Canfield knowing at some point.” Farrier said as they walked, the puppy struggling in the blonde’s arms.

They arrived in Canfield’s office and sat down, Farrier fidgeting and Collins struggling to hold the puppy who just wanted to play and wander around. He was a lot livelier than the night Collins had found him, so he was grateful but in this particular moment, not incredibly so.

“Collins. You were keeping a pet on the premises and didn’t tell any senior officers.” Canfield said, before Collins could cut in and answer the older man continued with a cold smile on his face, looking at Farrier now.

“And then the one you did tell, didn’t pass it up the line to his superior officer.”

Farrier smiled a nasty smile back at Canfield.

“Men. I’m not angry because there’s a dog here. I’m angry because neither of you told me, I’m acting supervisor of the entire base! Things like this shouldn’t be kept from me, what, are you afraid of me?” he asked Collins.

“No, not at all Canfield. I just… I did nae mean to tell Farrier, but he mentioned he liked dogs so I thought it would be safe.”

Collins was lying through his teeth and was well aware that it was Canfield’s own dog that Farrier had mentioned, but there wasn’t a safe way to say anything right now and his thoughts were racing.

“I like dogs too my boy, I used to have one! The little pup can stay, but we need to put up provisions for him. I’m leaving you in charge of finding somewhere, and I want you to come and ask me about it, yes?” he asked.

“Oh, yes of course Canfield. Thank you.” Collins stammered, surprised that he really didn’t mind.

“You don’t care?” Farrier asked Canfield.

“Nothing against having a pet on base written anywhere, so long as it is looked after properly.” He answered.

That evening as the sun went down, Dawson and Collins scouted the base for somewhere to keep the pup.

“Lucky Canfield didn’t mind,” Dawson said.

“I know! I expected the opposite, I think so did Farrier when he came to tell me,”

They had the pup with them, walking slowly to let him follow on the ground.

“Lucky you even found the little guy. What were you doing out anyway?” Dawson asked.

“Just needed to clear my head, get some fresh air.” Collins replied with the air that he didn’t want to elaborate, so Dawson didn’t pry.

Collins’ eyes kept straying back to the old sheds that lined the runway.

“Since Canfield knows now, surely we could use one of those?” He asked Dawson, who shrugged in agreement.

It wasn’t like Collins had ever seen the smaller sheds at the end of the lot in use, only the hangars
and larger sheds with gear in them. As it turned out the very last one, ‘Farrier’s shed’, wasn’t even locked. There were a couple of old wooden shelves inside with various rusted objects and a lot of spiderwebs.

“Perfect.” Collins said.

And within a fortnight, old bits of wood from said shelves had been used to make a makeshift pen around the back of the shed, some chicken coop wire from one of the nearby farmers who were very sympathetic to the matter were used to complete it. Finally, a square was cut in the corner of the shed so the pup could freely wander in and out. Dog food began to be a regular purchase by the base, and slowly but surely all the men noticed that there was a little brown fluffy dog at the end of the sheds. Of course, Collins took him out as much as he could and played with him. It came to the three week mark of Gatwick having a ‘mascot dog’ as he was being called, when Collins realised he should probably think of a name for the little friend. He’d already grown a bit since finding him, and his personality had boomed. The pup was ridiculously energetic and happy, and just wanted to be around people. Whenever an squadron was out with the planes, he would bark in a tiny voice up at them and try to jump over the pen’s fence.

“Looks like a darn kangaroo!” Dawson laughed one day over the intercom as they flew, everyone looking down at the dog who incessantly jumped up and down looking at the formation of planes.

“He’s just the park keeper of his little park! He’s making sure we don’t invade his territory!” Turner laughed.

“You mean a parker?” Davis asked.

“That’s the one.” Turner said.

“Parker,” Collins replied, probably too soft for his headset to pick it up.

The name stuck.

Chapter End Notes

Well this was eventful! Thank you to everyone for reading.

my tumblr
afternoon pinboard

Until next chapter, happy reading ❤
One Night in June

Chapter Notes

Monday the 23rd!! I’ve been very busy getting ready for Christmas, those of you who celebrate probably relate. Happy holiday season to you all❤️

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was almost June, and Gatwick had been audited twice in the last three weeks. None of the officers seemed to care about Parker, apparently other bases had mascot dogs, and if Parker wasn’t getting in the way, he wasn’t an issue. Since the audits however, regulation was tighter. Marching every morning, or ‘square bashing’ as Collins learned it was called. They did it across the tarmac before the runway began, and since Gatwick was no longer taking in training cadets, only men who were already trained to be put into an Operational Training Unit, it rendered the courtyard in the middle of the main building useless. That was, until Canfield had the bright idea to let Parker live there. A small marching band had been scraped together from whoever played relevant instruments, so the men marched to their music every morning.

And the saluting. Everything was finally running as it should have been long ago. Another shed was being built to act as a mess hall, and some of the classrooms had been converted into squadron lounge about areas. Collins was particularly shocked when he walked into 102 squadron’s common room for the first tome to see a professionally made large scale version of the insignia he’d designed along with the motto Dawson had come up with, hung on the wall in a frame. The original was laid neatly on a little stand beneath the framed version. The room had several different sized rugs haphazardly covering the wooden floor, something Collins was all too familiar with, his entire house was like that. The classroom desks had been replaced with some larger comfier chairs and a few scattered coffee tables adorned with books and board games. Gatwick was running like clockwork, almost to the point that Collins’ upcoming birthday slipped everyone’s minds. Almost. Dawson brought it up as they ate breakfast in the kitchen.

“So, you want anything for your birthday this year?” he asked.

“Oh! Not that I’ve thought of, just a nice night out or something, anyway how’d ye remember the date?” Collins asked with a mouthful of toast.

“Good memory with that sort of thing,”

“Dawson, when’s your birthday? I’ve known ye too long, you’ve had at least one since we’ve met.” Collins realised.

“Oh, it’s in the winter holidays. I had it when I was home in Weymouth, didn’t think it was that necessary to tell you because I knew I’d be away,” he said very matter-of-factly. Now Collins was wondering when Wingnut’s birthday was as well, because out of the three of them Collins was the only one who had celebrated openly, it made him feel strange.

“Do ye know Wingnut’s birthday?”

“No, but I have a feeling he must have also been away somewhere when he had his. Not like that boy to give up any opportunity to celebrate.” Dawson laughed.
And then it was Collins’ birthday, the 2nd of June. It happened on a regular weekday and he told everyone to stop fussing, ‘everyone’ being Dawson and Farrier. The blonde did however, make the effort to call his parents. Standing outside the base after dinner time in the phone box he waited for them to pick up.

“Ello?”

“Da, it’s me!”

“Oh! Happy birthday son!”

And though miles away on the phone, it was almost like old times between the two. Almost like there hadn’t been something that drove a knife between them, the conversation flowed and was almost bereft of any awkwardness. Then the phone was passed to Collins’ mother, who without the aid of facial expressions and body language, painted the perfect picture of life before they knew. Hearing her voice made Collins feel so safe, even if she knew, and even if he knew that seeing her in person it was easier to tell that she hadn’t forgotten, just listening to her made it seem like there was nothing wrong, like everything was normal.

That night Collins tried not to agree, but Farrier offering to drive him around sounded like a wonderful idea to make an otherwise normal birthday into something special. He really tried to resist, tell Farrier that it was too risky, that Dawson would wonder where he was, but the brunette was persuasive when he wanted to be, and soon Collins was skipping off to his room to put a warm coat on.

The drive was indeed beautiful, hidden inside a car driving past slow enough that Collins could enjoy all the city of London had to offer, but fast enough that nobody could look inside and see that he had the hand of the driver resting upon his thigh when it wasn’t on the gearstick.

“Happy birthday, pet.” Farrier mumbled softly. He’d said it many times already, but he said it again.

“Thank ye Farrier, again.”

The brunette smiled,

“London’s nice at night,” he said.

“Mm, lots of lights.” Collins commented as they drove.

“Farrier, is driving like flying?”

“Not really, I mean there’s a gearstick which you could think of as the throttle, but the feeling isn’t the same.” He explained.

“Do ye think you’d ever let me try?” Collins asked.

“’Course I would. Not sure about in the Aston,” he laughed.

“Why? I’m sure I’d be fine,”

“I mean, who knows. Maybe.”

That was as far as Collins got to an answer about learning in Farrier’s car, and soon after they began driving back out of the city.
“Nice ride?” Farrier asked.

“Very, thanks for thinking of something to do on my birthday,” Collins blushed.

They drove back in the direction of Gatwick, Collins fascinated watching Farrier’s hand on the gears.

“Is it that hard?”

“What, driving? No. You have to get used to it but coming from someone who can fly, it’s easy.” He said.

“I always thought yae were meant to wear gloves, just like we wear gauntlets in the plane.”

“You are meant to, helps stop the vibrations in your hands so they don’t get as tired, helps keep them warm too. They sound superfluous to me.”

“Does not wearing them go against the Gentleman’s Code?” Collins jested, earning him a squeeze on the thigh to tickle him.

They arrived at the same hill Collins had once walked up with his friends, back when they went jogging together.

“I’ve been here before, with Dawson and Wingnut.” He said, earning a thoughtful hum from Farrier. There was a windy street leading up the back of it which the boys had failed to spot when they’d been there. The engine got louder in Collins’ ears as it pushed up the hill, but once they arrived at the top the view was breathtaking, and one Collins had almost forgotten from the time he’d been previously.

“It’s beautiful.” He said quietly.

“Admittedly, I didn’t think you’d have been here before. But, yes it is beautiful.” Farrier said, and turned the engine off. His hand wandered onto Collins’, and though they’d gotten to know each other so much, small touches like that would always give off a spark. Farrier’s eyes wandered up to Collins’ face, watched the blonde as he looked off the hill towards London in the distance.

“Ye, I went here back when we did afternoon jogs.” Collins explained,

“You did?”

“Yeah. We used to go to the local gym sometimes, but all the work from base got in the way and we stopped. Lost any progress I’d made on myself,” Collins laughed.

“Well, you did fine in the physical classes,” Farrier reasoned.

“If you mean getting heatstroke and being exhausted all the time, then I suppose,” Collins smiled.

“Collins, you’re fine. Better than, and it isn’t like you have to be running around as a pilot anyway.” Farrier said.

“Would you be able to do the physical classes?” Collins asked.

“Probably,”

“Probably? I thought you’d say yes straight away.” The blonde scoffed, beginning to fiddle with the gearstick before his hand was swatted away.
“Shrapnel’s a bit of a bastard.”

Collins had all but forgotten about it.

“Been a while,” the blonde said, hoping that would make Farrier feel good.

“It has, yes. Maybe all the shrapnel is finally gone, or most of it at least. Been even longer since a serious problem with it.” He said, casually unbuttoning the middle of his shirt to stick a hand through. Collins watched as the sliver of golden skin peaked out into the moonlight. Farrier gingerly felt around the jagged scar that marred his stomach, face tense as if he was expecting that the mere act of touching it would cause a flare up. Then Collins did something that he didn’t altogether have control over. He reached his own hand over, and carefully slid it under the shirt fabric. Farrier’s eyes shot up to Collins’ and he inhaled sharply in shock, his first reaction being one of alarm. Collins let his hand smooth over Farrier’s warm skin, slowly tracing the lines of his scar, now that he concentrated he could feel the tiniest of bumps under the flesh, internal remnants, some of which would be expelled through his skin, some which would remain inside forever.

“It’s okay,” Collins found himself saying, Farrier’s shoulders gradually relaxed as he came to terms with what Collins was doing. Granted they’d been physically intimate, but Collins had never, not once, done this. It was probably the most vulnerable aspect of Farrier, not just physically but mentally, for what the injury reminded him of. Now he let Collins roam free, his slender fingers gracing over the remains of the worst day of his life. It was a level of trust that, although he didn’t realise he had been withholding, was now reached. Collins could feel Farrier’s short breaths as he held his hand to his stomach, he knew the brunette was nervous about what he was doing, but he hadn’t been stopped yet. Farrier’s hand joined his, a large warm palm on the back of Collins’ hand, holding it to Farrier’s skin. Their eyes met,

“I know,” Farrier said softly. It had been several minutes since Collins had muttered his reassurance, but it had been reverberating around Farrier’s brain the entire time. It’s okay. He breathed out and let go of Collins’ hand, the blonde taking that as time to move his own hand away.

Farrier quietly buttoned his shirt back up, not sure how to deal with the flood of feelings he was currently being hit by. He wound down his window and Collins followed suit. A cool air flowed in and surrounded the two, giving Farrier a much needed refresher.

“I haven’t let anyone do that.” He said.

Collins wasn’t sure how to respond to it, but he felt a sense of… Honour? That Farrier trusted him so much. The blonde continued the conversation,

“Did it hurt?”

Farrier shook his head, but he had felt something inside. Not pain, not anxious nerves. Something soft, but something so intense that it was almost unbearable. Something he felt for the man beside him. Farrier put it down to nerves in the moment, probably the weight of what he’d let Collins do had an impact on how strongly he felt his affections for the blonde, and the train of thoughts stopped there instead of continuing down the road of realisation.

The drive back was quiet, windows still down letting in the cool night’s breeze. Collins was trying to focus on the gear changes and the clutch so that he didn’t have to address what he couldn’t stop thinking about, what he’d admitted to Stella but not to the one who mattered most. Farrier was buzzing from realising just how much he trusted Collins and just how dangerous it was, but just how beautiful it was. He hated to admit it to himself, but the beauty outweighed the danger in his mind, which in itself was an extremely reckless thought, he couldn’t help it though. They arrived back late, all the lights were off inside the building. Farrier invited Collins into his room,
“Pet, I’m sorry I didn’t get you something for your birthday. I should have, I really should-“

Collins cut him off with a kiss which took the man completely aback. When they broke away there was a faint blush in Farrier’s cheeks, a rarity, something Collins cherished.

“No, you shouldn’t have. I don’t need anything.” He smiled, and Farrier pulled him into a tight hug.

Chapter End Notes

Birthday boy! Wish I could get a ride in an aston-martin on my birthday lol. I hope everyone enjoyed this one!
This is my tumblr.
Afternoon pinboard.
Until next chapter, happy reading and happy holidays 💗
Parker and the Pool

Chapter Notes

I may have missed Monday by a whole day... Last night I was sitting in bed thinking 'is there anything I need to be doing?' and my brain said 'nope :)' lol, so here I am on NYE !! I hope everyone has an enjoyable day/night.

The following week, everyone’s personal flying kits arrived. Finally, they all had their own goggles, flight headgear, parachute, gauntlets, oxygen mask, and life vest. They would learn how to keep their gear, how to put it on quickly and efficiently, and how to use it. Collins was just glad that now he had an excuse to wear the old goggles Farrier had given him, because they were almost the same as what had come in his kit so hopefully nobody would comment. The squadrons were up in the air early in the day after breakfast and morning marching, and after a quick walk with Parker around in the fields for Dawson and Collins, the pup was growing fast and with it, his hunger for not only food but exercise. He’d been given a few odd balls and objects to play with and bite on in the courtyard, and after the heat of summer there were plans to roll out some grass there. After an hour of solid flight, everyone arrived back on the ground for lunch which was taken in the newly furbished squadron common room. They all agreed that the new gear was amazing, none of it was outdated and everything fit much better. Collins went and got Parker from his spot in the courtyard and took him into the common room, assuming it would be fine since he wasn’t too dirty. The boys all loved Parker, they swarmed around him the instant the blonde walked back in with the little brown ball of fluff at his heel. Everyone loved him, but Parker was Collins’ dog more than anyone else’s. He’d found Parker after all. Farrier had grown inseparable to the pup however, and several times in the day would be seen in the courtyard with him, or walking him around on the fields. It amused Collins to no end how much Farrier enjoyed having a dog around considering how against the idea he initially was. That night, the air didn’t cool down as much as it usually did, a sure sign that the height of summer was approaching. Farrier and Collins lay on the brunette’s bed together, sheets thrown back. Parker lay on the floor asleep after finding great joy in seeing himself in the mirror which stretched down to the floor.

“One of his ears is beginning to stand up,” Farrier said.

“Ye I know, he’s so cute. I’m glad we could keep him here.” Collins smiled.

“You do a good job of looking after him, for someone who’s never had a dog.” Farrier commented, “I try, I just want tae give him the best life I can.” The blonde responded. Something stirred inside Farrier at the words, the almost fatherly nature of how Collins had said them gave him a pang of emotion, he dismissed it with a hum of agreement to the blonde’s statement.

“Hey Farrier?”

“Mm?”

“Can Parker come tae the swimming carnival?”

At that Farrier had to laugh. The second swimming carnival was fast approaching, less of an actual
“Chlorine isn’t that good for animals,”

“Surely there’s a hose nearby we could rinse him with. I’d make sure to try and keep him out of the pool if I can!” Collins said. A warm hand curled over his hip and pulled him closer,

“Sounds like you’ve already made up your mind about it, pet.” Farrier smiled.

“He’d love it,” the blonde defended.

“Yes, he would. If you can keep an eye on him, maybe get a leash before the day or something so we can tie him up in the shade, then I’ll speak to Canfield. He can’t be in the pool much, though it’d probably be cruel to take him there and not let him jump in, but you have to give him a wash after.” Farrier said, blue eyes much softer than his words.

“I will!” Collins said, turning over and smiling at the pup who had begun to move his feet as he dreamt.

The very next day after classes had ended, Dawson and Collins were out and about looking for a lead and collar to buy for Parker so they could control him. It wasn’t just so he could come to the swimming carnival, it was because they couldn’t walk him anywhere but the fields now because he just ran away, and it was becoming worrying that one day he might run so far he’d reach the far off fences and jump over.

Unsurprisingly, there wasn’t a store anywhere near base that sold something of the sort, the built up area had a few cafes and pubs and only a handful of specialty stores, it was mostly residential.

“Guess we’ll have to go into London,” Dawson said,

“We don’t have to today.” Collins said,

“I’m happy to if you are, not like we’ll miss dinner since it’s not cooked for us anymore.”

“Well, alright we will then.”

The train whizzed through the warm evening air as the sky darkened around it.

“So Farrier definitely said if you can get a leash, that Parker can go?”

“No, he said if we can get a leash, he’ll talk to Canfield.”

“Ah.”

The air was thick between the blondes as they sat on the train, the light weak through the window. Collins could tell Dawson was thinking about something, but wasn’t sure if it was his place to ask. Dawson rarely asked if Collins appeared that he didn’t want to tell, so it would be fair if he do the same now. Curiosity got the better of him though, and the Scot was given the chance to raise a concerned eyebrow when their eyes met. Dawson exhaled before giving his explanation.

“It’s just. You and… Farrier.” He said, and paused to think more, Collins, having had no clue that would be what came out of Dawson’s mouth had a huge shock, eyes widening in borderline fear of what else he had to say.

“Don’t get me wrong. Whatever makes you happy, yeah? I like seeing my best friend happy, it just…” Dawson said, Collins about to burst if he didn’t just spit it out.
“It’s hard to explain. I just find it hard to think about, I suppose. And I’m not trying to hurt your feelings, it’s just something I’ve never dealt with before, and though in my house we try to be accepting, society tells me that, well, you know what it tells me about you two.” He said.

Collins was crestfallen.

“So… You do think of me differently. You lied when I told you, you said you wouldn’t think of me differently.” Collins said with as level voice as he could manage, being careful not to raise it enough that someone else in the train could hear, not that there were many on their carriage. Dawson reached out and put a hand on Collins’ knee.

“That’s definitely not what I’m saying. I didn’t lie, I don’t see you differently. All I’m saying is that it’s difficult for me to think about the physical picture, the intricacies. And I know I don’t have to, but your mind wanders, you know?” he said.

“Well, I’m glad you stand by your word that you don’t see me differently. And I can imagine it must be a strange thing to contemplate, but do you think it would interferer with our friendship?” Collins asked.

“Mate!” Dawson said, and then began laughing.

“Course not, god you’re silly sometimes. Look, you wanted to know what I was thinking, I told you. You’re my best friend though, nothing will change that,” He said.

Collins supposed he’d have to accept this aspect of Dawson. He could tell his friend was really trying, and he’d been extremely lucky so far that Wingnut, Dawson and Stella had all been fine with it, so really, Collins thought, he shouldn’t push his luck.

They arrived in London town centre and after wandering around for a while and asking a few locals, they found a pet store.

“What colour?” Collins asked.

“Your dog, your choice.”

It hadn’t really dawned on him until then, Parker really was his dog, if anyone’s.

“Shite.”

“Collins, black or brown leather isn’t a difficult choice.” Dawson laughed, assuming he’d sworn because it was a hard decision.

“Ah, eh, this one.” The Scot said, picking up the brown collar. The two found some rope in one of the sheds back at base later and decided that it would do for a lead, making a slipknot in one end to hold it by.

“Well, can he go to the carnival?” Collins asked Farrier that night,

“Lead and collar?”

“Yep!”

“Then I’ll ask the old man tomorrow,” Farrier said.

On account of it being cooler outside than in, Parker was out in the courtyard much to Farrier’s disappointment, he liked having the dog in his room for a bit before bed even though Canfield
didn’t want Parker upstairs at all.

“Dawson made me realise something today,” Collins said, earning a hum from Farrier.

“Made me realise I have a dog.”

“Pet, the way you word things sometimes is just quite amusing.” Farrier said,

“No, I know there’s a dog here, but that he’s mine.” Collins clarified.

“I know what you meant,” Farrier said, reaching a hand around Collins’ head and gently pulling it in for a kiss.

The swimming carnival was at the end of June, just before the holidays. The group was comprised of the four squadrons of Gatwick and all the officers, and the ground crew. Collins felt bad that the ladies from the kitchen turned radar room weren’t invited. They worked so hard and were so good at keeping everyone in order when they’d been in charge of serving food to over a hundred men, and the blonde assumed they were doing magnificent jobs of learning radar. It frustrated him that they didn’t earn the same rights as the RAF. Then again, he didn’t know they weren’t invited.

“Are the ladies from the kitchen WAAF?” Collins asked Dawson.

“I have no idea.” Dawson said, perplexed. They were all walking down to the pool, the air was cool but it held the feeling that soon it would be hot.

“I was askin’ because they didnae get invited to the carnival! Seems unfair,” Collins said.

“I mean, we don’t know they weren’t invited but it’s probably unlikely. I think it’s just because they aren’t on active duty in any sense of the word, maybe they organise their own things, who knows mate.”

Parker was on his lead wearing his new collar. It had been a struggle to put it on the pup today, Dawson and Collins had tried to before his morning walk in the fields but Parker had bolted into the long grass to play. After he’d been tired out it was more feasible, though the pup was trying to get it off for the first hour or so.

“He looks ridiculous with one ear up,” Dawson laughed.

“He does, but he’ll look proper handsome when the other one pops up too,” Collins said. It was particularly amusing, his left ear wasn’t just partially up, it stood bolt upright while the right had still showed no signs of standing up yet.

Farrier and Canfield walked at the back with the other officers, Farrier taking a leaf out of Collins’ book and looking around more as he walked, enjoying the smell of summer in the air, the trees blossoming, Canfield’s constant chatter wafting through the air in a comforting buzz that was indecipherable to Farrier’s wandering mind.

“Good to know you’re listening, chap.” Canfield commented and slapped Farrier lightly on the arm, causing those words cut through the haze a little.

“Oh, I am.”

“What did I say?”

Farrier chuckled with his mouth closed and smiled at the ground, a habit he’d developed as a boy,
what he once thought was a confident act to hide a lie.

“Exactly.”

Soon enough they were at the swimming centre. The boys at the front of the group ran through the gate and onto the lawn, surprising the pool workers who were peacefully fishing leaves out of the water with nets. The familiar yet strange smell of the chlorine hit Collins at once, and even though he’d only been to the pool a single time before, the smell was nostalgic. Parker began pulling excitedly on his lead,

“Easy!” Collins laughed as he was pulled along with the dog, his walk turning into a jog.

“He’s seen the water!” Dawson laughed and jogged alongside.

“How does he know he’ll like it?”

“He’s a dog, he’s not thinking that, Collins. He’s thinking look! Something I haven’t seen before!” Dawson said. Collins looked behind him to see the other men laughing along at the dog’s insistence to get into the grounds of the pool, and Farrier’s smile was among them.

After everyone had picked a spot on the grassy hill next to the pool, Parker’s whimpering and pulling unceasing, Collins let him off the lead at last, making an apologetic face to the pool workers. Parker bolted straight towards the water, but to everyone’s surprise he stopped at the edge. There was a ways down from the pool ledge to the water, he looked over curiously, so Collins went to him.

“Blue, aye?” he said, bobbing down to pat Parker’s head.

The pup stepped onto the ledge and suddenly Collins was worried that he was too small, that because there was only a ladder to climb back out that he wouldn’t be able to if he jumped.

“Come on pup, I’ll go in with yae in a bit,” The Scot said and picked Parker up. Though he’d been unsure at the water’s edge, he sure struggled when taken away from it.

“What was all that about then?” Canfield laughed as Collins carried him back to the shade on the grass.

“Dunno! Guess he didn’t know there was a drop doon,”

“Well if he needs to get in the pool, maybe it’s best you get in with him.” Canfield suggested.

So that was what Collins did, grateful that this time nobody had to wear heavy overalls to test their abilities to stay afloat, but ungrateful that he’d used up so much of Dawson’s sunscreen on his body, he walked down to the shallow end with Parker at his heel.

Everyone seemed to see what Collins was doing, and they followed him. He didn’t realise as he walked down to the pool that the entire group was behind him until he turned to step back onto the ladder’s steps and down into the water.

“Oh!” he said, causing a collective laugh.

There was a tinge of self-consciousness, that he was being watched by everyone. It was gone when the blonde turned his focus back to Parker, who had cocked his head to one side as he watched Collins lower himself into the water.
“Come on then,” he said, and reached up to pick Parker up. At first the pup seemed very unsure of what was happening, but as soon as his paws hit the water, he yelped in excitement. Collins held Parker up by the belly, letting him get the feel of the water. Soon enough he began to paddle, instinct kicked in and he struggled out of Collins’ arms.

“Guess he likes it then!” the scot smiled up, mainly at Dawson who raised his eyebrows in agreement.

“Last one in buys me an ice cream!” Canfield shouted from the back, causing a stampede of men jumping in over the side of the pool. Parker loved it.

“Such a child,” Farrier tutted.

“You’re last in, chap. Hope you brought some money!” Canfield replied.

Farrier laughed,

“What flavour?”

Chapter End Notes

Last chapter for the decade!!!! I'm so glad that all of you enjoy reading and continue to do so, I am so lucky and I'm very grateful for all of you!

my tumblr
afternoon pinboard
Until next chapter my lovelies, happy reading ❤
See you all in the Roaring Twenties!!!!!
Happy Tuesday everyone! I'm on holiday at the beach right now and don't have wifi, I'm uploading this from my hotspot which has one bar lol (last night I had no signal at all lol hence it being Tuesday morning).

Hope everyone enjoys this one.

The rest of the day at the pool passed quickly, several inflatable balls had appeared over the day, one of them punctured by Parker, who was currently asleep in the shade after being hosed off by Collins, just as he'd said he would. The blonde was currently lined up for food at the kiosk, watching Dawson perfect his diving from the diving blocks. He was good at it, Collins imagined Dawson was the sort of person who got good at anything he channelled his time into.

The shadows grew longer, and as much as Collins did want to keep swimming, he could already feel the beginnings of sunburn on his shoulders and cheeks, so he opted to sit with Parker and eat his Rowntrees.

“Hey,” a low voice behind the blonde made him and the dog both jump.

“Jeez, Farrier,” he laughed. The brunette stood next to them with a packet of crisps in hand.

“Having a nice day?” he asked,

“I am, but I think I’m getting sunburnt,” Collins laughed and looked up at the man, his smile softened a little at the second he allowed himself to take just to look at Farrier, to take him in for the first time of the day. It was short lived, cut short for fear of being seen.

“The kiosk sells sunscreen, get some.” Farrier suggested.

“Oh, I’m happy just sittin’ with Parker for the rest of the day.”

Farrier wished he could ruffle Collins’ hair, but he made do with ruffling Parker’s fur instead.

“I wish we were back at the base, you know,” Farrier mumbled. Collins almost missed the tone in his voice, but the sharp look in the man’s eye as he looked into Collins’ own made sure the blonde knew exactly what he’d meant. Collins was uncomfortable, not knowing how to answer in public he shut his mouth, smiled and patted Parker, who was rolling onto his back.

“Well, we’ll be back there later,” Collins mumbled as his cheeks reddened. Farrier’s intensity still caught the blonde off guard sometimes, especially when it came to matters of their physical relationship. When the mood took Farrier, he wasn’t shy about making it known. The brunette walked off shortly after, not wanting to spend too much time with Collins while out and about. After Dawson had finished diving and swimming, he walked back over to the grass and collapsed on his back somewhat near Collins.

“May have overworked myself,” he panted, grinning with his eyes shut.

“Maybe ye should have sat with me an’ the dog,”
“Nah, I’m as close as a person can get to a fish! I love the water too much, mate,” he replied, and then Collins wasn’t sure if he went to sleep or was just too tired to keep talking.

“Shoulda joined the Navy then,” Collins laughed, coaxing a wheeze of a chuckle out of Dawson.

“When you’ve tasted flight, and all that jargon Canfield said that time,” he breathed.

“For once you have tasted flight you will walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards, for there you have been and there you will long to return.” Collins said. Dawson sat up with half a wince, “How do you know the entire thing?” he asked, standing to sit with Collins, Parker perked up upon seeing him near, Dawson sat and gave him a scratch behind the ears.

“I wrote it in my book. And it’s not from Canfield, it’s from Da Vinci.” He corrected, Dawson giving him some sort of mocking look for being a know-it-all.

The sun was getting low in the sky by the time Canfield and Farrier made the rounds to get everyone else out of the pool, and of course Parker managed to wriggle his way out of Collins’ grip to jump, lead and all, into the pool just as everyone had gotten out. The pool staff weren’t thrilled and neither was Collins, though everyone else laughed including Dawson.

“I’d just dried off!” he complained as he grumbled down to the pool’s edge to see the dog paddling around in circles.

“Parker, get out ye eejit!” Collins said, causing the dog to paddle away further. It was a game now.

“Now you’ve done it,” Turner commented.

“Yae want to volunteer?” Collins asked back, Turner giggled and walked away to get out of it.

“You might want to help the lad,” Canfield mumbled to Farrier, who had been laughing at Collins, the blonde was standing hands on hips, yelling at the dog to no avail.

“Yeah, might be here a while if I don’t.” he said, walking down to the pool.

“Here,” Farrier said to Collins, who took a step back from the pool.

“Parker! Come here!” Farrier said with a happy tone, he bent over and began splashing his hand in the water at the edge of the pool, Parker looked curious about what it was, but was still having the time of his life on the other side of the pool.

“Come on boy! Parker!” Farrier kept calling, until finally Parker did turn and make for the splashes the man was making. As soon as he got to Farrier’s hand in the water, he was scooped up, hand under his belly and given, sopping wet, to Collins, much to the other men’s amusement.

“Now we can go home,” Canfield laughed.

“He’s getting naughty, you’ve got to start training him, lucky he’s still small enough to pick up like that,” Farrier said with his typical public air of authority.

“Yes, I know. Sorry.” Collins said, catching a smile from Farrier out the corner of his eye as he walked off to be with Canfield.

That night, 102nd hung around in the squadron common room, and 107th in their own common room adjacent. It was nice, having a room to themselves. Although Collins and Farrier would have much preferred it if they were in the same common room, it was a nice way to get to know
everyone properly. Not only that but to just relax, not holed away in bedrooms. After Parker found out that the common room rugs could be lifted up and therefor played with, Collins took it as an opportunity to take his leave, first delivering Parker to the quadrangle where his kennel now was courtesy of Canfield’s soft spot for the dog.

The next day Davis had decided not to go flying, it was too hot and everyone seemed to have already put themselves in holiday mode pre-emptively. That didn’t stop Farrier from rounding his squadron up and getting them into the sky.

“Why are the mid-year holidays the short ones? In school it was that the summer break was longer than the winter.” Collins said to Davis, “Well, it’s mainly because the planes are just bloody difficult to fly in winter, so we give more of a break over the cold period so we don’t have to deal with things like frost, snow on the runway, things like that.” Davis explained as they sat in 102 squadron’s common room, all observing some maps and learning the fine details of using coordinates and landmarks.

The blonde hummed, made sense he supposed. Collins was glad of it if anything, he loved winter so it meant more free time. Yes, winter was beautiful from the planes, he’d seen glimpses in some of the colder flights he’d been on, but he couldn’t go on walks and explore from the air. Collins and Dawson looked out the window as some Spitfires from 107th squadron shot overhead, Farrier was having them do stall training today, something Davis had not yet worked 102nd squadron up to doing, but he’d told them it would be soon.

Farrier didn’t mind stalling the plane, after years it got very ordinary. He respected though that the first time, first few times in fact, it was terrifying. To deliberately fly until the engine stalled sounded like a ridiculous idea, but it was an important part of training, to learn how to come out of one and more importantly, learn what not to do in order to avoid one altogether.

After one of his pilots stalled too close to the ground and almost didn’t recover from it in time, Farrier called it a day.

“Too hot out here anyway lads, get inside and have a drink.” He said, the ground crew began to swarm their planes as they got out, Farrier extremely grateful that there were groundcrew at Gatwick now to save his back from pushing planes. The squadron walked inside, 102 squadron hearing the sound of laughter and conversation waft through the halls as they sat in the common room trying to stay cool.

“Oh, is it… Oh goodness, get out of here men! I lost track of time!” Davis laughed, looking at his watch, Collins then looked at his own to see it was almost 16:50. It was so sunny this time of year that the blonde found it harder to tell the time by looking out the window.

“Well, that was boring.” Dawson murmured to Collins as they went to see what was in the fridge.

“Yeah, not sure if Davis knows how much we were taught before we joined his OTU.” Collins said, grabbing a cold apple from the fridge and going to give Parker some cool water in a bowl.

Soon enough, students began to depart for the July holidays, it seemed everyone had somewhere to be, someone to go and see. Collins envied the other men for having either a seemingly perfect relationship with their families, or having a romantic partner which they didn’t have to hide from society. The blonde was moping about with Parker for the majority of the first day of the holidays, having got himself into the same mindset about home as usual, that he didn’t want to go and that he wouldn’t enjoy himself. He recognised that if he went, he’d have a better time than what his
mind was telling him, yet the thought wasn’t strong enough to outweigh the want to stay at base. The thought did however, raise the fact that Collins’ family were unaware that he had a pet. Deciding a phone call was a good compromise, he walked out to the telephone box on the street and dialled the number.

“Hello?”

“Da, it’s me!” Collins said,

“Son! Wasn’t expecting another call from ye so soon after yer birthday!” he laughed.

“I wasn’t expecting to call, but I need to tell ye something.” He said, the line was quiet.

“I’ve got a dog.”

“A dog? Speak up boy!”

“Yes a dog! His name is Parker, I found him. He lives with me on the airbase,” Collins said, smiling.

“Marie! Jack’s on the phone, he’s got a dog called Harper!”

“Parker, Da!” Collins laughed, hearing his father correct himself on the other end.

“Jack?” his mother said, surprising the blonde who didn’t know the phone had been passed to her.

“Hi, Ma.” He said.

“So, they let you keep a pet?”

“Ye, at first they weren’t sure but actually, the officers all love Parker.”

“Well I’m happy for you! Are you learning to care for Parker?”

“I am, he’s a rascal and getting naughtier by the day, but I’m going to train him.” He explained.

After some long winded explanation that wasn’t entirely false about the difficulties of getting a dog up to Aviemore and not wanting to leave him behind so therefore he wouldn’t be visiting this holidays, the call ended and Collins went back to moping with Parker in the courtyard for a while.

“You’ve been here all day!” said Canfield, giving Collins the fright of his life.

“Oh, ye well, he’s my dog!” the blonde said as Parker comically ran away from him, straight towards Canfield.

“Hello Parker,” the old man said, and bent to pat him.

“He’s getting strong!”

“He is. I’m going to start training him,”

“Excellent idea, I’ll not forget the image of him bolting into the pool!” Canfield laughed.

The sun was going down and the dirt of the courtyard was almost orange in the deep purple light of dusk. The grass was beginning to grow, but it would be a slow process to cover the square, especially since Parker found great joy in digging in the dirt and also digging up the grass to eat it
and play with it.

“Well tell you what chap, see if you can teach him one thing in the week I’m gone. How about that?” Canfield said as he went to go inside.

“I’ll try,” Collins laughed.

That night Farrier and Collins sat in the kitchen with some of the other students who hadn’t gone home for the holidays yet, Collins was slightly disappointed because Dawson had left early that day along with most of the students, meaning he had nobody to socialise with and hide his embarrassment of being in the same room as Farrier with other men around. Except Turner.

“Ey mate,” Collins said to Turner, Farrier had busied himself talking to someone else.

“Collin!” he said,

“Collins,”

“Ah, sorry! I was close though, gotta give me that,” Turner laughed.

“You were,” Collins said. Neither of them said anything for a bit, but the room was filled with chatter from the handful of other students not yet departed.

“How’ve you been then?” Turner asked, opening the fridge to see what food there was, Collins moved in after spotting a bottle of beer. It had been all too hot again today and Collins had only made it worse for himself sitting outside with Parker, even in the shade it was still too hot for his liking. The cool bottle in his hand was even enough to calm him a tad from the tension in the room as he and Farrier actively avoided each other to speak with others.

“Good, good. Glad to be on a little holiday now,” he said, opening it.

“Me too. Might go home for a bit,” Turner thought aloud, grabbing a beer after seeing Collins’ good idea.

“Is it safe?” the blonde blurted, earning him an irritated and confused look.

“Sorry. I shouldn’t have,” Collins said,

“Oh! Not to worry fellow, took me a minute to even realise what you were talkin’ about. The IRA, right?” Turner said, clinking his bottle against Collins’ as a cheers.

“Yeah, sorry I really didn’t think before talking,” the blonde said.

“Don’t be, it’s a legitimate concern. Luckily I’m from a town in the middle of nowhere that not a soul has heard of! We’re tucked away and safe my friend, don’t you worry.” He said. Collins wasn’t sure why he found Turner mildly annoying, but he couldn’t shake the feeling.

“Ah, then I’m glad you can go home,” he said.

“Will you?”

“What?”

“Go home,”

“Oh. Not these holidays, I’m staying here tae train Parker properly. It’d be a nightmare taking him
anywhere in public with his manners, the swimming pool was bad enough,” Collins laughed.

“You live far away?” Turner asked, Collins smiled confusedly, surely his accent gave the answer away.

“I mean, obviously yer from far away, but how far? The borders? Glasgow?” he asked.

“Well, I’m also from a tiny town nobody has heard of, in the highlands.” Collins explained.

“Ah! Us small town boys gravitate towards each other then!” Turner laughed, Collins nodded and drank his beer down, it was cool and exactly what he’d needed.

“Well, best not to ask too many personal questions I’ve heard,” Turner said.

“Indeed. First rule, don’t get too close,” Collins said, resisting the urge to turn and see what Farrier was up to.

Collins and Farrier deliberately stalled until everyone else had left, Turner proving to be a particularly clingy and conversational individual who didn’t leave until Collins falsely announced that he was going to himself.

“That man can talk!” Farrier laughed after everyone was gone, the kitchen was warm from the day’s heat and the single yellow light hanging from the ceiling only served to make it feel warmer.

“Sure can, I think I chose the wrong person to chat to tonight,” Collins said.

“Canfield told me he and you have a bet on,” Farrier said, still not moving from his spot leaned against the counter in case someone wandered through, the man less inclined to act in public after seeing how many men were still here, it was a lot more than he thought.

“A bet? No no, he said I should try to teach Parker a trick in the week he’s gone,” Collins said.

“He seems to think you bet money on that,”

“I did nae such thing!”

“That’s Michael for you, twists things around until they’re to his liking,” Farrier chuckled.

“Well I’m going to be a bit richer by the end of the week!” Collins declared. The very next day he was out with Parker in the fields behind the airbase teaching him the very easiest trick. Sit. Collins shouldn’t have spoken too soon about the bet, having forgotten what a cheeky dog Parker was turning out to be. The blonde had a handful of dog biscuits in his hand and was holding them above Parker’s nose as Farrier had told him to do, trying to get the dog to look upwards until he sat, but instead Parker would just jump. That, or get too excited and just run around barking. By noon Collins had given up and went inside, Parker following him very closely still under the impression that he had dog biscuits on him.

“She’s not doing it. He didn’t sit once!” Collins complained to Farrier who was sitting at his desk going over some of the radar room information. Collins had noticed that Farrier didn’t seem to like downtime unless it was relaxing in bed, even then he liked to do something. The blonde didn’t pry, but wondered if it was a distraction technique from his internal thoughts.

“Let me see. Where is the bugger?” he asked, and was promptly answered when Parker nosed the door open, Collins realising that he probably should have shut it completely.
“Let’s show you how to sit, little one.” Farrier said. Something stirred inside Collins hearing Farrier speak so gently to the dog. They took Parker into the dirt quadrangle and Farrier grabbed a handful of biscuits from the outside cupboard they were kept in.

“Parker, look!” he said, opening his hand to show the pup, whose ears, though still a little floppy at the tips, pricked up. Farrier held a single biscuit out so he could see it easily, and just as he had been before, Parker tried to jump at Farrier to get it.

“Ah!” Farrier said, sharply, holding his hand higher, Parker at least understood that the tone in his voice was disapproving.

“Were you talking to him?” Farrier asked Collins.

“Sort of, telling him tae stop acting silly.”

“It’s all in the tone of voice,” Farrier said, and tried again. This time, wary he’d get spoken to harshly, Parker didn’t jump, but his gaze followed the biscuit in Farrier’s hand. The man held it higher, and then moved it back over Parker’s head slightly, so that if the pup wanted to keep looking at it, he’d have to sit down to look directly upwards. And he did. Slowly and in a way that implied he wasn’t sure about doing it at all, Parker sat.

“Sit.” Farrier said to instil the word in the dog’s mind, and after a few moments, gave him the biscuit.

“You did it!” Collins said,

“You try.” Farrier said, giving Collins some dog food. The blonde got his dog’s attention with his name, showed him the biscuit, but Parker jumped straight up onto Collins as soon as he saw it.

“Parker no!” Collins said, trying his hardest to keep his voice harsh. He tried again, he went through the action of moving the biscuit very slowly as not to excite Parker, and to his surprise, he sat down.

“Sit.” Collins said, and then gave the dog his treat.

“I guess I was exciting him too much,” Collins said,

“Well, you’re very exciting,” Farrier smirked back before going inside again.
Monday again folks! This is a long chapter, but to be perfectly honest I'm not happy with it. It was hard to write for some reason, idk. Hopefully it reads alright for you all though. (P.S. don't translate the chapter title or anything else you might find in the chapter! All will be revealed)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Collins had spent the good part of every day that week teaching Parker to sit, to his absolute surprise the dog was learning slowly.

“Canfield will likely be back in the next few days, think Parker can do it with an audience?” Farrier asked one evening. Every night less and less men had made an appearance in the kitchen, the only place they all seemed to congregate in one group. Farrier assumed that meant that they were all away now because it was just he and Collins, almost all of the men lived locally anyway so it wasn’t unusual for them to all leave base, same as when Gatwick had been a training base. There was usually a handful of days on which Farrier was the only one there, those days used to be the hardest because he was alone with his thoughts, but now he yearned for them, because Collins would be there too.

“Let’s find out,” Collins said, beginning to leave the kitchen to get Parker. The dog practically leaped through the doorway from the courtyard, happy to see Collins again though it had only been perhaps half an hour.

“He’s sure fond of you,” Farrier laughed.

“We’ll I’m sure fond of him!” Collins smiled, and closed the door.

“He’s only done it without treats a few times.” Collins added,

“Well maybe don’t make it obvious if you’ve got them or not, keep your hand shut.”

“Won’t he know because he won’t smell the treats?”

“I dunno, maybe a closed hand will make him curious anyway.” Farrier said, so they tried it. Collins raised a closed hand slightly, but not enough for it to be the sole thing that drove Parker.

“Sit.” He said loudly, the dog nearly did it, but his eyes were still fixed on Collins’ hand.

It got less and less successful after every try, Parker figuring out there might not be a biscuit at the end of it.

“Ah well, we can try again tomorrow, pet. You’ve been working with Parker every day, give yourself some credit,” Farrier said, chanceing a ghost of his hand over Collins’ own.

“I know, he’s a naughty boy for sure. I just hope Canfield doesn’t really ask me for money!” Collins laughed,
“Ah he probably won’t, he just says things like that,” Farrier said.

“Do you think Parker gets cold outside at night?” Collins asked, opening the door to the quadrangle again to let him back outside, of course Collins then had to walk Parker over to the kennel, otherwise he’d just stand next to the blonde and not go back outside. Farrier followed.

“Not in this weather, in winter we’ll have to see what we can do though. Maybe one of the common rooms can have a dog bed in it,” he suggested. As they were out in the courtyard, Collins looked up. It was peaceful, and the sky was clear. The stars shone, having a field on one side of the base meant there wasn’t much light pollution. Collins almost jumped as he felt a warm hand in his. He looked down to see Farrier smiling fondly at him.

“Not here,” Collins said.

“Collins, have you been paying attention? Nobody else is here.” Farrier said.

“Oh…” Collins said quietly, suddenly almost nervous. They continued to hold hands, both looking upwards at the sky as Parker crawled into the kennel and finally began to sleep.

“Look!” Collins said as a shooting star appeared.

“Make a wish, pet,” Farrier said warmly as he watched it pass.

Collins wished that one day, Farrier knew how he felt about him,

and Farrier wished that no matter what happened, to him or the world, Collins would be safe.

They stood like that for a time longer, saw several more shooting stars too before finally going inside upstairs.

“I haven’t drawn anything in ages,” Collins mumbled to himself as they walked along the hall.

“Well why don’t you bring your book into my room?” Farrier asked. Collins nodded, and as they walked past his room he darted in.

“I want you to sleep in here tonight,” Farrier said as they got into his own room. Collins tensed, he wasn’t being asked, he was being told.

“I, okay,” He replied meekly, just happy Farrier wanted him to. He went and sat on the bed with his sketchbook, after locking the door even though nobody was there, Farrier joined him.

“What will you draw tonight, pet?”

“Don’t know,” The blonde said, staring at the blank page.

“Parker?” Farrier suggested.

“Actually, good idea!”

Collins sat for the good part of an hour up against the pillow, and Farrier watched the entire time. It was fascinating to watch Collins draw, the practiced movements on the page with the pencil creating something so delicate and beautiful that Farrier could never hope in his wildest dreams to replicate. The look on the blonde’s face was more beautiful than any of the drawings he’d done, in Farrier’s humble opinion. It was somewhere between concentration and happiness, an interesting mix that somehow suited Collins.
“Think it’s about finished, thank you for the idea,” Collins said softly.

“Of course,” Farrier said, taking the book to see properly.

“How did you even do this?” he said,

“What?”

“Looks just like Parker!”

“Well, animals in general are a lot easier than people to draw, easier to make it look like them,” Collins said bashfully.

He’d drawn Parker sitting in some long grass, presumably inspired by the fields behind the airbase. His head was cocked to the side and his tongue was lolling out of his mouth as it often was.

“It’s amazing, Collins,” Farrier said, giving it back.

“Thank you, it was fun to draw. Was it fun tae watch? Felt yer eyes on me the whole time.”

“Yes actually, I’d never be able to do something like that,” Farrier said, and gently took the book and pencil out of Collins’ hands, leaning over and placing them on the bedside table. The blonde shifted down on the bed so that he lay in line with his partner.

“You really do make me a better man, Collins. Because of you I strive to be my best, you give me a reason to try harder,” Farrier said, gently stroking Collins’ arm. Collins was red, his heart was pounding at such a rate he worried if he was about to spontaneously combust. Why was Farrier saying this? He never said things like this. Was Farrier about to say it? Was he about to say it?

Though nothing came after that, just the gentle strokes of his warm hand up the blonde’s arm.

“Well I’m very glad, Farrier. You, you make me feel safe. Make me feel like… Like me,” Collins mumbled, heart still beating in his ears wondering if the brunette was going to confess something. But he didn’t. Collins couldn’t read Farrier, it didn’t appear like he was holding anything back that he wanted to say, did he not feel that way? The blonde felt both anxious and relaxed at the same time. It was obvious that this was exactly where Farrier wanted to be, and that thought was comforting. But what if he didn’t have the same feelings Collins did? What if it wasn’t as deep for him?

He was dragged out of his thoughts as the hand that was stroking his arm came up to cup his face, forcing his gaze into those beautiful dark stormy eyes. Farrier could tell Collins’ mind was drifting. There was no malice, no shallowness, nothing except adoration in Farrier’s eyes. That was all Collins needed to see to know that his thoughts had gotten away from him yet again. Farrier was so calm when looking into Collins’ eyes, he knew the blonde sometimes found eye contact intimidating, he’d been told that he had an intense stare, but in the rare times when Collins allowed himself to look, Farrier felt so connected to him, felt so strongly for him that he could feel his chest tighten, it was like feeling anxious except it felt good.

“They’re so blue,” Farrier mumbled, causing Collins to look away and smile embarrassedly.

Farrier took his hand, it was cooler than his, Collins’ eyes shot straight up to Farrier’s, he was still in a strangely anxious mood, though his gaze softened and a small smile played on his face as the man leaned in. He felt a hand on the back of his neck, it played with the short hair on his nape, it nestled itself in the crook of his shoulder and Collins’ own hand came up and wrapped itself around Farrier’s forearm as his soft lips kissed him. Farrier pulled away and rested their foreheads
together for a while. When he sat up to admire his partner, it was only then that he realised that
Collins looked nervous, in the way his eyebrows were knitted and in the way his hands fiddled
with the sheets under them. Farrier slowly moved closer to him, slowly brushed his lips over
Collins’ own again.

“It’s okay.” He said, and at those words, Collins truly believed that it was. His breaths were heavy
with nerves, Farrier made him feel so safe, but he could feel that there was something different in
the air tonight. Maybe something to do with Collins’ feelings, his want, need, for them to be
reciprocated. Collins opened his eyes briefly as they kissed, he swallowed nervously and pulled
away.

“Pet, it’s okay, isn’t it?” Farrier asked,

“It is,” Collins said, almost laughing to himself. He took one more moment to gather his thoughts.

Collins took one more breath, and raised his gaze back to Farrier, who was watching him with a
worried, caring look that made Collins feel like Farrier would protect him from anything.

For what reason Collins was nervous, Farrier did not know. But he wanted to make his partner feel
as comfortable as he could, and being someone who didn’t talk about emotions much, he consoled
Collins with his body instead. Wrapping an arm around the blonde’s slight shoulders, pulling him
close, holding him. Farrier let his eyes close once more as he kissed him. He brushed a hand
through Collins’ hair to try and help calm him, it seemed to be working as the Scot leaned against
him more, exhaled deeply.

The room was warm, it was yet another summer night where the air never really reached ‘cool’, so
everyone was left feeling just warm enough for it to be uncomfortable if they had the sheets on.
The men were both burning up in their clothes, but Farrier was overly worried of taking it too fast.
He slowly reared up and took his shirt off, Collins watched more and more of Farrier’s golden skin
appear in front of him, and before he could become entirely incapacitated by the sight he took his
shirt off too, realising how clammy his skin was becoming under it. Farrier sat back on his
haunches to admire Collins.

“You truly are a beautiful person, inside and out, pet.” He said softly.

“Stop it,” Collins said. The brunette chuckled and as his soft laughter faded, his smile was replaced
with pursed lips, worry. Not just that Collins seemed more nervous than usual, but because of what
he’d thought to himself, that perhaps he had too much emotional baggage, that Collins had been
affected by it all.

“It’s okay,” Collins mirrored Farrier’s early words.

“I know pet. I just don’t want to hurt you, you know?” He said, Collins paused for a moment
before answering, wondering if Farrier was insinuating something about what he planned to do
tonight.

“You can’t.” Collins replied, coming to the conclusion that Farrier was talking about emotions, not
something else.

Farrier’s breath faltered at the sudden confession. Collins was well aware that feelings, and the
expression of, weren’t Farrier’s strong point, and he wasn’t surprised when the brunette chose to
express what he was feeling physically. Their lips met again and Farrier lay his weight on top of
Collins’ body, skin on skin. Farrier kissed down the blonde’s chin and along his jaw, Collins never
could control himself once Farrier’s lips had left his, once he had started making his way down his
body. The brunette breathed hotly on his neck, Collins’ entire body tensed. At that he ran a hand up the blonde’s torso, up to his cheek where he held it there.

It calmed Collins only for a little before Farrier dipped his head to place a kiss on the man’s collarbone, a shaky breath leaving him as Farrier made his way up to his neck, to the crook between it and his shoulder. He shivered into the touch and a hand came up to the back of Farrier’s head, holding him there thinking maybe if he drew it out long enough, he wouldn’t be nervous anymore. Farrier, who had been lying half beside half on top of him, shifted his weight to entirely pin Collins down as he kissed, the blonde’s legs fell open around his waist and Farrier stopped for a moment, raising his head to look at the man beneath him. Beautiful as always, but still nervous. Farrier ran a hand through his blonde hair,

“You really want to?” he asked quietly, unsure if Collins was pushing for something because he felt he should, rather than wanting to.

“Yes, just… Be gentle with me.” came the answer.

Farrier exhaled, he wanted Collins to be as comfortable as he could be, if he thought getting his end away would help, then Farrier would happily be obliged. The brunette continued to play with Collins’ hair, lulling the blonde into a state of almost content, before lowering his lips onto the other man’s once more. It was a soft kiss, one that meant *it’s okay, I’m here*. A kiss which Farrier hoped conveyed how careful he was trying to be, Farrier broke the kiss and sat back and as he did, Collins glanced out the window. The blinds and curtains were both still open, and the stars were bright over the field outside. Seeing it relaxed him, almost as if it was confirmation that everything was going to be alright. He looked back to Farrier with an expression of calmness, yet determination. Silent confirmation that it was okay to go on. Farrier’s strong hand placed itself on his chest, tentatively blunt nails dragged lightly over the skin, not hard enough to leave a mark, but just to feel something. Collins almost jumped at the sensation and couldn’t stop a gasp from escaping, he’d wanted the night to go in this direction but hadn’t been prepared for when it did. Farrier’s other hand wandered down to Collins’ belt buckle, undoing it deftly and pulling the leather out of the beltloops, letting it fall with a thump on the floor beside the bed. Collins reached forwards and tried to undo Farrier’s own buckle, nimble fingers working it off eventually. Soon they both were completely naked, completely trusting of each other, completely vulnerable. Farrier wasn’t sure why he himself was so nervous, it wasn’t like they hadn’t done this before. He supposed it was because Collins was nervous. Farrier’s emotions were hiding just below the calm surface, the front he was putting on to reassure his partner. He pushed Collins’ legs apart and they met him with some resistance. He looked over to Collins’ face, and upon seeing fear in those blue orbs he leaned over the blonde’s body, placed a kiss on his forehead.

“Tell me if you don’t want to.”

“I will,” Collins breathed, and leaned up to kiss Farrier one more time, for luck. The man moved down his body again, slowly, painstakingly so. He kissed all down Collins’ chest, down his belly until he reached his pelvis. Slowly, he took the blonde’s length in his hand, Collins hissed at the sensation and tensed, Farrier ceased movement for a second, he needed to know Collins was ready. Farrier looked up and finally it all clicked. He knew why Collins was nervous. Collins thought they were going to have sex.

“Fuck,” Farrier breathed, and he had to stop for a moment. He lay down next to Collins.

“You want to, don’t you,” Farrier said lowly, implication heavy in his voice to mean one thing, and one thing only. Collins looked away and blushed, but before Farrier was entirely ready the blonde turned to him and kissed him hard. Collins pulled away and trained his blue eyes on Farrier’s.
“Why are you nervous then?”

“You know I haven’t done it before,” Collins said lowly.

“I know, so you should know how careful I’m going to be, pet,” He replied

“Relax,” Farrier whispered. Collins couldn’t completely, but he did enough that Farrier deemed it alright to continue. Sitting on his haunches between he blonde’s splayed legs, Farrier gently took Collins’ length and slowly moved his hand up and down, other hand grabbing a handful of the man’s thigh and keeping his legs open with his body. His eyes hadn’t left his partner’s face. Collins’ hips stuttered as he tried to buck up against Farrier’s ministrations. The hand on his thigh shifted to his hipbone, holding him down.

“Farrier,” Collins muttered under his breath, heavy with annoyance.

“Not tonight pet.” Came the answer. Collins was frustrated at how slowly his partner was going, it felt so good but he needed more. He huffed in annoyance as neither the pace nor strength in Farrier’s grip got any more intense.

“Just relax,” Farrier repeated. Collins tried to, tried not to picture it as an action with an end goal, tried to just lie there and enjoy the sensation. It began to work, though not especially hard or fast, something began to build in Collins, and soon his breathing became more laboured, hips more insistent on rutting against Farrier’s hand. Farrier smiled, glad the lad was finally relaxing into it properly. So he stopped.

“Farrier, why-“ Collins began, but his question was answered as Farrier moved down further. The Scot’s hands clenched the sheets, he didn’t know what to expect. He felt the flesh of his arse being caressed, something so gentle that juxtaposed to something that in Collins’ mind was intense and painful and harsh, felt strange. Then he felt the hands pushing him apart, there was a moment’s hesitation as Farrier looked up at the blonde once more. Then a wet tongue slithered over Collins’ skin and straight down to his core, forcing a shocked gasp out of him. He blinked a few times and tried to focus on his breathing. This was real, this was happening. He tried not to let his thoughts take him out of the experience, so as he lay there being licked into he focused on nothing but the sensation. Farrier was being as gentle as he could. Perhaps once he would have been annoyed that someone needed this much working up, but not tonight. Not with Collins. Every second spent making the blonde more comfortable, every second of it was heaven to Farrier. His tongue snaked across sensitive muscle, swirling and sucking until Collins couldn’t take it anymore and was whining high in the back of his throat.

“Farrier,” he said, summoning all his strength to lift his head off the pillows.

“Please.”

The brunette’s dark gaze from between his legs made Collins’ stomach churn, and their eyes stayed locked on each other’s as Farrier raised himself up and lay next to Collins once again. He reached down and with a strong grip, moved the blonde’s legs wider apart. Farrier sucked one finger into his mouth and then Collins felt it at his entrance, felt his body tense and told himself to relax, taking a deep albeit shaky breath. Farrier placed a kiss on his cheek, Collins turned to him and the brunette took the opportunity to kiss him on the mouth. Collins sighed and Farrier felt Collins’ body relax as his finger circled his entrance.

Slowly, carefully, he pushed in.

Collins groaned against his mouth. The finger inside him slid in and out slowly as they kissed, both
breathing heavily against each other’s lips, Collins trying his hardest to suppress any noise. He needed more, and Farrier knew it. He could tell by the way the blonde was huffing against him, the way his breaths were short and needy and how his kissing was getting sloppy as his brain was overrun with pleasure. Farrier pulled his finger out and brought his hand back up to his mouth, wetting a second. When he pushed back in with double the girth, all Collins could do was groan and let his eyes close. Farrier pushed in and out, curling and uncurling, all the while watching the look on the blonde’s face. Collins was beginning to let go of the nerves, beginning to fall into the state of pleasure so great that he felt dizzy. One particularly deep thrust of Farrier’s fingers grazed against that special spot inside him and Collins couldn’t help but whimper. They’d done this before, but somehow with the knowledge of what was to follow, it was more intense this time. Collins was wired, he felt more alive than ever and yet, could barely move. He was in a haze of pleasure, and it was a sight to behold for Farrier that he’d managed to calm him down to such a degree. The fact that Farrier was the single cause of the pleasure so plainly exhibited on Collins’ face drove him wild. The man in question began to buck his hips again, Farrier sat up from his position next to Collins and moved himself between the man’s legs again for an easier angle. He slicked up a third finger, Collins looked eager and nervous at the same time and that expression stirred something primal deep down in Farrier which hadn’t been unearthed that night, until he saw the look in Collins’ eyes.

With more strength than previously, he pushed all three of his fingers deep inside Collins’ body, the blonde arched his back and moaned into the room. Farrier loved how easy it was. Collins just fell apart at his touch, if he ever had a resolve not to, it very quickly dissipated. Collins’ hand had wandered to his cock and he was gently tugging at it to the rhythm of the fingers inside him. Farrier grasped his own cock in his hand while pumping in and out of Collins with the other, he’d gotten hard just watching Collins writhe on the bed, and he wasn’t in the mood to deny himself pleasure. He hadn’t realised how wired he himself was, and how subsequently good it felt when he finally touched himself for the first time of the night, having all but forgotten himself in the need for everything to be all about Collins. The brunette let out a low groan as he watched his fingers curl inside of Collins, watched the blonde’s expression as he lay there, watched his own hand pumping his cock. His gaze shifted around and it was almost overwhelming how much was going on. Collins’ body was so incredibly tight, though it was gradually becoming accustomed to Farrier’s fingers. He pumped himself in time to his movements inside the man on his bed, and couldn’t wait to be inside him. As he looked down at Collins, Farrier felt a pang of raw emotion, just watching the blonde unfold, completely surrender himself to Farrier, was something the brunette never thought anyone would do for him, something he never thought he’d get close enough to anyone to experience. Collins’ eyes began to open, and he shook himself of the stupor he was in enough to prop himself up a little. The look of desperation in his eyes told Farrier all he needed to know.

He slowly pulled his fingers out, Collins immediately missed the feeling of fullness inside him. He let go of his length as Farrier straightened up, spitting into his hand and coating his dick. They both wished for more, more time, more niceties, but some spit and one of the only nights on which the base was empty would have to do. Collins tensed again, Farrier leaned his body over the blonde, faces close once more.

“Do you trust me?”

“You know that I do.”

Collins felt something larger, more blunt touching his body now. A little of the nerves returned and he looked up to Farrier for guidance, who looked down at him with an expression that could only be described as protective. Farrier leaned down over Collins, still craving the closeness.

One more whisper in the blonde’s ear to relax, that it would be okay, and Farrier pushed in.
They shared a collective gasp and blue eyes met blue once more. This was it. Slowly, Farrier kept pushing, Collins’ mouth hung open in pure shock at the sensation.

Farrier swore, causing the tiniest of smiles to appear on the blonde’s face. The brunette had never felt something like this, something so emotional, so real. He buried his face in Collins’ neck as he kept pushing, slowly, slowly, Collins staying uncharacteristically quiet until finally, he was buried to the hilt. He felt the blonde’s legs wrap around his body, and raised his head from the crook of Collins’ neck. Bunched brows, mouth still open, Collins looked up at him with a mix of wonder and pleasure.

There was nothing to do but keep going.

Farrier was itching to move faster, the man’s body was clamped around his cock so tightly it was driving him mad. But, for the comfort of his partner, he pulled out ever so slowly. He pushed back in just as slow, watching as Collins tensed again and they moaned in unison. Farrier kissed Collins’ forehead, his nose, his lips. Tried to comfort him as he inched in again. The brunette reached down between them with one arm and took Collins’ length in his hand. He began to pump slowly, the blonde’s body began to relax as he sighed. It got a little easier, once Collins untensed and Farrier could move without a vice-like grip around him, though still maddeningly tight. He pushed into Collins with a little more force in his hips this time, causing the blonde’s eyes to stare in surprise. They soon closed again as Farrier began to establish a slow rhythm. The pain had dulled to an ache in the background and Collins was grateful, for he knew just how hard the man was trying to make it a comfortable experience. Each push in felt like a milestone, felt unlike anything Collins could think of, and felt like he was drifting. He looked up at Farrier with a hooded gaze, conveying that even if there was still discomfort, it was outweighed by sheer need. For Farrier the experience was so surreal he almost felt like he needed to slap himself to make sure he was awake. He’d wanted this for so long, they both had. Now that it was happening it was almost unbelievable, and it was so much better than Farrier had pictured in his head, because he truly cared for the blonde splayed out beneath him trying his hardest to keep quiet. Farrier had never had meaningful sex in his life before and hadn’t thought he ever would. Collins’ legs were still hugging Farrier’s sides, his entire body jolting with each thrust inside. Collins’ breaths were laboured, cut short each time Farrier pushed himself up inside him again. Slowly, the blonde opened his eyes to look at Farrier, the most beautiful person he’d ever met in every sense of the word. Collins reached a shaky hand up to cup Farrier’s cheek and as they looked at each other, in that moment Collins began to teeter down the path of no return. Farrier leaned back over him now, faces almost touching whilst the man still worked Collins’ cock with one hand, resting all his weight on the other arm.

“Farrier,” Collins breathed. The brunette knew what that meant, he angled his thrusting higher, and achieved just what he was trying to. He hit the sweet spot inside Collins hard, so much so that the blonde made a choked sound in utter surprise. Farrier did it again.

“Farrier,” he said again, this time his voice was hoarse. He wasn’t trying to announce that he was getting there, he wanted to say it. The thing he’d been too scared to say, he had to say it now.

“Collins, can I?” Farrier breathed back, the blonde’s body was already beginning to tighten impossibly around him.

“What?”

“Inside,” Farrier breathed. He got a tired nod in response, Collins, through the haze of his mind realising he wasn’t going to get the opportunity to say it, but his nod was all Farrier needed to push on, push deeper and keep hitting the same spot over and over, pushing Collins closer to the edge
with every thrust, pushing himself closer too. His mind was full of clouds and as he buried his face in Collins’ neck he could feel the man’s pulse through his taut skin. Instinctually he moved and let his lips linger across it, hoping in any way to better Collins’ experience. Hands flew up to grab his shoulders, blunt nails dug into the flesh and the legs around his waist began to shake.

“Fa…” Collins managed, Farrier moved his head up just as Collins’ breathing suddenly got quieter, suddenly he went still, legs holding Farrier tightly, hands still clawed into his shoulder muscles. The brunette took as much of the sight, the experience in as he could, putting it away somewhere in his memory where he hoped it would stay forever.

Collins’ back arched and his body pressed to Farrier’s as he practically sobbed, their bellies both becoming sticky with hot seed, the tight ring of muscle that Farrier was buried inside contracted sharply and it took him off guard, the sudden tightness and then the rapid quivering of the muscle all around him was all he needed, along with the sight of Collins underneath him, laying there basically incapable of movement because of him, to send him over the edge too. Farrier groaned and shot his load deep inside Collins, who was too far gone to register the feeling much. Farrier’s arms began to shake and then he couldn’t hold himself up anymore, collapsing on top of the blonde, still buried inside him.

They stayed like that for some time, perhaps minutes, perhaps more. Eventually Farrier carefully pulled himself out, he lay there for a moment, basking in the comedown. It wasn’t long before he began to overheat laying on top of another body, so he got off the bed in search of a handkerchief to clean up with and let Collins lay there.

“Farrier?” a weak voice came.

“Mm?”

But by the time he’d turned around, Collins had rolled onto his side and was almost asleep. Farrier returned to the bed, wiping himself off first and then gently getting what he could off Collins’ stomach.

“Tha gaol agam ort,” Collins mumbled with his eyes still closed, not entirely realising he’d spoken at all. Farrier smiled, dismissed it as sleepy gibberish, and carefully moved over the blonde’s lanky form to lay behind him. He reached over Collins to turn the light off, the room now only illuminated by the light of the stars outside. Farrier looked at them, just as he used to look at them when he’d go and sit against the shed. He looked at them and in that moment he was grateful, he had a good life. He had a partner. He was living in relative safety. He had a roof over his head and food in his belly every night. He was grateful he’d survived, and in that moment he knew that everything he’d been through was worth it, just for this. Propped up on an elbow, Farrier looked at Collins’ pale face, at his shoulders, freckles blooming atop his pale skin. At his hair, messy and stuck up from the night’s events, and as the man lay down chest pressed against Collins’ back, as he smelt the blonde’s hair, the smell that was strangely comforting to Farrier in ways he didn’t understand, everything clicked. Everything clicked at once, why his feelings were so strong. Why he’d felt like he couldn’t contain them, why they were beginning to feel overwhelming, why he felt more a need than ever to protect Collins and always be with him.

Love.

He was in love.
Moments later, tears began to well up in Farrier’s eyes.

Love was bad.

Love was dangerous.

Chapter End Notes

As always thank you all so much for reading and for continuing to do so on such a long journey.
my tumblr
afternoon pinboard

And a special thank you to anyone who has left kudos and comments, it means a lot just to know you're there.

Until next chapter, happy reading everyone 💖
Love is Never Wrong

Chapter Notes

Evening everyone, it's actually very late Sunday night. I'm going away for a week tomorrow morning, so thought I'd just get this up tonight instead. I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Farrier woke up naturally early, with Collins in his arms. He carefully untangled himself from the blonde and got out of bed, trying to quiet the nagging thoughts of paranoia that someone might open the locked door and see them.

“Good morning,” Collins mumbled behind him, woken from Farrier’s movements.

“Morning, pet,” Farrier smiled. Collins sat up and yawned as Farrier began to get dressed, he had to see James and tell him what had happened with Collins and just as importantly, what he’d realised about his feelings for the blonde.

“You know you sleep talk, hmm?” Farrier asked as he peeped through the curtains to see what kind of day it was.

“Do not.”

“Do so!” Farrier chuckled, amused at the downright denial.

“What’d I say then?” Collins asked, adamant that he didn’t sleep talk, he’d never been told that before anyway.

“Wasn’t in English. Not that I could understand anyway, maybe you were mumbling,” Farrier said. All of a sudden Collins began acting very nervous.

“Do ye remember how it sounded?”

“Uh… Something like ‘the gale’ maybe?”

Collins’ eyes widened.

“Farrier, I didn’t mean tae, I’m sorry. Shite, I can’t believe-“

“Pet, what are you on about?” Farrier asked, very confused as to why this was a big deal. Collins hadn’t really registered that he’d said anything last night until Farrier brought it up.

“Farrier, don’t you know?”

“Know bloody what?”

“…That I was speaking Gaelic.”

“Oh, that’s interesting. I didn’t know you spoke Gaelic,” Farrier said, taking a moment to sit back down.
“I’m sorry,” Collins repeated. Farrier looked at the blonde’s face for a while,

“I think I’m missing something here,” he arrived at. Collins was shocked to say the least. If Farrier didn’t know, then he wasn’t against it.

“I…You don’t know about how we were punished in school for speaking Gaelic?”

“You what?” Farrier asked, suddenly a feeling of anger overcame him.

“We weren’t allowed to speak it anywhere, eventually out of fear we all stopped speaking it at home. I thought you’d be angry, sometimes bits slip out,” Collins murmured.

“I had no idea, Collins. And, I’m sorry that you were treated that way.”

He took Collins’ hand in his,

“I’ll never be scornful if you want to speak Gaelic with me.”

Collins was confused and shocked and utterly speechless. Slowly, a small smile crept onto his face and he gave a small nod, Farrier smiled too and got up from the bed again, handing Collins his top.

“I had no idea you spoke two languages,” Farrier said walking back to his chest of drawers.

“English is my second language,” Collins said quietly. It was strange to hear that for Farrier, who always seemed to picture people who’s second language was English not to be altogether fluent in it, but here was Collins, admitting that he learnt Gaelic first.

Then Collins remembered what he’d said in Gaelic last night, and he visibly stiffened. He’d said it, he’d told Farrier he loved him. And Farrier hadn’t realised. ‘Course he didn’t realise, eejit ye bloody said it in another language! Collins mentally scorned himself.

Still the nerves under his skin drove Farrier to somehow get off the base, using a weak excuse to Collins and feeling rather bad for it, not that the blonde seemed to mind, having enough to deal with in regard to Parker. Farrier drove quickly into London city centre. It was already somehow late morning, almost lunch and it was at this time when James helped out at the bar above his ‘other’ workplace. In the daytime, the bar was barely distinguishable from a regular bar, except it was more run down and strangely lacking in couples.

Collins felt wonderful, he felt refreshed and almost in a dream state. They’d woken up together, as he’d predicted Farrier got worried that they shouldn’t have slept in the same bed all night, holidays or not. Nonetheless he had been kind of course, to Collins. He’d blushed sheepishly as the blonde almost winced upon sitting up, he’d given him the warmest of hugs, he’d even let Collins lay in his bed while he got ready for the day. That was where Collins currently still lay as Farrier arrived at James’. There was a vague thought that he should get up and see Parker as he said he would, but being wrapped up in Farrier’s bed was just too perfect.

Farrier raced up the steps in the alley into the bar, giving the staff a surprise. Usually the patrons tried to enter as quietly as possible.

James of course, started laughing as soon as he realised who this man was.

“What the bloody hell are you running in here for?” he wheezed.
“Can we talk?” Farrier said, almost panting he’d walked so fast from his car.

They went downstairs where their conversation would be private.

“So, tell me why you—” James began, but kept wheezing at the mental image of Farrier bursting through the doors half panting.

“Okay. So…” Farrier began, waiting for James to stop giggling. Once he had, Farrier realised this wasn’t as easy to say as he thought it might be.

“So you remember Collins?”

“Of course, I remember him well! Beautiful tall man, lovely hair, lovely arse too,” James said, earning him a surprised and somewhat irritated look.

“We slept together.”

“As in… Just sleep?”

“No.”

“Oh for heaven’s sake! Calls for a party!” James said, standing up from where they sat on the couch in the reception of the downstairs business. Farrier yanked his arm until the weaselly man sat again, looking disheartened.

“Was it not what you expected? It’s alright, if you imagine something for so long and it isn’t how you planned, it can hurt,” James said.

“No no, it isn’t that at all. It was wonderful, he was wonderful. It’s that… It’s…” Farrier started, looking for an excuse not to say the words.

“Go on boy, you didn’t come running into London for no reason, I presume,” James said, pulling a cigar out of his breast pocket.

“I’m in love with him.”

James almost dropped his cigar, suddenly his usually hazy expression was clear, and it was elated. He jumped up grinning.

“That’s fucking made my year Tom! It’s so hard being who we are but look at you!” James yelled, “Now we really do have to have a party!” he said, making for the door upstairs.

“James,” Farrier said quietly, he was still sitting on the couch.

“Come on, boy!” James said, before turning around and realising that Farrier was not happy at all. He walked back cautiously, knowing Farrier throughout the years, James was aware that sometimes he went inside his mind.

“Tom. You’re here. With me, remember?” he said, something James had worked out to say over the years of Farrier’s occasional post-coital disassociation, which usually happened in the reception they were currently in. Farrier would walk out of the room with whichever worker he’d been with, and plonk himself down on the couch. At first James just thought he liked to stay and relax a bit afterwards, but over time he realised what was happening, and pieced it together as Farrier began to share more fragments of his life. The high after sex was sometimes accompanied with a low for Farrier. It had only happened once with Collins, the occasion being last night.
"I know. I’m here. It’s just that… James?” he said, the older man sat next to him, worried now.

"Love is wrong."

James patted his knee.

"Love is never wrong."

"It is when it puts both you and the person you’re in love with in grave danger."

James sighed, offering his cigar to Farrier instead of smoking it himself, the brunette gladly took it as well as the lighter James produced.

"I’m a liability now,” Farrier said.

"For fuck’s sake, Tom. You’re not. Do you fly together?"

"Not in the same squadron."

"Then how?"

"Doesn’t matter if we’re in the same squadron, if something happened to him I’d… It makes me weak. I’m putting him at risk too because if he loves me ba…”

The thought hadn’t occurred to Farrier that Collins might feel the same way. That someone might love him that way.

"What, that he’d throw himself out of the plane for you? Love might make people do crazy things, but it doesn’t override their basic instincts Thomas. I know you’re not good with feeling things, but that boy looked like the sweetest thing I’ve ever seen. You can’t not tell him,” James said.

"I wasn’t planning on telling him, or anyone else except you. Honestly? I should never have even allowed Collins into my life this way, but we’re way too far down the line for me to even bother telling myself off about that,” Farrier almost laughed.

"Tell him. Please. He has a right to know.” James said softly.

"A right?"

"I believe so, yes."

There was a silence between them as Farrier thought about it.

"I’m scared to tell him.”

He rarely admitted when he was scared and James was surprised by the confession.

"What are you afraid of?” he asked measuredly. Farrier took a deep breath, as if making sure the answer was going to come out exactly as he wanted it to.

"I’m afraid he’ll say it back.”

"You’re such a downer sometimes, you know that?” James asked, Farrier chuckled at this.

"Come on Tom. If he does, you saying it won’t change it. Please, for that boy’s own sake, tell him. Tell him before you can’t.”
And the last sentence kicked Farrier into gear. James was right. As hazed and strange as he was, his head was usually in the right place and it was why James was one of the few people Farrier ever confided in.

“You’re right,” He said lowly.

“Of course I’m right, I’m always right, boy.” James said, waving a hand through the air as he spoke.

The two walked upstairs into the bar.

“I know I haven’t been coming here to give you business lately, but I appreciate you listening to me,” Farrier said.

“I’ve known you long enough to see you as a friend, not a customer. You should know that by now!” James laughed, but he was hiding sadness. He wished he could help Farrier, because James loved that boy and wanted him to see romantic love for what it was; a magical wonderful thing.

“Just remember this, Tom,” he said, walking up to Farrier who was about to open the door into the alleyway.

“Us being who we are, men who walk with men, not many of us will ever find love. Don’t give it up, don’t ruin it. You don’t know how lucky you are,” James said, and it was one of the rare occasions on which Farrier saw him looking a little hurt. James was usually bubbly, either genuinely or from whatever drugs he was taking at the given time, but sometimes Farrier saw glimpses past that. He supposed they were similar in that way, both over time opening up to each other, but never completely. Not like how Farrier had opened up to Collins. Not like how he had plainly talked the blonde through everything wrong with him, everything that had happened to him, given him every opportunity to run for the hills, given him every opportunity to make the right decision, the one that didn’t involve Farrier. And yet, here he was, the day after making love to Collins. His Collins, who had against all odds, decided to stick by him.

He supposed Collins had earned the truth.

Farrier drove a lot slower back to base than he’d driven to London, feeling very nervous about the advice he’d been given, wondering when he was supposed to say it, how he was supposed to. Deep breaths, Farrier reminded himself, then almost laughing at himself and his self-care advice. He pulled into the gravel carpark, for a split second his vision flew to the steps on which Collins had been on that dreadful night. He shook his head slightly. That was in the past. Trudging up said steps, Farrier felt like he was in a dream. The base was too quiet, he guessed there was still nobody here except Collins. It brought up the thought that maybe the blonde was a little sad that he didn’t go anywhere, didn’t see his parents. Farrier knew Collins could have if he’d really wanted, he tried to squash the thought, already feeling mentally overloaded with the task he’d given himself of telling Collins at some arbitrary point in time. It had started to rain by the time Farrier reached his bedroom. In his bed he found Collins, asleep.

“Pet?” Farrier said quietly. Though there may have been nobody at base last night, Farrier couldn’t confirm there wasn’t anyone here now.

He shook the blonde slightly, and he stirred.
“Mm, s’rainin’.” He said, and went to roll over.

“Yes, pet, it’s raining. It’s also past noon.”

At that, Collins got up very quickly, picking up yesterday’s crumpled clothes off the floor which he’d never gotten around to putting on, flinching slightly as he sat back down to put his shoes and socks on.

“Hey, it’s okay,” Farrier said.

“No, Parker!” Collins explained, Farrier smiled at how dedicated Collins was to the dog. The blonde jumped up and went to leave.

“Hey,” Farrier said, hand lightly grabbing Collins’ forearm.

“Mm?”

“Last night. I… Was it okay?” Farrier asked.

“Yes, of course it was. It was… Different to how I expected.” He said,

“Different good?” Farrier asked,

“Different good,” he said, Farrier’s gaze softened at the blonde’s words. Then his heart skipped a beat. Was this supposed to be when he said it?

“I wish I could lounge about in yer bed all day, but I have a dog to feed,” Collins said, somewhat to the relief of Farrier.

Collins found Parker in his kennel, not particularly bothered at all by the rain, though upon seeing Collins he bolted for the man in sheer excitement.

“Hey buddy! Long overdue for yer breakfast!” he laughed, walking back to the doorway under the little roof which jutted out all around the courtyard. Collins stood with his back against the wall looking at the courtyard. He was glad it was being used as Parker’s home instead of things like the stupid obstacle course. He’d hated that, especially in the middle of summer. He hadn’t been standing there for long when Farrier joined him with two mugs. He offered one to Collins, who took it silently.

“What are you thinking about?” Farrier asked.

“Home.”

“Think you should go up?”

“I feel like I should. I don’t want to, though. I’m a grown man, should nae have to visit every time I can, but I feel obliged to,” he said, sipping the hot tea.

“Do what you want, not what others want you to do,” Farrier said,

“Not that easy though,” Collins said.

“It is,” Farrier said definitively.
Collins huffed, he supposed it was technically that easy, but it was harder to ease his conscience. At that moment, Parker chose to finish eating his food and jump up on Collins, almost making him spill hot tea down his front.

“Parker!” Collins yelled instinctually, and noting the tone, Parker removed his wet paws from Collins and dropped back to all fours, though still practically buzzing with excitement.

Collins’ hand, which wasn’t holding the mug strayed from where it had been at his side. It made a fist slowly, Farrier watched, knowing what he was doing. Collins held the fist up a little higher, Parker looked at it, then at Collins himself.

“Sit.”

He said it loudly enough to be heard clearly over the rain, with enough command that Parker listened, and he actually sat.

Farrier was speechless, the bloody dog finally did it. Collins looked over with a shocked expression, slowly a grin appeared on his face. He handed his mug to Farrier and bent down, giving Parker all the appreciation and pats he could possibly handle.

“He finally did it!” Collins said gleefully.

“Took the bastard long enough!” Farrier laughed. Finally, Parker was on the way to becoming a trained dog, and not a moment too soon because he was growing fast, and soon Collins couldn’t possibly hope to control him if he stayed as naughty as he was.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all as always, for reading my work. Though I wish I was going back to Scotland (I’ve been on a real Aviemore kick recently, I miss hiking around the area a lot), I’m going somewhere slightly cooler downunder than where I live, so I might, if I’m lucky, see some actual rain (I wish this was a joke). At least I’ll be going on a plane, I get antsy when I haven’t flown in a while! I wonder if any of you hate flying (or love it!)

tumblr
afternoon pinboard
I hope everyone enjoyed this one and as always my loves, until next chapter, happy reading ❤️❤️❤️
Promises One Can't Keep

Chapter Notes

Monday again already?? I haven't written for 9 days which is unheard of for me, I usually write every night but I've been on a lil holiday in a cooler part of Australia. ANYWAY I hope everyone likes this one!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Canfield arrived back some days later, and to his utter delight, Collins had managed to teach the dog a trick.

“Very impressive, young Collins! Glad he’s well on the way to being a behaved little lad,” Canfield laughed as Collins showed the older man that Parker could sit on command. They were in the hallway, Farrier watching with a soft smile from the kitchen, trying to act as if he wasn’t in there purely for the purpose of watching Collins proudly show off his dog’s trick. He still hadn’t told Collins how he felt about him, the urgency of the matter had somewhat faded, but it was still in his mind. It was freezing cold, Farrier had his hands shoved deep in the pockets of his Irvin, which he’d begun to wear on a day-to-day basis simply because it was the warmest thing in the world. He saw Canfield bid the blonde a good day, pat Parker’s head, and take off towards his office further up the hall. A cheeky grin played on Collins’ face as he patted Parker and walked off in the other direction with him. Farrier smiled to himself and busied his hands with making a hot cup of tea to warm him up.

Collins was glad that he’d done what Canfield wanted him to, and glad that even if it was possibly a joke, that he didn’t have to pay the older man now. He was a little disappointed that it had been a joke, wondering if he’d have a few coins in his pocket today. Alas, Collins was no richer than he was yesterday, though he was gleaming with the happiness that Canfield approved of Parker’s ability to sit. He delivered the pup to the quadrangle, where Canfield had put a new toy which he’d picked up while away. It was a ball with holes in it to hold treats inside.

“Better set up the new toy then,” Collins said to Parker, who had already lost interest since it was empty. Collins grabbed a handful of dog biscuits from where the bag sat inside the outdoor cupboard, not liking the smell or texture, and dumped them inside the toy. He shook it, Parker’s still slightly floppy at the top ears pricked, and Collins rolled it along the half grass, half dirt quadrangle. At least Parker’s incessant need to dig at the grass couldn’t match the speed at which it grew. The little dog pranced after the ball, and after a few cautious sniffs, dove at it with both front paws. Collins laughed and walked back inside.

As Canfield unpacked he felt a sense of ease. It was always like that, getting back to base. He felt at home here, as much as he sometimes tried to say he lived in Somerset and just worked on base. He was glad the boy had taught the dog something, even if it was just to sit down. By God, the dog needed to sit down. He was always at everyone’s ankles, yapping and wagging his tail. He didn’t bite though, for which Canfield was grateful for. He liked Parker, but Collins needed to make sure he was well behaved. He glanced at the newspaper which was on his office desk, likely put there by Farrier after he’d finished reading it. The front cover was adorned by a photo of Oswald Moseley, leader of the British Union of Fascists. Canfield scoffed as he read, Moseley had supposedly put forth a plan that would ‘bring peace in our time and our children's time’.
“Not our time, Moseley.” Canfield said to himself. The man stopped for a second, reflecting. To fight two wars. It was blatantly obvious now. It wasn’t a question of if, it was a question of when. Canfield’s hands shook a little as he folded the paper in half on the desk to hide the article. War affected everyone differently. He considered himself lucky, he’d managed to clamber up the wall out of the hole before it could consume him completely, some men weren’t so fortunate and had fallen down into the dark. That didn’t mean he hadn’t seen the horrors of war himself. Sometimes they slipped back, caused him to pause, unable to stop seeing them. In that way he and Farrier were alike, and likely something shared among every single veteran there was. The inability to make the visions go away when they presented themselves. Luckily, Canfield managed to get on with life well enough for the most part. He shrugged and looked at the clock, the memories dissipated soon after. Best just to get on with it.

Collins walked into the kitchen where he knew Farrier was, saw the man brewing a tea and began making one for himself.

“Glad the dog sat, I was worried he’d decide not to,” Collins chuckled.

“As was I, Canfield seemed very chuffed, didn’t he?” Farrier said.

“Aye, glad my work paid off.”

There was an air between them, now that Canfield was back, now that other pilots and airmen had started to trickle back to base from wherever they’d gone, that their guards were back up, their fun was over it seemed.

Farrier hummed as he dropped the teabag into the mug, meant he was thinking about something, Collins had picked up.

“What?”

“Nothing important,” Farrier said as he went looking for the sugar in the cupboard.

“Alright then,” Collins said, trying to say it in a way that would make Farrier want to tell him anyway, but that had never happened. Until this time apparently.

“I…” Farrier said, he’d stopped looking for the sugar. Collins’ heart almost stopped in anxiousness.

“Another time,” Farrier said, cutting off whatever Collins was apprehending.

“Are you okay?” was what he asked the brunette, who sighed and rested his hands on the bench, shoulder blades bunching together under his clothes as he stared into his tea.

“Yeah. I’ll tell you another time,” he said. Those words arguably made Collins more anxious. He took a step closer to Farrier, toeing the line between what might be seen as strangely close.

“Promise me it’s not bad,” he said, dipping his head slightly. Farrier looked at him and pursed his lips. But didn’t answer.

“Tea’s getting cold, Collins,” he said of the blonde’s cup sitting there.

“So is yours.”

Collins pushed away from the bench where he’d been stood. If Farrier was going to play coy about it, he knew the best thing was to get some fresh air rather than worry and stagnate. Collins walked
off upstairs to grab a coat and his sketchbook. He was going for a walk.

Farrier knew that was the wrong thing to do and say, but there was nothing else he could have said or done. It wasn’t a good thing, in his mind. He wasn’t going to promise anything he couldn’t keep. He found the sugar, and looked at Collins’ mug as it sat next to his getting cold. He took several spoons of sugar from the jar, all except one he tipped into his tea, the last one he ate straight off the spoon. Canfield’s voice rang through his head, *ruining a good cup of tea, boy*, at that Farrier smiled to himself, and decided to go see what the old geezer was up to.

“Come on Parker!” Collins said, luckily the dog wasn’t fazed by the lead, he was just happy to go walking.

They were out on the street soon enough. Parker was sniffing every different fence as they walked, Collins had forgotten to bring any of the little dog bags from the cupboard, so he’d just have to make it a short walk. Halfway down the street with the airbase still in sight, he turned around entirely, deciding to instead just go back into the fields, preferring to walk in the wet long grass than the pavement. The duo walked back through the base’s gates and took the shortcut through the carpark to reach the airstrip and then behind, the fields.

“Yeah, off ye go,” Collins muttered as he took the lead off, having no further use for it. Parker bolted away and Collins didn’t even bother to go and get him, he’d come back eventually. He was still slightly annoyed at Farrier, but worried more than anything. He knew the man never tried to be ominous, but somehow he was, a considerable amount of the time too. Collins desperately needed to know what Farrier wanted to say, he didn’t like surprises of this kind. Come to think of it, he didn’t like surprises of most kinds unless it was a present on his birthday or Christmas.

“Read this part?” Canfield asked Farrier, pointing to the front cover of the newspaper.

“Nope. Anything that boy says I tend to gloss over,” Farrier laughed.

“Good choice. Now he thinks he has a plan for peace in our time, *and* our children’s!” Canfield laughed.

“Maybe the next generation, but I think this one is well and truly fucked,” Farrier said, noting Canfield’s slight wince at his language.

“You’re not even trying to deny it?” Canfield asked. Farrier waited for a bit before shaking his head. He didn’t want to say the words, lest give them power.

“Well, I suppose the day Tommy stops denying it is the day it’s real!” Canfield laughed, it was hollow, trying to cover the fact that he was worried too. Farrier didn’t answer, made to leave.

“The boy finally got his dog to sit!” Canfield said to change conversation as Farrier’s hand was about to touch the brass doorknob.

“Oh, very good! That dog was getting out of hand,” He replied without turning.

“You knew,” Canfield said. Farrier froze, staring at the wood of the door.

“Knew what?”

“That the dog could sit,” Canfield said. Farrier turned,

“I may have seen Collins practicing with Parker before you got back,” he said. That wasn’t a lie.
“Ah, spoiled the surprise then!” Canfield laughed,

“Well I didn’t know it was a surprise for you, I thought it was just him training his dog,” Farrier said. That was a lie.

“Very well, carry on then. I assume you’ve got something to preoccupy yourself with?”

“I’ll find something. Glad you had a nice time away, Michael,” Farrier said, leaving the office.

He did wonder where Collins had run off to, but considering Canfield and who knew who else was back, Farrier opted to go see if any of the hangars needed tidying instead of looking for the blonde. He subsequently found Collins out in the field with Parker.

“What’s that boy doing?” he asked himself, opting not to alert Collins to the fact that he was in view, walking quietly inside one of the hangars.

Upon entering, bereft of the usual buzz of ground crew and pilots waiting for their turn in the planes, Farrier found the place quite peaceful. Usually it was stressful to be inside because of how much was going on, but not now. He took to packing away some flying kits which had been thrown haphazardly in a pile.

Collins couldn’t work out why he needed to blow off some steam, Farrier had been trying to be nice to him, hadn’t he?

“Why is he like that, Parker?” Collins asked the dog, who turned vaguely at his name but kept walking to wherever he was going with Collins in leu. The sun was getting low in the sky, clouds half covering the sky in big blotches.

“I know he doesn’t mean tae, but sometimes he worries me Parker,” Collins said, talking to the pup who was positively oblivious. The blonde looked ahead to see where on earth the ball of energy was going, nowhere in particular it seemed. Typical, just wanted to walk around. Collins truly loved Parker, and was grateful he’d been in the right place at the right time to find him.

“It’s cold, boy!” he called after him.

“Parker, let’s go back inside!” Collins called again. Parker eventually turned around and walked with Collins back towards the edge of the field, and it was then that the blonde saw one of the hangar doors open. He’d been at Gatwick long enough now, even if you weren’t ground crew, there were little things to check for in terms of security and suspicious activity. Collins wasn’t sure he’d seen the door open when he’d walked out, and thought it worth a look just in case. Parker walked with him until he realised where they were going, and ran ahead inside.

“Parker!” Collins hissed, but the dog didn’t listen.

“Oh, what are you doing here?” Farrier said, the puppy having given him a surprise. He looked up to see Collins in the doorway, arms crossed.

“Collins,” Farrier breathed,

“What ye doing in here?”

“Just tidying some things up, trying to find things to do. What are you doing in here?”

“Just getting my dog,” Collins said, walking in to get Parker, who had other ideas, running back to some unknown corner of the hangar. Collins tried to walk past Farrier without eye contact, but a
strong hand came out and grabbed his forearm.

“Pet,” Farrier said,

Collins turned, an irritated look in his eye.

“You can’t just talk to me like that and not expect me to be bothered,” he said. Farrier sighed.

“I know, I’m sorry. You know I’m not good with talking about things.” He let go of Collins, who walked off to get Parker.

“I know yer not, but it doesn’t make it any easier for me.” The blonde said, finding the dog and convincing Parker to follow him back out of the hangar.

“See you later?” Farrier asked, for the first time since he could even remember being placed in a position of being the one to ask to see Collins, being the one who wasn’t sure.

“Indeed, and yer going to tell me whatever it is,” Collins said, his slim silhouette leaving the hangar door with the dog beside him, more of a commanding tone in his voice than usual.

He knew it wasn’t right to be annoyed at Farrier, he could tell the man was trying, but it was frustrating when he acted this way. He wished there was someone he could go to about relationship problems. Then he realised there was someone.

Chapter End Notes

When your partner doesn't use words much, it can be frustrating.
I hope everyone enjoyed this short sharp and shiny chapter, and thank you all for reading!
tumblr
afternoon pinboard

Until next chapter, happy reading everyone ❤️
Monday!! Firstly, if any of this is clunky/you find errors I am very sorry, it's late and I'm a lil nervous and unable to focus on editing because I have a work placement starting tomorrow at an architecture firm!! I've never even been in an office and have no idea what to expect lol. ANYWAY I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them, and that you all enjoy this chapter.

“Come on Parker,” Collins said, putting the lead back on his collar, and tying it up against the gate as the man quickly ran inside to grab an apple from the fridge in the kitchen. He then took Parker on a walk to the pub Stella worked at, Parker overjoyed at what was turning into a long walk.

It was the middle of the week, Collins had no idea if Stella would be there, he knew she played there on Saturday, didn’t know if she was there any other night. All things considered, if her band was the main source of income, the blonde thought his chances were alright.

Parker and Collins walked down the ever increasingly dark and cold street towards the pub. As the walk went on, his annoyance towards Farrier dissipated and was replaced with sincere worry for what he was going to say. Was it bad? How bad? Collins’ mind jumped to the worst case scenario, what if Farrier was trying to say he didn’t want to be together anymore? Surely that wasn’t it. Collins had lost his virginity to the man a few days prior, surely Farrier wasn’t going to say that he didn’t have feelings anymore.

He arrived at the pub, at the door he tied Parker up and walked in. It was quiet inside, the dinner rush hadn’t begun and the staff were busy cleaning. Collins felt like he was intruding, they were all happily chatting and hadn’t realised he was there. He took another step in an cleared his throat, some of them looked up and one walked towards him.

“Sorry dear! Didn’t hear you come in!” she said, a middle aged lady who Collins hadn’t seen before, he assumed she was a day worker.

“S’okeh,” he said, looking behind her to see the stage empty and no Stella in sight.

“Lookin’ for someone, dear?” she asked.

“Uh, yeah but she isn’t here. Is there a band playin’ tonight?” he asked vaguely.

“Should there be? It’s the middle of the week!” she laughed.

“No I, no. Sorry.” Collins muttered, and went to leave.

“Are you looking for someone in a band that plays here, love?” she asked. Collins turned,

“Yes, I am actually.”

“Well then. Come and look at the phone book. I’m sure we’ll be able to help you.”
“Oh, thank you. That means a lot,” Collins said, the lady laughed and waved her hand in the air to dismiss his thanks. Collins was taken behind the counter and a large book was opened.

“Which band are they part of?” she asked.

“Oh,” Collins said, realising he had no idea what Stella’s band was called.

“Well, do they play here often?”

“Every Saturday, or most Saturdays I think.” He said,

The lady huffed, not in annoyance but amusement.

“Must be quite important then, you seem to know a lot about this person,” she said,

“I’m sorry, ye really don’t need to go through the trouble” he said.

“I was joking, not like we have much else to do before dinner time here, don’t worry dear,” She smiled.

A few quiet moments passed, Collins frequently looking at the door outside, behind which Parker sat.

“Well the band that plays most Saturday nights here is Liberté.” she said. Collins hummed.

“That’s probably it.”

“Who are you looking for from the band then?”

“Her name is Stella.”

“Right. We’ll see if she’s there, but maybe next time you should take her number or address down!” she laughed. Collins agreed. He had seen her address once, on the piece of paper she’d written it on which Collins had given to Canfield and Farrier so that they could correspond with letters, but Collins couldn’t remember what she’d written. He thought he remembered her saying she didn’t have a phone at all, though. Maybe she’d lied. Maybe he was remembering wrong. He cursed himself for being so forgetful, and told himself to remember her address, maybe ask her again for it or find the piece of paper back at base somewhere.

The woman walked off with the phone book, beckoning Collins to follow. She walked back to the small telephone room at the back of the bar, sat down on the seat and dialled the number. The phone rang for a long time, then the lady began to speak.

“Yes hello! Who am I speaking to? This is Shirley from the Golden Deer.” She said.

“Is Stella there? I have a friend of hers here who would like to speak.” She said. Then Shirley held a hand to the phone and whispered to Collins,

“He’s gone to get her,” before handing him the phone and standing to leave.

“Thank you again, really” Collins said, embarrassedly. In the back of his mind he was still worrying about both Farrier and Parker. The phone line crackled and it brought him back to the present moment.

“Hello?” came Stella’s voice.
“Stella! It’s me, Collins,” he said.

“Oh, what are you calling for? What’s wrong?” She asked.

“Yer going to laugh, but I just wanted to talk.”

And indeed she did laugh.

“Well I’ll come down to the pub, I’ll be there in ten minutes, alright?” she said.

“Oh, don’t rush!”

“I won’t, my house is very close.” She said, and after a quick goodbye she hung up. Collins walked back to the lady, thanked her once again and then finally went back outside to check on Parker, who acted like he hadn’t seen Collins in a year.

“Yer going to meet a new friend, Parker,” he said as he untied the leash and stood leaning against the wall. Collins couldn’t resist Parker’s charm for much longer, he bobbed down to pat the dog.

“Your ears are freezing!”

Stella appeared around the corner of the pub moments later looking characteristically frazzled, arms crossed across her very thin frame, dark hair untouched and blown into a mess by the wind, she had no makeup on and Collins could see she looked tired. She froze upon seeing Parker, eyes widening.

“Jack, you didn’t tell me there was a dog,” she said. Stella was metres away and she had taken several steps back.

“Are you scared of dogs?”

“… A little bit.”

Collins felt guilty, he hadn’t realised she might be.

“Stella, I can go back to the base and leave him there,”

“No it’s… It’s okay, but is he friendly?” she asked,

“Can’t ye tell?” Collins chuckled, looking at Parker wag his tail so much it might fall off. Stella smiled a little.

“What’s he called?”

“Parker. He’s never bitten anyone, he’s just very excited.” Collins said.

“Hello Parker,” Stella said nervously, walking slowly towards Collins.

“Parker, sit.” Collins said, raising his hand above the dog’s head. To his complete relief Parker sat, regardless of the excitement of a new person.

“Just come here slowly, put yer hand out so he can smell it.” Collins said. Stella did as she was told, Collins repeating the word sit to remind him not to jump on her. Parker sniffed her hand, licked it, and then finally succumbed to the excitement and stood up, causing Stella to stand back upright to move her face further from him.
“He’s a puppy!” Collins almost laughed,

“I know, but I’ve never met him!” she countered.

After a few more minutes of Stella getting used to Parker and vice versa, they began to walk. Stella pulled out a cigarette, offered one to Collins, he took it reasoning that they supposedly calmed you down and that he could use that.

“So you went to the pub and asked the staff to call me, for what?” she asked.

“Sounds stupid. I just wanted to talk about relationship stuff. I can’t really talk to others, you know?”

Stella laughed,

“I understand. Tell you what, come to my house.”

“With Parker?”

“Yes.”

“I, thank you Stella,” Collins said.

“It’s not a problem. Plus, you can meet my housemates!” she said.

They walked around a few corners, and they arrived.

“Perhaps take note so you don’t have to go through the pub’s phone again? The phone is very new and only for business, really,” she laughed. The house was terraced like all the others, it was old and ornate, yet looked like it hadn’t been taken utmost care of. Collins noted the number and the street.

“But I cannae just knock at any time of day can I?”

“Why not?” Stella smiled, and opened the little gate with a loud creak.

“So as I think I told you once, I live with my band, and also another band.

“There’s a lot of you then,” Collins said.

“Liberté,” she laughed.

“Reminds me, didnae know yer band name until we looked it up in the phone book.” Collins said as he lead Parker inside, Stella hummed in response, shutting the door behind them.

“You like it?”

“I mean, yeah it’s… French?”

“Yes, obviously,” She laughed.

“Why did you pick it?”

“It’s freedom.”

Collins nodded plainly. The inside of the house was very large, the outside had deceived the blonde.
“Well take your coat off!” she said, pointing at the coat hook on the back of the front door. Collins did so,

“Want Parker to stay here?” he asked.

“No, he can come into the kitchen with us.” She said.

They sat at the little wooden table, and in the first ten minutes, Collins had already met seven new people who were wandering through the room. None seemed too fussed that there was someone else in the house. He sipped the cup of tea Stella had made for him, refusing to have one herself on account of it apparently being too late in the day for her.

“I dunno if I can talk about it with everyone around us, Stella. You know?” he said.

“They aren’t listening, and won’t care. If you’re worried, just call your partner ‘she’.” Stella said matter-of-factly. Collins giggled at the thought. Stella raised an eyebrow,

“Oh, just funny to imagine them as a ‘she’. He’s uh, not very feminine,” he said. Stella smiled, looked at something over Collins’ shoulder, her smile grew wider for a second before her dark eyes flicked back.

“Well if you don’t want to talk about it here, we can go somewhere else,” she offered. Presumably the person Stella had been looking at over his shoulder, a redhaired and freckled woman, walked past them to look in the fridge.

“It’s not even a specific thing it’s just, sometimes it’s a lot,” Collins said, patting Parker as he sat next to the table,

“It’s alright. It’s hard when there’s nobody to talk to,” she said.

The redhaired woman turned back with a bowl in her hands.

“Thought he looked thirsty,” she said. Her voice was strong and a little high pitched, interesting contrast to Stella’s low pitched and often husky sounding voice. She placed the bowl next to Parker who did indeed start lapping at it thirstily.

“Oh, thank you,” Collins said.

“I’m Tilly,” She said, walking off with an orange in her hand and a smile.

“I’m Jack,” he called after her.

“I know who you are, blondie!” she yelled from the next room. Collins turned back to Stella, perplexed.

“I’ve spoken about you,” she explained.

“Is she from the other band?”

“Yes,” Stella said.

Farrier knew he’d done something seriously wrong, and that the only way he could fix it would be to tell Collins how he felt. Problem was, he couldn’t find Collins anywhere, so as he milled about the base tidying things that didn’t need to be tidied, his nerves grew stronger.
“What the devil are you fretting about?” Canfield asked, causing Farrier to jump and almost hit his head on the bottom of the desk he’d been under trying to look for rubbish.

“Know how to creep around, don’t you?” he said, standing with a wince from bending his knees. Canfield tapped his foot expectantly.

“I’m trying to find things to do!” Farrier said, trying his hardest to keep it inside, not to yell.

“Why are you stressing out over that, boy? It’s the holidays,” Canfield said. Farrier walked past him, not in the mood for this conversation.

“You know how I get when there’s nothing to do,” he said. Canfield sighed at that. He knew when not to push, and from knowing the man all these years, he did know how he got when there was nothing to do. Work was an outlet, a way to escape the past, a way to escape his mind.

Stella, Collins and Parker ended up relocating to the balcony on the third floor once the kitchen began to get busy with several people coming to make a large communal dinner.

“He tries. I know he does. But sometimes he makes me so worried,” Collins said, feeling strange venting, like it shouldn’t be so easy to speak about into the open air.

“In what way?”

“Today I just had to walk out and take a break. He said he wanted to tell me something, then said he’d tell me later. But the problem was when I asked him if it was bad, he said it was. Ye can’t just leave someone hanging like that!” Collins almost laughed. Stella hummed, reaching a tentative hand down to lightly stroke Parker’s head.

“He’s so soft. How old is Parker?” she asked.

“Not sure exactly. I found him about two months ago I think.”

“Found?”

“Yeah, after we had our tiff, on the walk back to base,” Collins said, Stella raised her eyebrows and nodded.

“Is your partner closed off usually?” she asked.

“Yes,” Collins said very definitively.

“Well, he’s probably being as open as he can be,” She said, pulling another cigarette out, this time Collins shaking his head to the offer.

“I know, that’s what frustrates me. I have no right to be angry, he’s trying his best. It also just worries me, he’s going tae tell me something bad when… When you know what I told you last time we spoke, how I feel.”

Stella coughed,

“You mean he doesn’t know yet?”

Collins shook his head, she slapped his arm.
“Why haven’t you told him?”

“I don’t think he’d appreciate it.”

“My goodness Jack I could scream at you for saying that.”

Collins chuckled imagining Stella do that.

“I want tae tell him, but he makes it hard sometimes.”

“Maybe that’s what he needs though.”

Collins sighed.

“With me and my partner, we’re polar opposites, Jack. We can barely agree on anything! It’s part of who we are together. But we learn to work well together regardless. We learn not to fight but to debate, learn,” she said.

Collins sighed.

“Well does your partner know ye love her?”

“Course she does. And I know she loves me, and it’s because it’s such a rare thing that people like us would come across love, that we just had to say it as soon as we were sure. You have to make sure your partner knows these things. This world Jack, it’s not kind to us. It’s not built for us. People are cruel, but if you can find love, hold onto it with all you have. One day, it might be all you have.”

She took a long drag on the cigarette and looked at Collins, his blue eyes were still sad, and Stella knew she couldn’t help, that he needed to sort it out himself.

In the end, the chat with Stella didn’t magically solve any problems, but somehow made Collins feel just a tiny bit better that she knew what was going on, and it made him feel better that she saw him as close enough a friend that she had invited him into her home.

“Thank you, really,” Collins said as he left,

“It’s alright, always feel welcome here, Jack. You too, naughty,” she said, directing her words at Parker, who was obliviously wagging his tail.

“I’ll be seeing you,” Collins said, and then he was back out on the cold streets, the sun was down and he was starving and even considering the whole afternoon, he just wanted to see Farrier again.

Stella walked back inside, still smoking. It had been completely out of the blue to see Collins today, but she was happy for it. She enjoyed seeing him. She got back into the kitchen to help with dinner, as everyone did.

“Finally got to see him!” Tilly laughed,

“Oh, yeah. I didn’t expect it, but he rang us from the pub, wanted to talk,” Stella said quietly.

“Must’ve been serious,” she said over the noise of the kitchen,

“Sort of was,” Stella replied, Tilly barely hearing her voice over everyone else’s. She didn’t ask any more questions, Stella looked more exhausted than usual and Tilly didn’t like to be on the receiving end of her outbursts.
Collins got back to base and immediately went into the kitchen to make something. For once, he decided to actually spend some effort on dinner, and made good old clapshot and mince, there were enough ingredients for it, it was just that nobody really cooked properly anymore. Apparently men didn’t cook, except they did if they were Collins and happened to like helping Mum in the kitchen as a boy.

The blonde was a little disappointed that Dawson wasn’t back from seeing his family yet, but he told himself not to be, his friend was doing what he wanted to do, and it was Collins’ own choice to stay at base the entire time anyway. As the man went upstairs after saying goodnight to Parker in the quadrangle, he wondered if he should knock on Farrier’s door. He opted against it, not completely sure of the reason. He supposed maybe it was best to let Farrier approach in his own time.

The brunette could hear that Collins was back from wherever he’d disappeared off to, and was under the impression that he was still angry at him. He’d been trying and failing to read yet again, and having re-read the same sentence about twenty times now, Farrier decided he should go and see what was wrong, and try and fix it. He had to tell him now.

He knocked on Collins’ door. After a worryingly long amount of time, Farrier having to dig his nails into the palms of his hands to remind himself to stay present, the door opened. Collins looked tired. He was, and he was too tired to even say anything. He hung his head low and stood aside to let Farrier in, and closed the door quietly.

“Collins, before anything else, I’m sorry,” Farrier said quietly. The blonde just looked at him, his eyes were red.

“Collins…” Farrier’s voice wobbled. He hadn’t seen him close to crying in a long time.

“Just tell me you’re not trying to end what we have,” Collins said very slowly and measuredly.

“What? Pet, no no no that’s not it at all!” Farrier walked quickly towards the blonde and took him in his arms, now understanding why Collins was so bothered by his words, if that was what had been going through his mind.

“Collins, I-” Farrier said, scared at how readily the words were about to jump out of his mouth. The blonde, relieved a little, looked up. They broke apart and stood in the moonlight. Collins still felt like he should prepare for Farrier to say something awful.

“What is it then?” he asked.

Farrier bit his bottom lip, shoved his hands in his pockets. Farrier didn’t fidget often but he was now.

“Farrier?”

“Collins, I… I think… Well, I don’t think, I know…” he said, not looking at the blonde but eyes fixed on the floor between them. Collins crossed his arms, dipped his head a little to the side, trying to catch Farrier’s gaze. Finally, the brunette looked up and their eyes locked. Farrier swallowed hard, there were tears threatening to show themselves, but he wouldn’t let them. He took one final staggered breath in.

“I love you.”
The words hung in the air. It was a rare moment in which Farrier looked scared, his brows were furrowed, eyes big, hanging on what Collins would say. He was exposed, he wasn’t hiding behind anything. He braced himself for the worst. For what he told himself he wanted to hear. That Collins would say that it’s ridiculous, too dangerous, not reciprocate his feelings. That way Farrier could bury his own.

But Collins didn’t say anything for a time. His arms fell to his sides from where they had been tensely crossed over his chest. His expression went from worry and tiredness to elation, and finally his eyes shone with tears of joy. His mouth quivered into a smile and he rubbed his eyes with the palms of his hands before looking back to Farrier.

“I love you too.”

He said it with a happy almost sob in his voice, after all this time he could say it, after all this time he knew Farrier felt the same way. Collins began to step towards Farrier, to be close, embrace, feel him in his arms. But Collins’ smile left his face as Farrier’s expression didn’t change to one of happiness but to one of dread, as Collins realised that Farrier said he was going to tell him something he deemed bad, and that this was it. He stopped in front of the man, not touching but close enough to feel heat radiating from him.

“Why?” Farrier said. his voice was firm.

“What? How could I not?” Collins asked, crestfallen.

“No. You’re not meant to say it back.” Farrier muttered, looking at the floor again and then going to sit on Collins’ bed. He was disassociating.

Collins had no idea what to say, what to feel. This was the most emotionally important thing he’d ever experienced in his opinion. He sighed, why did he think Farrier would be able to handle emotions well? Collins told himself not to be so harsh, to heed Stella’s words. He sat gently next to Farrier and spoke softly.

“It’s not a bad thing.”

“To love is to be vulnerable,” Farrier said plainly. Collins didn’t say anything, but he rested his head on Farrier’s shoulder.

“But loving you is the most wonderful thing that’s ever happened to me.”

He so desperately wanted Farrier to understand how he felt, to feel how he felt about loving.

“Is it so bad to be in love? Why is it so bad to be vulnerable with each other?” he asked quietly. Farrier didn’t answer with words, but a hand moved onto Collins’ thigh and squeezed.

“But in the air, what if you’re in trouble? Love makes me vulnerable, and if I’m in trouble, it makes you vulnerable. And it’s that which I’m worried about.” He explained in a very matter of fact way, trying his best to suppress any emotional response. It was easier in the air. It was easier to
supress reaction to death than love.

“There’s no war, we’re not in danger, Farrier. Can’t we just… Love?”

The room was silent. Farrier wished his mind would stop sometimes. He wanted nothing more than to just love, but his mind wouldn’t cease reminding him of the dangers and to heed his own words of not getting too close. He turned and wrapped his arms around Collins tightly, he nestled his face into the crook of the blonde’s neck.

“I’ll try.”

Collins relaxed into the hug at this. He hadn’t expected any of this to happen, not a confession of love, not for Farrier to immediately shut down his reciprocations either. But, it had been said now. There was no going back to how it was before. Collins pulled away from Farrier’s arms slightly, the man before him was strong, so strong. But he was also fragile. Collins lifted a slender hand and placed it on Farrier’s cheek, feeling his light stubble, his warm skin. The brunette sighed and allowed his eyes to close.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said any of that.” He said, “No need,” Collins replied quietly. He should have expected Farrier to be like this, he didn’t want to but he should have.

“I understand,” Collins said.

“My mind won’t let me only think of the good, Collins. It nags me with thoughts that because… Because you love me… That you’d follow me into the jaws of death.”

“But-“ Collins was about to say he would, but was cut short with a finger on his mouth. Eyes still closed, Farrier smiled gently.

“Don’t answer that,” he said, blue eyes opening to meet Collins’ own.

Farrier inhaled, breath shaky.

“I should get some kip,” he said, and went to stand.

“I know it’s not easy tae think about for you, but Farrier?”

“Mm?”

“Thank you for telling me… Nobody’s told me they love me in a while.”

As Collins stood too, Farrier took his hands. He didn’t often hear Collins speak negatively, he was a very positive person most of the time. It made Farrier want to better himself in that aspect. It hurt when the blonde let little things slip, like now. Farrier decided, for whatever reason, that now wasn’t a good time to inspect what Collins had said, opting instead not to say anything about the comment in response. It didn’t mean he wasn’t hurt by it.

“I wasn’t going to say anything. James convinced me to,” Farrier replied, and for that he got a squeeze of his hands as Collins smiled. Dimples showing, blonde eyelashes brushing over his cheeks as he looked downwards.

Collins looked up again, into Farrier’s eyes and for once, they were clear as day to read. Farrier was nervous.
“I’ve never been in love before,” the brunette said quietly.

“Neither have I.”

Those words comforted Farrier a little, though it still wasn’t a comfortable experience for him. He’d laid all of himself out on the table now.

“Good thing we have each other then,” Collins said. Without answering Farrier pulled him in for a tight hug. It was tense.

“I’m scared,” He muttered into Collins’ neck. The blonde faltered, words died on his tongue as he realised the admission. Farrier never told people when he was scared, never showed any inclination of fear. This was trust at its purest. It was love.

“I am too,” Collins replied. He was, he may not have tried to shut it down like Farrier not moments past, but he was scared. Not just of being in love, but of being in love in a war. It was coming, everyone knew. It was just a question of when it would begin. He hugged tighter until anxious thoughts of the future passed. Then Farrier pulled back, just enough that their noses were an inch away from touching, and then he leaned in. It was deep, it was raw. His lips moved with uncertainty, like now that he’d admitted his feelings he had to get used to kissing Collins all over again.

Farrier almost reached for the bottle that night as he lay awake in bed. He still wasn’t sure if he’d done the right thing, but something told him, a gnawing thought in the back of his mind, that it was right. That love was good. Love was what he needed.

Collins was too fidgety to sleep, he sat awake doodling for half the night. It was a lot to process. Love. But at a cost. And, Farrier being so unsure. Not of his feelings but his attitude towards his feelings. Collins wished more than anything he could help Farrier, but it wasn’t that easy. In time perhaps, the blonde hoped.

Chapter End Notes

They said it! Unsurprisingly, one of them was much happier to admit it than the other.. Thank you all for reading and letting me know how much you appreciate my writing, it means a lot!

my tumblr
afternoon pinboard

Until next chapter my loves, happy reading 🖤
Farrier woke with a migraine. He’d kept track, it had been five days since he had told Collins how he felt. The weather was just beginning to turn, on the edge of cold and mild. Not having any idea what caused said migraine and for a second wondering if he had started drinking last night and forgotten, Farrier groggily got out of bed after hitting his alarm clock a mite too hard and pushing it off the bedside table.

According to Canfield, he must have obviously been suffering from a stress headache.

“Well, you’re always stressing about something,” he said as they walked the halls in the morning light together, cups of tea in hand as they waited for the younger pilots to all grab breakfast from the kitchen before them.

“Always something to stress about, it’s going away already anyway.” Farrier said, wishing his tea would hurry up and cool down so he could drink it.

“I get them too. Random, out of the blue. It might have something to do with us being in the air so much.”

“You think?”

“Well, I’m not medically inclined but it sounds about right, doesn’t it?” Canfield asked.

“Not sure if I want to know the answer,” Farrier said.

“Maybe it’s related to your other problems.”

“Beg your pardon?”

“Oh your,” Canfield said, gesturing vaguely at Farrier’s torso and then slapping him rather hard in the shoulder blade he’d once shattered.

“Michael!” he said, earning a laugh from his superior officer.

“I don’t see how it would be,” he said, before looking through the windows that lined one side of the hallway into the courtyard in the middle of the building.

“Oh for goodness’ sake, he’s following us,” Farrier snorted. Parker was walking around the perimeter of the courtyard, tail wagging incessantly and tongue hanging out of his mouth as he...
happily followed Canfield and Farrier up the hallway from the other side of the glass.

“Collins needs to train him up to be a proper RAF dog!” Canfield said.

“No he doesn’t.”

“He should!”

“Why?”

“Why not? It’d be helpful to have a trained dog on the premises.” Canfield said, irked as to why Farrier had such a strong objection.

“Yeah, but it’s just his pet,” the brunette said, finally beginning his tea.

“Yes, but Parker lives on the base, he needs to be behaved.”

“Behaved is different to a trained military dog though, Michael.”

“Yes, suppose you’re right. Still wouldn’t hurt to have one of those,” Canfield chuckled.

“Now that I think about it, maybe Parker would probably be a good working military dog. He loves Collins so much, if Collins was the one to reward him for learning, he’d want to do his best to please Collins every time.” Farrier thought aloud.

“Well, pitch it to the lad. See what he thinks.”

So Farrier did. It was after both squadrons had gone up in the air one after the other. Collins was only just beginning to feel confident in the cockpit alone. It was late afternoon and Dawson and Collins were both in the courtyard playing with Parker. Farrier knew he wasn’t going to be able to get Collins alone for this, but he reasoned he shouldn’t need to. He went out into the courtyard and the two blondes stopped laughing at the puppy before them.

“Afternoon lads. Collins, I actually wanted to ask something about Parker,” Farrier said, and again Collins was astonished at how well he hid behind the wall, it almost made the blonde worry that Farrier was still hiding behind it when they were together. He brushed the thought away as he realised Parker had run to Farrier to jump on him.

“Sit down you silly bugger!” Farrier laughed.

“So what did ye want to ask?” Collins said as he grabbed Parker.

“Well Canfield and I were talking this morning, and he raised the question of Parker being a military dog.”

“You- what? Like a war dog?” he said, shocked.

“What? No, there’s not even a war now, don’t talk like there is. I meant like a trained dog to have around the base.”

“Oh, well I dunno about that,” Collins said, looking at Parker who was chewing on the ball with treats inside.

“You don’t have to make a decision now, but we were just saying he’d actually make a good one.
See, the way dogs are trained to be military dogs is on a reward basis, follow the order, get a treat. Imagine how hard Parker would try to impress you, how hard he’d try to get everything right to get a treat,” Farrier smiled.

“I mean… Yer right,” Collins laughed.

“I’ll let you boys get back to it, but think about it,” he said, and just like that he was back inside, leaving Dawson and Collins alone with Parker.

“Think you’ll do it?” Dawson asked.

“I don’t know, I kind of like him being a goof all the time.” Collins smiled, Parker had rolled onto his back with the ball on his belly, wrestling it. Raindrops began to appear on the dirt of the courtyard, or what was left of it as the grass grew valiantly over it despite Parker trying his best to rip it up every day.

“Common room?” Dawson suggested.

“In a bit,” Collins said quietly. Dawson didn’t know what Collins was waiting for, as the skies opened up more Parker trotted back to the shelter of his kennel.

“I’ll meet you in there, Collins,” Dawson said, walking to the door. But he paused in the doorway, watching his friend. Collins was interesting, he’d give him that. As it began to rain he just stood there. He closed his eyes and tilted his head back, face to the sky. Collins was lying through his teeth if he said he hadn’t been under an immense amount of emotional stress since the night he and Farrier confessed their love. They hadn’t said it to each other since, and Collins didn’t know if it meant Farrier truly did want to forget they’d said anything. The rain wasn’t a solution to anything, but it was immensely calming. The blonde didn’t care that his woollen uniform was getting wet, that Dawson was likely waiting for him, all that Collins’ mind was focused on in that moment was the feeling of the rain on his face, cool and wet. The sound as it hit the ground, the walls, the roof. And finally, the smell of petrichor which Collins loved so much, the smell that would always remind him of himself.

That night he and Farrier met. Though it wasn’t in either of their rooms. In the late hours of the afternoon they’d had not even five minutes alone in the kitchen together, during which Farrier invited Collins to come on a drive with him in the night. It seemed like an even safer idea than either of their rooms, and Collins was still holding onto hope that Farrier might teach him how to drive.

“Well, I’ll go down but maybe you wait a few minutes, then come meet me, yeah?” Farrier said outside Collins’ doorway. The blonde nodded, and after checking both ways several times for other people, Farrier placed a kiss on Collins’ forehead and walked off down the hall. Collins smiled. He knew Farrier was trying hard to make it up to him, for how he’d reacted those nights ago.

Farrier walked quietly down the stairs, through the dark halls of Gatwick base and out the front door, keys jingling as he played with them in his hand. He reached his car, running a hand over the shiny black paint as he walked around it to the driver’s door. No sooner had he sat in the seat did Collins appear at the front door of the building, Farrier had to smile, the lad clearly couldn’t wait any longer. Collins walked down the steps from the front door and made his way to the carpark, trying his best to look inconspicuous but looking even more so than he probably wanted. Farrier sat back in the chair and allowed himself the simple pleasure of admiring his partner. Beautiful long legs carried the man in question over to the other side of the car, and he bobbed right down as not
to hit his head on the doorframe.

“Well, let’s go!” Collins said, Farrier smiled and rubbed the blonde’s knee before starting the engine up.

“Let’s go indeed.”

“Go where?”

“Wherever we end up,” Farrier answered. He seldom had somewhere in particular to go, he was just so used to catching public transport that the car only came in handy occasionally. Still he saw it as a good purchase, even if it was expensive to run.

Again, Collins watched interestedly as Farrier pushed the clutch in, moved the gearstick.

They drove off into the night. It was still, and very cold. The blue moonlight illuminated everything, there was little cloud cover tonight.

“So, getting used to flying alone now?” Farrier asked.

“Yeah. It’s still a bit nerve wrackin’ when we fly in close formation, but for the most part it’s fine. It’s great, in fact,” Collins smiled back, and reached a cold hand out to rest on Farrier’s thigh, which twitched at the unexpected touch, but then the man’s left hand came down to rest over it, occasionally moving to change gears or hold the wheel with both hands, but always going back.

“So I told Stella that I donnae like women,” Collins said casually. Farrier shoved the car into neutral and pulled over sharply.

“You what?” he said, looking over at Collins wondering why on earth he was so calm.

“No, no it’s okay. She gets it.”

“What do you mean?!” Farrier asked, worried.

“I… Well I have tae say it now don’t I. Stella isn’t interested in men,” the blonde said, feeling bad that he’d outed her. He’d have to go and see her now to apologise, though something told him she wouldn’t take it too harshly. Farrier sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose.

“You understand why I worried, right pet?” he said,

“Yeah, should have said it the other way around maybe,” Collins laughed.

“Yeah maybe, don’t forget what Anderson’s lot decided to do when they found out,” Farrier said as he pulled back out from the curb,

“I never will,” Collins replied sharply, indicating he hadn’t liked how offhand that comment was.

“Pet, you know what I meant. We both know the seriousness of that night,” Farrier said, and this time it was his hand which wandered to Collins’ thigh. They sat in silence for a while. Collins in thought about that night, which seemed so distant now. Farrier was thinking about Stella, he hadn’t had any inclination at all that she wasn’t interested in men, not that there should have been any, but now that he knew it, it seemed to make sense and he didn’t know how he hadn’t seen it before. He supposed she, like he, had perfected the art of hiding it.

“I sometimes wonder if Anderson really meant it,” Collins said, breaking Farrier’s thought train.
“You can’t accidentally do something like that, Collins. He spiked your drink with opium,” Farrier said as he drove.

“I know, but I mean I wonder if he meant it to be that bad.”

“Does it matter? It was that bad.”

“I guess,” Collins said meekly. Farrier was right though, it was in the past. On they drove, through the streets until they weren’t streets anymore, they were unsealed roads between the fields on either side.

“Where are ye taking us?”
“Somewhere beautiful.”

“Does somewhere beautiful have a name?”
“Not really. We’re going into the Surrey hills, pet. But somewhere beautiful can be anywhere you want it to be,” he said quietly.

“Fate doesn’t dictate that?” Collins snarked.

“No, not this time. For instance, anywhere you are is beautiful.” Collins almost laughed, “What?” Farrier chuckled.

“Yer tryin’, aren’t you,” Collins said.

“Yeah I am. I feel bloody awful about how I was,” he said. The car was winding off into the hills, they started a shallow incline up a particularly unkept road, complete with potholes and gravel.

“This probably isn’t great for the car,” Collins laughed.

“Ah she’ll be fine. She’s a ‘sports’ saloon after all!” he smiled, comically timed as the car made a sharp jolt after driving through an especially deep pothole.

“Fuck,” Farrier said, only half joking.

They reached where he was trying to get them to though. It was a dead end road, with three trees at the edge of the grass field on the other side.

“Do people own these fields?”
“Honestly, no idea. Probably not, doesn’t look like they grow anything, there’s plenty of crown land here.” Farrier said.

The engine ceased, and suddenly both of them realised how quiet it was. Farrier looked at Collins, his gaze something Collins couldn’t quite place, somewhere between admiration and peace.

“I really, really love you.”

That was when Collins found out what Farrier looked like in love.

Then a warm hand cupped his cheek, and Collins was leaning in, closing his eyes, falling into the moment with all he was. They broke away, rubbing noses.

“I love you Farrier,” Collins said. It felt strange, but it felt so right.
The brunette sat back for a while, exhaled and smiled. He then opened the car door, Collins followed suit. They stood next to the car for an indefinite amount of time, both watching the stars. There was no light pollution to mask anything, there wasn’t even a building in sight.

It was cold outside, as beautiful as the view was Farrier’s fingers were frozen. Still not wanting to start driving again, Farrier opened the door behind the driver’s instead, sitting down on the passenger bench seat. It was soft, arguably softer than the front seats because it was just a long bench of leather, there was definitely more legroom, something Collins noticed immediately when he sat down on the opposite side.

“Why buy a four door car?”

“Michael asks me this all the time. I just thought it might be useful sometimes, and it has been. Sometimes the other officers take a ride in it, like when we held your cohort’s graduation.” He explained. Collins hummed,

“When did ye buy this car?”

“1937. I bought it for my own birthday,” Farrier chuckled at Collins’ amused face, then his smile dropped as he allowed himself to just sit and take Collins in. His eyes soaked up the sight, tried to remember every single detail of the man before him, tuck it all away in the confines of his mind and never forget it. He was in awe as Collins sat, looking at him with those blue eyes which almost glowed. Collins breathed out, breathe condensing before him, then a hand laid itself on his thigh, Farrier squeezed lightly, before moving his body closer until their hips touched. Collins turned on the seat, folding one leg up underneath him as to completely face his partner. Farrier’s fingers sifted through his blonde hair, a calm smile playing on the man’s face as he did. It was Collins who moved in first, the hand staying in his hair as he pressed his lips to Farrier’s. The man held his hand on the back of Collins’ head, holding him there, deepening the kiss. The only sounds which could be heard were their shared breaths in the cold still night. But it wasn’t enough. Collins clambered onto Farrier’s lap, head almost hitting the roof of the car. Their eyes met briefly, before the blonde crashed his lips back onto Farrier’s.

There was nobody around, there never was and there likely never would be in the middle of nowhere like this. Still both of them were paranoid, yet Collins still had that reckless streak, the one that pushed him to constantly flirt with Farrier in their early days of knowing each other, to the point that Farrier would tell him to stop and then he would do it some more. The reckless streak which got him into trouble with Anderson, the one that decided it was a good idea to bring Ben back to his parents’ house that night. The reckless streak which was currently forcing him on top of Farrier, grinding his hips down against his partner’s. Farrier’s tongue ran across his bottom lip, his hands now firmly on either of Collins’ hips, holding him down, pushing his weight down harder onto his crotch, glad that finally the warmth was returning to his fingers.

This was exactly what he needed. A way to show Collins that he truly was in love, and that his harsh words were nothing but his mind running wild on an off afternoon. He roughly pushed the blonde off him and back onto the seat, where he busied himself with removing Collins’ belt, the blonde jumping lightyears ahead discarding shoes and then trousers. Farrier faltered for a second upon seeing Collins’ beautiful skin in the moonlight. Orange blonde hairs dusted his pale legs, but Farrier didn’t have more than a moment to gaze before he was being straddled again.

“I need you,” Collins grunted.

“I need you,” Farrier replied. And though the blonde didn’t likely pick up on the greater meaning considering the haze of lust which had settled on his mind, Farrier meant it in every way. He needed Collins by his side in life. That much he was sure of.
He shrugged his coat off, undid his shirt, breaking the kiss to lean forwards to get it off completely. The car was considerably warmer now.

Collins stared, caught off guard. He was still sensitive about Farrier’s body, as was the brunette about Collins’ own, the difference being one of them reacted internally only.

Collins desperately pressed himself against Farrier as much as he could and Farrier held him there, almost scared to let go.

It was hot and they were both sweating and it was messy but every pent up emotion was flooding out of them both in a waterfall. Soon enough Farrier’s hand was down Collins’ boxers, the blonde whining against his shoulder as he gripped him hard. They shared a look in the heat, one of a single emotion. Trust. Collins reared back and Farrier watched as he sucked a long finger into his mouth, blue eyes dark. He reached behind himself and his other hand clutched Farrier’s shoulder harder as his eyes slid shut, the brunette unable to do anything but watch. His grip had gone limp on Collins’ cock as he watched the blonde’s face contort.

“Pet, don’t rush,” Farrier murmured.

“I’m not,” he huffed before settling his forehead against Farrier’s. He pushed inside himself, it wasn’t dissimilar to how it had felt when Farrier had done it, he was still getting used to the feeling but there was a different feeling tonight, a drive. And Collins realised it was love. He didn’t want to fuck, he wanted to make love with Farrier. That was why he was so desperate. He pulled out of himself and brought his hand to his mouth, slickening another finger before groaning against Farrier’s mouth as he pushed back in with both. Farrier’s eyes were on him, his gaze softer than usual. The brunette was glad the car had started to fog up, meant less chance that prying eyes, not that there were any, could see. Gave him more opportunity to soak in the sight before him, and soak it in he did. He ran a hand through Collins’ hair, catching a handful, tugging lightly. The blonde’s head moved back with the notion, a quiet hum of content escaping his lips. Farrier’s other hand, though desperately wanting to touch his own prick, focused on Collins’ instead. The hand on his shoulder gripped hard, Farrier felt nails beginning to dig in, he eased off Collins’ length, didn’t want to get him over excited. Blue eyes snapped open at the sudden cease of movement, he pulled his fingers out of himself, and Farrier took that opportunity to grab Collins by both thighs and pull him impossibly closer with almost aggressive force. Then he slowly, giving Collins every opportunity to refute it, pushed two of his own fingers into the blonde’s mouth. Collins gladly took them in, playing with them with his tongue. He liked Farrier when he was like this. When the man was strong, when Collins could tell he was present, that his mind wasn’t elsewhere, that he didn’t feel weak, scared. He felt in charge, and he was. Collins had come to realise over time that he wasn’t a walking contradiction, having told Ben that he hated anyone controlling him hence joining the RAF for freedom, yet not wanting any control in the bedroom. He’d realised it wasn’t a blanket statement, it was just Farrier. Only Farrier. He was the only one Collins wanted to give up control to, and Farrier knew it. He knew Collins too well by now. Fickle at times, but always his. He pulled his fingers from the blonde’s mouth, and reached down through the leg of his boxers, circling. The hand that wasn’t gripping Farrier’s shoulder took his cock, Farrier let out a choked gasp, having all but forgotten about it. He looked up to Collins as he sat on top of his thighs, and with that, slowly, he pushed both fingers inside. The blonde’s eyes squeezed shut and he groaned beautifully into Farrier’s shoulder. Soon they were panting together, both needing each other more than breath.

“Please,” Collins breathed.

Farrier broke through the haze of arousal at that word. Collins had said it the first time they were ever intimate together. His eyes flicked back down to his own length, removing his fingers from
inside Collins, who promptly manoeuvred himself out of his underwear. Farrier spat into his own hand cruelly and used it to slicken himself up as he watched Collins rear up on his knees, one hand ever present on Farrier’s shoulder, the other now gripping Farrier’s prick, guiding it. It was only now that Collins’ nerves caught up with his actions as he remembered how it had been. That perhaps this position wasn’t going to be comfortable for him. His thoughts began to become panicked, but a warm hand came up to cup his face, direct his gaze back into Farrier’s eyes.

“It’s okay,” he said quietly, and pulled Collins closer, until their lips brushed together. Farrier tried to use it to distract Collins, to help him relax further. But it was unmistakable when the tip of his length grazed over the furled muscle at the blonde’s entrance, how his body stiffened in anticipation. There was nothing else to do but push inside, so painstakingly slowly, ever so caringly, Farrier did. The noise that escaped both of them in unison was one of exhausted pleasure, for needing something so badly and finally having it. Collins slowly let his body lower itself back onto Farrier’s lap, pushing the man deep inside him. His arms were around the brunette’s neck, faces inches apart. As Collins finally let all his weight back down he shuddered, whimpered as he felt the familiar stretch. Farrier was holding him close, putting every single one of Collins’ needs before his own, struggling not to push his hips up but managing. Collins lifted his head up when he was ready, and began to roll his own hips. Slowly at first, bitten off gasps accompanying his every move, not yet used to sex. Farrier almost missed it, the first few times. Before he’d gotten used to it, begun to understand how to have good sex instead of just sex. He wished he’d shared those times with someone who mattered, but it was enough that he was the one who mattered enough to Collins. As the blonde rose gently and then ground back down Farrier watched his face, Collins eyes were closed and his brows contorted, whether from sheer effort or pleasure Farrier did not know. He hoped it was the latter. The feeling in his gut was building, as was Collins’ confidence, Farrier could see it on his face. He thrust up inside Collins just as he came down on his cock, forcing a breathless moan out of him. Farrier did it again, now both hands holding Collins’ hips, not forcing his body down, but holding him. Just holding, feeling his skin, how soft it was.

The night was silent outside the car, nothing could be heard but the whistle of wind through the trees, the occasional bird call. Nothing could be seen but a lone car at the end of a road. If one looked closely, the windows were fogged. If one looked even closer, the car was moving slightly. It was just an object in the world.

But from inside the car, nothing outside existed. It was just them, together, trusting. Loving.

It hurt, it wasn’t as comfortable, Collins had to work more for it, but somehow it was better than the first time. He knew what to expect now. They were both hot, both blushing. Collins reached down and wrapped his hand around himself, Farrier slouching on the chair to give himself more thrusting ability, to take the necessity of movement off Collins’ shoulders, allowing the blonde to sag against him, hand still tugging in time with Farrier’s thrusts. The change of angle had Farrier hitting deeper inside Collins, pushing against the magical spot at his core. The blonde practically sobbed against Farrier’s shoulder, and he couldn’t do any more except allow himself to become undone. It didn’t take much more before Collins couldn’t hold it back. He dug his nails into Farrier’s shoulder and the man watched as Collins whimpered low in the back of his throat and came hard. His body clenched around Farrier, seed shooting over both of their bellies in a hot sticky mess. Collins wasn’t sure if his eyes were closed or if they were open and he just couldn’t see, for a split second it was almost like he was in the air. A feeling of absolute weightlessness, absolute freedom, peace, overcame him. After the euphoria, the blonde came down to realise his exhaustion, collapsing against Farrier, barely noticing the stickiness on now both their bodies.

Farrier’s peripheral began to grow blurry, he was riding the edge and just as he heard a tired “I love you,” murmured against his shoulder, he was swept over, closing his eyes and burying his face in Collins’ neck. He groaned as he thrust hard, feeling his load shoot out of himself and inside his
partner. His mind for once in his life, was clear. There was nothing but a settling feeling that this was right. With laboured breaths, Farrier opened his eyes, and then he realised that the blurriness in his peripheral was caused by tears. Tears of joy.

They sat like that for what felt like an eternity, heavy breaths the only sound that could be heard.

“I love you too,” Farrier said, finally pulling his face back to look at Collins as he sat up. The blonde carefully got up off his lap and silently looked for the handkerchief Farrier always had in his coat. Collins clothed himself, Farrier sat and buttoned his trousers up, mind still a haze. The tears hadn’t gone away, and Farrier had never cried of joy before. It was a solitary sniff that gave him away, Collins immediately turning to see what was wrong.

“Farrier?” he said quietly.

He got a smile in response, letting him know that Farrier wasn’t unhappy. At that Collins wrapped his arms around Farrier, and Farrier wrapped his around Collins, pulling him tightly against his body and holding him there. He threaded his fingers through the blonde’s hair, always so soft. Collins didn’t slick his hair back like the other pilots, for whatever reason it meant there was never any oily product in his hair, and Farrier loved it.

They got back into the front seats, and Farrier started up the car again.

“I needed that,” he said.

“Me too.” Collins said, now with Farrier’s coat draped over his body on account of Farrier claiming to be much too hot for that now. They drove silently down the cool gravel road, Farrier woken somewhat by the vibrations through the steering wheel from his post coital stupor, Collins lulled almost to sleep by the car’s movements. They made it back to sealed roads, and perhaps once Farrier wouldn’t have trusted Collins in an Aston-Martin, but now he did.

Now he trusted him completely.

He pulled over gently, turning the engine off.

“Pet?”

“Mm?”

“Would you like a driving lesson?”

Collins perked up at this. He quickly took Farrier’s coat off of himself and put it in the back.

“Yes!” he beamed.

They swapped seats and immediately Collins felt out of his depth.

“Is et like a plane?”

“Even easier. See that button? Hold it in and turn the key.”

Farrier went about explaining the gears and clutch, all the while Collins struggling to keep his eyes off his partner and on the job at hand.

“So you have to time it properly, yeah?”
“Uh yeah, yeah,” Collins said.

It was no surprise that the car stalled.

They both laughed and Collins tried again, and again and again. He stalled the car four times before finally, it grabbed and the blonde was so shocked that they actually started to move down the road that he let out a yell, much to Farrier’s amusement.

In the end, he wasn’t half bad at driving, for his first time.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading, I hope you enjoyed this one 💖 Also thank you to anyone who has left a comment/kudos, they mean so much to me!

my tumblr
afternoon pinboard

Until next chapter, happy reading 💖
Monday! I don't know why this chapter is almost 6k but it is, so enjoy I suppose?!

I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them, I certainly do. I'm finally going back to uni this Thursday after a long summer break, mind you I haven't been in Australia for her summer since 2016 so I was pretty overwhelmed lol. This week is a little cooler, so I'm glad of that too. Weather rambling aside, I hope everyone is well!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was the beginning of August. The holidays were over and everything was back to exactly how it usually was, the only difference was that on this particular Saturday morning, Wingnut had decided to come down to Gatwick to pay them a visit. He hadn’t announced that he’d be there, so when he knocked on the front doors as the morning sun just began to touch their wood, he shouldn’t have been so surprised when a cranky Farrier opened it.

“Oh!” Timson said,

“Oh!” Farrier mirrored.

“Just visiting?” he asked, standing to the side.

“Yes! No flying for a few days, thought I’d come see the damage down here,” he laughed, and walked past the bemused officer, knowing that nobody would care if he didn’t have a visitor badge on.

“Good to see you again, lad,” Farrier called after him, Timson turned and grinned.

Collins and Dawson were in the kitchen debating whether a canvas body on a plane was better.

“Ye but it’s weak!”

“But if a bullet flies through canvas, no big deal, patch it. If it’s a metal frame, that’s structural damage, need a whole new sheet!” Dawson countered, and before Collins could say something snarky, Wingnut waltzed into the otherwise empty room. Both blondes did a double take.

“Miss me, boys?” Timson asked before being tackled into a group hug by them both at once.

“I’ll take that as a yes!” he laughed.

They let go of each other and settled at the table.

“So what are ye doing here?” Collins asked, letting his tea get cold on the bench behind him.

“Well, we aren’t flying for a few days so I thought I’d make my way down to see you two,” Wingnut explained.

“Still seeing Lucy?” Dawson asked.
“Course mate. We see each other as much as possible, but that doesn’t mean I won’t come back down to Gatwick every now and then!” he said.

And for that morning, everything was as it was when the men had first joined, before the threat of war was so obviously looming, before anything had happened between Farrier and Collins, before they had their wings. Collins did feel somewhat guilty that he’d grown closer with Dawson, but he told himself not to be, Timson had moved to Bomber Command, they were destined to grow apart a little after that happened. The blonde caught himself out yet again adopting Farrier’s views regarding fate.

For old time’s sake, the three headed to the sandwich store for lunch, as they left the airbase Canfield rounded the corner, catching a glimpse of the three leaving out the front door. He shook his head and mumbled something about needing another cup of tea, must be hallucinating. As he sat in his office reading the paper with his tea, Canfield contemplated the young sprogs. That generation of fliers didn’t really exist before the war, it was just aviation enthusiasts who could already fly who became military pilots. It wasn’t like any sort of military air arm even existed for long before the war anyway. He wondered how another war might affect these young men, if it came to that. He contemplated how the war had affected him. He had to be strong, for Farrier mostly, and Canfield was grateful that he’d not been in any serious flying accidents, that the horrors of war hadn’t been shoved in his face like they had some others, like Farrier. Nonetheless the old man still wished there was someone around sometimes who he could talk to about the war. Nobody wanted to hear about it, they didn’t want to know anything about the war, almost as if they didn’t want to acknowledge that it had happened, which was half the reason he rattled off so many stories during class, he felt like he’d explode if he didn’t.

Farrier peaked his head through the door of Canfield’s office and then walked in as the older man looked up from his daydreams.

“Boy, tell me I wasn’t hallucinating when I saw Dawson and Collins walking off with Timson,” he said,

“Oh! No, you weren’t. I let him in this morning, said he’d come to visit,” Farrier replied, Canfield scoffed.

“No note from his superior officer?”

“Should there have been?”

“Well, you’d expect one, would you not?”

“Suppose. Didn’t really think about it, I just opened the door for him.”

“Well he’s here now,” Canfield laughed.

It was past lunchtime, and Stella was still in bed. Tilly had gotten up and dressed and brought her a cup of tea that had gone cold on the bedside table. She just didn’t feel like doing anything today, and they had to put the show on at the Golden Deer tonight, causing Stella more worry than it should. She couldn’t be bothered playing the clarinet for hours on end, not today. Today she wanted to stay in bed all day, maybe take a walk in the park with Tilly, but nothing more strenuous than that.

The aforementioned redhead walked back in, always exuding the cool comfort of a summer breeze in the shade.
“Stella, your tea is still here.”

“Yes.”

“Don’t want it?”

Stella sat up, she did want it, but worried.

“Stella. It’s okay to have your tea. I’ll make you a new one that’s warm.”

“No, don’t waste tea,” she said, and finally took the mug in her hand, slowly bringing it to her lips, taking as much time as possible to look at it, inspect it, before taking a miniscule sip, mainly to please Tilly. The redhead smiled sadly, and took the mug from Stella’s hands.

“You’re performing tonight.”

“Yes,” Stella said, and stood up to avoid more questioning. Most of the housemates were out today at the markets selling baked goods, meaning Tilly would be watching Stella’s eating, or lack thereof, like a hawk with nobody else around. Stella knew she meant well, but it was uncomfortable.

She brushed out her short dark hair and felt arms around her waist. Tilly’s chin rested on her shoulder, in the mirror Stella watched Tilly look at her, and couldn’t help but smile before pushing her off her shoulder gently.

“I won’t make you eat, Stel, but I know you enjoy the show more when you’re not about to faint.” Tilly said.

“I know. I will eat. Not now,” Stella said, sentence broken up as she bent over and looked around for clothes to wear.

“Well would it cheer you up if we went and got your friend Jack, see if he wants to see the show?” Stella stood bolt upright, flustered as anything.

“Why would he want to see it?”

“You’re friends, aren’t you?” Tilly laughed, motioning for Stella to put her arms up so she could help her out of her nightie, she knew the woman had delicate days, and was more than happy to help her through them, whatever means necessary. Tilly ran a hand over Stella’s pale skin, down her back, it caused the brunette to giggle, bringing a smile to Tilly’s face.

“I suppose we could. He’s usually busy, and what if he brings his friend again?”

“Alexander?”

“Mm.”

“Well what if I come along?”

Stella sighed.

“It’ll do no good. You can only be my friend there, you know that Till,” Stella said, now dressed and ready to go downstairs to the kitchen, glancing at the cold tea again before deciding to leave it there. Tilly acted on it and picked the mug up to take it with them.
“But I don’t get all shy like you when I talk to boys,” Tilly smiled, and held out a hand for Stella, who took it as they walked downstairs together.

“Goodness, nothing beats this place!” Wingnut declared as he sat, mouth stuffed full of his sandwich.

“Do they no’ have a lunch store near your new base?” Collins asked.

“Mm, they do, bu’ it’s no’ as goo’,” Timson said, struggling not to spit half his lunch out, earning a big laugh from Dawson as they walked back along the footpath, the blondes shaking their head at each other as Wingnut ate.

He left as the shadows began to get long on the ground, but not before having a very long play with Parker, and then insisting to sit against the building and watch the squadrons fly, because they’d been told they were practicing today. Not everyone was there, considering it being Saturday but Davis gave those who were there permission to fly, as long as he could come along, of course.

Dawson and Collins climbed into their Hurricanes, and after Davis gave the all clear, everyone taxied out behind each other as they’d practiced. The roar in their ears was loud, even with the headgear on. Once the throttle was opened, the Hurricanes shot down the runway and they were off, one at a time their wheels lifted off the ground and were smartly folded away into the underbelly of the planes. Timson was glad he stayed to watch the formation practice, he hadn’t been present to see the practice it had taken to get everyone to this stage, and to see the Hurricanes in near perfect formation as sunset neared was a beautiful sight. Farrier and Canfield watched as they flew, and seeing Timson sit in awe against the wall brought some sort of nostalgic feeling to Farrier’s gut. He remembered when he was a boy, and Canfield had introduced him to planes. It hadn’t been long after he’d started living with Canfield that the old man had mentioned over the breakfast table. The first time Canfield had taken him to an air show it had awoken something inside him, and from then on Farrier had gone about being as involved as he could until finally, Canfield let him fly with him instead of just being the maintenance boy.

“Thank you for… The air shows,” he said quietly, his mind not really processing that Canfield couldn’t hear his thoughts and that the sentence probably therefore made no sense.

“Oh, what the things we used to enter? The competitions?”

“Yeah.”

“You’re most welcome my boy, what’s got you thinking about those?”

“Look,” Farrier said, gesturing to the look of wonder in Timson’s eyes as he sat a distance from them watching the half squadron fly.

“I remember that look,” Canfield said. The men shared a smile of reminiscence.

“I was just thinking today actually Tom, how before the war there wasn’t really this whole training scheme, it was just whoever could fly a plane!”

Farrier pursed his lips, he never enjoyed it when Canfield sprung the topic of war on him.

“Yeah,” he said vaguely.

“I wonder. If we’re in another war if this lot would fare better than us poor bastards,” Canfield
laughed. Farrier visibly stiffened at this. The Hurricanes were coming back to land now, wheels unfolding from inside the bottoms of the fuselages. Farrier had to look away, they were warplanes, they were painted sand and spinach. They had the capability to be armed. It was real. Why had Canfield said that?

“If,” Farrier mocked, and walked inside before Canfield could say anything else. The older man followed Farrier.

“Tom, stop running away!” he called,

“I’m getting a smoke, what do you want?” Farrier said. Canfield caught up to him,

“I’m sorry, lad. I forget not to just open the topic. I’m not like you,” Canfield explained.

“Yeah I know that. I just, I don’t need to think about those boys going off to war.”

He walked past the courtyard in the middle of the building, seeing Parker made Farrier change his plans to go straight to his room where he left his cigarettes and detour out to see the pup, who of course was overjoyed to see someone, anyone. After which Farrier did go and get his cigarettes, and walked out of the front doors of Gatwick with them. Just his luck, the skies began to open up above him. Typical British weather, he thought to himself as he pulled one out to smoke nonetheless. He wished he wasn’t in his number ones, wished he was in his Irvin, maybe even his turtleneck, possibly even his civvies. But the fields behind the base didn’t have the same feeling of escapism the streets did, they were still part of the airbase. Farrier walked a ways from the base itself, drawing long breaths from the cigarette, taking time to look around himself. To ground himself. It was something Collins had suggested, that he go for walks when he felt like he might start disassociating or ‘going back’ as the blonde sometimes called it which, as much as Farrier didn’t like, it was an incredibly apt description.

He walked and smoked, feeling the cold air biting at his nose and not caring. There was nobody on the streets, why would there be? Everyone had rushed home into the warm out of the rain. Gatwick’s permanent population was that small to start with anyway, that half the time the streets were empty regardless of the weather.

“Don’t you start soon?” Tilly asked as Stella put some shoes on to go and find Collins.

“No, we start at 7. It’s 5 now.” Stella said,

“Well can I come?”

“Oh,” Stella said, standing and smiling.

“Yes!” she said to Tilly as she shrugged on a coat. The women left the house together and walked out onto the rapidly darkening streets. Stella immediately pulled out a cigarette which Tilly lit for her.

Once they rounded a few corners and arrived on the street on which Gatwick RAF stood, Stella spotted Farrier up ahead.

“He looks how the weather does!” Tilly laughed nervously,

“I know him. He helped with Jack’s case. He’s quite nice,” Stella replied,
“There’s this whole world you’ve got with these pilots that I don’t know about,” Tilly smiled, chancing a touch of Stella’s arm.

“You can join them, you were just busy with your big show when Jack had his case, I don’t really see them apart from when he brings his friends to the bar, which has happened about twice.” Stella explained, sensing Tilly feeling left out.

“I’m not pushing, you can have friends that I don’t know, Stel,”

“I know I can. But maybe I want you to know them, maybe I want them to know you.” Stella said, a smile creeping onto her face as she saw Farrier recognise her up ahead.

“God it’s a small world, isn’t it?” he laughed,

“Especially if you live in a bloody village,” Stella replied,

“Good to see you, love. You’ve been keeping well?” Farrier asked,

“Yes very well. Busy with the band as usual. Uh, this is Tilly. She’s my… Friend!” Stella said.

“Lovely to meet you,” Tilly said, offering her hand which Farrier took gently.

“Tilly, I’m um… Thomas,” he almost laughed, and Stella did too, confusing Tilly.

“It’s a military thing. Last names, all that,” Farrier explained embarrassedly.

“Oh! Yes of course,” Tilly said politely.

“So what are you two doing walking around in the cold and wet?”

“Actually, I’m looking for Jack. I wanted to see if he would come and see my performance tonight. Jack Collins?” she said, Farrier beamed and looked away,

“I know who you’re talking about love. I’ll ask him, why don’t you come back with me? It’s only up the road.”

It seemed today was all about letting people into the airbase without asking, for Farrier.

Tilly squeezed Stella’s hand excitedly, she’d never been on a military base before.

Gatwick didn’t look like she’d always imagined inside. She’d imagined it to be drab and plain. She didn’t expect a Victorian era interior in perfect condition, beautiful high ceilings and dark wood, beautiful long hall runners and delicate yet simple chandeliers.

“This is the military?” she asked Farrier as he walked in front of them.

“This is Gatwick,” Farrier laughed.

“RAF bought an old school boarding house, this was it. Left it pretty much how they found it, threw in a runway or two, some hangars, insulated the underground dining room to make a bunker if need be, they’d got themselves a training base!” Farrier chuckled.

“It’s beautiful,” Tilly said, earning her a discreet pinch on the arm from Stella, smirking.

“Well ladies, I’ll take you to my office and I’ll go find Collins for you.”
They waited in the office, Stella sitting in Farrier’s chair behind the desk, Tilly sitting on the chair at the window.

“I never imagined it would be like this inside. I always see the outside of the building, I thought it would be so different,” she murmured, looking out the window to the runway. Stella smiled fondly at her, watched her red hair flick as she pushed it back from her face. Tilly’s round face turned to Stella and she smiled, big freckled cheeks and warm eyes. Stella hummed, seeing Tilly smile always made her feel calm.

“If Jack comes and brings his friend, I’m sure we’ll all sit on the same table, I’ll make sure he doesn’t try any funny business.”

“Won’t they think it rich if you come and my ‘boyfriend’ doesn’t?”

“So what? He’s busy, probably has a high stress job at a casino somewhere in London.” Tilly laughed, causing a smile to spring onto Stella’s face, though it was quickly wiped off as she jumped with a fright at Collins opening the door, returned with Farrier, Dawson and Wingnut.

“And this is Tilly,” Farrier said, the woman waved happily. Stella stood up quickly from Farrier’s seat.

“Sorry, looked comfortable is all,” she said quietly, causing the man to laugh heartily.

“It is! Sit back down Stella,” he said.

The three young pilots filed into the room, no sooner had they all squeezed through the door did Stella ask.

“Well, Jack I was just wondering if you wanted to come and see our show tonight.”

She was deliberately not looking at Dawson, wishing they hadn’t all been brought in together.

“Sure!”

Farrier had only just made it out the door, he hoped it wouldn’t seem rude.

“Can I come?” he asked turning back around.

“Yes, it’s a free world, officer,” she smiled.

Farrier deliberately didn’t tell Canfield about it. Part of him felt bad for not doing so, it was exactly the sort of thing he’d enjoy. It was also a rare occasion on which not only could Farrier go out somewhere with Collins, but he could properly get to know his friends more. Hopefully in time they wouldn’t see him as such an intimidating authority figure. It was strange now that Gatwick wasn’t really a training base, before it had always been the same. The new sprogs would be terrified of him at the beginning, but by the end of their training they’d come to like him. Now nobody except his squadron really got to know him, and Farrier felt even more alienated from most of the men walking the halls of Gatwick. He knew exactly why most of the pilots were intimidated by him, yet he couldn’t do anything about it. Farrier couldn’t change who he was, not at a core level. He’d put up walls, facades, but that couldn’t change the fact that he was awful at conversation, had a vague look of irritation on his face without meaning to half the time, was extremely closed off, and a plethora of other ‘problems’ which had been pointed out to him over the years, mainly by Canfield trying to help him to be more presentable. He never really wanted to be a Squadron Leader either, but being in the RAF for so long, and having a knack for being a good pilot meant promotions tended to be given. Farrier had always been happy being a work dog, a foot soldier, but fate had other plans apparently, he thought to himself. He felt like his rank contributed
to his intimidation of others, he glanced down at his sleeve cuff as he thought about it. He should have felt proud as he looked, but he didn’t. Farrier loved planes. He loved to fly, the freedom of it, he loved living at an airbase and waking up to the smell of petrol and the low drone of engines every morning. Everything else that came with being in the RAF, he could have done without. He’d been in the military so long, it was all he knew.

The night couldn’t come fast enough, Farrier was more than eager to get off base for a while and go out.

He walked down by himself, a while later than he heard Collins and his friends fussing about in the hallway. Once he reached the pub, Farrier hesitated as his hand touched the brass doorknob. It was the first time he’d been here in a while, and the first time he’d been here after the disastrous event happened to Collins inside. The man took a breath, told himself to stop being so weak, and entered. Inside the atmosphere was alive, happy faces everywhere, and at one of the tables in the middle of the room, Collins and his friends sat with Tilly. They waved Farrier over and in some sort of haze he walked, not really hearing any of the loud noise around him, his sole focus currently was just making sure he looked at everyone at the table and not just Collins, though the blonde was definitely looking dashing tonight.

He sat down with the others, trying not to remind himself how old he was next to them all.

“Evening, then.”

“Good to see you made it!” Tilly smiled back.

Farrier was sitting between Collins and Tilly around the small table, he supposed it was easier not to stare at Collins if he wasn’t directly opposite him.

“It’s starting!” Tilly said excitedly. The lights dimmed and Farrier was mildly annoyed he hadn’t thought to order himself a drink, feeling like it would be rude to do it now.

Stella and the band stepped up to the front of the stage, and after a few warm good evenings, they began. Collins noticed that Stella had done her hair, it was properly curled unlike her usual natural mess which could sort of pass as stylish in itself. She was wearing a much nicer dress as well. He leaned behind Farrier to Tilly,

“She’s done up a lot more tonight,”

“I know, sometimes she feels like it,” Tilly smiled.

Collins felt like he’d known Tilly for a lot longer than he did, she had the feeling about her that she was caring, trustworthy. Collins dragged himself out of his thoughts of Tilly as he realised he was still looking at her, and upon focusing his vision he realised how Tilly was looking at Stella on stage. That soft look in her eyes, the faint pink on her freckled cheeks. Something clicked. Was that why Tilly was here and none of the other people Stella lived with? Collins made a mental note to ask Stella privately at some time.

“Cor, she’s brill isn’t she!” Wingnut said to the table.

“She really is,” Farrier agreed, having never heard her perform before.

Stella felt wonderful. After much convincing from Tilly she’d eaten something small, waiting for just before the show to maximise the mood boost it would supply. Tilly did know how to make Stella feel good, she knew that when the brunette dressed up more she felt good on stage, so she’d laid out an outfit for her to wear. Stella closed her eyes in bliss as her band, the stage, the bar
disappeared around her and she lost herself in the music.

Dawson was looking on with an expression of both happiness and sadness. Collins nudged him and Dawson gave a sad smile. Collins wished he could explain why she wasn’t interested, but obviously that wasn’t an option. The blonde did find it strange that he’d found her, that odds stacked against them, he, a man interested in men had made friends with a woman interested in women.

Tilly loved watching Stella on stage, it was the most peaceful she ever saw the woman. She tried to come and see often, but being in a band herself she was often busy at the same times. Stella was doing some sort of little dance along to her music and Tilly couldn’t help beam, she didn’t feel the need to wipe it off her face, there was nothing wrong with a friend beaming at their friend, it wasn’t weird. Was it?

Farrier shouldn’t have been as nervous as he was sitting next to Collins. Whenever he was out in public it felt like they’d be discovered somehow, even if there was no possible way. As the brunette tried to get lost in the music, he felt a knee touch his. Collins’. The blonde was back to his antics, which never really stopped when Farrier thought about it. He exhaled measuredly out of his nose, and moved his leg away. Not here, not now. Then a shoe pressed on the side of his own. Farrier half wanted to step on Collins’ foot but instead he moved his own away, the blonde eventually getting the message and realising that they were in public after all.

After what seemed like much longer than it was, the band took a break. Stella moseyed over to the bar as usual, and Tilly hopped up excitedly to go and sit with her.

“Well lads, it’s drink o’clock for me!” Wingnut announced, also standing.

“Can’t argue with that,” Farrier said. Dawson and Collins joined too, but not after Dawson shot Collins one of his knowing, warning looks, Collins wondering why he’d received such a look. Did Dawson think he was going to act out?

“Stella, you’re an amazing player,” Farrier said as they sat at the bar together.

“Oh, thanks,” she said shyly.

“It’s a wonder yer not in the same band,” Collins said, hearing the tail end of a conversation.

“Well, we both already had established bands,” Tilly said.

“Oh, you’re in one as well?” Farrier asked.

“Yes! I’m a singer,” Tilly smiled, earning her raised eyebrows from Farrier as he took a sip of his drink, whiskey by the smell of it, Collins deducted. He wondered why Farrier couldn’t order a beer like a normal person. He sipped the froth off of his own, which he had been extremely careful to keep in his own hands and not to let out of his sight. Stella had her usual pink drink, and to Collins’ amusement, Tilly’s drink matched.

“Tilly, do ye get the same as her all the time?” he asked.

“I certainly do, Mary Pickford is the most delicious, and it’s pink!” she smiled.

“So what does your band do?” Dawson asked,

“Well, we’re yet to write anything so far, mostly it’s blues stuff, some jazz occasionally, but that’s more Stella’s band,” she explained, putting a hand on Stella’s shoulder briefly. Stella was glad that
they could get away with that much, female friends were very touchy anyway, so it wasn’t strange.

“What’s the time?” she asked Tilly quietly, who held out her watch in front of Stella’s face.

“Oh!” she said, and quickly gulped down the rest of her drink.

“Sorry everyone, we’re back on in a minute!” she said, and walked off to the stage again to where her band members were having a laugh at her frazzled state. She loved her band, and was grateful that they were always so joking and light-hearted.

“So we’re drinking light tonight?” Wingnut asked Farrier, gesturing to his whiskey which was almost gone.

“What? Oh, very funny,” Farrier said, not sure the purpose of his comment, unable to tell if he was being friendly or not.


“Better than a girly pink drink!” he said.

“Want to try it?” Tilly asked, Wingnut took a sip.

“Oh, that’s… Delicious!” he said, causing everyone to laugh. Stella’s band began to play again, Tilly took her drink back from Wingnut and swivelled on her barstool to watch. Now Farrier was between Wingnut and Collins, and he suspected the blonde had deliberately gotten the seat next to him.

Farrier finished his whiskey and ordered another.

“Jeez, wish I could do that,” Dawson laughed, halfway through his pint.

“No you don’t,” Farrier laughed back, causing a snort from Collins.

“So is that Scotch?” the Scot asked,

“Nope. Irish.”

“Why isn’t it Scotch?” he asked,

“Now you’ve done it,” Dawson commented, Farrier regretting his drink choice. Collins was persistent, but Collins with drink in him was even more so.

“No real reason? Both taste good, I guess.”

Collins shook his head in fake disappointment, making Tilly laugh.

“I’ve never even had Scotch,” Wingnut said. Collins almost did a double take,

“Ye bloody what?”

That caused a laugh around the whole group. Collins finished his pint and continued to stare at Wingnut, who continued to laugh.

“Well get some, eejit!” the blonde said, causing another round of laughter.

“I don’t want to!”
“Why?”

“We’re here to watch the band, not get drunk!”

“It’s not going to get you drunk, Wingnut.” Farrier said,

“Oh, it will.”

“Just have a shot then, not half an actual glass like mister show off.”

After a whole lot of grumbling, Wingnut ordered a shot of Scotch.

“Now we can sort out the real men from the pretenders!” Farrier laughed.

“Oh come on,” Dawson jested.

“Oh no, you keep drinking your piss beer, you too Collins,” Farrier said, causing Wingnut to choke on his laughter and Tilly to stare in amazement.

“You too Tilly, you’ve got your fairy drink to have.” Farrier said, causing a surprised laugh from the redhead.

“Right then. Scotch all around, is it?” she asked. Everyone nodded.

“Farrier ye didn’t have to turn this into a drinking game,” Collins said.

“I didn’t, you all did,” Farrier said back and smiled.

None of them did get drunk in the end, thankfully. The conversation and laughter was flowing well, and the music was spectacular. Farrier was genuinely very pleased with himself that he’d managed to socialise with Collins’ friends and really get to know them as more than new pilots. He was also pleased that he realised when to stop ordering himself drinks, where once he would have complained of spending too much money when in reality, it was because he didn’t know when to stop drinking. He took a smoke break in the alley behind the pub after the music was over, assuming Collins and his friends would walk back to base together. He didn’t realise Wingnut had managed to get himself drunk after all, and that Dawson had to go help him find a cab willing to drive two hours. Collins excused himself from the debacle, saying he was going to go and speak to Stella, and went out the back exit she’d taken him out once, glad Dawson didn’t try and follow in some mad hope of talking to her awkwardly about nothing. Collins found Farrier in the alley instead of Stella and her band.

“Oh, hello there.”

“Oh, hi.” Farrier said.

“Have ye seen Stella?”

“Yeah, I think she’s ‘round the corner,” Farrier said, feeling the cool bricks in his hand as he ran it over the wall, fiddling with the cracks as he smoked. It had been a good night. As Collins walked past, Farrier could tell the blonde was tipsy by the sway in his gait. How many more drinks had those boys ordered after he’d gone outside? He didn’t expect Collins to halt his walking and step up to Farrier. He had a look in his eye.

“Not here,” Farrier said sternly, finishing his smoke and stepping on it.

But Collins moved in and kissed him, with force that pushed his head back against the wall as he
felt the blonde’s body against his. Farrier made a soft sound of protest but his mind was overrun with emotion for the man kissing him and suddenly he didn’t care about anything else.

It was deep and wet and over as soon as it started, leaving Farrier open mouthed, as the blonde walked off in search of Stella he began to smirk. The nerve of that man. The danger excited Farrier, it shouldn’t have but it did.

Collins giggled to himself, and after walking around the corner he did find Stella, although he was slightly embarrassed at how tipsy he’d gotten from the drinks of scotch, blaming it on not drinking much now that he was down in England in the RAF, he managed to form a coherent sentence.

“Hey Stella, need any help?”

“With packing? Oh no, we’re nearly done,” she smiled, Tilly popped her head around from the other side of a trolley with musical equipment on it and smiled.

“Stella I…” Collins began, not sure how to continue,

“Is Tilly… Is she-“

“Yes,” Stella said quickly, knowing exactly what was on Collins’ mind and knowing that the quickest way to shut him up was to give him an answer.

“Was it obvious?” she added quickly, panicked.
“Not to anyone except me, I just saw the way she was starin’ at ye on stage. Nobody else would have noticed,” he said. Stella’s shoulders untensed a little at this, and she smiled.

Collins smiled humbly at her.

“She’s beautiful,” he said quietly, Stella blushing and turning away and muttering a ‘gee thanks.’.

“Hey, not to say you aren’t!” Collins said,

“It’s what you meant,” Stella said.

“Hey, no it’s not Stella. You’re beautiful, ye both are, inside and out. It’s a good fit,” he said quietly, standing over her shoulder. Stella considered that maybe he was telling the truth. Deciding she didn’t care if he was or not, she changed the subject.

“So do I know your partner?” she asked quietly, dark eyes penetrating Collins’ mind.

“Seems like ye already know the answer,” she said, before turning to catch up with Tilly and the band.

“Course ye know him,” Collins said, embarrassed.

“Okay. Then I know who it is,” she said, before turning to catch up with Tilly and the band. Collins grabbed her wrist, vaguely registering how tightly his fingers could wrap around it.
“C’mon ye can’t say that and not say his name,” the blonde almost smiled.

“It’s Thomas, isn’t it.”

Collins had been so ready for her to say ‘Farrier’ that he stopped for a second.

“I….Yes,” he said blankly, Stella smiled triumphantly and walked off.

“Night then!” she called without turning back around.

Chapter End Notes

What's this? Afternoon without angst? I don't know her. Writing so many of my OCs with the canon characters all together was so much fun, I hope it was just as much a joy to read.

my tumblr
afternoon pinboard

Until next chapter, happy reading everyone ❤️
Farrier wandered back to the base alone, thinking that waiting for Collins and Stella to stop conversing was verging on too much. The air was cold and clear as he walked, the clouds having lifted for the time being. The brunette remembered when Collins used to stand out by the windows in the hallway and draw the sky, the stars and their constellations. And then the word love resurfaced in his mind. He loved that man.

After a quick pat of Parker, Farrier was up in his room on his bed, finally. He kicked his shoes off and began to fall asleep in his clothes, not realising how exhausted he was until he lay down.

Collins was less nervous than he should have been that Stella had figured it out. He knew she was smart, surely it was only noticeable to her. Collins thought about how he’d kissed Farrier in the alley. It was probably the most dangerous thing he’d done, apart from flying planes for a living and bringing Ben back to his parents’ house. He didn’t know what had made him, whether it was the glint in Farrier’s eye, his open stance, maybe it was just the alcohol, not that he’d had much, it had already mostly worn off. Whatever it was that made him kiss Farrier wanted more, he missed the man, not just to be next to. He hated how quiet the base got, how quiet they had to be, how invisible they had to be. That was when Collins’ mind had the brilliant idea not to go inside. Instead, he walked around the back of the airbase, through the gravel carpark, from which he grabbed a small handful of stones, to the back of the building. Collins looked up to the window at the end which was Farrier’s, and began throwing pieces of gravel up at it. His aim wasn’t half bad, most of them finding somewhere on the pane of glass. He saw the light turn on, prayed it wasn’t another sod he’d woken up even though he knew it wasn’t. To his relief, and somehow at the same time unsurprise, it was Farrier who pulled the blinds up aggressively and threw open the window with an incredulous look on his face, until he saw who it was standing down beneath him.

“What the fuck are you doing?” he hissed, but Collins didn’t answer with words. He had a look in his eye, the same one he had in the alley, Farrier could see it clear as day from where he looked out of his window. Then Collins turned and began to walk away from the building along the line of sheds, throwing one more glance over his shoulder at Farrier.

And then he was down there with him.

Behind the last shed of the lot, far enough away from everything, pressing Collins’ body against the cold metal of the shed, pinning him to it, grinding on him. He pressed his hands into the flesh of Collins’ hips, kissed him hard, swallowed the sounds the blonde made even though there was nobody to hear them. Something in Farrier didn’t like how open it was though, so he grabbed
Collins by his shirt, pulled him away from the shed wall and threw open the unlocked door, shoved the lad inside.

It wasn’t long before Collins’ trousers were shoved down his thighs, he was turned around roughly and felt the cool metal of the shed wall on his cheek and Farrier’s hand on his shoulder, holding him there. Farrier needed this more than he even knew. His other hand snaked down Collins’ front and into his boxers, the blonde hissing as Farrier grabbed him roughly, his own hand soon taking over from the brunette’s so the man would have a hand free, Collins mumbling something about hurrying up to Farrier. A slick finger ran down his crease before he was entirely ready, and then was joined by another before they circled the furl of muscle once, twice, Collins felt Farrier’s rough cheek on his neck, hot breath down his nape, before fingers pushed inside. Collins groaned deep in his chest and sagged against the wall, trying his hardest to keep his legs from buckling under him as he was worked into.

After walking a tightrope between being careful and being too aroused to care, Farrier pulled his fingers out, not bothering to dry them as he gripped Collins’ hip hard, the blonde stepping his legs apart farther until they strained against his trousers still around his ankles, head dipping as he exhaled in anticipation.

Farrier pulled himself out of his trousers, glad to be free of the restraint. He spat unceremoniously onto his hand and gave himself a few quick pumps with it, rubbed his length up and down Collins’ arse a few times before lining them up, a fleeting thought that even if they could have something slower, more romantic, less hidden, that in that moment he wanted it to be just like this, and then he pushed hard inside the man. They groaned together, Collins’ mouth hanging open as the man kept pushing in. Hand sternly back on the blonde’s hip, Farrier pulled his body back to meet his thrusts, air forced out of Collins’ lungs as he gripped himself, hand moving in unison with Farrier’s sharp thrusts. This was exactly what he wanted. He didn’t want anything romantic or soft, he wanted it hard. His back began to arch away from Farrier and his breathing became ragged as the hand on his shoulder dug in, the man behind him huffing with each thrust now. Farrier thrust once, twice, and before he could comprehend it he was coming hard inside Collins. He pushed himself in with a low groan and held himself there, panting against the blonde’s neck and feeling his body shake beneath him. It wasn’t long before Collins followed Farrier over the edge, spilling all over his hand and trembling against the brunette as his legs shook and brows furrowed. They both stood against each other for a while, holding each other up more than anything. Eventually Farrier pulled out and Collins gave a short huff as he did, not taking his arm off the shed wall, still propping his frame up.

“C’mon pet,” Farrier said, taking his hand off the wall so Collins would finally stand straight. He put himself back together, doing up zippers and belts, kicking dirt over suspicious wet patches on the ground, wiping off hands and then the only evidence that anything had happened was the dark shade on Collins’ cheeks and the dark look in Farrier’s eyes.

“I needed you,” Collins said quietly.

“And I, you,” Farrier replied, realising how dry his throat was from the ordeal. As Collins was about to walk out of the shed, a warm hand took his and turned him around. Farrier looked deep into his eyes, before slowly moving closer and brushing his lips against Collins’. He pulled him into a tight hug, and Collins was touched by the gesture. He allowed himself to relax into Farrier’s shoulder, inhale his scent, get lost in the moment. The arms around him tightened before they let go, Farrier saying something about waiting a few minutes to leave after Collins.
By the time August was midway through, the wall had finally been taken away from Gatwick.

“And good riddance!” Canfield laughed over tea with Farrier one morning, both of them waiting for the majority of the men to have finished in the kitchen before braving it.

“Yeah, was beginning to look pretty shabby,” Farrier agreed.

“So, do you want anything for your birthday this year?” Canfield asked.

“It’s almost a month away!”

“Yes,”

Farrier chuckled.

“Not really, as usual Michael. When have I ever actually had any idea?” he laughed.

“This is true. I guess you’ll get something that’s not alcohol then,” Canfield said.

It was that sort of offhand comment that always ticked Farrier off, Canfield knew he was doing it, he would make a comment so sly that alone it couldn’t really be called being rude, but it was.

“Michael, you can give me booze for god’s sake.”

“Can I?” he said, raising his eyes from the paper.

“I… Have actually been feeling better recently,” Farrier said quietly. Canfield stopped drinking his tea.

“Tom, that’s great. That’s… Excellent, my boy!” he said, and stood up to come and give Farrier a hug, who unsuccessfully waved it off and ended up getting one anyway.

“I think… Things happen, but maybe it’s not my fault. And maybe it’s not to teach me a lesson either. I’m… Just trying to be grateful I’m here, you know?” Farrier said, watching the steam leave his tea.

“You don’t know how long I’ve been waiting to hear you talk this way, son.”

Canfield knew Farrier didn’t like it when he used the word ‘son’, as impersonal as it was to Canfield, who called any man under the age of fifty the word. Whenever he used it Farrier knew he was happy.

“If you wanted to gift me alcohol, I wouldn’t misuse it,” he said. Canfield smiled, and nodded.

“We’ll see.”

After reading a few more lines of the paper, Canfield spoke again.

“I’m proud of you, Thomas,” He said softly.

“Thanks,” Farrier said, never being one for attention and hating it now as much as any other time.

“Glad you didn’t get thrown in the loony bin,” Canfield laughed,

“Yeah, me too. I still feel like I lied to them though,”

“Well, all’s been done now.”
They were of course, talking about when nurses had been trying to diagnose Farrier. He never officially got one, managing to act ‘normal’ in front of them until they finally discharged him. Having a diagnosis of shell shock would have meant more monitoring, more hospitals, but most importantly, Farrier probably wouldn’t have been allowed back into service. Not so fast anyway. Canfield, and the rest of them had come to accept that Farrier was shell shocked. There was no other way to describe it, but he’d managed to slip through the system.

“Do you think many got out of the system like that?” Farrier asked.

“Probably depended if they were even able to hide it. You saw some of them, terrible,” Canfield muttered. Farrier supposed he should consider himself lucky that his shell shock, or whatever it was that he didn’t really want to give a name to, wasn’t as severe as it could well have been. There had been awful periods of time, and he almost felt like it got worse after he’d faked his way out of care, well it definitely had, but he was still glad he didn’t have to be in the damned psych ward for long.

“Well, things to do, all that,” Farrier said and stood.

“Tom?”

Farrier was halfway out the door.

“Do you think the sprogs are ready for war?”

Farrier went pale, he stared at Canfield and couldn’t say anything. Were they at war? His face must have said it all.

“Oh, goodness, no no. I didn’t mean to alarm you. No, nothing in the paper, my boy, relax. But the question still stands,” Canfield said, his voice quietening off at the end.

“No. Not nearly.”

Farrier walked out the door with an air of anger at the question.

Canfield sighed, he agreed. It wasn’t like they’d ever been training lads like this before, with such an ominous feeling over their heads. He wouldn’t pretend not to dislike it, the feeling. They all knew it would be soon. The old man just hoped the young lads would be able to retain some piece of who they were now. He’d hated having to go through a war, and to come out the other side someone else. It was hard, and he’d had to find himself again, at the same time he’d had to prop Farrier up and be there for him. The old man sighed to himself and stood to go for a walk, ease the stiffness out of his knees. He knew Farrier and a great deal of others had it worse than him, but he’d still seen war, there was no getting around it.

Farrier found some of the sprogs still in the kitchen when he went to find something. They all murmured their good mornings to him, some from his squadron giving him a more genuine sounding one than the others, who sounded like they were scared stiff that he was in the kitchen with them.

“Ready for more combat training today, are we?” he asked the room vaguely, all answering yes excitedly, though hearing their answers made Farrier more anxious than anything, why were they so excited?

Once he got the Spit up for the day and started going through the motion with each squadron
member, a familiar feeling made its way back into Farrier’s gut, and it wasn’t from shrapnel. He wasn’t scared, but it was a dull grey feeling that settled inside him, something of sad nostalgia. Combat training was fun, but at the same time Farrier’s mind would never be able to fully distinguish training from the real thing, it was always going to set something off inside him, put him on edge for the flight.

The combat training made Collins dizzy and almost sick. They’d done it a few times, now but nothing so real. Davis knew his way around the sky more than Collins realised. Dawson somehow escaped the queasiness everyone else seemed to feel, laughing it off with the excuse that he was on his dad’s boat a lot, which wasn’t untrue.

The blondes walked back inside once the sun began to get low in the sky, the ground crew doing such an amazing job of taking the planes back in for them that Dawson felt compelled to thank them, they seemed more appreciative than they should have been.

“Do you think they don’t get much recognition?” he asked Collins,

“Probably not, all goes to us, doesn’t it?” he smiled.

“Unfortunate though, isn’t it.”

“Aye, they do a lot more than I could, that’s for sure,” Collins replied.

They sat on the tarmac, the day’s warmth disappearing rapidly and the wind picking up into the still foreign looking windsock.

“This place has changed,” Dawson said wistfully.

“I know.”

“Sometimes I wish it hadn’t, you know?”

“Ye, back to the days when it was Wingnut and us. Donnæ miss the classrooms though,” Collins said.

They sat for a while in silence, watching the sky turn a brazen orange. Collins sighed.

“Mm?” Dawson hummed,

“What? Oh, nothin’.”

Dawson never had been one to push, but it seemed the look he had on his face made Collins want to say more. After making sure nobody was around, he continued.

“Just… Farrier stuff, I guess. You won’t want tae know.”

Dawson didn’t have a moment to think before he was already speaking.

“Wouldn’t say that. I just said if it’s, well you know, more illicit stuff that I’m not sure if I need to know. I told you mate, I don’t think of you differently. That’s what I said when you blatantly decided to tell Wingnut and I your preferences after basically just meeting us.”

Collins drew his knees up and crossed his arms over them, chin leaning on his forearms.

“I know. And, I don’t understand why ye and Wingnut are so nice about it all, nobody else is,” he said, purposely omitting Stella from the equation.
“Well, does Wingnut seem the type to care about, well, anything?”

That had Collins chuckle, but he was finally about to crack. It hadn’t even been playing on his mind at all, but something about the flying today had reminded him about everything Farrier had told him, and something about the look on Farrier’s face Collins had seen as the man got out of his plane for the day.

“And as for me, I told you. In my house we’re taught not to judge people, and of all people, would I judge my best mate?” Dawson said, pushing Collins’ shoulder lightly.

The Scot sighed again, more shakily this time. Dawson was very apprehensive about what he was about to say, Collins rarely seemed to want to divulge in anything personal, this had to be important.

“He just… Some of the things he’s told me,” Collins said quietly into the wind. Dawson waited.

“He’s seen a lot,” Collins arrived at. To that, Dawson didn’t know what to say. Of course he assumed Farrier had, anyone with a chip on their shoulder that big had seen a lot, but never did he suspect that Collins was weighed down by this too.

“It’s alright mate, then surely he’s coming to terms, yeah? If he’s talking about it, then it’s a good thing, right?” Dawson said.

“Yeah, it’s a great thing. It’s just that I was reminded today with all this trainin’, and it hadnae affected me much actually, I dunno. Maybe I’m just overtired,” Collins said, letting one leg slide out straight on the ground, crossing his arms tightly over his chest now, Dawson noting his fingers curled tightly into his biceps, thumbs rubbing up and down. He was tense.

“Look mate, you don’t have to talk about this if you don’t want to. And probably best not to tell me things he might not want you telling me, but why don’t you talk to him about it?”

“It would destroy him to know it’s gotten to me.”

Dawson rubbed his face, this wasn’t his forte and he wasn’t really looking for this conversation if he was honest with himself. He thought for a while, watched Collins look out onto the grass of the fields, watched how his friend’s eyes glassed over as if he wasn’t really seeing anything.

“Let’s go see Parker for a while,” he suggested, thinking a distraction, while not a solution, was better than him sitting there saying nothing. For the first time ever, Collins said no to seeing his dog, and for the first time ever, Dawson put his foot down and said something forceful to Collins.

“Wasn’t a question mate, he’s your dog, come and be his owner.”

“I said I donnae want to. Leave me alone if ye don’t want to sit here.”

“No, mate, I won’t. You brought that bugger back here, he’s been nothing but naughty ever since, but he loves you more than anything, Collins,” Dawson said.

Collins was surprised at Dawson’s tone, he’d never heard it before.

After more grumbling, Collins got up and the blondes went into the quadrangle. Sure enough Parker was thrilled to see them both, even though it hadn’t been long since he’d seen Collins anyway. It was difficult, he’d admit, having to keep Parker in the quadrangle instead of let him follow him around anywhere like a dog would in a normal house. He walked him of course, and let him come into the squadron common room, but Canfield had been clear about him not being
upstairs or in the kitchen. The exposure to Parker did help, not to Collins’ surprise. He sheepishly thanked Dawson, who knew it was still simmering in Collins’ mind.

“Want to play cards?” he offered.

“Ye know what? That’d be grand,” Collins said. As they climbed the stairs, Dawson began to feel something he felt guilty for feeling. Anger. Directed at Farrier. Clearly whatever he’d said to Collins, probably old war stories, had gotten to him. *Speak of the devil*, Dawson thought as Farrier rounded the corner behind them, coming from the stairwell. Collins was through Dawson’s door before he realised Farrier was walking up, who saw him disappear into his friend’s room and then smiled at Dawson, who to Farrier’s shock, glared at him before quickly shutting himself in his room, the door closing with just enough force to make it known that it was deliberately closed harshly.

Farrier asked himself what on earth was going on as he headed in the direction of his room, done for the day. He was halfway out of his trousers when his mind realised what it could be. “Fuck.”

The blondes sat on the floor as they used the old deck of cards Wingnut had given them, now that he had a new one.

“So he told you things about war, I assume?” Dawson said, hoping he wasn’t overstepping anything.

“Mm. About his personal experiences.”

Dawson didn’t reply for most of the card game, it was a lot for even him to take in, not that he knew what the man had said to Collins. It was enough to see that his friend was struggling.

“Well,” he said, gathering up the cards after the game.

“I don’t think it’ll ‘destroy him’ if you tell him it’s gotten to you,” Dawson said.

“Ye don’t know him,”

“I know him enough, he was our teacher for a year, you know. I still say hello to him around base, just because we aren’t in the same squadro- “

“Ye but really know him. Dawson, he’s not actually alright.”

That worried Dawson, he was still angry though. If someone wasn’t stable, you didn’t just unload everything onto the first friendly face. It seemed Collins had beared the brunt of some sort of… Breakdown?

“Mate, what did he tell you?” Dawson asked softly. Collins stood slowly and sat on Dawson’s bed.

“He basically laid everything out on the table for me. I’m glad he did. So I knew what I was goin’ into. He told me about this huge accident he had. How it affected him down the line.” Collins said. *Right.* Dawson thought. At least he knew the basis of it now.

“And is it what happened to him that makes you unhappy? Or is it that he unloaded it all onto you? Or something else?”

“Everythin’. S’pose it’s mainly just knowing that he’s still not okay.”

Dawson wished he could help, he really did. He sighed,
“I’m sorry mate. I wish I could say something more constructive, I can only really think to tell him how you feel. I dunno, maybe check up with him, see how he’s doing, is he getting better?”

“He is, he said he is feelin’ better nowadays. Ye know how veterans are though,” Collins said, a sad smile on his lips. Dawson did know, he’d told Collins one night about his father, who had been in the Navy in the war. His dad was still his dad, but war had changed him.

“I know. Well if anything, it’s very noble of you to listen to him. He probably doesn’t have many people he can talk to, or who he feels comfortable talking about his problems with,” Dawson said. Collins hummed. Dawson rubbed his friend’s back and stood,

“Almost time for dinner. Want to go find it somewhere instead of the shoddy kitchen?” he said. Collins shook his head.

“C’mon mate. If there’s one thing I pride myself on, it’s making people happy.”

So, they caught the train into London and found somewhere to eat that they’d never been to before. It was just a pub, but Collins was grateful. Dawson couldn’t bear to see Collins unhappy, and it was the first time he’d really seen him down.

“So,” Dawson said before swallowing his food.

“Did something trigger these thoughts today?”

Collins pursed his lips before answering.

“Think it was the combat flying. Couldn’t help but think o’ him,” he said in a hushed tone.

“Well, you joined the military, mate,” Dawson almost laughed, Collins almost did too.

“I know, but as the horizon gets darker I’m feelin’ less and less like I want tae go to war. At first I was sort of excited, lookin’ for a war even.”

“Well, I can agree with you on that mate, actually,” Dawson said, earning a nod from Collins.

“But, I’m glad we’ve both come to our senses. It’s good though, being RAF,” he said.

“I like it, don’t get me wrong. If there’s a war, we’re doing the right thing I think, protecting our home. I’d rather be in a plane than on the ground or in the ocean,” Collins said.

“Definitely has the most spectacular views,” Dawson smiled.

Farrier was beginning to get very worried. He knew it was something about him and Collins, it couldn’t really be anything else. The two blondes had gone off base Farrier reckoned, he hadn’t seen them in the kitchen at dinner time, nor since. He’d be asking Collins what on earth the nicest lad he’d ever met had scowled at him for. He was currently sat in the quadrangle with Parker at who knew what hour, he’d taken his watch off for bed already. Parker was still small, though not nearly as much as when Collins had brought him back that day. He was soft, his fur was very thick through Farrier’s fingers as he stroked his head, the puppy falling asleep on his lap. To say he wasn’t sad would be a lie, Farrier still had nights like these, but at least now he could recognise it. He was also immensely worried and wished Collins would get back from wherever he was.
“Come on boy,” Farrier said to Parker as he moved the dog off his lap to stand, the pup waking and standing with him.

“No you’re not coming inside, boy. Go on,” Farrier said, looking at the kennel. It was cold outside. Farrier reached down and felt how cold Parker’s little ears were, which were now mostly standing up by themselves. He sighed,

“Well, you’ll have to be silent. Understand?”

Farrier led Parker inside and upstairs, having to reach down and grab him halfway up so he didn’t bolt away with excitement. Once they were in his room, Farrier tried to go to sleep for the third time that night. Parker jumped up on his bed and started trying to lick is face, causing the man to splutter and laugh, eventually sitting up and picking Parker up, plonking him down at the foot of the bed. Farrier was still nervous at whatever Dawson knew. Collins may have said that his friends would never tell a soul but that didn’t mean Farrier wanted them knowing. His eyes finally closed and he fell into a doze. He was woken up a few minutes later when Parker moved, Farrier not being used to a dog on his bed. He reached to put his lamp off. It was something about how he’d looked at the lamp as it faded and the room turned black. Something about it reminded of Farrier how he’d been when he’d lost consciousness after his crash, when he’d stumbled into the French. He flinched at the memory and turned over in the bed.

Collins and Dawson had finished dinner,

“Well, we should get back then,” Dawson said.

“Mm. Thanks for all this, ye know how to look after a friend,” Collins smiled.

“’Course mate! You know I’m here for you,” Dawson smiled. With a pint and a full dinner inside them both, they boarded the train back to the airbase.

“So, you feeling better?” Dawson asked.

“I am actually, yeah.”

“That’s what I wanted to hear!”

Farrier turned the light back on, not waking Parker. He couldn’t sleep, not yet. He kept seeing the same things behind his eyelids and was sick of it. He got out from under the covers and lay on his belly next to Parker, patting him softly. It was calming, patting the dog. Farrier knew there was about a quarter bottle of booze in his bottom drawer, but tonight he made the conscious decision not to do anything of the sort. In fact, the thought slightly repulsed him.

“Wish I could stop remembering, hey boy,” he said softly, Parker lifted his head and opened his eyes. His little snout yawned, and he repositioned his head back over his paws, eyes closing again. Farrier smiled, he was a cute little bugger. Farrier nuzzled his face into Parker’s soft body as another flashback came. He groaned, wishing it was possible to just stop them, just not feel or see or hear about the war. Talking about it helped sometimes, but when he was like this, he wanted nothing but to forget. Farrier got out of bed and splashed his face with water at the sink in the little ensuite. He saw the red plane shoot across his vision. Farrier had come to realise though, that he was being stupid when he said the Baron had probably modified his plane. It was an excuse. He lost that day, that was all. Back then, you weren’t trained what to do if your enemy decided to fly
head on towards you, you were told that it would never happen because it was suicide. He wasn’t fast enough, that was that. He’d lost. And it was at that moment as Farrier gripped the sink with white knuckles, that he heard a knock on the door.

The knob began to turn, Farrier didn’t let go of the sink, barely looking behind his shoulder at the door. Parker let out a yelp which brought him back to his senses,

“Shit, quiet boy!” he said, walking back to bed from where Parker had jumped, his eyes followed the dog to the door where Collins now stood.

“Thought he’d taken himself for a walk,” he said half with relief, half annoyance. Farrier gulped and didn’t say anything for a second.

“Can he stay in here? Please?”

The last word hitched in the back of his throat, and something changed in Collins’ eyes as he heard it.

“I… Ye I mean, sure. Is everything okay?” he asked, closing the door behind him and leading Parker back up onto the bed.

“Yeah, yeah,” Farrier said unconvincingly, earning him raised eyebrows from the blonde.

“Just one of those nights, you know?”

Collins sighed.

“Me too.”

They sat up in bed together, Parker warming the whole room it seemed.

“Want to talk about it?” Farrier asked. Collins’ mouth twitched up, considering.

“I… I appreciate that you told me everything. I really do, and I wouldn’t want it any other way. It’s just… I’ve been thinking about it today,” Collins said.

Farrier’s stomach dropped. He’d done exactly what he tried not to. His head dropped into his hand, he rubbed his forehead and sighed.

“Collins, I…. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry,” he said, because there was nothing else to say.

“No it’s alright. I’m usually fine. It’s not even the events it’s just the thought of how they affected you. How many years you spent recovering,”

“Still am to be honest.”

“Yer not helping your case here,” Collins said, a little smile on his face.

“Pet, I never meant for anything to affect you, that’s the last thing I wanted.”

“It was going tae, you gave me the chance to run, and I chose to stick by your side. I choose this. I’m just saying, sometimes it’s a bit hard, and I wish I could make it better.”

“You do, love,” Farrier said, reaching a hand out to take Collins’.

“It just doesn’t have a magical cure.”
“I know, but I’m here all the same.” Collins said. And it was only then that he realised that it wasn’t card games, Parker or a nice dinner that he needed to feel better. It was to see Farrier and to see that he was alright, or to at least try and make it so.

Collins snuggled down into the bed.

“Pet, you-“

“I’m sleepin’ here tonight,” he said, and Farrier wasn’t about to argue.

“I love you,” he said quietly.

“I love you too.”

Chapter End Notes

Another week, another chapter done, and it wouldn’t be Afternoon without some angst. I hope everyone enjoyed, or maybe not enjoyed all of it but thought it was a good read. Anyway, thank you all so much for the kudos and comments you leave, it means the world to me!! I hope everyone has a good week ahead of them.

my tumblr
Until next chapter, happy reading ❤️
“Chilly this one, isn’t it?” Dawson said.

He and Collins had taken to bringing their cups of tea out onto the front steps of Gatwick to get out of the kitchen.

“Mm, is.”

They never did get around to doing their morning walks like they had the idea to, but standing on the step at 0700 hours was beautiful in itself. The cold yellow morning light was just sweeping over the pavement and onto the building, grass still frosted. Once their tea was done, they quickly took Parker for a walk, taking him by Stella’s house as she’d mentioned to Collins that she wanted to say hello again. Tilly opened the door to them.

“Oh, morning you three!” she said, her voice turning into a squeal at the end of the sentence as she dropped down to pat Parker who struggled away from Collins and into her arms.

“Missed this little thing, even though I only saw him that once,” she said,

“You like dogs?” Dawson asked.

“All animals actually,” Tilly smiled.

“Goodness his ears are cold!” she said, holding one in each hand.

“So what’s his name?” she asked.

“Parker,” Collins said,

“I like that,” she said, standing and beckoning them in.

“Ah we shouldn’t, got tae be back at base soon. Stella wanted to see Parker though,” Collins said.

“Well at least come in while I go get her,” the redhead insisted, and eventually they caved and went inside.

Stella woke up to the smell of Tilly’s hair, she started smiling before she opened her eyes.

“Morning Stel,” Tilly said gently.

“Jack and Alexander are here with their puppy!” she said. Stella’s eyes shot open at this.
“Oh, gosh I didn’t realise they’d be here now, today,” she said.

“I assumed you invited them.”

“I said I wanted to see Parker again, didn’t have a clue when they’d show.”

Eventually she deemed herself dressed and presentable enough to go downstairs to say hello. She followed Tilly and as soon as Parker saw her, he stood from where he’d been sitting at Collins’ heel and she froze momentarily.

“Hey now, sit doon ye silly,” Collins said, snapping his fingers to get Parker’s attention and doing the only command the dog had learnt. Stella arrived in front of them, arms crossed but happy looking. She felt safe with Tilly hovering about the kitchen.

“Morning,” she said, smiling between the blondes.

Dawson although still wishing he could go on a date with her, recognised that it wasn’t meant to be.

“Good morning Stella,” he said in a tone that conveyed what it needed to. That he wasn’t trying to pursue anything anymore, that he was a friend.

“Hi Alexander-never-Alex,” she smiled.

“How are ye?” Collins asked. Stella sighed happily.

“I’ve been well, thank you. How has this little one been?” she asked, holding her hand out as Collins had taught her to, Parker sniffing the top of it before licking her, causing a giggle to escape Stella as she quickly pulled her hand back, Tilly smiling to herself as she went about making breakfast.

“Eh the usual. Naughty, disobedient, loud, hungry,” Collins droned on, causing another laugh.

“He’s a good boy,” she said, summing up the courage to bend down and be on Parker’s level.

“Thank you for remembering to bring him to say hello,” she said.

“No problem, I was glad ye wanted to get to know him more,” Collins replied.

“Yes well, he seems friendly.”

“Don’t most dogs?” Dawson asked,

“Oh, I’m quite scared of a lot of dogs,” Stella laughed,

“Why’s that?”

“I’m not really sure, I suppose they’re just jumpy things, and they have big teeth and I can’t always tell when they’re being playful or not. I’m not sure about a lot of jumpy things, really,” she explained, Collins trying not to smile at the description being ‘jumpy things’.

Though Tilly tried to have the men stay for a cup of tea they graciously declined, genuinely needing to get back to the airbase.

“Well, thanks for coming over with Parker,” Stella smiled.
“Not a problem, glad yer warmin’ to him,” Collins smiled.

“It was nice to see you again, too,” Dawson said.

“And you, Alexander-never-Alex,” Stella smiled, and it was genuine. It was obvious that he was trying to make friends with her and forget the awkward conversation they’d had in the pub. He was very kind to her every time they’d spoken.

The boys walked back with Parker, it was quiet and still in the streets. The birds began to wake up around them, the sun rose higher still as the village gently woke up.

“I like these days. The beginning of the cold months, such fresh mornings,” Dawson said.

“I like them too, though not as much as the genuinely cold months,” Collins said, Dawson shaking his head at his friend’s odd weather preferences.

“He’s growing, looks healthy,” Dawson said, reaching down to pat Parker’s head.

“Mm, nothing like the little rat he was when I found him. Still small though,” Collins smiled.

“I wonder if he’ll get that big,”

“I was thinkin’ about that the other day. No idea, but judging by his good looks I would assume he’ll be a big boy,” Collins replied.

“Yeah, well good luck training him before he can outrun you!” Dawson laughed.

“Now I know that won’t happen. He can sit, and that took a bloody lot of effort. Canfield and Farrier want him trained properly though, and I’m gonnae work at it. Maybe see if we can get him to know ‘stay’. That’d be a helpful one.”

They arrived back at base and got into the routine again. Put the dog back in the courtyard, get ready, march, and by that time the sun was halfway to being at its highest point for the day.

Today the squadrons were learning how to follow aerial commands such as ‘break’, which Collins was finding quite fun to do.

The Vic formation was easy enough to follow, and though going under and over each other whilst turning looked like a nightmare from the ground, it was relatively easy. Collins was really getting the hang of flying Hurricanes.

“See? Told you you’d warm up to them, you have to give it some time, mate!” Dawson said as they walked in.

It was high afternoon, the base had been given the afternoon off flying because of high winds, typical British weather coming out of nowhere and covering the elusive blue sky with grey. Collins wasn’t disappointed at all, he was just beginning to miss the clouds.

“Ye I know, you were right. They’re good planes,” he agreed.

“So what are we doing this afternoon?” Dawson asked.

“Uh, I dunno. Actually, I might do some drawing, haven’t had time in a while.”
“Mind if I hang around?”

“Not at all.”

The two ended up sitting in the squadron common room together, along with some of the others, including Parker.

“So, any new tricks he knows?” Turner asked.

“Nope, cannae even sit half the time still,” Collins laughed.

“Keep at it, wee fellow would make a fine friend if he didn’t bowl you over whenever he saw you!” Turner said.

“He does not!”

“Will one day blondie, look how big his legs are! Rest of him will be that size one day too,” Turner said.

Collins had vaguely realised that Parker would likely be strong, big, but hadn’t thought that it might mean completely uncontrollable. Part of him didn’t want to tame him completely, though.

Part of him knew he couldn’t.

Collins had been drawing Parker as they all sat in the common room, but after one too many passing comments that it was a sissy thing to do, he left.

“Mate, wait!” Dawson called after him halfway up the stairs. Collins did,

“Don’t take it to heart, they were all joking. You know that right?” Dawson asked.

“Sort of, but there’s always a bit of truth isn’t there? Had never even contemplated that makin’ art wasn’t what men should do.” Collins said, holding his books tight shut.


Collins took a big breath in and out.

“Why are ye always right?” he said, coaxing a laugh out of himself.

“Ah I’m not, you just listen anyway,” Dawson chuckled.

They both sat on Collins’ bed, it had begun to rain.

“So before the RAF, did you just do art?” Dawson asked, looking around Collins’ room.

There wasn’t much that made it look different to his, a dried thistle on his dresser, his old sketchbook on his bedside table. He knew he was asking about his friend’s past, but they’d known each other long enough.

“I was the town’s paperboy!” Collins laughed.

“Oh! On your bike?”

“Absolutely. Up and about at 0700 hours long before joining the military,” Collins said,
“But I always loved art. I thought maybe I’d be a local artist, get some pocket money that way. Didn’t matter to me that it wouldn’t make much, I would have been happy.”

Dawson’s eyes softened at hearing about Collins’ past, something that they both knew they shouldn’t talk about, safer to be friends without knowing history, lest something happen, they’d kept it from each other until now.

“What happened?”

“Parents booked a joy flight for my 21st birthday, fell in love with the sky.”

Dawson’s smile grew at those words.

“She is a beautiful thing to fall in love with,” he said.

“Well what about you then?” Collins asked, flicking absently through his sketchbook.

“I wanted to be a lifeguard at home.”

“If ye wanted to join the military, surely the Navy would have been a better fit,” Collins said.

“Yeah, well my Da was in the Navy. He’s… Still my Da, but he’s not the same as he used to be. Says it can be really claustrophobic being in a ship’s hull like that, and I hate small spaces.”

“Cockpit is smaller.”

“But the sky is all around, you feel so open.” Dawson reasoned,

“That, and I didn’t fancy joining the army and getting trench foot either,” he laughed.

“Valid reasons,” Collins said.

“So what’s the drawing today?”

“Well I’ve done Parker, was just doodling the window actually,”

They sat like that for a while, quiet conversation accompanied by the scratch of Collins’ pencil on the page, he reminded himself that he should practice his painting.

“It’s a nice looking book, this new one,” Dawson commented.

The words alone brought colour to Collins’ cheeks.

“It is,” he said, pretending to concentrate hard on his drawing as not to make eye contact.

“Buy it yourself?”

“Oh, Christmas present. Family,” he said too quickly.

“He gave it to you didn’t he?”

Collins sighed and nodded slowly, still trying not to look at Dawson to hide his red cheeks.

“Thoughtful,” Dawson said, but nothing more. Inside, he was glad that Farrier was being nice to Collins, that’s all he could hope for, he supposed. He had to remind himself that Collins was able to make his own decisions, he’d chosen to listen to whatever Farrier had vented to him about.
They sat for a while listening to the soft rain hit the glass window.

“Have your thoughts changed on Hurricanes a lot? I know you’re getting used to them, but do you see them a lot differently?” Dawson asked.

“Oh yes,” Collins replied, making them both smile.

“The plane doesn’t make the pilot,” he added.

“Right you are mate. What made you finally realise?”

“Well, I suppose just getting my hours up in them, ye come to love your own plane,” Collins said.

That night, Collins decided he should tell Farrier of his realisation.

“I told you so,” was all the man said.

“I know you did, and I’m saying you were right.” Collins replied,

“Well I’m glad you finally came around. According to Canfield one of the test pilots for Spits said something like ‘She’s a lady in the air, but a bitch on the ground!’ and I think that’s very apt,” Farrier laughed.

“Hard tae land?”

“God yeah, you’ve seen us all snaking up the tarmac, can’t see in front of you at all because of the nose, not to mention how narrow the landing track is. Wheels are so close together under the plane, you really do have to be careful. It’s a wonder nobody has had an accident yet.” Farrier said,

“I will say, another training pilot got out of the plane and said ‘don’t change a thing!’” Farrier smiled.

“Hurricane’s aren’t a piece of cake either, though,” Collins said.

“Well I remember they felt sturdier on the ground, only landed a few of them to be honest, before I was put in 107.”

“Well they do feel sturdy, but it’s still much more of an ordeal than landing the Harvards,” Collins said.

“There’s a reason they’re training planes,” Farrier smiled.

“I do miss the days of Gatwick being a little training base, no sand and spinach to speak of, not even a bloody windsock!” he smiled.

“It was sweet, the little yellow Harvards. I couldn’t stop looking out the classroom window whenever there was a flight goin’ on,” the blonde said.

“Times are changing. I can feel it, you can feel it, everyone can,” Farrier said.

“Are you scared?” Collins asked.

“Of course I am.”
Farrier said it without a moment’s pause, before he mightn’t have even answered the question honestly but now, now everything was the truth with Collins.

“Should I be?” the younger man asked.

Farrier blinked once, twice, and looked at Collins. He didn’t know what his answer was. Farrier always had an answer, whether he told anyone or not was a different question. On one hand, Collins should have every reason to be afraid of war. It was a monster, and made monsters of everyone in it. On the other hand, how could Farrier tell Collins to be afraid? Fear was no good in the event of war, and certainly no good if there wasn’t even one.

“I… Don’t know.”

Collins sat there, surprised that indeed Farrier didn’t have an answer. Farrier sat up straighter and continued,

“I mean, obviously I don’t want another war, I think we all know that by now, there’s already a blackout in central London, no lights allowed at night,” he said with a half-smile, Collins raised his eyebrows having no idea.

“And that means I’m scared. What if it spreads out to Gatwick? Then it’s real business. But, I can recognise that being scared won’t do anything, especially since we’re in peace, for now. Even in war, being scared is rarely useful.”

Collins sat up too and considered.

“Look pet, I can’t tell you how to feel, but I pray you don’t have to know what it feels like to go to war,” Farrier said, though to the bottom of his heart, he knew that his golden haired, happy go lucky man would have to know what it was like. The horizon was dark, and everybody knew something was on the way.

He didn’t know how soon though, didn’t know the very seeds of war were being sowed as they spoke, as German troops marched into Poland.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so so much for reading and for all the lovely comments I have received recently. It makes me sad that after this long, the peace will finally end soon, but I’m trying to enjoy it while it lasts.

my tumblr
afternoon pinboard

As always, until next chapter, happy reading ♡
"It's coming."

Chapter Notes

These are the last quiet whispers of peace.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was the first day of September. The birds were singing, and it wasn’t too cloudy as Farrier looked out the window, everything was still. He walked downstairs to the kitchen for a tea. Through the kitchen he could see the door to Canfield’s office wide open, he could see the man at his desk with the paper. Farrier smiled to himself, he did enjoy that Canfield always took tea in his office with the paper, it was very proper of him. Farrier went about boiling the kettle, saying his good mornings to the other men in the kitchen. He sat with his tea, and peered down the hall into Canfield’s office again. The more he looked the more he realised that the old man wasn’t reading the paper. He was frozen, staring at the front page. Something was wrong. Farrier took his tea and walked straight into the room, closing the door behind him and setting the tea down on the desk.

“Michael?”

Canfield’s grey eyes looked up from the page and he slowly turned the paper towards Farrier.

GERMAN OFFENSIVE IN POLAND

Warsaw bombed: many reported killed

Farrier’s eyes read the words and immediately shot up to Canfield’s, and then back down to the rest of the article, though he couldn’t even read past the sentence.

POLAND HAS NOW INVOKED THE TREATY WITH BRITAIN

Farrier’s mouth hung open and suddenly he was a boy again, looking to Canfield for what to do, what to feel. The answer was a solemn expression and a quiet, but perfectly clear sentence from the man’s mouth.

“It’s coming.”

Everything was still then. Neither man dared move, barely dared breath. A thousand thoughts were rushing through Farrier’s head, like waves crashing into rocks again and again and again. It was unbearably loud, and unbearably silent. Canfield broke the silence finally, before Farrier could descent completely inside his own mind.

“Said our government will convene tonight. Make a decision.”
Farrier swallowed. This was the last thing he needed.

“Okay,” he said, and in a dream stood up, tea left to get cold on the desk. He walked to the window and looked out onto the street, rested his hands on the sill, still cold from the night and yet to be warmed by the heater turned on a few minutes before. He felt the wood underneath his palms, pressed the cold pane of glass to his nose, watched light rain sprinkle the road outside. Everything was peaceful and nothing was wrong, if he just tried to block out what he’d just read.

He heard a sigh behind him.

“Don’t try to ignore it.”

How that man knew what Farrier was thinking half the time baffled the brunette.

“If I do, maybe it’ll go away.”

He heard a chair move behind him, Canfield got up and stood with him.

“Not this time, I fear.”

Farrier took a breath in, and let it out slowly. He wasn’t ready to go back to war. He wasn’t ready to send these young sprogs off to one either, especially his Collins, his Collins who he’d tried so hard to protect from all this but in the end it didn’t matter how hard, the sands of time were flowing and as fate would have it, there was to be war.

“I have to show the men,” Farrier said, taking the newspaper off the desk.

“Be delicate with it,”

“Impossible.”

The man walked out of the office without shutting the door. It was simple things like that which told Canfield that Farrier wasn’t thinking straight. He always closed that door. The older man watched as Farrier walked back into the kitchen, the younger men around him seeing clearly on the man’s face that something was wrong. They one by one turned to him, asking what was wrong. Farrier barely registered any of them as he laid the newspaper out on the table. Not everyone would see this paper, some lads wandering through without even noticing, others who didn’t board would have to read it at home, or not. It was a small group in the kitchen this morning, and what surprised Farrier most was that not one of them reacted the same way he and Canfield did. The room was buzzing with excitement. He didn’t know how to process it, that they were excited. Why weren’t they horrified?

So, Farrier left the paper on the table and walked through the group, heading upstairs again.

Collins was still asleep, no flying until afternoon so why bother setting an alarm? He woke up to a quiet but fast knocking on his door, urgent. He stood and pushed a hand through his hair, vaguely registering that he needed to visit the barber soon. He opened the door to Farrier looking… Distant.

“Morning,” Collins said, though something in the air told him not to smile, that Farrier wasn’t in a good mood.

“I can’t talk, Canfield’s probably about to come looking for me, but go downstairs into the kitchen and read the paper on the table,” he said, and went into his room. Collins was very confused, but got out of his pyjamas nonetheless and trudged downstairs.
The kitchen was excited, he heard the men in it before he saw them, and said newspaper was
handed to the half asleep Collins before he even reached the table.

“Looks like we might get some action soon, mate!” said the man who had passed it to him.
Connors, from Farrier’s squadron. Collins furrowed his brows as he blinked the sleep away to read
the headlines.

“German offensive in Pola..” He began reading before he realised the seriousness and went quiet,
continuing to read the entire article before handing it back to Connors, who was waiting for it with
a smile.

“Exciting, right?”

“Uh, I mean… Sort of, ye,” Collins said, and unfortunately, it was true. He was sort of excited, and
that thought he knew was one Farrier would dislike.

“Nothin’ might happen though,” he added. Connors smirked,

“C’mom Scottie, something will,” he said, before turning back to the others. Collins weaved
through everyone and made his breakfast, and it wasn’t a moment too soon when Dawson
appeared, the paper shoved in his face as well.

“Oh, Jesus,” he said, handing it back.

“Gets the blood pumping in the morning, doesn’t it?” said one of the boys from the newer
squadron of Hurricanes.

“That’s one way to put it,” Dawson said back, finishing the conversation there and ducking
versowards Collins, brows raised.

“Well, I guess we’ll be getting what we trained for a little bit sooner than we thought,” he said.

They took their tea out onto the front steps of the airbase, standing underneath the little overhead
shelter jutting out from the wall and watching the rain.

“Maybe nothin’ will happen,” Collins said.

“Well, yeah maybe. But we have to protect Poland,” Dawson said.

“Don’t you think we ought to?” he asked.

“I mean, ye I do think we should. And this is what we trained for, we’re in the military for a
reason. But still,” Collins said quietly and slowly.

“I’m not saying I’m exactly looking forward to the idea that a war might involve us very soon, but
imagine it. Putting every one of the skills we learnt here to proper action for once. Not shooting at
a wall, not firing air at the friendly plane in front of us. Doing something worthwhile, saving a
country,” Dawson said. Collins was going to give him a look of disagreement, but saving a country,
even if it wasn’t his own, was a sure enough cause.

Canfield was at his desk again after an unsuccessful attempt to get Farrier out of his room, when
the phone rang and nearly had him jumping out of his skin.

“RAF Gatwick this is Wing Commander Canfield,” he said, voice almost making it sound like his
head wasn’t in a thousand places.
“RAF Gatwick this is Ministry Official Patricks.”

“Good morning Ministry Official Patricks.”

At least it wasn’t one of the higher ups, Canfield thought.

“I’m calling, firstly to ask if you have seen this morning’s news.”

“I have, yes.”

“Right. Well in the very likely event that, well, we begin a war, the Ministry aims to have as many operational squadrons available to be deployed as possible. Officer Canfield I am going to be blunt with you, my question to you is this; how far along are the OTU squadrons at Gatwick?”

Canfield sat a moment, they were going along fine, but nobody was ever ready for war, they couldn’t be.

“They’ve done almost all of the training.”

“What remains?”

“Some of the more extreme combat flying lessons.”

“Okay. Wing Commander this isn’t a question, I wish it was but unfortunately I must state it to you. Any Operational Training Units capable enough are being converted into front line squadrons, and this now includes those based at Gatwick. From now on, the men you have there are not in an OTU, they are in real squadrons. I trust you to convey all the necessary information and make all the relevant changes. Is this understood?”

He’d said it like it was nothing.

“Understood. Thank you Patricks,” Canfield said, eyes as blank as his mind.

He wandered out of his office, and Farrier almost sheepishly back out of his bedroom, and eventually after Canfield running around finding him and the others, the commissioned officers all met in one of the squadron common rooms, all in their number ones. The air was cold and the windows were half fogged, Farrier looking out where he could at the runway, the grass beyond, the tree with his old identity disks in it.

“Now I take we’ve all read the paper or heard the radio now?” Canfield asked, nods all around excluding Farrier, who stood there arms crossed biting on his thumbnail.

“If a war comes to us, we must be ready men. I have had a call from the Air Ministry already. They have news.”

Canfield waited until all eyes were on him, including Farrier who took several moments more than everyone else, looking up conveying he didn’t think he needed to give Canfield his eye contact.

“They have told me that they need as many front line squadrons as possible. This means any Operational Training Units which have completed most of their training and are more or less capable, will become front line squadrons. Effective immediately.”

The room was silent for a long time after that. One by one officers left until it was just Farrier, Canfield offering a hand on his shoulder before he too, left.

The man stood in the room, his thoughts loud against the heavy silence. The rain was too light to
make a noise and the fog outside was suffocating Farrier’s mind. He walked to the door and slammed it shut as hard as he could, the noise only just cutting through his dulled senses.

He only realised he was breathing deeply when he walked over to the windows and completely fogged one of them up. Farrier swallowed. Of course he wanted to honour the agreement with Poland, of course he wanted to protect people and do the right thing. He wanted to save as many people as he could, but at the same time all the horrible things Farrier knew of war came flooding back. He told himself to stay calm. There had been no declaration of war yet. It was still peace in Britain.

“Peace in our time, bullshit Moseley,” he said as he walked off out of the airbase in search of some fresh air. He nearly walked straight into Collins and Dawson on the front steps with cups of tea in their hands.

“Jesus boys, nearly gave me a heart attack,” he said, the blondes comically turning inwards and apologising at the same time, almost looking like a reflection of each other.

“It’s fine,” Farrier said shortly, walking between them both and off down the street.

“Nice time for a walk, going anywhere?” Dawson asked,

“As far away from that bloody newspaper as I can get,” Farrier called out, not turning around. Collins pursed his lips and lowered his tea from the sip he was about to take. A heavy feeling settled in his gut as he watched Farrier disappear down the street.

“I’m guessing he doesn’t share the same excitement as everyone else.”

“Doubt Canfield does either,” Collins said.

“I wonder if any of the older ones do, wouldn’t think so,” Dawson commented, Collins nodded but didn’t say anything.

That day they flew in the fog and rain on account of it not being too heavy, Collins was a pit of nerves but somehow it served to help his flying, he was even more precise than usual and felt like a livewire. They were doing G-tolerance training today. Pilots had to learn not to pass out pulling several Gs, it was imperative in a dogfight, and as Davis had ominously said before they went up, “We have to do it today. There’s no time.”

It mostly involved steep descents and then sharp pulls upwards, as well as sharp banks to either side. It would have to be a gradual process, it wasn’t something that could be rushed but all the commissioned officers enforced that they had to begin today and keep training with it.

Everyone pulled 5 Gs by the end of the day, apparently the average that a normal person without training could withstand without passing out. Luckily, everything went smoothly, and the pilots were able to follow their flight leaders’ moves well enough that nobody accidently pulled more Gs than advised.

Green section walked back inside together, Dawson and Collins getting the usual earful from Turner, though this time it was of course about the newspaper headlines. As it turned out, the Irishman was less excited than most of the others, and that thought alone comforted Collins, because as well as Dawson agreeing, another person agreeing meant it was okay to feel that way.
“Have to say, I’m not that thrilled either,” Collins agreed as they filled out their logbooks in the locker rooms.

“Glad you say that, I mean it’s what we trained for and it’ll be exciting for sure, but it’s still war,” Turner said, before walking off. He didn’t board, so the blondes only saw him during flight hours and the odd time he stuck around in the base between sessions. He was growing on Collins, as much as he’d been frustrated at Turner’s loudness initially.

“Wonder how Wingnut processed the news,” Dawson said as they walked quietly to the sandwich shop.

“Probably like most of the men here, excited,” Collins said, and Dawson agreed.

They were right of course, Wingnut was very excited and raring to hear the word ‘war’. It seemed he, as well as many others, didn’t consider the negative aspects, it was just what they’d been preparing for and therefor it would be an adventure. Lucy on the other hand wasn’t thrilled. She’d been transporting planes since before war was such a huge thought on the public’s mind, and would have been very happy to continue to transport civilian planes forever. It was marvellous to fly fighters to their stations, and the perks of being in the Air Transport Auxiliary were great, but she worried for Timson and his brash streak, his inability to see the dangers that lay ahead. She worried about him being sent on missions elsewhere, wishing he could just stay home with her and finally move into a house together with no immediate dangers.

Collins was in Farrier’s room that night. He stood leaning against the man’s dresser, looking at him as he sat tensely on the side of his bed with his arms crossed. The room was dark save for moonlight streaming through the half closed curtains.

“It’s…” Farrier began, but he never finished the sentence.

Collins came to sit with him eventually.

“They’ve already sent the kids into the country as a precaution,” the man said blankly.

“Precaution is the important word there,” Collins tried.

“Blackout all over Britain now, you’ve got new curtains, installed while your lot was flying. We all do. Plus, no lights at night where they can be seen, obviously.”

Collins knew there wasn’t much to say, Farrier stood to grab some smokes as he muttered about the Army being mobilised already.

“It’s not looking good, pet,” he said as he sat again, offering a cigarette to Collins who, surprising himself by the action, took it.

Neither slept properly that night.

Tilly, Stella and their housemates were worried, not only for a war but for their home. A war meant less men in the pubs because they’d be deployed, meaning less pubs which would consider it a good investment to pay bands frequently, meaning less money for them.
“Well, we’ll have to just put more into the Saturday markets, and maybe find other things too,” Tilly said as everyone sat around in the lounge.

“Guess so,” Charlie agreed, putting out his smoke in the ashtray. They would have to wait for the state-issued blackout curtains, so tonight they would have to remain in the dark.

The next day, the state of emergency in Poland was upgraded to a state of war.

Turner and Finn didn’t know what to feel, Ireland had declared neutrality, but they’d still be involved when the war came. Collins happened upon the two talking in hushed tones in the kitchen over lunch. He’d not even met Finn before, he was in Farrier’s squadron and the two had never even spoken.

“I’m Finn, our home just declared itself neutral,” he said, offering a hand to Collins, who had walked in on their conversation earning him a look.

“Collins, and I’m sorry. Both of ye,” he said.

“We actually just found out that we’re a town apart from each other,” Turner laughed.

Collins was surprised that they’d spoken of their hometowns, such a private topic.

“Well, if Ireland is neutral, at least yer families are safe right?”

“For the most part. State of emergency has been declared, we can only hope everyone stays safe,” Finn said.

Collins had the strange feeling that he was intruding, so he left.

They were up in the air again shortly after lunch, doing more G force training. It seemed that would be the order of the day for a while. Canfield stood sheepishly by the hangars as he watched 102 in the air. Farrier had walked away from his own squadron who were preparing to go up.

“So when are you telling them?” Farrier asked.

“Soon.”

“You think they’re going to go up and do gravity training every day and not realise something’s strange?” Farrier asked. There it was again, that unfriendly smile, eyes cold and smirk deceptively confident. One of the many ways Farrier showed underhanded anger towards Canfield which infuriated the older man.

“Are you incapable of telling your own squadron?”

“No, but I thought-“

“Then you’ll tell them, and Davis can handle his own squadron, so can the others. Not everything here is my job, contrary to popular belief,” Canfield said.

“Don’t make me order you to,” he added before walking a distance away.
Once the Hurricanes came back down, Farrier pulled Davis aside and told him to organise his squadron into their common room and deliver the news. After his own squadron had flown, Farrier would do the same.

“Well men, the Squad Leader has given me the uh, privilege, shall we say, of letting you all know this,” Davis said, though it was clear that it didn’t feel like a privilege.

“In light of certain events, the Air Ministry needs as many active squadrons of men, and as many bases with active squadron postings as possible. That’s why, effective immediately, you lot are not in Operational Training Units. You are in front line squadrons.”

That sentence alone made Collins dizzier than the G force training.

“So when do we start?” asked Brand, Collins could tell by the waver in his voice that he hadn’t asked out of excitement.

“Well, we’re just sitting tight at the moment boys. No war yet, remember. If nothing else, you’ll be deployed on reconnaissance missions mostly, I hope,” Davis said.

As the sun went down Dawson and Collins sat together on the cold concrete outside, looking out at the runway ahead and behind it, the fields, just beginning to get frosty.

“Do you wish you could see into the future?” Dawson asked.

“I… Dunno, really. You?”

“Not at all,” he answered quickly.

“Why’d ye ask then?”

“Oh, just something my Da goes on about sometimes, how he wishes he could see into the future,”

“Interesting,” Collins said, though the more he thought about it the less he wanted to see into the future, even if it wasn’t as grim as the current one.

Farrier agreed as they sat on the bed together discussing it, Farrier telling Collins that he did not want to talk about the current political climate.

“Hindsight is enough of a bitch, seeing into the future would probably be worse,” he laughed.

“I think it wouldn’t be worse. With hindsight, ye cannae change anything about what ye did. Seeing into the future, maybe you could change it. I think for some things it would be useful. If ye could choose what ye knew, but then I guess it defeats the purpose.”

“Certainly would, that’s just playing God then, isn’t it?” Farrier said. They sat for a while in silence resting against the headboard, the wind outside doing little to drown out either of their thoughts. Then Farrier shifted down, and slowly moved his head into Collins’ lap. It was something the blonde hadn’t expected, it was so out of character for Farrier to roll over and show his soft side.
“I’m scared,” he said quietly.

“Me too,” was all Collins could say.

To see Farrier like this was not normal, it was bad. It wasn’t Farrier being comfortable with showing Collins this side of him, it was him being afraid of everything to the point that this was the only option. Collins stroked his hair slowly, for a while they stayed like that. Then, Collins shifted down under the covers and they lay side by side, noses inches apart.

“I don’t want to lose you,” Farrier murmured, eyes dark. Collins was momentarily stunned by the sentence, but tried hard to regain his speech as not to spook Farrier.

“It’s like Davis tells us. Fly smart, fly home.”

“He says that?”

“Sometimes, at the end of the day usually,”

“Bit of a pissy thing to say,” Farrier tried, maybe he could turn the conversation around into a laugh.

“I don’t think so. I like it,” Collins said. No laughs tonight.

“If… If it happens, war, we have to say goodbye before every flight,” Farrier said, his words alarmed Collins, how sincere they were and how much sadness there was in his eyes.

“Farrier,”

“Please.”

Farrier never pleaded.

“Okay, alright, if that’ll make ye happy,”

“Won’t it you?”

“It’ll make me sad,” Collins said.

But it was decided then and there, that even if it was a fleeting glance across the tarmac, there would be something, a moment between them, when it came the time that they didn’t know which might be their last. It was harder for the two to part that night, whether because of their solemn conversation or something else afoot that night. Maybe both. Neither of them knew that it would be the last sleep in 6 years which would fall during peacetime.

Chapter End Notes

I... Can't believe I'm saying this, but this is the final chapter of part 1. Something that I published over a year and a half ago on a whim. Honestly I feel emotional wrapping up part 1, and I'm being sappy but I just wanted to thank each and every one of you who are reading this. Every time I see a comment or a kudos, it makes me happy that I've touched someone, made them feel something, that my writing can do that. Ever since the 13th of August 2018 I have checked my emails all the time and I have been lucky
to receive feedback on this piece of work, which is actually my first ever fanfiction I have ever written.

I love you all, and it is because I know you love this story enough to read this far, that I hope nobody minds too much if I give myself a break from weekly uploads. Not a long one, but I have uploaded every Monday for 18 and a half months straight, so the next time you see a chapter will be on the 23rd of this month. I hope you all understand ❤

Tumblr
Afternoon Pinterest board

There will be three parts to the series.

If the calm before the storm is Afternoon, then the darkness that war casts over the world is Nightfall.

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