A Plague On Both Your Houses

by Esperata

Summary

The GCPD are making moves to curtail Fish Mooney’s criminal activities. She is plotting to turn the tables on the police. And in the midst of this conflict, the cop's forensic scientist happens to catch sight of her enchanting umbrella boy.
Act One

The hand landing flat on his chest halted both Edward’s forward momentum and his preoccupied thinking. He blinked himself back to awareness as he raised his gaze to look at Bullock and realised they had arrived at their destination already. He’d been so lost in thought that he hadn’t noticed how far they’d come.

“Now, you better let me do the talking,” Harvey insisted. “Fish and me... we got history. We understand each other. She’ll hear me out. What we don’t need is you opening your trap and freaking anybody out.”

Edward frowned.

“I don’t know why you even brought me if you don’t want my input.”

“I brought you to keep you out of Miss Kringle’s hair while she sorts out the mess you made of her filing system. Believe me, I don’t want you here.”

“It wasn’t a mess,” Ed protested. “I was simply trying to make her life easier. If she would just-”

“Nu-huh,” Harvey interrupted. “I’m not interested. All I need to know is I gotta make sure you don’t get us killed. And all you’ve got to do is try to act normal.”

“Normal,” Ed repeated slowly.

“By which I mean,” Harvey clarified. “Stay silent. I don’t think you really know how to act normal otherwise.” He eyed the taller man and relented slightly. “Just head to the bar, order a drink and keep an eye out to warn me of any impending trouble. OK?”

“Act as lookout.” He nodded. “Okie dokie.”

Bullock rolled his eyes but seemingly accepted the response as agreement and led the way inside. As Edward followed he found his curiosity about visiting a nightclub – especially one with a reputation such as this – outweighed his previous worries and irritations. However he couldn’t immediately focus on the interior as their attention was automatically fixed on the sudden array of guns pointing their way.

“GCPD,” a heavyset goon growled. “Give me one reason not to shoot you dead right now?”

Harvey held his hands palm upwards.

“We’re not here to cause trouble. Just looking to have a friendly word with your boss. See if we can’t settle on a way to avoid more bloodshed.”

“In this town?” a female voice answered before a woman rose from her seat in the shadows. “This city thrives on blood.”

“Fish.” Harvey opened his arms and smiled at her. “You’re looking gorgeous. As always.”

It was an undeniable fact. This was a woman who used her beauty as a weapon and clearly dressed to kill. She smiled back at him, exuding confidence in her every step.

“And you’re looking rough. As always,” she countered, though she softened it with her smile. Moments later she gestured to her men who all lowered their weapons and settled back. As she
guided Harvey over to her central table, he flashed a quick look at Nygma who started back to himself and glanced round.

The nightclub wasn’t open yet but was in that busy hour of preparation leading up to the start of their business hours. No-one seemed inclined to pay him any attention though and he made his way across to the bar as Bullock had suggested. Sitting himself on the stool he looked about the room. Mooney’s henchmen were standing rigidly surveying all entrances and exits but around them the nightclub workers scurried about making sure everything was ready for their customers.

“Outta the way Penguin.”

The aggressive tone snapped Ed’s awareness back but he was momentarily stymied by the unusual derogatory name. He’d heard many such terms in his life – freak, weirdo, creep – but never before had he been compared to an aquatic bird. It took him a second to realise the large man currently leaning over the bar for glasses hadn’t actually been talking to him. And when he moved away Ed was suddenly face to face with the real subject of his comment.

They were without doubt the most stunning person he’d ever set eyes on. Ed’s eyes catalogued every detail they could, from the raven black hair, past the exquisite bone structure, pale skin, beautiful lips and trailing over his impeccably styled form. The only thing marring his perfection was the slight furrow in his brow as his eyes tracked the brute leaving. Then those eyes flicked back to land on him and Ed was spellbound.

They glittered like ice, shifting in the soft light from blue to green to grey.

“Can I help you?”

The voice made Ed aware that he’d been staring and he abruptly brought himself to attention. Even the voice was perfect he thought. Refined and polite but with an undercurrent of steel. He realised immediately that he needed to say something however when a finely defined eyebrow arched.

“Skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony.”

The beautiful object of his attention blinked in surprise at the response.

“Is this… Are you asking me a riddle?”

Ed felt his heart hammer at having successfully opened a dialogue.

“Do you like riddles?” he asked eagerly.

“No.”

The point blank response might have disappointed him except for the fact the other hadn’t left yet. He was still looking up at him with curiosity.

“So do you give up?”

The question seemed to amuse his interlocutor, as if this was a funny joke rather than a simple question.

“No,” he said again, though this time with a soft smile. “Repeat it for me.”

No-one had ever asked Ed to repeat a riddle before. Even if this wasn’t exactly a riddle he was happy to comply.
“Skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony.”

“Snow White.” The answer came swiftly this time now he was expecting the question. Another frown crossed his forehead though. “I don’t understand the relevance.”

“That’s who you remind me of,” Ed explained in a rush. “Skin as white as snow, lips as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony.”

“Oh.” The snow white skin flushed pink and the eyes dropped away as he stumbled for what to say. “That’s…” He cast his gaze back up. “Who are you?”

“Edward.” He smiled before adding. “Nygma.”

The vision stared at him as if he was trying to unlock a mystery. Edward decided to press his momentary advantage.

“I know who you are.”

“You do?”

“Mmhmm.” He nodded. “But I don’t know your first name Mr Penguin.”

Another flush crossed his cheeks but this time it was clearly not a pleased blush.

“My name isn’t Penguin,” he declared irritably.

Edward merely shrugged, entranced even by this flare of temper.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me,” he commented. “And there are undoubtedly worse things to be called than Penguin.”

The unintentional dark undercurrent brought him the full attention of the shorter man again. He didn’t want to be questioned on his familiarity with verbal abuse though so he quickly redirected the conversation.

“What is your name then?”

“Oswald. Oswald Cobblepot.”

“Oswald,” Ed repeated softly, tasting the name and finding it sweet. “That’s a beautiful name for a beautiful person.”

Once again the head before him ducked in embarrassment. It was adorable but Ed couldn’t help but feel it was probably embarrassment for him. He knew from prior feedback that his attempts at flirtation were not considered eloquent. In fact the word most frequently used to describe them was ‘lame’.

“I’m sorry. You must hear compliments like that all the time.”

“No. No. Not at all in fact.”

Ed found that patently impossible to believe so he concentrated hard on something better to romance Oswald.

“I can’t be bought,” he began slowly, relishing the renewed focus of attention, “but I can be stolen with a glance. I’m worthless to one,” he raised one finger in demonstration, “but priceless to two.”
He held the pointer fingers of both hands together in front of him. “What am I?”

Oswald was staring at his hands intently, clearly determined to unravel the riddle.

“Can’t be bought… stolen with a glance,” he muttered to himself.

It was a wonderful opportunity to drink in the sight of him and Edward made the most of the chance while Oswald was distracted. He was willing him to solve the puzzle though.

The sound of chairs scraping and the sight of the bouncers tensing in their peripheral vision distracted both of them from their own intimacy and Ed suddenly remembered why he was supposed to be there.

“Oh dear,” he murmured.

Bullock was still sat opposite Fish but he was holding his hands up to the heavyset man who’d fetched the glasses before and who was currently pointing a gun to his head.

“Butch,” Fish’s voice drawled. “Let’s not make a mess right before we’re due to open.”

“He threatened you,” Butch countered, holding his aim steady.

Fish rose gracefully and laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Now now,” she cautioned. “Don’t mistake the monkey for the organ grinder. Harvey’s only the messenger.”

The unsubtle insult pacified Butch who lowered his weapon. Fish patted him again before turning her fierce gaze onto Bullock.

“You better get back to your precinct and tell your captain we aren’t sacrificing our interests for her convenience. Do you understand me?”

“Loud and clear,” Harvey confirmed as he quickly moved away from the centre of her goons. He’d almost reached the door before he remembered he hadn’t come alone. His gaze swept across to the bar and humiliatingly he whistled sharply.

“Hey Nygma! Time to go.”

Ed cast a longing gaze back to Oswald who was likewise watching events unfold with rapt fascination.

“Think about the riddle,” he insisted wondering if he dared reach for his hand or, even more temptingly, dart in to capture his lips. As Oswald nodded and parted his lips to say something else, Bullock yelled again.

“Nygma!”

With a sad smile, and throwing mournful looks over his shoulder the whole way, Ed finally followed the detective. His only consolation was that Oswald’s eyes never left him the entire time.
Act Two

Edward was distracted the whole way back to the GCPD. Not that Bullock noticed. The detective was rambling on about how if only Essen had listened to him, maybe agreed to turn a blind eye in some areas, Fish might have been more receptive to concessions.

Not that Ed cared about any of that. All he could think about was that intense stare, those pursed lips, the flutter of eyelashes against delicate cheekbones.

Bullock’s palm slapping his back forcefully broke his reverie.

“You better make sure the morgue’s prepared for incoming.”

He blinked at the instruction and it took a second for his brain to process what it meant. They were back at the GCPD and Bullock was preparing to pass Fish’s message to Captain Essen. Such defiance could not be ignored which meant in all likelihood there would be a violent crackdown against the gangs in their near future. Most likely a number of cops would die.

He should probably care about that.

Instead he cast his gaze about the bustling room and wondered how many of them would care if he suddenly disappeared. None of them had even noticed his return to the building so in all likelihood they would have been equally unobservant about his absence.

Not like Oswald. The man had seen him. Looked at him and noticed him. And having done so he’d focused his attention on Ed, as if he wanted to know more about him. He’d asked for the riddle to be repeated. He’d watched him leave, step by step, like he had wanted to memorise every detail of him.

He was desperate to see Oswald again. Desperate to find out if he’d solved the riddle. Perhaps present him with another to solidify his interest. He might not be a cop but he worked for the GCPD and had been seen alongside Detective Bullock. In all likelihood Fish’s men would kill him before he could explain he had no interest in their gang war.

His wandering gaze fell upon Bullock’s desk currently unattended. The detective would be talking to Essen a while and at present he had no partner. The solution for his torment sprang into Ed’s head.

Casting a quick look around to make sure he was still being ignored – it would be typical if the one time he wanted to be unobserved he wasn’t – he then made his way over and up to the files spread on the desk.

Bullock might have been many things but he wasn’t actually an idiot. When going to face the boss in her territory he had at least pulled the files on every known associate, whether criminal or not, who he might expect to encounter. It took Ed a tense few moments fumbling through files before his breath caught on the familiar face.

Oswald.

For several seconds Ed simply stared at the picture. Oswald was smiling shyly at the camera and Ed was sorely tempted to sneak the photo out. However his logical mind eventually prevailed and he turned his eyes onto the accompanying text. There wasn’t much but there was the one piece of information he needed; Oswald’s home address.

A swift glance at the clock showed it was near enough clocking out time for him to risk sneaking out
early. He could go straight there, or maybe take a swift detour home to change. Perhaps pick up a
gift. He was already heading to the door when his brain reminded him of a pertinent fact. Oswald
would still be at Fish Mooney’s. The club would only just be opening and it had to be expected that
he would be there the entire night.

His shoulders slumped and he stood indecisively. The sound of Bullock stomping out of Essen’s
office made him jump but also sparked a new plan. Quickly he turned and headed up there himself.
He would ask to switch his hours from tomorrow morning to tonight. That way he’d also have time
to prepare a new riddle in the lab before visiting Oswald.

By the time Edward stood outside the apartment door he was twitchy with nerves and his palms were
so sweaty he was afraid he’d drop his offering. Taking a second to once again check his hair was
swept into place, he licked his lips and knocked.

A vague susurration of voices followed before the distinct sound of steps echoed towards him. He
had a chance to swallow nervously one more time before the door opened and he found himself
staring into those beautiful pale eyes again.

“Edward!”

A relieved smile broke across his face at the fact Oswald remembered his name.

“Oswald,” he replied, his voice unintentionally slipping into a deeper register. The smaller man
flushed and darted his eyes away in embarrassment but it didn’t hide the smile playing about his lips.
Then a new voice interrupted from behind.

“Oswald? Who is it?”

Oswald stepped back, clearly inviting the taller man inside, while he glanced over his shoulder to
answer.

“It’s my friend, mother. Edward.”

“Oh!”

As Edward stepped inside the small place he found himself immediately the subject of the older
lady’s scrutiny. He surveyed her back, noting all the ways she mirrored her son and all the details in
which Oswald differed. She had just the same air of enchantment about her though, especially when
she smiled at him.

“So you are the mysterious Edward Nygma!”

Ed found himself lost for words at the comment and threw a confused glance to Oswald. Who was
blushing profusely now.

“Mother!” he admonished.

She ignored him and moved over to whisper faux conspiratorially with Edward.

“Usually, he come home from work, I ask about his day and he tells me nothing. Last night though is
different. He tells me about this man he met. A man who posed him a riddle.”

She arched a delicately curved eyebrow and he suffered the realization that Oswald had probably
shared the riddle with her. Even if Oswald hadn’t solved it, Ed was in no doubt this woman knew exactly what he’d meant.

He was spared having to answer as Oswald moved determinedly back over.

“Mother,” he spoke firmly. “Why don’t you make our guest some tea?”

She smiled dreamily at them both before turning and sashaying away.

“Of course. I will leave you two to talk.”

As soon as she was gone Oswald started babbling.

“I am so sorry about that. It’s just that usually I can’t risk telling her anything about Fish’s business but I was still puzzling over the riddle you set and I thought that would be safe to share and-”

“Did you solve it?” Ed couldn’t hide his eagerness as he interrupted.

Oswald looked up at him, momentarily lost for words, before saying hesitantly.

“I think so.”

Ed’s heart leapt in his chest but before he could ask further Oswald had dropped his gaze to the box in Ed’s hands and briskly changed the subject.

“What’s that?”

In other circumstances he might have been discouraged by the diversion but as it was he grinned in delight.

“Another riddle,” he declared and opened the box to show Oswald the contents.

There was a long moment of silence, broken only by the sounds of the kettle in the distance, as Oswald peered inside the box. Then he looked up in confusion.

“Edward. That’s a cupcake with a bullet in it.”

“Yes,” he agreed. “But it means more than that. Do you see?”

“No.” Oswald shook his head. “Not really.” He reached in and picked it up, looking at it from other angles as if the meaning would then become plain.

“I thought it was appropriate. The cupcake is sweet and the bullet is deadly. A beautiful person is a dangerous thing.”

Oswald met his eyes again and this time Ed could see the swirling emotions there. He wanted to drown in them.

“So you did mean…” Oswald murmured softly, almost leaning further up towards Edward before breaking off, both verbally and physically. He stared down at the cupcake in his hands.

“Edward. If this is meant to relate to me… I could argue with you about the sweet part… or indeed the description of beautiful… but it is right about one thing.” He looked up. “Getting mixed up with me could be deadly.”

“OK. First of all, you cannot argue with me about either the sweet or the beautiful parts. They are
undeniably true. And as to deadly… I wouldn’t care at all if I got to be with you."

“Ed.” Oswald looked part pained, part fond. “I don’t want to see you get hurt. Not because of me.” He cast a cautious glance to the kitchen and lowered his voice. “I’m close to Fish Mooney. I know her secrets. If push comes to shove, she’d kill me herself rather than let me be taken by the GCPD.”

“I won’t let that happen!” Ed went to grasp Oswald’s hands before remembering the cupcake and hovering them awkwardly between them. “I swear if I hear of anything about to happen I will save you myself.”

“You’re sweet.” Oswald smiled and reached his free hand up to cup his cheek. “An idiot. But sweet.”

“I am not an idiot,” Edward objected, nonetheless pressing his own hand over Oswald’s. “I’m the smartest man in Gotham.”

Oswald smiled brightly.

“I will believe that when you manage to sweep me away from all this Mister Nygma.”

With a surge of determination, Ed pulled Oswald’s hand from his cheek to his lips and kissed it.

“Tea!” The chirpy voice broke their moment and they looked to see they were being smirked at. “My Oswald, he is a handsome boy, no?” she commented playfully.

“He is indeed,” Ed agreed.
Returning to the GCPD after his lunch with the Cobblepots, Edward was floating along in his own daydream. Gertrud was so unlike his own mother. She was so free and open. So welcoming to this man about whom the only thing she knew was that he doted upon her son. He hoped to experience many such more moments with the pair of them. And a few more private ones with Oswald.

When Ed had reluctantly told them he had to return to work Oswald had escorted him to the door. Once out of eyesight of his mother he had pulled Ed down by his tie and stolen a delicious farewell kiss. There had still been a hint of frosting on his lip and Ed had delighted in licking it off and hearing Oswald giggle before silencing him with a kiss again.

It was the promise of more such kisses in his future that meant Ed was smiling blithely at everyone he passed. Humming happily as he went about his afternoon’s work, real life only came crashing back in upon him as he entered the bullpen at dinnertime, only to find a drama unfolding in its midst.

Edward was used to finding pandemonium in the station. Some days there was more chaos than order as officers rushed about each trying to make sure they could be seen to have done their duty – even if it was for surface show rather than actual work. Today however was a tableau.

People were frozen in place, their eyes locked on the scene as if it was a stage performance. No-one saw Ed stepping in and likewise stopping dead at the sight.

The ape from the club, Butch, was poised in the middle of the room, gun pointing straight up at Detective Bullock. Off to the side of him Captain Essen was clearly trying to defuse the situation.

“You’re in the middle of the GCPD. Only a fool would think they could get away with this.”

“Too bad he’s got an IQ too low to register,” Harvey threw in.

The sound of the gun being cocked snapped just before Essen did.

“Bullock! Keep your mouth shut.” She turned her face back to the threat. “We were willing to talk with Fish. Come to a peaceful solution. We still are.”

“This isn’t about that,” Butch growled. “This is about this piece of garbage thinking he can worm his way into Fish’s affections and get info out of her.”

“Look Butch,” Harvey tried to soften his tone. “I’ve known Fish a long time. That sort of history builds bonds.”

It might have been okay if he’d chosen to stop there. Bullock however couldn’t seem to help sticking his foot in his mouth.

“Certainly more of a bond than a lovelorn lackey could hope for.”

That tipped the balance and Butch let out an enraged scream before pulling the trigger.

His scream forewarned Harvey though who ducked instinctively before pulling his own gun and firing back. The shot proved deadly accurate and Butch dropped like a stone. For a lone moment nobody moved, then chaos once again broke out.

“Alright people!” Essen’s voice cut across the babble. “This is it. When Fish hears of this she’ll
declare open war on the GCPD. Everyone gather what you can from your informants. We’ll have to spring our traps pre-emptively and for that we need details. Where she’ll be going, who she’ll be seeing, everything! Otherwise this fight will hit the streets and there’ll be innocent casualties.”

Edward’s blood ran cold as he saw multiple officers reach for phones and begin dialling. They’d be squeezing their contacts for information to halt this war before it got started. Part of him knew he should be supportive of this plan but the majority of his mind was screaming at him to warn Oswald. As soon as Fish suspected someone had ratted on her she would turn on her umbrella boy as the likeliest suspect.

Before he could even rationalise his actions Ed was running out the door and hurrying away towards her club. No matter the cost, he had to get to Oswald and protect him.

The journey seemed to take him forever and every moment he expected to hear the sound of gunshots or sirens. Rationally he knew there was still time. A number of informants would have to be met with face to face before all the necessary information could be gathered. The news of Butch’s demise wouldn’t reach Fish immediately and, even when she did hear, even she would need some time to rally her troops.

Still, he couldn’t control his rushing pulse or quickened breathing as he sped through the streets. He only managed to calm himself when he was finally within sight of the building and could see nothing yet amiss.

Taking a deep breath he considered the situation. He had to garner Oswald’s attention without being noticed by anyone else. He needed something that Oswald would understand but which couldn’t be intercepted and turned against them.

Quickly he pulled out a pencil and notebook and started writing;

NOW AND THEN A MAN’S GOT TO TAKE A TRIP OUT OF TOWN. DON’T YOU WORRY YOUR PRETTY LITTLE HEAD ABOUT IT. I’LL BE BACK IN GOOD TIME. DON’T WAIT AROUND FOR ME. GO HAVE SOME FUN AND MAYBE I’LL GIVE YOU A CALL WHEN I GET BACK IN GOTHAM. AND IF NOT, HEY, IT WAS FUN.

He scanned it over briskly and decided it would have to be good enough. No-one else should see anything odd in such a missive but hopefully Oswald would see his initials and realise he needed to speak to him. Scanning about he saw a street urchin and quickly caught their attention with a dollar bill.

“Take this in there and give it to a man called Oswald,” he told them simply.

The youth looked over the letter and apparently decided it was innocuous enough to comply. Ed let out a sigh of relief as he watched them run into the club. Then he made his own way round to the alley at the back, praying that this was where Oswald would anticipate finding him.

“Ed?”

He looked over to see Oswald approaching him with trepidation. For a brief second he wondered why Oswald appeared to be crying. Then his brain crashed as he put two and two together.

“Oh Oswald! I didn’t mean…” He opened his arms and enfolded the smaller man as he rushed into them. “The note was a riddle,” he said apologetically.

“Then… you’re not leaving me?”
“No!” Ed felt tears sting his eyes. “I only intended the letter to be indecipherable if it was intercepted. I never thought you’d read it and think…” He huffed a self-depreciating laugh. “Maybe you’re right. Perhaps I am an idiot.”

Oswald smiled against him and pressed a kiss to his shoulder.

“But at least you’re my idiot.”

“Always,” Ed promised before allowing Oswald to pull himself away.

“What was I supposed to think from that letter though? If not what it said?”

“My initials.” He held out his hand and Oswald dutifully passed the note to him. Ed covered all but the first letters of each line. “See? Nygma!”

Oswald smiled up at him.

“Very clever. But why are you here? If Fish finds you-”

“Yes!” Edward interrupted as he recalled his actual purpose. “We have to leave. Now.”

He made to tug on Oswald’s arm but the other man resisted.

“What do you mean ‘we have to leave’? I can’t just leave.”

“Of course you can. Tell her you need to work things out with your boyfriend.”

Oswald frowned at him.

“Ed. This business doesn’t work like the GCPD. They only gave me this break because no-one wanted to see me crying.”

Ed reached up a hand to stroke sorrowfully across the tear stained cheek.

“Butch stormed into the GCPD today,” he explained. “He tried to shoot Bullock. Harvey shot him dead. They’re going to crackdown on Fish’s organisation no later than tomorrow. When she finds out what’s going on she’ll-”

“Blame me,” Oswald concluded, eyes widening in realisation. “She’ll kill me.”

“I can’t let that happen.” Edward cupped his face more firmly. “Which is why you have to come with me. Now.”

Oswald shook his head.

“I can’t. If I leave she’ll kill my mother.”

“Then we’ll have to take her with us,” Edward decided.

“You’d do that? For me?”

“Of course.” He frowned in confusion at the question. “I hope you know Oswald. I’d do anything for you.”

There was a pregnant pause as Oswald stared slack jawed up at him before he surged forward and sealed their lips together.
“I love you,” he mumbled against Ed’s lips. “I love you so much.”

Edward could feel himself reacting to Oswald’s heat and fierceness and he clutched him tighter to him.

“I need you,” he admitted. “Please.”

His heartfelt words drew a whine from Oswald as he pulled himself away, eyeing Edward with clear longing.

“Come with me,” the smaller man suddenly declared, gripping Ed’s hand and pulling him forcefully back towards the club.

“Oswald?”

“We can’t leave with my mother this instant,” he explained over his shoulder. “She’ll need to prepare and if I go now Fish will know something’s up. So I go in, ring her and warn her to grab some essentials so we can go tomorrow morning. Nothing’s going to happen overnight. The GCPD will never move against Fish while she’s in a club full of civilians.”

“But,” Ed hesitated to follow Oswald into the building. “If Fish see me here… won’t she realise something’s happening?”

The devilish grin nearly broke his crumbling self-control.

“There’s private rooms. Upstairs. For… entertaining. Wait for me up there. I’ll hover about a little, make conversation with some mark, then give Fish the sign I’m booked for the night. She won’t bat an eyelid. In fact, she’ll probably be pleased I’m earning my keep for once.”

Before Ed could think to question that remark Oswald crowded back into his personal space and purred up at him.

“This might be our only night together Edward. Let’s make it count.”
Act Four

Dawn broke too soon for either of their liking. Far too soon for Oswald considering he preferred to avoid seeing much of the morning let alone a sunrise. Added to which he’d been kept unusually active the night before. As the mattress heaved next to him however he managed to roll towards the movement and pry his eyes open.

“What are you doing?” he mumbled. “It’s still night time.”

“The sun is literally rising.” Edward chuckled quietly. “It’s dawn.”

“No it isn’t,” Oswald insisted. “Come back to bed. It’s cold without you.” He reached out sleepily and his hopes raised as his hand was able to wrap around Ed’s wrist. Letting his eyelids drift shut, he gave his captured prey a gentle tug. The bed shifted again as Ed leant on it and seconds later Oswald felt a kiss placed to his forehead.

“I have to go,” Ed whispered apologetically. “If Fish finds me here…” he trailed off as Oswald opened his eyes with a worried look. Edward flashed him a reassuring smile. “If I go now, she’ll never know I wasn’t a paying client and I can get started on preparing to hide you and your mother.”

“Hhhmmm,” Oswald agreed reluctantly, rolling onto his back so he could watch Edward more easily. It wasn’t as fun seeing him dress as it was watching him undress but Oswald was still happy watching him. Ed continued talking.

“I’ll send you a note when I’m ready. Let you know the next stage of the plan.”

“Should I wait here or go home?”

Edward paused as he analysed the better option.

“It shouldn’t take me long to arrange everything. You should probably stay here. Get some more sleep.” He smiled across at the adorably rumpled man lazing in bed still. “Besides which, the less attention we draw to your home the better.”

“Smart,” Oswald agreed with an equally fond smile. “Now do I get a goodbye kiss?”

Ed stalked back over with a predatory look before he bent down and placed a chaste kiss onto Oswald’s all too eager lips.

“Ed-dd!” he whined.

His tormentor silenced him with a solitary finger to his half open mouth.

“I have to go,” he announced regretfully. “I promise I’ll make it up to you later.”

He relented slightly and ducked down to offer one final quick press of his lips before heading determinedly to the door. “Wait for my note!” he called back before hastily departing.

Oswald sighed blissfully and snuggled back under the covers. The scent of Ed lingered around him and within minutes he was asleep again.

He had no idea how much later it was when the sound of abrupt knocking startled him awake. For a moment he wasn’t sure if what he was remembering was just a dream or if it had really happened. Then his gaze fell on the small bottle left out on the bedside table and he blushed as the reality struck
him anew.

Before he really had time to collect himself though the door was shoved open and one of the club staff bustled in with an irritated look.

“There was a letter delivered for you downstairs,” he said while his eyes glanced round in distaste. “You’ll have to get out of here by midday. These rooms need to be cleaned.”

With a final sniff of disdain he handed over the missive and swept back the way he’d come. Oswald didn’t give a damn about his haughty attitude. His entire focus was on the paper in his hands and he hastily opened it up to read: You’ll find me where the Earth meets the sky, where water flows and birds fly by.

For a few instants he merely frowned in confusion. He’d been hoping for something a little clearer. Maybe something that indicated for example whether he should bring his mother. However following their exchange this morning perhaps Ed had assumed that matter was settled for now.

Instead Oswald focused on unravelling what Ed meant. He muttered to himself as he got up and began collecting his clothes.

“Earth meets sky… water flows, birds fly by…” He grinned suddenly to himself as he got it. “Obviously he means the pier!”

With as much speed as he could he began redressing himself. There were limited options available for toiletries so he had to do the best he could with what was available. His hair was something of a fluffy mess but it couldn’t be helped. At least he knew Edward had already seen it in a much more dishevelled state.

As he headed down through the club he kept his eyes peeled for Fish or any of her closest associates. It wouldn’t do to forget in his excitement that today was likely to be the day she came to blows with the police. He didn’t want to be anywhere close to where that went down. He was almost surprised to get through the place without seeing anyone of importance but then Mooney often had business to conduct elsewhere. He certainly wasn’t going to question his luck.

Getting to the pier didn’t take long but as he exited the cab he could feel the anticipation that had been building in his stomach erupt into butterflies. His new life started now. With Ed at his side surely there would be nothing they couldn’t do.

However the sight that met him as he stepped further along the pier made his blood run cold. Where he should be seeing the tall silhouette of his lover, all he could see was the long shape of a horrifyingly familiar figure on the ground. Swallowing his panic he began to run forward… only to stumble to a halt as Fish Mooney herself stepped into his path, flanked by four of her biggest men.

“Oswald,” she purred, “I knew that little note would bring you running.” Her head tilted to one side as she considered him. “Did you really think you could get one over on me?”

He cast his terrified gaze between her and what was undeniably Edward Nygma laid out at the edge of the getty.

“What have you done to him?”

“Hhmm?” She gave him a pretend oblivious look before glancing behind herself too, as if she had forgotten he was there. “Oh? You mean Harvey’s emissary from the GCPD? He got what he deserved.”
Oswald felt his heart shatter and before he could think anything through he flung himself forward in a rage. It was stupid of course. Her escort easily knocked him back before he could get within an arm’s reach of Fish.

“My dear boy.” She stalked forward, towering over him as he struggled to right himself. “I’m willing to hear your pleas for forgiveness. Tell me how he turned your head. Wrangled my secrets out of you. If you beg me prettily enough, I may even let you live.”

“Ed didn’t do anything,” Oswald spat up at her. “Except love me. It was someone else that betrayed you.”

He knew there were tears falling from his eyes but at this point he simply didn’t care. She stared contemplatively down at him.

“Now why should I believe you?”

“I could beat the truth out of him boss?”

“Now that is an excellent suggestion.”

To everyone’s surprise, Oswald started laughing. They watched somewhat apprehensively as he pulled himself to his feet still giggling.

“Do you know what my mother once told me Fish?” He grinned manically at her as he took an unsteady step forward. “She said, life only gives you one true love Oswald.” More tears fell down his cheeks and his smile faltered. “When you find it, run to it.” His gaze shifted past her to rest on the motionless form beyond. “So that is what I’m going to do.” Without saying anything further he darted to the side and dashed past them towards Edward.

Running towards rather than away probably confused them long enough to let him slip past. Not that Oswald was really of a mind to consider that. He was aware of shouts behind him but he didn’t hesitate. Instead he dropped to his knees beside his lover and allowed himself to look upon the beloved face one last time. Then, before anyone would have time to stop him, he drew his switchblade and plunged it into his stomach.

The shock brought a gasp to his lips and more tears fell free. As the pain settled into a throbbing ache though he managed a tremulous smile and bent down to put one last kiss on Edward’s beautiful mouth. His breath shuddered out of him when he pulled away but then caught as he saw soft brown eyes blinking up at him.

“Oswald?”

“Edward! You’re alive!”

The delighted smile faded from his lips as the pain in his abdomen made itself felt and he slipped sideways.

“Oswald?” Ed struggled to push himself onto his elbows. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” Oswald lied, hoping his smile would be reassuring but fighting to focus through wavering vision. “You’re alive. That’s all that matters.”

A fresh spurt of blood dripped through his fingers and he heard Edward gasp.

“You’re bleeding!”
Hands gripped at him, easing him down and pressing themselves onto his wound. Oswald tried to speak again but found his breath was coming in shorter bursts.

“Ed…”

“Hush. Don’t speak. Save your strength. Just… stay with me Oswald. Please!”

He managed to nod shakily, wanting to do as Ed asked but finding it was so very tiring to keep his eyes open. If only he could rest them for a while.

“Don’t close your eyes Oswald! Stay awake! Do you hear me?”

“Ye-” he tried to mumble but whether he managed he wasn’t sure. Everything around him was getting blurry. He thought he heard gunshots and wanted to grip Ed to make sure he was okay but he found he couldn’t raise his hands.

Hopefully Ed would forgive him if he just took a short nap. Just for a few minutes.
Gertrud fussed about where Edward was sat on the little sofa. She’d already brought him tea and wrapped him in a hand knitted blanket but she still hovered uncertainly.

“How is your head feeling now?”

“Still a little muzzy,” he admitted slowly.

“Szegénykék,” she murmured, carding her hand through his hair affectionately. “They very bad people. I always tell my Oswald. No good comes of drugs. Herbal remedies are best.”

He smiled tersely, too grateful to her to start an argument about the benefits of modern pharmaceuticals. And he couldn’t deny the drugs Mooney’s men had injected him with as he’d tried to sneak out of the club really hadn’t done him any favours.

Still, a few hallucinations were better than bleeding out on the end of Gotham pier.

His jaw clenched as the vivid memory of feeling Oswald’s warm blood soaking through his hands rushed back over him. If the GCPD hadn’t arrived when they did there was no telling what Ed might have done.

A gasp from Gertrud broke Ed out of his distressing memories.

“Kisfiú! You should be in bed!”

He looked over to see a pale and wavering Oswald in the doorway and he breathed out a fresh sigh of relief. The emergency services had arrived in time. Oswald was still with him. He hadn’t lost him.

“I wanted company.”

Ed rose even as Gertrud went to hover about her son. He joined her to wrap his own blanket about those slim shoulder before gently guiding Oswald with him back to the sofa.

“I make you both fresh tea,” she announced before heading off to the kitchen.

Oswald slumped back in obvious exhaustion, the journey from the bedroom to here clearly too much for him. Ed couldn’t find it in him to rebuke the man though. Instead he simply rearranged the blanket and tucked Oswald under his arm so his head could rest upon his shoulder.

“How are you feeling?” he asked softly.

“Like someone took a can opener to my stomach,” Oswald replied, before opening his eyes to peer up at Ed and smiling. “Then I look at you and everything feels better.”

It was impossible to resist pressing a fond kiss onto his slightly sweaty forehead and Ed didn’t even try to restrain himself.

“I can’t believe you did that for me.”

A bemused huff gusted across his collar bone.
“I thought I’d lost you.” He reached his hand over to grip Ed’s. “Besides, Fish was going to beat me then kill me. It was actually the lesser of two evils.”

While Ed appreciated the attempt to downplay the significance he still felt overwhelmed by the gesture. He inhaled the by now familiar scent of Oswald and tried to calm his emotions before replying.

“I’d be lost without you Oswald.”

He felt a light kiss against his shoulder.

“Needless to say, the feeling is entirely mutual.”

Edward allowed himself to relax, drawing comfort from the warmth of Oswald against him and from the regular pattern of breaths against him. Everything was okay. They hadn’t lost each other.

Gertrud came back in with a tray of tea things and began bustling about with them.

“Chamomile. Will help stop the anxiety from those bad drugs,” she announced as she handed Ed his cup.

Oswald released his hand and shifted awkwardly so Ed could drink. In his new position he reclined his head upon the seat cushion sideways so he could continue watching Edward.

“I still don’t understand why she didn’t kill you,” he said thoughtfully.

Edward lowered the cup from where he’d been inhaling the fragrance and turned slightly to meet Oswald’s curious gaze.

“I was to be her bargaining chip against the GCPD. Either to trade for anyone important arrested or to barter for terms. I’d have been no use to her dead.”

“Hhmm.”

“But now she’s arrested. No?” Gertrud pressed.

“No. She was shot in the gunfight at the pier. They lost her body in the river.”

“Good riddance.” She declared unrepentantly. “Trying to hurt my poor sweet kisfiú.”

Ed smiled at her. For a seemingly innocent if slightly eccentric lady Gertrud had some surprisingly fierce beliefs about justice. He turned back towards Oswald, intending to ask what he might do for employment now, only to find the man’s eyes closed.

“We should get him back to bed,” Gertrud suggested.

“No.” Ed shuffled himself to the end of the sofa before he leant back and tenderly hooked his arm round Oswald’s thin shoulders.

“Huh?” Sleepy eyes forced themselves open as he found himself being manoeuvred round.

“Hush,” Ed soothed him as he settled the raven haired head in his lap. “Go back to sleep. You need your rest.”

Oswald let out a long sigh and sank back, a content smile resting on his face. Edward was so distracted brushing his hand through the messy strands and admiring the freckled cheeks that he
didn’t notice Gertrud had moved until a new blanket was draped over the reclined figure.

“My handsome boy,” she cooed, leaning down to kiss her son.

Then to Ed’s surprise she leant in to him too.

“My clever boy,” she praised, placing a firm kiss to his cheek.

When she stood up again, looking fondly down at both of them, she smiled beatifically.

“My two handsome, clever boys.”

Ed found himself blinking back tears and turned his face back to Oswald so she wouldn’t see. He couldn’t help but smile to himself. He finally had everything he could ever want. A home. And someone to share it with.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who stuck it out and read this far. I hope you aren't disappointed.

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