Ride the Wind

by TinyPineTrees

Summary

Tommy had always been able to control the wind around him. He’d been a natural at it. When he went to war though, he was buried in the earth. Something broke inside him, and now he can’t control it anymore, and it lashes out with his anxiety and PTSD.

Notes

I don’t own any of these characters. If I did the tv show would be wildly different.

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

Tommy held his hand to the flickering candle. The wind hardly moved a muscle now. It spun lazily around the flame. Coyly sinking and climbing back to the heat. Dissipating with the fire. This used to be so much easier before, before he was buried in the tunnels with the 179. Tommy used smoke ever since then. Cigarette, gunfire, coal, any smoke. The smoke showed him where the wind was. He couldn’t control it anymore, and it freely arced and raced where it pleased. The wind never listened to him.


When he was younger, he could coerce the wind into lifting him off of horses, and ringing errant shop bells. Pulling pranks and mischievous things young kids get into. Never anything too dangerous. He had never wanted someone to know he had a secret skill. A gift. “A gift in Birmingham is like a knife in the back.” Aunt Pol would say. “Keep your secrets close. Only family.”

And so it’d been a family secret for years. In the same way Arthur’s feeding neighborhood dogs, and John’s kissing girls behind Picture House’s had been family secrets. It wasn’t strange to the Shelby’s. It was just another thing to add to their collection of unusual facts. It went well with their Romani heritage. Aunt Pol would tell them how her Grandmother could coerce the wind. She’d been a natural at it. Like Tommy had been. But she’d never been buried alive.

“Something must’ve broken.” Tommy thought. Tilting his hand around the flame. Ever frustrating, the wind refused to budge.

“Something important.” Whatever it was, it must’ve broken into a hundred tiny pieces.

Tommy had barely any coherent memories of when the earth collapsed on the 179. The sound of rushing wind largely. Like when you’re on a cliff, with nothing to dull the roar of the wind around you. And the feeling of being thrown around like a ragdoll. He couldn’t remember Freddie, or Danny. They’d told him, after they’d dug themselves out, that some act of God had happened. They knew that in the horrible space between collapsed tunnels and dead friends, that something pushed the earth off of them.

Tommy hadn’t been able to coerce the wind since. If he grew agitated, so did the wind. If he had a nightmare, the wind would race outside his window, careening down the block and back. Whipped into a frenzy. One time, a car backfired and Tommy’s mind was thrown back into the tunnels. When he had finally opened his eyes he was crushed against an alley, and everything surrounding him had been shredded. Thick wooden boxes were splintered, and sheets of metal had been cut to ribbons. Ash and dust coated the buildings. As if a tornado had hit Small Heath.

So Tommy used smoke. If the smoke started arcing around him in agitation, he would know to remind himself to breathe. Breathe deeply, and the wind would resume lazily puffing around him. It wasn’t an exact science though. Breathing couldn’t quiet the night terrors.

But Alfie could.

The only hiccup in his grand plan of Fall in Love with Alfie Solomans -aside from all the gang deals gone bad, murder, sedition, back alley jumpings and bloody business hiccoughs- was explaining to Alfie that Tommy, at one point in his life, had been able to ride the wind. And that not only could he not do that anymore, but that he had no control over the extremely volatile element
whatsoever.
It was the second time someone had complained about a destroyed alleyway. A worker-alley full of merchandise, fine one second, gone the next. Like Small Heath had some kind of terrorist bomb. Sgt. Moss was completely lost. No one had any information, no one had even seen or heard when it happened. Which if Moss was honest, reeked of Shelby business, but even the Shelby’s were saying they didn’t know. Odd as it was, they usually had a hand in these sorts of crimes. However, none of the businesses connected to the crimes were blacklisted by the Shelby’s. Some had debts, some were selling under the table, some were completely legitimate. Which the latter of, Moss was secretly very impressed with. It was like a hit job with no actual target though. Which was why Moss was speaking with a Shelby about it, at least once more.

Arthur was the easiest to find, usually outdrinking the lads at the Garrison, outdrinking, or outboxing. He had no insight though. Same story as before. Not Shelby business.

“Must just be kids then.” Arthur huffed, lighting a cigarette.

“Must be.” Moss agreed. “How many kids, do you think, it would take to fuck up an alley in ten minutes?” Moss questioned. Arthur sniffed and flicked his cigarette in thought.

“15? Maybe a gang of them, right? All bored, getting together to start some shit?” Arthur glanced into the Garrison and back to Moss.

“I’ll ask around for you, see if anyones heard anything.” He patted Moss’s arm twice and stepped into the bar.

Kids then. That was Arthur’s grand idea. A gang of maybe 15 kids getting together, maybe hitting the whiskey a little too hard, maybe need to let loose. A gang of 15 kids isn’t quiet though. 15 kids could fuck up an alley sure enough, but afterwards everyone and their brother would know, because rowdy boys are proud. They’d be shouting it from Saltley to Sparkbrook.

Moss didn’t know if he should hope they strike again or not. If they struck again at least maybe there’d be more evidence.

He stared up at the smokey air circling the street lamp. It wasn’t done by a gang of kids.

Nearly ten minutes later, the back door of the Garrison crept open slowly. Edging out of the door Arthur stared down the back alley, checking if Moss was still hanging around. Once he was positive he was gone, Arthur was off, gracelessly loping through the side roads to get to Watery Lane.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!,” Arthur mentally chanted. Fucking Moss and his fucking questions. Fuck his detective thing. Pol was gonna kill Arthur.

Alright, so Arthur didn’t know for sure if Tommy fucked up that alley. But he’d bet Finn, Michael and his mustache that he had something to do with it. A week ago, Tommy had shown up, late at night -early morning really- exhausted, with too wide of eyes and looking like he had jumped from a moving train. He didn’t say a word to Arthur as he passed him in the kitchen. Just anxiously smoked his cigarette. He smelled like winter wind. Pol was definitely going to kill him.

He finally stumbled around the corner of Watery lane, slamming open the ratty door of their house.
“Pol!” He shouted, the door slammed shut, shaking everything in the hallway. “Pol, important!” Arthur dodged into the kitchen gasping for breath.

“Jesus Arthur! She’s gone out, what the bloody hell is wrong?” Ada called out from the staircase.

“F*ck, Ada! Where the fuck is Pol?” Arthur screamed. Ada, rounded the corner into the kitchen, stopping short at the sight of Arthur bent over gasping for breath.

“I don’t know, out, errands, visiting friends. She said she had to stop by the office later, try there? What the hell is wrong?” She brushed back his hair, feeling his forehead as he sucked in air.

“Tommy fucking lost it again and wrecked an alley, and Moss fucking knows.” Ada’s hands froze.

“Moss knows Tommy can…can do the thing?” She stuttered out.

“No, no, I don’t know. But he’s asking questions!” Arthur snarled straightening up.

“Well Jesus Arthur, that doesn’t mean he knows. Don’t freak out over nothing!” Ada snapped back. She spun around then and began making tea. The longer she held Arthur off from making a scene all down Watery Lane shouting for Aunt Pol, the better. “Tell me what happened.” She said filling the kettle.

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It was late, nearly nightfall when Tommy finally made it home. He gently pushed open the door and was nearly bowled over by Finn.

“Aunt Polly says you gotta come into the kitchen, She says Family Meeting.” Tommy was never going to get used to him being that tall. When did he get so big, honestly. He could smell whiskey on his little brother as he led him to the kitchen, and he dug through his pocket for a cigarette. He lit it as he entered the kitchen. Everyone was crammed in, sitting on anything and everything. The chairs were commandeered by Pol, Ada and Arthur, otherwise John and Esme we’re on the counter and Finn and Michael we’re near the window. Charlie and Curly we’re leaning near the sink. Too many people in a too small room. Tommy relaxed his shoulders and tried to breathe deeply as the cigarette smoke shook near his fingers.

“So,” Polly began. “Moss says there’s been a recent attack on an alley.” The smoke jerked anxiously for a second before daintily resuming puffing. “Cops on our payroll come to us for information, and we give it to them. If we don’t have it, we find it. Half the businesses that got wrecked are on our payroll. Pay them. We need to know if some small time gang is starting to come into our territories.” Polly took a drag of her cigarette. “If it is a small gang, we need to get rid of them.” She stated matter of factly.

“A wrecked alley Pol.” John started. Leaning against the counter. “Why do we care if someone wrecks an alley?” He continued. “They won’t fuck with us anyway if they’re small time.”

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“And if they aren’t?” Michael butted in. “Gangs rise up all the time, there’s got to be at least 20 in London alone,” Michael crossed his arms.

“Fine, let’s say they aren’t small time. They still aren’t fucking with us. They wrecked an alley, they didn’t take a racecourse or a bar.” John argued.

“Let’s say it escalates though, right?” Arthur chimed in. His hands swapping between cupping his
knees and balling his fists. “We lose face, we lose cops, we lose money.” Arthur said glancing at Tommy.

“Security needs to be upped at the office and Garrison as well.” Polly stubbed out her cigarette and pushed back her chair. “That’s all I have, pay everyone out and find out if we have a gang problem, Thomas, a word.” She said already heading out of the kitchen. Tommy stubbed out his dead cigarette and lit a new one.

As he rounded the corner everyone began dispersing loudly. Curly mentioned something about a late dinner and Charlie agreed. John said they should just go to the Garrison, Ada and Esme seemed interested enough. The smoke dissipated easily behind Tommy as he followed Pol.

Once behind closed doors though, it lingered heavily.

“Tom.” Pol began arranging pillows on the loveseat. “Yes or no, did you wreck this alley, like the last one.” She didn’t look angry, just tired. She lit another cigarette and sat down.

Tommy blew the smoke out through his nose. It drifted upwards jaggedly. He tried to relax again. He could say yes, and be honest, and have Pol try and fix him. Or, and Pol had given him an easy out, he could say no. And blame a fake small gang.

“I’m working on it.” He tilted his head. The wind picked up around his ears, whipping over and cutting through his hair.

“Tommy, it’s going to be fine. We’ll pay who we need to pay. It’ll be sorted.” The wind curved down his shoulders dancing around to the loveseat. It pushed through Polly’s hair dissipating behind her.

“You’re working on it.” She repeated leaning back against the couch. “Have you,” Tommy’s cigarette sparked, spraying ash in loud pop.

They both watched the cigarette for a moment.

“I’m working on it.” Tommy said again. He threw open the door letting the smoke out and dove down the hall to his coat. He threw it on and stubbed out the cigarette.

“Tom!” Polly stopped in the hallway.

He glanced over his shoulder giving Polly the best “I’ll be careful I promise” look he could before diving into the darkness.

It took him nearly half the night to drive to London.

When he got there it turned out Alfie was in Epsom, and so Tommy continued driving. He wasn’t sure how many cigarettes this was, but the wind outside the car had picked up and the trees on the side of the road were loudly shaking their leaves. It would all calm down the minute he was in Alfie’s presence. He knew it would. Alfie was like an instant blanket. Despite his manner and presence saying otherwise. Alfie would bundle him up and say it’s ok, and then he’d whisper about odd things he’d learned. Like how some flowers grew with moonlight instead of sunlight. Odd things to distract Tommy and get him out of his head. The wind loudly whistled outside the car as he pulled into the hotel Alfie was staying at. He put his head to the steering wheel for a minute trying to calm down. It’d be ok. Aunt Pol said it’d be ok. And Alfie was inside and he’d make things even better than ok.

And he did.
He’d greeted an exhausted Tommy at five in the morning on a blustery gray night in his unbuttoned worker shirt and Tommy couldn’t have been more grateful. The wind died down as Alfie wrapped him up in a heavy, warm hug whispering that “he was fine,” and “are you ok?” and “Jesus you’ve been driving this whole time?” and “You must be freezing,”.

Once inside he asked Tommy if he felt up to talking about what had happened, or if he needed to shoot somebody, but Tommy just wanted to be warm and held. He wasn’t warm often with the wind constantly breezing around him. It was exhausting. Alfie just held on tighter to him. He fell asleep snuggled perfectly enclosed in Alfie’s arms.

The night terrors had never happened with Alfie.

But there’s a first for everything.

The tunnels had collapsed. Freddie was shouting, and Danny was sobbing. “Tommy! Tommy get up!” Danny shoved at him from under all the mud and dirt. He whipped his head back and forth screaming to figure a way out of the tunnel.

“Tommy! Now! We have got to go!” Rushing wind, as loud as a freight train, blew through him out of the packed earth shocking them with a bright light. Tommy was brought out of his nightmare with an almighty heave just in time to see their posh hotel room in shambles. He swallowed down the bile threatening to come up.

The shiny gold lamps tipped over and teacups shattered into pieces. One bedside table was thrown on its side and the writing desk was threatening to join it. The wind slowed to an eerie crawl as he blearily looked around. It was dragging chipped glass and ripped papers above them in a pantomime of snowfall. Tommy, enclosed in Alfie’s iron grip, reached forward to snatch one of shreds out of the air. As soon as he touched the paper, everything in the air came to a complete halt, shuddered and crashed to the ground around them.

“What the hell?” Alfie mumbled, awestruck as he looked around. Tommy felt like he’d swallowed ice. He could taste the dust in his mouth, and feel the glass in his eyes.

“Fuck.”
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Tommy and Alfie discuss what happened, Moss does some detective work, and Polly is the only person doing actual work in this family.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It seemed safe enough for now. Trashed and fucked, yes, but safe. He’d sent the concerned hotel staff away with more money than necessary, for the damage and their silence respectively, and investigated. Alfie had expected to find wire cutters or a loose grenade clip, but after thoroughly sweeping through the destroyed hotel room, he found nothing. It was annoyingly empty. He didn’t want to say this was Sabini either, he liked the element of surprise that explosives brought, but he was too dramatic for the cut and dry style their bomber used. He’d never have left the hotel without making sure he was seen lording over the wreckage.

Alfie crept over the jagged window panes towards the attached bathroom Tommy had thrown himself into. Splintered wood stabbing at him on the way. It wasn’t entirely out of character for Tommy to disappear as fast as he did, but Alfie felt something was off. He could handle explosive, sudden violence as well as Alfie.

It’s why they got on so well. Alfie had never met another person that could stare down the barrel of a gun and be so unbothered. That and he was tiny as hell and acted like he was twice his size. Tommy, who was all too happy to either snuggle into his arms, or throw himself into a gang war and scare bigger men than Alfie in the streets. He was so constantly underestimated by their contemporaries, and it was indecent how aroused he got when Tommy planned a hostile takeover. He was getting distracted though.

“Tommy…” Alfie knocked on the bathroom door. He could hear Tommy gagging.

“Tommy, can I come in?” Alfie asked. If he heard him throw up again he was going in. It was bad enough standing on bits of broken glass and wiping the gritty dust out of his eyes. He didn’t want Tommy being sick as well. He heard him retch again.

“I am coming in now love, pale and green or not, someone’s got to hold your hair!” He tapped again at the door before twisting the scratched handle. The door itself seemed to have escaped the explosion. Chipped glass was stuck in the grooves, but nothing permanent he didn’t think. The bedside table though, that was a goner, he couldn’t find the drawer and it was missing a leg.

Once inside, he found Tommy hunched over the toilet looking more miserable than ever. Alfie’s favorite shirt was hanging off of him like an oversized curtain, bunching at one elbow. Tommy tried wiping his face with the sleeve before peaking up. Sad eyes blinked tiredly at him as he walked in.

“Well,” Alfie said as he made his way over to him. He ran a hand through Tommy’s hair.

“Did you get it all out? Shall I call for some water?” They had whiskey, but he didn’t think that would help settle a stomach.

“No thank you.” Tommy whispered tilting his head back to the bowl.
“What a dreadful morning. Two lovely people, sound asleep till holy hell rains down on them.”
Running his hand through Tommy’s hair seemed to be helping. Keeping him present if nothing else.

He settled himself down next to Tommy. The bathroom hadn’t been hit by the explosion apparently. The lamp was still upright and the mirror hadn’t been shattered into a hundred sharp pieces.

It was odd. Alfie didn’t have another way to say it. It was just odd. A bomb, with no fire, nor shell of any kind. Bombing two men with violent tendencies, one of which was very well versed in explosives as well. Their attacker couldn’t be too shocked that Tommy and Alfie had handled it as calmly as any other soldier. Everything about it was off. He peaked over at Tommy hoping he’d started feeling better, but he still looked shaky.

“Alfie, what,” he started before gagging again. Alfie jumped up rubbing at his back and mumbling all sorts of ‘get it outs,’ and ‘you’re alrights’. The wind rattled against the window lightly. It had been chilly last night, bordering on winter. Not quite icy enough to feel it in your bones, but enough to linger threateningly in the air.

“Let’s get a little air in here maybe, hmm?” Alfie muttered. “Cool you down some.” He quickly went to throw open the window. He barely touched the handle when Tommy shouted.

“NO!” He furiously shook his head. “No air, keep it out.” He leant back from the toilet bowl, straightening up.

“No air.” He looked up at Alfie, and breathed deeply.

“No air then.” Alfie agreed. Tommy exhaled loudly through his nose. He was still eyeing Alfie despite his pallor and sickness. Alfie realized at that moment that Tommy had been watching him closely from the minute he stepped into the bathroom till now. As if he was tasting the air, waiting for Alfie to say something. He didn’t think Alfie had set the bomb hopefully. That would be several months of trust exercises wasted. Especially after the whole Arthur debacle.

“Love,” Alfie gently started, crouching down to sit next to Tommy again.

“Something the matter?” He dug a cigarette out of his pocket, lighting it before passing it over to Tommy.

“As far as I can tell, it’s safe in the hotel room. I’m telling you now, I don’t normally bomb the room I’m sleeping in.” Alfie resumed running his hand through Tommy’s hair. Tommy had yet to take the cigarette from him.

“Especially not when people I’m intimately involved with are in there.” He added. Tommy was a uniquely logical person who was unfortunately predisposed to self loathing. It must be odd seeing the world through such an accurate lense and then throwing the lense in the trash when he focused inward. Alfie nudged him, gesturing to the tobacco.

“I don’t want it right now.” He whispered so quietly that Alfie was sure if he wasn’t sitting next to him he’d have missed it.

“Sudden change of addictions my love?” He dragged the cigarette across the floor putting it out. There’s a first for everything then. Well, this was a whole morning of firsts. First bomb in a bedroom, first bomb in a hotel room really, first time he’d seen Tommy throw up. Alfie didn’t want to say he was freaking out, but he was full blown freaking out. Tommy smoked like a chimney.

“Tommy, are you,” Alfie didn’t want Tommy to bolt. He took a deep breath and tried again.

“You’re not in trouble with Sabini again, are you? Or the fucking Russians?”

“Alfie, have you-have you ever…” Tommy hunched into himself and seemed to deflate before
shoving Alfie's hands off of him and struggling to his feet. He paced in circles around the bathroom, wound like a top. It was breaking Alfie's heart.

Alfie clambered up and gently paused Tommy in his pacing. He didn't want to cage him in, he never did well when caged. But he'd spin himself into a fit if he kept on this way.

“Tom-” Alfie started. The window slammed open, throwing the shutters side to side. Icy air careened in slamming open cupboards and throwing the lamp. Alfie jumped to cover Tommy and move them to a safer spot, but as fiercely as it blew in, it seemed to die out. Tommy was tensely still, clutching desperately at Alfie, whispering.

“Stop, stop, stop.” over and over.

“That is unnatural, that. We ought to leave before we’re blown away.” Alfie murmured resting his head comfortingly on top of Tommy’s. Tommy was barely covered, probably freezing in the near constant blustery chill. Alfie was hardly faring better, his trousers were ripped, but the only shirt that escaped the bomb was the one Tommy was wearing.

“Not unnatural.” Tommy whispered, a shiver running through him as he said it.

“Just the wind.” He continued. “I used to be able to...” He stopped to look up at Alfie. Despite the height difference, Tommy had a unique way of staring him down. A vein of iron shown behind his eyes as he gathered his courage.

“I could control it.” If Alfie hadn’t been holding Tommy just then, he would have sworn Tommy was having a laugh.

“A wind bomb. You can control wind bombs.” Alfie clarified with a laugh.

“No, the wind. Not a fucking wind bomb Alfie, it’s all fucking wind.” Tommy spat.

“Alright, alright, you can control the wind.” When Alfie was in France, he’d met a man that said he could move things with his mind. He’d sworn to the platoon that he could shoot a gun in any direction and the bullet would still hit the mark. When Alfie called his bluff, the soldier stood up and pointed the gun at his own head, which should’ve been a warning sign really, and shot himself. Alfie never got the look on his face out of his head. He had met people stranger than that in his life as the years went by. The shell shocked soldier though, stayed. People create illusions when their minds shatter. He was broken out of his reverie by Tommy.

“Alfie, I’m not crazy, watch.” He slipped out of Alfie’s hold to the discarded cigarette, re-lit it and puffed for a second. To Alfie's immense surprise, it began sluggishly rising up to loop around Tommy's neck in an eerie hangman’s knot, and traveling further up by his ear in a smooth arc, to circle around his head like a crown.

“Well, fuck.” Alfie began. “Since when the fuck could you do that?” He stepped over to run his hands through the smoke. It broke from its path to crawl across Alfie’s hands before slinking back down to rejoin the arc. Slowly and steadily, circling around Tommy.

“I can’t.” Tommy stared Alfie down again. “It doesn’t work anymore, it reacts to me, but mostly by breaking things.” Tommy said gesturing to their surroundings with his hands in the air. The whirling smoke didn’t seem bothered though, once Tommy relaxed again it resumed its circling.

“It doesn’t like to be too far away, and it circles when I get,” he paused. The cigarette let out a short hiss and the smoke grew darker, bringing thicker plumes to cover over Tommy’s neck and head.

“Nervous.” He finished miserably.

“Tommy, it sounds more like you’re being haunted by the wind.” Alfie said with a laugh.
Moss had returned to the destroyed lane once again, digging through some of the sheets of metal that had been cut. Most of the evidence came with reasonable explanations for the damage. Cargo boxes could be smashed with hammers, and coal and tools could be thrown around by anyone. The metal though, had to have been cleaved with something extremely sharp, and frighteningly strong.

“Did you speak with the factory workers again?” He asked the attending officer. A scruffy Small Heath native called Peter Phillips, he drank too much for Moss’s taste, but he was decent enough.

“Yes sir,” Phillips held up a worn, rain damaged notepad. “They still say no one saw anything unusual. Certainly not a large group of kids. They say that the day was average, they started early, coming in and out of the alley often.” He flipped a page of the notepad.

“When the lunch whistle rang, the alley emptied and the workers went to the local pubs for lunch, and upon returning, discovered the wreckage.” He finished. He flipped through a few more pages before adding, “Some of the factory workers from the steel line say that if no one was in the building at the time, that someone could potentially have snuck in to cut the steel with a band saw, sir.” He flipped the notepad closed and looked up at Moss.

“Snuck into the steel shop, started the band saw, and cut four sheets of metal into random shapes?” Moss reiterated. He stared back down at the steel. There were parts where it didn’t even look like it had been cut with a saw. It looked like something had pinched it at the seams, twisted it and then ripped it.

“A band saw can rip metal like this?” He held up the metal in question. Phillips stepped forward to look at it.

“Maybe a very determined person, misusing a band saw? Maybe they cut a little bit, realized they were running out of time, and just ripped it out of the saw?” He demonstrated visually with his arms, jerking his hands toward himself to mimic pulling the metal from a saw.

“Let’s look at the band saw.” Moss concluded. They might get an actual lead that way. Steel line workers were notorious for missing fingers and gouged limbs, and a person misusing the saw wasn’t entirely out of character for them. The more Moss thought about it, the more it made sense. Especially if they were angry with the BSA factory for wage cuts.

The steel line was in full swing when they managed to get into the hall. The cacophony of noise was immense, weighing on Moss and Phillips as they made their way to a massive iron band saw. It was the closest to the alley, but it didn’t look as though someone had been ripping metal across the razor blades, but Moss wasn’t sure how noticeable it would have been.

“Excuse me?” Moss shouted to the grime covered worker using the saw. He was a wiry, thin faced man who seemed fully absorbed in his work. Moss admired the focused dedication, but didn’t know enough about metal cutting to say if the man’s work was good or not. Given the looks the wiry man was receiving from his fellow comrades, it seemed to be leaning towards not.

“Excuse me!” Moss shouted again. This time the grimy man looked up and gestured to another man to shut off the saw. Even with one saw off, the noise in the room was still deafening. A strong Italian accent cut through the noise.

“What? What do you want?” He asked pushing the metal project to the side and grabbing another sheet. He tried wiping the sweat off of his brow, but only furthered the grime.

“Is this band saw the easiest to reach from the back alley?” Moss asked. The wiry man looked
toward the alley and over at the other saws being used.

“Maybe?” He said shortly. He sniffed and looked over at the other workers for a moment. “Why?” He asked.

“I’d like to take a closer look at your saw, if you have a moment. It might only take a second or two, Mr…” Moss stepped closer to the saw, after it had been shut off it had revolved a few times before slowing down. He didn’t think he’d seen any serious bends in the blades even then though.

“Fratello.” Mr. Fratello pulled the uncut metal he’d just laid down off the bed and slowly spun the blade saw for Moss. It unfortunately confirmed Moss’s fears. The blades weren’t bent in any way.

“Mr. Fratello, has anyone changed the saw’s blades in the last week?” Moss asked hopefully. This case was going to remain unsolved for months if new information wasn’t discovered soon. The alley had already been mostly cleaned up thanks to the Shelby’s money and protection, all except a small corner Phillips had been guarding, roped off and labeled “evidence”. If he didn’t uncover something soon it would be entirely forgotten unless another explosion happened.

“No, no changes. Is this about the, the, what’s the word?” The Italian stopped for a minute and muttered fast in his native language. “The boom?” He mimicked a bomb for a moment seeming to hope that it translated well enough.

“Well, potentially Mr. Fratello, how long have you worked with metal here?” Moss asked. Steel workers were big normally, big and thick to move the heavy sheets all day. A wiry guy like Fratello must struggle a lot, although, maybe he had no other options.

“A few months, I came up with family.” He answered. Moss sighed, one more dead end, although he could request to see all the band saws in the factory. Maybe that was a job for Phillips. He thanked Fratello for his time and began his escape from the roaring steel line.

One of Fratello’s coworkers leant forward to restart the band saw as he replaced the metal sheet. As they began milling about and returning to work, an Englishmen commented on seeing a Shelby by the alley before the lunch whistle. Several of the other workers acknowledged that, but argued that one person still couldn’t rip steel. How the metal was ripped was still the strongest gossip in the factory. Fratello’s eyes followed them as they gossiped.

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Returning to Small Heath was always bittersweet. Everyone Tommy liked lived there, besides Alfie that was, but it was also a smoldering trench of poverty. How would Arthur handle Alfie knowing about the wind? How would Arthur handle Alfie? The two had a notorious relationship after Alfie had double crossed them and put Arthur in prison. Bad business. Nasty, dirty, bad business. Necessary though, if Alfie hadn’t double crossed him, he wouldn’t have ousted Sabini. They had discussed the double cross beforehand, Arthur’s imprisonment however, was spontaneous. Alfie paid for that with more than a month on the couch, and weeks of apologizing.

The car jerked along the road jarring Tommy from his thoughts. Alfie was singing something in Hebrew.

“Nervous dear?” Alfie asked, his song petering out. He reached over and patted Tommy’s knee.

“Polly will be glad, don’t you think? She’s been crusading for you to bring me ‘round more often. Well, maybe she won’t be, wasn’t too pleased with me last time I saw her.” Alfie paused in thought. Polly had accepted Alfie’s staged betrayal, but, like Tommy, she didn’t accept that he’d incarcerated
Arthur. Despite Alfie saying he’d just gotten caught up in the moment and wanted to make a good show to all the watching men. She only allowed him back in the house after Alfie had both gotten Arthur back out of jail, and sworn on his bakery to never land another unsuspecting Peaky Blinder in jail again. If he broke his vow then she was free to burn his bakery to the ground.

“I’m more nervous for you.” Tommy said, looking over at him as he pulled the car in front of Watery Lane.

“They might tear you apart.” He jumped out of the drivers side, slamming the door. He dug a cigarette out of his pocket, and lit it as he made his way to Alfie.

“Nah, tearing me apart isn’t their style.” Alfie huffed as he led the two to Tommy’s door.

“Cutting my eyes out though, I wouldn’t put past them.” He went to open the door, but was beaten to it as it was slammed open by Arthur.

“You two!” Arthur was furious. Tommy’s eyes widened as he shouted and the smoke spiked out near his fingers. Arthur eyes glanced down spying the spikes before resettling on Tommy’s face.

“Yes Arthur?” Tommy deadpanned as he narrowed his eyes. Arthur eyeing the smoke was an unfair advantage. He had to breathe and remember Alfie was at his back.

“Where the bloody hell have you been? I tried finding you all bloody night.” He said loudly, his hand never left the door.

“We’ll talk inside. Where’s Pol?” Arthur gestured towards the kitchen as Tommy pushed past him. He didn’t get more than two steps in though, as Arthur fully filled the doorway behind him when Alfie tried stepping in.

“Hello Arthur, shitty weather in’it?” Alfie knocked his cane against the door. Tommy sighed loudly and turned around, Arthur had pulled himself to his full height, towering over Alfie.

“You are looking rather good lately, is that a new haircut, mate? It suits you.” Alfie continued.

“I always thought you’d look really good with a ponytail, you know?” Alfie held his hand up as if to frame Arthur’s face. “To give you some intrigue.” He added with mirthful wide eyes.

“Fuck off.” Arthur snarled at him. Tommy stepped over to intervene before Arthur could start a fight.

“Arthur, let him in. He’s apologized, and Pol will burn down his bakery if he fucks up again.” Tommy gave Alfie a chastising look, which Alfie acknowledged.

“I’ll burn down his fucking bakery if he fucks up again.” Arthur kept his arms folded and the doorway blocked.

“He’s a fucking liar Tom. He’s no fucking good.” Arthur hissed.

“We’re all no fucking good Arthur. Let him in.” Tommy cocked his head and brought the cigarette to his lips. The smoke was suspiciously unmoved by all of this. Tommy was unsure if that was good or bad. The wind had been looming fearsomely the last few days, or maybe Tommy had just been more anxious than usual. Being home with Alfie in the house should’ve had the smoke spiraling. He was normally very on edge, worrying over how everyone got on. He started off to the kitchen.

“A lie if I ever heard one dearest, you’re the greatest good I’ll ever get.” Alfie shouted after him.

Arthur grudgingly stepped aside allowing Alfie in. Once in the kitchen they found Polly, sitting with a cigarette in one hand and counting money with the other. She glanced up as the three walked in.

“Good afternoon Tommy, Alfie.” Leaning back in her chair, she focused on Tommy, blinking slowly. Tommy sniffed and stared back at her as Arthur watched, confused at the silent conversation
between the two. The room was quiet for a moment, with the wind gently tapping at the window as if asking to be let in. Tommy put his cigarette out and raised his eyebrows at her, scratching at one with a small nod, like he’d begrudgingly agreed to a unsaid statement.

“So Alfie knows then. Alright.” She acknowledged and stabbed her cigarette out as well. She really has always been able to tell when he’s hiding something. Tommy promised to himself once more to try and keep a secret from her.

“Knows what?” Arthur asked, glancing between the two.
“About the wind.” She answered and began organizing the stacks of money into piles.

“Oh yeah, experienced that this morning, didn’t we love?” Alfie said nudging Tommy. “Didn’t quite follow it for a while, but once you see it, you can’t deny it, and afterwards, you’re left wondering how the fuck you missed it.” He finished.

“Well don’t go shouting it off rooftops. I will not find my nephew dead in a ditch because someone didn’t like what they heard.” Polly ordered. She seemed satisfied with the stacks finally and looked over at Arthur.

“These on the left go to the BSA, make sure you get them to a foreman. Find John or Esme and give them the middle stack for the Lee’s. Tommy, far right’s for the betting shop.” She stood up and pushed in her chair and gave Alfie a smile.

“How about lunch?” She asked.

Tommy froze while collecting his stack. A small breeze blew a few pounds off the table and into one another, Polly met his eyes as he resorted them embarrassedly.

“Pol,” Tommy began. He pushed down firmly on top of the stack of money under his hand, feeling a gentle breeze cooling around his neck. It sank threateningly and strengthened, creeping under his shirt, down his arm.

“Nothing is wrong with eating, Thomas. Why don’t you join us after dropping those off? We’ll just be down the street I’m sure.” She said, looking comforting about it. As if she wasn’t about to learn the full extent of his and Alfie’s relationship. It’s not like they’d hidden anything, but Tommy liked his privacy, and Alfie was so sweet and kind and genuinely wanted Polly to like him. He’d tell her everything she wanted to hear and more.

He watched as she ushered Alfie out into the hallway and to the front door. Tommy tried catching his eyes but didn’t get a chance. He heard the door shut, rattling the hallway again.

The cold wind snapped, exploding to life making Arthur shout as it threw all the money off the table and into the air. The cash rained down on the brothers and collected into one massive heap on the ground.

“Tom!” Arthur groaned as he threw the small stack he’d managed to grab into the heap in defeat.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Tommy gets in touch with his roots, and he takes Alfie along for the ride.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Lunch with Polly had granted Alfie a few new insights. Insights into the long relationship the Romani travellers had with the wind, insights into what Polly thought of the Peaky Blinders future with Alfie, and insights into who made tea better. London or Birmingham? Alfie had to admit, London.

An unfortunate side effect of lunch with Polly, was that Alfie discovered that when she told you to do something, you felt eerily compelled to do it. Alfie was going to go into lunch next time better prepared. Because otherwise, ideas that weren’t necessarily Alfie’s happened. Things like driving a traveller caravan up northern England in early December.

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It was a cross between chill and fierce winds as the caravan rattled across the field. A thin coat of fresh snow packing onto the wheels as Alfie’s borrowed horse, “Eddie” pushed forward. Alfie had never ridden in a caravan before, nor had he led a horse drawn caravan across an open field with no road.

“That direction Alfie,” Johnny Dogs had gestured roughly north, “We’re headed that way.” He added with a giggle.

As if Alfie struggling to lead a horse through a snowy, open field at six in the goddamn morning, while never having driven a horse drawn anything was something to be happy about.

“Take him traveling, it’ll do you good to know what you’re getting into, and he might be able to get a hold on all the-.” Polly had said at lunch, gesturing around her head as if miming anxiety. That lunch had been frightening and inspiring all at once. Alfie would never again wonder where Tommy learned how to make someone spill all their secrets.

She’d also warned him that the Lee’s and Johnny Dogs would give him hell during the whole damn adventure. They hadn’t disappointed. They thought Alfie traveling with them was Tommy’s way of seeing if he was tough enough to join gangs. How frighteningly wrong they were.

Tommy was oddly happy though, Alfie thought, swinging his head back to look into the caravan. He was somehow still asleep with all the rocking and rattling. All the constant movement and traveling had worn him down to where he was finally too exhausted to be up leading Eddie. Although Alfie didn’t think even drop dead exhaustion could slow his mind. He was probably scheming in his dreams.

Someone started shouting in Romani, or what Alfie thought was Romani. Alfie turned back around in time to see Eddie has stopped moving, not for lack of trying. He started muttering platitudes to the
horse as he jumped off the front bench and stomped to the back wheels. They were covered in mud, snow and damp grass, apparently Alfie had gotten too caught up thinking to notice the caravan getting stuck. The wind rushed across the open field quite suddenly then, knocking Alfie gently against the side of the wagon.

“Need a hand there, pal?” A Lee asked pulling up by him and hopping off. At least this one wasn’t snide like the last few. They’d stared rudely at Alfie when he’d originally met them with Tommy. They had begrudgingly allowed him to join them, and were fine with everything except his clothes. Apparently, they were too boring, not enough color. Tommy, his posh boy, was dressed to the nines as usual and they hadn’t said a word. Although he’d pulled on more Romani approved articles of clothing the further they got from civilization.

They pushed hard at the caravan to help it escape the well the wheels had dug, but didn’t budge. Alfie could already hear Tommy moving about inside. The second the rocking stopped he’d probably been woken. Alfie half entertained the idea of an overly large baby cradle for him and Tommy to sleep in. On second thought, it may have been the Lee’s yelling that woke him.

“Stopped twice now Mr. Solomons, not just you though, fret not about your driving skills.” Johnny Dogs sauntered up beside him. He was bundled head to toe in what looked like lovingly knitted wool.

“A couple of the Lees got stuck a bit back, it’s just the snow, we might want to stick here for an hour or so. Maybe let some of it melt off with the sun?” He added curiously glancing down and the stopped wheel.

“Let’s pull you out and set up camp then hmm?” He clapped Alfie on the shoulder and walked off assumably to grab another horse.

Tommy emerged from the front of the wagon just then, kitted out in thick sweaters and wool just like Johnny. He seemed to compromise with style and comfort, sticking to his deep blues and greys, but losing the slick leathers in favor of an overly thick grey pullover.

“Morning my love, gotten stuck in the mud haven’t we?” Alfie greeted as he kicked the snow packed wheel. Tommy jumped off the bench and crunched through the snow to have a look at the wheel like Johnny had. He clicked his tongue and side eyed it before standing up and giving Alfie a quick good morning kiss. They were subtle around the Lee’s, Johnny Dogs though, seemed to already have some idea of their relationship.

“Might be a good time to start a nice breakfast, hmm love?” Alfie nudged Tommy gently and glanced toward the wagon. Tommy huffed at him before turning the opposite way to help Johnny get another horse.

It had been a bloody shock when Tommy had said yes to the whole traveling idea. Less of a yes, more of a forced vacation. Alfie was half hoping he’d say no on a business principle, too much work, and never a moment to rest. That and Alfie wasn’t extremely excited about a less than romantic snowy trudge across cold open fields in early December.

“This is Philip, he’s gonna pull the wagon.” Tommy said, huffing in the cold air as he pulled a massive horse along with him.

“Why do all these bloody horses have normal names? Who names a horse Philip?” Alfie asked, following Tommy to hook the horse up. It was early and cold enough that once the wagon was free, Alfie could potentially encourage Tommy back to bed. Maybe to sleep. Maybe for more fun things.
“Georgie Lee had a good friend named Philip, and since his death in a boating incident, they’ve named every horse they’ve gotten since then, after him.” Tommy answered securing the horse.

“Well that,” Alfie started. “That I do not agree with, that is a serious lack of creativity.” The horses pulled the wagon free and a few yards forward for good measure. Alfie began a distracting ramble about horse names as he surveyed their hard work, making sure not to get stuck in the snow again. He also used that time to quickly peek at the air around Tommy.

He’d gotten better at subtly eyeing the wind to gauge Tommy’s feelings, something Tommy was adamant was cheating and would become fiercely angry over if he noticed Alfie doing. He was easily distracted when Alfie talked though. Especially about horses. He had a tendency to forget trying to hide the wind then.

As it happened the wind was dainty this morning. Flitting between puffing through sleep mussed hair and tossing snow around the field. Being out in the open air was helping tremendously. Tommy hadn’t had an episode like the hotel room since leaving Birmingham.

Alfie was starting to notice the winds unique personality too. It reacted to everything, happy or not, which Alfie had originally misinterpreted. He’d thought it wrecked rooms or tipped lamps when Tommy was upset, angry or scared. He was ashamed when he finally realized it reacted to happy thoughts as well. Like when he opened their bedroom door back in Birmingham, and small tendrils of wind rushed in through the window and tossed through his hair and down to his shirt collar in a greeting. It wasn’t always a menace, but Alfie had only seen it in a negative light until then. Just one more thing Tommy dealt with day to day.

He was seeing the happier wind more as they got further from society.

“Well then, what shall we do love? Shall we settle back in? The sun hasn’t even broken through the skyline. Still dark innit? Alfie said, checking for the Lees before tucking Tommy into his arms. “Lots of spare time. Can’t do anything till the sun melts the snow, Mr. Dogs said so himself.” Alfie added for good measure. Tommy tucked his face into the junction between Alfie’s jaw and shoulder, breathing in the cold air. A chilly gust breezed down his back and curved out by his ankles, slicing through the snow.

“There really isn’t anything, is there?” Tommy finally agreed. They clambered into the wagon, toeing off their snowy shoes. Despite Alfie’s misgivings, the wagon was actually very nice. It was brightly painted, and had soft fabrics upholstered to otherwise hard benches and chairs. They had a nice, soft mattress behind a curtain to sleep on, something Tommy had seemed bashful about showing Alfie.

“Where are we sleeping then? I don’t see a bed.” Alfie has asked, wondering if he missed it, or if maybe it was just that small.

Tommy looked nervously into his eyes for a minute before going to a thick, purple, heavy set curtain. He shoved it to the side and crawled across the bed to lean against the wall. The wall and frame were painted in the same artful style as the shelves and drawers, and the bed had heavy blankets laid on top. There was even a little window by the headboard.

It was small. It was small, and tucked into the back of the wagon, and only accessible from the one long side. Alfie consistently reminded himself that this was a whole house. Everything all crammed together. Much like the Shelby’s. He wasn’t sure how long Tommy had lived in the wagon growing up, but judging from how shy he looked in the bed, Alfie would bet it was long enough. It was like showing your lover your childhood bedroom.
“These are lovely.” Alfie tap at the wall. “You can’t find delicate detail work like this anymore, you know?” He said, surveying the wall. Tommy smiled.

“What’s your plan then, Mr. Solomons,” Tommy asked, craning his head to look at Alfie, as he stepped through the wagon to the bed.

“Yeah, you know, uhm, maybe sleep?” Alfie answered, taking his coat off and hanging it up. Leaving things on the floor here was not an option. Both he and Tommy had already tripped on clothes and blankets more than they cared to admit. “Like in a bed, with blankets and pillows. You know?” He moved over to the bed, stopping at the edge. Tommy stared up at him, still bundled in his thick grey sweater.

“Fine. Just sleep then.” Tommy blinked slowly at him through his eyelashes and began snuggling into the blankets. He started pulling a thick blue one up and around him before shouting with laughter. Alfie grabbed him around the middle and lifted him bodily out of bed. He hooked Tommy’s legs around his back and kneeled on the bed walking them to the wall.

“So no sleep then?” Tommy smiled breathily. The clasped window rattled gently, a few wind chimes chirped in unity.

“Plenty of time for that later, innit?” Alfie quipped, swallowing Tommy’s no doubt witty reply in loving kisses.

Alfie probably could’ve tried harder championing sleep. After all Tommy had been tired enough to lay down willingly last night. But then he started doing that thing with his tongue by Alfie’s ear, and all logical thought just gets thrown out the window then doesn’t it?

He turned them sideways and quickly pulled off Tommy’s sweater and trousers before laying him down on the mattress.

Tommy teased his hands down Alfie’s sides to palm at his dick. Gently twisting his hand around it as he watched pleasure spread across Alfie’s face. Alfie began massaging around his waist and to his thighs. Opening them up to give him more room. They were as quiet as they could be. Swallowing down each moan and gasp as best they could in the dull, early morning light.

Alfie slid a slick finger inside, searching gently for where he knew Tommy would see stars. Once found he eased in more fingers slowly, stretching Tommy out. Making sure to drag softly against it as he did. Alfie jerked as Tommy ran his hands down his cock, gently teasing around near his balls in a quiet retaliation.

Once full prepared he slid slowly into Tommy, kissing hotly at his neck. Tommy gasped before dragging Alfie’s head back up to kiss him. He began a steady pace, slowly dragging his hips back and forth. The chill that had lingered in the wagon from the winter night was dissipating fast.

As he pulled out, Tommy gripped him hard with his thighs suddenly and flipped them. He leant forward, kissing Alfie softly and sank down on his cock. Slowly riding him.

“I figured,” Tommy began moaning quietly, shutting his eyes tightly as he sank deeply onto Alfie’s cock.

“With all the riding you’ve been doing, maybe I should return the favor, eh?” His gasped sharply as Alfie unconsciously snapped his hips up. The little window above the bed rattled harder this time, as if threatening to open. Alfie glanced up at it for a half second.
The pace never strayed from gentle and slow from then on.

Johnny Dogs watched quietly from his wagon as Tommy dragged his hands through misty late morning air. He’d been doing that quite a lot lately. Anytime Tommy thought someone wasn’t watching, he’d light a cigarette or blow warm air slowly from his mouth and try to catch it. If he was a younger man, he’d go up to Tommy and ask him if he really bought into the old wives tales about gypsies spinning the air and throwing it across the wide fields. His own mother had a story like that, she used to tell him about an old woman who was able to crook her fingers and blow out every campfire for miles. It was all a craic, but watching Tommy stand quietly, drifting his hand through dissipating steam was unnerving.

Johnny couldn’t decide if it was better left unmentioned, or if he should bring it up to somebody. Maybe Arthur? He wasn’t entirely sure of Mr. Solomons.

He liked him well enough around a campfire when he told stories. He would use wild gestures and incite the whole camp into a frenzy, standing people up to have them participate and show them specifically how a battle went down. The Lees were unusually accommodating with it as well. Willing to participate and encouraging even.

That may have been Esme though too. She’d been in a state when she found out they were going traveling without her. The only thing that saved them all from certain death, was an extremely sure promise that in a month or two her and John would take time off to get back to their roots as well.

A sudden gasp from Tommy drew Johnny out of his thoughts. It looked as if his hands were shaking as he cupped them around something Johnny couldn’t see. As Johnny watched longer, he could see that he was trying desperately to breathe deeply and slowly ease his hands further apart. The more distance he achieved, the more curious Johnny became. He eased down a little further and around the side of the wagon, paying extra attention to the spots that could rattle or creak. Spooking Tommy was a terrible idea, spooking him while Johnny had been essentially spying on him might lead to sudden death. That’d be a terrible day.

Tommy’s hands were almost apart, but Johnny still couldn’t see anything. He edged up a little to try and peek over Tommy’s shoulder. Grabbing onto a thin beam holding the wagon cover up, he slid his foot up silently and toed along the groove running around the outside of the wagon. Heaving himself up as quietly as possible for a better vantage point. He saw the top of Tommy’s hands for all of three seconds before shouting as the beam snapped.

Tommy shouted and spun around, throwing his hands out to defend himself as Johnny fell unceremoniously onto the hard, snowy ground face first.

“Ugh,” He groaned out, the wind had been knocked right out of him. He tried to sneak a glance at Tommy before getting his story straight. This vantage point was as terrible as his last though.

“Coming to sneak up on you right? And I get my arse handed to me, don’t I?” Johnny lied, slowly picked himself up, slipping a little as he brushed the snow off.

He looked Tommy fully in the face then. He was a little wide eyed, but his usual icy armour was already creeping up, guarding behind his eyes. Tommy stared him down, his face had a hard set to it, and he was watching him closely.

“Tom?” Johnny started. It was oddly quiet on their side of of the wagon. The normal sounds of children playing and people working were dampened by snow and open wind. It blustered around
them, throwing itself roughly at the broken wagon cover as though it wanted nothing more than to rip it up.

“I’m gonna start fixing that broken post, unless you want to help?” Johnny asked. He thought he saw a bead of sweat drip down the side of Tommy’s face. He pivoted awkwardly on his foot and stepped around the wagon as quick as he could. He made a promise to himself not to spy on Tommy ever again. The look he gave him twisted his insides with guilt.

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Tommy’s eyes followed Johnny as he made his way out of view. His inner mantra never quieting. ‘Relax, relax, relax, calm down, calm down, calm down. It’s just the music hall band turning up, eh?’ He tried as hard as he could to keep his breathing even, but it was achingly hard, shaking as he was. He’d thought the wind was going to slice through Johnny and leave him bloody and lying in the snow when he heard the shout.

He let out a hard breath through his nose. The wind shook sporadically out. He dug quickly into his pockets for a cigarette and managed to light it after a few tries. Watching as the smoke barely puffed before taking on a life of its own to grow into sharp jagged shapes that sliced through the air. Tommy backed up to lean against the wagon, slinking down to curl inwards. He covered his head with his hands and squeezed his eyes shut. He watched as the smoke rose in staccato-like sharp movements. Arcing out in a sickle and spiraling around his head, slicing hard at the wagon. It was starting to leave small claw marks.

“Breathe. Breathe.” Tommy repeated. He held his hands up to the side to protect it from further scratch marks being made, but the wind just started slicing at his hand. Tommy dropped his cigarette as he scrambled upwards quickly. He was not going to lose it. This giant field full of Lee’s and Johnny Dogs and Alfie would be decimated. The wind would have nothing blocking it. It would spread across the field shredding everything.

“Breathe! breathe!” his voice pitched a little higher in his hysteria as the wind grew in strength. He scratched at the cuts, trying to draw focus from the pain. It wasn’t working. The wind whipped out in a sickle again, carving into the wagon’s side.

“Tommy?” Tommy jumped as Alfie’s voice sounded from around the wagon corner. A strong gale flew upwards ripping the cover violently off of the wagon and threw it into the sky. Alfie quickly dodged past the wagon side. He took one look at Tommy; shaking, covered in blood and pale, and launched himself towards him. He grabbed ahold and pulled him back to the caravan again. Alfie pulled his head down to tuck under his jaw.

“You’re alright,” Alfie whispered soothingly. How was he so bloody calm? He ran his hands reassuringly down Tommy’s back. The wind gentled achingly slow, coiling back down to lay in wait. As still as untouched water.

“What’s happened?” Alfie was whispering. Tommy was pressed into his warm coat, he could smell the rum. His throat felt like closing, and his hands stung, and a deep-seated cold settled into his bones. If there was a point when Tommy felt he’d lower himself to crying, it could be now.

‘Pull it together, you didn’t destroy it. One fucked up wagon isn’t the same as a wrecked alley.’ Tommy reminded himself. Alfie was rubbing some warmth back into his arms and whispering Hebrew into his ears. He broke off the rhythmic whispering quietly.

“We should move quickly before the Lees start piling over here.” He started slowly walking Tommy to their caravan. Just as they turned the corner Tommy could hear the Lee’s kids stomping about,
shrieking at the scratches and marks. They were very excited, shouting about sudden wind storms and the ripped cover.

Alfie somehow snuck them away quick enough that no Lees saw them. He caught Johnny’s eye though as Alfie ushered him into his wagon. He was staring concernedly after him, but thankfully decided to leave him alone for now.

It had actually been going well. He’d been watching the wind twirl in his palm, and for a half a second, it almost listened to him. He was going to get a hold of this or die trying.

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“Repeat it again for me.” Sabini ordered. The skinny man sitting opposite of him nodded, rushing to speak. They were sitting in a cafe, with just Sabini, and his bodyguard, who was drinking in the corner.

“They say they saw Tommy Shelby by the alley before the whistle. They say that when the lunch whistle rang, he had some kind of a fit. They say he threw a bomb, but there was no fire, just smoke.” He twitched uncomfortably in his wooden chair. Sabini stared at him vaguely disinterested.

“And the cop, where does the cop come in?” Sabini gestured in annoyance.

“The cop was asking questions, asking and asking and asking. Everybody! Nobody said anything.” The skinny man said.

Sabini sniffed and dragged a finger under his nose, looking up at the skinny man across from him.

“I pay you to get information, real information! You work in that shithole for me! Not the cops! At WHO did he throw the bomb! Was there a body hidden? Was there a target? You don’t know shit! You come back here and you tell me a policeman is asking questions, but no one answers! What do I do with that Fratello?” Sabini screamed throwing his wine glass at a window. The bodyguard looked up for a moment before boredom resettled on his face.

Fratello concealed his flinch as best as he could.

“Discover the reason, yes, understood Mr. Sabini. I will uncover anything you need!” Fratello rushed to appease him.

“Next time, don’t come down here telling me you have important news unless it has all the facts! What can I do with that, if I don’t know everything!?” Sabini screamed further, slamming his hands on the table and rising.

“Get out before I ship you back to Italy now.” Sabini growled through his teeth. “And send someone to clean this shit up.” He shouted after Fratello as he made his way to the bodyguard. He sat across from him and futilely dabbed red wine stains from his cuff.

“The fucking nerve of these people. I take them in from the goodness of my heart, give them a well paying job, and this is the work they do. It’s criminal.” Sabini rambled disgustedly at his ruined shirt. The other man’s eyes followed Fratello out of the building, never quite letting him out of sight.

“What does it take to find honest good employees these days?” Sabini continued.
“I’m very sorry to waste your time like that. Let me make it up to you, what could I help you with that would make up for that distasteful meeting?” Sabini finally stopped uselessly dabbing his shirt to look up at the man.

“Well actually,” A harsh New York accent quipped. “I have a feeling it may be very useful.” He tossed his drink back. Sabini stared at him, encouraging him to elaborate.

“I’ve heard about a similar incident to this, same results. All smoke, no fire. This one was in a hotel room though.” The man opened a packet of cigarettes and lit one.

“Have Fratello listen to what the steel workers in the other local pubs say. They wouldn’t dare bring it up in that shithole the Shelby’s own.” He tapped his cigarette into a crystal ashtray.

“Talk to the cop too. I want to know what the law thinks.” He added.

“Naturally Mr. Changretta.” Sabini said quickly. “We’ll know more soon, Fratello or not.” He finished.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for taking the time to reading my story! Please let me know if it needs work! It’s my baby and I’d love any help taking care of it.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Alfie makes a few new discoveries, Sabini realizes he’s made some poor life choices, John is very much in love with Esme, and Tommy is sad he has to come home.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The little window rattled gently, the latch ticking against the window pane. Alfie stirred groggily at it. The wagon made a multitude of noises throughout the day, creaking and groaning with every step they took. Their company as well, had more kids than Alfie knew what to do with, all shouting and playing, and the adults were in an ever joyful mood, freely yelling from one wagon to another. The racket was constant, and even encouraged. Nighttime was far more disconcerting. It held a lingering silence, unwilling to be broken by anything less than the morning sun. As such, any uncommon noise in the night roused Alfie quickly. He’d wouldn’t say he was a light sleeper, as there were times Tommy had come and gone and he’d been none the wiser, but an anxious sleeper, maybe.

The latch knocked slowly again, pushing Alfie to finally drag his eyelids open and crane his neck up to stare at the little window. Tommy snuffled in his sleep, pressing his face further into Alfie’s pillow. There was always a nagging question of whether it was Tommy unconsciously pulling at the wind, or if it was just the natural wind, and judging which was which on any given day was a very blurry science.

The little window snapped open, knocking the latch to the side, sending an icy stream of snowy air in. It danced daintily above them, spinning in slow graceful arcs, catching snowflakes before they dropped, never treading close enough for them to melt. Thicker snowflakes tiptoed in on the wind, climbing up into the arch of the ceiling before ever so slowly sinking back down in thin rope like coils, errant strands braiding themselves together as they sank, creating a bespeckled snowy ribbon.

The wind edged closer to Tommy, but he twisted away from it, as if to say, ‘Not now please, I’m sleeping,’. One of Tommy’s hands untucked itself from beneath his chin and brushed across his face, as though he were brushing the wind away, and he turned his face further into the pillow. The wind whispered just over top of them before obediently, slowly, flitting back out the window, petering off. Tommy shivered, his hand sneaking back under his chin, rousing Alfie from the trancelike state he’d been in since the snow dance had started. He pulled Tommy closer and resettled their blanket up higher, wondering if he could reach up and relatch the window without waking Tommy up.

It was the gentlest he’d ever seen the wind, not a single razor sharp sickle or edge ever appearing. Alfie, stupidly enough, hadn’t considered how sharp wind could be until he saw Tommy’s hands yesterday, all sliced into little ribbons. He’d seen the carnage it could reap, and sheer destructive capabilities, sure. It had always been through brute force though, never the wickedly sharp edge he’d seen the other day. He looked down to where Tommy’s hands were now, pressed tightly together.

Asking Johnny Dogs or the Lees for gauze or bandages could have been potentially suspicious, so he’d ended up cutting one of his more threadbare shirts and using that. He’d settled Tommy onto one of the thick upholstered benches in the wagon and began looking over the damage, assessing how deep or long the cuts were and methodically cleaning them, whispering to Tommy quietly as he went
about it. Tommy’s eyes hadn’t yet lost their manic glint, and small tremors still shook through him every so often.

Alfie hadn’t brought it up yet, but when he was cleaning out the cuts, he had noticed older ones, similarly random and healed over. They appeared on his hands, and crept up his wrists to his forearms, leaving small nicks, cuts and in some cases, large slices, all thin and rope like in their shape. They worried Alfie more than the explosive wind worried him, all it would take is one or two deep cuts on his wrists and Tommy could be in serious trouble.

The chilly air bit at his nose, reminding him that he hadn’t shut the window yet. He slowly started sliding his arm out from under Tommy’s waist and dragging it free, his back cracking as he sat up. Tommy sniffed a little at the loss of warmth, and one of his bandaged hands escaped their tight confinement under his chin, reaching out to where Alfie had been laying. Alfie pushed himself up onto his knees and relatched the window quickly, before slumping back down gratefully, and taking ahold of Tommy’s offered hand. He tugged Tommy gently up and back into his arms before closing his eyes again. He was very rarely so successful in keeping Tommy asleep when he moved. His final thoughts before sleep took him were again of how calm the wind had been, and he wondered if maybe Tommy had more control then he thought. It seemed to Alfie that when he was peaceful and calm, like just moments ago, the wind listened just fine.

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Dirty snow slushed around them as kids played in the alley. Phillips’s roped off ‘evidence’ corner had dwindled, after slowly being chipped away by sneaky kids and nosey adults who wanted to guess at what blew through the alley. John Shelby asked Phillips earlier what he’d thought happened, and he’d answered saying he was still inclined to think it was an angry steelworker, and brought up speaking with one of the workers, distinctly remembering how poor his work had been. Now he and John blinked down at the pathetic pile of left over ‘evidence’. Three ripped sheets of metal, and several scatterings of broken cargo boxes.

“Is this all of it?” John asked Officer Phillips.

“Yes, Mr. Shelby, some things have been taken, but I’ve watched it as best as I can.” Officer Phillips sniffed and rubbed at his flakey, red nose. He’d been out here since early morning, every morning, guarding his little pile of evidence, waiting for when Moss would say it’s pointless, and that nothing new has been discovered. He’d finally had enough this week, having watched it dwindle to near nothingness. He’d come back from lunch breaks to find more and more missing every day. A few days after the explosion Arthur Shelby had appeared, offering him money for the whole lot of it, but Phillips was certain Moss would fire him on the spot if he’d taken up the deal then. But it’d been a nearly a month now, no new leads and Moss had more pressing problems. So who was the wiser if he sold a shitty pile of broken boxes and metal to John Shelby?

“Well, as agreed then, the kids will make a racket after your lunch. You pretend to chase after them for a block or so, let them get away and with any luck your next job as Evidence Watchdog will be somewhere warmer.” John clapped him on the shoulder and handed him a wad of cash. He stooped to collect the sheets of metal and wood, whistling as he held up the brutally ripped metal.

“Why didn’t you just throw the broken wood around?” He asked looking at the thin pieces of shredded cargo boxes. It was utterly indecipherable from the other shredded pieces of cargo boxes up and down the alley.

“Evidence, sir. Someone could’ve left something, or maybe a specific cargo company was targeted? Moss didn’t want to leave any detail uncovered.” Phillips said, pushing his hands into his armpits for warmth, peering down the alley. The kids loudly continued their game.
“Well, if Moss ever figures it out, let us know.” John winked at Phillips as he hefted the last bit of evidence into his arms. He whistled loudly at the kids before pivoting and heading off in the opposite direction.

“Best of luck Phillips, come down for a pint at the Garrison sometime!” He said as he left.

Seven scrawny, wet and red cheeked children suddenly splashed up behind Phillips. Hand-me-down clothes and dirty, ragged shoes outfitted on all of them.

“Alice is the fastest, but James is the loudest.” The one in the red hat started. He was missing a tooth in the front, and he picked nervously at one of the buttons on his coat.

“You must be the bravest then, which ones the slowest?” Phillips asked genially. The kids looked at each other, sizing themselves up, before coming to a group conclusion.

“Amelia, but only cause she’s got one shoe.” The brave one spoke again, gesturing at one of the girls on the right.

“I’ll make sure to give you a head start then.” Phillips smiled at her. Amelia smiled toothily back and the kids excitedly skipped off back to their game. Hopefully the Shelby’s paid these kids, otherwise Phillips could see himself finding a spare shoe sometime today.

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“Mr. Sabini, Mr. Changretta is here.” A stodgy looking man announced, his voice reverberating around the empty club. Darby looked up in time to see Changretta sweep in, he had a small entourage of three men with him, each outfitted in dark grey suits, and one who was carrying what looked like a heavy bag. He stalked to Sabini’s desk, pulling out a chair and sitting. He pulled a small toothpick out of a box from his pocket and stared patiently at Darby.

“Mr. Changretta,” Darby started unsurely. They hadn’t had another meeting planned till next week. Darby watched as he put placed the toothpick daintily in his mouth.

“How can I help you?” He finished, putting aside his paperwork.

“Mr. Sabini, let me remind you, you asked me to help you take back London.” Changretta rasped. He turned the toothpick over in his mouth.

“You, asked for my help, and now I hear you’re looking into my business.” He blinked slowly at Darby. Darby couldn’t lie. Since Solomons had ousted him earlier in the year he’d been grasping at straws. He truly hadn’t expected Alfie, someone he’d known since he was eight, to team up with dirty, river gypsies and double cross him. It just wasn’t done, he’d been under the impression that he and Alfie had a standing agreement about London. No outsiders.

He’d only written Changretta in a last ditch effort to take back what was rightfully his. After seeing his work though, Darby had to admit, he may have been in over his head. He’d wanted London back, but it was starting to look more and more like he’d be running small parts of London for Changretta in the very near future.

When Darby looked into his work, he really only wanted to make sure he was actually snooping around and solving problems. He hadn’t meant to uncover the deep web of people surrounding Changretta. It turned out he knew someone everywhere, in every social standing and in every profession. He told people specifically what they’d need to know in order to complete their job, but never anything about himself, so he couldn’t be named by a witness. Which is how Changretta caught Darby snooping. As Darby had asked a cop on his payroll about Changretta’s coming and goings, but the cop had never met a Changretta. When Darby had become angry and yelled at him for somehow missing the extremely tall, dangerous looking man, the cop stopped him saying he
knew someone who fit that description, but by a different name. That was the first time Darby felt he may have gotten in over his head.

“Please don’t think of it as looking into your business. Please think of it as, me making sure you have what you need,” Darby gestured widely with his hands. Changretta gave him a dead stare as he spun the toothpick slowly. Finally he leaned forward, clapping his hands together.

“In the interest of your future involvement, I’m going to share some information that I have recently attained, and my thoughts on how plans will now proceed.” He took the toothpick out, tapping it on the table.

“A Shelby offered to buy the beat up merchandise from the work alley two days after the explosion, and a hotel maid in Epsom is selling similarly damaged items. Thomas Shelby was present for both bombings. No new evidence from the alley has since been discovered, so the police are writing it off as kids and will no longer be interfering, unless another incident occurs.” Changretta glanced at his watch and gestured to one of the men he’d brought with him.

The one carrying the bag stepped forward and Changretta pulled out a jagged piece of ripped metal, and a bedside table leg that had a chunk of splintered remains from the top of the table still attached.

“These, are both products of the bomb, a term I’ll use lightly here.” He set down the table leg first. It was sturdy, likely made to endure decades of rough use at the hands of many uncaring customers. “This, is a leg from an oak bedside table from the bombed hotel room, it hasn’t been cut,” Changretta ran his fingers along the top where it had been pulled from the body, the splintered section of what used to be the top stabbed out. “And this,” He picked up the ripped metal sheet. “Is from the alley, it also, hasn’t been cut.” He laid both items in front of Sabini.

“Mr. Sabini, what do you think could do this?” Changretta asked, gesturing to the two items. Darby opened his mouth to answer, but Changretta held up a hand to silence him.

“Distancing ourselves from the ‘bomb’ for a moment, Solomons has been gone from his rum house for two weeks, he left it guarded, but not so well you couldn’t be doing something about it.” He said this as though it were obvious. Darby could feel sweat gathering down his back. Changretta made it sound like he was letting Solomons take a vacation.

“Lastly, and most importantly, Solomons and Shelby are most certainly closer than business partners, they are rarely seen apart and according to the hotel maid from Epsom, they share ‘intimate affections’ for one another. If what they say about this Shelby is true though, then who could judge him? I’ve heard Shelby is a sight.” Changretta clicked his tongue and leaned back in his chair.

So Solomons was fucking Shelby. That was news to Darby. Although, he had been curious when the two began working together so frequently. Alfie had a use it and lose it type of personality. He’d never stayed with a business partner as long as he had with Shelby, and typically he’d fuck them over before killing them. Darby never considered that he might want to actually fuck one rather than fuck them over before. He’d seen Shelby before too, well, he’d beaten him up. It was dark when he’d met him, but from what he could tell he was small and had large pale blue eyes. He wasn’t what Darby would’ve put with Alfie. And Changretta, Changretta wanted to fuck him too?

“You think he’s a sight? You want to fuck another man?” Sabini asked disgustedly. It occurred to him he’d spoken out loud when Changretta leaned forward menacingly, and pointed at him with his toothpick.

“I’d be careful with how you speak to me Mr. Sabini, before were finished, I may very well fuck you too.” He leaned back, clapping his hands again.
“Now here’s what you’re going to do.”

Rounding the corner of Watery Lane, John splashed childishly into a puddle, aiming to coat as much of the building side as possible. It had been a game he’d played when he was younger, ‘Paint the Bricks’, an unimaginative name, but a fun game. Barring when Polly saw how dirty he got. He inspected his work, watching the grey slush run off the side of the brick, he never got enough height. The front door slammed open suddenly, shocking John as he whipped around.

“Bloody finally! I’ve been waiting for you!” Esme threw the door open further as she stepped out.

“Tommy and Alfie come back this week, when do we leave?” She asked, jutting her chin out with her hands on her hips.

“I’ll ask Tommy when he gets back, pretty sure all he needs is the books set, then we can be on our way.” John smiled down at her. Originally they’d agree to leave a month, maybe two after Tommy came back. Esme had been so despondent at not being able to travel with them however, that John felt the sooner they left the better. The kids were beyond excited to get out of Birmingham as well. Esme had been telling them stories every night of what they’d see, and where they’d go.

“We’ll take my wagon too, right? Like you promised.” Esme confirmed, her eyes seemed to grow larger as she was picturing it. There were times when John was furious with Tommy for arranging his marriage to Esme, and there were times when he couldn’t help but wonder if Tommy somehow knew she was perfect. He’d gotten distracted staring into her eyes though, she’d moved on from asking about traveling to picking at the metal in his arms.

“So this is the ripped metal everyone was talking about? You want to know what I think?” She tilted her head up at him as her fingers gently brushed over the jagged edges.

“I think it was an angry ghost from the steel line. Someone who died there after an accident. How would a human being tear apart metal?” She pulled one of the sheets from his arms, inspecting it as she guessed.

A few days after their family meeting Polly had pulled John aside and explained what happened. It was surreal, knowing how controlled Tommy was on a daily basis, and pitting that image against the wrecked alley was unnerving. John hated not including Esme in the family secret as well. Tommy had said she was family on multiple occasions, telling her to voice her opinion when the spirit moved her. Yet he didn’t include her in his own secrets and opinions. He didn’t really include anyone in those.

“Let’s look at it inside, Polly said it’s best if no one sees us with it.” John ushered her in with a glance around the street. Nobody seemed very interested in their conversation though. John kicked the door shut behind him as they strolled in, he could hear Polly in the kitchen bemoaning the state of the door and hallway as it shut. Everyone slammed the front door though, and the whole family had made a promise not to put breakable things in the hallway due to its constant state of movement.

“I swear to god, that door will break one day and it’ll be on your head John Shelby.” Polly snapped as she entered the hallway. Esme gave her a look as she passed her by on her way to the kitchen.

“Pol,” John shrugged futilely and threw his chin in the air at her chiding. “Everyone does it, I’ll buy a new one if it breaks, what does it matter?” He threw Phillips pile of evidence down in the corner and attempted to walk past her as Esme had, but she refused to budge.

“First of all; because you’re the only one that kicks it closed, second, if that’s from the alley, don’t leave it in the front goddamn hallway where anyone could see it, and third, you don’t always have
the money to replace a fucking door.” She listed off, towering over him despite being shorter. Sometimes John wished he’d inherited that icy, confident, intimidating air Polly always had about her. He used to wonder if it was learned or if it came naturally, and if it was learned, when he was supposed to have learnt it. Tommy seemed to have inherited it, using it naturally and gracefully, and he’d even seen Arthur use a form of it, albeit his version was a lot more violent and bloody. John figured that if he ever learned it, his version would fit along more with Arthur’s, and less with Tommy and Polly’s.

“Alright, alright, sorry. I’ll try not to kick it.” John muttered sufficiently chastised. It wasn’t like he had much choice, Polly was always right.

Tommy disagreed with that statement frequently though, and it had led to some major arguments between the two in the kitchen. John used to spy on them through the cracks in the living room wall, watching the wind whip around Tommy in fierce annoyance, and Polly always seeming to effortlessly ignore it. They’d always settle their differences in the end, but sometimes the kitchen would be left in shambles.

John was never sure how to approach Tommy when the wind whipped around him like that. Arthur advised him to just be cautious and watchful, Tommy couldn’t stop the wind from shoving him, or cutting him. It was scary though, seeing the cigarette smoke loom threateningly around his head, darkening and separating into thin needle-like points, just waiting to stab at your head, like he was wearing Jesus’s crown of thorns.

He’d asked Finn once what he thought when Tommy got like that, or if he ever saw the smoke lash out, but he’d ended up being maddeningly unhelpful. He’d never seen Tommy lose control, he’d only ever seen the smoke grow cloudier, and eventually, Tommy excusing himself to avoid choking everyone out with it.

Polly was asking him questions again.

“What did the copper say?” She looked frustrated with him. Honestly, he didn’t ask for this complicated, million plan operation into wealth. He’d been fine with making enough to live happily on. Esme had too. Tommy was the one that couldn’t stop!

“John, this is very important, do they have any leads at all.” Polly asked again.

“No, Phillips said nothing new came up in the last month, he said he finally gave in when he asked us to take it. That and Moss hadn’t had a new lead since he asked some bloke in a steel shop about his band saw.” John repeated, he picked up one of the pieces of metal and tapped at jagged edge.

“And the steel workers? Are they agreeing with that story?” She leaned forward slowly.

“Did you know Esme thinks a ghost did this?” He showed her the metal sheet, pointing to where it had been pulled apart.

“John, if Tommy wants to tell Esme, then he’ll tell Esme. It’s not your secret. Are the steel workers agreeing? Did the copper say if Moss was pursuing that?” She pushed again. John thought telling Esme might be helpful though, she’d also grown up hearing stories about people who could coerce the wind. Her favorites were the ones where gypsies would flip the hats off of evil coppers or push royalty into one another, they could never be blamed because it was always the wind. They were just the ones pushing the wind to do that.

“Yeah, He said no one had any leads. No one knows anything.” John scratched at his nose. Polly modded at that, and he handed her the evidence and made his way down to hall to Esme.

“John, Finn said there were four sheets of cut metal last time he looked, you only have three.” She
called after him.

It was two days, and several slushy, gray snow falls later before Tommy’s car rattled down the street. Alfie wouldn’t say he was glad to be back in Birmingham, but he was enormously glad to be out of the endless nothingness of wide open fields, lack of centralized heating and the constant necessary upkeep of wagons. He would miss some of the Lees, their kids were a riot, coming up with all sorts of stories and jokes to entertain themselves. He’d certainly miss Eddie, his misappropriately named horse, but most of all he thought he’d miss general care free air everyone, even Tommy, had about themselves while traveling.

He’d noticed just how relaxed Tommy had become when he started changing back into his black jacket and posh suit. It was like putting on a costume, stepping out of one person and into another. Typically when Tommy spoke, it was a means to an end, he was never a conversationalist, but he spoke very confidently and effortlessly ordered people around. When he wore the wool sweaters and soft clothes though, it brought out a rarely seen side of him, and he would freely reach for Alfie, holding his hand and never straying too far from his side, pointing at things on the horizon as they rode along. He would make very quiet commentary, only for Alfie’s ears, about what he saw and thought. No one outside the Shelby’s, and even a few of them would never believe him, but Alfie was dead sure Tommy was actually a soft spoken, reserved, people watcher who, despite the towering ambitions, really just wanted to hold hands and ride horses.

It led him to feel a sense of wanderlust he had never really been partial to. He’d always enjoyed London, and its gritty permanence, its unyielding drive to continue existing despite societies upper classes constantly shitting on it. Alfie saw a similar vein of that in the gypsies now, even if they didn’t live in small town houses, struggling furiously against their perceived betters, the gypsies refused to yield to the upper classes as well. It had been a memorable experience for sure.

Tommy spun the steering wheel, turning the car in a small bend and parked. He turned the car off and leaned back tiredly against the seat, looking over at Alfie. It had been a quiet drive home, what with Alfie being caught in his thoughts, and Tommy being naturally quiet. As well as both being tired from the traveling. Alfie could see Tommy closing back in on himself as they’d driven deeper into civilization, slowly reign in what little of his wilder side he’d let stay out after they’d left the Lees. Alfie vowed to work on Tommy showing that side more often, even if they weren’t in a wagon surrounded by horses and gypsies.

“Shall we face the noise?” Alfie quietly asked, patting Tommy’s knee. Tommy slumped forward with a sigh before leaning sideways to rest his head gently on Alfie’s shoulder. Alfie huffed a laugh, shifting his arm to come up around Tommy’s waist, pulling him closer.

“I know, it was a nice break. Cold, but nice.” They had talked a little about the panic attack, working on what had happened, and what to tell the Lees if they asked, but it seemed like Tommy was inclined to feel their trip was successful, despite the episode. Alfie desperately wanted to agree, having witnessed the gentle snowy dance the wind gave a few nights ago. The more time they spent in the open air, the more the wind was inclined to slow down. He hadn’t brought it up to Tommy yet, but he was starting to see where Tommy’s problem might be centralizing. It was a delicate sort of work, Alfie didn’t know how to control wind, and Tommy hadn’t ever spoken about how it felt when the wind moved around him. Whether it was like breathing, or if it was like having a second limb? Did deeper breaths make stronger gusts, or was it a case of, ‘When I flick my arm out the wind will rush in that direction?’

“I guess we’ll have to go in sometime.” Tommy looked like he was suffering an internal struggle. Alfie wouldn’t blame him, Arthur was likely to have a hundred questions, John would be excited,
and Esme, lord help them from Esme. She’d want a full report on her family and cousins, no stone unturned. He couldn’t fault them for wanting to say hi to their brother. Perhaps Ada would be home, that would be nice. She was a calmer presence, usually willing to wait for Tommy to talk first. Alfie made a mental promise to visit her in London more often. If there was anyone Tommy confided in about the wind, it was her, that and she was better at reading people than she let on. She probably hoarded secrets like Polly and Tommy did.

Tommy pulled away roughly as someone knocked rapidly on the back of the car, a small gust of wind flipping through Alfie’s hair as he did. The knocking moved closer to the window quickly, someone was shouting for Alfie.

“Alfie! Alfie, problem!” It sounded like Ollie. Alfie opened the passenger side door quickly.

“Ollie, Ollie mate, what’s wrong?” Alfie asked hauling himself out of the car. He could hear Tommy doing the same as he grabbed his cane.

“Sabini sacked the bakery, he’s trashed the place!” Ollie gasped out. It looked like he’d been running around Small Heath for hours trying to find Alfie. His eyes were wide and his curly hair was in tangles. His trousers from his knees down were soaked.

“He what?” Alfie’s eyes widened, he felt an icy tendril run into his stomach.

“Ok, ok. Tommy feel like driving to London?” Alfie asked, craning his neck looking for Tommy, only to find he’d already gotten back into the driver side and was starting the car.

“Ollie where’s your car?” Alfie asked suddenly realizing there were no other cars on the lane. “Ollie mate, where’s Arthur, or John?” Noticing the lack of them as well.

“Sabini slashed the tires on the cars, I took the train. Fastest alternative. As soon as I got here I asked around for you, but no one knew when you’d be getting in. Arthur Shelby said I should stay here and wait for you, so I could fill you in as quickly as possible.” He wiped his hands onto his trousers. “They said in the interest of good business partners they’d go down and start damage control.” Alfie could see Tommy’s shoulders deflate at that. Arthur and John on damage control in his bakery. He jumped back in the car and gestured for Ollie to jump in as well.

“Ollie tell us everything, and I do mean every little detail mate. When the fuck did it happen?” The car quickly pulled out of Watery Lane and back onto the road as Ollie began relaying the days events. He talked very quickly, and made small anxious gestures with his hands if words failed him. It sounded like Sabini had attacked the bakery yesterday evening, when Alfie’s hourly guard swapped. They’d snuck in through a side door and began tipping barrels and smashing bottles as fast as they could, and when the guards arrived they started shooting. Three of Solomons men and two of Sabinis were dead. The police on Solomons payroll only agreed to look the other way only when Ollie doubled the usual amount. It seemed like his guard did a fair job of keeping some of the bakery safe though. According to Ollie, his office hadn’t been hit, and only three of the stills were damaged.

“And Sabini says to set a date, he wants to talk business and says that he’s got new information to share with you, he says to bring your pet. His words.” Ollie quickly mumbled, glancing at Tommy, who rolled his neck at the slight and continued focusing on driving. Alfie peeked over as well, Sabini didn’t usually call Tommy his pet. It was always ‘the dirty gypsy’ or ‘the pikey’. He liked him calling Tommy his pet even less than he liked the other names though.

“Well fuck, if he wanted to chat he could’ve just stopped by. Strange for him to pull this and say he wants to talk after what happened, don’t you think Tommy?” Alfie looked over at Tommy, the wind hadn’t made so much as a whisper after Ollie had shown up.

“If he wants to talk, let’s talk.” Tommy shrugged.
Thank you so much for reading my giant wall of text! If you feel like it, please let me know your thoughts in the comments, it makes my day reading them. <3
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Arthur and John start the clean up process while Tommy checks up on Ada and meets a new enemy.

Chapter Notes

Please double check the tags!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

John kicked at a tipped barrel, rum spilling out as it lazily rolled away from him. Apparently Ollie hadn’t specified the extent of the damage when he’d blown through Small Heath, just the pressing need for Alfie, or a car to find him with if Alfie couldn’t be found. Ollie’s opinion on waiting for Alfie and Tommy had been lukewarm, given that he rarely took orders from people who weren’t Solomons, and Arthur was the furthest thing from him. He’d stayed though, he’d stayed and continued searching for Alfie, allowing Arthur and John to drive down and assess the damage. John had been shocked Arthur even wanted to help, considering his relationship with Alfie. He normally enjoyed Alfie’s misfortune, and he was particularly spiteful if Alfie got in trouble with Tommy. Something Ollie said must have been concerning enough that Arthur willingly offered help. He didn’t know what it was though, just that Arthur had come into the house yelling for John to get the car, and that they had business in London.

The bakery wasn’t the worst John had ever seen, as he’d sacked a business or two in his past, but it wasn’t going to be a fast clean up. Three of Solomons stills, those big, heavy, metal tubs suspended from wall, were broken open, allowing rum to cascade down in an obscene waterfall. If John were any less dignified he’d be under one, mouth open, willing to drown.

He was more refined these days. At least he hoped he was, Esme acted like his refinement was boring. She was more interested in letting loose and she’d be right under the still, dragging John with her if she were here. So maybe he was less refined than he thought, at least he wouldn’t dive under the tub in present company. Only if Esme were here, or maybe if Arthur looked the other way for a moment.

“Bloody hell, it’s like they didn’t even have a plan. Just trash it, trash anything you can get your hands on.” Arthur held up a ripped sales receipt. “Who sets something like that up? Aren’t we all a bit more organized than that?” He threw the receipt into a large rubbish bin and grabbed at whatever else littered the ground. “Tommy always has a target with this kind of crap.” He mumbled as he tossed broken bottles and snapped wood chips into the bin.

“Maybe damage was the target?” John guessed as he kicked at another barrel. The smell in Solomons bakery was usually a mix of aged spirits and damp wood, but with all the rum spilled out everywhere, the aged spirits smell was taking on a life of its own. John’s eyes watered as he stuck his head into another barrel, searching for anything Sabini’s men may have left behind. Arthur was right
though, gangsters like Alfie and Tommy and were more of a ‘meet up and discuss first, then blackmail, then sack if need be’ type. Even the ‘then sack if need be’ step was rarely as unprovoked as this. Alfie had beaten Sabini out of the race tracks nearly 6 months ago, fully uprooting him in a hostile takeover. Sabini hadn’t made a sound since. John had never seen bedroom eyes on Tommy before that day and he never wanted to see them again. No one should have bedroom eyes that large for someone planning violent takeovers.

“It’s just, this is the kind of stuff we used to pull back when we were small time.” Arthur sorted through a few more damp papers, stacking some into a pile and discarding others. How he knew what to save or bin was beyond John. “It’s making me feel a little nostalgic, remember the first time we raided one of Sabini’s clubs?” Arthur paused in his sorting, looking down at his hands. “On second thought, maybe it’s better these days.” He separated two sheets of paper, trying to decipher the waterlogged ink.

“Do you think Solomons needs a record of ‘Damaged Ingredients Received’?" Arthur squinted as he stretched the damp sheet out. “Potentially from 1920, or maybe 1921?” John sighed rolling his eyes upward. This was not what he’d thought damage control was.

“Mr. Shelby?” A rum-soaked worker rounded the corner. Solomons employees tolerated Arthur and John, they were helpful with directions, tools and the mechanics of how to fix everything, but they were frosty and tight lipped about anything John found interesting. Things like where Solomons office or his London house was. They’d told Arthur the office hadn’t been hit and refused to even take him there. They especially refused to give them directions to the London house, even though John was fairly sure Tommy lived there at points. If they trusted their brother, why not them?

“Yeah, mate what is it?” Arthur looked up from the damp papers. John couldn’t remember this workers name, but he was their designated guide for their time here. He was one of the nicer, if a little quiet ones. John wished they’d gotten William though, the beastly man that had greeted them at the door.

William had remembered Arthur from Alfie’s double cross, and made a point of asking him about his time in prison. He’d been surly, loud and violent, telling Arthur and him that everything was fine without them. John figured he was Alfie’s regular doorman, like their Scudboat. He looked fun to provoke and definitely like he could give hell if things got violent. He refused everything Arthur had said about ‘Coming in the interest of better business’ and ‘Shelby and Solomons had worked together for a while now’. He’d only let them through to work after Arthur swallowed his pride and argued that Alfie and Tommy would be coming down next and they’d sent him and John ahead as an immediate clean up crew. Something John now wished he’d declined, and instead had asked for guard duty.

“Alfie just got in. He’s asking for you.” The worker stated, pointing down the hall. They paused in their work to listen if Alfie was shouting, but couldn’t hear anything past the steady drip of rum escaping from the barrels.

“Bloody finally! I’m sick of all the cleaning.” John broke the silence, tossing a barrel to the side and heading down the hallway. Arthur wasn’t far behind.

Passing pipes and barrels they finally came upon the entry way, spying Tommy. His back was to them, hands shoved deep into his pockets as he looked over at the damage, repair expenses probably running through his mind. He looked like his trip actually did him some good, the hard line of his shoulders had eased and he was almost slouching. John hadn’t seen Tommy slouch since before the war, he’d been all perfect posture and hard eyes since. Whatever Alfie and him had gotten up to must have brought a hidden piece of him back out, John wouldn’t say it out loud, but he was almost giddy
to see it. He’d thought Tommy had destroyed the old pieces of himself, if they were just hidden, then maybe they had a chance of the old Tommy showing himself. John would be ready if that happened, he’d bring wild horses, an ungodly amount of whiskey and Esme and her caravan, it’d be perfect.

“Tom.” Arthur spoke first, jarring Tommy and John from their thoughts. A wisp of wind teased through Arthur’s mustache and up into Johns hair. Arthur looked conflicted, his face pinching like he was building up the courage to ask Tommy something.

“Has Sabini set anything up with either of you?” Tommy didn’t give him a chance to ask, pivoting on one foot to look up at them. “Gotten a message to you?” John doubted anyone would request him to a meeting. It was always Tommy or Arthur, John just made sure they had backup when they needed it. “Have you checked on Ada?” That one John hadn’t been expecting.

“Why? She’d have said something if she’d gotten trashed don’t you think?” John blurted out. Tommy narrowed his eyes for a second, his hands twitching in his pockets as if he wanted to light a cigarette, but thought better of it. John was glad for the lack of cigarette smoke though, he couldn’t see the angry shapes the wind made without it.

“Because she’s your sister, and because Sabini knows she exists.” Tommy tilted his head forward, somehow looking down at John despite being shorter. John hadn’t thought of that. Ada has been firm in her decision to not be apart of the Blinders, leaving the whole of gang life behind, striking out on her own in London. Even he’d admit it was dumb to assume rival gangs would leave her out of it.

“I sent one of Solomons’ men out to check in on her.” Arthur brushed his mustache. “He said he’d stay with her until I checked in.” He mimicked Tommy, shoving his hands into his pockets. Tommy nodded and resumed looking around. “What is all this then Tom?” Arthur dragged one hand out of its pocket to gesture at the wreckage. Tommy clicked his tongue and shrugged one shoulder, hands jerking again in another aborted attempt to pull out a cigarette.

“Alfie is over at the ageing barrels, he’d like you to fill him in on what you’ve found or done since you got here. I’ll go check in on Ada.” Tommy nodded at the two, spinning on his foot as he set off back onto the icy, London streets.

“Tom, I don’t like Sabini pulling this shit!” Arthur called after him. John sighed, Esme was going to be pissed at him when he came back to Birmingham.

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Tommy ripped his hands out of his pockets, lighting a cigarette quickly as he walked. He’d leave the car for Alfie, Ada’s house was too close to bother driving. The smoke was subtly lingering, hanging closely to his ears as if listening for trouble. He picked at the bandages on his hands, a few more days and they’d be scabbed over. He was glad Arthur and John hadn’t seen them, they’d have started asking too many questions if they had, ‘Did you get into a fight?’ Or ‘Did something happen while travelling?’ the worst one being ‘Was it the wind?’.

Arthur was especially skilled at guessing when it had been the wind. When they were younger Tommy used to flick the wind out, slicing thin cuts into kids who they had gotten into scraps with. Arthur had gotten used to seeing those cuts on kids and began to worry when Tommy came home with identical ones.

The wind shook around his ears apprehensively, sparking out in all directions. It had been oddly calm throughout their drive to London, but Tommy put that down to his frame of mind. If he focused, the wind would too, it might not go where he wanted it to, but it would match his mood. It was just a drop in the bucket of control, but it was a start. Alfie needed help, and Tommy could focus
for him, wild wind or not.

It all fell back to Sabini, and Tommy was very unsure of that business. He was slimy, sure enough, but he wouldn’t have used ‘Pet’ to refer to Tommy unless he knew about their relationship. They’d been so careful about anyone catching them, and Sabini wasn’t the type to hold information this damming over their heads and not tell anyone. He’d sell it everywhere and anywhere as fast as he could to get back on top. Setting up a meeting to blackmail them was too slow for him. Tommy had never stopped his watch detail on Sabini either, paying different Brummie’s who wanted a taste of London a few quid to keep tabs on him throughout the past months. They’d always said the same thing. ‘He’s sad, and drowning his sorrows in alcohol,’ or ‘He’s mad, and picking fights he isn’t sure he’ll win.’ At some point he picked up enough men to raid Alfie’s bakery underneath his nose though. The Sabini that sacked the bakery didn’t sound like the same Sabini his men described. The smoke slid down around his neck, circling anxiously, leaving an ashy taste in Tommy’s mouth.

It was hardly a 20 minute walk to Ada’s house, but in the bitter cold it felt twice as long. The ice, snow and muddy slush had soaked their way up to Tommy’s knees, leaving him shivering, and desperate to get inside. Coming upon her house he jumped up the three steps to the front door, digging in his pockets for her house key. Fishing it out, he knocked loudly on the door shouting to Ada, letting her know he was coming in. He could smell her faint perfume and a wood burning fire inside, he threw his coat onto a coat hook as he kicked off his wet shoes, stabbing the last dredges of his cigarette out. He could feel the pleasantly warm fire near by making him glad to be out of the cold. He rounded the corner into the living room, but barely made it past the door frame before jerking to a stop. The living room was pristine, complete with a happily burning fire in the fireplace, not an item out of place, except for a blood soaked man propped up in an armchair.

Tommy glanced around the room before rushing to him and checking if he was alive. The wind flitted around the room in his rush, rustling curtains and papers. The man was dead, the blood had already begun turning brown on his clothes. From the looks of his tallit it was the man Arthur had sent to watch Ada. He’d been shot multiple times, and choked going on the bruises around his neck. Tommy didn’t know his name, but he’d seen him in Alfie’s bakery before. He was a massive, fighting man, exactly that type that Arthur would send to guard their little sister. A trickle of icy fear dripped down Tommy’s throat, the man was strong, and a frequent boxer. Tommy would have bet it would take at least four men to take him down.

Tommy stood up silently, quickly walking to the attached sitting room doors and pulling his gun out of its holster. There were no noises in the house beyond the gently crackling fire. He couldn’t see anyone through the misty glass door into the sitting room and circled the whole lower landing. Sweat beading down his back as every room he passed was as empty as the last. Tommy debated running back to the bakery for backup, but it was 20 minutes away and if Ada was still in the house he wouldn’t be able to live with himself if he left her. Finally he came to the stairs. This wasn’t Watery Lane, Tommy didn’t know every step like the back of his hand, if someone was still in the house they would absolutely know where he was if he tried climbing the stairs. Tommy took in a slow, measured breath. Ada was smart, and she would’ve made a huge mess if Karl or she’d been hurt, but everything in her house was where it should be. It didn’t look like a struggle had happened. Then again, the dead man in her living room spoke otherwise. Tommy stared up the looming stairs, rapidly becoming more worried.

If there were ever a time for the wind to be a loud, angry monstrosity, and slam all the doors open at once, shocking the killer out it would be now. When he was younger, moving the wind was a matter of just telling it where to go, whispering to it as if it were a mischievous friend. Maybe it went deaf in the tunnels, and just needed to be pointed in the right direction? Tommy could point, he wasn’t above pointing. He extended a bandaged hand outward, and pointed up with his finger. He could feel the wind gathering, but it wasn’t leaving, it chose instead to anxiously circle around his head and
down his back. Sighing in defeat, he began gently, and as quietly as he could, making his way up the stairs. The wind rushing out ahead of every few steps he took, before dashing back to circle around him.

He heard papers flipping, immediately turning his down the hall toward Ada’s office. With every step he took his mind whirred with possibilities. What if Ada was dead, and Karl too? What if someone kidnapped them? What if someone shot him the second he opened the door and the last words he said to Alfie was a pathetic ‘We’ll figure it out,’? He stopped in front of the door. More papers were rustling inside and he could hear a drawer being opened. If there were ever a time to bite the proverbial bullet, this was it. He steeled his nerves and twisted the door knob open, letting the door slide open on its own as he leaned on the frame, aiming his gun to where he hoped the intruder would be. Ada wasn’t in there, but a hook nosed man was seated in her chair. He looked up, fascination spreading across his face as he took in Tommy, as if he wasn’t expecting him.

“You’re definitely not Arthur Shelby.” The man said slowly, closing the drawer. He leaned back in the chair, slowly observing Tommy. The dead man downstairs must’ve said Arthur sent him before he was killed. “See, I have plans for Arthur Shelby, but you,” The man clicked his tongue, whistling lowly. “I was not expecting you. You must be Thomas Shelby.” He pushed a few papers to the side. If he had plans for Arthur, it might explain how he’d succeeded in killing the boxer downstairs. Tommy was as much a fighting man as his brothers, being slighter than the others only pushed him to be more vicious, but if the man originally planned on taking Arthur out, Tommy’s chances of winning would be slim. This wasn’t a fight yet though, just a negotiation. A negotiation for Ada.

“I must be,” Tommy admitted. “Where is my sister, and her son?” taking the most direct approach, tilting his gun further at the man. The wind that had been looping around his neck just moments ago slowed as he spoke, becoming uncharacteristically still. Tommy took a moment to observe the intruder. He was dressed nicely, in thick, black leather and his hair was slicked back in an American style. Given his hair style, it was unsurprising that his accent was similarly American. He didn’t look familiar at all. The man pointed at Tommy and began speaking again.

“The stories people tell about you, do not do you justice.” His eyes narrowed as he studied Tommy. He pushed himself out of the seat, drawing himself to his full height. He was exceedingly tall, towering over Tommy. “You’re all blue eyes they say, all blue eyes and a pretty face. Did you know?” He slowly walked around the desk, coming to a stop in front of Tommy, whose gun was now being pressed into the man's chest. Tommy refused to back up, holding his ground. He couldn’t kill him, but a bullet in the man’s arm would make him feel better. “They never mentioned how small you are though.” The man’s eyes slowly made their way up Tommy’s body, finally landing on his face.

“Again, where is my sister and her son?” Tommy asked, tired of this game. So people commented on his features, if the man wanted to wax poetic about him, he could do it on his own time. Tommy pressed the gun further into his chest. The man stared down at him before a slow, horrible smile took over his face.

“You won’t kill me, who will tell you where they are if you kill me?” The man whispered in his ear, leaning down, pushing himself closer to Tommy. He was massive, hulking over him with significantly more body mass, Tommy barely came up chin. Backing up was seeming like a better idea now, he edged his foot backwards, leaning as far away from the man as his pride let him. He glared coldly, and slowly tried pushing the gun from the man’s chest to aim at his arm.

“I guess I’ll be bringing The Pet to the meeting then.” The intruder’s smile grew as recognition spread across Tommy’s face. He quickly ripped his arm to the side to shoot him, but the other man was faster, his arms reached out like lightning, one grabbing Tommy around his waist in an iron grip,
dragging him closer and the other grabbing hold of his gun. Tommy jerked backward but couldn’t
break his hold. His breath came out fast as he slid forward against his will. The wind hadn’t reacted
at all, remaining as still as water around him, or maybe it left him completely. He pulled hard on his
gun, trying to dislodge the man’s hand and slamming his free hand as hard as he could into his face.
The man was pressing him too close to do any painful damage though.

“Calm down now, calm down,” The man whispered, his thumb rubbing bruising circles into
Tommy’s side. Shoving backwards again, Tommy clawed at the man’s heavy grip, leaving scratch
marks down his hands and wrists. He was lifted suddenly, making him shriek, and shout ‘No!’ as he
flailed, the tall man hefted him up higher, pressing him flush against his hip and carried him over to
Ada’s desk.

Tommy tried kicking out, but he was too close to the man to get any leverage. The man pinned him
to the table roughly, struggling to separate his legs so he could stand between them. Tommy could
feel Ada’s papers and pens beneath his back as he kicked out again, trying desperately to free his gun
and aim it at the man. One hand was pushing painfully on his stomach, and the other was slowly
tugging the gun out of his hand. He couldn’t get him off, he pushed harder at the man’s chest, small
terrified noises escaping him as the man pressed him further into the desk. He couldn’t breathe.

“Calm down, I just want a feel before any deals get made, nothing’s gonna happen to you.” The man
finally succeeded in forcing his legs apart and stood firmly in between them, the hand pinning him
painfully at his stomach as he slid over, bruisingly grabbing ahold of his hip and dragging Tommy
closer and pressing up hard against his crotch. Tommy’s free hand fighting him the whole way,
ripping the man’s sleeve as he tried to pull him off. The papers were flying off the desk in their
struggle, and a brass lamp had fallen loudly to the floor. The man succeeded in pulling the gun out of
his bandaged hand, throwing it on the ground. Tommy couldn’t feel the wind anymore, or any air at
all really. It had to have left him. Lacking his gun he started clawing at the man’s face with both
hands, scratching one deep mark into the man’s eyebrow before having his hands pulled tightly next
to each other and pushed above his head.

“With how you’re acting, I’d say this is your first time, how long have you been in this business?”
He reached down slipping under Tommy’s trousers and grabbing ahold of his arse. Tommy tried to
yell, or say anything, but he couldn’t breathe. His hands crept further down, fondling as he went,
Tommy’s pupils shrinking smaller and smaller with every inch he explored. The man huffed a quiet
laugh, cooing at him to calm down again. His fingers dipped lower.

The windows exploded, shattering glass, wind rushing in as loud as a freight train, tipping the
massive desk Tommy was pinned to. The man ducked down, attempting to escape the explosion, but
he was thrown backwards as glass rained down and wind careened into the room. Tommy threw one
arm over his head futilely blocking the glass as he tried staggering to his feet, struggling to push
through the wreckage spinning around the room. The gales grew stronger, warping the floor and
pulling up nails, causing the office to creak and groan, the larger glass pieces had been crushed into
shards, shredding everything from the curtains to the arm chairs.

Tommy succeeded in pulling himself to his feet and began cutting a path through the windstorm. He
dove out into the hallway, the cyclone barreling around him as he ran, he very nearly cleared the
handrail when a hand grabbed his arm tightly, spinning him around to face the other man. Tommy
reacted instinctively, lifting his free hand to hit the man as hard as he could and kicking at his knees,
but his grip just tightened. The cyclone continued growing loudly around them, ripping up portraits
and tearing the floor runners. Tommy struggled desperately, he was sore, cold and humiliated. He’d
found out he had bigger problems than Sabini, and even more problems than he originally thought.

“Let go!” Tommy screamed over the roar of the wind. Several posts on the railing banister were
ripped off and thrown into the cyclone, spinning madly around the upper hall. One of the wooden
posts swung dangerously close, causing both Tommy and the man to duck out of its way as it spun
madly passed them, breaking into splinters as it hit a wall.
“Let go!” Tommy screamed again, throwing his free hand up to hit him, but he was beaten to it by an
arc of wind that had broken free from the cyclone. A sickle shaped burst of wind cut deeply into the
hand holding Tommy, finally allowing him to break free and stumble down the stairs. Tommy had
just enough sense left to steal out the back door and out into the quiet, icy alleyways, gasping fiercely
as he ran.

He glanced upwards, choking on his breaths. The sky was a whirling, angry grey, deeply mottled
with thick plumes of circling clouds, looming high above London. He spun and ran towards Alfie’s
bakery, a sharp snap of wind careened down the street in front of him as of leading the way. People
were coming out of their homes and pointing at the sky. It occurred to Tommy, nearly five minutes
into his sprint that he wasn’t wearing his coat or shoes, and he couldn’t feel his feet. Although, with
his torn clothes and bare feet, he must’ve passed well enough for a beggar that no one really paid him
any mind. They were all far more interested and concerned in the potential cyclone forming.

Tommy slowed down as the bakery came into view, breathing hard as he choked on the icy air. His
feet were heavy and numb, and the cold bit into him, stabbing painful pricks into his uncovered skin.
A delayed terror was setting in as well, building in his chest, threatening to escape. His throat
betrayed him, allowing soft, traumatized cries to escape as he leant against a brick wall. He’d gotten
Ada and Karl kidnapped. He’d gotten Alfie’s bakery sacked. He’d brought whoever that man was
down on their heads. The wind coiled loosely around his head, breaking off every few seconds to
send snow flurries around him. Tommy pushed himself off the wall, his feet stinging fiercely as he
walked on them, punishing him for his lapse in running. He sped up trying to ignore the pain,
coming upon the doorway guarded by William.

“William,” Tommy croaked out, coughing. “‘Scuse me.” Tommy gasped, dragging in as much air as
he could. William blinked at him before slowly and unsurely opening the door to allow him in. The
bakery wasn’t warm. Tommy didn’t know why he thought it would be, it was a massive brick, rum
house full of metal stills. It was normally warmer than outside, but at the moment it felt even colder.
Why had he thought the bakery would be warm?

“Alfie!” William shouted loudly behind Tommy, startling him from his stupor. “Alfie, Shelby’s got a
problem!” Tommy held his hands up to his ears to block out William’s yelling.

“Shelby, do you know where you are?” William’s face came into view. “You ever had shell shock
before?” Tommy jerked fearfully as William’s hands bracketed his shoulders. The wind blustered
through the open doorway, slamming the door into the wall. William glanced alarmingly at it before
his eyes returned to Tommy. “You’re very cold lookin’ mate, and you got no shoes on.” Of course
he had no shoes on, he’d left them at Ada’s house. Well, what was left of her house.

Tommy could hear the sound of someone running, and maybe shouting. He definitely recognized
Arthur’s voice, but he couldn’t hear Alfie’s. He started to feel like he was swimming. Machines in
the bakery began floating around him of their own free will. Tommy shut his eyes tightly and
reopened them, seeing if the bakery was still moving. It was. Large hands cupped his head suddenly,
grounding him once more to reality. He struggled against them for a moment before realizing that
these hands weren’t as scary as the other man’s hands, Arthur’s eyes came along with these hands.
Arthur was swimming too apparently, he sounded like he was underwater. Tommy couldn’t
understand where all this water appeared from so suddenly in the bakery. Maybe it was rum? Rum
would explain why his head felt so heavy. Arthur was grabbing him under his arms and pulling him
up. Maybe he was drowning, that would explain the burning feeling in his lungs. It wasn’t that bad,
drowning. Maybe it was because he was drowning in rum though, that Tommy didn’t mind.
Alfie dashed around the corner in time to watch Tommy faint into Arthur’s arms. He’d been in his office when William called for him, Arthur was further up the hallway and already running when William’s shouting took on a more concerned tone.

“What the bloody hell happened?” Arthur shouted at William, cradling Tommy gently. Tommy looked worse for wear. Alfie knelt down by him, running a hand through his hair, hoping the pretense for a head wound would go unsaid. He was bloody, soaked through, he had no shoes on, and one bandage missing. He looked extremely small in Arthur’s arms, especially without the coat. Extremely small and extremely cold.

“He just showed up like that! He walked right up to me and said ‘excuse me’!” William answered, equally as confused as Arthur and Alfie. Alfie jumped up and ran to the open doorway looking outside. He wasn’t sure what he was expecting, maybe Sabini and a car load of gunmen, or a trail of bloody bodies marking Tommy’s path, but he found instead, an alarmingly big funnel cloud high in the sky. It looked like it was dissipating though, as more bright grey clouds than dark ones were breaking through the thick cloud line. Alfie glanced down the street, icy wind danced across his face, bringing flurries of dirty snow with it. The wind was agitated, indecisively tossing between gentle breezes and sharper ones.

“William, how long has that been in the fucking sky?” Alfie pointed upwards. Arthur and William glanced out the open door, Arthur’s eyes widening as he took in the clouds, William looked thoughtful for a moment, thinking back on the last hour or so. Alfie kneeled back down on the cold floor by Tommy again as William thought, moving his sleeve up to see the bloody damage, spying a multitude of bruises forming. Arthur followed his train of thought lifting his other arm, noting a similar pattern. Maybe someone tried to grab him off the street?

“Maybe half an hour? I’ve seen tornados before though, been in one even, and this one is too high up to touch down, it’s a bloody fast spinner though.” William assured Alfie confidently. Alfie was sure of William’s experience with a naturally forming tornado, but he had just recently, one second ago really, discovered that Tommy could be frightened into creating his own cyclones. Tommy’s cyclones might not be bound by the same elemental laws as naturally occurring ones were either.

“Ok, William go outside and loop the block, try and see if you can tell what happened.” Alfie ordered. The second William was outside Alfie moved to grab ahold of Tommy, but Arthur’s arms clenched tightly around him, pulling him further from Alfie and more into Arthur’s lap. The wild eyed glare Arthur threw at him reminded Alfie why they called him a ‘Mad Dog’. Huffing, Alfie resorted himself to folding Tommy’s sleeves up and out of the way so they wouldn’t stick to the cuts, thinking of how he could reason with Arthur. Thank god John had gone to dump the rubbish, two angry Shelby’s was more than he could deal with right now. “Let’s go away from the door, my office is warmer.” He held his hands out once more, asking Arthur silently to hand Tommy over.

“Like hell I’m giving him to you. Barely an hour in London and look what you people did.” Arthur spat at him. Alfie’s composure was slipping, and bordering on snapping. Tommy would not like it if he woke up and found his brother dead. He’d probably be even more angry if he woke up on the cold, hard ground to discover Alfie and Arthur had beaten each other bloody arguing. He took a massively deep breath before he regrouping what little patience he could find deep inside to deal with Arthur.

“Arthur, William will be back soon, and he’ll tell us what he’s learned about the huge, bloody tornado in the sky,” Alfie paused pointing upwards. “And we’ll sit here, making excuses, like we don’t fucking know how that happened, while we all freeze on the cold, fucking floor.” He looked
down at Tommy, whose head rested on Arthur’s shoulder. He wasn’t shivering, but he still looked cold. Arthur must have tucked his hands under his chin unconsciously, used to seeing Tommy sleep like that. “Or, we go to my office, where there is a couch and blankets and we start a bit of damage control.” In Alfie’s opinion, the correct option was very easy to pick. Arthur’s glare was steely though, and hadn’t abated in the slightest. He tucked Tommy further into his chest, and stood up shakily, ignoring Alfie’s offered hand. They slowly made their way to Alfie’s office, Arthur carrying Tommy despite Alfie offering and depositing him onto the couch. Arthur found the only two blankets in the office, bundling them around Tommy and tucking them under his chin. He fusssed constantly, tucking the blankets under Tommy’s feet and dabbing at bloody cuts on his face, never failing to throw an icy glare at Alfie as he did. Alfie couldn’t stand it anymore, he’d been more than cordial, letting Arthur glare and snarl angrily at him like he’d done something wrong even when he hadn’t.

“Arthur, I swear to god if you keep glaring at me, I’m going to hit you, what is it you think I’ve done?” Alfie pushed Arthur away from Tommy gently. The blanket moved, causing both of them to glance down at Tommy, watching as groggy, blue eyes blinked open slowly, and one hand escaped the blanket to scratch at the cuts on his face. Alfie knelt down quietly, redirecting Tommy’s hand, avoiding the cuts as he rubbed some warmth into it.

“Tommy?” Alfie progressed up his wrists slowly, there was even less undamaged skin there, dark purple and blue bruises had begun mottling the skin in force. Tommy’s grogginess cleared slowly, as reality crept. He looked into Alfie and Arthur’s concerned eyes, taking in the office and his damp, ragged state. He blinked slowly, clearing the last dredges of confusion from his eyes, and taking a deep breath before speaking.

“Ada and Karl have been kidnapped and I think Sabini has a new coworker.” Alfie froze in his massage, he could hear Arthur’s sharp gasp. Tommy pulled his hand free from Alfie.

“Tommy, what happened?” Arthur moved closer, but Tommy curled away from him, tugging the blanket up over his head and closing his eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Oh good lord, I stressed about posting this chapter. Thank you for reading as always and please let me know your thoughts in the comments! They make me smile ;)}
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Some detective work begins and Tommy and Alfie have a discussion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Arthur shifted uncomfortably in his hard wooden chair, staring down at the worn letter in his hands. Solomons' clocked ticked quietly in the corner. They'd been sitting here for hours, planning and replanning, checking on Tommy often to make sure he was alright. Coupled with being frequently snipped at by him if they weren't subtle enough when they pulled the blanket over Tommy’s feet or tried to stop him from scratching at his cuts. The strong smell of rum still lingered heavily, but after sitting in it for so long, Arthur could barely smell it.

Everything they could immediately do to find Ada and Karl they’d done. John had returned shortly after Tommy woke up, and all hell had broken loose leading Tommy to send him back to Birmingham to inform Polly and rest of the Peaky Blinders. Arthur didn’t fancy the telephone call they’d receive tonight. Ollie appeared nervously after John left with another note from Sabini, requesting again for a meeting and stating Ada and Karl were safe for the moment. They’d called every informant and sent out every runner Solomons had in his employment then. Each one returned with slightly more information, building a slow forming picture of what had been happening beneath their noses this whole time.

Sabini had written to somebody, who they still didn't have a name for, and whoever he was, was apparently very skilled at removing gangs. Several of the runners mentioned the mafia, and others said he was Italian, but most seemed sure he was American, including Tommy. From the minute his feet hit British soil he’d started working, creating a network spanning London to Birmingham, listening and collecting information.

They couldn’t be sure what he knew specifically about, but Arthur was positive he had a piece of sheet metal from the destroyed alley, and cited John’s lack of collecting all of the evidence when he’d bought it from the copper. When a runner mentioned that he’d gotten ahold of destroyed furniture from a hotel room, Arthur thought Solomons would snap and kill the kid. His face had grown steadily darker and darker with each new bit of information revealed, Tommy’s face had done the opposite, whitening as more runners came by. It came to a head when one of the informants, an especially twitchy one, brought up someone seeing Tommy and Solomons enter Solomons’ house and not leaving till morning.

They’d taken a break then thankfully, with Solomons leaving Arthur and Tommy alone to check up
on Ollie. Arthur was exhausted, after watching Tommy panic and scare himself in fainting and learning about Ada and Karl, he’d had enough of today, and he could feel his mind drifting as it started to wander.

It wandered all the way to the old days, back when he was head of the family. They’d done ok with him leading, they’d always broken even. Ada had never been kidnapped while he was in charge, but they’d never have gotten Michael if he’d remained. When Tommy took over, money began pouring in, from places Arthur didn’t know and people he’d never met. Tommy knew them, and he said Arthur didn’t need to.

Arthur wished for the old days now, back then he could just tell Tommy to explain his thoughts, explain what went wrong, and Tommy would. He knew Ada and Karl getting kidnapped wasn’t solely Tommy’s fault, given that he may have been travelling when it had happened, but Tommy was the one in love with the crazy Jew, and he was the reason all of this happened. If nothing else changed from today, Arthur knew he would never send another person to check up on his little sister again, he’d do it personally from now on.

He glanced back down at the letter in his hands. It had been in his pocket a while now, folded and refolded enough times that if you set it down on a table, it would start folding itself.

‘From one deposed boss to another,’ The letter began. Arthur had tried to bring the letter up to Tommy earlier, but he’d left for Ada’s too quickly, so he’d resigned himself to waiting until Tommy came back. Even then though he hadn’t gotten a chance. After passing out from stress, cold, or shell shock, potentially a combination of all three, he’d been tucked under a blanket, probably feeling as much guilt as Arthur was, and refusing to come out from under. Arthur didn’t want to say he was scared, scared wasn’t a word he ever liked to use. He was already terrified for Ada though, and he didn’t know what could send Tommy into this sort of a state. He didn’t really want to find out either.

‘In the interest of retaining or re-acquiring our earned wealth, in whatever capacity that may be,’ The letter continued. Not ten minutes after tucking the blanket over his head Tommy threw it off, swinging himself up and off the couch, tipping alarmingly before Solomons caught him. Solomons seemed to have some sort of godly sway over Tommy’s actions as well because he told Tommy quite firmly if he moved again there’d be hell to pay, and he hadn’t moved from the couch since. He’d sat in Solomon’s office silently planning, unwilling to leave to the London house to change into warm clothes or eat even when Solomons offered that option. The wind around him had been shockingly compliant with his stillness as well, Arthur would have sworn it wasn’t there if he hadn’t known it constantly surrounded him. He pressed down on the crease of the letter.

‘I ask you, Arthur Shelby, to meet with me.’ It stated further that they’d meet tonight if Arthur agreed. The handwriting was fancy, fancier than Arthur’s at least. None of the Shelby’s had nice handwriting like that, they’d spent their youths learning how to hold knives rather than pencils. Polly used to say none of them would be able to write to each other when they lived far away, cause no
one would be able to read anyone’s handwriting. They couldn’t write if they were dead though either.

‘Signed, Darby Sabini.’ Tommy flinched, rubbing at his wrist. Since returning to the office, his arms had darkened considerably, bruising colorfully starting at his wrists and splotching up to his elbows. If he had to guess what had happened, and he’d learned that he really shouldn’t guess about what Tommy could get up to in an hour, he’d say it was a particularly nasty surprise attack, one Tommy seemed to have won, seeing as he was here and not dead or dying in a ditch. His eyes had taken on a haunted look though, one Arthur hadn’t seen since the early days just after the war.

“That’s all it says?” Tommy asked, dragging his too large eyes up to stare at Arthur. He leaned back a little, possibly the most he’d moved in an hour, before jerking forward again. “And the second letter, the one Ollie was given today, doesn’t have a time or date set, just the request for the meeting and a statement that Ada and Karl are safe for now.” Tommy confirmed, resuming staring, dead eyed and impassive at the office wall behind Arthur.

“Meet with him, see what he says.” Tommy sniffed. Arthur had never met Sabini, his nasty cousin Mario, sure. Never Sabini though.

“How do we know this isn’t a trap?” Arthur asked, turned the letter over in his hands.

“We don’t, but Sabini has done this before.” Tommy began. “If he’s asking for help then we’ll know he’s in over his head. We can use that.” He finished, grabbing his shirt sleeve tightly, focusing on Arthur again, his eyes pinning him. “If the American shows up, leave.” Arthur glanced down at the letter, pressing the creases again.

A whisper of wind brushed around his face, curling down the back of his neck, wandering more gently than it had in years. Back when Tommy had control of it, it was almost constantly breezing around his hands, and when he’d see Arthur or John or any of their siblings really, the wind would rush out and gently dance around their faces. As if Tommy was checking on them from far away, ruffling through their hair. Feeling that now only worried Arthur. He was undoubtedly the best fighter in the family, he’d taught them all how to fight in some way or another. Tommy shouldn’t have to worry about Arthur being kidnapped, why would they want him? Especially since they already had Ada.

“The American, Tom?” Arthur questioned, Tommy had mentioned Sabini’s new coworker earlier, but he’d neglected to say anything after that, tucking his head into the blanket, and refusing to come out from under to explain anything. It has to be the same American the runners were referencing. Arthur wanted desperately to reach into Tommy’s head and just pull the information out. What did the American really want, would he be ok with Sabini’s territory, or would he take over all of London? All of Birmingham?
“You’re positive the American doesn’t have a name?” Solomons asked, jarring Tommy and Arthur from their conversation to look at him. Arthur didn’t know how long he was standing in the doorway, but it was apparently long enough to eavesdrop. They were having a private, family conversation, even if it was being held in Solomons’ office it didn’t give him the right to comment. He was on the right track however.

“Yeah,” Arthur turned to look back at Tommy. “Does he?” Tommy’s eyes slowly slid off of Solomons’ face, a silent conversation happening between them before reaching Arthur’s.

“No.” Tommy resumed fussing with his shirt cuff, twisting it and pulling at it anxiously. Solomons quietly walked over to him, reaching out to redirect his hands. He hardly touched Tommy’s sleeve though before Tommy pulled himself roughly out of his reach and to the other edge of the couch. Solomons stopped short, lowering his hands in a calming gesture as Tommy’s eyes flicked to Arthur before looping back up at Solomons.

“Arthur, do you feel like maybe giving us a moment? Possibly several?” Solomons huffed, craning his head to look at Arthur. Arthur wasn’t feeling very inclined to leave though, especially after watching Tommy pull himself away from Solomons.

“I don’t know, Tommy should I leave? I don’t know what he’ll get up to if I go.” He argued. He knew what Solomons would get up to, he just didn’t want Tommy being anymore stressed by him and he didn’t want to have to rush into another room and watch someone faint again if he didn’t have to. It was very likely Solomons was going to ask about what happened and Arthur didn’t want to leave if Tommy didn’t feel safe. Although those wouldn’t be the words he’d use if he had to speak them.

“What I’ll get up to?” Solomons asked, his arms wide in confusion, gesturing at the ragged, exhausted state of Tommy. “What do you think I’ll do?” Solomons turned fully to look at Arthur, sheer exasperation running through his eyes. Arthur was tempted to punch that look off of his face. Tommy eyes narrowed, clearly disliking being the subject of this conversation.

“He’s in a state is all!” Arthur started, arguing further. He rocked forward and out of his wooden chair, one hand forming a tight fist, the other whipping up to shove in Solomons face, quickly organizing his thoughts into what could be a loud argument.

“Arthur!” Tommy snapped sharply, his face stormy as the longer hair on top of his head bristled, looking as if the wind was running through it in annoyance. A small burst of wind rocketed out, blowing around Arthur’s face.
“Alright, alright, I’m going.” Arthur brushed at his mustache. “Meet with Sabini tonight in a one on one, see what he says and leave if the American shows up, easy.” Tommy’s scathing glare followed him as he left the office.

“Bring William!” Tommy shouted as Arthur stormed out.

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Alfie looked down at Tommy. Three hours they’d sat here now with no explanation as to what happened. The hunt for Ada and Karl taking over for the most part with Alfie’s runners searching high and low, but now that they had a quiet moment, Alfie felt some answers were in order.

The massive funnel cloud had fully dispersed before the sun went down, and William had told Alfie that a few houses not too far away seemed to take the brunt of the damage. William has been shocked it had touched down with how high in the sky as it looked. Unsurprisingly, Ada’s house was included in the damage. Alfie wouldn’t lie, Tommy had frequent panic attacks, but never one that ended with him in the condition he’d arrived at the bakery in.

“So love,” Alfie began, settling himself beside Tommy. He draped the blanket over his lap patting the spot next to him, hoping it would entice Tommy to naturally gravitate towards the warmth, he pushed the blanket just close enough to almost touch him, but he stayed stubbornly out of reach. If Tommy didn’t want to talk, nothing Alfie could say or do would make him, but he could encourage him to open up about how he felt sometimes, and that in turn could lead to an explanation. He reached down under the blanket and into his pocket to pull out a cigarette, lighting it and passing it over to Tommy. He refused it much like the day in the hotel room. Undeterred, he patted at the blanket again, catching Tommy’s eye.

“I’m not getting under there.” Tommy muttered stubbornly, turning to look away from Alfie. The wind caught on a slight puff of smoke wafting from the cigarette, it spun violently, arcing out like sickle’s, creeping closer and closer to Tommy’s hands. Alfie stubbed the cigarette out quickly, reaching to pull Tommy’s hand away, grabbing it as loosely as he could to avoid leaving anymore fingerprints. Tommy jerked away hard though, pulling his hand back and tucking it close to his chest as he curled into the couch corner, trying to ignore Alfie as best as he could.

“So love,” Alfie began, reaching over between Tommy’s neck and the back of the couch, gently scratching through the short hairs on the back of his head. Tommy just pulled further away, pushing himself more into the arm of the couch. “Are you warm enough?” He plucked at a loose thread on the blanket, tucking it back into the weave. “Because this blanket, while purchased for Ollie-”
“Nothing happened, I got to the house and the American told me he kidnapped Ada and Karl, we fought and I ran here, the wind overreacted.” Tommy said, his voice muffled from being pressed firmly into the couch’s arm. He fussed with his sleeve again before tucking his arms back into his chest beneath his chin. “It’s overreacted before.” The wind blew roughly around Tommy suddenly, resettling slowly so Alfie couldn’t track its movements. He wished Tommy had taken the cigarette.

“Yeah, yeah it has, hasn’t it.” Alfie agreed, he’d seen it overreact. He’d seen it overreact viciously, sometimes at the expense of Tommy, or whoever was nearby.

He’d never seen it cause a funnel cloud though. The wind was actually quite predictable in its outbursts, and Alfie had been slowly cataloguing it. If Tommy wasn’t expecting a shock, it exploded and whipped around loudly and erratically damaging things, but settled down quick enough if Tommy calmed down. If Tommy couldn’t settle down, it progressed, spinning faster, creating the razor sharp edges that had cut into Tommy’s hands and the Lee’s wagon side.

Those panic attacks, whilst explosive and dangerous, had time limits though. Tommy always reigned in his fear eventually, and Alfie understood that Ada and Karl being kidnapped could inspire a more violent reaction, but not a prolonged one. Spinning wind was a symptom of prolonged exposure. Which was where Alfie’s concern lay. The only reason the wind would begin funneling, in Alfie’s opinion, was that Tommy had either been panicking for an uncharacteristically long amount of time or that he’d been so scared that he pulled all of the wind in the area together, compressing it and containing it to one spot and formed it into a madly spinning cyclone. It was like he skipped the first two phases and discovered a third new phase of explosive wind.

Alfie looked out his doorway to check for his employees. He wouldn’t put it past them, especially Ollie, to linger nervously in his doorway if they saw him and Tommy sitting too close. He didn’t see them though, so he stood up quickly, pushing the blanket off and stepping over to shut the door. Tommy’s head peeked out as he shut it, watching him from beneath his fringe. He walked back over to the couch, grabbing the blanket once more and gently leaning in to where Tommy’s head had peeked out.

“Tommy, I don’t know what to expect when we go into that meeting.” He held the blanket up enticingly. “If Arthur’s going to meet with Sabini tonight though, I want to meet with him and the American tomorrow, and you can’t meet Sabini in torn clothes with no shoes.” He pushed the blanket closer slowly. “Why don’t we go home now, bathe, get warm finally, and relax. You aren’t going to find Ada in this state.” Alfie couldn’t place the look in Tommy’s eyes, torn, conflicted, or heartbroken, maybe a combination of all three. He reached forward, cupping Tommy’s jaw and pressing their foreheads together. “Have you ever known Ada to be a coward? She’s probably giving them hell right now, her and Karl. Tough as nails they are.” That seemed to do the trick as Tommy’s face cleared a little at that thought, and he emerged slowly from the couch corner.
“I’m not wearing that blanket out though.” He mumbled tiredly, sitting up fully for the first time since Arthur put him on the couch. Alfie held out a hand for Tommy as he got up, wincing as he watched him stand, he didn’t envy the pain in Tommy probably felt in his feet. He grabbed his coat as they made their way out of the office and down to the door William guarded. He and Arthur were having a remarkably quiet conversation given their opinions of each other. Arthur paused when he saw Tommy, his eyes flickering to Alfie before checking over Tommy again.

“We have business, Solomons and I are leaving.” Tommy coughed, blinking slowly. “After you meet with Sabini tonight, go to Solomons house.” Arthur looked like he wanted to argue, but Tommy hunched his shoulders a little then, and a small breeze tossed through Arthur’s hair, and then curled around Alfie’s beard. Alfie wished again that he’d taken the cigarette from before. He’d gotten too used to reading Tommy’s moods with it.

“William, go with Shelby. Stay with him the entire fucking time mate, alright? Even when he comes to my house” Alfie clapped William on the shoulder and ushered Tommy out into the darkness.

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Alfie’s car was freezing, it was freezing even bundled in Alfie’s coat, snow clung to the tires and the steering wheel stuck when the car turned causing it to slip and slide as they drove. The ache in his arms and hips had grown, and whenever he looked down and saw the bruises he felt sick. He didn’t want to tell Alfie, he couldn’t tell Arthur, he almost wished for Polly, but mostly he missed Ada.

Guilt tore away at his insides as he thought of her. Alfie was right, she was tough as nails, and she’d do anything to protect Karl. Ice sank into his stomach at that thought though, his arms winding around his waist, as he curled in on himself again.

He’d never forgive himself if something happened to her. The wind looped slowly around his neck, reaching beneath the coat and creeping around his waist to mimic his arms. The car slid a little as Alfie turned again, jarring Tommy into the side of the car, pressing painfully on the bruises on his hips. He had to keep reminding himself of how fiercely intelligent Ada was, she’d have found a way to use her position, no matter how forced into it, to her advantage.

Alfie was pulling his hand away from where it gripped tightly to the coat. He was going to have to tell Alfie. If he didn’t then the American might bring it up. Tommy couldn’t decide which was worse, Alfie knowing Tommy hadn’t been able to throw the American off and basically let him touch him, or Alfie knowing and overreacting during the meeting.

The car had stopped, Alfie was quietly humming as he softly rubbed circles into his hand. He didn’t
deserve to hear about this now, he’d already helped them so much to find Ada, he’d put up with the Lee’s while travelling, and he was so calm and accepting of all of Tommy’s panic and the fucking wind. He might leave him if he found out, there had to be a limit to when someone was too much of a basket case, and Tommy reigned as the undefeated champion of basket cases. Or maybe he could contact the American before the meeting, set something up to where Alfie would never find out. Alfie had gotten out of the car and was pulling him out now too, a cold wind blew around face and his feet felt like they had weights stuck to them.

“And now, a little bit of pleasantness after such a shitty day!” Alfie opened the door wide, warmth spilling out welcomingly as they stepped inside. Alfie gently turned him to the side, tugging off his coat. “Indulge me now love, you’re feet must hurt and Arthur didn’t let me help you earlier, he barely let me hold your hand. I feel like I haven’t done my good duty as your boyfriend.” Wrapping his arms around Tommy. “You’ve had a hell of a day.” He finished. The wind agreed for once, brushing down Tommy’s back and circling around Alfie. Tommy nodded, sighing defeatedly.

Alfie gave him an encouraging smile and crouched down, keeping one arm around his back and lowering one behind his knees, picking him up in one smooth movement. Tommy circled his arms around Alfie’s neck, tucking face under his chin. That icy, horrible feeling crept higher into his throat when Alfie reached the stairs, his heart beating stronger with every step he took, thumping hard as if mimicking Alfie’s footsteps. He wondered if Alfie could feel it.

He hadn’t been able to think of how he could contact the American before their meeting tomorrow. He couldn’t let that man tell Alfie, Alfie would take it as a betrayal from Tommy, and he had a sickening feeling that the man would bring it up no matter what, he would be a fool not to. It was strategic, especially if he assumed Tommy wouldn’t tell Alfie. Tommy was determined to undermine him in some way though, even if he had to humiliate himself doing it.

Alfie was nudging their bedroom door open now, stepping inside and over to their bed in one quick movement. Someone must’ve come by earlier and lit their fireplace, as the room was glowing and warm enough to finally chase away the chill that had stuck with him since his escape from Ada’s house. He could feel the wind dancing away sporadically to push warm gusts of air toward them, returning every few seconds to reheat the air.

He thought Alfie would lower him down and leave him for a moment to prepare a bath, but instead he turned around, seating himself on the bed with Tommy now in his lap. Scooting backwards he leaned himself against the headboard, positioning Tommy so he was cuddled and resting his head on Alfie’s chest. An exhausted sigh escaped as he relaxing into Alfie. Alfie was softly scratching through the short hairs on the back of his head, humming lowly. It was creating a deep rumble in Alfie’s chest, lulling him into a pleasant space. He’d already bitten one proverbial bullet today though, he might as well bite the second.

“Alfie,” Tommy forced himself to sit up a little, resting his hands on Alfie’s chest. He stared down at
him, the novelty of looking down at someone bolstering his courage for a moment. He didn’t know how to say it, he didn’t think there were words to explain it. Alfie was quiet though, blinking patiently, waiting for him to speak. He’d noticed when they’d been travelling that Alfie didn’t talk over him. His siblings didn’t ignore what he said, and when he gave orders no one ever interrupted him, when he was having a regular conversation however, people tended to finish his sentences for him, or assume what his feelings would be on something if he paused for too long. It just made explaining this even worse.

“The American,” He started again, trying to find the words. He sat back slightly, his hands gesturing at indescribable words. Alfie’s hands came up to steady him, grabbing ahold of his hips firmly, causing Tommy to flinch and jerk forward.

A concerned look crossed Alfie’s face slowly, Tommy could see his train of thought speeding to conclusions. He tightened his grip on his hips, watching as Tommy’s face pinched in pain at the ache. One of Alfie’s hands travelled slightly over to his backside pressing firmly, his eyes trained on Tommy’s face. The second he saw discomfort and humiliation cross his eyes he tipped them so Tommy lay on his back, his head bouncing as it hit the mattress. A small fearful noise escaped him as Alfie kneeled over him. He knew he wasn’t scared of Alfie, but he wished the wind would do something distracting. It curled soothingly down his hands instead, intertwining between his fingers. Alfie pulled on his shirt, roughly tugging it out from his trousers.

“No, no, Alfie no, please don’t think anything-!” Tommy cried, reaching down for Alfie’s hands. Alfie stopped short, his hands stuttering above his hips. Shame bloomed on Alfie’s face as a strong tremor ran through Tommy. He tried to breathe deeper as he slowly unbuttoned his trousers, tugging them down himself, his hands shaking all the while.

The bruises were stark.

He hadn’t expected them to darken that much in such a short time, he knew they were there, he could feel them, they’d been a constant dull ache since he’d gotten to Alfie’s office. They felt like massive, dirty fingerprints painting his waist and hips, down over his arse and to his thighs where he’d been touched and grabbed, fingerprints that weren’t Alfie’s. He looked up into Alfie’s eyes, hoping he wouldn’t immediately explode angrily, but he looked heartbroken instead. Tommy couldn’t decide if that was worse.

Alfie sat back, pulling Tommy upwards and towards him, gripping him close, speaking quickly in Hebrew. His arms tightened around his back holding him fast as Tommy tried to explain that he’d tried to fight, he really had. The American was just a massive, towering giant and he was fast and Ada and Karl had been missing, and there had been a dead boxer in the living room.

“Nothing happened though!” Tommy whispered, feeling the bitter irony of those words. “Nothing
happened, I got away.” Tommy tried to argue, his face burning red as it was pressed into Alfie’s shirt.

“You wouldn’t say nothing happened if it happened to Ada.” Alfie answered brokenly in his ear. A small, warm breeze gently circled behind his head, trying to help soothe as well. He didn’t want to cry, he really didn’t. He thought he might be past that, as though he’d gotten all of his emotions out when he’d paused before reaching the Bakery. The thought of ‘nothing’ happening to Ada though only made the guilt worsen in his chest, and Alfie squeezing him tighter wasn’t helping to abate the pain. His eyes stung.

Alfie woke up mid snore. It was pitch black in the room, the fire having long died out. He could hear knocking coming from somewhere in the house. Shaking his head to clear away the drowsiness, he pushed himself up on his elbows, the wind roused sleepily as well, brushing over his face gently. Tommy was still beside him sleeping as peacefully as could be expected. At least he was warm, clean and comfortable. He’d ended up wearing one of Alfie’s heavy knitted sweaters to bed, Alfie wished he could’ve gotten him to wear the matching socks too, but he counted the sweater as a win already. He hadn’t meant to fall asleep, neither of them had. Massive emotional confessions coupled with ridiculously long, terrible days that ended with baths did that to people though.

The knocking continued, disrupting the peaceful silence and causing Tommy to begin moving. In the better interest of letting Tommy sleep a while longer, and maybe put this nightmare of a day behind him a little, Alfie slid out of bed, leaning down by Tommy quickly, whispering to keep sleeping. He quietly made his way downstairs, doing his best to avoid the creaky steps and lighting a lamp in the hall as he went, finally reaching over to open the door.

Arthur and William has returned. Beyond looking cold and tired, they both looked to be completely fine. Finally something went right for them. Alfie thanked William, sending him off and ushering Arthur inside. Tommy hadn’t said whether he wanted to tell Arthur about the American’s actions. He was against it, given Arthur’s track record with people who hurt his siblings, or threatened to. Alfie was actually for it though, for the same reasons. Arthur, when he was mad, was wildly unpredictable, and the American had so far predicted every step they’d taken and would take. Including Arthur sending a guard similar to himself to watch Ada. Thank god Tommy escaped. Alfie felt the air drop out of his lungs as he thought of the bruises littering his body. Alfie wasn’t a Peaky Blinder, but he would cut the American’s eyes out for this.

“Where’s Tommy?” Arthur started, throwing his coat over a table in the hallway. He began throwing off his shoes and making himself comfortable. Alfie watched as he looked around a little, taking in the sparseness of the hallway. It was quite different from Watery Lane. Water Lane had all sorts of things stashed in its front hall, whereas Alfie kept a single lamp and a gun in the table drawer.
“Sleeping, what happened during the meeting?” Alife asked quietly, he could feel a faint breeze on his neck. Even when Tommy was asleep the wind still reacted to him, following Alfie and checking on Arthur.

“I’ll tell Tommy, where’s he sleeping?” He looked uncomfortable just standing Alfie’s house. “Why is he sleeping?” Arthur asked, his brow furrowing at the oddity as his eyes searched the hall and living room, like he was going to go find him. “Tommy can sleep with Ada kidnapped?” He added a second later. His face pinching confusedly. The wind at the back Alfie’s neck was slowly swinging around to the front, pushing at him like it wanted him to back up.

“He’s sleeping because he’s had a terrible fucking day, and he deserves to fucking sleep. Unless you’ve found Ada I don’t think you have the right to talk.” Alfie held the lamp up to Arthur’s face, watching as annoyance cut through his eyes. The wind thickened, brushing down around his chest and pushing him backward again.

Arthur’s glare turned icy, bringing himself up to his full height to stare down at Alfie. He always struck Alfie as thin and wiry, and lacking the same broadness Alfie had in his shoulders. When he wanted to though, it looked like he could cut quite a menacing figure. That and he had a very convincing growl that rumbled lowly in his chest. Alfie couldn’t tell him about what happened to Tommy, but he was seeing more and more why Tommy threatened people with Arthur. He’d just have to convince Tommy to tell Arthur at the right moment. It felt dirty and underhanded, but Alfie felt better with Arthur as their wildcard.

“Alright, alright. I’ll wake him up. You sit right fucking there though, don’t wander the house.” Alfie pointed towards a couch in his living room. He would’ve had to wake Tommy up eventually, and this way he had slightly good news. He heard Arthur round the corner into his living room, sniffing for alcohol as he climbed the stairs.

Rousing Tommy wasn’t physically painful, but it still hurt. Alfie just wanted to keep him here, warm and comfortable. In a safe bed, in a safe house. He gently shook Tommy’s shoulder, whispering that Arthur was here and he had news. Tommy was up quickly, blinking the sleep from his eyes and staring confusedly. He hadn’t planned on falling asleep either. The wind left it’s post where it had been hanging around neck presumably to loop around Tommy’s. They found another pair of trousers for Tommy and he pulled them on quickly, not bothering to take off Aflie’s sweater.

Once back downstairs they’d all settled themselves into the chilly living room, with the only light coming from the glow of the hallway lamp. Arthur was glancing concernedly at Tommy as he sat down, probably very unsure of his sweater. Tommy just lit a cigarette and settled himself into an armchair, as the wind shook anxiously at his fingers, as Alfie seated himself opposite of him, gesturing at Arthur to begin.
“So his name is Changretta.”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was so stressful!! Pls let me know what you think and as always thank you so much for reading! <3
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Meetings and new insights.

Chapter Notes

Please double check the tags! The holidays slowed my writing speed a little, but I got there in the end! Please enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The building loomed tall in front of them, with Alfie’s cane clicking on the ground softly as he glanced around. They’d had all day to prepare, but Tommy hadn’t planned on feeling this anxious. His head felt too light, like it’d float away with a strong breeze.

He might take Pol’s advice after this, slow down for a little and focus on the legal side of things. Hopefully there was an after this. He was glad he didn’t have to talk to her in person, she’d wanted to kill him when she’d heard his voice on the telephone last night. She’d agreed to their plans, but she’d also sworn off London. Tommy wasn’t sure if that meant she’d ignore business in London or if she’d sworn off him and Ada being in London.

Alfie was holding the back door open for him, gesturing for him to walk through with his cane. He blinked slowly, eyes tracking up Alfie’s face, conveying the uneasiness he felt. Alfie just nodded wisely, agreeing and commiserating with his feelings. He could hear Sabini talking as he stepped through the doorway, and Changretta’s voice responding to whatever he’d said.

The panic came on fast, Tommy thought his heart would beat straight out of his chest at the sound of his voice. It beat louder than his steps, it beat in time with the seconds, pounding and pounding, it wouldn’t give him a break. The wind sliced through his hair, swinging down by his ears, whispering gently around them. The hallway smelt faintly of a coal yard, easing Tommy for a moment as they walked. It reminded him of the coal and steel workers near the Garrison, the wind spun around quickly, dragging the smell with it up and around his nose.

Changretta and Sabini were patiently waiting opposite of the large entryway. He stole a quick glance at Alfie as a small burst of anger liquified into courage at the sight of Changretta, but his eyes were shadowed beneath his hat. His hands were white where they tightly gripped his cane, white and surprisingly still. Alfie’s hands didn’t usually shake, Arthur’s did, but Alfie had tick in his fingers that
foretold his extreme, sudden violence.

He was a half step behind Alfie when they reached the other two, and with a quick gun check on both parties, the doors into the office were opened. Sabini and Changretta entered first, Alfie and Tommy following after, they’d agreed on no bodyguards inside.

They had a plan, with Arthur and Sabini’s meeting giving them a silent edge, but Tommy could feel his heart pounding again, threatening to jump right out of his chest. An innate, terrible fear of Changretta sprouting from somewhere hidden deep in his mind. ‘Nothing happened though, nothing happened.’ He reasoned furiously with himself as he stepped through the doors.

The office was cold, with the wind quickly brushing around him, widening to loop the room. Tommy’s eyes followed where he felt it leave him, sweeping to the left and further into the room, as it pushed past the table, he froze.

His abandoned shoes were set neatly in the middle. Changretta’d had them cleaned.

A buzzing began ringing in his ears.

His eyes flickered to Changretta’s back as that uneasy feeling returned, clawing up his throat. The wind mimicked it, flinging around Changretta and back to him, creeping up his neck, bringing the pleasant coal back in an attempt to calm him again. It wasn’t helping. The largest bruise on his hip, a dark imprint of Changretta’s hand, bloomed to life with a dull throb. Changretta’s heavy footsteps rang loudly as he made his way around the office, gracefully rounding the table to sit down. The buzzing grew. He tilted his head up slowly blinking, trying push the buzzing away.

They were in a basement, it came up slightly above ground however, and there were windows near the top, large ones at that. The windows eased the buzzing more than having Alfie at his side. He swallowed down that sickly feeling, trying to replace it with anger for Ada instead. Angry wind was easier to predict.

Alfie hadn’t voiced his concerns, mostly because Tommy wouldn’t let him, and the only thing Tommy conceded was that Changretta had said ‘Nothing’s going to happen’ and nothing had. Alfie had hated that. He’d been a near constant presence, ensuring everything they needed was taken care of. He’d always had a good reason for why he was around, whether it was because he needed Tommy’s plans or because he couldn’t directly order the Blinders and vice versa. Even going with Tommy to get a new suit for the meeting, he’d refused to meet Changretta and Sabini in rags. Alfie had ended up tailoring it personally though, as Tommy had been too anxious to stand still when the tailor moved close to him.
Alfie was taking everything too well, Tommy was terrified he’d snap and kill everyone at this meeting and they’d never find Ada. He was starting to remind Tommy of a large, hungry dog, hunting something from a distance, closing in slowly. He wished he knew what Alfie was hunting.

Sabini seemed twitchy, his eyes darted around the room as he sat, frequently landing on Tommy and Alfie, the shoes and Changretta. They stared silently at one another for a moment before Alfie leaned forward, glaring at Sabini while Tommy lit a cigarette.

“I’ve brought your shoes back pet, thought your feet might be cold without them.” Changretta broke the silence, sitting up and picking up the shoes to hand them to Tommy. “Your sister was cold though, so I gave her your coat. She’s very concerned for you, very sweet considering her position.” He put the shoes directly in front of Tommy. The guilt had never left, but the buzzing was back in force. He’d told Ada, and any chance he’d had at avoiding telling the family was out. He could feel a white fog bleeding in around his eyes. The wind jerked, forming sharp needles out of the gentle puff from the cigarette. Changretta’s eyes drilled into Tommy’s, neglecting to watch the smoke.

“Sabini, why don’t you introduce your friend?” Alfie asked, breaking through white fog, tapping his cane gently on Tommy’s leg. Sabini’s eye twitched at the word friend and the smoke resumed circling quickly.

“Mr. Changretta,” Sabini seemed happy to change the conversation, “Has kindly agreed to assist me in cleaning you out of my clubs and racecourses.” He answered, flicking non existent lint off of his tie.

“Well now, the last time that sort of thing happened Darby, you were none to happy when I responded, and I want it written somewhere that this is becoming inappropriate.” Alfie rested his cane against the table and laced his fingers together. “We can’t keep this constant level of sabotage up, it’s rude, it slows business and it keeps Tommy awake at night,” He gestured loosely at Tommy, staring innocently as Tommy looked at him.

“So you actually are fucking him.” Sabini twisted his lip, edging away from the table. “I never assumed you’d sink low enough to fuck a gypsy just for an army.” Tommy sat forward slightly, blowing smoke in Sabini’s direction. Sabini he could handle, and it was a helpful break from Changretta’s staring.

“In his defense, it was destiny. Once I told him his fortune, he had to follow it.” Tommy flicked ash in Sabini’s direction. “Maybe I should tell you yours?” Tommy asked, leaning back again into his chair, bringing the cigarette up to his lips once more. This time, Changrettas eyes followed the smoke.
Johnny dogs didn’t often question the oddities in his life. He’d been raised fairly standardly he felt, *Be Respectful, Work Hard, Keep your Family Close*, that sort of thing. He’d always done his best to follow those rules, going so far as to extend the family one to friends. That’s how he came to be so close with the Shelby’s. A blessing in disguise that one, for all the stress and sleepless nights their requests of him made him, he’d never give them up. He’d learned by now that oddities like Shelby’s usually brought fortune on him. He did wish he’d been less curious that day he spied on Tommy though. It felt dangerously close to breaking *Be Respectful*, as well as *Keep your Family Close*.

If he hadn’t spied, he wouldn’t know about Tommy, and he wouldn’t be trekking through a snowy forest, on a borrowed Lee’s horse named Winston, looking for the Boswell clan. He’d recently learned they were few in number, but this was getting ridiculous, traveller clans weren’t usually this difficult to find.

The search started when he’d heard the Lee’s wagon cover rip off. He’d known spooking soldiers was bad news, but he’d never spooked somebody that was both a soldier and someone who could spin the wind. The Lee’s said they hadn’t had someone who could coerce the wind in decades, saying that spinning wind was more of a Boswell trait, and that Lee’s usually only came by it through marriage. Johnny hadn’t even heard of the Boswell’s before then.

He’d spotted wagon tracks in the snow a while back, but the the further into the woods he went the less the tracks appeared. He still wasn’t sure what he’d even say if he found them. ‘Hello, I’m a traveller too, can anyone here spin wind?’ Or ‘Hello, my name is Johnny Dogs, you don’t know me, but I know you. Who here can wind spin?’

Another wagon track appeared thankfully, guiding him deeper into the woods. A chill had settled into his bones a while ago, Winston seemed unbothered, but Johnny didn’t want to stress him out. He was debating snapping some wood off the trees to make himself a little fire, but he didn’t think it would be dry enough to actually catch. There wasn’t a lot of snow, it was more muddy really, with just enough snow to thinly cover the forest floor and the surrounding trees in patches.

Winston ambled past an alcove, shaking his head as Johnny rubbed some warmth into his ears. The tracks were petering out even more, ultimately stopping altogether after another five minutes, leading him to pull Winston to a full stop. Johnny sighed deeply, closing his eyes and tilting his head up miserably. He was too deeply in the woods to give up now, but wandering aimlessly was an unappealing thought and he was already cold. He opened his eyes again to the bright blue sky, a rare sunny day, perfect for finding Boswell’s if they so chose to be found. Winston shuffled, shaking his head again.
Tommy might be the most controlled person Johnny had ever met. His particular clothes, particular cigarettes, particular choice of words, he'd never really seen Tommy lose it. Beating Lee’s up didn’t count in his opinion either, as he later found out that was another particular choice.

His face when Johnny had shocked him haunted him in his sleep though, and he’d only seen it for a split second before Tommy regained control again. It had been one of deep fear and concern. At the time he didn’t understand, but now, after having seen the massive scars that cut deep into the Lee’s wagon, he did. Tommy had been worried he’d cut straight through them. The Lee’s, the wagons, even odd Alfie Solomons. Johnny’d felt horrible when he realized that. He knew he shouldn’t scare soldiers, and he’d never wanted to see someone be that scared of themselves again. Tommy couldn’t control the wind, the more Johnny thought about it, the more it made sense.

He jolted, Winston jerking with his quick movement. A small cloud of smoke was dissipating in the air on his right, only barely visible due to the lack of leaves on the trees. A potential campfire!

He nudged Winston in that direction, keeping a close eye on the cloud and Winston to make sure he didn’t end up in a rabbit hole or trip. He’d probably spent 10 minutes following the smoke, feeling particularly proud when wagon tracks appeared again and he finally came upon a small caravan of wagons. A fair few people milled about, tending to the ever busy daily life they led. The fire they had going looked enticingly warm, luring Johnny into their wagon circle.

“Hello!” He shouted in Romani, waving from atop Winston. Romani would put them at ease hopefully.

He pushed into the camp a little further, not fully entering their space. Several people came out of wagons or from behind, a few children as well, red faced and big eyed, some braver ones staring up curiously at him. One of the older men walked up, taking in his appearance and Winston. “I’m Johnny Dogs, I’m uh,” Johnny paused. He still hadn’t come up with something to say. He couldn’t just out and ask them if anyone could spin wind could he? “Uh, just travelling through, I heard a caravan was up this way. I usually ride with the Lee’s see,” he hoped they didn’t have problems with the Lee’s. “But I, uh, set off on my own for a while, just a bit of soul searching you know? You’re Boswell’s right?” That sounded convincing. Convincingly like a lie if the Boswell’s face was anything to go by.

“What have the Lee’s done?” The man asked, tugging at his thick, green wool sweater. He had a bright yellow kerchief around his neck that was oddly clean, as he looked like he just finished digging a ditch.
“Nothing, nothing!” Johnny said quickly, “Just thought I’d explore whatever beauty I hadn’t seen yet!” Johnny finished, gesturing widely at the forest around them. It wasn’t very impressive, just an average, snowy forest. More muddy in some areas than snowy really. It was probably more impressive in the summer. “Just going wherever the wind takes me you know!” He finished smiling. The smile froze on his face when he realized his word choice, and the Boswell’s eyes narrowed. A stiff breeze blew by, flicking his hat off of his head.

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“And Mrs. Thorne and her child will be delivered to you once we see receive your business deed and proof of your exit from London.” Changretta spun the toothpick in his mouth. Tommy lit another cigarette, glancing at Alfie.

Even sitting Alfie dominated the room. He was still worried he’d snap and kill them all, but so far Alfie had been remarkably calm. Which was really for the better because Tommy didn’t know what he’d do if Alfie started a fight. Changretta wasn’t inclined to let Alfie be the only towering presence in the room however, frequently mirroring Alfie and more worryingly, patronizingly backing down when he saw the cigarette smoke shake.

“Well unfortunately, I find myself incapable of believing you’ll follow through on your promises. As I don’t find your word to be worth much of anything.” Alfie snapped, his eyes searing across the table. “I’ve been told you may say one thing, and then do another.” Ada had been the main item for sale for a nauseating hour. Changretta seemed hell bent on treating her and Karl like products.

Tommy was reminded of tunneling while he spoke. The constant state of fear that everything would collapse in a second, as though it was all balancing precariously, tipping horribly one way or another as different deals were made.

Changretta’d promised that if they fully left the racecourses and clubs, ceased and turned over any and all illegal business in London, never set another foot in Sabini’s territories or the surrounding areas, and stopped expanding in Birmingham, they would get Ada and Karl back.

He must’ve weighed how much Tommy was worth to Alfie, ultimately deciding that Alfie would drop Tommy to keep the rum business, and let Tommy deal with Ada and Karl’s kidnapping. Leaving Changretta with Tommy, and Sabini with Alfie. A clean split. Now that they were sure of his actual intentions though, Tommy felt he could finally unveil his own plans.

Alfie’s hands were clenched tightly in anticipation. He hadn’t been comfortable with Tommy’s idea, too many variables, too many things that could go wrong. Tommy knew it would work though. It
would. The room was still cold despite the heated arguments, and Tommy wished he’d brought more cigarettes, he only had three left.

“Now,” Changretta tsked, “That’s a rude thing to say, I feel as though the gravity of your situation hasn’t sunk in. Your poor Ada may suffer for that rudeness.” He sniffed, dragging a finger over the deep cut Tommy had scratched into his eyebrow yesterday. Tommy felt his stomach turn at that, he hadn’t threatened to hurt Ada earlier.

“You should be a little more careful,” Tommy said lowly, “Anything you do to Ada or Karl,” he paused, slowly dragging his cigarette to his lips. “I think I’ll do twofold to your mother. Audrey, isn’t it?” Tommy asked watching as Changretta froze.

The smoke drifted glacially, barely circling as he stared down at Tommy. His eyes darkened considerably and Sabini went ashen, swinging his head to stare at Changretta.

“A good person, your mother. She’s very concerned for you, very sweet considering her position. Just like my Ada.” Tommy parroted back their earlier conversation. Changretta leaned in close across the table, his massive height lending him to reach closer than Tommy expected. He pulled the toothpick out of his mouth gently, using it to point at Tommy.

“If you touch her, I won’t just fuck you on a desk next time, I’ll bend you over one.”

Alfie’s ring finger twitched.

His cane swung too fast to follow, cracking into the table and splitting it. Tommy’s abandoned shoes flew off landing somewhere behind them.

Sabini flinched, jumping up and backwards, retreating to a safer distance. Changretta barely twitched though, glancing down at the crack in the table before blinking back at Tommy. Tommy inched closer to him, stubbing his cigarette out violently, a bitter enjoyment at finally having an ounce of control back, as well as getting a rise out of Changretta rousing from inside his soul.

“Don’t think that deals on the table, despite how much you may have wanted it.” Tommy whispered softly. The wind drifted from the smoke, sinking down around Tommy’s hands and weaving through his fingers. Changretta rose up to his full height, towering once more over Tommy. The bitter joy he’d felt earlier vanished instantly, terror replacing it as Changretta stalked slowly around the table toward him.
The white fog descended again, forcing his eyes to follow Changretta as everything else became blurry. He watched slowly as Changretta came closer and closer. He knew Changretta wouldn’t touch him, he knew the stakes now, but that knowledge was too quiet to break through the loud buzzing that had returned.

Alfie was saying something, but it sounded muffled. Changretta had stopped moving, or something was keeping him from moving. Tommy forced himself to blink.

He listened intently at the blurry cadence of Alfie’s voice, the more singsong his voice became the more violent he was. It was one of the first things Tommy had learned about him. He would lure others into a sense of security, distracting them with a confusing roundabout use of language and tone, and once they paused to figure out what he’d said Alfie would snap. Sabini’s voice joined the mix as Tommy angled his head with the rise and fall of Alfie’s voice. Slowly, achingly slowly, the words were becoming clearer.

“Fair is fair mate, you wanted to drag all this into it, that’s your prerogative.” Alfie was standing, gesturing openly with one hand while the other gripped his cane tightly. “You cannot deny that retaliation was always an option, and I think you ought to get your priorities fucking figured out.” He dragged the cane off the table, slamming it on the ground in visible punctuation. Sabini looked angry, glaring at Tommy and glancing worriedly in Changretta’s direction.

Tommy’s eyes slid, half lidded in exhaustion, to Changretta once more. His hands were clenched on the table from where he loomed over Tommy, seething visibly. The wind had never reacted, staying close around his hands, brushing in between and around his fingers intermittently.

“So,” Alfie rapped the cane once more. “We fucking trade then don’t we, that evens the playing field and we take our personal fights onto the mud, no hostages.” The singsong tone was drifting in and out with Alfie’s ire, taking its time as it crawled to an even cadence. “In two days, Monday.” Alfie held up two fingers, further punctuating two days. He bent down to pick up Tommy’s shoes and pushed in his chair. “We are leaving.” Tommy stood as well, using the table for a crutch for a moment before pivoting, Alfie’s arm came around his back to open the office door.

They made quick work of the hallway, their bodyguards collecting while Alfie gave them orders. Tommy fumbled with their car door handle for a moment, the wind was sweeping distractingly and his hands were shaking a hair too much to get a good grip. Alfie ripped the door open suddenly, heaving Tommy up and into the car by his armpits before rounding to the driver side and throwing the door open. He started the car, shaking his head and mumbling under his breath as it pulled away from the building.
Tommy stayed frozen how Alfie had set him in the seat, his shoulders hunched and his hands still stretched out in front of him. He watched as the wind crept up his wrists, stepping around the darkened, mismatched blotchy spots and rising to his neck. It felt like London didn’t exist outside of the car, or maybe Tommy just couldn’t see it, maybe they weren’t in London anymore? He looked down at the shoes in his lap. Ada’s perfume drifted faintly off of them. The car jerked and Alfie was tugging him out again. They couldn’t possibly be home that quickly could they?

“Out, come out, were going inside.” Alfie’s gripped him firmly by his upper arm, all but dragging him in the house. He pulled the shoes out of his hands, throwing them on the floor and dragging him into the living room. He spun them around facing Tommy now, bring his other hand up to hold him still. Tommy’s eyes widened as he stared up at Alfie.

“You, are not going near him again. I’m saying this now, you understand. You can’t be at that trade.” He breathed heavily, “I’m asking you for this one thing, do not fight me on this.” Alfie punctuated each sentence with a firm shake. His fingers were tensing, twitching where they gripped his arms.

“Tommy.” He shook him a little again. “I need you to acknowledge this.” Alfie was staring down impatiently at him, waiting for him to say something. Everything was fading in at a glacial pace, new information slowly settling in Tommy’s mind as he reconciled the meeting.

The building had been in one of London’s nicer business districts. Their bodyguards were mostly Italian but some Americans as well, they were big, and well fed. Sabini’s new expensive suit, where did he get the money for that? Changretta’s own, very nice suit speaking plainly that he had money. It was all a very well decorated show. They hadn’t needed to stoop and hire poorly trained, average, worker men, they weren’t a small razor gang fighting tooth and nail through the mud.

So where had the coal smell come from?

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was a beast to write. Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed it and please leave a comment if you feel like it! They make my day! :) next weeks chapter may be delayed as well for New Years! Thank you!
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Alfie and Tommy argue, and Arthur does some detective work.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Tommy,” He shook him firmly again. “Tommy, answer me.” Alfie watched as Tommy’s eyes faded in and out focus. He genuinely thought they’d been prepared for Changretta, as prepared as they could’ve been at least. All their work to uncover more information, find Changretta’s mother, kidnap her, as nasty of a business as it was, everything was so they could come into that meeting with some kind of a handhold. It wasn’t enough, not nearly enough. The American had out maneuvered them at nearly every turn.

Watching both Tommy and the wind curl away from Changretta at that meeting had been eye opening. Tommy hadn’t had a physical reaction like that as long as Alfie had known him. Even with the people who so clearly encouraged that behavior, like that stomach turning police detective, Campbell. It was agonizing.

“Coal.” Tommy faded into focus again, staring at Alfie’s face. “Coal! Alfie, how many coal yards are there in London?” Tommy’s hands came up quickly grabbing at Alfie’s jacket, he could feel quick wisps of wind skirting around his face.

“What?” He loosened his grip on Tommy’s arms, confusedly. “No, Tommy love, listen.” Tommy focused on him clearly for the first time since the meeting. “You cannot go to the trade.” his hands fisted into Alfie’s lapel, tightening slowly. “I don’t want him near you.” He finished, letting go of Tommy finally. He tried to pick his words carefully, it felt like anything he said would be a potential minefield.

“Sabini doesn’t own a coal yard does he? Just clubs right?” Tommy asked as his eyes flickered side to side, ignoring him once again. “Or a club near a coal yard?” He added looking up again.

“If Changretta fucked Ada on a table would you let her near him?” Alfie asked, watching as Tommy’s eyes froze. “You wouldn’t, you wouldn’t let her near him.” Alfie felt like a stone dropped into his stomach as Tommy’s face drained of color. “I’ll bring bloody Arthur if I have to, but I’m not bringing you. If something goes wrong, you’ll be in a lot more trouble than I will. The worst that’ll happen to me is a fucking gunshot, innit?” He added. The wind was suspiciously slow, creeping through Tommy’s hair and down to his shoulders where Alfie couldn’t follow it.
“No.” Tommy snapped, looking up at him as angrily. “The worst is everyone is killed.” He said obviously. “And if she were your sister you’d be there.” He finished, arguing Alfie’s logic back at him.

He sighed, disappointment creasing his face as he thought of any deal that would end with Tommy not going to the meeting, but he had a sinking feeling that Tommy would go whether he wanted him to or not. He could settle a deal and make him tell one of his brothers, then more people would be aware of Changretta’s intentions, but Tommy would never willingly tell Arthur, and Ada knew now as well, which was bad enough. He thought she did at least, if Changretta’s threat was anything to go by.

“He won’t hurt her while we have his mother, and once we have Ada we can,” Tommy paused, his fingers unclenching slightly from Alfie’s jacket. “renegotiate.” He nodded to himself.

“And what will you do if he gets ahold of you again?” Alfie lunged forward suddenly, grabbing him around by the middle. Tommy’s eyes blew wide with shock, the smallest bit of fear creeping in at the sides, before quickly retaliating and harshly shoving him. The living room window rattled harshly before slammed open as the wind rushed in, throwing itself loudly around Alfie’s face.

“I’ll rip his fucking eyes out!” Tommy shouted slamming his foot into Alfie’s bad knee. They both went down hard, Alfie landing on his back with Tommy on top. He rushed to straddle him, struggling to pull himself up and out of Alfie’s ever tightening grip.

“Stop it! I get it, you think I don’t understand?” Tommy yelled loudly into his ear as small slices of wind carved into his checks. He loosened his grip slightly, holding him firmly. They stared angrily at one another for a moment, each waiting for the other to crack. “I get it.” He snapped. “But he didn’t fuck me on table, he tried to, but he didn’t.” Tommy finished snarling and stabbing his finger into Alfie’s chest for visible punctuation. Alfie felt the argument rising in his chest, but Tommy beat him to it.

“I’m coming. I’m coming, and I’m gonna kill him.” Tommy glared angrily as the wind whirled threateningly above them, dragging old papers and pens quickly around the room. It steadily gained strength, pulling up bottles and blankets heaving them chaotically into the air.

“No. I’ve asked you, and now I’m telling you. No.” Alfie narrowed his eyes, dragging Tommy even closer as the wind barreled louder around them. “You wouldn’t let someone you love near him, so why should I?” He rasped tilting his head forward.
Alfie had never said he’d loved him, Tommy had never said it either. It was bittersweet to watch that revelation spread across Tommy’s face during this particular argument. Tommy huffed breathily, staring hard into his eyes, as if searching for any trace of a lie. Alfie stared back as earnestly as he could, blinking away only when he noticed the silence in the room. Photographs, papers and bottles, nearly everything in living room that wasn’t a large piece of furniture, were all suspended in air, floating daintily as if waiting for Alfie to come collect them.

“Love, I’m not saying that to force you to agree. I’m saying that cause it’s bloody true, but you still can’t come.” He said, watching as Tommy sank forward, resting his head against Alfie’s chest. Alfie brought one of his hands up, running it through Tommy’s hair. “Relax now, just let the wind do its thing.” He whispered into Tommy’s hair. “If it keeps spinning, then it keeps spinning. I never liked this room anyway.” An empty bottle of rum drifted aimlessly near them, probably the one Arthur drank the other night.

“I’m coming. People I love will be there too, so I’m coming.” Tommy mumbled from Alfie’s jacket. The wind shook, rattling its collection through the air like marionettes puppets, before snapping and crashing loudly to the ground as if their strings had all been cut. Alfie covered their heads quickly as several shards of glass scattered their way.

“See love, you control it just fine, and a little bit of glass never hurt anybody.” Alfie smiled, picking small shards out of Tommy’s hair.

“If I controlled it, then it wouldn’t have burst in here. It would have stayed outside.” He brushed several pieces off of Alfie, pulling himself up higher to survey the damage. It was mostly aesthetic, broken bottles and ripped papers, an old blanket was caught on a desk corner but it didn’t look destroyed.

“How did you used to move it around?” He asked looking up at Tommy. Tommy swung his head around to look at him, his forehead creased in thought as if he couldn’t quite remember. He lifted one bandaged hand and pointed at a ripped sheet, thrusting his finger hard at it. Both froze, neither daring to breathe as they watched the paper.

A corner flipped up briefly before falling back down.

Tommy sank back down, resting his head once again on Alfie’s chest as he sighed miserably. Alfie sighed in agreement, dragging one hand to scratch at Tommy’s back, picking errant pieces of glass and shreds of paper off as he did.

“We’ll get it, we will.” Alfie encouraged. “If we have to go bloody travelling again in order to do it
we will.” He could feel Tommy perk up slightly at that. If Alfie was picking travelling though, he was requesting they leave sometime during a warm season, not that England ever had a stable warm season. “Suppose we ought to figure out Changretta first though, and it’s still no. I’m telling you, no.” Alfie shook his head firmly.

“I have an alternate strategy.” Alfie plucked a particularly large piece of glass out of his hair. “and I need to know what Sabini’s proximity to a coal yard is.” Tommy mumbled, pushing his head up a little, peering at Alfie through his bangs.

Arthur crept down the alley, dodging around dirty, snowy puddles and dilapidated crates. He glanced upwards, gauging how much further he had to go before reaching the meetup point. The last dredges of watery, grey daylight were slowly drifting away, leaving the sky dark and cloudy. He stumbled suddenly, cursing as he stepped into an icy puddle and grabbing ahold of the brick building to his left to balance. He shook as much water off of his foot as he could, swearing violently as it seeped into his shoe. This meeting had better be worth it. London had brought them nothing but trouble as far he could tell.

Tommy hadn’t said whether or not a follow up meeting with Sabini would be productive, so Arthur made the executive decision. Most of their information and upper hand came from his last meeting with Sabini, so another one would likely be as useful. He didn’t have William with him this time either, thankfully. While William hadn’t actually said anything detrimental last time, he had been judgmental and annoying, arguing over everything Arthur did and said. He’d only been blessed with a short moment of silence when Sabini had finally arrived. He’d reappeared after that, resuming his judgmental opinions and what he thought Solomons’ would like to know, as if Arthur cared about Solomons.

Arthur rounded the corner of the alley, stopping short as he almost ran into Sabini, both jerking at the sight of each other. Sabini tugged his coat collar closer around his chin and nodded while Arthur tucked his hands under his armpits for more warmth. Next time they had a secret meeting, Arthur was going to request it be indoors. Potentially somewhere with heating, but a fireplace would do as well. Sabini turned to face him fully as Arthur shot a glance behind him to check for guards.

“Well,” Sabini started. “Let’s discuss what you’ve been up to since we met.” He said, staring authoritatively at Arthur. “You found his mother easily enough, and what of his father? Vincente?” He sniffed and brushed through his mustache. Someone lit a dim light several stories above them casting a dim glow on the alley. Not enough that someone could identify them from the alley entrance, but enough that Arthur could see the subtle snowfall.

“We have Audrey Changretta, yeah, John’s working on Vincente.” Arthur adjusted his hat, pulling it
forward. “We’ve been gathering an army of sorts, enough to take Changretta out at least. Have you found Ada?” His hands fist tightly together, rebelling against the cold, he didn’t want to lean against the brick, thinking it might be colder than the just standing still.

“You should’ve seen him when you’re brother told him he’d kidnapped her.” Sabini whistled, ignoring his question, “I thought you’d be down a sibling to be honest, he did not like that one bit.” He sniffed again before glancing down at his snowy shoe. He tilted sideways then, tapping off the dirty snow onto the brick.

When they’d last met, Sabini had offered to trade Ada and Karl for an army to get rid of Changretta. He had known, or at least suspected, Arthur’s feelings about Solomons, and negotiated that once Changretta was gone, Arthur could argue with the Blinder’s that Tommy’s actions were getting out of hand, and that Arthur should take his place once more. Effectively getting Tommy out of London and therefore Solomons out of Arthur’s life. Sabini figured that if Tommy left, Solomons would either lose the army Tommy had dealt him, or be rattled just enough that Sabini could sneak in with his new army and destroy him quickly. It was very alluring, having Solomons potentially out of his life, Arthur felt a trickle of dishonestly drip down his throat as he considered it again.

“And Ada?” He asked again, his thumb running across the blade in his cap. Poor Ada, who would never talk to any of them ever again when they got her out of this. She’d probably fuck off to bloody America, put as much distance between them and her as she could. Maybe he should take charge again, it was Tommy’s fault Ada was even in this position. If Arthur resumed heading the family they could all live peacefully in Birmingham, making good solid money. No more mad fucking Russians, or Italian Mafias, or kidnappings.

“No, I haven't found her yet. Changretta isn’t an informative person, but he spends a lot of time at the La Nova club. Perhaps you could find someone with some time to inspect it?” Once Arthur had agreed to Sabini’s plan, he’d begun treating Arthur like one of his employee rather than a business partner. Arthur was beginning to see why Solomons, as annoying and difficult as he was, would have problems with someone like Sabini.

“You promised her, you want your army, you do the legwork.” Arthur stated, blinking down at the dirty snow, kicking at a chunk of ice on the ground. A strong wind whipped roughly through the alley, tossing their coats open and throwing Sabini’s hat off of his head.

“Maybe tell your brother? Changretta has a thing for him,” Sabini looked up at him before curling his lip distastefully. “I bet if you’re brother asked nicely to suck his cock he would give him the girl. Did you know Changretta fucked him? Can you imagine? Fucking disgusting.” Arthur’s head flung up as he cut Sabini off.

“He what?” He swallowed hard, his eyes narrowing on Sabini’s face. A sudden, nauseating memory
of Tommy, panicked beyond belief and covered in bruises, passing out in Solomons’ bakery, roared into Arthur’s mind. He could feel a cold sweat breaking out on his palms. That can’t have happened, Tommy’s too clever for that.

“To say nothing of all the Broken Shit Questions, ‘What rips metal’ and ‘How would a desk rip apart?’ Dio Mio, I could just give two shits about all his broken shit.” Sabini checked his watch, scratching at the glass as he wiped the condensation off of it. Arthur’s mind caught up with his ears, replaying Sabini’s words.

“Ripped metal?” He croaked out as his heart began pounding. So Changretta had gotten ahold of the last piece of metal, no wonder John couldn’t find it. Arthur froze in thought, which wasn’t difficult given how cold he was. If Changretta knew about the wind they might as well be fucked.

“La Nova club Shelby. That’s where all the broken shit seems to come and go.” He pushed a hand through his icy, slicked back hair. “When will my army be ready?” Sabini dropped his hands into his pockets, looking up impatiently at Arthur’s face.

“When you give me my sister.” Arthur mimicked him, pushing his own freezing hands into his pockets before rounding the corner and moving quickly through the back alleys.

He escaped out the back alley and onto a busy main drag of London, skirting cars and people in his rush to get back to Solomons’ house. Tommy had told him to meet there in two hours time to go over the meeting, John was supposed to call with an update and so was Polly. Arthur’s heart began beating hard again as his feet pounded the pavement. Changretta had to know about the wind, or he was close to guessing it. He had all the tools necessary to figure it out. Arthur jolted to a stop.

Ada’s house was on his left.

It looked alright from the outside, some of the windows were cracked, one was completely missing, but other than that it didn’t look like anything explosive had hit it. He dodged around the side, heading toward the back door and pulling out his key. The back door creaked quietly open, as he stepped inside, tapping the snow off of his feet, one foot still damp from where he’d accidentally stepped in the puddle. Paper, wood chips, glass, fabric, more things than Arthur cared to inspect littered the floor, and the carpet runner was flipped up and tossed haphazardly around as well. Dirt and dust floated in the air catching everywhere causing Arthur to pause coughing. He tried scrubbing the grit from his eyes as he crept up the dark hallway, rounding it into the main entrance.

The inside of the house was destroyed. Utterly, and totally destroyed.
The staircase railing was missing posts, every glass photograph frame that Ada had hung was shattered and their photos were torn, shredded in with the chaos that littered the floor. Arthur quietly explored further, tiptoeing around larger chunks of wood and a dresser drawer as he stepping up the stairs. He crouched down, sifting through the refuse as he spotted a mostly undamaged photo of Karl.

Two of the doors had been bent off their hinges, but the one into Ada’s office must’ve been already open. It was swaying back and forth, scratching the floor with the glass caught in its grooves. Arthur stepped down the hallway, tucking the photo of Karl into his jacket for safe keeping as he gently nudged the door open further.

The room was freezing, unsurprisingly as there were gaping holes were windows used to be, and pieces of the outer wall had come away in the blast. Snow was collecting on the ledges and fallen bricks on the floor adding to the refuse. Ada’s desk was flat on its side, and several drawers laying around the room. Arthur recognized the drawer he’d seen on the stairs as one the missing pieces of her desk. He huffed anxiously, stepping around to the desk inspecting more damage. The sudden image of Tommy, powerlessly trying to pull Changretta off of him burned into his eyes. Horror clawed up his throat at the realization of what happened to cause this level of damage. It sank heavily into his bones. His heart clenched painfully, he didn’t know if this happened to Ada as well, men in their line of work took whatever they liked.

A burning grew in Arthur’s chest as he really took in the carnage. He paused, his breath coming out harshly, visible in the frigid air. Changretta had witnessed the wind first hand. Arthur knew Tommy too well, nothing scared him, aside from the lack of control he had on the wind. Changretta had scared him.

Arthur glanced toward one of the armchairs in the room, metal was catching on the modicum of moonlight casting through the room. It was Tommy’s gun, hiding under the chair and beneath several papers. He plucked it off the ground, gritting his teeth at how cold it was in his hands.

So Changretta kidnapped his sister, fucked his brother, and was planning on taking London from them. The burning in his chest sparked, cascading down his arms. He shook angrily, flicking the gun open and counting how many bullets were still inside. With every bullet accounted for, he locked it and stowed it in his pocket for safe keeping. He threw a last look around the room, before pivoting and heading back down the hallway to the stairs. He could feel the burning growing to rage, building in his chest, threatening to explode outward any second.

He couldn’t wipe his mind of Ada protecting Karl and Tommy helpless against Changretta. He breathed heavily as he swung the backdoor open once more, slamming it shut and locking it. His breath coming out plainly in the bitter wind as a growl formed lowly in his throat. He needed to talk
to Tommy. They needed to find Ada. He needed to kill Changretta.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading my story! Please leave me a comment if you like, they make my day! Also please let me know if there are any glaring errors or grammatical things! :) My schedule should return to posting on Wednesday’s as well now too!
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Arguments and arguments. Followed by arguments.

Chapter Notes

This chapter gave me nightmares!! I’m glad to finally post it! I hope you guys enjoy it! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Someone was pounding loudly on his front door. Assumedly Arthur, given that Tommy didn’t knock, and was next to him, and Ollie knocks twice before nervously waiting. Alfie would’ve liked it if Arthur never knew his address, but given the circumstances they didn’t have many options. Changretta was likely watching the bakery, and given how rarely he actually used his house he didn’t think Changretta would know about it. He probably assumed he slept in his office, surrounded by his rum.

The pounding was growing louder. Alfie grumbled to his feet, grabbing his cane from where it was resting against the chair. He tilted his head at Tommy, thrusting the cane in the direction of the door.

“That’s probably your fucking brother, maybe you should get it?” He said, raising one eyebrow. Tommy looked up at him from his desk, his eyes slowly creeping down Alfie’s arms and to his cane, finally reaching the wall hiding the door.

“Your fucking house.” His eyes snapped back to glare at Alfie. The argument on whether or not Tommy would be attending the meeting had not gone well. Neither conceded and they still hadn’t come to any form of agreement. At the moment, Alfie was debating how well Tommy could slip out of handcuffs, as he felt the only options left to him were to either physically restrain him or knock him out. He didn’t want to think of what Changretta would do if he got ahold of him, and he didn’t think Tommy fully accepted that Changretta could absolutely catch him. The front door was slammed open, causing both of them to break their staring contest as they pulled out guns, aiming them at the hallway.

Arthur rounded the corner, his arms shaking fiercely as he stormed into the room. He spotted Tommy quickly, stalking over to where he was sitting, ignoring both the guns pointed at him. He pulled a gun out of his coat pocket, slamming it onto the desk Tommy sat at, breathing heavily as he stared at him. Tommy blinked down at the gun, visibly tracing its edges before slowly looking up at Arthur.
He took a deep breath, as if to begin asking questions before Arthur cut him off.

“Don’t argue,” he growled, “Do you know if he’s done anything to Ada?” Arthur cocked his head questioningly. “Have you told Pol what he’s done to you?” Tommy’s eyes widened, his shoulders rising slightly as Arthur drew himself to his full height, standing over Tommy. He switched to Romani then, speaking loudly and violently, throwing his arms out wide as he gestured. Tommy seemed to shrink, sinking down in his chair as Arthur grew wilder.

“Arthur!” Alfie yelled, feeling both very ignored and nervous for Tommy. He slammed his cane down loudly, startling Arthur from his rant. He swung his head around to glare at Alfie.

“First, it’s fucking rude to yell in another language in someone else’s house.” He paused, watching Tommy climb back up from where he’d slid down his chair. “Second, I am not a large fan of people bursting through my fucking door like they live here.” Alfie stepped slowly across the room. “And third, information is a valuable thing, if you have some, maybe share it with all of us?” Alfie shrugged, gesturing with his gun.

Arthur swung back around, quickly remarking nastily in Romani, or what Alfie thought was nastily sounding.

“Get up.” Arthur growled, returning to English, staring down at Tommy, who had slunk back into the chair. “I’ll drag you back to Birmingham if I have to.” He grabbed the gun again, tucking it into his coat jacket.

“Arthur,” Tommy started surprisingly quietly. Alfie had seen them argue before, usually with Tommy explaining why something needed to happen or who they needed to make deals with. It was typically quite loud though, shouting coming from both sides as they negotiated the various levels of danger in their daily lives. “I have to get Ada back first, I’ll stop, I’ll stop when we get her back, until then though,” Tommy paused, seeming to make his eyes larger at Arthur.

“He knows about the wind.” Arthur apparently wasn’t tolerating Tommy’s rebuttal. “He knows. He’s asked Sabini, he’s even got a collection of shit that you’ve broken and fucked up.” Arthur yelled, pointing his finger at Tommy. “How were you going to get around that? You’ll lose it and it’ll explode when you meet up. He’s seen it now, he knows about it Tom.” Tommy deflated as he tried to come up with a good argument. Alfie wished he knew what Arthur said to make Tommy so much less combative.

“Get in the bloody car, and go back to Birmingham. When you get there, fucking stay.” Arthur jabbed his thumb behind himself, gesturing in Birmingham’s direction. “Any plans you might think you have, you can tell me and I’ll bloody do them. I’m done with this though.” Alfie hadn’t ever heard Arthur sound this confident before. The Arthur he knew was war-shattered, easily impulsive.
and terrified of his own strength. This Arthur might be a resurgence of who he may have been before the war. He must be a resurgence, given Tommy’s rapt attention to him.

“I will not watch Ada get raped because you had a big idea. I shouldn’t have had to find out you’d been.” The wind snapped, slicing Arthur thickly quickly across the cheek. Tommy’s face paled as he jumped to his feet putting distance between the two, Arthur held his hand to his face, trying to catch the blood as it fell.

Alfie didn’t have siblings, but he’d heard they fought like cats and dogs. It was difficult to tell when was a good point to step in, if he even should, given his already tenuous position with Tommy about attending the meeting. It seemed like Arthur held the same values now as well. Stepping in may encourage Tommy to argue more, but with Arthur on his side he might be able to win without any more arguments. He chose instead to watch them closely, waiting to see if he should say something.

Arthur pivoted, his eyes following Tommy as he moved further away from him. Tommy didn’t strike Alfie as scared as much as unsure, watching as Arthur flicked blood on the ground as it pooled too deeply in his hand.

“I’m not Dad.” Arthur stared. Tommy relaxed slightly, and the pinching around his eyes eased. Alfie wished someone would fill him in on what that specifically meant. The particulars were important. He was feeling more lost now than when Arthur had been speaking Romani.

Arthur gave up trying to contain the blood, letting it seep into his coat and drip on the floor. “Go back to Birmingham. I’ll sort it out here.” He nodded at Tommy. Alfie nodded as well, feeling like now might be a good time to add his own opinions.

“Trust us, just this once love, trust us for the next two days to handle Changretta, and then we’ll go from there.” Alfie negotiated, stepping up beside Arthur. He couldn’t tell what Tommy was feeling, he’d turned impassive, staring blankly at Arthur. He thought his heart might break though when Tommy turned his eyes to Alfie, insecurity screamed loudly through them. Arthur mumbled again, too quietly for Alfie to hear, ushering Tommy to the hallway.

“Wait, wait,” He heard Tommy whisper to Arthur, he curved around Arthur quickly walking up to Alfie and stopping in front of him. His hands rose up, fingers stuttering in the air. “You’ll be safe, you swear?” Big eyes stared up at him. If his heart wasn’t already broken, it might as well be crumbling now. He was desperate to know what Arthur had said.

“Yeah love, bit hard to kill me innit?” Arthur chose that moment to step into the hall, leaving them alone for a short second. “You’re the only one who’s even come close, scared Ollie half to death
with your bomb threat, ‘blew up me own pub for the insurance money’ wasn’t it?’ Alfie tucked him close, trailing small kisses over his forehead, down his face and to his lips as Tommy pulled him down further. They broke apart too quickly, reality setting in once again as Tommy pulled himself away. Alfie tightened his grip slightly, tugging him closer for just a second.

“You will go to Birmingham, right?” He asked, hugging him tightly. There would hopefully be time later, to really say he loved him and to show him how much, but now he just wanted to know he’d be safe.

“Yes, I’ll go to Birmingham.” He hoped it was the truth.

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Arthur watched the car drive off, praying he’d actually go to Birmingham. Tommy asked them to trust him all the time, and there were times when they had been bloody forced to. Stuck in jail, being beaten nearly to death, hoping against all odds that Tommy had a plan. It was almost vicious how vindicated he felt forcing Tommy to rely on him. He couldn’t let Changretta attack anyone else though, he’d let Tommy know as much earlier. Telling him specifically what Changretta would likely do to him if he caught him, him and Ada.

It had been terrifying, he felt like he’d finally stepped back into his old life after spending so many years being slightly off kilter, unable to totally pull his head out of his own sadness. Solomons coughed lightly behind him. He’d forgotten about him.

“So,” Solomons began, “You’ve been busy.” He tapped his cane idly, watching the car drive off as well. “Care to share what you’ve learned?” The cane stopped tapping as he turned to look at Arthur. He wondered if Solomons knew what Changretta had done, if Tommy had told him or not. He raised his hand to the sluggishly bleeding cut on his face, pressing on it to ease the stinging. The snow still drifted around them, grey and dirty. Bleak and watery moonlight broke through the clouds intermittently, casting a dim light on the street.

“Changretta spends most of his time at a place called La Nova.” An icy breeze flew around them, dragging dirty snow and smoke with it. It seemed to blow right through him, stabbing icy claws at his stomach. He almost felt bad for the things he’d said to Tommy. He spun on his heel storming back into the house. He’d pushed Tommy away for his own good, if any of them had gone through what he had they’d have pulled them out as well, saying they needed a break. He’d pull Ada out too, he’d even buy her a ticket to America if she asked.

“Yeah, I know the place, it’s posh thing near the Thames. Could do with a bit of a shake down
though, definitely has some unsavoury folk running it, and now apparently dining at it.” Solomons tilted his head down at the icy slush, appearing lost in his thoughts before turning to follow Arthur. “The man who owns it is good friends with a duke or two though, best to go in prepared on that front.” Solomons shut the door behind them, flicking at the broken lock a few times before leading Arthur into the living room. Arthur paused, staring at the papers and glass still on the floor.

“We had a bit of an argument didn’t we, He was not a big fan of my firm ‘No attendance’ stance for the meeting and you’re now looking at the fall out.” Solomons brushed a few papers to the side and stepped over a lamp to where he kept the rum. “Supposing you’ll be wanting some of this.” He held up a half empty bottle. All of Arthur’s previous confidence and assurance that everything was going to be handled was seeping slowly out of him as the stress and pressure settled in. He couldn’t shake the hanging feeling that Tommy had agreed too easily to return to Birmingham either. Although, before the war Tommy would’ve done anything Arthur asked, so maybe it was the return of his confidence that in turn gave Tommy confidence?

“Yeah, give it here.” Arthur took the bottle gratefully, half a bottle wouldn’t be much help for the night, and they had actual work to do. “Sabini said all of Changretta’s information goes through that club, I’m going to go tonight, spy a little maybe. See if I can’t figure out where he’s keeping Ada and Karl.” Arthur tilted the bottle up, drinking heavily for a minute. He checked his watch, they were nearing six. Polly and John would be calling in an hour or so. He could see if Solomons would be willing to wait for their call.

“Tommy thinks they’re in a coal yard. He said Changretta smelled like one but had no reason to. Given his proclivity toward the fancier side of things, ‘A man of his standing wouldn’t lower himself to breathe the same air’ were his words I think.” Solomons threw a few papers off of an armchair before sitting and folding his hands.

“There’s what, hundreds of coal yards in London?” Arthur squinted, looking around the room. Must’ve been one hell of an argument. Arthur brushed a receipt and several unidentifiable papers off the end of the couch. “Did he have some way to narrow it down?” He tipped the bottle again.

“Yeah, he thinks it’ll be near a club Sabini owns. Makes a good bit of sense, but then most coal workers I know are good people, if they saw two people who clearly didn’t belong, they’d probably raise some sort of alarm.” Solomons shrugged.

“Unless Changretta is paying them, they could be just as willing to look the other way for a fair amount.” Arthur argued, he tugged off his left shoe, feeling the still damp sock. Solomons eyes followed the movement before jerking up to meet Arthur’s. He shook his foot and flexed a few toes, trying to work some feeling back into them. This was going to be a very long two days.

“If he’s been hanging around that club we might want to send someone a little more inconspicuous,
they’ll be on the lookout for your face.” Solomons murmured, flipping through the papers closest to him. “Tommy was making a list of places Ada might be before you sent him off, why don’t you compile your own nice, neat little list, right,” Solomons paused as he stood up and wandered back into the sitting room they’d occupied earlier. “Of all the things that Sabini told you,” he yelled across the hall, Arthur could him rifling through papers. “That would help us out tremen-” he heard him curse softly as the rifling paused. Solomons appeared back in the living room, empty handed.

“He took the list.”

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“Ada.” Someone whispered, it couldn’t have been Karl. She peeked under the coat at Karl, he was sleeping, and he called her Mum anyway. He was grimy, exhausted and terrified, but still sleeping. It couldn’t have been the American, he called her Mrs. Thorne. She blinked through the inky darkness, forcing her eyes to see outside the little window in the door. The American hadn’t left her with anything to use for light, or food or water either for that matter. It had been three days with just Tommy’s coat. That had been a blessing, the cement was freezing and there was no heating in the building. She couldn’t even say for sure if the building was finished or if it was just a foundation. She could hear the Thames though, or what she thought was the Thames. It could’ve been any river, but it was cruel to hear it without being able to drink it.

“Ada.” The voice whispered again, she slowly climbed to her feet, wobbling slightly and grabbing hold of the wall. Icy air brushed around the room, fluttering around Karl and nearly lifting her hat off her head. She took a deep breath, loosening her knees and balling her fists.

“Ada, make a sound.” She couldn’t tell if this was a hallucination or a trick, it sounded like Tommy. The wind blustered through the small room again, chilling the cold sweat that had broken out across her forehead. She took a few timid steps toward the window, looking out. It was all the same, a blanket coating of darkness. During the day she could see a hallway, and maybe another room, but it looked as empty and small as the one she was in. She whistled quietly, hoping it was Tommy and not just the guard the American had left her with. Whoever it was, they whistled back.

Slowly the whistling grew closer until a little match was lit, bringing a small glow to the window. Her eyes took a second to adjust to the light as she rubbed a dirty finger across them, trying to push the exhaustion away. She blinked a few times before finally focusing.

It was Tommy.

“Oh thank god, get us out. Get us out now.” She stepped closer to the window. “Did you kill the
guard? Where’s the American?” She began rapid firing questions as Tommy fussed with the lock. “Can you pick locks?” Being one of them as he fussed more with it. The wind brushed in through the window again, rushing down her back and around the room kicking up dust and dirt. She began asking more questions, questions about Polly, Arthur, John and Finn.

“Ada, be quiet. No I can’t pick locks, Yes the guard is dead, I stole keys from him, but there’s a lot of keys on here. I don’t know where Changretta is.” Ada left him to it for a moment, stepping over to Karl and shaking him quietly awake. He blinked one eye open, looking up at her questioningly as she held her finger to her lips to shush him.

“We’re going escape now love. I need to you to be silent, silent like when you’re playing Hide and Seek.” She whispered, he nodded slowly, excitement coming to his eyes as he sat up. She tugged Tommy’s coat tighter around his shoulders and fixed his shoes. One of the keys finally worked as the lock clicked. She heard him blow the match out as she heaved Karl up into her arms, and pivoted. Tommy quickly opened the door, rushing in to hug her and Karl. He was as cold as she was, with his icy fingers digging into her back. She was sure her own icy hands weren’t warming him up any.

“Where are we?” She felt the wind blow around the room and out the door, bouncing across walls. Karl gripped her neck fiercely, silently shivering from the cold. She was going to buy him so many gifts when this was through, hell she’d buy him whatever he wanted. Whatever he wanted and the warmest coat that existed, just Incase.

“A construction site on the Thames. We’re on the second floor. It’s four blocks into Sabini’s territory, but he owns the whore house across the street. There’s nothing unique about it except that it has a massive coal furnace outside.” He whispered as the wind rocketed around them. They came across another window, much larger than the one in her cell, and lacking its windowpane. It was throwing cold, snowy air down the hall and casting a low light, just enough to make out Tommy at least. “I’m not lighting anything, that match was as bright as I’ll go and I’d bet three to one those women are paid to watch for lights. The stairs are this way. Once we find them we’ll be alright, the back door is near there.” She nodded quickly before realizing he couldn’t see it. Following it up with a quick “OK”.

They walked as quickly and quietly as they dared, sneaking around pillars and holding the wall for balance. Tommy had to have come from this way as he seemed to have a good understanding of where they were going. The air was becoming grittier the more the wind whipped around, pulling more dirt into it. Tommy froze in front of her suddenly, listening intently.

Footsteps. There were footsteps coming from somewhere below them. Tommy swung around, grabbing her wrist and running in the opposite direction. Karl tightened his grip, pushing his face as tight into her neck as possible, she could feel small tears gathering in her hair. Now that she was aware of them, they seemed to be the loudest sound in the building.
“I have a plan, I have a plan, you’ll hate it but it’ll work.” The wind carried the words over to her. He stopped quickly just before the larger window, keeping them out of the moonlight. “We’re going to jump. The wind is strong enough this close to the Thames, it’ll catch us, I’ll throw us to the water.” She sucked in a gasp, her heart in her throat at that thought. Buildings weren’t usually close enough to jump into the Thames. The footsteps were closing in. Her heart was beating with them. “Ada, we have to jump, we are completely surrounded by Sabini’s territory, please, please jump.” His hands tightened around her arms as he breathing hard. A loud rattle echoed down the hallway, Tommy’s hands shook with it. Whoever was here was on the second floor.

She threw herself into the little room, looking down at the Thames. Her eyes widening massively at the distance. They would never make that jump. The footsteps swore loudly, breaking into a run and quickly gaining on them. They could’ve been speaking Chinese for all she knew, the words all ran together in her head, pounding near her ears and matching her heart as it thumped harshly in her chest. She looked back out the window, fearing the height, the fall, the wind, and the Thames if they did actually land in it. Tommy didn’t give her a choice to fear much longer.

“Don’t scream!” He half whispered, shoving her, Karl and himself as hard as he could out the window. Her closed mouth scream was about as loud as an open one, and her eyes slammed shut as she fell. The rushing wind raged around her, catching them hard and tossing her like a rag doll through the air. Spinning them over and around, tumbling through the air until all the wind was knocked from her as she hit the water.

Everything dulled for a moment as water rushed around her ears, soaking through her clothes and dragging her and Karl down heavily. Karl clenched tightly around her, refusing to let go. She was running out of air and struggling to blink her eyes open, trying to see Karl. The water was freezing, slowing her as she blindly tried to pull Tommy’s coat off of him. She could feel her coat being tugged off of her as well, before she finally breached the water. Karl was breathing heavily and crying. She nearly sank again in the cold, Tommy’s arm coming up behind her to keep her afloat.

“Keep swimming, keep swimming.” He shivered, teeth chattering as he paddled through the water. “There’s a sewage drain over,” he sank a little under the water before resurfacing quickly, “Over there.” He might’ve tried pointing, but it was impossibly to see over the water. “We can’t go to a dock, Changretta will think that’s where we’ll go.” She could barely hear him over the water and Karl. She tightened her grip on Karl, shifting him to her back so she could swim easier. They were absolutely going to die, people died from swimming in freezing water like this.

“We won’t die, I promise Ada, we won’t.” Tommy shuddered in the cold. She must’ve been speaking out loud, although how he heard her over the water was a mystery to her. The waves rolled over them as they swam, throwing them under and back up repeatedly, small chunks of ice flowed past them, reminding Ada unnecessarily of how cold it was. She couldn’t hear anything but the crashing water, her whole body having gone numb after a few minutes of swimming. She sank a little deeper with each heavy wave, struggling to get Karl over the water. Her hands scraped roughly
against slick rock suddenly, shocking her eyes open. The sewage drain was above them, just barely visible in the pale moonlight.

Tommy was heaving himself up and out of the water, he slid twice back into the river before finally crawling to the ledge. He grabbed Karl first, bringing him up to the ledge as well before pulling her out. The wind rippled around them, bringing the cold and stench of sewage to them. Ada shuddered, coughing and spitting up dirty water.

“Let’s go, we have to go to Birmingham, I promised Arthur and Alfie I’d go,” he paused, forcing the words through chattering teeth. “I just thought I’d check this place, and a few others first, just to be sure.” Tommy led them further into the drain. “Hopefully, hopefully they won’t be too angry.” He shuddered harder. She tucked Karl tighter into her arms shivering as well.

Chapter End Notes

Poor things. Maybe things will start looking up in the next bit. Probably not tho. Thank you so much for reading, if you feel like it please leave a comment! They make my day :)
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

I’m a fan of westerns. There was always going to be a shootout.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The car brake nearly broke with how hard Alfie pulled it. The tires slid across the icy road, jerking as the brake clamped down on it. He didn’t have a plan, well he did, it just wasn’t very good. At the moment it was; Blow up the La Nova, sneak in, find anything that pointed to where Changretta was keeping Ada, and finally, rescue Ada and presumably Tommy, who’d probably already figured out where she was. He and Arthur had split up after leaving his house, each taking different sections of Sabini’s territory, searching nearby for Tommy’s car. They’d agreed to meet at the club around 7 if they truly couldn’t find him, but Alfie couldn’t wait any longer. Arthur would turn up eventually and he was happier without him hanging around while he searched. If Changretta was inside that’d be even better, he would know Tommy was moderately safe, and he’d be able to finally kill the American.

He threw the car door open, gently handling the grenade Arthur, for some ungodly reason, had lying around. Alfie didn’t usually keep explosives in his car, that was definitely a Shelby habit. One he would curb the minute he had Tommy within arms reach. The snowfall had slowed in his drive, drifting aimlessly, but the biting wind had only increased. Unsurprising, given how close they were to the Thames.

He pulled the clip on the grenade, leaning as far back as he could and heaving it as accurately as possible at the front doors of the club.

The terrible space between peace and violence weighed heavily on him as he watched the grenade sail, reminding him fiercely of his days at war. The soldiers minute, Tommy called it, one minute of everything at once. It was all he could think of, waiting with bated breath as he stared down the road. He wasn’t an explosives expert, Tommy was, but Alfie rarely used them during the war. He could barely remember how long it took for one to explode.

Not long at all apparently.

It was massively loud, rattling the ground and nearly overturning a car parked out front. Glass, brick and mortar rained down on the street, coating the cars, and sorry clientele. The decorative facade cracked, falling to the ground heavily, sending massive, sharp fragments of glass into the heavy
FUCK TOMMY FOR FORCING THEM TO IMPROVISE. FOR SOMEONE SO FUCKING SMART HE COULDN’T SEE HOW TEMPTING OF A HOSTAGE HE MADE AND GIVEN HIS CURRENT STATE HE WOULD BE EVEN EASIER TO KIDNAP THAN USUAL, AS STRESSED, BRUISED AND BATTERED AS HE WAS. HE PROBABLY THOUGHT HE COULD THINK HIS WAY OUT OF ANYTHING CHANGRETTA THREW AT HIM, NEVER CONSIDERING HIS LIMITED PHYSICALITY.

He stared at the chaos erupting at the club. Hopefully, if he was quick enough, no one would recognize him. Either that or he’d have to kill Changretta’s men. Alfie felt his coat pocket quickly, double checking his gun. He couldn’t kill everyone though, fact of life innit?

He ran over to the club, mimicking all the confused and concerned remarks people in chaotic situations made. He pulled several people out of rubble, passing them off to the next pair of hands as he made his way inside the club. The grenade must’ve broken through a window, landing near the bar. Glasses and bodies littered the floor, along with overturned chairs and tables. Several bottles had exploded, going up in flames, spreading fire across the club. He passed catatonic patrons and ex-soldiers alike, all struggling to process the bomb. He gave a few cursory glances around, hunting for where a private room would be.

He didn’t have to look far, a single, twitchy, well dressed guard was standing watch over a side door, too caught up in the commotion to notice Alfie. Either Changretta had a lot less self preservation than Alfie thought or he wasn’t in the building. That thought crept down his throat, souring in his stomach. It was good for Alfie, it would make his detective work go much quicker, but bad for Ada and Tommy if he was with them.

He darted forward quickly, surprising the twitchy man and slamming his fist into his nose. Twitchy shouting angrily, bringing his fists up as he crashed into the door. Alfie punched him again for good measure before whipping his cane down, ramming it hard into his leg. He heard the telltale crack of bones breaking and grabbed ahold of his lapel, swinging him to the side and pinning him to the wall.

“Shitty day for you mate, I hate to say it, but I’m going to be needing your help.” Alfie leaned in close to his face, he stank of cologne covered sweat. “You don’t have any problems with that, do you?” He shook him, bringing him closer to his ear, whispering under the cacophony of terror spreading through the club. Twitchy gurgled, moaning in pain and holding his nose. “Excellent, didn’t think so.” He kicked the door open, dragging Twitchy with him and throwing him onto a chair before slamming the door shut once again.

“Now don’t fuckin’ move, I am pressed for time and I don’t feel like wasting it or my bullets on you.” He warned, rounding the large, ornate desk and taking in the posh interior. Nice desk, nice chairs, nice telephone. Even his fucking curtains were expensive looking. Too posh for someone so clearly lacking in class. He threw a few papers to the side, flickering his eyes to Twitchy, who
moaned sadly from where he was slumped in his chair.

“Now mate, if I were your boss, where would I keep a kidnapped woman and her terribly young son, hmm?” Alfie began throwing open drawers, hunting for notes, letters and addresses. Anything with a location would do. “I’m not hearing locations, and it may have slipped your memory, but allow me to remind you,” Alfie paused, ripping open the slim center drawer. He pocketed the gun he found, but slammed the drawer shut quickly when nothing more helpful appeared, “I’m the one who decides if you’re going to see tomorrow.” The moaning returned, followed by a scrabbling, scratching sound. Twitchy was pulling himself up the chair, tipping his head back as he tried to staunch his bloody nose. He groaned a few words out, spitting as blood drained into his throat.

“Speak up now mate, haven’t got the ears I used to, now have I?” Alfie snarled as he nearly pulled the last drawer off of its wheels. The ripped sheet metal and broken bedside table leg were crammed inside, along with several accounts from people who appeared to have witnessed the effects of Tommy’s ‘Explosions’. Someone named Fratello, Sgt. Moss, the fucking hotel maid from Epsom, all neatly stacked together. Alfie pocketed them quickly and ripped the leg off of what remained of the bedside table. He flipped it around in his hands and aimed it at Twitchy, who threw his hands up, screaming what sounded like “Please don’t, I’ll talk!”

“Where then.” He stalked over to Twitchy, swinging the table leg threateningly through the air as he closed in. Twitchy shrank back, covering his face and dragging his good leg up to protect his middle. The smell of burning wood and alcohol was seeping into the office as smoke curled inside from under the door, stinging at their eyes.

“There’s a construction site, near here,” Twitchy gurgled, coughing to clear his throat and flinging his hands to the right, gesturing away from himself. “A big unfinished building, they’re inside. It’s across the street from a whorehouse.” He stared wide eyed and terrified into Alfie’s eyes, shaking as the blood dripped down his face. The sweat was overpowering the cologne now, permeating the room.

“And Changretta, where’s he run off to?” Alfie dragged his fingers over the freshly splintered edges of the wood. He watched as Twitchy’s eyes darted to his hands, following them as they danced over the wood. The noise beyond the doorway was rising, more people clambering in and out, attempting to help others escape.

“He’s already left, somebody saw Shelby-” Alfie clubbed him hard on the head, nearly breaking the table leg. Twitchy’s head crashed sideways landing on the chair’s arm, bleeding as sluggishly as his nose. Alfie restrained himself, fingers itching to do further damage and take all of his frustrations out on him. He whipped around, spotting the telephone again. He grabbed it, quickly dialing out and getting ahold of Ollie, ordering him to round up anyone at the bakery and to get to the club prepared for a shootout. At least when the fight inevitably broke out they’d have backup coming.
Two massively deep breaths later, he spun on his heel and dove out the door. Dodging around frantic patrons and employees as he cut through the burning wreckage and back into the frigid air. He sniffed at the cold, and gathered his bearings as he stared down icy street.

“What the bloody hell have you done?” Arthur shouted. He whipped his head around searching for where Arthur’s voice had come from. “What happened to inconspicuous?” Arthur appeared angrily on his left, looking wind blown and more manic than usual. He must’ve given up waiting as well, unable to find Tommy’s car. Probably because they’d find Tommy’s car down the road. “Did you even look for his car?!” He started before Alfie cut him off.

“Changretta’s keeping Ada and Karl in a construction site down the street, a big unfinished building, he’s there and so is Tommy.” Arthur was running before he finished, bolting ahead full tilt down the street. It couldn’t have been far, Changretta would’ve made the building close enough to walk to incase of this exact situation.

The construction building loomed quickly on the horizon, barely lit by the dim street lights and swarmed by gunmen, all shouting and pointing at the river. Alfie slowed down, watching as his heart pounded loudly in his ears. Changretta was there. Imposingly cutting through the chaos and ordering people every which way. He paused, looking toward them, or more accurately the fire growing behind them. Arthur swore, dodging down an alley as Changretta noticed them and began screaming to shoot. He turned from them then, throwing a small ladder down and climbing into a sewer. Bullets began raining down, throwing them into action.

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His throat closed up again as he struggled to breathe, his lungs refusing to cooperate. The walls kept closing in. Pressing on all sides, it was too small. Too small and too dark. All he could hear was Karl, crying from the cold as Ada tried desperately to warm him up. The brick was too slippery to get a firm grip on as they tread anxiously toward an exit and the wind was careening up and down the tunnel fiercely, whipping freezing air into their faces as they walked.

He stumbled when a deafening explosion ripped through the tunnel, sending dust, dirt and sewage onto them, stinging as it clouded their eyes. Strong tremors that had nothing to do with the cold ran through him as the tunnel shook, heavy brick protesting loudly as aftershocks rippled around them. They both paused, praying it wouldn’t all collapse around their heads. His throat closed again. Memories of the last time a tunnel collapsed on him screaming in his mind.

“What was that?” Ada whispered from behind him, her teeth chattered with her steps. It isn’t a tunnel, he reminded himself, it’s a drain. A big drain, the kind people could stand in. The kind lots of
people could stand in at once.

Even if they did find a manhole cover there was no telling if they’d manage to open it. It could be frozen shut. He tried scrubbing the grit from his eyes, but between the cold and fear he couldn’t force his body to cooperate. They were too cold, they had to find an exit. *It’s too small, It’s going to collapse.*

“A bomb.” Tommy answered as another aftershock rattled through the drain. Ada slid suddenly, nearly dropping Karl as she fell. Tommy spun around, catching him and trying to break her fall. They all went down in a tangle of freezing limbs. Ada huffed out a broken cry, empathizing heavily with Karl who had yet to stop crying. Tommy’s heart broke as he listened to him sob, there wasn’t anything they could do to help. They didn’t have any warm clothes, they didn’t even have any dry ones. It was dark, freezing and he’d spent the last three days holed up in a construction site with no food or water. Ada lifted herself onto her elbows before slowly climbing back to her feet.

“Should we be worried? Did you plan that?” He could feel her tilting her head up, pressing firmly on the bricks. Tommy couldn’t see her face, but he didn’t need to to imagine the worry running through it.

“I didn’t. It’s someone else.” He whispered, forcing down the bile threatening to rise up his throat, trying to make his lungs to work. The wind spun loudly around them, adding to the echo. He wished it would just calm down. *It’s too dark, It’s going to collapse.*

“Only a little further now,” Ada’s voice broke through his terror, “Only a little further now, and it’ll be warm beds for everyone.” She shuddered, her impossible positivity eeking out of the darkness at them. Tommy stared up at her, or where he hoped she was, holding Karl closely as he struggled to sit up and get his feet beneath him. He was reminded of her ferocity, never once cowing in the face of danger. She would worry, and be fearful, but Ada never cowed down and let someone else win. She never once yelled at him to calm the wind down either, even though he knew it was only adding to the problem. She grabbed his arm tightly, helping him up and not letting go until she was sure they wouldn’t fall.

“Just straight then, straight till we feel a ladder.” She shuddered out, reaching out like he had earlier, feeling along the wall. Their footsteps echoed too loudly, causing him to look backwards, expecting each time to see someone creeping up on them in the darkness. Karl gripped his neck tightly, forcing him to look forward as he pressed his face as closely as he could, trying to find any warmth left. Tommy could only pull him closer as the wind lashed out again, tearing away as it spun, dragging more dirt and water around them. It blew through them quickly, leaving their shuddering even more pronounced as it sped down the tunnel. Icy water dripped onto his forehead, slowly crawling through his hair.
A dull, popping sound echoed through the drain. Ada paused in her search, sniffing as her nose dripped. Gunshots it sounded like, coming from above them. His heart beat loudly in his chest, boarding on painful. *You’re going to be buried, It’s going to collapse.*

“I feel a ladder.” He could hear the triumph in Ada’s voice, the wind barreled around them, wailing in their ears. Karl poked his head up slowly at that, his frozen hair tickling at Tommy’s chin as he looked around. “I don’t know how easy it’s going to be to get this open.” She climbed the ladder in small, clumsy steps. He could hear her pushing roughly on the cover. He found himself hoping the explosion loosened it. The wind tore around them loudly, jerking Karl to push his face back into Tommy’s neck. The grating sound of metal on metal bit at his ears. Ada shouted, shoving the cover up and to the side. A thin beam of light was thrown down the passage, shocking their eyes after so long in the dark, allowing them to finally see each other. Ada was covered in dirt, shaking violently, and her hair was frozen, forming small icicles near the ends. Tommy was sure he didn’t look much better.

“Pass me Karl! I’ll bring him up!” She screamed over the roar. It was definitely gunshots. They rang loudly down the drain, echoing around them. He heaved Karl up to her, pushing at his shaking limbs to cooperate. She grabbed him deftly, pulling him up above. He could hear the cover being pushed further out of the way as she pulled herself up as well. The wind started dying, calming down at the sight of the exit. He reached out for the ladder, but was pulled backwards suddenly, as arms snared him roughly around the waist.

“No explosions now Pet.” Changretta’s voice growled in his ear. One hand crawled up his body, tightening like a vice as it came around his throat. “Is this how gypsies do business?” His fingers pressed down hard. “Making promises they say they’ll uphold? Deals they won’t double cross?” Tommy coughed, struggling to fight back.

He threw his himself forward, slamming his foot down on top of Changretta’s. The wind swung out, barreling between them, trying to help push him off. He couldn’t breathe. He was too cold and Changretta’s hands were too tight.

“I watched you jump.” He paused. “Quite desperate isn’t it. Given how far away the river was.” Changretta lifted him easily, thrusting him close again, forcing the wind away. “Help me now Pet, tell me how you made that jump into the river?” The fingers loosened slightly, allowing him to just barely inhale. “Or how you made the wind spin around us yesterday, tell me how?” Tommy stopped, his breath coming out loudly as he struggled get air in his lungs.

“I’ve spoken with several people, they say you dirty, fucking, river gypsies have a history with these sorts of things.” Tommy his hands scrabbled at Changretta’s, trying to drag them off of his neck. The wind rushed back around them again, whirling dangerously and sickling out. The arm around his waist tightened, pressing him painfully into Changretta’s front. “Tell it to stop.”
“Tommy!” Ada’s voice echoed down the tunnel, “Tommy, are you ok?” Changretta shook him hard as the wind grew, racing inward and cutting into them. He could hear Arthur, he realized belatedly. Arthur knew he didn’t go to Birmingham then. Arthur was going to kill him. He tried to make the wind stop, gasping desperately, pleading and begging in his mind. Please just this once, please stop. It carved through his sleeves, arcing up and slicing into Changretta. It wasn’t listening. It never listened. He hadn’t even known if it would catch them when they jumped, he had been banking on his fear for Ada and Karl to push the wind to catch them.

“Gypsies fuck out in the open, don’t they,” Changretta’s lips touched his ear. “I can’t imagine you’re used to a little class, especially with Solomons, but if you don’t tell it to fucking stop, I’m going to fuck you here and now.” A choked cry escaped his lungs as Changretta’s hand pulled at his trousers. He tried pulling himself away as the wind whipped loudly around them, shoving them hard until Changretta let go of his neck. Even in the dim light he could see the anger in his face, his free hand moving up to brace against the wall. Tommy coughed hard, sucking in bitter cold air and swinging his fist at the American as the wind raged. He couldn’t make it stop, but he couldn’t tell Changretta that.

“You’re not listening.” His ears went fuzzy as Changretta grabbed hold of him again.

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Alfie dodged back behind the brick pub for the third time, slipping slightly on the ice as his bad knee ached. They’d been at it nearly five minutes now and he was quickly running low. Arthur wasn’t faring much better, he’d managed to get further down the road than Alfie though. Changretta’s men were converging on the small dock jutting into the Thames. Why had Changretta gone into the sewer? That question was sweating into his palms, rattling around his brain as he tried to reason it out. Either it was to blow them up from below, or Tommy, Ada and Karl must be down there.

“Fucking shoot Solomons!” Arthur shouted from behind a car. He peeked around the pub again, counting the seconds between gunshots. Another bullet cracked through the brick near his ear, carving into it and sending dust into his eyes. Fuckin’ hell, this was a terrible idea. He should’ve waited until Ollie showed up. Blindly shooting wasn’t going to do anything but waste bullets, and that was a precious commodity at the moment. He shot twice quickly, breaking into a dead run to the car covering Arthur and slamming into it hard as he slid to a stop. Arthur caught his arm before he could slide further, pulling him up into a crouch.

“We aren’t going to get them all, we need a plan.” he tilted his gun around the side of the car, shooting at a man who’d just pulled the same stunt he had, dodging for closer cover. It grazed past his head, sailing into the one behind him. “Ollie should be here soon,” he paused turning to look at Arthur, “Changretta’s below ground, I think Ada and Tommy are too.” He felt another bullet race
“Arthur?” Alfie looked over at him impatiently. “Arthur, what do you,” He stopped. Down the side street on their left, a hand had appeared out of the sewer, furiously shoving the manhole cover to the side. A bullet tore into the car, shocking him back to the gunfight again. He fired back twice, nailing one in the chest. The second missed, soaring just shy of a man into the Thames. Alfie turned back to the side street, watching as the hand reappeared, this time with a toddler. He was climbing precariously to his feet, shaking heavily, wearing what looked like Tommy’s coat.

“Karl!” Arthur screamed and jumped out from behind the car, sharply swearing and dodging back when a bullet grazed his arm. “Karl stay where you are!” He shouted, turning back to the gunfight, watching as more bullets hit the car. “Cover me, I’m gonna try and grab him.” Alfie looked over as Ada pulled herself up and out of the sewer. She was worse for wear, shaking as hard as Karl and covered head to toe in dirt. She was leaning back down into sewer, calling Tommy’s name. He was about to tell Arthur to run for it, but he’d already beaten him to it, dashing out from behind the car, narrowly missing a shot near his knee and down the side street. Alfie shot twice more before following in his footsteps, rushing over to help.

“Ada, stop.” Arthur was grabbing her tightly around the shoulders, barely containing the shivers wracking through her. She tugged hard at his arms, repeating over and over that something was wrong. “I’ll go down, I’ll,” He paused as a choked cry came from the sewer.

Alfie’s heart burned. He wouldn’t let this be like last time. Changretta wasn’t going to win. He could hear the wind rushing, struggling to find an outlet, building intensely beneath the surface. He dove at the sewer, grabbing ahold of the icy ladder and swinging himself into the hole, shouting as he was thrown bodily upwards. A massive gale tore out from the tunnel, rocketing down the street and tipping the car they’d been using as coverage.

“Fuck!” Arthur swore, grabbing Karl and Ada and pulling away, narrowly avoiding being thrown themselves as he shoved them from the tunnel. Alfie groaned, pushing himself up to his elbows, achingly turning his head down the street as the gunfire grew louder. Either Changretta’s men were closing in or his men had arrived.

“Tommy!” He shouted, hoping to god he hadn’t gone catatonic in his fear. “Tommy, tell it to attack back!” Alfie yelled louder, finally heaving himself to his feet. He tripped back over to the tunnel, stopping short as the wind exploded upwards again. “It reacts yes, it fucking reacts to you, but it also fucking listens love!” The wind whirled, spinning madly above them, slicing sharply at his face. It would build into a tornado soon if they didn’t figure things out. He looked up, cocking his gun quickly as someone appeared down the street. He sighed thankfully, watching as Ollie was ran up to them, apron and all with three machine guns and a hand grenade strapped around his chest. Thank god for anxious Ollie, he’s the only one Alfie knew that would come that prepared for a shootout.
“Saw the fire, heard the gunshots. Still a lot of Changretta’s men around, they’re mostly sticking to the docks, but they’re moving in closer as well.” Ollie pulled two of the guns off, passing one to him and throwing another to Arthur. He nodded shortly before running back down the street, pressing his back close to the wall and rapid firing wildly.

“Tommy love, can you hear me?” Alfie shouted down into the darkness, his voice breaking and lowering in volume as an eerie silence set in. It was like the wind was dying out, It spun a few more times slowly dissipating to thin air. Muffled fighting was rising out of the tunnel. He looked up, following the last string of wind that spun thinly above him. The clouds were funneling, thick and grey in the sky, threatening to tear down upon London. Grabbing the ladder warily, nervous of being thrown again as he inched closer. The wind hadn’t exploded in the last minute, so he took the opportunity, jumped down into the dark. He could hear Tommy struggling, and Changretta fighting as well, but it was difficult to see anything beyond the ladder.

“Tommy,” he called, stepping from the light, shooting his gun wasn’t an option, he was completely blind. He was worryingly sure Changretta and Tommy weren’t though.

“Alfie!” Tommy choked out, his breath coming out too quickly to be anything less than terrified. The air was achingly thin, making breathing even more of a challenge. It seemed like the wind was forcing itself out of their lungs and up above the sewer.

“I’ll shoot him if you come closer.” Changretta’s disembodied voice rang out. Alfie stopped short, listening to Tommy fought harder. He could feel the wind moving upwards in a steady stream, drifting in smooth arcs out through the tunnel.

Despite his days in the war, Alfie had never really had a feeling of being in true, unpredictable, danger. War was dangerous, grenades were dangerous, hell guns were dangerous. It was organized though, you went onto a battlefield understanding the level of danger. He knew a funnel cloud was forming, but he couldn’t say if it would build strong enough to touch down. He didn’t know if the wind would lash out, rushing in all at once, tearing through them and cutting them to ribbons. He didn’t know if Tommy could pull it back from here either. It was too unpredictable.

“You’d throw away your mother’s safety, just like that?” Alfie asked lowering his voice, ignoring his pounding heart threatening to break out of his chest. He crept towards them, holding the one upper hand they still had over Changretta. If he spoke calmly enough, it might reach through to Tommy, calming him down just enough so the wind might not snap.

“Desperate times Solomons. We all fall on them.” He heard a gun click as he took another step closer. Tommy’s muffled voice echoed again, ragged and strained. Changretta must be covering his
mou

t. He inched closer to him still, taking careful steps against the icy ground.

“Your Jew isn’t listening Pet, I don’t think he wants you alive.” Alfie froze again, sweat beading down his back in spite of the bitter cold permeating the drain. “Or rather,” Changretta’s sickly voice rang out. “I could shoot him instead.” Tommy’s struggling doubling as he gasped desperately in the thin air. His foot slid forward again, easily gliding along the ice.

He heard the revolver trigger.

Time slowed to an impossible crawl as the trigger clicked back and the bullet wound its way out of the gun. Metal scraping on metal, tearing out of the chamber, echoing loudly down the drain. He leapt to the side, blindly dodging and tipping further into the darkness, before being thrown bodily as a sound louder than a freight train erupted around them.

Everything sped too quickly then, pushing the wind to burst into action. The tunnel was collapsing, crumbling in on them, packing in tight and choking them out. Tommy was screaming as the wind tore around him. Alfie tried picking himself up, trying to help before the wind whipped him into the wall, cracking his head hard on the brick. Massive arcs of wind exploded outward, decimating the drain and roaring through the air. He could hear Tommy screaming for him, desperately trying to find him before he blacked out.

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Small, muted cries broke gently through the thick fog, forcing his eyes open against the gritty dirt. Alfie tilted his head up, aching bones protesting as he pushed the chunks of brick and cement off of him. It was quiet, the wind had gone quiet, drifting by naturally as wind should. He looked up, swearing as he took in the wreckage. The ground above the sewer had been cracked open, carving a thick, jagged scar to see through. As if a giant had torn a trench into the middle of a London street.

He turned his head, hearing the gasping sound again and spotted Tommy. Ada had her arm around him, tugging him up and out of the rubble and leading him slowly over to the metal ladder, or what was left of it as several rungs were gone. Someone was prodding him in the stomach, pulling him from his staring. He turned back, looking up at Arthur. He wasn’t wearing his jacket, and his suit was torn, dirty and blood stained.

“You lived you lucky bastard,” Arthur reached down, grabbing his arms firmly and dragging him up. “You’re alright? Nothing broken?” He rapped gently on his head, tapping at his arms and legs.
“We’re going back to Birmingham, follow Ada and get in the bloody car.” He dusted smaller pieces of brick off of him before stepping over a few massive chunks of rubble and stopping in front Changretta.

“Dead?” Alfie coughed out, as dust coated his throat the more he breathed in. He limped over, ignoring Arthur’s orders, coming to stand next to him. If he wasn’t dead yet, he would be soon. People with that pallor didn’t last long.

“Yeah.” They stared silently, watching as the dust blew over his body. He looked menacing, even in death.

“He lasted the blast, but Ada shot him. Stole my revolver off me and got him in the chest. Go follow her Alfie. I’ve got this.” Arthur huffed exhaustedly, clapping him on the shoulder and pushing him toward the ladder. Alfie felt a new sense of gratitude toward him. Despite the constant arguing and fighting, he really did try to keep his siblings safe and taken care of. He crept as carefully over the rubble as he could, breaking an ankle now would just be sad.

The climb out of the sewer shouldn’t have been that difficult, even as sore and cold as he was. Ada reappeared, dressed thickly in Arthur’s coat with someone else’s hat on her head. She gave him an encouraging smile, taking ahold of his arm and leading him to Arthur’s car. Someone must’ve moved it from the club.

“Tommy’s in the car,” she tightened her grip slightly, calming him down when he jerked, angling toward the car. “No police yet, Sabini must have a tight rope on them. Ollie’s over here too. He’s quite nervous isn’t he?” She spoke gently into his ear, easily correcting his missteps and catching him when he stumbled. He’d been in the bloody war, why was walking so difficult? In the back of his mind, he knew it was probably shock setting in, given the day he’d had. Or several days at this point.

“Alfie,” Ollie appeared at his left. “We lost William,” he said quickly, swallowing thickly. “We made out ok otherwise. Got halfway to the dock before the sewer blew up.” He tugged at the machine gun, pulling it up higher. “What’s the plan?” Ollie looked at him expectantly. He’d have more than Changretta’s men to think about tonight yet, too many of his own men had died due to this whole fucking thing.

“Get everybody out and back to the Bakery, about the,” He paused, weariness sinking heavily around his shoulders as he looked over at the massive scar torn into the ground.

“Arthur’s got a deal with Sabini, he’ll cover us since we took care of Changretta.” Ada chimed in. “Fire in the club and explosion underground, we think it was a gas leak.” She patted his arm, smiling disarmingly at Ollie, who smiled shakily back. Alfie nodded at him, waving him off and watching as he pivoted, rounding everyone up.
“You know with Arthur in charge, I’m surprised he’s letting you come to Birmingham.” She nudged him further away from Ollie towards the car. “I might even say he’s decided you’re apart of things now.” She shivered slightly, tucking Arthur’s coat closer. “You do want to come to Birmingham, right?” They stopped in front of the car. Karl was in the front seat, practically attached to the heater.

“Yeah, uhm,” he looked around, catching Arthur calling for Ollie, figuring out a plan. People had come out in force, lighting lamps and helping in the clean up. They seemed to be buying Ada’s gas leak story as well. The fire in the club had spread, eating through the chain of buildings between the sewer and the club. He wasn’t sure that story would hold up under close observation though. They’d still have to explain Changretta’s dead men as well. He turned, peeking into the car again, this time at Tommy.

He was covered head to toe in blankets and coats, a slight tremor running through him as he waited. Alfie’s eyes crept up the blanket, landing on his face. Tommy was staring back at him, his hands were tucked under his chin as he warily tugged at the coat. He blinked slowly once, letting the insecurity, exhaustion, guilt and nervousness ring through for a moment before closing his eyes and tugging at the coat again.

He opened the door, reaching over and pulling Tommy toward him as he climbed shakily in. Tommy jerked, his arms stuttering out and reaching for him as well, trying to help as Alfie arranged them. He murmured soothingly when Tommy couldn’t get his limbs under control, eventually settling him on his lap and tucking his coat around him.

“Yeah. Consider me apart of it.” He said, resting his head gently on top of Tommy’s. Ada smiled wide, shivering again as she climbed into the front seat, mimicking him as she arranged Karl onto her lap. She swung her head around, her eyes crinkling at him as Tommy settled.

“Excellent. You don’t mind if we stop at your house do you? We’re all a little damp. We didn’t know we’d be going swimming or we’d have brought our swimsuits!”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading that massive wall of text. It’s all fluff from here on out. Maybe a little drama tho... I can’t always resist. Please leave a comment down below! I love reading them!
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

The fluffiest chapter I’ve ever written.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tommy forced his eyes open again, the blurry car coming into view for the third time in ten minutes. Alfie’s arm moved up, tucking him closer and blanketing him in warmth again. No matter how many times he tried to keep his eyes open they just kept closing. Arthur and Alfie were talking, but all Tommy could feel was the deep rumble of Alfie’s voice in his chest, lulling him back to sleep.

“Ada says you caught them with the wind love, threw yourselves off the second floor and into the Thames.” Alfie’s voice broke through the fog. “One more mark in the Controlled Wind column innit?” He tugged the coat up higher around them, smiling annoyingly down at him. “Don’t quite approve of the jumping, especially with the distance between the building and water.” Alfie looked down reproachfully. He tried to glare back, but with one eye half closed and the other threatening to join it, it came out more confused.

“You know, we could always try again, with less distance, and in the summer?” Ada twisted around, she looked like she’d recently woken up as well. Karl’s head flopped over, landing on her arm as he snored.

“No. And I’m still pissed at you,” Arthur gestured at him, “You just couldn’t go back to fucking Birmingham like I asked. How hard would it have been? And you!” The car jerked as Arthur shoved a finger at Ada. “Stealing my gun and shooting Changretta, you’re a killer now, are you?” Arthur snarled as Ada scoffed and arranged Karl so his head wasn’t so bent.

“You were just standing there, wide eyed and lost. Someone had to do something.” She pulled the sweater she’d borrowed from Alfie up higher. “You didn’t spend the last three days in an empty, cement construction building. It was highly susceptible to the elements too, fucking freezing.”

“Yeah, Yeah. You’ve had a shit go of it. You still should’ve let me kill him. Now you’ve got that on your conscience.” Arthur admitted.

“Off my conscience more like.” Ada mumbled under her breath.
Tommy smiled, his eyes closing again. He had no idea how much longer they’d be stuck in the car, open fields were still flying by as they drove. He almost didn’t want to go home. Polly was going to kill him. She’d make sure to get them back into shape first, she wasn’t the type to kick them when they were already down, far more likely to wait until they could handle it and then strike.

He vaguely remembered the telephone call to her, letting her know what had all happened, but he couldn’t remember hearing her response. She was going to tear him apart for ignoring Arthur. The car ride from the sewer to Alfie’s had been blurry as well, he wasn’t quite sure what anyone said, or how he’d made it out of the car and into Alfie’s house, but in the blur he’d had a very quick, warm shower, been bundled in dry clothes and pushed into the back of the car again. He could feel himself sinking again as his eyelids grew heavier. The bone deep exhaustion just wasn't going away.

“Did he fall back asleep again?” Arthur’s voice drifted around him.

“In and out of it really, he’s fucking exhausted mate, what more do you want from him?” Alfie asked. He leaned back a little more, pulling Tommy closer. “You break through that much concrete and earth using only wind and tell me how you feel after.” Alfie argued.

“He wouldn’t have had to if he’d just gone to Birmingham. Why would sneaking off on his own and searching for Ada have seemed like a good fucking idea?” Arthur growled. “It was Tommy Shelby against the world then? Tommy Shelby with the big ideas is going to take down the bloody Mafia.” Tommy’s eyes tightened. He tried to block Arthur out, forcing himself to fall back asleep quicker rather than listen to Arthur list his mistakes.

“Shut up Arthur.” Ada grumbled. “I was happier to escape sooner rather than later anyway. And much happier to have avoided being an object in a deal.” She huffed out. “I could have done without the swimming though, and the sewer. I don’t ever want another sewer situation, it was fucking awful hearing him scream like that.” His heart sank, he couldn’t remember screaming. He remembered the wind, how dark it was, and Changretta pulling on him, but mostly he remembered not being able to find Alfie.

“Pol said she had a solution, or rather,” Arthur coughed quietly “An idea.” The car rattled, bumping along the road for a moment.

“What kind of idea?” Alfie rumbled. Tommy tilted his head, pressing his ear closer to Alfie’s chest.

“Didn’t say. Just that she had an idea and maybe it would help. She’s furious with you by the way,”
Arthur snickered. “Went on for a while about how bloody stupid you had to be to leave your bakery unguarded and not notice your main competitor going into business with the mafia. She thinks you and Tommy must get on well.” He laughed.

“So Polly’s accepted you as well then?” Ada asked. “Because last I heard she was going to burn down your bakery for this sort of stuff.”

“Not that she did or did not say that, and not to distance ourselves from this insightful conversation, but should we be worried that the wind hasn’t been around?” Alfie brushed his arm up and down Tommy’s back, feeling for the telltale wisps.

“Maybe it has, it's hard to tell without the smoke.” Ada said. “It wasn’t always so noticeable growing up, sometimes it was very quiet.”

“Maybe the snap broke it more?” Arthur’s voice sank lower. “If Danny or,” he tailed off for a moment.

“Freddie.” Ada sighed sadly.

“Freddie, Yeah, if either of them were around maybe they could tell us what happened directly after the first time.” He could hear Arthur digging for a cigarette. “But without them,” he drifted off again.

The car was quiet then, with just the dark landscape to pass them by. He didn’t know why the wind hadn’t been around, maybe Ada was right and it was. With Changretta dead and Ada and Karl safe, he didn’t have too much to be nervous about, so it didn’t have much to whip around about. There was always Polly’s impending judgment, as well as worries that police or inspectors would catch on to the wind, but it was too far fetched to really go anywhere. They’d be far more likely to believe a bomb went off than some Romani wind spinner losing control.

“I think he can control it.” Alfie said suddenly, rousing Tommy from his thoughts. His eyes refused to open, but one ear focused, waiting to see if he wanted to be apart of this conversation.

“You think he was controlling it in the sewer?” Arthur asked.

“No, not then, just listen,” Alfie paused. “I think it reacts, but I think it also listens.” He took a deep breath. “When Tommy gets anxious, the wind does too. It’s first line of defense is to kick up and
loop around, brushing against everything, right?” Arthur mumbled a short ‘yes’ as he tapped at the steering wheel. “That’s when it’s uncontrolled, it does that when he’s inside anywhere. The wind doesn’t like being inside anything, so it constantly pushes to go outside.”

“And the controlled?” Arthur asked.

“Well see, have you ever been talking, and suddenly the wind is pulling on you, looping around your neck and tugging you closer?” Alfie asked. Ada and Arthur both hummed in agreement.

“That’s controlled. That’s him pulling you closer. It’s just subconscious. He thinks it’s uncontrolled, but he wants,” Ada cut him off.

“That’s still uncontrolled. Controlled would be, for example, for him to see a piece of paper, flick the wind at it, and bring it to him. That’s controlled.”

“Ok, fair point. I’ve seen him move the wind away then. Completely controlled.” He heard Ada twist around. “We were with the Lee’s, in the wagon, and he was sleeping, snowy wind came in and him, likely not wanting to be cold, brushed it away.” Alfie said. Tommy desperately wanted them to change the subject and pick something without him or the wind being the topic.

“So it works when he’s sleeping?” Arthur asked. “Let’s try it now then.” He heard the window being rolled down.

“For fucks sake Arthur, not now, let him rest!” Alfie yelled and pitched forward, startling Tommy into opening his eyes and sitting up quickly as the car jerked. Ada was staring wide eyed as well. “Look what you did now, he was bloody asleep!” Alfie shouted, pressing Tommy back down to him.

“You said it worked when he was asleep Solomons!” Arthur snarled, righting the car and rolling the window back up.

“Maybe give him a day or two to get some actual sleep first!” Alfie growled.

“Relax, this argument is pointless. There will be thousands of nights to try this out on. We don’t have to see if it works right this second.” Ada snapped at them. She looked at Tommy then, her eyes softening as he tried to focus on her. “It’s fine Tommy. We’ll be in Birmingham in an hour, Pol and
warm beds soon.” She turned back around, situating Karl as she went. Tommy looked out the window; she was right. Despite darkness blanketing everything, the scenery was becoming more familiar by the minute.

“Bloody, fucking arse of a brother.” Alfie was muttering quietly into Tommy’s ear. “Can’t see how tired everyone is.” His eyes pinched angrily, glaring daggers into the back of Arthur’s headrest.

“Alfie, it’s fine.” Tommy mumbled out. “He’s only trying to help.” He shivered, bringing his hands down from his under his chin and wrapping them around Alfie’s arm.

“That didn’t look like helping to me.” Alfie hissed, rubbing his hands down Tommy’s arm. “Looked more like causing problems. Opens the bloody window to let cold air in, disregarding the three people that recently went swimming in the Thames in the middle of the night.” He grumbled on, muttering about the multitude of ways people could get sick from swimming in freezing waters. Tommy just pressed his head to Alfie’s chest and listened to the rumble, feeling terribly pleased when it finally lulled him back to sleep.

It’s an odd sort of exhausted dream that plagues him during the car ride. He dreams of the nights events, running through them again. Although no one speaks in English, nor Romani. Every time their mouths open to speak, wind rushes out. Sometimes loud, sometimes violent, sometimes quiet even. It takes him a moment, but he realizes it’s the only sound he can actually hear.

He can see the wind as well, not the smoky, grey outline he usually sees, but the actual wind. It’s cascading around them like ribbons. Thin, razor sharp arcs circle threateningly around Changretta when he inevitably catches him, they sink around his hands and climb to his neck, while thicker, smooth ribbons careen down the sewer, searching for an exit. Even in the midst of the terrifying experience he pauses, holding his hand out as for the ribbons to land on. They choose instead to drift passed him, sometimes wrapping around him as they float.

When the sewer collapses again, he can see it rattle, though the first time it happened, it had been too dark. He can see cobblestone after cobblestone, silently falling away from the walls to bury them. It should be loud. It was deafening at the time, but there’s just oddly quiet wind around him. Gently brushing near his ears. Arthur’s face appeared near the ceiling then, reaching down and trying to pull him up out of the wreckage. His mouth opens, and Tommy waits, listening intently for words. Maybe he’s gone deaf. He wondered if this is what the wind feels like. Trapped in silence, waiting for Tommy to tell it what to do, unable to hear him.

The car door slammed shut, causing Tommy’s eyes to snap open. Grey, early morning light was seeping through Birmingham, rousing its inhabitants. Tommy watched as Arthur stretched his legs, nearly tripping and likely sore from the drive. Ada was climbing out as well, gingerly stepping around dirty puddles that never quite froze, and putting Karl down. Karl dashed up the stoop
knocking hard on the door and yelling for Pol.

The back car door opened and Arthur was tapping Tommy on the shoulder, trying to wake him. He twisted his head around, blinking quickly to clear his eyes. Arthur sniffed and brushed a hand through his mustache, his eyes seeming to apologize in advance for the next few hours. Tommy blinked back trying to convey his acceptance at the inevitability of it. He slumped backwards, leaning against Alfie, who only snored louder, unbothered by Tommy’s moving.

“I’ve got a key, hang on Karl.” Ada called, Arthur groaned, his knee popping as he followed them, jumping up the stoop as well. Tommy sat up finally, grimacing as his back cracked and the cold crept around him as Alfie’s arms slipped down. The front door of Watery Ln opened, allowing Karl to run in excitedly inside with Ada.

He slid off of Alfie, wobbling slightly as he climbed out of the car. He patted Alfie awake then, tugging him toward the car door and out into the street. Alfie woke easily, mumbling about his stiff neck and achy knee. Tommy handed him his cane as he helped him out of the car.

They could hear Polly fussing over Ada and Karl, making food already as she asked question after question. What did Changretta say, do, act like? Did he give any secrets away? We still have his mother if something needs to be done. Is Karl alright, still has all his fingers and toes?

She kept at it as Tommy hung up the coat he’d borrowed. Alfie hummed along, hanging coats and organizing shoes. He wasn’t a naturally messy person, but his stay in the wagon had taught him to pick up quickly after himself. More clutter had accumulated in the hallway as well, adding to their growing collection. Coats and hats as well as tools, stacks of newspapers, race track clippings and packs of cigarettes, which Tommy stole, quickly lighting one and pocketing the rest.

“Christ, the state of you.” Polly rounded the corner into the hallway stopping short, taking in the forming bruises littering his neck and cuts across his face. The smoke drifted aimlessly, unencumbered by the wind. “Ada says Changretta’s dead, the lucky man. Lord knows what I’d do to him if you’d kept him alive.” She patted his cheek lightly, sending him toward the kitchen with a hand on his shoulder. He paused as she stopped in front of Alfie. “Mr. Solomons.” She started, blocking Alfie’s route.

“Mrs. Grey,” Alfie said.

“Tommy makes his own decisions. Whether they’re good or bad, we can’t always say until the cards are all on the table. I suppose you were a rare good one.” She patted him on the shoulder as well and pointed toward the kitchen. Tommy let a small smile slip through, grabbing his hand and leading him
through the house.

Alfie was feeling fairly stunned. The Shelby’s weren’t predisposed to grand speeches of acceptance, but that was about as grand as rolling out a red carpet and announcing him as part of their own.

“There’s tea in the pot, I’ll hear no complaining from anyone. If you want to lose fingers or toes that’s fine, don’t drink it.” She brushed passed Arthur, taking ahold of the kettle. “If you want to keep them, drink the tea.” She set it down on the table and went about collecting cups, all the while explaining to Karl what was in it, and how it helped. After cayenne was listed as an ingredient Karl had taken on a significantly less interested look.

Alfie reached for a cup, noting the thin crack running along the China. He wondered how often it had been slammed onto the table, if maybe it was Polly’s favorite. He grabbed at the kettle, but Ada waved him off.

“You don’t want that. Polly used to make that when we were younger, it’ll warm you up but it’s the definition of ‘If it burns, it’s working.’ She gave him a look before pouring some into a cup and handing it to Karl. “Watch.” Karl tipped it back, taking less than a mouthful before spitting it out. Arthur laughed, reminiscing about days when they were younger and Pol would make them drink it.

“Well I like it, and It’s good for you Karl. You’re going to get sick from the water if you don’t drink it, and your fingers haven’t gotten warm yet, you said so yourself.” Ada lifted her own cup as she nudged Karl’s toward him. “You’ll feel better for it.” Alfie chuckled watching as Karl tried again, grimacing as he gingerly sipped.

Finn bolted down the stairs then, tearing into the room and nearly crashing into Ada. Alfie couldn’t follow what he said next, it all ran together as he asked about the shootout, Ada, the sewer, and Alfie, which he gracefully answered as best as he could before Finn was off asking other questions. It was about when Finn started asking about Sabini that he noticed Tommy wasn’t in the room anymore, and neither was Polly.

He snuck away quietly, creeping down the hall near the living room. The wallpaper was dingy, fading green tones wearing away to reveal the wood beneath it. Tommy’s voice jumped nearby, arguing with Polly.
“He said her name is Miriam Boswell. She’s willing to help at least. I talked with her on the phone. She isn’t sure why it won’t listen, but she said at the very least that she could control it when you can’t.” Polly said. “Johnny Dogs said he could take you to them when you’re ready. You can’t keep exploding. You told me you’re working on it.” She paused. “I’m working on it now too.” Alfie came to a stop at the living room door, noting the dented door knob and small scratches littering the wood.

Johnny Dogs was of some use then, he thought. Alfie had been worried when he’d eyed them during Tommy’s panic attack in that field. Tommy had told him not to worry, that Johnny was a Blinder and he’d keep their secrets secret. He couldn’t shake the nagging feeling that he’d been too relaxed about it though. Tommy was rightfully obsessive about who knew about the wind. Johnny Dogs didn’t strike him as someone who would keep it truly secret. He hadn’t either, he’d gone to find help, but he’d also told the secret.

“Miriam Boswell.” Tommy said. He could hear defeat in his voice. Not that there was anything to be defeated about in Alfie’s opinion. If Boswell could help then they’d be thick not to accept it. He knocked on the door then, not wanting to be caught eavesdropping.

Polly opened the door, blinking up at him and huffing. She twisted around quickly, shooting a look at Tommy.

“Drink the tea, we’ll talk later.” She spun on her heel then, walking down the hall and calling for Arthur. Tommy blinked up at him from where he leaned on a loveseat, tugging at the knitting on his sweater.

“Don’t let it be said I listen through doors now love, but you’d disappeared on me. Miriam Boswell?” Alfie barely got the words out before Tommy grabbed his shirt, dragging him closer and holding him tightly. He pressed his face into Alfie’s chest, gripping tightly to the fabric.

“Some old lady who can coerce the wind.” He mumbled. “She thought she was the only one I guess. Johnny Dogs found her and mentioned me.” He sniffed. The early morning light was breaking through the window, casting the room in bright sunlight and coating everything in a buttery yellow. Tommy’s regularly dark hair looked brighter, turning a deep brown in the light.

“I still happen to be of the opinion that you have some control over it.” Alfie whispered to him. “Could be useful though, having her around. She might really help.” Alfie brought his hand up, cradling Tommy’s head as he spoke.

“They’re shipping me off. I’m cracked.” He tilted his head, leaning into Alfie’s hand. “It’s too much for them,” He whispered brokenly. He felt the wind then, for the first time since the sewer. Flickering
to life around Tommy’s head and climbing toward Alfie’s. It felt as tired as Tommy looked, rising jaggedly from its slumber, trying to join the conversation, but too exhausted to contribute much.

“Absolutely not. They’re trying to help.” Alfie argued. “If you have a specific problem you see a specific doctor don’t you? You wouldn’t go to the eye doctor if your foot hurt, right?” He reached down, wrapping both arms around him. “They’re trying to help love, they don’t know what to do, so they’ve found someone who does.” He tucked his face gently under Tommy’s neck, pressing small kisses around the bruises. “We need another vacation as well, this mafia business has been unkind to my back, and this time I promise to set extra guards on the bakery.” Tommy crumbled under him, bringing his arms up to cup his face.

“You’ll come? Even though the traveller lifestyle isn’t your favorite.” The light bounced off of his eyes, making them appear even lighter.

“Yeah, well, not seeing you daily is my least favorite. Give me a week though love, I have to sort out the shootout and Sabini. Although I have no doubt your brother is already in contact with him about it. As fast as your family is at conducting business.” Alfie began, watching as Tommy rolled his eyes at that.

The noise in the house grew as Tommy’s family woke, he could hear feet tapping upstairs and water running. Esme was calling after John, reminding him of something or other. The wind tiptoed down his right arm, circling his wrist and softly climbing up his left, joining in on their cuddle.

“Plus we haven’t discussed your punishment for not following Arthur’s orders.” Alfie broke the moment, watching as Tommy froze, gripping his beard tightly. “I was thinking spankings.” He huffed out a laugh and swatted gently at Tommy’s arse as a blush crossed his face. The wind flicked out as Tommy tried to hide his face, but Alfie was faster, too excited to have been the reason he blushed. He cupped his chin gently, commenting here and there with little kisses “And this lovely shade of red goes so nicely with your freckles darling,” and “Why, it’s crept over to your ears now too!” He placed butterfly kisses everywhere, making sure to sneak a few down to Tommy’s lips as well. Tommy squirmed, pressing himself delightfully up against him as Alfie’s hands brushed down near his arse. He eased off the light kisses for a minute, allowing Tommy to breathe, viciously pleased with himself for getting such a reaction out of him.

“A proper vacation then. We'll even take Esme. She’d probably kill us otherwise.” Tommy scratched at his face, likely trying to will the blush away.

“You’ll take us all. No way in hell we’re just going to send you off to some woman.” John sounded from the doorway. “Esme was around when Johnny Dogs called, she’s packed already. Just say when.” He leaned against the door frame. “I’m not counting this as me getting back you yet though, some light petting doesn’t count. You wait, I’ll get my revenge.” He nodded to them before turning
around and shouting for Ada.

“Well, tea then? A real bed after that, and I repeat, a real bed. Not the one in your bedroom. We’re going to need to replace that.” Alfie said, squeezing lightly at Tommy’s arse.

“I’m not drinking that tea. I haven’t gotten the taste out of my mouth from the last time she forced it on me.” Tommy grumbled.

“Drink it, or you’ll be Shelby-No-Fingers.” Ada called as she passed the living room with Karl in tow.

“Not a minute of peace in this house you know?” Alfie sighed, swinging Tommy around and nudging him toward the kitchen.

Chapter End Notes

Just the epilogue left! Thank you for braving the wall of text, if you feel like leaving a comment, I’ll be eternally grateful, they make me smile! Thank you! <3
Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

The epilogue.

Chapter Notes

Thank you for sticking with my story!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Alfie watched as the wind tossed around Tommy and Miriam. Invisible until it ruffled through their
clothes or played in their hair. Miriam was speaking, but she was too far away for Alfie to hear,
raising her arms and slowing the wind as she directed Tommy. Polly climbed to the wagon bench
Alfie had seated himself on, watching closely as well.

“Still at it then?” She eyed Miriam before turning to Tommy, blinking slowly as he stood still,
refusing to copy Miriam. “Observing, but not participating?”

“Not hardly, nearly five minutes ago he did exactly as she asked, followed her to the nines, he did.”
Alfie hadn’t dropped his eyes from them, refusing to let Tommy out of his sight. He wasn’t the only
one, Arthur barely let him passed the wagon line. Ada suffered the same grounding as well.

“He’s trying then. Good.” He could hear the smile in her voice. She lit a cigarette, puffing slowly as
Miriam encouraged Tommy to try again.

“He keeps denying that he can control it, and he only brings up how he could, to describe how he
can’t.” Alfie sighed, twisting his cane in his hands as snow drifted off a low hanging bough. It fell
gently on the wagon cover, slipping off to dust through the air.

“You didn’t see when he could, probably better for you. Keep trying to convince him he can.” She
ordered blowing smoke upwards. “Keep trying Solomons.” The smoke drifted off naturally,
dissipating above their heads. “How are the nightmares? Still violent?” He could feel her eyes on
him, piercing into his mind and rifling through his thoughts.
The weeks following Changretta’s death were swallowed by nightmares and panic attacks. Three nights into travelling Ada and Karl refused to sleep alone, rotating amongst the Shelby’s to ease their fear. Tommy lasted the week before nearly shredding the wagon.

Miriam Boswell turned out to be remarkably skilled at spinning the wind. Alfie had woken up from a dead sleep to find her halfway into their wagon, nervously siphoning the wind out through the doorway and shouting for him to try and wake Tommy up.

“Still violent, Yeah.” Alfie said, sharply reminded of last night. Tommy had screamed himself awake, nearly falling to the floor before for Alfie caught him as he shouted, desperately trying to find him in his dreams. He could only hold him tightly, begging him to slow down and breathe, telling him that everyone was alive and safe even if in his dreams they weren’t.

“Well,” she paused, leaning forward curiously as Tommy tilted toward Miriam and stretched his arms out, copying her. “it was always going to catch up.” Alfie couldn’t decide if that was ominous or accepting, it was difficult to tell with Polly. Much like Tommy, she held her cards close to her chest, waiting for the right moment to reveal her true knowledge. He was surprised initially, when she never asked about Changretta’s assault.

As it would happen, Changretta had never told Ada about what happened at her house. He’d dropped the coat off shortly after locking her up, leaving her to suffer in fear when she continually asked where Tommy was, and what he had done to him.

Arthur had never told anyone either, thankfully. Although Alfie put that down to an innate understanding of Tommy, and that sharing information that traumatizing would make him feel worse. Alfie kindly let Arthur know that Sabini had been wrong, and Changretta hadn’t raped Tommy. They’d had an embarrassingly close moment after that, both standing in silence as Arthur nearly cried in relief.

They’d ended up agreeing to keep Arthur as the boss, at least temporarily. Once Tommy felt comfortable with the wind, he’d return as head of the family. Sabini didn’t need to know that yet though, and when they were back on their feet they’d knock him back down. Alfie was quite looking forward to it.

A sharp burst of wind whipped passed them then, tossing Alfie’s hat and barreling into the wagon. Polly nearly tipped before it slowed unnaturally, winding its way backwards towards Miriam. Tommy’s eyes found his then, betraying exhaustion and anxiety.

“Think it’s time for a break.” Alfie said to Polly, hopping off the wagon bench and crunching
through snow. “He has been at it all morning after all.” He said over his shoulder. Polly nodded slowly, keeping her eyes on them as he walked.

The cold air slipped into his lungs, chilling him as he stepped through the heavy snow. He wished again for Changretta to have attacked during summer, or late spring even. The only good thing about the cold, was that the police actually believed their story about a gas leak bursting beneath the La Nova club. Apparently two others had burst that night due to the cold. Sabini had been fast enough to get rid of the bodies before the inspectors could investigate as well. That still left several dead for him account and find rites for though. It had been bloody awful.

“The horse analogy was good, if you’re afraid, so will the wind be.” Miriam said, tucking her arms close against the cold. “I can’t promise you’ll ever fully control it, but I think you’re doing better.” Tommy was staring coldly at her, annoyance pulling behind his eyes.

“Well then, isn’t that a pleasant thing to hear. Couldn’t be happier to hear how well it’s going.” Alfie smiled, nodding as Tommy huffed and turned away from Miriam, kicking through the thick snow toward him. “I think a bit of lunch is in order Miriam, may I steal Tommy from you?” He asked as Tommy pushed passed him, winding his way toward the wagon.

“Of course.” Miriam brushed the cold wind away from herself, smiling as it twirled around. “Find me later if you want to practice.” She called after Tommy. Alfie caught up to Tommy quickly, jumping ahead to carve an easier trail for them. He peeked up at Polly, watching as she sat, still smoking on the wagon bench.

He’d slowly started to view the wagon more comfortably since arriving, seeing it as a warm, safe place rather than a cramped, wooden box. Tommy was massively more comfortable in it as well, which eased Alfie more each passing day. He could see the tight knots buried in his soul loosening every day they stayed. He knew Tommy still missed Birmingham, as well as the Peaky Blinders, deals and gang-life, but he had to admit, this suited him far more.

By the time they reached the wagon, Polly had left, searching for Ada likely. Tommy kicked the snow off of his boots before climbing into the warmth. Alfie followed, sighing pleasantly as a burst of heat greeted him. Their travelling would’ve been very awful without a small iron heater to keep the cold at bay.

“Do tell now love, is Miriam a liar or not.” Alfie smiled, shutting the door and arranging their shoes. Tommy padded over the the bed, throwing himself on it before pulling the blanket over his head. “Nah now,” Alfie walked over and gently tugged the blanket off, staring down at Tommy. “Can’t be that bad, show me what she taught you, I’ll practice too.” He nodded encouragingly as Tommy stared up at him.
“Fine.” Tommy grumbled, pushing the blanket further off of himself and sitting up. Alfie sat on the bed, waiting patiently as Tommy slid over to him and cupped his hands together. “She said to start small, and not pull more wind than necessary.” He leaned forward, almost completely hunching in on himself. “That it’ll naturally-” a small shock of wind darted out from his cupped hands, bursting into the side of the wagon. Tommy and Alfie both sat frozen, staring at the wagon side.

“Did you want it to do that love?” Alfie blinked at the wood.

“No..” Tommy huffed, hands still cupped as he stared frustratedly. A second shock joined the first, whipping out before dispersing easily. Tommy quickly pulled his hands toward himself, tightening them into fists and bringing them up to his chest. “It’s not doing what I want.”

“It’s you throwing it though.” Alfie couldn’t keep the smile off of his face.

“In the broadest sense, Alfie. Don’t get any ideas-!” He didn’t let Tommy finish, sweeping him up and kissing him hard.

“That’s more control than last month,” Alfie whispered to him, “more control than last week even.” Tommy kissed him back excitedly, eager to leave practicing with the wind behind.

“Don’t get excited.” Tommy paused, breathing hard through his nose. “It’s still not doing what I want. It’s going anywhere it likes, you’re celebrating over nothing.” Alfie moved down around his chin, pressing little kisses into his neck. “I wanted it to stay near my hands.” Tommy gently pushed him off.

“You wanted it to move, and it did.” Alfie smiled at him, cupping his face and bringing their foreheads together. “You’ve never been able to make it move of you’re on free will, at least around me. Deny that love, let’s hear it.” He could see the argument leaving Tommy. Alfie wrapped his arms around him, dragging him down to lay on the bed.

“No. I haven’t.” Tommy said finally. He tucked his head closer and brought his hands up to Alfie’s beard, gently tangling his fingers through it.

“May I ask a question, about the wind that is.” Alfie stroked one hand up Tommy’s side. He’d never outwardly asked a lot of his questions. He felt that they’d only make Tommy feel like he had less control, especially with questions like, ‘What does it feel like? Does it listen and then just ignore? or
'Do you have to move physically to make wind move?' Tommy nodded, waiting patiently for him to ask.

“What is the actual term for it? I’ve heard a few different ones. You can- ‘Wind Spin’, ‘Coerce the Wind’ and ‘Spin the Wind.’ Despite the similarities between two of them, I would like an actual term.” Tommy blinked at him, smiling slightly at his question. The smoke from their heater drifted upwards, gently puffing out of the wagon. The wind hadn’t been overly present, despite the morning and practice, satisfying itself with brushing through their hair and tiptoeing around the blankets.

They laid there for a moment, peacefully soaking in the quiet warmth. The sun had yet to set, leaving small cracks of light to filter in through their little window. Alfie pulled Tommy closer, tucking him neatly into his chest as he thought of a good term.

“They are all fine, it just doesn’t translate very well.” Tommy finally said quietly, tilting his head up at him. He seemed to wrestle with himself for a moment then.

“Well don’t hold out on me love, if there’s a name you prefer I’d like to call it that.” Alfie said. The smoke caught his eye then, softly spinning away from the heater, nervously arcing closer to them.

“My mother used to say I could Ride the Wind, because of how often I flew off of horses with it.” Tommy admitted shyly. Alfie stared him, thinking he might’ve died and gone to heaven as a contented smile crept across Tommy’s lips.

“Well, that is fucking precious and if you let me, I’d like to borrow that term from now on.” Alfie decided, kissing him lightly as Tommy laughed.

Chapter End Notes

Holy Jesus! Thank you so much for reading all of this, and for sticking with me throughout my massive story. I’ve learned so much from writing this, from fandom culture and how inspiring the people are who are in it, to writing in general. There are some chapters that I love and some I hate and I never ever thought I’d actually write a 50k story! Thank you to everybody who has read, commented or left kudos, you encouraged me to write all the time! You’re an amazingly wonderful group of ppl.

TLDR: Thank you, you guys rock and you taught me a lot. I’m not emotionally ready to leave this AU though, so please feel free to drop me a prompt on Tumblr @tinypinnetrees if you want me to write any one shots or scenes you feel would be interesting! Thanks! <3
End Notes

Tommy is trying. He’s having a hard time. Please let me know if this is terrible! I’m hoping to keep a good schedule of update, and I love constructive criticism. Let me know if my I should work on anything!

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