They don't love you like I love you
Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

Kristen Kringle gets an assistant.

A young woman walked down the sidewalk holding her long black coat closed as the wind did it's very best to whip it off of her small body. The trees she passed while she traveled were barren of their leaves and their spindly branches creaked softly in the wind. You could barely hear the light noise with the sound of the train roaring in the distance and the clomp of her black platform heels on the concrete. She walked with her head aimed downward, doing her best to avoid being hit straight in the face by the strongly blowing gale, but she still kept herself aware of danger. This city she lived in was by no means a utopia. She walked with a purpose, something you had to do when you inhabited a place such as this. You could not afford to look weak here, not if you wanted to live. Giving off the air of weakness was a one-way ticket to a dark alleyway and a sharp object at your throat. Luckily for her, she made it to her destination without incident. She stood on its front step and gazed up at the building in awe at the Gotham City Police Department. The structure was decadent and neo-Gothic in design. It was absolutely beautiful. She let herself give a little smile; she had a feeling that she was going to immensely enjoy working here.

With that thought and a few others about the origins of gothic architecture swimming in her head, she bounded up the grey stone stairs to the entrance of the police department. he pushed open the glass door (something that was most definitely modified in the buildings plans) and stepped inside. It was even more awe-inspiring inside with its hanging light fixtures and curving metal beams. The building was a true work of art. While she was standing in the entrance of the place, she got a few curious stares from a couple male officers sitting at their desks, but she paid them no mind. Her mind was too busy imagining the things the stones in the walls saw during the years this building was a precinct. That was far more interesting than a few men in her opinion.

Eventually recovering from her complete dork moment, she realized that she had absolutely no idea where she was supposed to meet Captain Essen. This was a problem. She swallowed and looked around the room again. Almost everyone had gone back to their previous work and none of them looked in any way approachable. She was so busy trying to find a friendly face that when someone approached her, she took no notice.

"Excuse me, Ma'am; is there anything I can help you with?"

She turned with a start and found herself staring wide-eyed at a sandy-haired police officer with deep brown eyes and who was a great deal taller than her. (Although almost everyone was a great deal taller than her, as she was only five feet and four inches.)

It took a small moment for her to recover from the shock," Oh, um, yes, please. My name is Kylie Wood. I'm s-supposed to be meeting with the Captain a-about the Assistant Archivist job, and I h-have no clue where I'm to meet her."

She resisted the urge to facepalm. Why must she be so plagued by social ineptitude? To her surprise, however, the man smiled.

"I'm Johnny, Johnny Thomas. And y'know, I was actually just going to go out on patrol but I think I
can show you where you need to go. I always did have a weakness for pretty ladies."

Kylie sighed in relief, what a lucky break she had gotten, finding a friendly person in a sea of strangers had looked like such a daunting task. She had no idea what she had been worrying about. She followed Officer Thomas up a small flight of stairs to a curved platform and watched as he knocked rather loudly on the wooden frame of a door, behind of which muffled voices were heard.

After two or three knocks he spoke, "Hey Cap, I've got your new Archivist out here."

A brief silence ensued, and ended with a few short words spoken by an unknown party and the door opening to reveal two Detectives looking particularly unhappy.

She moved over so as to let them pass by without incident, but nevertheless, she received a very solid shoulder check by the larger of the two.

The man turned his head to look behind at her and glared, "Watch it."

And with that, he continued down the stairs mumbling something about a stupid broad, who she assumed was her.

Thomas rested a hand on her shoulder, "Don't mind Bullock, he's just got his panties in a twist over some case he and his partner are working--"

He looked like he was going to continue, but was cut off by the Captain summoning her into the office.

She smiled at him kindly, "Thank you for helping me, even when you had no reason to do so."

He flushed lightly," I, ah, you're welcome. I'd be glad to help you out any--."

"Thomas! Aren't you supposed to be out on patrol?"

He paled a bit at the sound of Captain Essen's voice as she came to the door," Y-yes Captain."

"Then go."

He flashed an encouraging smile at Kylie before he turned and hurried down the stairs at record speed. In an instant, Essen's entire demeanor changed from one that exudes authority to one that seemed to seep exhaustion.

"Well, come on in," she said tiredly as she sat down behind her desk.

Tucking a stray strand of dark blond hair behind her ear, she obliged, closing the door behind her. Before she sat in one of the worn out chairs near the Captain's desk she peeled off her coat and revealed a black and white striped skater dress. Then she seated herself upon the nearest worn plush chair.

"Kylie, is it?" the dark haired woman asked as she stirred sugar into her coffee.

"Yes, Ma'am."

She sifted through a few files on the desk, and then stopped, scanning a non-descript piece of paper.

"It looks as if you'll be working with Ms. Kringle in the Archives, is that right?"

"Yes, Ma'am."
Essen slid a few forms in front of Kylie along with a pen," Alright, all you need to do is sign these and I'll send you off to your office."

She took hold of the pen and scanned the papers, signing as she went. They just covered basic things like insurance, liability, and other boring things. When she had finished the Captain looked them over and filed them away in a folder. Then after rifling around in a desk drawer for a short amount of time she produced a key.

"This is for your office, it's got a number engraved on the back. When you walk out of here, go down the hall on the left. All the rooms are numbered, just go straight until you find your door. The Records Annex isn't too far from there. I'll send someone down with your I.D. card later."

She handed it to her and Kylie smiled gratefully," Thank you."

A tired smile was returned back.

She stood up and was preparing to exit the Captain's office when a hand appeared on her shoulder," A word of advice from someone who knows a bit about certain people," Captain Essen looked Kylie straight in the eyes, "don't trust everyone you meet here."

Confused, all she could do was nod to convey her understanding. Essen let her go and watched as the new employee made her way carefully down the stairs. A rowdy bunch of officers clustered together shared looks as the young woman attempted to find her way to her office. Essen called to mind how out of place she looked sitting in that old office chair, surrounded by walls with dingy wallpaper. Kylie only seemed to radiate innocence, even now as she weaved through the lobby, brushing by the other employees. All the Captain could hope is that the girl stays that way.

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Surprisingly, Kylie managed to find her office without too big of a blunder. She stood in the small, dimly lit place and tried, in vain, to find more light switches. She fumbled around in the yellowish glow of a single bulb fruitlessly, stopping only when she heard a light knock on her door.

She opened it to reveal a young woman with glasses and very pretty red hair," Hello, I'm Kristen Kringle. The Head Archivist."

Kristen held out her hand from under a large pile of folders for Kylie to shake.

She took the outstretched hand carefully, so as to not cause the files to topple over.

"Kylie Wood, it's a pleasure to meet you."

When the introductions were over Kylie offered to help her coworker with the files. Kristen accepted her help reluctantly and they divided the immense mountain of files in half. The two of them staggered down the hall, Huffing and puffing by the time they reached the archives. After sitting the piles on top of a table they struggled to regain their breath.

"Who-" Kylie gasped out, "Who used all of these?"

After a few labored breaths, Kristen managed to get out a hoarse reply," Detectives Gordon and Bullock. They needed them for some cold case from a few years ago."

When the two had recovered enough, Kristen explained her filing system and they began to return the folders to their original locations. It did not take long for the pair to fall into a rhythm of sorts. Pick up a file. Look at the number. Find the numbered cabinet. Alphabetize. Repeat. Unbeknownst
to them the archive door creaked open. A tall man with brown hair and glasses entered quietly. He stood for a minute over the Assistant's shoulder and when she took no notice of him, he tapped on her shoulder. Kylie whipped around with a wide-eyed gasp.

"Oh, hello..." she trailed off uncertainly.

"Ordinary people strive to find me while heroes and villains aim to hide me. What am I?" The stranger awaited her answer patiently, even though this was by far one of the easiest riddles out there.

"An identity. Oh, you must have my I.D. card!" she replied with a smile.

"Correct," he held out a laminated card with a small metal clip attached.

"Did you know that the earliest identity document was put into use in the 1400s?" she asked excitedly.

This time, it was the stranger who smiled, "I did not. But that is fascinating."

Kristen appeared from behind a file cabinet and her expression seemed to darken when she laid eyes on the person in front of her.

"Hello, Mr. Nygma."

"Ms. Kringle, always a pleasure," the brown haired man's grin was wide.

Kristen smiled politely and picked up a pile of folders a little too quickly to be casual.

"Excuse me, I have work to continue."

Nygma's smile faded and he focused on Kylie once again with a sigh. He stuck out his hand.

"I'm Edward Nygma, the Forensic Scientist, but you can call me Ed if you like."

Kylie took his hand and shook it politely.

"Hello Ed, I'm Miss Kringle's new assistant, Kylie Wood."
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Kailyn defends Ed.

Kylie was fighting a noteworthy battle with the lock on her office door. The stupid thing. Eventually, after many unladylike things were muttered under her breath, it gave a small click. It was all in her power not to break into song. She pushed open the dreadfully creaky door and stepped inside the small room. The first thing she noticed was the envelope, face-down, on the floor. Kylie smiled and stooped down to pick it up. This had happened every day since she had started working here. She flipped it over and the usual question mark was there, scrawled in green ink like it always was. She sat down at her desk and eagerly ripped open the envelope, revealing words scrawled in the same green ink on a wrinkled piece of notebook paper.

What kind of a ship sails smoothly during times both good and bad?

E. Nygma

The girl made a face as she stared at the piece of paper. She, being the dorky piece of crap that she was, tried in vain to shift through all the ship names she knew. About 5 minutes had passed before she realized that she was the most idiotic person on the planet. That had been his intention, to have her stumped by going through all the facts in her head. He hoped to get her frustrated when she came up with absolutely nothing and admit defeat, something she hadn't done in the entirety of her new job. With a smug little smirk, she dug out a push pin from her desk and tacked the riddle on her corkboard, right next to the other riddles that she had solved. It had been easy when a small portion of her brain had stopped thinking of physical ships and wandered off on some tangent about her friend, Ed Nygma.

And then she had it.

The answer to the riddle.

A friendship.

Kylie grinned before setting to work. She had more handwritten reports to type up, print, label and deliver to the Annex for filing. Not to mention decipher handwriting that looked like it was scrawled on papers by toddlers. She was about two hours into a stack of papers when a sharp knock on the office door caused her to look up from her computer monitor.

"My, hello, sorry to bother you," her co-worker, Kristen Kringle said as she opened the door with a folder cradled in her right arm.
"Oh, you're not a bother at all," Kylie replied with a smile," I was just typing up the reports from last month to put on record. You came in at just the right time, I've been dying to get an excuse to stop trying to decipher sloppy handwriting."

Kristen made a face as she noticed the stack of papers on her assistant's desk, "That sounds horrible."

Kylie made a noise of agreement as she sent the report she finished to the printer behind her desk.

Ms. Kringle paused for a moment," Well," she drawled out," I was going to take these files to Detective Gordon."

She raised an eyebrow curiously.

"But I'm sure it wouldn't hurt if you took them to him."

Kristen plucked a Jolly Rancher out of a jar on her friend's desk," Might be a good way to kill some time," she said with a shrug, "and besides, I've got to reorganize the Annex."

The blonde grinned," You're a saint, Kringle," she said as Kristen passed the files over to her," but why would you need to reorganize, that place is impeccable."

Kristen sighed and popped the candy into her mouth from perch on the armrest of one of the chairs in her friend's office,"That's what I told Mr. Nygma," she stated with a scowl," but he thought he had a better way of doing things. The whole place is in shambles."

Kylie was taken aback by the acid that dripped from Ms. Kringle's words when she mentioned Ed. It was silent for a few minutes as she tapped on her keyboard.

"He likes you, you know."

Kristen sputtered, nearly choking on the cherry flavored candy, "W-who Mr. Nygma?"

She rolled her eyes as her fingers zipped over the keys, chipped purple nail polish creating a brightly colored blur as words appeared on the screen.

"Who else would I be talking about? Ed was trying to help you. It was an attempt to make your job easier."

Kristen had recovered and sent her friend a glare, slightly annoyed that her own assistant didn't take her side.

"Well, it didn't. It made everything 10 times more difficult than it already was. I just wish he would leave me alone," the redhead snapped.

Kylie was becoming ever so slightly annoyed about the way her co-worker was speaking about her
friend.

"I never said his refiling made things easier, I just said he tried to make things easier for you," she plucked the files up from her desk and stood, "you should, at least, be flattered that he thinks enough of you to attempt to ease your workload."

Kristen started to say something in reply but the short girl had already begun making her way down the dimly lit hall, as dim lighting seemed to be the popular theme at the precinct. She smiled politely at the few officers that greeted her and walked up the small flight of stairs where Detective Gordon sat at his desk. As she made small talk with Detectives Gordon and Bullock (who seems not to remember the time he ran into her), the door to Captain Essen's office opened and Ed exited with a box of evidence in his arms.

Seeing the group over the stack of boxes, he gave his awkward little smile, "Detectives" he said, nodding slightly in their direction, "Ms. Wood."

The two officers didn't bother looking up and Ed's smile faltered for a moment.

Kylie, on the other hand, smiled warmly at the scientist, "Hello, Ed."

Her friend brightened up again and began to make his way down the stairs, but he stopped at the very top before turning back around to face her.

"Ms. Wood, by any chance are you free for your lunch break?" he asked hesitantly.

Detective Bullock suddenly choked on his coffee, startling his partner and causing him knock his phone off of the desk.

Kylie shot the two a particularly nasty look over her shoulder then turned back to Ed with a much kinder expression on her face, "It just so happens that I am."

Bullock was now coughing an alarming amount and Gordon was fighting against the tangled cord of the phone he had assaulted.

Ed cleared his throat," Would you...........would you like to visit my office and play video games over lunch?"

A few officers walking past the platform stopped in their tracks.

"Oh, I'd love to!" she chirped to everyone's surprise.

"Although," she continued," I thought you would ask Kristen to lunch, not me."
His eyes down casted a bit and his mood dropped, "I did, but she doesn't like video games," he paused for a bit, "Or me, especially since I tried to improve her record system."

The two were walking down the stairs, side by side and conversing when Officer Thomas appeared from nowhere.

"Long time no see, dollface."

The woman forced a smile, slightly annoyed at his use of the name, "Officer Thomas, how are you?"

The sandy-haired man gave a toothy grin, "I'm pretty good, but not as good as you look in that red dress of yours."

She made herself laugh good-naturedly; in all honesty, she did not like him as much as she did when she had first met him. She had ignored the comment he had made when they first met because she thought that was his way of easing her nervousness, turns out, he was just a pig. Ed shifted uncomfortably beside her and the officer took notice, giving her friend a once-over.

"Oh, so you're Nygma, I've heard of you," suddenly, Johnny's grin didn't seem so friendly anymore, "I also heard that you've asked my friend here to lunch."

Ed swallowed and did his best to look tall behind the boxes he carried, "I have."

"Well, how about that," he leaned in towards Ed slightly, "Now, there's just something I think you need to know."

"What's that?" Ed asked curiously.

"You're a creep," Officer Thomas deadpanned.

Ed swallowed hard and his gaze shifted to the floor. Kylie went to interject but the man shifted his position so he stood in between the two friends.

"No one, and I mean no one will ever do anything other than pity you. She," he said jerking a thumb to Ed's companion, "only said yes to your invitation because she pities you, not because she cares for you."

Officer Thomas smiled again and patted the scientist on the shoulder, "Because no one does, okay?"

The officer continued his way up the stairs, nudging Ed hard with his shoulder and sending him tumbling down the stairs along with the boxes of evidence. With a horrified gasp, Kylie ran after her friend, finding him at the bottom of the staircase, surrounded by papers.

"Oh my God, Ed, are you okay?" she asked worriedly as she knelt down beside him.

Ignoring her question her looked up at her in humiliation, "Do...do you pity me? Is that why you're nice to me all the time?"

"No."

"No," she answered as she fished around the scattered files.

Finding what she had been looking for, she turned back to the man in front of her and used the hem of her dress to clean the lenses. He was waiting for an elaboration, and so were all the ignoramuses in the precinct who were content enough to listen, but not to help.

She placed the glasses back on his face and looked at him fondly, "I figured out your riddle this morning. You are really going to have to do better a better job in order to stump me, Mr. Nygma."
The answer was friendship."

She scooped up a pile of paper and placed it into a box.

"And I do believe that this is the start of a rather beautiful one."

She missed the grateful look Ed gave her as he too began trying to clean up the mess.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Kylie and Ed have lunch together.

To say Kylie was excited was a huge understatement. She finished typing up the last new file and saved it. It was 11:59, one minute before her lunch break officially began. She let a little smile come across her features as she thought of the impending half hour because maybe, just maybe, she kind of, sort of, had the ittiest, bittiest crush on Mr. Nygma. *Maybe.* She pulled her lunch from the mini fridge in a corner behind her desk and stood to leave. As she left, she locked her office door behind her. Even though she considered herself to be generally well liked, there were still a number of people who resented the Archivists' relationship with the ill-favored Forensic Scientist and had trifled with her things in the past. Not too long ago, she had had to fix her bulletin board of riddles and history facts. It was quite a job considering the large amount of trivia she had found astounding and she really would rather not to have to fix it again. She made her way down the hall and back through the main lobby of the precinct, but before she stepped the toes of her scuffed black combat boots out of the shadows, the archivist took a deep breath, mentally preparing herself for the jeers of a few rather barbaric individuals. She forced herself to stand a little taller and stepped out into the room, trying to make her way as quickly as possible to the hall across from her. For a while, she thought that she was actually going to make it to her friend's office without a major incident. She had spoken, or rather thought, too soon it seemed when Officer Thomas came into view for the second time that day and barred her path.

"Oh, hello Officer." She said with a forced smile, hoping that he would just move his ignorant ass out of her way.

The man let out a good-natured laugh, "Now doll, I've asked you time and time again to just call me Johnny. Why can't you just do that one simple thing?"

She found herself wanting to punch him in his condescending face. She swallowed the sudden bout of anger and composed herself. Kylie had just started here not too long ago, it wouldn't do to cause trouble.

"Perhaps it is because you cannot force me to address you by your first name. I can call you what I please, Officer Thomas."

She pushed past him and continued her journey across the room. Something dangerous flickered on his face, but he covered the look before she could see it, putting on a rather forced smile and letting out a rather forced laugh. He followed close behind her, easily catching up to her short, agitated strides with his own natural, more relaxed ones. She mentally cursed herself for being so vertically challenged. For once, Officer Thomas was silent for a moment, something that sadly, did not last as long as she would have hoped.

"You're not still having lunch with that Nygma are you?"

She clenched her jaw in an attempt to retain her anger," I am. Although I find it hard to understand why you keep nosing your way into my business, especially when said business has absolutely nothing to do with you."
By now the duo had reached the office door of one Mr. Edward Nygma. Without missing a beat, the man next to her replied, unabashed by her venom laced comments with something that just made her blood boil.

He leaned against the door frame, barring her entrance to the room beyond it, and smiled another one of those smiles of his, "Tell you what, how about you ditch the dork and have lunch with me down at the diner? Just you and me, huh?"

She glared angrily at the officer, "That dork just so happens to be a very dear friend of mine and I would appreciate it if you would refrain from speaking of him in that manner."

Kylie attempted to push past the man to open the door, but he shifted his body and blocked her path once more. Rage bubbled up within the assistant.

Without warning Kylie stomped the heel one of her heavy boots on his right foot with an amount of strength uncharacteristic for someone her size. Officer Thomas let out a most satisfying shriek and Kylie smirked.

He jerked the injured limb away from her foot and his right arm flew from the door frame to cradle his foot. It was then that the short, blonde woman grabbed the police officer by the tie and yanked him down to eye level with a dangerous look.

"It will be in your very best interest, Johnny, if you stay away from Eddie and I."

Officer Thomas was nothing short of freaked, his thoughts were too scattered to form a jeer at the endearing nickname Kylie had used in reference to the scientist. The feeling fanning out from her had warped from annoyance to a calm rage if there ever was such a thing. Her voice had somewhat changed too. Her normal quiet and awkward pattern of speech smoothed into something more intimidating and confident. He swallowed hard. Her light blue eyes had even darkened and swum with something that dared him to contradict her. Their gold flecks glinted menacingly in the flickering light in the hall.

"Because you will find that I am not someone you would want as your enemy."

She let go of his tie, allowing him to stand back at his full height as she straightened it and brushed some imaginary dust off of his uniform.

She smiled sweetly.

"You should run along, Officer, you wouldn't want another pay dock for shirking your patrol duties that you are, " she checked the small silver watch on her left wrist, " twenty minutes late for."

Officer Thomas became visibly pale and bolted down the hall into the main room of the precinct.

The young woman looked after him with a malicious grin before changing her expression back to one of innocence and excitement. She knocked on the door in front of her.

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Ed looked up from his noodles hopefully when he heard a sharp knock on his office door, he had honestly thought that Kylie had skipped out on him as a cruel joke, just as others had done before her.

"Come in."
The door open to reveal the short archivist in her red dress and black combat boots, smiling sweetly, her light blue eyes full of excitement. The thing that lurked in the corner of Ed's mind felt the need to remind him how he usually saw dread in all the eyes of the people who looked him. It started to whisper other things too, like how pretty she was and how she always treated him with kindness but Ed quickly shut them out.

"Hi, Ed, sorry I'm late, Officer Thomas caught up to me in the lobby."

He stirred his lunch, "Oh, that's quite alright. Although, I am a bit worried about him bothering you..."

She closed the door behind her and perched in one of the chairs in front of her friend's desk, sitting her brown paper bag on top of it.

"I'm fine, he didn't really do anything except try to get me to go out to lunch with him and ditch you."

She swallowed a bite of her sandwich, "which I would never do."

Ed picked up a few noodles with his pair of chopsticks, "It never crossed my mind that you would do such a thing."

He felt a tiny twinge of guilt. One for thinking so lowly of his only friend. Two for lying straight to her face. He moved the food into his mouth, chewed and swallowed. Three for the words being said about her by the thing in his head. He blocked out the voice again, something that he thought he was getting better at.

"I was thinking that we could play Joust, it's a simple enough game to master in a short amount of time."

Kylie nodded enthusiastically, chewing another bite of her sandwich and her friend got up to turn on the television and set up the gaming system. While he did so he began to explain the objective of its' two player mode. Going into every detail possible. She listened politely, interjecting at all the right times, even though she knew exactly how to play.

In all honesty, she just liked to hear Ed talk.

After getting everything ready the scientist handed her a controller before sitting down with his own.

"Now, Miss Wood."

Try as she might, she could never get Ed to stop calling her that.

"I am not about to take it easy on you even though you've never played before," he said confidently.

She raised an eyebrow, oh, how fun this was going to be.

"So, please don't be discouraged from playing."

He pressed the start button and both of their avatars appeared on the screen, his yellow knight flying a very noble looking flying ostrich and her blue knight on the ever regal stork. A few seconds later enemies flew in, perched on their buzzards. Kylie maneuvered her knight past stone platforms, taking enemies out on the way and collecting the green eggs that were dropped, preventing the enemy knights from spawning again. Right when the game had started Ed had attempted to tell her what to do, his own way of helping, but shut his mouth when she almost cleared the entire board in under a
minute. He quickly got to work, slaying as many buzzard-mounted foes as he could. Ed was so focused of ridding the board of computer generated opponents that he forgot about the human one sitting next to him. She had been lying in wait between screens, just enough to the left side of the screen to be hidden, but not too much to the left to be deposited on the right side. Ed's knight swooped over to the bottom right side, in hot pursuit of one of the last enemies on the board. Their lances clashed together and his knight emerged victoriously, he scooped up the egg that the buzzard had dropped and let out a whoop of celebration.

She took her chance.

She sent her knight to the farthest left she could go, sending herself careening over to the bottom right of the screen, but not before pinning her knight to the platform above, ensuring that her lance was positioned the highest. He realized what was happening too late. Before he had a chance to flee, the ostrich and stork collided.

She had won. This time, it was her who screeched in victory while Ed adjusted his glasses.

And his ego, muttering something under his breath about beginners luck. He pressed play again, determined to win. Lots of button smashing and pterodactyl noises later Kylie emerged the winner again.

And again.

And again.

And guess what?

..................again.

Ed stared at the screen in disbelief. No one beats him in video games. Ever. So he was not too keen on acknowledging the fact that he had just got his ass beaten in one of his favorite games.

The girl next to him turned in her seat and gave a little grin, mockery twinkling in her eyes," C'mon Eddie, please don't be discouraged from playing."

He made a noise that sort of made him seem rather childish.

"Please don't call me that and I'm not discouraged, I am just tired of letting you win," he sniffed.

Kylie raised an eyebrow in disbelief and sighed, "Fine, Ed, then why don't we play again, and this time you can show me how good you really are at video games, instead of letting me win.

Ed sat his controller gently on his desk," No, no, that's all right," he said a little too quickly," break is almost over and I wouldn't want you to be late getting back.

She looked at the clock hanging over the door, they had about 8 minutes left.

"So what do you wanna do now?"

Ed swallowed nervously," Well, I, ah, I did have a question to ask you."

A little flame of hope flickered inside of her. Holy shit....what if he was going to ask her out on a date?!

"Alright, ask away," she replied back coolly, hiding the pent up excitement pretty well if she did say so herself.
"You work with Miss Kringle, correct?"

She did not like where this was going.

"Yes, I am her assistant after all," she replied back, coating her words with nonchalance and hiding the disappointment.

He fiddled with a pen on his desk," Does she ever...mention me?"

She couldn't say she was taken aback by his question because she wasn't. She mentally cursed herself for being so stupid, of course, he didn't like her in that way, after all, she wasn't the one he stops by the annex to see every now and then. Even though he would always say hello to her, it was always Kristen he was there to see. Her chest began to slowly ache, although it wasn't for her and her invisibility to Ed. It was for Ed and his invisibility to Kristen. He had asked if she mentioned him and Kylie thought back to earlier that morning when the redhead had visited her. She mentioned him all right, she just didn't mention good things about him. It was always, "He's such a creep." Or," So weird." Or," He put a bullet in a cupcake! A live bullet!!! What a freak!" She never once said a good thing about him in front of Kylie. But how was she going to explain to her friend that the girl he fancied just was not interested in him?

She chose her next words very carefully," She.....talks about you from time to time.."

He brightened up a bit," Really?"

She gathered her garbage from lunch, planning to pitch it in a can in the main lobby, and stood up.

"Yeah.." she trailed off," but y'know only maybe once or twice a week.."

She was hoping that Ed would take the hint to not keep asking about her coworker and spare himself the pain of finding out her true feelings toward him. But of course, him being the way his is, all socially obtuse and whatnot, made everything worse. Even if did she find it endearing.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to walk with you back to the Records Annex. Perhaps Ms. Kringle will be there, I have something for her that I think she'll love."

He pulled a bouquet of lilies from under his desk and made his way to the doorway she was standing in.

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"Did you know the word crush originated in Britain and described social gatherings such as a dance or reception? The gatherings were often extremely hot and crowded with little space to move freely. They were places where men and women most frequently met and it is speculated whether the word was borrowed later to describe the romantic entanglements that occurred at the functions."

The blonde clapped a hand over her mouth in embarrassment. Damn her and her big mouth and prattling brain.

Ed looked at her curiously," Are you implying that you believe I am infatuated with Miss Kringle?"

She swallowed," I suppose so...I mean you do talk about her quite a lot....." she trailed off quietly..

Kylie really had no idea what her brain was implying, even though it was her own (Although not entirely). Sometimes it seemed as if she was merely a puppet and some unseen being was her puppeteer, manipulating all the little strings connected to her arms, legs, and mouth.
"I had been thinking about the same thing actually."

She turned her head to look at her friend with wide eyes.

"And I think you're right."

Now the ache in Kylie's chest was for her invisibility. They picked their way through the precinct, getting a handful of remarks thrown at them, an equal mix of belittling comments to Eddie and perverted snickers to her herself. Kylie found it difficult to swallow her anger and shot Kay a warning look. They had made it to the archive without a huge scene, something that was rare here. Kylie turned the doorknob and pushed open the door to the room beyond, saying something over her shoulder to Ed about maybe looking over some old cold case files for fun over break one day.

Her eyes went wide and she froze rather suddenly, giving her friend just enough time to peer over her and into the archive room. She cursed her short stature as Ed made a tiny choking noise as he processed what he was seeing. The girl turned and placed one hand on his chest to push her friend away from the door and closed it with the other, hoping their presence had not been noticed. Kristen had been there, indeed. But someone else was too. And that someone had been kissing her. Ed was silent and had brought the flowers from behind his back in front of him. He stared at them sullenly. Kylie gently guided him to her office and sat him in one of the chairs in front of her desk, positioning herself on its armrest. He was clutching the stems of the flowers hard enough that his knuckles began to turn white. There was nothing she could say that wouldn't make it worse. So she didn't utter a word. Instead, she cautiously wrapped her arms around him, resting her head on his shoulder. He tensed up for a moment before relaxing a little, remaining silent. They stayed like that for a while, but it was cut far too short in her opinion by the harsh ringing of her telephone cutting through the silence. It startled the both of them and caused Kylie to release her grip on him.

Ed looked at the clock hung on the wall and sighed," I best be going," he said dejectedly," I'm ten minutes late."

He stood and made his way to the door as Kylie let the phone ring on.

"Oh, um. I enjoyed lunch today, Ed. Perhaps we could do it again sometime?"

He mulled over her question for a moment," Perhaps."

Ed turned to the doorway took a step, then stopped, looking over his shoulder," Goodbye, Kylie."

She smiled at the use of her first name.

"Goodbye, Eddie."

He smiled flimsily before walking out of her office and into the hall, his steps making a dull thuds on the worn carpet.

Until they stopped.

Vexed by curiosity, Kylie peered into the hallway and saw Ed stopped by a trash can at the end of the hall. He was staring at the flowers again. Although, his shoulders weren't drooping as they were in her office. Instead, he stood rigidly, perfectly still. He looked angry, something she had never seen him be.

She jumped slightly when suddenly he snapped the flower stems and tossed the entire bouquet into the trash with a small noise of frustration. He stalked down the rest of the corridor and disappeared into the main room. Looking down both ends of the hall, she made sure no one was watching and
darted out of the doorway. She peered down into the bin and sitting right on top were the ruined flowers. The assistant picked them up gingerly and plucked one from the middle. Somehow, this one made it out unscathed by her friend's anger. A single white lily. She crept back to her office and pulled a fake rose out of the vase on her desk before tossing it her trash bin. After filling said vase with water from one of her refrigerated bottles she sat the lily inside and tilted her head.

"White Alstroemeria, also known as the Peruvian lily," Kylie whispered quietly.

She gently brushed their fingers over the petals.

"Representative of friendship and devotion."
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Ed is lonely.

When Kylie walked into work 10 minutes late she seriously thought about turning around and going right back home. She had seen all sorts of things during her short time working at the Gotham City Police Department, murderers who tied their victims to balloons, a drug that made you super strong but killed you in a matter of hours, and a man who chose his employees by making them fight to the death.

But she never, ever expected to walk inside the precinct and see a circus.

She wasn't quite sure if she should shrug and keep walking or be surprised. Clowns, acrobats, and other kinds of performers, still dressed in their attire, sat at desks all around the room either being questioned or waiting for someone to do so. She ducked and dodged as well as she could in a room packed tight and in quite the frenzy. She also tried not to stare at anything too long so she kept her eyes locked on the hall to her office. The flustered assistant made it about three-quarters of the way through the crowd when her shoe caught on the wire of a portable fan, which was blowing more glitter around the room than it was cooling it. Kylie let out a yelp that was instantly lost in the chatter of the station and prepared to hit the ground.

However, she didn't even get near it.

A pair of arms caught her as she tripped and hauled her back to her feet.

"You gotta watch where you're walking in here, Miss, you could get hurt real bad," her savior said quietly.

Kylie pulled back still wide-eyed from her mishap, "Oh, um, thanks for catching me--?"

The boy smiled sweetly, red hair standing out against pale skin," Jerome," he said as he stuck his hand out, "Jerome Valeska."

"Thank you for catching me, Jerome Valeska."

"Oh, anytime ma'am. It's just there's one thing I haven't caught yet....." he told her while looking through his lashes.

She raised an eyebrow," And that would be?"

"Your name."

The blonde smiled," That was smooth, I'll give you that, Mister Valeska. I'm Kylie Wood, I work in the Archives."

"That sounds like an awfully interesting job," Jerome said as he walked with her back the hall.

"Not really," she said with a little laugh," All I do is type up the files for people are too lazy to finish
by themselves in a tiny office.

He tilted his head," Well, it may not be as interesting as it first sounded," he acquiesced," but you must be mighty important if they let you handle files."

After twisting her key and unlocking her door she sighed, "Not really, I'm only an assistant to the Head Archivist. She's the important one who keeps everything orderly."

The ginger stepped into her office right behind hesitantly, as if checking to see if it was alright. A kind smile from the pretty girl in front of him let him know it was. He perched in one of the chairs in front of her desk as she logged onto her computer, watching her curiously.

"But there wouldn't be anything to keep in order if you didn't type up files to begin with."

Her fingers with their purple painted nails stopped pressing keys and she stared at him for a moment.

"Did I say something wrong?" the boy fretted, " I didn't mean to cause any offense or-"

"No, Jerome, you didn't," she said gently," It's just I've never thought about it that way. You're a like a breath of fresh air with that sweet attitude of yours," she pointed a finger at him," don't let this city take that from you."

He flushed crimson, almost like his hair," Thank you, Miss, no one's ever said that about me before."

Kylie put her elbows on her desk, resting her chin on her arms," That's just because no one's ever given you a chance, have they?"

Something changed about the boy sitting in her office right then, like all the sweetness melted away like ice cream in the sun," No, they never have."

Her brow furrowed, he sounded bitter, angry almost, maybe the offhand comment had hit a nerve. She glanced at the clock. She didn't have much to do today, to hell with it, she could play therapist for a bit.

"You can talk to me about it if you like, Jerome," she said kindly.

"Oh, no, I couldn't. You must have so much work to do, I don't want to keep you from your job."

He was back to being a perfect little gentleman almost immediately.

"It's alright, J, it's what a friend would do," she said carefully.

He tilted his head to one side, an endearing habit, she noticed, something he did when he was confused," A friend," he trailed off uncertainly.

Kylie smiled sweetly again and slid from around her desk and into the chair next to the boy," Well, yeah, I mean I can be a friend if you want me to be."

Jerome's eyes got big," Would you? Please?" the poor kid looked like he was going to cry," The cops here, they look at me like I'm some kind of thing to pity, to pat on the head and lie to. They say they're going to find out who killed my mom but I know they won't," he wailed.

"And, and no one in the circus likes me much, my mom was the only person I had," he sniffed," the only person who cared about me."

Her smile dropped and she made a small noise in the back of her throat, moving to wrap her arms
around the crying ginger. He let out a small sob against her shoulder as he clung to her frame and she rubbed his back soothingly. So that's why all those circus people were here, someone was murdered and that someone happened to be the mother of the little angel who saved her from falling. She couldn't believe that the kid had been so positive before, telling her that she was important when he hardly knew her. This boy really needed someone, so she made a decision.

"I can't say anything about the search for your mom's killer because I don't really know what's going on but I can tell you one thing," she said softly.

"What- What's that," he asked shakily.

Kylie pulled back and held him by the shoulders," There is another person who cares about you."

Jerome stared at her for a moment, seemingly at a loss for words before wrapping her in a big hug and pulling her closer.

"Thank you, friend," he mumbled into her shoulder while grinning deviously, she fell for it.

Hook, line, and sinker.

He actually did catch her out of the goodness of his heart. Sort of, he thought it would he a waste of a pretty face if it got all trampled on. Jerome hadn't really intended to put on a performance like this at first, but when a pretty girl looked at him like he was normal, well, he couldn't just let that slip through his fingers, now could he?

Of course not.

Unaware that the whole act was a ploy, Kylie continued to speak with Jerome. She learned that his mother had been a snake charmer in the sideshow and that he didn't really have an act. He just sort of took care of Sheba, his mom's pet snake and helped everyone else when he could. Even if they weren't always very appreciative. As she listened, the girl just couldn't help but think about how it didn't add up. Jerome was golden. He was intelligent, funny, and polite. He was like the perfect representation of a Boy Scout. And cute too. How he didn't have all the friends in the world baffled her. She voiced her thoughts and was appalled to learn that it was probably his love of reading that prevented him from making very many friends.

He had to fight back a grin at the disgusted look on her face. Reading was fine and dandy, he didn't like it, he didn't hate it but when he noticed the filled bookcase in her office it suddenly became his favorite pastime. And she believed it. Kylie was a smart girl, her position and diploma proved that, as well as the wall of riddles she had, so he must be a superb actor. He asked about the riddles curiously and watched her blue eyes light up.

"Oh, they're from one of my friends," she said happily," his name is Ed."

Uh oh, spaghetti O's. Blondie might have a boyfriend.

"That's neato, is he good at 'em?" he inquired seemingly interested.

She nodded quickly," Insanely good. He doesn't even have to think about some of them and he listens to this quiz show on the radio and always gets every question right!"

"He sounds like a smart guy, someone like you deserves someone as brilliant as him," Jerome commented casually.

The assistant flushed, " Oh, he's not my - we aren't together. Ed's just a friend."
Bada bing badda bow. Wanna find out if she's gotta man, well, that's how.

"Oh dear," he apologized," I didn't mean to make any assumptions. It just the way you looked as you talked about him made me think he was your boyfriend. I'm sorry."

"No, you're fine, Jerome," she said waving off the comment," He likes someone else, anyway."

He detected a hint of jealousy there, with just a pinch of something bitter.

"Who could possibly be more swell of a girl than you? I mean, you're so nice and pretty and so smart too."

"The Head Archivist, that's who," she said with a sigh, "She's a pretty little red haired thing with glasses. You've probably seen her around today."

Jerome snapped his fingers, "Y'know I think I did. A bit of a Debby Downer isn't she? Looks like she could use a laugh or two, right?"

Kylie smiled, "Right."

All of a sudden there was a knock on her office door. Jerome tilted his head curiously as Kylie furrowed her brow in confusion. No one ever really visited her except Kristen and Ed, both of whom are probably up to their ears in paperwork.

"Come in."

Detective Gordon peered into her office," Sorry to bother you, Miss, but a couple officers saw you walk back here with Jerome Valeska, you wouldn't happen to know where he is would you?"

Jerome turned around in his seat," Oh, hello Detective. Sorry about disappearing, I just wanted to have a chat with this pretty lady for a moment but it seems that I've lost track of time."

"So it seems," the Detective said with a forced smile, and a slightly concerned look at the blonde, like he knew something she didn't.

Jerome stood, looking at the girl he befriended apologetically," I think it's time for me to go. One final interview for today and I can head home."

Kylie bit her lip," One sec," she said grabbing a sticky note and a pin from her desk, scrawling something onto it," Call me when you get there?"

He took the green note and stared for a moment at the digits scrawled in purple ink before giving a shy smile," Sure thing, doll."

"See you around, Jerome."

"See ya," the ginger said as he exited through the door propped open by Gordon.

As the door was about to close, the Detective mumbled something she only barely made out.

"Don't count on it."
A half hour later Kylie left her office to deliver a couple things to some other Detective in the main lobby. She had just laid them on his desk when a group of people emerged from a hallway she'd never gone down. Detective Gordon appeared first, followed by a police officer hauling someone in handcuffs. She made a noise like a strangled cat when she saw a familiar mop of bright red hair.

"Hiya Doll, why the long face?" he cackled from across the precinct.

She rushed over to get as close as she could before Gordon put out an arm to hold her back.

"Jerome, what's going on? What did you do?" she asked.

"Well," he started, "-"

"He murdered his mother," Detective Gordon deadpanned.

Kylie snorted," What? No way, I sat with him for two hours, he's a sweetheart."

"Aw, did you hear that boys? She thinks Imma sweetie!"

"He used an axe. Chopped her up like minced onion,-"

"She probably wouldn't have tasted as good, but I'm she knew people who'd disagree."

"-and tossed the weapon over a bridge. He's been playing you this whole time."

Kylie blinked, had she really been that stupid? Detective Gordon wouldn't lie to her, there were many corrupt officials but he wasn't one of them.

She looked back at Jerome with a look that was a mixture of hurt and anger," You lied to me about everything."

He shrugged nonchalantly, " Well, not everything. I meant every word I said about you. How you were pretty, and smart, and such a sweetie -"

He was cut off midsentence by the short blonde's fist connecting with his nose after she broke through Detective Gordon's hold. His head snapped back and Kylie watched with satisfaction as it gushed blood.

He looked at her with a grin, blood running into his mouth," OOOooOOOh and a good punch too," he waggled his eyebrows," Do it again will ya? I gotta have something to think about at night when I'm all alone."

She glared at him hard," Fuck you," she spat.

"When, where, how hard, and how much?"
"Enough," Gordon interjected looking a bit uncomfortable, "I phoned Arkham, they sent a truck over. It should be here any minute."

The officer holding the redhead nodded and pushed him forward, not caring about the blood pouring from his nose.

"Hasta la vista, Dollface."
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Ed is lonely.

Today, Ed found himself feeling a bit lonely. It was funny how after having someone's company for even a short while could make moments without them feel empty. He had only known Kylie Wood for a little more than a month and he had already begun expecting her to be spinning around in his desk chair, clutching a caramel latte in her hands when he unlocked his office door every morning. The assistant seemed to have a knack for lock picking, something he noticed the first time she appeared in his office. In response to his inquiry on how she entered, the blonde only tapped the side of her head (which he later found out harboured a bobby pin) with a crooked smile before wrapping pink lips around the straw of her latte.

It was interesting how the human brain clung to the idea of routine, like the kitten on those cliché motivational posters, and felt uneasy at the lack of it. This morning he couldn't help but feel like his office was a place of desolation. His office chair was devoid of a certain dark blonde woman, his desk barren of warm coffee, and the books on his bookcase were still in alphabetical order, something she insisted upon scrambling everyday before he arrived just because she knew it irritated him. He eased into his chair with a sigh, pushing one foot off of the floor and sending it on a lazy spin. Ed leaned back and closed his eyes, catching a whiff of something familiar. He turned his head so that his cheek rested against the plush back of the chair and inhaled.

Vanilla and burnt sugar. That's what Kylie smelled like. He had first noted that when she had hugged him three days ago after catching Miss Kringle at a rather inopportune time. He stopped his chair. Kylie had insisted that there was nothing wrong with him, that anyone would be lucky to have a guy like him, but Ed couldn't help but feel that something really was wrong. Why else wouldn't Miss Kringle return his affection? Kylie thought he was clever, that he was funny even. So why didn't the pretty archivist think the same? He knew that he was exceptional at puzzles but why couldn't he figure this one out?

He closed his eyes and let out another sigh, thinking about the reports that he just did not have the motivation to fill out. Instead, he let his mind wander back to his fair-haired friend and how she was so much different from Miss Kringle. For starters, she liked video games, and was good at them too. She loved to read and one whole wall of her small office had shelves piled with books. These were things that the head archivist did not enjoy in the slightest, and this was just the beginning. Kylie liked Forensic Files and Doctor Who, just like he did. She smiled differently than Kristen too, like she really thought what he said was interesting and insightful. She defended him when Arnold Flass read his letter to Miss Kringle out loud. She was loyal, retaliating against Officer Thomas's brutish advances and demeaning comments with well versed venom. She was truly a diamond in the coal mine that was the GCPD. It was a surprise when he called to mind the incident a few days ago when she hugged him, he recalled it with a warm fluttery feeling. The way her arms wrapped around him, hesitantly at first but eventually relaxing, how her head rested on his shoulder and her hair fanned out, slightly curled golden locks tumbling over his arm, the aroma of vanilla and sugar encompassing him with a feeling of safety, the way the side of her body pressed against his as she leaned ever so slightly into the embrace.
He jerked himself from the memory with a jolt of panic and a shaky breath. He couldn't, no he didn't fancy Kylie. His heart's affections belonged to Miss Kringle.

Who treats you oh so very well.

There it was again, that small part of him that always seemed to contradict everything he ever thought. That always whispered things he was never brave enough to say to the faces of those who ridiculed him, that now, seemed to continuously remind him of how well the short assistant treated him and how poorly her superior did. He groaned and attempted to shove back the images that the voice was trying to let bubble to the surface.

He didn't succeed.

Previous imaginings he had had of Miss Kringle morphed into ones of her assistant instead. Kylie kissing him sweetly. Kylie curled into his side late at night with her head resting on his shoulder while they watched television. Kylie sleeping peacefully beside him with his arms wrapped tightly around her. Kylie wearing one of his shirts that fell halfway down her thighs as they played video games.

His hands gripped the sides of his head as he leaned forward and pressed his elbows onto the desktop. A noise of frustration escaped from between his lips.


But you do, don't you?

Ed clenched his jaw and closed his eyes.

"No, I don't."

Why, because you fancy that red-headed witch?

"Please don't talk about Miss Kringle like that."

Why not? All she does is treat you, us, like dirt and you know it!

He dug his fingers into his hair, effectively mussing it, although it wasn't as if he noticed," She's just confused. All Miss Kringle is trying to do is fit with the crowd. It's understandable, human instinct is to gravitate towards the group. She'll come around, I know she will."

If "fitting in" is a natural instinct, wouldn't that mean that Kylie was pushing aside what was expected of her just to spend time with you? In past times, the very notion of going against the pack would mean death and in a way, it still does. She chose you over social dominance while your beloved Miss Kringle chose the easy way out.

The voice spoke calmly from the back of his mind, it's words calculated and logical. It infuriated him to no end.

"Miss Kringle only treats me the way she does for self-preservation," he fired back with his own
voice slightly raised.

*That only makes it worse. Kylie didn't care about how she would be treated for befriending you, all she cared about was being there for you. You know that though, that's why deep down you're beginning realize how you-

Ed looked up suddenly, his insides twisting in frustration and confusion,"SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!"

His hands slammed flat against the table, knocking over a pen filled beaker, "I DON'T FEEL THAT WAY! I- i don't...i don't...."

He cradled his head in his right hand, suddenly feeling very tired, but victorious. The voice had fallen silent, it's goading words were quelled for the time being. The scientist began to calm down. His little daydream had lasted four hours. He made a noise somewhere between lack of motivation and frustration. Ed had just put a pen to a report template when a knock cut through the newfound silence of his office.

"Hey, Eddy,"

He froze. What was that old saying? Speak of the devil and he shall appear? It seemed all he had to do was think of her.

"Hello, Kylie. I thought the Captain gave you the day off," he implored.

She shrugged and he watched as her hands fiddled with the end of the purple scarf around her neck," She did but I thought maybe I'd drop by and take you out to lunch. Y'know only if you want, I mean, I'm sure you're all kinds of busy."

Edward looked back at the stack of paper she was eyeing and waved a hand dismissively,"Oh that, it's nothing. I think an outing is exactly what I need. Things have been getting just a teensy bit stressful this morning."

He grabbed his car keys from the keyring by the door,"I'll drive us."

Kylie smiled happily as Ed looped an arm through hers good-naturedly and led her out the door.

Ed watched what was happening in confusion. It was like he was looking at her through a one-way window. He could see her and hear her but she seemed to be looking right through him. And even more perplexing was that when he opened his mouth to speak, the words that came out we're not his own.

Edward smiled as he travelled down the hall and out the main doors of the precinct. Ed’ s confusion was amusing, one second he was about to say he needed to stay behind and finish paperwork and the next he was shoved into some faraway corner of his own mind.

Now he knew how Edward felt like all the time. He looked fondly at the woman on his right arm, hair glowing like a halo in the late fall sunlight. He knew what he wanted, and he was either going to convince Ed that he desired the same or he was going to be dealt with in a rather unsavory way.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Kylie and Ed go out to lunch and when they return, find out something rather unsettling.

Kylie felt like she was on top of the world. Ed had actually said yes, and even pushed aside the paperwork he had to do in order to spend time with her. She didn't want him to be reprimanded for shirking his duties but the almost flippant way he spoke and regarded the documents eased her mind, even if that was something he would never normally do. Her conscience chalked it up to Ed just being a little stressed and in need of a break, so when her friend had looped his arm through hers, she didn't think much about how he wouldn't normally do that either. He walked her through the lobby and out the doors of the precinct, smiling all the way. The two traveled down the sidewalk a bit before he stopped and opened the passenger side door of an old light blue car, gesturing with the arm that was previously entwined with hers.

"M'lady," he said with a crooked smile.

She slid into the plush seat with a laugh,"Thank you, Eddie."

The smile stayed on his face as he made his way to the other side of the vehicle and slipped into the driver's seat. Ed may not be fond of the nickname but Edward sure was.

After twisting the key and starting the car he turned to her," So, how has your day been?"

The blonde girl shrugged again and Edward watched how the dark purple scarf she had slid against the pale skin of her throat from the corner of his eye.

"It's been alright. I mean, I missed you and all but I did get to sleep an extra two hours."

Edward blinked as he brought the car to a halt at an intersection," You missed me?"

The corner of his mouth uplifted slightly at the thought.


He struggled to hold back a grimace at the remark. That bumbling idiot had dug himself quite a hole and now Edward was the one who had to climb out of it. He didn't plan on being her best friend for long.

"And you are mine," he said cheerfully as he pulled into a parking space.

The two exited the car and made it to the diner, where the were greeted with warm air and the smell of cooking food. They were seated almost immediately and their drinks were brought out right away.
Kylie thought that the diner's name, Quick Tyme, was very appropriate.

She noticed Ed eyeing her drink and she raised an eyebrow," What?"

"I.......just didn't expect you to order fruit punch of all things."

She shrugged again," I like fruit punch, and you don't have much room to talk. You didn't even get a soda, you got water."

"I like water."

"So leave my beverage choices be, Edward," she said feigning seriousness.

She had taken her scarf and jacket off, leaving them on the seat next to her. A silver chain hung around her neck with two star charms dangling from it. He had asked her about the necklace a few days ago. He being Edward of course. One charm had belonged to her sister and was slightly misshapen, like it had been melted. He had also asked what happened to her sister to cause the star to look that way but the assistant quickly changed the subject. He deduced that whatever happened to her was not good.

Kylie snorted as the waitress, a tall and skinny woman in her early 70's, sat Ed' s food in front of him.

"So Mister Sophistication ordered a grilled cheese sandwich and fries after mocking my choice in drinks?"

"So it seems," he said as he sipped his water.

The rest of the lunch break more or less just the two of them giving each other a hard time, until their server came back with their receipt and placed two chocolate malts in front of them.

The old woman smiled kindly,"On the house, old Louis here has quite a soft spot for lovebirds," she said jerking a thumb back towards a large man working the grill.

Edward internally grinned and gave control back to Ed, it was going to be amusing to watch him worm his way out of this one.

Kylie flushed pink and Ed began stammering after realizing that he was back,"Oh, uh, she's just, we aren't-"

"We're not lovebirds," the two finished together.

Ed swallowed hard and Kylie blushed a darker shade of pink as the waitress raised a plucked brow.

She shrugged," Coulda fooled me."

After the woman had left Ed slapped down his part of the bill and got up from the table, mumbling something about going out and warming up the car. The pretty blonde girl watched him scurry away with a sigh, things had been going so well. She had never seen Ed open up like he did today. He seemed more relaxed, and a hell of a lot more talkative and confident around her. Like maybe he was finally getting used to having a friend. That act had fallen apart when the waitress had said something about them being together, it was like someone had flipped a switch and Eddie was his normal self again. She found herself missing the carefree way he laughed, even if she had just heard it today for the very first time. She counted out the other half of the bill and left the waitress a seven dollar tip. She had done well, aside from making Ed act like a middle schooler. Kylie shrugged on
her jacket and tied her favorite purple scarf around her neck before picking up the malts and her wallet.

The assistant was met with a bitingly cold gust of wind as she pushed open the doors of the diner. She immediately wished she was back inside, seated comfortably in the booth and laughing with Ed. The sharp honk of a car horn drew her attention to her friend's car. He had pulled up to the curb so she wouldn't have to freeze to death as she walked to his car. She ran as well as she could in her low heels, something she rarely wore but cursed herself for putting on this morning. Upon climbing into the car she was met with silence.

"So, I, uh, I got your malt," Kylie said uneasily as she slid the two cups into their holders.

"It was silent for a moment before Ed mumbled a thanks like an afterthought. He seemed to be thinking something over. The incident at the diner maybe? She mulled over the possibility for a time before throwing it out. He was most likely going over the work he had to catch up on when they made it back to the precinct. The remaining duration of the car ride was silent, except for the sound of Kylie taking the occasional drink of her malt. When they arrived back to work Ed cut the engine and the two exited the car. She had grabbed his malt, thinking that maybe he had forgotten it but when they had walked back to her office he simply said that he was grateful to her for taking him out to lunch and that she should keep the other dessert. He claimed that it could spill on the papers he had to fill out.

She knew that was a valid excuse but couldn't help but ache slightly at how formal he was acting, the man had even addressed her as 'Miss Wood' for Christ's sake! It was as if all the progress she had made was for not, like their friendship was some snow globe that had been shaken slightly but had fake snowflakes swirling around nonetheless. But instead of voicing her concern she smiled happily and told the handsome scientist that it was no problem and that she'd love to do it again sometime. She entered her office, completely forgetting that today was her day off. She hung her coat and scarf off of the light blue coat rack she brought from home before flopping into her office chair with a huff. She might as well try to get something done while she was here. Kylie checked her email, realizing with astonishment that Harvey Bullock had actually typed up his own reports. Not only that, but he also delivered them to the Annex already!

She was tempted to run to the nearest window to check for any airborne swine.

Instead, she decided to visit Kristen. Maybe she would want the extra treat. She logged off of her computer and compiled her things, choosing to leave her coat behind. After all, she was only walking a short distance down the hall. The short woman opened her office door, a malt in each hand, stepped one foot onto the dingy carpet and was nearly mowed down. She let out a small cry but it was ignored by the figure stalking the opposite direction. All she managed to catch a glimpse of was a lab coat. For a split second, she thought it was Ed, but what would he have to be angry about? Perplexed, she continued to the Annex and pushed open the door.

"Excuse me, Kristen? I brought you a- hey, what's wrong?" she said looking wide-eyed at the pretty girl in front of her.

The redhead's green eyes were watery and slightly red-rimmed.

"It's nothing, really, I swear," Kristen told her earnestly, although it more so sounded as if she was telling herself that.

Kylie entered the room slowly, sitting the malts on the edge of her friend's desk before resting her hands gently and looking her in the eyes with concern.
"Kris, I haven't known you for very long, but I know you've got thick skin. You're tough and you wouldn't let 'nothing' get under it. You can tell me what's wrong, you know that, right?"

The archivist's eyes down cast and she shook her head quickly," I'm fine, really, I am."

Kylie looked at her hard, blue eyes disbelieving but she didn't push it. It wasn't like she could make Kristen tell her.

"Alright," she said hesitantly," But you know that you can always come and talk to me right? About anything. I just want you to know that I'm here for you, okay?" she squeezed Kisten's arm reassuringly.

The green eyed girl gasped suddenly and pulled away, clutching her arm.

Kylie's eyes widened," Kris.....Kris, what aren't you telling me?"

She darted forward like a snake, taking hold of her friend's wrist and yanking up the sleeve of her shirt in one fluid motion. The blonde paled at what she saw. A large bruise circled Kristen's forearm, purple and shaped suspiciously like a hand. She let her arm drop and brought a hand to her mouth.

"Oh, Kristen........."

The girl's eyes were pleading," He didn't mean it! It was an accident, I swear. We got into a little spat and he didn't mean to. It won't happen again."

Her assistant's head snapped up," He? He...........Tom. It was Tom wasn't it?"

Kristen's already wide eyes widened further at the venom in which the sweet girl spoke," Kylie, listen, it was an accident, okay> He didn't mean-"

Kylie cut the Head Archivist off," I don't give a damn if it was an accident, Kristen! He put his hands on you and that, that is wrong! Beyond wrong and I won't fucking stand for it, goddammit."

She stalked over to the door, malts and reports forgotten, her black heels clicking dangerously against the stained tile floor.

"Wait, where are you going?" Kristen yelped as Kylie's hand gripped the doorknob.

She turned suddenly and a pair of cold blue eyes made the red head shrink back slightly," To make Tom Dougherty rue the motherfucking day he touched you."

The door slammed behind her and Kristen let out a low, shuddering sob. She wasn't sure what she was more scared of, what would happen to her when Tom found out that she had told both Mr. Nygma and Kylie, or what would happen to Tom when Kylie got a hold of him.

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Heads jerked up from desks as the sound of Kylie's heels hit their ears, a few officers eyed the girl leeringly before averting their eyes once they noticed the normally cheery girl's cold gaze.

"Where's Dougherty?"

The precinct was silent.

Blue eyes narrowed dangerously," I said, where's Tom Dougherty?"
"You called, Sweetheart?"

The short girl whipped around and allowed a sneer to mar her features," You complete ass."

"Ah, I see," he said nonchalantly," Why don't you and I take a little stroll?"

Kylie tilted her head and regarded him for a moment," Yeah, let's."

She allowed the pig to guide her away from the prying eyes of the main lobby and into the deserted hall of the lab wing, something she knew was dangerous to do. So many things could happen to her away from the safety of the pack, but then again, so many things could happen to him too.

"So, I assume you heard about how Krissy and I had a little misunderstanding."

A derisive laugh escaped between dark red lips," A misunderstanding doesn't involve assault, Dougherty."

He frowned," What happened to you calling me Tom?"

She looked up at him in rage," You lost that privilege when you decided that putting your grubby little hands on my friend was a good fucking idea."

Woah, woah, woah," he said putting his hands up defensively," Don't pin this all on me, Kristen's the one who-"

"Don't even finish that sentence."

"started it with that mouth of hers."

Her jaw clenched and muscle tightened, The next thing Tom knew he was being slammed into a wall by a short girl in heels.

"I warned you, you piece of shit."

The man laughed, sending a vibration through the arm she had pressed against his throat. He moved to push it away humorously before receiving a slight poke in the abdomen. A switched blade jabbed ever so slightly into the fabric of his uniform.

To her annoyance, he laughed once more, " What are you gonna do? Stab me in a building full of police officers? That would go well, wouldn't it?"

She fought to keep her gaze level but Tom saw her resolve weaken slightly. His hand shot out and pinned the girl's arm behind her, causing the switchblade to clatter to the ground. The officer stooped down to pick it up, making Kylie twist uncomfortably in order to stay upright.

He examined it closely, noting how one edge of its blade looked brown and singed slightly. The handle was marbled and once appeared to be a bright white swirled with black but seemed to have been greyed.

"Such a pretty thing, this knife is," he said slowly, " Nice and sharp, too."

He tapped it twice on her collar bone and she clenched her jaw," If you know what's good for you, sweetheart, you'll keep that mouth of yours shut."

The tip of the blade pressed gently onto her bottom lip, making her lipstick smudge as she stared back at him unwaveringly," Unless you want your tongue cut out."
He let out a chuckle before tossing the thing down the hall and shoving Kylie away from him, making her lose balance and fall.

"You're a lot like Kristen, y'know? I see why the two of you are such pals. I also see why that creep hangs around you too. A mouth like your and Kristen's oughta be awfully nice to have around."

She glared up at him," You're the creep, Dougherty. A sick, perverted creep."

"Edward is ten times the man you'll ever be,"

Tom let out a growl and took hold of a wad of blonde hair, making the girl cry out as he hauled her roughly to her feet.

She swung at him with one arm but he grabbed it by the wrist, squeezing until it cracked. Kylie held back tears.

"You two girls are so alike it makes me sick." he spat.

He released her and shoved her back once more, her head thunking against the wall behind her.

She watched him go with a glare of hatred, clutching the bruised and probably fractured wrist. After composing herself, she took the long way around to her office, unaware that someone was watching her go as well.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Kylie gets a late phone call.

The sky had long since darkened by the time Kylie reached the fifth episode of Doctor Who that night. Well, the sky had gotten as dark as it was going to get with all the signs outside. In fact, her living room was cast in a pale green glow that was filtering through her dark purple curtains. It was annoying when she first moved to Gotham but she quickly became used to it. She itched at her wrist brace absentmindedly as she watched the television with heavy eyelids. She was lucky to have found it and avoid a visit to Gotham General. As of now she was curled up on her small, but comfy blue and white checkered couch and snuggled into an Avengers blanket. After almost nodding off for the third time that night she pried herself from the couch and wrapped the blanket around her. If she hurried, maybe she would make it back before the end of the commercial break. The girl shuffled across the room and into the kitchen, unicorn slippers sliding against the scratched up hardwood floors. She tripped once on the blanket and barely caught herself on the island. She groaned and hiked up the warm piece of cloth. The assistant was tired. So, so tired after such a crazy week. Befriending a murderer who thought she was pretty and had a bit of a pain kink, finding out Kristen was being abused, and getting a fucked up wrist really took it out of a girl. All she wanted to do was sleep so she could get up early and go shopping before everything on sale was gone. Unfortunately, tonight was a double feature of new episodes. She couldn't miss that, dirt cheap dresses be damned.

Kylie yanked open the freezer with her good hand and pulled out a tub of cookie dough ice cream, sighing longingly. She kicked the door closed and picked up a spoon from a drawer before making her way back to the couch. The show returned right as she flopped back down and dug into her treat. Halfway through the second episode and her container of ice cream she had a heart attack. Her cell phone, which had been sitting untouched on the coffee table since she had gotten home, suddenly sprang to life, vibrating and blaring Insane in the Brain by Cypress Hill. She let out a screech and nearly dropped her ice cream. After fumbling around for a moment, she grabbed the phone and flipped it open before burrowing her brow.

Why the hell would Ed be calling her at 12:30 at night? Or at all? And she didn't even think he stayed up this late. She answered it with a shrug.

"Hey, Eddie," the blonde said with a yawn while stretching slightly.

"Kylie, oh thank gosh, I, uh, is there - is there somewhere I can meet you?"

She turned down the television, as he spoke, trying to figure out what he was rushing out. "Meet you? What? Ed, it's like two in the morning."

"Please, " he pleaded, "I- I don't know what to do.

Maybe it was the way he sounded, so distressed and scared or maybe it was just the idea of having the attractive forensic scientist in her apartment that led her to give him her address and agree to meet him at her door in fifteen minutes. After ending the call she sort of sat there for a few moments, going
over what had just happened.

Ed had called her. That was weird enough on its own since he had never even texted her before.

He asked her about meeting up with him. At an hour in which no living thing should be conscious willingly.

He sounded freaked the fuck out and was breathing heavily like he had just run a marathon.

She went pale.

*What if someone was chasing Ed?*

Kylie knew that he sometimes left work well into the night, making him a prime target for murderers and thieves. He may even have a better chance of being jumped just because he worked at the precinct. Fear bubbled to the surface of her thoughts and she pushed herself off of the couch so she could get properly dressed. After pulling on a sports bra and a pair of pajama shorts she was stationed near her front door, seated on a bench in the entryway. She waited, and waited, and waited some more, anxiety growing and mind running through every possible thing that could happen to him. 20 minutes later her turmoil stopped when there was a flurry of knocks on the cheap wooden door. In a flash, she was at the door undoing the lock and flinging it open.

A hand flew to her mouth in horror as she took in the state her friend was in. His hair was a wreck, his glasses askew, and most importantly, his clothes were covered in blood.

"Oh my God," she all but yelled, pulling him inside and ushering him through the apartment and into the bathroom.

"Eddie, what in the hell happened to you?" she said, her voice higher pitched than normal as she pulled off his bloodstained coat and sat him down on the side of the bathtub.

It was silent except for the scientist's heavy breathing.

Kylie was frantic, trying to find the source of the bleeding was proving difficult as she felt around his torso. There was blood everywhere, his coat, his pants, his shirt. Struck by a sudden thought she looked back to his once brown coat laying in a heap inside her tub, staining it red. There was more blood on that than his shirt. Unless............

She pulled her hands back jerkily,"Is this," she said hesitantly," is this even your blood?"

He shook his head from side to side slowly, eyes staring blankly at the white wall behind her, lost inside his own head.

"Ed, whose blood is this?" she questioned.

He was silent.

It was a mixture of fear for her friend and anger at his refusal to tell her anything that caused her to grab him by the chin and turn him towards her. She ignored the pain that shot up her right arm as she utilized her injured wrist.

"Look at me, Ed. Whose blood is this?," she pleaded," I need to know, okay?"

She watched as he swallowed hard and gently removed her hand from his chin, not even batting an eye at her wrist, something she hadn't even told him about.
"It's Officer Dougherty's. It's his blood," Ed said shakily.

"Wha-?"

" He was going to Miss Kringle's house and, and he was drunk and he was going to hurt her again, I know it. I confronted him and he attacked me. I had to defend myself, with this," he said pulling a bloodstained knife from his pants pocket before tossing it on top of his jacket." He ran away after that."

It was endearing that Ed had been concerned with Kristen's wellbeing enough to confront a man like Tom Dougherty but something was off. Tom Dougherty would never run from a fight, his ego wouldn't allow it. Her eyes darted to the coat laying in her tub and the blood puddling under it.

"Eddie," she said carefully," Are you sure he ran away?"

He looked at her in indignation," Of course, I'm sure." 

She swallowed hard," Because the Tom Dougherty I know would never run from a fight. No matter who it was with and, and by looking at all this blood, I don't think he could've even crawled away from you. So, tell me, Eddie, tell me what really happened. Please," she said shakily.

He shook his head again," No, you'll hate me. You'll think I'm a monster. I can't hear that from you, I can't."

She took his hands in hers," Ed, I promise that no matter what you tell me, I'll never think any different of you, alright?"

For a moment, he looked conflicted but he whispered so faintly, she almost didn't catch it," I killed him. It was an accident and I was defending myself," he said lowly, he brought his eyes up to hers," but I killed him. I'm a murderer. A criminal. But I did it for Kristen and, and I did it for you too. He did this to you," Ed said softly as he grazed his fingers over the brace," And I didn't want it to happen again." 

It was silent for a moment and it was like Kylie was staring at him but not at him like she was looking through him while deep in thought. He shouldn't have told her. He didn't think that she'd rat him out, but what if after thinking about the situation, she broke her promise to him. What would he do then? Kill her too? He couldn't do that. She was his friend, she was kind to him. Maybe, if it came down to it, he could push past her and run for it. He then remembered how she shoved Officer Dougherty into that wall like a sack of potatoes earlier that day, realizing that she could probably take him down if she wanted and almost threw out the plan before remembering the hurt wrist of her dominant arm. That might just give him a chance.

However, when Kylie finally spoke Ed didn't know whether to be ecstatic or concerned with what she said.

She had looked at him with those blue eyes that looked so sure, her tone so final," He deserved it."

Edward was thrilled, to say the least, and Ed could tell. The voice had a name now, it became clear to him as it reminded Ed of all the names Officer Dougherty called him, of the bruises he left on Miss Kringle, and of the fractured wrist he gave Kylie. He didn't tell her how that last one made him feel so angry, made him never stop stabbing the man until he was on his knees and taking his last breath. He didn't even know why that was the memory that did it. Perhaps it was because she received it while trying to protect a friend. Something she did regularly for him.

Kylie nodded, reassuring herself that her decision was the right one," And you're not a criminal.
Being a criminal requires a crime to have been committed and if there's no body,"
"There's no crime," Edward finished as he shoved Ed back.

He grinned," Have I ever told you that I love the way you think?"

She shrugged and got up from her perch next to him," You have now, I'm going to find you a
change of clothes. We can figure out what we're going to do tonight while watching Doctor Who
and get rid of him tomorrow."

The girl looked back as she opened a different door, light from the bathroom partially illuminating it. He saw the outline of a bed and a nightstand, realizing with a jolt that he was looking into her bedroom. She disappeared inside and seconds later a light flicked on. he could make out the same scratched up wood flooring as was in the living room, although in there it was covered with a fluffy purple rug. A purple chair sat near the foot of her bed, a book most likely pulled from a white bookcase situated in a corner near a window with purple curtains. Edward was beginning to like the color purple. His friend came back moments later, a pile of clean clothing in hand and he took the opportunity to get a look at her. Her blonde hair was pulled into a messy bun, bangs hanging slightly into her eyes. She didn't have her makeup on and he could tell by the dark bags under her eyes that this week had taken its toll. He still thought she looked beautiful. A baggy t-shirt hung off of her curvy frame a little to the left and he could see a sliver of a light purple bra. His eyes wandered down to her legs and he couldn't help but flush a light pink. He mentally cursed Ed for this reaction and pushed him further back, making sure he was totally unaware of what was happening. Her pale legs were bare, contrasting starkly with the black Dig Dug shirt she wore.

She must've noticed his face and how he was staring because she laughed," Relax, Eddie, see?" she said pulling up the hem of her shirt," shorts."

And shorts they were, little dark pink things with Carebears printed across them. She released her shirt and allowed it to fall back into place before setting the pile on the edge of the sink.

"Here's your stuff, just put the bloody clothes in the tub for tonight. We can deal with them in the morning too," she stopped in the other doorway that led into the living room," but hurry up, the next episode is starting up soon and I think the ice cream I had out is melted."

"I won't be long," he promised as she closed the door behind her.

Edward wasted no time peeling out of the dirty clothing before putting on the things Kylie had given him. Moments later he had on a Pac-Man t-shirt and a pair of Avengers pajama pants. His eye involuntarily twitched upon the realization that these were men's pants and couldn't help but wonder who they used to belong to and why they were still in her apartment. It only furthered his desire to do what he wanted to do. He caught his reflection in the mirror over the sink and grinned when Ed shook him head at him.

"I know what you're going to do and I won't allow it!" he rushed out.

Edward raised an eyebrow," Oh, really? And why is that?"

"It's a serious breach of privacy, that's why! She hasn't invited you into her room so you have no right to go in!"

He sighed and rolled his eyes at Ed," Y'know, I'm starting to realize why you don't have more friends, dude."

He twisted the door handle and looked over his shoulder as he disappeared into the dark room,"
You're too uptight."

Ed sputtered as he watched his other self slink into his friend's room.

The first thing Edward noticed about Kylie's room was that it smelled like her, vanilla and sugar. It was a scent he would never grow tired of. He flicked on the lights and looked around. The walls were painted a gentle lavender and her furniture was painted a delicate white. He browsed her bookshelf and was intrigued to find plays and a few books on acting. The majority, though, were thrillers and horror stories. He admired the various trinkets she had lying around, mostly glass animals that he imagined cast all sorts of colors around the room when sunlight hit them. He let his fingers skim over the dark purple comforter on her bed, memorizing how it felt, how it would feel laying beneath it with her curled up by his side. A tut from Ed caused his to face the opposite corner of the room, where Kylie's dresser sat with a mirror mounted on it.

"You just can't let a guy have fun, can you?"

"Not when said fun involves lusting after my friend," Ed snapped.

"Our friend," Edward corrected.

"No, not your friend," his reflection hissed," she doesn't even know you exist."

By now he had crossed the room and had his face near the glass," You see, that's the thing because I don't exist, I'm just a figment of your imagination, your repressed feelings personified. I am you," he said darkly.

He leaned away before grinning lightheartedly," And right now, you," he said pointing at Ed," Are going to go through Kylie's underwear drawer."

"Don't you dare," Ed threatened as he eased open a drawer.

Edward peered over the edge and winked at his reflection," Bingo."

The drawer opened all the way and he let out a low whistle, digging under a few pairs of Kylie's underthings," Wonder who she bought these for," he said while holding a pair of dark green lacy underwear in front of the mirror for Ed to see," maybe they're for you, you like green don't ya?"

"Stop it," Ed demanded with a red face, but whether it was from anger or embarrassment Edward couldn't tell. Well, let's rephrase that. He knew, he just didn't care about which it was. He just wanted to milk the moment.

Oh, just imagine how lovely these would look on her. This color would look great against her skin, hugging that sweet little ass of hers, although, I have to say," he whispered, face close to the mirror again," I bet that they would look even better on the floor as I fucked her into that mattress over there."

Ed's eyes went wide but he didn't get to hear his reaction.

"Hey, Eddie, did you get lost in there or what? The show's starting and I gotcha some ice cream," Kylie shouted from the couch.

He winked at Ed who had paled considerably at the sound of Kylie's voice," Gotta go. Smell you later, dude."

"Stop talking like that!"
Edward slipped the underwear back into her drawer and turned off the light on his way out, making sure that he closed the door gently behind him.

"Sorry, I was just thinking about a few things. I'll be right out," he called out.

"You'd better be."

He spun around towards the mirror, ignoring Ed glaring hatefully at him and running his fingers through his hair a few times before nodding to himself, "It's showtime."
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Kids these days with their music and murder.

When Ed woke up, he was pretty confused. He was wrapped up in blankets that weren't his and laying on a bed that was far too soft. It was dark but he knew it was morning. The light was just being blocked by thick purple curtains. Suddenly remembering what had happened the night prior he bolted up and fumbled around on the nightstand next to him, knocking something to the ground. He winced as whatever it was cracked against the wood floor as he slid his glasses on his face. He turned slowly, hoping that the noise hadn't startled his friend awake but the spot beside him was empty and cold. She was already up. Ed pulled back the blankets and swung himself out of bed, planting feet on the cold floor. With his glasses on, he could make out things such better in the dim light, including the silhouette of a bedside lamp. He turned it on and dared to look at the thing he had broken.

"Oh, dear," he said stooping to pick it up, shards of glass falling from it.

The white frame was chipped, paint flaking off onto the floor and his hands. He turned it over, realizing with a start that the two subjects looked the same. Twins. He adjusted his glasses and peered closer. The two girls weren't exactly alike. They were dressed differently for one, the blonde on the right had a very rough and tumble look about her like she'd punch you in the nose if you even thought about her wrong. Ed thought she was very intimidating with her dark eye makeup and purple dip dyed hair. The other seemed more familiar to him. A pair of kind blue eyes stared back, with a smile that radiated positivity. She looked so much happier in this photo with her arm wrapped around her sister than he had ever seen her. He could barely make out the charm necklaces that each wore, stars perfectly shaped and glittering. After picking up the glass and tossing it into the trash he made his way out of her room, holding the broken frame carefully in one hand. It wasn't like he could put it back and pretend nothing had happened.

When he entered the living room area he could faintly hear music playing. It started out with no vocals but the tune was unfamiliar to him anyway. He didn't really listen to music much. Suddenly, right on cue with the singer's voice, another joined in. Clear and full of emotion, with a sweet sound, even though the words of the song were not sweet in the slightest.

"Are you insane like me?
Been in pain like me?
Bought a hundred dollar
Bottle of champagne like me?
Just to pour that motherfucker
Down the drain like me?"

He crept closer in curiosity, thinking that maybe she was cleaning up after making breakfast. She hadn't eaten yet, though, he noticed the two plates sitting at her table, still steaming.

"Would you use your water bill
To dry the stain like me?
Are you high enough without
He watched her turn it every which way, checking for any other stains and finding none. It was mildly sexist but he attributed her knowledge of getting blood out of clothes to being female because that was a white dress shirt. She sat it on the other side of the sink and let out the water, her gloves dripping pink water when she pulled them off.

"And all the people say
You can't wake up this is not a dream
You are part of a machine
You are not a human being"

She rinsed out the sink and put the gloves into a garbage bag, burying them under normal trash. She picked up the pile of clothing and turned, jerking in surprise and making noise at the sight of Ed standing there.

She smiled after she recovered and the music kept playing, "Good morning. I made breakfast and washed the blood out of everything. I wasn't sure if you wanted to save anything or get rid of it just in case."

"Thank you, but I think we should dispose of everything that I had on me last night."

"With your face all made up
Living on a screen
Low on self-esteem
So you run on gasoline"

Kylie nodded, "I figured as much. At least this stuff won't catch anyone's eye like bloody clothes tend to."

She tossed the clothes into the bag and tied it shut.

"What are you going to do with the knife?" She questioned while washing her hands.

"I think there's a flaw in my code
These voices won't leave me alone"

Ed let his fingers glide over the edge of the counter top, "I was thinking about cleaning it off and keeping it with me. It's the safest option."

"Yeah," the blonde replied as she turned the water off, "that way no one will just happen to find it and if they see it on you, they'll just think it's for when you leave work late."
Well my heart is gold  
and my hands are cold

"That's the idea," he said quietly while thinking something over.

She walked over to where he was standing, about to slip past him and into the dining area when she stopped," Is something wrong, Eddie?"

He didn't even chastise her for calling him that annoying name.

"You, you seem to know your way around getting rid of evidence....." he trailed off.

She laughed lightheartedly, "Don't look so worried, Ed. It's just a mixture of common sense and a love of crime shows." 

"Are you deranged like me?  
Are you strange like me?"

She switched off the radio," C'mon, we can talk about what we're going to do over breakfast," she said with a cheery air as her slipper-clad feet padded their way over to the small white table. Soon they were both seated in front of warm ham and cheese omelets.

Ed clutched the broken frame nervously, "I, uh, I broke this while trying to find my glasses this morning. I'm terribly sorry," he held out the picture across the table to the short girl.

She took it carefully, studying the damage he had inflicted before shrugging, "It's alright. It was just a frame, I can just buy a new one."

He was silent for a moment, trying to figure out how to tactfully bring the subject up.

"That's a picture of you and your sister isn't it?"

Kylie looked up from her plate and nodded," Yeah, that's the day I was heading off to college. My mom made Kailyn and I take one together before I left."

"She doesn't look too happy to be taking it," Ed commented.

The girl gave a half smile as if remembering the moment fondly," She wasn't. She was supposed to be heading to a race on the outskirts of town. Mom made her late so she had to race on a five-second penalty that day. She still won but she was so pissed."

Ed shoveled a bite of food into his mouth," What kind of racing did she do? Was she on the track team?"

"Oh god no," she said with a laugh," the day Kailyn ran for fun would've been the end of all things," she wiped away a tear," She was into drag racing and was good at it too."

"Oh."

Now that he thought about it, it made sense.

"What happened to her?" He asked before he had the chance to realize what he was saying.

Kylie stabbed a piece of egg, "She died while I was away. Her car blew up."

"Oh, I'm sorry," he said uncomfortably.
"There's nothing to be sorry about. The bastard who did it got what was coming to him. That's all that matters."

He sensed the finality in her tone and even though he had so many more questions, he let the subject go. Edward told him that he could just research it later.

"So, what's the plan, Eddie?" She asked after taking a sip of water.

An hour later the two were at Ed's apartment, with a huge sheet of plastic on the floor and all the furniture shoved to the perimeter. There were also severed body parts and small puddles of blood here and there.

Kylie cut a sheet of plastic off of the roll, "So, what time are we heading to the lab?"

"How about ten?" Ed asked as he rolled a section of Officer Dougherty's arm in plastic.

"Sounds good," the assistant replied absentmindedly as she tried to pick what to wrap.

"What did you tell the Captain to explain you coming in late?" he asked casually, "I'm going with traffic. It's simple but believable."

"I told her my cat got sick."

"You don't have a cat," he said simply as he placed the limb into the container.

She shrugged, "Essen doesn't know that."

Ed didn't really have much to say about that.

It didn't take long for the two to pack away the remains of the police officer. Kylie sort of thought it similar to packing a lunch when she was younger, wrapping food and placing it neatly in a lunch box, except this wasn't food and they were putting the parts into suitcases. The analogy sort of fell apart when you got into the details, although most did tend to do that. She watched as her friend stuffed the last little bit of the man into the case and snapped it shut.

He turned to around and looked a little ways past her, face devoid of glasses, "Why don't you go ahead and get cleaned up while I take care of the rest of this?"

Kylie looked down at the apron she had on, frowning at the specks of blood and knowing she was going to have to get rid of it, "Are you sure? I can wipe down the tarp."

"I'm sure," he said looking down at her, "besides it might take a little while to get this out of your hair." He held a piece of pinkish red hair between his gloved thumb and pointer finger before her face.

"Oh," she said taking the strand from him and standing, "you're right, that probably will take a bit."

"Of course, I'm right."

Her eyes snapped from the hair to the man in front of her, furrowing her brow. Ed sounded cocky. Something he never was. Ever.

She let it slide. It was probably just the thrill of doing something like this that was getting to him.
The piece of hair fell from her hand as she peeled off her gloves and tossed them in a bag, "I'm going to shower. I'll be out in 30, Eddie."

Edward watched her untie her apron and shove it into the garbage bag before disappearing into the bathroom moments later. He smiled happily to himself, wondering why Ed had even worried at all about Kylie thinking him a monster. She was Ed's friend, his best friend and she had always helped him defend himself before, no matter what those dimwits who passed themselves off as police officers said about him. Why would she have abandoned him when he came to her for help? She wouldn't. Edward knew that, but Ed was still afraid. He could feel it, the way the scientist watched her out of the corner of his eye all the time, gauging her every move, analyzing every word she spoke. It was infuriating really, how he mistrusted her, how he expected her to betray him. Ed didn't deserve someone like her but -

"No, you don't," Ed said forcefully as he looked up from the plastic he was wiping down. The scientist glared at the figure who was leaning back in one of his kitchen chairs, feet propped up on the table.

Edward rolled his eyes with a dramatic sigh, form flickering slightly, "And why is that, Eddie boy?"

"Because you're a monster. You tell me to do horrible things to the people I work with and, and you-you killed Officer Dougherty. You're a murderer." Ed argued with his voice slightly raised prior to tossing the rag he had been holding onto the ground.

Ed watched the other him raise an eyebrow before resting all four chair legs on the floor and removing his feet from the table, "That's all you've got?

He stood, "What a pity, because I have so many things against you."

Edward sneered as he crouched down in front of Ed, "When Essen told you to deliver the nametag to the new girl, you jumped at the offer. Maybe you could talk to Miss Kringle. You did get to speak with her, didn't you? But only after ignoring the pretty girl who answered you riddle right. Kringle didn't even spare you a minute, but she did, she even went as far as making one up and finding you later to try it out. You cut her off and left her standing in your office because you saw that red headed woman walk past your door. She waited for you though and smiled when you came back like you had made her day just walking into that office."

Ed opened his mouth to say something but he never got it out, "And when that oaf, Officer Thomas, pushed you down the stairs, she rushed to your side, asking if you were hurt and helping you clean up the mess. She answered another riddle correctly too and you appreciated it, but only briefly because you saw Miss Kringle talking to Arnold Flass. Instead of thinking about Kylie, who was the only one being kind to you, you wondered if she had seen what happened and thought less of you. The girl had even called you her friend and you pushed that to the back of your mind."

Edward stood once more, "Then she even said hello to you that one time you came out of Essen's office, and you wondered why Kristen never greeted you as sweetly as she did. Your first choice to have lunch with was that bitch instead of someone who had been nothing but kind to you."

Ed got up from his position on the ground, his jaw clenched in anger, "Don't speak about Miss Kringle that way. She's just confused about her feelings. She's scared that she will be ridiculed for being attracted to me. That's why she treats me the way she does. It's not her fault!"

"So she treats you like dirt because she 'likes' you? What are we in," Edward shot back, "elementary school?"
"Kringle doesn't like you, she thinks you're "weird". She told Flass she thought so and let him read that letter you wrote out loud to the whole squad."

Ed flinched as he recalled the memory. Officers snickered behind his back and mocked him for weeks after that.

"Do you think that your beloved Miss Kringle would be as understanding as Kylie has been? Do you think she would have helped you? Let you stay in her home? Sleep in her bed?"

Ed shook his head slowly, "No, no she wouldn't have."

Edward grinned at the progress he was making. "That's right. She would have freaked out and called the cops. She would call you a monster, a psychopath. She wouldn't have understood how you had tried to protect her like Kylie did."

He lowered his voice so he was speaking much more gently, "And do you know why Kylie is so understanding?" he asked while handing Ed his glasses.

"Because she's my friend and thinks like I do?"

Edward tilted his head and smirked a bit, "Well, those are reasons but I was thinking more so along the lines of attraction."

Ed jerked as he slipped the things on his face, nearly jabbing himself in the eye, "Attraction? She likes me?" he looked in confusion towards the closed bathroom door.

"Mmmmmmm, and she really wants you to notice but she thinks it would be unfair to tell you."

"Unfair?"

"Because you fancy Miss Kringle. She doesn't want you to feel guilty or ruin your friendship. isn't she just the sweetest?"

"Yes," Ed replied, "but I wouldn't just stop being her friend. I care about her."

The scientist picked up the bucket of bloody water and poured it down the sink. He didn't hear the sound of the shower stopping over the running water as he refilled it.

"Yeah," Edward said while casually resting a hand on Ed's shoulder, "but I care more than you so adios amigo."

His image flickered and disappeared.

"What -" His grip on the bucket faltered and it fell back into the sink.

Edward took off his glasses and blinked. He thought that Ed should really better his defense tactics, the sap hadn't even realized what was happening until the struggle was almost over. He finished cleaning and drying the plastic before throwing it and his gloves into the bag. He was clean for the most part, knowing where to cut in order to prevent blood splatter was rather helpful so he pulled out the clothes he was going to wear to the lab. He was pulling off the t-shirt Kylie had given him when he heard the bathroom door swing open suddenly and Kylie emerge with a towel wrapped around her, muttering curses under her breath. He smiled to himself as he caught sight of her bag containing the extra set of clothes she brought laying on the couch.
She flushed as she caught sight of a shirtless Ed and quietly darted across the apartment to avoid being seen. He was beautiful, slightly toned with smooth and pale skin. He was nothing at all like the overly muscular officers who often flirted with her. Kylie grabbed the bag from over the back of the couch and turned to scurry back to the bathroom but gasped as she ran right into him. Edward caught her and she threw one hand up to grab the top of the towel, fighting to hold it up.

"Holy shit, Eddie. You scared me."

"Sorry," he said slowly," I didn't mean to. I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate you helping me out."

"It- it's nothing, really. Friends help friends get away with homicide all the time, I'm sure," she said nervously.

Ed still had no shirt and it was really putting her on edge.

He leaned in," Still, I feel like I owe you one."

Kylie swallowed, blue eyes wide," It was nothing. You don't owe me anything."

She attempted to slip to his left, trying to defuse the high tension situation by making it to the bathroom but his grip on her arms tightened.

"Oh, but I insist. Just let me make it up to you," he said lowly as he moved a piece of damp blonde hair away from her face," Please?"

"Uh, um, I -"

A pair of lips pressed against hers, effectively cutting off whatever it was she had been attempting to stutter out.

So quick question for everyone. How do you guys feel about smut? I can either try my hand at writing it if you guys would like me to and you're comfortable with it or I can just reference it. It all depends on how you all feel about it. I will warn you though, I have never, ever, written that kind of stuff in my life. I've read a lot but never wrote my own so........it's all up to you people.
Chapter 9

Kylie's eyes went wide as Edward pressed his lips to hers. They were soft, just like she had imagined, and after a moment of shock had passed she started to kiss back. His hands eventually came to rest on her hips. Her back was pressed against the couch and her bag was now on the ground at their feet, the clothes she had came to retrieve forgotten. She had dropped it when she tangled her hands in Ed's hair. That also meant her towel had fallen, it lay pooled around her feet beside the bag as she tangled her fingers in her friend's hair. She hadn't meant to pull his brown locks but her fingertips accidently got caught up in a small tangle and ripped a bit harshly through it. She attempted to pull away in order to apologize but the notion quickly escaped her mind when, surprisingly, Ed moaned against her mouth and his nails dug a little more into her hips. From there, the kiss intensified. He had bitten her lip and when she let out a little gasp he took the opportunity to slip his tongue into her mouth. This time, it was she who made a noise of pleasure and gave an experimental tug at Ed's hair again, a little harder than the first.

He pulled away from Kylie with another groan only to look down at her wildly, "Do it again, harder."

She grinned in delight and pulled sharply, causing Edward's head to snap back and his breath to hitch as he felt a pair of lips ghosting along his throat. His eyelids fluttered shut and he hummed in appreciation but his eyes reopened when the trail of soft kisses stopped right before his jawline. The blonde gave him a rather mournful look and it took him a few seconds to realize that she couldn't reach. She had already been standing up on the very tips of her toes and had reached her vertical limit. Without even thinking about what he was doing, Edward tightened his hold on Kylie's hips and heaved her on top of the back of the couch. Her fingers wound further into his hair and the assistant let out a small squeak as she was lifted into the air rather suddenly. However, she recovered gracefully and was delighted by the increase in reach, tracing Edward's jaw with pink lips before planting a sweet kiss on his mouth. He reciprocated eagerly, one hand trailing down her leg and resting on her thigh before pulling her legs apart and stepping between them. They were close but not close enough in Kylie's opinion. Edward's breathing faltered a bit when her chest made contact with his and pulled away from the kiss with a mischievous little smile. She was different, Edward had noted, her eyes had a little glint that he had never seen before and that, paired with the grin on her face made her look downright wicked. He loved it.

Edward swooped down to start an assault on the pale, unmarked skin of Kylie's throat but stopped with his lips less than a centimeter away.

"Something wrong, Eddie?" the blonde purred lowly.

A split second earlier, at the exact time Edward had shifted his attention to her neck, she had rotated her hips forward, grinding against him. Ed jerked his head back and gasped like he had just resurfaced from underwater, blinking rapidly. He looked at his friend wide-eyed, mouth opening and closing much like a fish as he took in his current situation. He, he had his best friend, his only friend, perched on the back of his couch, stark naked, with hands gripping his bare shoulders. The last thing he remembered doing was washing out a bucket that had been filled with bloody water and everything from then on was blank.

He faintly heard Kylie repeat the same question as before, concern lacing her voice as blue eyes searched his face. (Which most likely was painted with a look of pure horror as he realized that this
"I, uh, un, I'm, oh dear," Ed stuttered out as he backed away from the assistant, who let out a noise of surprise at his sudden movement and had to hold onto the couch to prevent falling off of it.

His face flushed a bright pink and he averted his eyes," I'm, uh, I'm sorry. I'm so so sorry."

Kylie tilted her head in confusion," What are you-"

"This," the scientist breathed as he ran a hand through his messy hair," This was a - a mistake."

"Oh."

Hurt flashed across the blonde's face as what was said sank in but Ed didn't see that, as he was much too busy wrestling himself into a dress shirt after finding the tank top he had discarded earlier on the floor near his bed. It only took him five minutes to get dressed and find his glasses, which was also enough time for Kylie to wipe the wounded look away as he turned back towards her, now towel covered, body.

"I, uh, I hope you understand. It was nothing that you did, it wasn't about you at all. It's just I wasn't in my right mind and I apologize for that, this won't happen again, I promise."

She forced a tight-lipped smile and ruffled one hand through her damp hair awkwardly," It's alright. I - I get it. You weren't you, it's fine."

Ed didn't notice how her voice faltered slightly or how she didn't quite look him in the eye as she said those things because he just smiled back, as if all prior happenings were erased," Rodger Dodger, well, I'm off to the lab to say goodbye to Officer Dougherty. Why don't you finish up here and meet me there later?"

"Um, yeah, give me an hour and I'll be there," she sighed.

He nodded," Mind getting the door for me?" he asked while nodding towards it with the large suitcase in tow.

After opening the door and saying a quick farewell to her partner-in-crime Kylie let out another shaky sigh as she closed it behind him. What in the hell had happened? It seemed that one minute Ed was completely content with kissing and touching her but the next...............when she had ground against him, he froze and pulled away like she was infected with the plague. He had said that it wasn't her fault.......but what did he mean by that? She pondered this for a few moments before her jaw clenched as she came across a possible solution, no the probable solution.

Kristen. He must have thought of her for a split second and remembered that he had feelings for the redhead. He cared for the head archivist, loved her even, Kylie knew at least that much from the way he spoke of her with that dreamy look in his eyes.

But how did he feel about her? How did he feel about the girl who defended him? Who listened to him prattle on and on about a woman who didn't even spare him a kind word? How did he feel about the person who held him so dear that she helped him get away with murder for fear of losing him forever?

Obviously, that she was a mistake, although she wasn't quite sure how making out with her when she had nothing but a cheap towel on could have been a simple mistake. Maybe he had wanted to see if she was easy. If she would give in so quickly, if she was a whore. As she pulled on her white and lavender floral dress she bit her lip. She hadn't protested when Ed had kissed her, in fact, once
The following week had been strange and yes, she was referring to the sudden increase of weird shit. The guy who murdered women when relationships didn't work out, Detective Gordon's girlfriend, Barbara Kean, killing her own parents and being admitted to the newly reopened Arkham Asylum, and the threat of an upcoming gang war were just a few things the past few days had ever so kindly bestowed upon her.

Along with all the paperwork that people refused to do.

Everything had gone rather smoothly so far. Kristen had only mentioned her boyfriend once when she had found a note that he had supposedly left that had Ed's name written all over it.

_Literally._

She had agreed that it was a bit strange that the beginning of each sentence spelled out the scientists' last name but wrote it off as a coincidence with a laugh. After the woman had left Kylie had a rather scathing conversation with her friend about his little riddles. She was fine with them any other time but not when they could get the both of them tossed into Blackgate. The argument had also caused her to say some things she probably shouldn't have said about his fixation with her coworker. Kristen may have been a friend of sorts to the assistant but the way Ed spoke about her like she lived on a marble pedestal above everyone else really ground her gears. In the end, Kylie's jealousy and frustration got the best of her and now she and her friend hadn't spoken in two days. She missed him but if she said she felt guilty about what she said to him, she'd be lying. The assistant sat her mug of coffee down on her desk when she realized that her hands were shaking in a silent rage. Apparently,
she couldn't even think about their little spat without getting worked up all over again. She let out a noise of frustration and switched on her radio, turning up the volume as she remembered the Alanis Morrisette CD she had in. Jagged Little Pill was just the kind of angry that she needed to hear right now. There she sat in her office for a solid three hours, typing up reports, listening to music and eating every last piece of candy in the bowl on her desk. She was actually starting to feel better and had amassed enough papers to make even the Queen of The Archives weep. Okay, so maybe she wasn't entirely better. Maybe she had withheld some things from earlier in the week to make Kristen's job a tad more annoying. **Maybe.**

She scooped up the sizable pile and made her way to the door. With her radio up so loud, she didn't hear the commotion in the main room. Or the frantic sound of someone nearly sprinting down her hall. As fate would have it, the moment her hand touched the doorknob, the door flew open, knocking papers all over her office.

"Goddammit!"

"Kylie! Kylie, oh gosh. I'm so sorry. I - "

The blonde sighed and cradled her head in one hand waving off the apology with the other," It's fine, Kristen. Really, it is. Just help me pick these back up."

Kristen made a noise," We don't have time for that," she countered quickly grabbing the other girl's wrist, "You need to see this."

Any protest that had begun to make its way from Kylie's lips froze as she fought to keep a grimace from her face. She didn't wear her brace to work, choosing instead to cover the fading bruises with concealer even though the pain hadn't totally gone away. The redhead jerked her out the door of her office, the sound of the radio fading as the two neared the main room, which was in a complete frenzy. The two stopped after Kristen had fought through a crowd of officers with their eyes glued to a news broadcast on the television.

Kylie felt all the blood drain from her face as the headline flashed on the screen along with a series of images.

Arnold Dobkins.

Robert Greenwood.

Aaron Helzinger.

Richard Sionis.

Barbara Kean.

Jerome Valeska.

Their pictures were accompanied by a flashing series of words before the channel switched to a live feed of a tall building where large shapes were being dropped from the roof. It took a moment for Kylie and the rest of the group to realize that the shapes were *people.* The camera zoomed into the group of people still on the roof, wearing black and white striped Arkham uniforms. It stopped on a sickeningly familiar face as he looked right at it. Jerome grinned and gave a little wave before blowing a kiss, eyes seemingly locked onto hers through the screen. He stared a few moments longer until a few yells were heard, along with the wrenching of metal. The live feed cut out suddenly and
the program switched back to a traumatized looking woman sitting in the newsroom. It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that someone had shot down the helicopter the cameraman had been on. The precinct was in an uproar but Kylie didn't notice.

She was still staring wide-eyed at the television in front of her and hoping Jerome didn't really mean what he said the last time she saw him.

"Hasta la vista, dollface."

"See you soon."
Chapter 10

The next couple days were absolute hell. Actually, Kylie figured that was a gross understatement. In fact, she'd rather be in there than in Gotham. Maybe there wouldn't be so much paperwork..... "The Maniax!" as the group of escapees called themselves had recently hijacked a bus full of cheerleaders and football players, doused them all in gasoline, and tried to light the kids ablaze. You wouldn't believe the number of sobbing girls that were paraded around the precinct in order to get their statements. You also wouldn't believe how many times Detective Gordon had asked if Jerome had said anything about his future plans when she spoke to him in her office before he had been arrested. Essen had even called her into her office in order to grill the assistant further. The Captain went so far as to assign an officer to drive her home every day after work and check in with her on days off. It was all entirely unnecessary in Kylie's opinion. All she did was talk to the guy for a bit. It wasn't like he was going to remember her, murderers usually have things other than unimportant assistants on their minds.

Not that she'd know.

All she knew is that she needed to get these files back to Kristen before the redhead blew a gasket. According to the archivist, these particular pieces of paper had been out for over two months and no one had had any idea where they'd gone. Not even the newly promoted Offi- no - Detective Johnny Thomas, the person who signed them out in the first place. He claimed that he sent them back weeks ago.

Kylie found the manilla folder shoved under the leg of his rickety desk, keeping the piece of scrap metal level. There were only two good things that stemmed from her interaction with the slimeball. One, the blonde saw an ever so tiny glimmer of fear in his eyes when he saw her waiting for him at his desk. And two, the way his mouth dropped open when she pulled the papers from under his desk, sending everything on it sliding to the ground. He hadn't bothered her directly in quite a while, finding other targets that weren't as feisty had been how he spent his time. In fact, she had seen one, a pretty little intern, smile, eyes shining with laughter when Kylie upset the desk. That had made the small break in her act totally worth it. She smiled to herself as she remembered the look on Thomas' face a few moments ago while making her way down the hall to the records annex. Today, the same glossy white heels she had worn after Officer Dougherty's murder clicked against the stained tile flooring and a light blue dress peppered with daisies brushed against her legs. Her sweet act had only raised one set of eyebrows so far and those belonged to Kristen Kringle, the only person who found the style and slight behavioral change weird. However, it was easy to mislead her, only a few stuttered words when the woman asked why she was so chipper and a light blush when Kristen voiced her idea of Kylie having found a guy and she was in the clear. She felt the need to press one of those "That was easy" buttons.

The blonde stopped in front of the entrance to the archives and rapped against the door as she opened it.

"Hey, Kringle, I've got that-" her sentence was cut off with a little huff of air.

She wasn't here. Kylie had dropped everything she was doing this morning to find the stupid files she had been complaining about since forever only to have her not be in her office. It wasn't like the assistant could file it herself, Kristen's filing system was a wreck and the only person who really knew how to find things was the redhead herself. She let out a noise of frustration and slapped the folder down on her desk, jumping when the noise it made was louder than usual, more of a bang than a smack that papers would normally make.
Then she heard the screams and more of what had to be gunshots. She took a few steps away from the frosted glass of the annex door towards the small storeroom in the back of the musty room before all the blood drained from her face. If Kristen wasn't here.......where would she be other than the lobby? And Ed........oh God..........!

*He had been taking something to Detective Gordon when she was getting the files from Thomas.*

She couldn't stay here. She had to find her friends, even if one hadn't spoken to her for days. The assistant carefully approached the exit, eyes widening when pairs of footsteps rushed past it as people screamed. A few gunshots and the both the screams and footfalls were silent, ending with large thunks. A hand covered her mouth in a silent horror. She waited a moment before easing the door open and peering out of the room. She kept her eyes off of the floor after seeing the sprays of blood coating the walls of the hall as she picked her way to the lobby.

"Ed?" she whispered quietly," Kristen?"

She called for the two the entire time she walked, becoming more panicked the closer she got to the main room, where the screams had faded for the most part and there were only a few stray shots. When she reached the end of the hall she froze.

The entire precinct was a hell hole. Officers littered the floor, most likely all dead. Kylie blanched when she recognized a bracelet resting on a bloody and motionless arm that lay behind a desk. That was the intern from earlier, the girl who thought it funny when Officer Thomas' desk fell over. The woman regretted never learning her name. She looked up in a slight daze and saw Kristen for a split second, rooted in place like a deer in headlights. The redhead made eye contact with her, eyes going wide before a gunshot rang out and the archivist went down with another person.

Kylie then did the one most idiotic thing she had ever done in her entire life, she screamed. She had only taken a few steps toward the last place Kristen had been before her left arm was yanked back roughly by a hand clamped around her wrist. The girl let out a yelp of pain as the hand tightened and her back hit someone's chest.

"Oh," the man cooed," Lookie what I found."

He spun her around to look at him and a look of disgust washed over her face as Robert Greenwood gazed down at her.

"Let go of me."

"You look even tastier in person than you did in the photo Galavan showed us," the cannibal leered.

The large man leaned in towards her," He said he wanted you alive but that means all kinds of things," his breath tickled her neck and she flinched away," one little taste couldn't hurt."

Greenwood's tongue had just made contact with the side of her throat when a gunshot rang out and the Maniax! member jerked back, releasing his hold as something wet sprayed across the side of her face. The heavy-set man hit the ground with a thump and lay motionless. Kylie raised a shaky hand to her cheek only to pull it away stained red.

"Damn it, Greenwood. What did I tell you about playing with-" the voice suddenly cut off and changed its tone drastically.

"Well, hiya Dollface!"

She spun around at the sound of the nickname and saw Jerome jump down from atop of a
"Long time, no see, right?" he chirped.

"Glad you could join the party."

She forced a smile at the sight of the blood-spattered boy, "Me too."

Kylie didn't know how it was possible but his grin got wider, like he was genuinely thrilled that she was here, "You're looking great by the way, love the dress but this," he said while running his fingers through her bloodstained hair, "really brings the whole thing together."

"Thanks, sweetie."

She couldn't figure out for the life of her how she was gonna get out of this. Alive, that is. Hopefully just going with it would keep her from dying.

Jerome let out a little laugh, "Anytime, Doll."

Sirens began to wail in the distance and Jerome looked towards the glass doors of the precinct, "Ooh, that's our cue."

"Our? What are-"

"Aaron, would you be so kind?"

Kylie's eyes went wide as a piece of cloth pressed against her nose and a sickly sweet invaded her nostrils. Her eyelids began to feel heavy as the image of the precinct began to turn grainy. Her slowed mind was able to bring forth two words.

"Chloroform."

and

"Shit."

Her eyes closed and someone caught her as her knees buckled, arms lifting her up bridal style. Jerome held the blonde close, remembering the first time he met the little assistant. She didn't look at him like he was a freak. She didn't talk to him like he was crazy. She didn't call him names. She treated him like a normal person. She made him feel special. As the remaining former Arkham inmates climbed into their getaway van he remembered when Galavan first brought up the plan to wreak havoc of the GCPD, showing the group a photo of Kylie Wood, someone they would want, no need, in the family. Of course, Barbara had her doubts about the short blonde girl. All of them did. The woman in the photo looked harmless, like she couldn't even bring herself to swat a fly. She looked kind. Jerome was skeptical but after Theo had explained to everyone who she really was, he felt like he was the one who had been duped back there in her office. As he sat in the back of the van holding her close, he looked at the blood staining her face with a grin.

Gotham hadn't seen anything yet.
The precinct was in shambles but that was putting it lightly. Blood stained every surface imaginable and the death toll was steadily increasing as workers were found in all parts of the building. It was silent for the most part, the only noise being the low whispers of the survivors to those who hadn't been there during the shooting. Ed watched the scene from his place on a desk where a medic was bandaging up his arm after pulling out a bullet. He could've made it out unscathed if it weren't for him catching a glimpse of Miss Kringle caught in the crossfire. She had just been standing there and staring at something across the room with frightened eyes when one of the shooters took aim at her. Ed had been able to push her out of the way but ended up taking the bullet meant for her chest in his arm. Miss Kringle had been thanking him all afternoon, saying how grateful she was and telling him how brave he had been. He didn't think what he did was particularly exceptional by any means, he had just wanted to keep her safe. Although Ed wasn't going to complain about the extra attention he was getting, no sir. He was tuning her out for the moment, opting instead to study his surroundings. One question, however, reeled him back in with a small shot of panic.

"Hey, have you seen Kylie anywhere?" Kristen had asked suddenly with her green eyes searching the precinct," I caught a glimpse of her before you saved me but I lost her after that."

Ed thought for a moment, going over everything he had seen in the last half hour before shaking his head," No, the last time I saw her, she was heading back to the records annex with the files you've been searching for."

Kristen bit her lip," I'll be right back," she said, her voice layered with worry.

Ed watched her pick her way through the precinct over to an officer holding a clipboard. The man had been recording the names of found survivors and another stood next to him, scrawling the names of the identified deceased onto his own pad of paper. Kristen spoke to the both of them, looking over the lists as they did. He felt his chest tighten as the officer in charge of survivors looked up with a sympathetic shake of his head. What had been the last thing he told his friend? That they shouldn't talk to a while. How long had it been since he had spoken to her? Days.

Kristen made her way back over to him with a tight smile," She's not on either list. They haven't found her yet. She's probably still holed up somewhere waiting for it to be safe."

Ed shook his head," No, you said you saw her right before they tried to shoot you. That means she must've heard the gunfire and came," he stopped for a moment and swallowed hard," looking for the two of us."

"If she saw you go down," he continued," she wouldn't just leave you there. She'd -"

"Try to help me," Kristen finished with a horrified look.

"The quickest way to get to me would've been to run straight across the precinct but she wouldn't do that. She's not that-"

"She would if she thought you were hurt," Ed cut her off with dismay.

"Kylie screamed," the redhead admitted shakily, "I heard her scream when my head hit the ground and before I blacked out she yelled at someone to let go of her. There was a gunshot, Edward. Someone died."

Ed tightened his jaw," It wasn't her. This was the first room the search team went over, they
would've found her by now."

Kristen stopped for a moment, brows furrowed," That boy she talked to, the one who killed his mother, he thought she was pretty. He was the one who shot the Captain...you don't think-"

"That Jerome shot whoever touched her and then took her with him?" Ed finished for her," It's a possibility."

"They found the body of Robert Greenwood. I overheard the M.E. say that he wasn't killed by a standard issue GCPD gun. Do you think he was the one who grabbed her?" Kristen inquired.

"Most likely," Ed replied while adjusting his glasses," Why else would his own partner shoot him down? He must've not liked how Greenwood handled her and gunned him down for it."

"Oh God, anything could be happening to her right now," she bemoaned," They could've killed her already, I mean, the last thing she did to that nutjob was punch him in the nose. What if he wanted to kill her hi-?"

"I doubt it," he shot back a little too quickly," I don't think Mr. Valeska would go through all that trouble when he could've just killed her here," he moved his shoulder experimentally and winced a bit," I also doubt that they've harmed her. She's rather bright and will most likely be going along with whatever they've thrown her way to avoid, well, you know, dying."

Kylie looked around the room appraisingly. It seemed to be a study, filled to the brim with books (which, to her dismay, was an impressive collection) and expensive decor. Studies usually felt warm and welcoming if the one back home was anything to compare this to. This one felt cold, even with the inferno roaring in the fireplace. Eventually, curiosity took hold of the young woman and after finding that she was in no way bound to the chair she had awoken in (which was rather strange in her opinion) she decided that a quick look around wouldn't hurt. After all, someone did place her in a room full of books without restraining her. After browsing the collection, she concluded that the owner of the room had a deep interest in the history of old Gotham, well, more like an obsession. Every book in the room was in some way about the city, old plans, family histories dating back to when the town was first founded, things like that. Sure, Kylie found that stuff a bit intriguing but this person? They were fixated on this hellhole. She was looking over a particularly curious volume when the heavy door of the study was swung open.

"Ah, Miss Wood. I had a feeling you would be awake by now. How are you feeling?"

The man stood beside the desk she had regained consciousness near with a seemingly friendly smile as she studied him for a moment. The woman tilted her head slightly to one side as she picked apart his act. It was one of the first things her drama teacher taught the class way back in high school. How to tell when someone was acting. This guy, this guy's friendly demeanor was definitely a sham, although she needn't remember Mrs. Reed's lessons to figure that out. There was something wrong with his eyes, they weren't as friendly as the words he was saying. There was something dark there, something evil and she had a feeling that telling him that she saw through his little character wouldn't
be a smart thing to do.

"Well," she eventually replied, inspecting the spine of the book once more," I did have a bit of a headache but that's gone now so I suppose I am doing just fine," she watched him from the corner of her eye as he nodded.

"Those are unavoidable, I'm afraid with the means we had to employ," he said regretfully," I did request that a minimal amount be used to prevent serious detriment but when you work with clients like these," the man shrugged," who knows what you're going to get."

He sat at the desk now and Kylie was still pretending to examine books, mulling over his words. He said "work with" but she hadn't seen him on the news with the escapees. Did that mean he was the one behind all of their crimes?

"I find it mildly concerning," she said casually as her eyes skimmed over gold-embossed titles," that you know my name and who I am but I know nothing about you or why you brought me here."

The stranger nodded with a sigh," Straight to business I see and you're just as level-headed as I thought you would be, Miss Wood. Very good."

Kylie raised an eyebrow at this but decided to let the comment slide for the time being as she slid into a chair in front of the mahogany desk.

"My name is Theo Galavan and you are here because you have something the rest of these clowns don't," he said with a charming smile.

She stayed silent and gave him a look that urged him to continue.

"You have charm and you can deceive but the one must important thing of all that you have is," he paused for a dramatic effect before tapping his temple," a brain. You think before you act. You want to know why you're here?"

He pulled a rather thick looking folder from the desk drawer beside him and leaned back in his chair as Kylie looked at the folder in confusion before she flipped open the front flap.

"That's why."

She kept the horror churning inside her from showing on her face as she skimmed over the reports before closing it and sliding it an inch away.

"I don't understand. This is a five-year-old solved case, why are you showing me this," she said, her voice laced with befuddlement.

Galavan looked at her with a little smile," It was from your hometown, now what was it called?" he paused before snapping his fingers," High Ridge, that's it. This was a case about a serial killer targeting the drag racers of the place and I believe," the man said as he flicked open the folder and picked through a few files," that the first victim was one Kailyn Wood."

Her jaw clenched as a photo was slid gently across the table, coming to a stop right in front of her. She stared numbly at the scene it depicted. The car was in flames in the middle of an abandoned road, already burnt to a crisp. Everyone else who had been racing that day had already cleared out long before the police had arrived.
Her sister had died almost instantly, shrapnel from the explosion had been catapulted from the front dash into her torso and throat. She bled out as she burned, unable to make a sound, the coroner had said, save for maybe a few gurgling noises before she expired. Kylie felt the anger she had smothered for so long resurface and she fought to swallow it back down.

"Why are you showing me this?" she inquired with a pained look on her face," They caught the person who killed her. The case was closed years ago."

"Oh ho ho," Theo laughed," They may have caught the person who murdered your sister but they never did figure out that he didn't kill the other three. Terri Slawly, Jeremiah Anders, and Ryan Valdez were the other victims and unbeknownst to the county police, Mister Leo Renolds was not their executioner."
"You were the one. You killed those three kids because you knew that the person who murdered your sister wasn't going to face justice. He was going to get off Scott-free just like all the other times he broke the law. Leo was the mayor's kid, he could do no evil. You wanted him to pay."

Kylie bit the inside of her cheek as she narrowed her eyes at Galavan.

He leaned forward," Kailyn had been a threat to Mr Renolds, she was a better driver than him and he couldn't stand to lose. He made threats, demanding her to drop out of the running and you saw them, hell, they were even handwritten but the police disregarded them as if they were nothing,' he held a wrinkled slip of paper in the air for a moment before placing it on the desk," A week later, during one of the tournaments, her car blew up. No one cared and no one looked into it because most people just thought it was a stupid accident, that some teenager overheated their car. They stopped thinking that when the second person died during the next race," he shook his head sadly," poor Terri had been right behind Kailyn in the rankings, just like Jerimiah and Ryan. They knew there was a killer now, hunting the young racers of High Ridge and it didn't take them long to figure out who it was. "Leo" had slipped up quite a bit. He smoked a cigarette after placing the third bomb and was unlucky enough to be caught by a traffic cam planting the fourth. The boy's father couldn't protect him against that kind of evidence and he was charged with all four murders and sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole."

She remained silent as his eyes danced with excitement.

"You see, my dear, these papers only tell me so much. They spin a wonderful story but I think you could tell it better. I think you can tell me what really happened."

The assistant thought for a moment, running through everything she could do and what could happen if she did it. Theo waited patiently as she did this, almost as if he knew what the blonde was doing. Her thoughts came to a halt when she realized that there was really only one option as the others she had come up with all lead to her probable death. He wanted to know the story and it seemed as if the only way to ensure she didn't die today was to tell it. She had to reiterate her darkest secret before someone she didn't even know.

She leaned back into her chair with a defeated sigh, hoping he wouldn't kill her after storytime," Well, where would you like me to start, Mister Galavan?"

He smiled and Kylie immediately thought of a snake," At the beginning. I want to hear it all, every last detail."

"Alright," she breathed, hoping once more that this was the right decision," It happened during my first year of college. I was off getting my history degree and Kailyn was still at home, doing what she did best."

"And that was?" He interrupted.

The girl shot him a mild look of annoyance, nothing irked her more than people interrupting her," Racing. Drag racing."

"Anyway, our parents didn't know about it. They just thought she had gotten a job and that's where all the money came from. I got a call one day after my first class telling me that there had been an
accident and that I needed to come home right away. So I drove like hell and when I got there, my whole world fell apart. My twin was dead, blown to bits on some crumbling road outside of town and everyone thought it was an accident," her voice wavered a bit here but she continued on," but I knew better. Kailyn and I called each other every day and she had been telling me about the notes she had been getting, ones that were demanding that she drop out of the tournament. I had freaked out but she kept telling me it was one of her friends playing a joke on her. She emailed pictures of them to me at university as proof but those things were no joke. They sounded serious and I urged her to tell someone. She didn't listen to me, though," Kylie smiled bitterly," she never did. Telling the cops about the notes would lead them straight to the races. I texted her the day of her last race, telling her to be careful and wishing her good luck.

"Ten minutes after I sent her that message her car exploded a few feet from the finish line. Twenty minutes later than that my phone rang telling me that she was dead. One hour passed and I was home, holding my mother as she sobbed and watching my dad stare blankly at the fireplace. Police officers interviewed me and I showed them the notes that she'd gotten but they were dismissed later as some sort of coincidence. At first, I didn't have a clue about what kind of monster could do something like that, just blow someone to bits over a few thousand dollars, but I knew who did it when I laid eyes on him at her funeral. He sat there a row across from me, staring at her casket. He didn't look sad and he didn't look distraught."

"Leo Renolds looked proud, he looked smug and when he noticed me staring at him, he didn't even try to hide it. He smiled at me."

Theo found himself unconsciously leaning back away from the young woman in front of him. It seemed as if the wound that had been festering for half a decade had become infected after being left alone for so long. She was angry, and the dangerous in look her blue eyes reminded him a little of Jerome when Greenwood toyed with him.

"Something inside of me snapped and I wanted him to suffer. I wanted to hurt him so badly that not even his father could save him. A day or two later I got an idea and asked the police department for her case files because, as her twin, I needed closure. It wasn't a total lie because in a way, I felt a bit better after everything was said and done but I didn't get it by reading autopsy reports, even if those were rather useful in recreating the bomb Leo built. It was disturbingly easy to buy everything I needed at the hardware store and get home without a problem. Everything I did after that feels like a dream, building the bombs, swiping a couple of Leo's discarded cigarettes from the school parking lot, planting the explosives and the evidence and letting myself be captured by a traffic jam dressed as a boy who just so happened to be wearing a varsity basketball jersey under a slightly unzipped black jacket. It all happened within two weeks and they had him arrested as soon Ryan turned into a large order of bacon bits. Suddenly the letters I gave the police mattered and for once I thanked my mother for making me join the drama club because the tears of a grieving sister had been the little push that the jury needed to avoid being paid off. Leo went away at age 22 for at least two decades," the girl said with a smug little smile," and you should've seen the look on his face after he saw me smoking a pack of his favorite cigarettes," she sighed," It took four police officers to restrain him and shove 'em in the back of the prisoner transport van."

Theo raised an eyebrow at the dreamy look on the young woman's face as she remembered her past victory, "But why frame the boy? Why not just blow up his car and be done with it?" he inquired.

Kylie's focus snapped back to her kidnapper as she sent a look of incredulity in his direction," He didn't deserve a quick death. Putting him away for murder stripped him of his social standing, his friends, his future, even his family didn't want anything to do with him. I took everything he ever had and sent him to rot in prison. He has the possibility of parole, but where would he go? Home?" the blonde let out a little laugh," no, he wouldn't last an hour back in High Ridge, they'd kill him and so
would the citizens of all the other cities in a fifty-mile radius."

"He has nothing. Just like I did when he killed Kailyn."

"What about the three innocent people you murdered in order to get your revenge? Do you regret what you did to them?"

She waved a hand dismissively," They were just a means to an end, they didn't matter to me then and they don't matter to me now. I accomplished what I set out to do so no, I don't regret one little thing."

He smiled once more and this time, to Kylie's surprise, he actually looked like he meant it, like he was excited," Genius, pure genius. I now understand why you were your class's valedictorian. You're brilliant. The plan, the execution, all perfect! What I would give to have seen you in action during the trial," he said longingly.

Kylie raised an eyebrow," They film those sorts of things you know, it would be easy for someone like you to get, I'm sure."

"No, with luck I won't need a recording to see you perform, my dear," he replied before extending his arm across the desk," I'd like to see it for myself."

He was offering her a place with The Maniax!, or what was left of them...To the assistant, it was a no-brainer, join and have a bit of fun or deny the offer and most likely end up rotting in some alley.

Her hand wrapped around his firmly," It would be a pleasure to be a perform for you, Mister Galavan," she said with a smile.

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Ed, from the viewpoint of someone who didn't really know him, looked like he was a complete and utter train wreck and they wouldn't be wrong.....because he was. After finding out that his friend could have been kidnapped by a soulless ginger he became a little obsessive. The man had taken it upon himself to confirm the identity of every body (no matter how mutilated) that took up space in the precinct's morgue. Then he moved to the survivors, checking each and every name off the list before wandering a bit aimlessly around the halls and eventually settling inside Kylie's empty office with the door closed.

It smelled like her in that musty little room, like vanilla and sugar, and as he inhaled he felt an ache in his chest. He compared it loosely to what he imagined a corpse would feel after it's heart had been removed during autopsy. He wasn't usually one for cliché similes such as that but he couldn't help how accurate the description seemed to be. Ed was sitting in her desk chair with his head in his hands, elbows resting on the worn metal of his missing friend's desk fighting back the wettness forming in his eyes and the scratchy feeling at the back of his throat. It had been five days since the shooting and The Maniax! had yet to call in a ransom. The new head of the precinct, Captain Barnes, didn't lie to the few workers who had questioned the assistant's disappearance. He told them, rather bluntly in fashion, that the small blonde girl was most likely dead, strung about some place like Christmas decorations.

Ed refused to believe it.

He kept telling himself that she was fine, that she'd be back any day now but it was hard knowing that the few officers and detectives still out searching for her were looking for a body, not his living,
breathing friend who didn't deserve to be treated the way she was by someone she cared about. God, he shouldn't have yelled at her. He shouldn't have told her to stay out of his business with Miss Kringle. He shouldn't have pushed her away. He shouldn't have ignored her when she tried to apologise for something she had no reason to apologise for. He should have listened to what she thought. He should have apologized. He should ha-

"Oh, stop whining you big wuss," a familiar voice sneered," a real man would get up and do those things, not sit around and give me a headache with all of your sniffling."

The scientist's jaw clenched and he lifted his head up just enough to glare at the man draped in one of Kylie's chairs," Go away," he said forcefully.

Edward crossed his right leg over his left in a fluid motion while using a hand to stoke an imaginary beard," Hmm, let me think about that," he said seemingly deep in thought before grinning, brown eyes twinkling in amusement at Ed's apparent frustration," nope."

Edward sighed as the brown haired man tried to ignore him and stood in front of the desk with his hands splayed on top of it," If pretending that I'm not here never worked out for you before, Eddie, it most certainly won't be any different now."

"Don't call me that."

A smile graced the lips of Ed's provoker, delighted that the man acknowledged his presence," Why not?" He asked innocently as he examined his fingernails," you said the same thing to Kylie but you always let her anyway, or well, I did. It always sounded so sweet coming from those pretty lips of hers."

"Shut up, she doesn't like you."

Edward tilted his head," Like how Kringle doesn't like you?"

The flustered scientist slammed a hand on the desk, causing a metallic thunk to resonate in the office," She cares for me," he countered," she just doesn't know it yet."

"Well I know that a certain blonde cares quite a lot for me. It wasn't you who she asked to sleep in her bed and it wasn't you that she nearly fucked on our couch. Which, by the way, was so kind of you to interrupt!" Edward all but snarled.

Ed opened his mouth to shoot back a venomous remark but a sudden knock at the door stopped him before anything could be said. Edward raised an eyebrow at the redhead that opened the door meekly.

"Ed, are you alright? Kristen asked with concern," I heard shouting and I thought something was wrong."

"Oh, uh," the man fumbled," that was just the radio, Kylie's radio. I'm sure you know how loud she played that thing," he lied easily," I always told her that she'd go deaf listening to it like that."

Kristen nodded in agreement with a sympathetic smile," Yeah, I could always hear it through the walls."

"She trailed off," I found some more files on Jerome Valeska and the rest of The Maniax!, I hope they help."

"They will," Ed assured her," Will you be coming over again to discuss ideas tonight?"

The past few days he and Miss Kringle had been visiting each other Jean, bouncing theories and
information off of each other about their companion's disappearance.

"I'd love to. Perhaps we could look into a few of the things I found?"

Ed smiled happily at the thought of the pretty woman sitting with him on the couch, going over what they knew," That was precisely what I was thinking."
"This is insane," the blonde protested with wide eyes, "What could you possibly stand to gain from murdering a bunch of snobby brats?!

The packet of paper she had read over mere moments before now lay abandoned on Theo Galavan's desk after she had dropped it in shock.

The man in front of her sighed in disappointment, "I thought someone with your level of intellect would have seen the beauty of the plan immediately," he lamented.

"There's no beauty in offing a bunch of snot nosed teenagers."

"That's not what I was referring to as beautiful, Kylie," he replied easily, "the young girl hosting the party just so happens to be the daughter of a councilman who refused to support my efforts to make Gotham what it once was. She and her friends will be examples, warnings, to those who choose to go against me."

She crinkled her nose in disgust, "So you're going to kill a bunch of kids because someone's daddy didn't want to roll over on his belly."

"Something like that."

The woman stood up from the office chair with a shake of her head, "I'm out. There's no way I'm turning a bunch of whiney kids into confetti. Get Barbara on this one, she's been getting sort of antsy lately and besides, she hates kids."

Kylie pulled open one of the heavy oak doors that lead out of Theo's office only to have it be pushed closed in her face. Her jaw clenched she caught sight of the man's hand splayed out against the only exit.

"You know, Miss Wood, most people have a wide variety of things that they hold dear. Parents, siblings, pets, even certain little trinkets of theirs can make a person dance to whatever tune I wish to play. Most people have so many things to choose from but my favorites are the poor souls who only have one," he whispered lowly.

"Now, a few friends of mine in the force have told me that you're rather chummy with someone down in the forensics department, a dark-haired fellow with glasses. Oh, what was his name?"

She could practically feel the smirk appear on his face when she swallowed hard, "Edward, Edward Nygma, that's it. I've heard he's a strange fellow, talks in riddles all the time, really grinds the nerves of everyone there. Tell me, would anyone other than you miss him if he were to disappear?"

She remained silent.

"Your boy likes riddles but I'll cut you some slack, I'll make this simple. If you don't attend this party and stick with the plan, Tabitha's going to have a nice chat with Eddie, one that'll be far more enjoyable for her than for him."
Her left eye twitched slightly at the threat against Ed's life and anger burned white-hot beneath Kylie's pale skin. She wanted nothing more than to rip the piece of slime to shreds for just saying his name.

"When's the party?"

He reeled back from the heavy doors as one began to open. The discussion inside had not gone well from what he had heard, someone didn't like what Galavan was planning. The door slammed closed again rather abruptly but not before he caught a glimpse of a blonde woman, blue eyes swimming with disgust. He pressed an ear to the wood, hoping to catch what was being said.

The doors were thick and so he wasn't able to hear very clearly but he quickly deduced that the girl he had just seen about to leave was being threatened. However, it wasn't her head that was going to be put on the chopping block if she didn't cooperate. Someone called Edward Nygma, a name that scratched faintly at the back of his memory, had his life hanging on the line. Something else was said and he stepped back as quickly as he could from the door as it opened once more. The girl he saw earlier stepped out into the hall, her face devoid of expression but her eyes swimming with hatred. She was muttering all sorts of things under her breath as she breezed by him, too preoccupied with her own thoughts to notice him standing there. He didn't mind, though, as he recognized her as the girl who had brought him a coffee the few times he had been unfortunate enough to land himself in the GCPD holding cell. She had never said much to him but he imagined her to be someone who was untouched (for the most part) by Gotham's taint. It was apparent that his imaginings were wrong, however, but as he swam around with his own thoughts for a moment he realized that his poor judgment of the girl's character could work in his favor. It would be easy to find an ally in the kidnapped assistant if she was intent on acting upon the threats she had been murmuring. A voice sounded from the study, beckoning him inside and the cruel smirk that had made its way onto the man's face morphed into a forced smile as he hobbled through the doorway.

Galavan would rue the day he decided to make an enemy of Oswald Cobblepot.

"Oh, don't be like that," Jerome urged the girl, "It's nothing personal."

"Yeah, don't cry, Sweetie. It was random, we just put your party on a dart board with a few other fun things and 'plink'," Kylie assured the birthday girl with a little tap on her nose, "bullseye."

The dark haired girl flinched away from the masked woman's touch with a small whimper and she frowned, "You don't look like you're having much fun, Kadee."

The blonde tapped her finger on her chin thoughtfully before smiling widely, "I've got it! I know exactly what you need," she turned away for a moment to rifle through the black duffle bag sitting near their feet onstage, "Here you go," Kylie chirped from behind her sequined mask as she sat a dark purple party hat on Kadee's head.

The young woman stepped back to get a look at her handiwork but as she did something smashed into the side of her head, whipping it to the side. She stumbled in her black heels as she held a hand to the side of her face, which instead of being shielded by her mask, was slick with blood and bits of glass. The black and purple item lay on the ground covered in shattered glass. Blue eyes glared angrily over the crowd as she did her best to wipe away the crimson liquid with the back of her
"Keep your hands off my girlfriend you crazy bitch!"

The young man who threw the flute stared back at the girl onstage in defiance before taking a step back as she glared daggers straight at him, not noticing the wisps of blonde hair falling into her face from under what must have been a dark purple wig.

"That wasn't very nice, Mister," Jerome drawled out," hurting my Doll like that."

The people standing near the young man backed away from him, afraid that they would get caught up in whatever the duo was going to do to him. Before the ginger could say, or do anything, a sudden bang resounded and he crumpled to the ground with a thump. A few people screamed as the boy clawed weakly at his throat, where a bullet had entered and exited. Jerome rolled his eyes as the girl tied up onstage let out a pained wail as her lover died and Kylie turned with a scathing glare, blood still flowing from the cut on her face.

"Shut up, you stupid little brat or so help me -"

She was livid. She hadn't wanted to come here tonight. She hadn't wanted to kill all these people. She just wanted to make sure Ed didn't get hurt. She had been on edge all night, praying to whatever would listen that Galavan would keep his word and that stupid boy had given her just the right push for her to break.

Kadee let out another wail and then a bloodcurdling screech as a bullet ripped through her right shoulder.

"Your stupid boyfriend is dead! You screaming and crying isn't going to bring him back, IT ISN'T GOING TO BRING ANYONE BACK! IT NEVER HAS AND IT NEVER WILL! SO SHUT YOUR DAMN TRAP," the young woman screeched.

Jerome blinked, startled at the sudden outburst just as much as the small crowd that Galavan's henchmen had been able to prevent from escaping. She was actually a little bit scary and this was coming from the guy who got punched in the face almost daily the first few days she had been with The Maniax!.

He recovered, though, smirking at the crowd below cowering beneath his feet," Calm down, Doll, everything's set up for broadcast. Soon none of these little rodents will bother anyone ever again," he pushed Kylie's blonde hair back under her wig and tied her mask back over her face.

In a little less than three hours all of Gotham had tuned into the news, listening intently and trying to glean more information on the latest breaking news. Ed silently willed the newswoman to hurry up with all her warnings about the content of the footage found at the scene. Finally, it started to play.

The film depicted, at first, party guests sat around the ballroom, smiles painted on dead faces. Some had been sat at tables in front of wine glasses and desserts while others lie on their backs, staring blankly at the ceiling while their blood seeped into the floorboards. The camera panned over the whole room as the "Happy Birthday" melody played over the speakers before stopping at the stage where a table sat with three people around it, two of which were singing along with great enthusiasm.

"Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you,
All your friends are dead,
and soon you will be too"

The two people sang to a brown haired girl sitting between them. When the camera zoomed in on the scene Ed saw that the girl's eyes were wide, staring blankly into the space in front of her. She sported a gunshot wound to the forehead. Kristen gasped at the sight from beside him on the couch.

A familiar face grinned as the camera focused on him," Well hello, everyone. I'm glad you could make it to the party. It just wouldn't be the same without ya. Right, Kadee?"

He nudged the girl beside him with his elbow and let out a disappointed sigh when her body slumped onto the table, faceplanting in the birthday cake in front of her," Kids these days," he said dejectedly with a shake of his head.

"Well," he chirped, pulling off his mask," you all know who I am, Jerome Valeska, showman, performer,"liberator," he paused," but you don't know a very good friend of mine and I think that should change. They're all yours, Dollface."

The ginger pointed the camera to his only living companion, a woman.

She smiled and Ed got a funny feeling that she was familiar somehow.

"Hiya, Gotham," she greeted with a little wave of her gloved fingers," Nice to meet ya."

Jerome appeared on her left side, slinging an arm around her shoulders," Isn't she darling? She did all those little smiles on everyone just because I thought they looked a little sad."

The woman turned her head towards him and in doing so revealed the right side of her face, which was crusted with blood. Kristen made a noise of disgust at the sight of the gash on the side of her head.

"I didn't care about them looking sad, you being happy is all I care about, Puddin'" she cooed before pressing dark colored lips against Jerome's.

Kristen made a gagging noise as the redhead broke the kiss to lick at the girl's neck, smearing the blood against her pale skin.

"What sickos. Right, Ed?"

He ignored Kristen's remark as he leaned forward in his seat.

"You should probably introduce yourself, Doll. Give somethin' to call you," Jerome suggested, mouth smeared red and purple.

She smiled again, lipstick smeared lips stretching wide before she pulled her blood soaked mask off of her face.

Ed was silent as he stared at the screen, eyes wide behind his glasses. He thought the girl looked familiar, the way she smiled, the way her blue eyes glittered had all felt so familiar to him. Now he knew why. A silver necklace glimmered under the spotlights and from it hung two small stars, one slightly misshapen. He had tried to convince himself that it was a coincidence, that there was no way the girl on the television was her but when her mask came off...He recognized her under all that blood and under the purple wig she wore. It was Kylie, his friend. He batted Kristen's arm and pointed to the screen, at the necklace, flinching at her shrill screech of realization.

"Oh my God," the archivist uttered in horror," what did he do to her?"
"You can call me Guess."
"She's a monster," Kristen muttered with a look of horror as she watched her former assistant on television.

"She helped murder all those people. She's a psychopath."

Ed flinched slightly at the way his companion spoke of their friend. Kylie wasn't a monster, she wasn't, she couldn't be.

"Maybe she didn't want to this," Ed offered uneasily, "maybe someone threatened her?"

The redhead snapped her attention over to him as she stood, "You aren't defending her, are you?! Not after you watched that?"

Her voice was shrill and it was beginning to grate on Edward's nerves.

"I'm not defending Kylie, I'm just saying that there has to be some logical explanation for why she did," he paused and swallowed hard, "that."

She stared at the scientist for a moment and the loft was silent save for the drone of the television, "There is a logical explanation for what she did. SHE'S CRAZY! SHE'S A FREAK!"

"Please, don't call her that," Ed argued, his voice wavering slightly, "Jerome could've done something to her. He could've tortured her, threatened her. He could've done anything to her in past week!"

Kristen paced as he spoke, obviously going over something in her head. This also annoyed Edward. Why the hell couldn't she just stay in one place?

The woman stopped suddenly, and an expression of dawning realization came across her pretty features, "No, I don't think he did anything to her. She was acting funny just days before the shooting."

Ed got a sinking feeling. He knew exactly why she had been acting weird. She had been making sure that no one would suspect her in Doughtery's sudden disappearance.

"...She started acting differently, all cheery and bubbly. She told me that she'd found a guy she liked," Kristen spat venomously, "It was Jerome. She was talking about that freak. I should have known. I mean, what normal person would be interested in her anyway?"

Ed's jaw clenched and Edward glared from his place at the kitchen table.

"With all of her stupid facts and that horrible music. If I wanted to hear speculation about how the pyramids were built I'd go to a museum. If I wanted to hear some 90's alternative crap, I'd go to Lollapalooza and OD on whatever stupid drug that was -"

"Enough!" Ed snapped, "Kylie was nothing but kind to you. She tried to protect you from Doughtery, suffered because of it and all you've done is turn your back on her. You're the monster."

"Oh, this is perfect," Kristen shot back angrily, "the 'Riddle Man' defending his crazy girlfriend. News Flash, Edward, she left you, willingly, might I add, for the mommy murderer. I think it's pretty normal for someone to stop being friends with a killer."
Edward was growing tired of the archivist shrill voice and her constant insults. He felt that it was time Strawberry Shortcake knew just how much Ed and Kylie cared about their friend.

"I suppose you could never be friends with me then," Edward sighed reluctantly.

Her face contorted into confusion and he grinned, "You didn't really think that the note he 'left' coincidentally spelled my name, did you?"

"Y-you, what did you do to Tom?" she demanded as she took a step away from him.

He stood easily from his place on the couch," I got rid of him, though I didn't mean to at first. I just wanted him to treat you with a little more respect and leave Kylie alone. Him dying was his own fault."

"You killed him?" Kristen said with a little snort of disbelief," You, of all people?"

Edward's smile slipped from his face," Yes, I , of all people, did," he replied stonily.

He stepped across the room and over to his nightstand. After rummaging through it for a short time he found what he was looking for. He shut the drawer and tossed the item on the couch.

"Proof," he claimed with a nod to the object.

The woman looked at him warily before stepping over to where the thing lay and picking it up gently.

"T. Doughtery," she read out aloud in a whisper.

"Do you believe me now?"

"Oh my God," she said lowly before tossing it back where it had lain," how could you?"

She turned and grabbed her jacket, she was leaving.

"Would you at least let me explain?"

"NO," she said quickly," There's nothing to explain. I don't even know who you are, no that's wrong. You are a murderer," she spat," just like Kylie."

"He was a monster," he argued back," you said so. He was abusing you!"

Edward really had no idea why she was acting this way. What he did for her was a service.

"I can't believe I was beginning to fall for you, you sicko," Kristen said with disgust.

Edward twitched slightly as Ed shoved him back in a panic," I'm not sick, I love you. I did it for you."

The redhead shook her head," Everything I ever thought about you was right, I should have my head examined."

"Don't say th-"

"Wait," she stopped for a second," what were you doing outside my house?"

He swallowed hard," I was worried for you."
"You were stalking me," she said accusingly," you're a psychopath! You're just like her!"

"That's not true, that's not true," he said shrilly," that's not what I am! Please don't say that about us, we were only trying to protect you."

Kristen stopped a few feet from the door," We?" her eyes widened and Ed, with a great deal of horror, realized what had just come out of his mouth," Kylie helped you, SHE KNEW!"

She was shaking now, most likely with anger at what she deemed to be betrayal," The two of you are going to go to prison, where they will do horrible things to the both of you. Things you more than deserve."

"Don't," he warned," say that to me."

He grabbed her arm as she turned to the door but a sharp smack to the side of his face made him let out a yelp and release his grip. He dove for her again, however, and managed to get ahold of her, pressing her back ever so slightly against the door.

"Let go of me you freak!"

"Please don't call me that," he begged as he loosened his grip on her arms.

As soon as she felt Ed's hold on her diminish slightly, she lunged to her right, escaping his clutches completely as she smashed a glass over the side of his head. He yelped again as he hit the ground and she turned, trying to escape and call for help. Before she could open the door Ed was back on his feet and had spun her around, covering her mouth with one hand and unconsciously curling the other around the pale skin of her throat.

"Listen to me," he ordered breathlessly," I am not the man that you think I am, I would never do anything to hurt you. I had to kill him, he hurt you, he hurt Kylie. Do you understand that?"

Kristen made a few panicked noises that were muffled by his hand but he ignored them and plowed onward," I did it for you, for her. I promise I will never hurt you ever again."

She was silent.

"I love you, I've loved from the first moment I saw you," he smiled and removed the hand from her mouth and the one from her throat, thinking that finally, she understood.

He waited for her to say something but the pretty woman just stared straight ahead, eyes blank, as her body slowly slid to the floor.

"Kristen?" he questioned.

He kneeled down, suddenly worried," Kristen?"

He took her face into his hands and stared hopelessly into dead green eyes," No no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no no," he muttered over and over.

This couldn't be happening.

He frantically began searching for a pulse and found none," no no no no no, please, please, no," he sobbed.

He cradled her in his arms as he cried. He'd killed her, he killed Kristen. The girl he loved was dead, all because of him. And there was nothing he could do to bring her back. A part of him blamed Kylie
if she hadn't been kidnapped, hadn't been in that video, he and Kristen would never have fought. This would never have happened. Another part of him said it wasn't her that was to blame, that it was no one's fault but Kristen's, that she was wrong for calling his friend all those names, wrong for saying all those nasty things about her, about him, when all they did was try to protect her from the real monster that was Tom Dougherty. It was her fault that she couldn't understand, that she couldn't see that Ed and Kylie were her true friends. It was her fault she was dead.

At least that was what Edward told him.

So hiya. It's short but I felt like this needed its' own chapter since it was sort of a big moment.

What do you guys think?
"Galavan is what?" The woman questioned in disbelief, a little reluctant to trust that what the odd man said was true.

After all, he did just walk into her room about five minutes ago.

Oswald rolled his eyes, "He's using you and your ginger friend. You're not going to be big stars and you're not going to be remembered like Mister Valeska thinks you are," he paused, "you're going to be dead."

Kylie narrowed her eyes at the mobster, "Why would he kill us? He's the one who pulled The Maniax! together."

"He did but did he inform you of his running for mayor? About what happened to all the other candidates?"

It was silent as the girl remembered what she had seen on the news the night prior and Oswald smiled as she slowly put two and two together.

"He killed them. Didn't he?"

He nodded solemnly, "Indeed, although he had some...reluctant help."

"What did he do to you?" she inquired, remembering well what Galavan had threatened her with if she didn't cooperate.

He tensed in the chair he sat in, "He kidnapped my mother. I don't know where she is or if she's even alive."

Kylie rested an unsure hand on his shoulder, "He threatened to kill someone I care about too," she admitted, "that's why no matter what, I have to go onstage at that Gala tomorrow night."

He looked up, "He'll kill you," Oswald argued.

"To make himself look like a hero," the blonde finished with a sigh, "I know."

The two sat in silence for a moment before she looked back at her new ally, "Say, Oswald, think you could do something for me?"

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"This costume is absolutely ridiculous," Kylie huffed as she fixed her feathery purple headdress for what had to be the thousandth time in the past five minutes.

The blonde woman beside her shrugged lightly before adjusting her companions' accessory herself, "I dunno, I kinda like it."

"Good for you, Babs. I'm glad you like this frilly monstrosity."
Barbara gave a little smile and leaned in towards the younger girl like she had some super big secret, cupping her hand around the side of her mouth, "I'm not the only one who likes this getup if you know what I mean."

"What are you-" Kylie started as she pulled away from the blonde.

Her sentence was cut off, however, when the tall woman placed a hand on either side of her head and rotated it gently to her right.

"Oh."

"Yeah, 'oh'," Barbara snorted as Jerome grinned cheekily at the younger girl after being caught staring.

The woman he had been talking to thanked him once more for being able to step in at such short notice before scurrying off somewhere to make sure everything was in order for the show. Just like an actual magician, the ginger appeared from nowhere between the two women.

"You two look magnifique," he proclaimed in some ridiculous accent prior to leaning a bit towards Kylie, "Though I have to say, Doll, you look especially so."

The former assistant let a smile make its way onto her face at his break of character and in one fluid motion she turned and pulled his false beard down as she pressed her lips to his.

"Thanks, Jerome," she mumbled against his mouth before being cut off by the redhead as he pulled away after a moment.

"It was my pleasure, dear, but tonight," he said while speaking in that accent again," I am The Great Rudolpho!"

Kylie giggled as Jerome wrapped an arm around her shoulders, pulling her in so he could plant a kiss on her cheek. She swatted at him playfully when he decided to stop kissing her and try to, instead, tickle her with his fake beard. Her eyebrows furrowed in confusion a split second later as her blue orbs, alight with joy, landed on Barbara, who looked...guilty as she stared at the two of them.

"W-what's the matter, Babs?" she inquired though horribly suppressed laughs as Jerome's beard brushed her neck.

Like a marionette whose strings were just yanked, Barbara snapped out of whatever she was in and waved the question off easily,"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking about something."

The ginger checked his watch behind Kylie's back before pulling away, with another kiss on her cheek," Gotta go, Doll, it's showtime."

"Break a leg, J," she called out as Jerome disappeared somewhere backstage.

Someone started counting down from ten and the two remaining performers scurried into their spots behind a blue and yellow checkered box. When the countdown reached one a cheesy show tune began playing and the curtain opened. The two pushed the box center stage before popping out from behind it, Kylie on the right and Barbara on the left, with little waves. They each pulled open a door to the box and peered in, shrugging theatrically at each other and then the crowd when they saw the box was empty. They shut the doors and stepped back, arms crossed and appearing to be thinking about something. Suddenly the duo grinned at each other and with a flourish, threw open the doors once more, smiling widely behind their masks as they revealed Jerome leaning against one wall and yawning dramatically. The crowd applauded as he stepped out and flung his arms into the air.
"I am indeed The Great Rudolpho!" he announced in his accent before he and his assistants bowed to a thunder of applause.

"Please ogle my lovely assistants."

The two girls twirled around before blowing kisses at the various members of the audience who whistled. Everyone's attention was so focused on the performers onstage, no one took notice of the men lurking in the shadows of the room, closing and locking all of the exits.

"For my first act," he announced with a wave of his arm," I'll require a volunteer."

The crowd 'oohed' and looked around at each other, wondering who would be called up.

"Hm, let me see," he paused.

Kylie and Barbara put their hands at their brows, looking side to side like they were searching for something.

Jerome looked away from the crowd and put out an arm," Duck, duck, duck, duck, duck, duck, duck, duck," he chimed as he pointed randomly around the room.

The crowd laughed at his method but fell silent at the sudden," Goose," that was announced a little darkly into the microphone.

The crowd turned and clapped for the young boy that had been chosen to take the stage for The Great Rudolpho's next trick. It took a bit of convincing but the boy eventually walked up and took Kylie's hand as she helped him up. The purple clad girl smiled kindly at the boy and he relaxed slightly as she led him over to a table where another box lay.

"Hello, young man," Jerome greeted.

The boy smiled nervously, obviously uncomfortable with the situation at hand. As Kylie helped him up to the table it was revealed that his name was Bruce. Not that that was a surprise to her. When the box was secured shut, with Bruce inside, the fake magician pulled out a saw and lightly touched a fingertip to the blade.

"Is there a doctor in the house?" he questioned humorously as the crowd chuckled.

The room fell silent save for the sound of the saw cutting through the box but erupted into cheers when the two assistants grabbed opposite ends of the table and pulled the halves apart with large grins. Bruce waved to the crowd at the prompting of Jerome with a big smile.

"Some people say Bruce has a split personality."

Kylie pushed Bruce back together again as the ginger and Barbara bowed, seeing the other assistant's mask fall to the ground out of the corner of her eye. She bit her lip nervously as she released the dark-haired boy from the box and helped him back down from the stage before bowing herself.

Jerome took the microphone once more," For my next illusion, I'd like to call to the stage esteemed Deputy Mayor Harrison Kane."

Kylie scurried off and pushed a covered cart onto the stage, stopping in front of a large red wheel. She waited to reveal what sat on its top until Barbara returned with the Deputy and grinned as the crowd murmured excitedly at the array of knives that lay upon the table.
Jerome picked up one and pointed at the audience playfully, "No one here is getting out alive."

The crowd laughed once more but fell into a shocked silence as the knife in the magicians' hand was sent hurtling into Kane's chest. The man's mouth opened in shock and his hands flew to where the object protruded from his body as he fell to the ground. The moment he sunk to his knees, gunfire and screams erupted.

"Tada!" Jerome exclaimed gleefully as he grabbed Kylie and pulled her close.

The two bowed as the crowd scattered about the room and all three performers giggled when the patrons rattled the locked doors in a vain attempt to escape. Amidst all the chaos they all tossed away their disguises and Barbara slunk away to tie Jim Gordon's new girl to the red wheel.

"C'mon, Dollface," Jerome said with a quick peck on her lips, "We gotta call to make."

Kylie linked her arm with his as they skipped over to Barbara before she branched off as Jerome began to speak.

"I've been trying to. Sorry, Jimbo, it's just little old me."

"Are you outside?," Jerome inquired, "You are, aren't you? Oh, goody!"

There was a pause.

"Breathe, James. I haven't touched a hair on your girlfriend's pretty head. See for yourself. This is live television after all." Jerome assured.

The camera shifted and he, along with Barbara and Kylie, presented the image of Leslie fastened to the wheel to the whole city.

"True, but not the point. Hey, let's talk about what I want. Excuse me, ladies." Jerome stepped off to the side and continued to speak, winking when Kylie blew him a kiss.

The camera was turned and Jerome stood right in front of it, "$47 million dollars, a helicopter, obviously, the dry cleaning I left at Mr. Chang's, be careful, the man is a crook and, mm, I don't know, a pony."

He paused, before turning back towards the wheel,"Hey, Doll, you want anything?"

Kylie laughed," Just you, Puddin'" she called out.

"Ooh, just me? I'm honored," he said, putting a hand on his chest before turning back to the camera,"Uh, you got ten minutes, or I start killing people."

"And remember, this is being broadcast to every home in Gotham, so, you know, don't let people die. Bye," he cackled as he hung up.
Jerome turned back around, laughter cutting off suddenly as he nodded, "I think that went well."

"Enough!" a voice exclaimed, "You need to pack up your pathetic little sideshow and leave."

Theo Galavan stood and glared up at the ginger. Everyone was silent.

"Is that right?"

"It may be presumptuous to speak for all the citizens of Gotham but we are sick of you! You're a small, vicious man with a pathetic need for attention. Enough, man. For God's sakes, enough," Galavan spat.

Jerome smiled, "I'm curious what your leverage is here, Mister?"

"Theo Galavan."

"Well, Mister Theo Galavan," the ginger said dangerously, "if you don't sit down, uh, I'm going to shoot you. In the face."

"I know there is some human decency left in you. If you need to take a hostage, take me but let these people go home to their families, to their children."

"Boring," Jerome declared.

Theo barely got to open his mouth in reply before a mallet to the head sent him to the ground, where he lay unconscious. Barbara bowed before heading back over to the wheel to have a chat with Leslie. Kylie assisted Jerome in terrifying a few more guests before she heard a screech from the direction of the wheel. Barbara glared hatefully at the dark hair woman in front of her before pulling out a knife, preparing to plunge it into the woman's chest. Leslie turned her head, not wanting to see the blade plunge into her body. She looked back, though, when the pain didn't come and was surprised to see a familiar face staring at her captor, hand wrapped around Barbara's wrist.

"Hold on there, Babs, don't you think this deserves a little more ceremony? What's the fun in doing it right now, making it quick? Why not wait for the right time?" Kylie said gently.

The blonde narrowed her eyes at the younger girl before wrenching her arm away with a huff and stalking off with a pointed glare at Leslie.

When Barbara was far enough away Kylie turned towards the woman, "Are you alright?"

Leslie looked at her in befuddlement, "Why would you care?"

"Because I know you, Doctor Thompson, not very well, I'm afraid, but I thought you would remember the girl who always nagged you about missing files."

"Kylie?"

She gave a thin-lipped smile.

"But why- why would you do all of this? What have they done to you?" The woman demanded.

"It's not what they've done me, Leslie, it's what they will do to someone I care for if I choose to defy them."

the sound of Jerome's voice jerked Kylie from her conversation with the doctor and she took a step back, "See you around, Doc."
"Wait-"

"Well, I think it's time for tonight's first official victim, you all know and love, poor rich boy, parents murdered in an alley, and my favorite volunteer. Where is Bruce Wayne?!," Jerome shouted.

The room was silent.

"You know I'm an orphan, too, Bruce. I killed my parents, though."

Bruce was nowhere to be seen.

"Where are you hiding?" he crooned," Bruce! Where are you, buddy?"

After a moment of silence, the ginger made an impatient noise," Kill his butler."

"Last chance, Bruce, but it's about to get very butler brainy out here."

"Brucey!" he sang.

Another minute passed and Jerome yawned," I'm bored. Shoot the butler."

In a flurry of movement, Bruce burst out from behind a curtain and there was a frenzy as the henchmen struggled to separate him and his butler. Eventually, though, Jerome ended up with the boy as Detective Gordon emerged from behind the same curtain Bruce had, shooting everyone with a gun.

"What do you say, Brucey boy? Want to boost our ratings, huh? Smile." Jerome whispered, dragging a knife lightly against the skin of the boy's throat.

"I said, enough."

Kylie's eyebrows furrowed in confusion as Theo Galavan stood once more. This wasn't a part of the plan. Jerome let go of Bruce and spun around. Kylie screamed too late as she saw light reflect off the object in Theo's hand. It plunged into the ginger's neck before he had been able to register her warning. The two sank to the ground, Jerome making small noises in the back of his throat all the way down. Galavan sat back as Jerome fell silent and with a wail, Kylie dove forward, shoving him to the side and off the stage.

"No, no, no, NO!" She screeched as she cradled Jerome's face in her hands.

Her eyes were wide and while she hadn't loved Jerome they way he thought she did, she cared deeply about the boy. She ran her fingers through his red hair, staining them with blood that still poured from his neck. He was dead and his eyes stared right at her but held nothing. not one spark of light like they used to. She gently swept bloodstained fingers over his eyelids, closing them, and planted one last kiss on his forehead before resting him back on the stage.

Her head slowly turned towards Galavan, who had picked himself up from the ground. He took a step back when he saw the look of pure hatred in her blue eyes," TRAITOR!"

The crowd murmured as the girl stood and pointed a pistol at the man in front of her," I trusted you."

Just as her finger grazed the trigger, a shot rang out and she stumbled back, looking wide-eyed at the red spot blooming darkly on her purple costume. She turned and stumbled backstage before disappearing behind the curtains. Detective Gordon followed weaving between bits of machinery and props before coming across a shape on the ground. He crept closer, gun drawn, although he put
it down moments later. A blonde girl was splayed out on the wood floor, purple wig and hairpiece not too far away. Blue eyes stared lifelessly in the dark as blood pooled around her body and a silver necklace hung from her throat with its' two perfect stars splattered with crimson. He swallowed hard and looked away from the girl who had delivered files to him for the past two months.

His job was to bring her back to the GCPD.

He didn't think he was going to be doing that with her in a body bag.

---------------------------------------------

Boom.
"Rise and shine," a voice sang from its’ place leaning against the wall.

Ed turned his head slowly as the voice let out a laugh, blinking his bleary eyes in confusion before they widened in shock," What are you doing here?" he demanded," I banished you for good."

"Almost," Edward chirped," companionship of a good woman and all of that. Though, we both know how that turned out," he made a face." Yikes."

He turned away from the other version of himself,"That was an accident," the scientist asserted," I'm not that man. I'm gonna make this right."

He sniffled pitifully and Edward rolled his eyes," See, I knew you'd wake up all boo-hooey. You probably have half a mind to turn yourself in. Luckily," he said while gesturing to his head," I have the other half."

Ed's eyes narrowed but he plowed on nonetheless," Do you like magic tricks?"

"What?"

"Of course, you like magic tricks. After all, I do. Well, guess what?" he questioned with a loud clap," I can make a body disappear."

He gasped theatrically as Ed turned to look at the last place Miss Kringle's body had been.

Wide eyes took in the bed, empty save for a purple envelope, and a lump formed in the poor man's throat,"Where is she? Where is Ms. Kringle's body?"

Edward's lip curled, "Open the envelope."

"I hid her body while you were catching some Zs, you'll need a helping hand, so look for her initials down at the GCPD," he read with a sick feeling.

He paused and looked down at his clothing, gaze resting on his nametag. This was not what he had been wearing last night.

"You went to my work last night?!

"Well, technically, you did," his spitting image answered with a jab of an index finger in his direction," I was just in the driver's seat, so to speak."


The other half blinked and feigned offense,"That is uncalled for."

"Uncalled for?" Ed shot back as he straightened his glasses," You hijacked my body while I was asleep and you stole my dead friend." His voice began to waver during the end.

Edward laughed," Okay. Yeah, that's true," he became serious," But I'm doing this for your own good. If I was you... which, again, I sort of am... I'd get cracking."

He looked at his watch," You do want to find the body first, right?"
Two hours later, Ed was frantically pushing coins into a vending machine in the breakroom. Edward had somehow gotten Miss Kringle's hand inside of it and in the row KK. He was sure that his other half thought it amusing and clever to put it in such a place but for Ed it was hell. The breakroom was one of the most frequented places in the precinct, making it imperative that he get the severed part as quickly as possible to avoid being caught. He could only hope that none of the voices he heard speaking just outside the door entered the room and saw how frazzled and shaky he was. They would surely think something was up. Finally, after using a great deal of pocket change, it dropped to the bottom of the machine. He wasted no time shoving open the small door and yanking the hand from it before hiding it under his coat. The scientist moved as quickly as he could through the less frequented halls of the precinct, ignoring Edward's complaints about not grabbing all the sponge cakes they had paid for. His priorities were most concerning given the present situation. The door to his office slammed closed as he took the cold hand from its' hiding place and sat at his desk. He swallowed the growing lump in his throat as he unraveled the slip of paper attached.

"I'm tired of hiding and want to be free. To locate her body, find the two things missing from me."

"The back of our head kind of looks funny. It's like the top of a pencil," Edward mused idly.

Ed gritted his teeth at the airy way the remark was said," Why are you doing this?"

"Because," his other half chirped," it's fun and it's good for you."

"How is it good for me to be tortured?" he demanded," To be driven insane?"

Edward smiled at the beaten down man in front of him. He looked so tired, so mentally drained that it was hard to fight back a laugh,"I'm trying to show you who you are. How have you not realized that yet?"

He shook his head in disappointment,"Though, to be honest, I'm surprised you haven't figured out this riddle yet. Should I have made it easier?"

"You could start by using proper grammar," Ed shot back bitterly," A period at the end of a sentence is....," his eyes widened as he scanned the paper once more.

"FIND THE TWO THINGS MISSING FROM ME"

"M, period, E, period," he whispered," Oh, God. M.E.."

He whipped around to face the imagined being," You didn't!"

Edward grinned," I did."

It was another mad dash to the morgue, this time literally. It was well into the evening now, the precinct was much quiet with officers making their nightly rounds about the city and all other staff members home for the night. The room was empty, much to his relief as he spotted a drawer with a tag attached to the handle. A green question mark taunted him as the slip of paper swayed in the slight breeze from the vents. He pocketed the tag and pulled open the metal door prior to sliding out the large metal tray that held Miss Kringle's body. He sighed in relief and ran a shaky hand through his hair, it was over, he had found her. His respite was short-lived, however, as the door to the
morgue began to open. He barely had enough time to slide the body back inside and slam the door shut.

"Ed?"

He gasped, one part in surprise and another in horror, "Oh..."

"What are you doing?" the dark haired woman inquired.

"Dr. Thompkins, hello," Ed rushed out," Uh, I'm just... double-checking notes for a Jane Doe case I'm working."

The Medical Examiner nodded,"Do you need help?"

"No! No, no, no. She's all gone," Edward rolled his eyes," Or she's... I'm sorry, I'm... I'm all done with checking my notes."

"Uh, what notes?" Leslie asked with a raised eyebrow.

"It's all up here," Ed replied with a small laugh," Do you realize that by assigning simple mnemonic devices to case files, you can produce recall capacity equal to that of photographic or even eidetic memory?"

"Ed," the woman sighed," what's going on?"

"Okay," Ed said with a nervous chuckle," Um, truth be told, uh... I was hoping to run into you here. Alone. It's-"

To his surprise, the doctor cut him off," It's about your friend, isn't it? Kylie? That was her name, right?"

Ed nodded, unsure of where this conversation was heading and Dr. Tompkins continued," I'm really sorry about what happened to her. She was a sweet girl, she didn't deserve to go out like that. She wasn't like everyone thought she was."

The scientist's eyebrows furrowed together in confusion,"G-go out like what?"

Leslie's eyes went wide," You don't know, do you?"

The query was a whisper but Ed was suddenly overcome with a feeling of dread. Even his darker counterpart looked up from examining his fingernails with an expression of concern.

The doctor placed a gentle hand on his shoulder," Last night, at the gala things got crazier after Jerome Valeska died. They think Kylie formed some attachment to him during her time with The Maniax! and when he was killed she started after Theo Galavan," the woman swallowed," She never got to touch him, though. Jim had to shoot her. She ran off. They found her backstage after everything was over, she bled out with a gunshot wound to the chest."

Ed remained silent as Leslie looked him in the eyes," She wasn't a monster, Ed. She saved me that night. She could've let Barbara Kean kill me but she didn't. There was still some good left in her."

Both versions of him looked stricken. Edward, for once in his existence, had nothing to say. Tears brimmed in the man's' brown eyes. His best friend couldn't be dead, she couldn't be.
"If you need to talk, I'm here alright."

The woman's words jerked him back to reality and he sniffled, blinking a few times," Th-That's alright, Doctor Thompkins. I, I think I just need to be alone right now."

Leslie nodded in understanding," Okay but if you need someone, don't hesitate to call me."

She looked at him one more time before her eyes widened," Here," the woman dug into a pocket of her lab coat and pulled something out," I didn't get to do the autopsy but I managed to get ahold of her personal effects."

She grabbed his wrist and dropped something metallic in his hand," It's not much but it was all I could get."

Ed peered down at the object in his hand and blinked. Resting in his palm was a silver necklace with two star shaped charms. After a moment he was able to choke out a thank you before the doctor bid him goodnight with a look of pity. He stood there for a long time, necklace in hand and dead body forgotten, remembering the first time he had met the short blonde. She had been helping Kristen file some things and the first thing he had noticed was how small she was, even shorter than the archivist herself. She had been humming a little tune when he had approached her, something that cut off the moment he tapped her shoulder. The blonde gasped when she turned, pretty blue eyes wide at the sudden contact but she had recovered from the scare quickly, smiling at him so kindly that it hurt to think about. Kylie hadn't been rude when he asked a riddle either, actually making an effort and answering correctly. He remembered how her eyes lit up when he confirmed her reply. She had been so nice to him, defending him from the smaller minded individuals of the GCPD, listening to his ramblings of Miss Kringle and always assuring him that there was nothing wrong with him. The moment she had met him, she had always been there for him. What was he going to do now?

While Ed was lost to the world, Edward had hopped down from his place on one of the tables and made his way over to where the scientist stood. He peered at the necklace in his other half's hand, inspecting the way it reflected in the fluorescent lighting before stopping at the two charms. His head tilted curiously at the leftmost star. It was perfectly shaped and shone just as brightly as the one next to it. His lips curled into a small smile before he smacked Ed hard on the shoulder.

"Oh, stop boohooing, you big baby and use your head."

Ed sniffled and looked up at the thing in front of him with watery eyes.

"Tell me, Eddie-boy, what is the one thing wrong with that necklace?" he demanded.

"W-what do you mean?" the man asked shakily," it's completely fine. The chain is the same length, the charms are the same sh-" Edward grinned as the scientist held the piece of jewelry in front of his face.

"The charms are the same shape," he muttered.

Edward cupped a hand around his ear and leaned in," I'm sorry, what was that?"

Ed grinned,"The charms are the same shape!" he all but yelled.

"And,"his other half placed two fingers on either side of the left charm, turning it to show the other side.

He squinted behind his glasses at a small mark on the charm, almost indiscernible. He clamored over to a supply cabinet and pulled out a magnifying glass, putting the necklace under it as fast as he
A small purple question mark greeted the two from under the lens and Ed grinned as Edward clapped him on the back roughly before disappearing completely. He stood there smiling for a bit before pocketing the necklace and starting to whistle a tune. On his way back over to the morgue, he picked up a few things and set them on the dissection table. He opened the door to Kristen's current residence with a large grin and pulled out the tray.

He had a body to get rid of.

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I wish it was longer than this but I really gotta get the house cleaned and get my shit together for school tomorrow. Wish me luck for Junior year, I'll probably need it. Also, who the hell knows when this will be able to be updated. Things might get a little crazy with school and marching band but I'll try to write when I can :)
Kylie tugged at the makeshift bandage under her dark purple hoodie as she wove through another alley. The material from that costume she had to wear at the gala was scratchy and irritating but it was either use that or shred the clothes she was currently wearing. She couldn't decide whether to curse or thank Jim Gordon for the graze on her upper arm. She supposed that she should be glad that the girl they found with a gunshot wound to the chest wasn't her. The woman wasn't sure that Oswald would deliver the note she wrote to the detective and had only been less sure that Jim would take her side. He must have believed the things she wrote about Galavan. A sudden noise from the other end of the alley made her heart leap in her chest as her head swiveled. A newspaper had been tossed to the ground, its pages rustling loudly as it fell onto the dirty pavement. It was out of pure curiosity that Kylie slunk over the discarded pile of paper and scooped it up. She cursed loudly when the front page headline entered her vision.

"Theo Galavan Elected As New Mayor"

She crumpled up the paper immediately and hurled it forcefully at the stained brick wall with a grunt. That piece of shit had actually done it. He got away with everything he had done, orchestrating all those crimes, kidnapping Oswald's mother, killing all those people, killing Jerome. The last one really got her. Jerome had trusted that man, had believed with every fiber of his being that Theo Galavan was his ticket into stardom. Jerome had become a friend of hers...and he killed him. Gotham ate up that hero bullshit with no questions asked and elected him mayor in the four days she had been gone. The young woman was buzzing with rage as she continued down the alley, not paying much attention to the figure lurking near a dumpster. As she passed by the bag slung over her shoulder was yanked harshly, causing her to stumble backwards.

"What's in the bag, huh?" A gravelly voice demanded as a hand gripped her left shoulder hard.

Ignoring the dull lick of pain in her arm, Kylie made her voice as cold and steely as possible,"I'm going to give you one chance to walk away."

There was a laugh and the man used both arms to swing her around," Nice try, sweetheart," he leaned in close, pulling a strand of blonde hair through his grubby fingers," but you trespassed on my turf and now you gotta pay the toll."

His teeth were yellowed and he smelled of rot.

Kylie gave a derisive snort," You must be pretty proud, laying claim to a place filled with garbage and rats," she paused, meeting her attackers' eyes," but I suppose you fit right in."

The leering grin the man had given her slipped from his face, and his jaw clenched,"You little bitch," his right hand pulled back before forming a fist.

As he swung at her head, Kylie shifted to the left, narrowly avoiding the punch. The man howled as his hand made a sickening noise as it collided with brick and spat curses at the blonde. Her smirk widened and a hard kick to his right knee sent him to the ground. She had to admit, spending her free time sparring with Tabitha had its advantages. A pale hand slipped inside her hoodie pocket as she took a step towards the middle of the alley, following the man to where he had scrambled off to. In one fluid motion, it was visible again and a flick of her wrist allowed a silver blade to glint dangerously in the low light.

"I can't say that I'm going to regret any of this later on," the young woman informed him as she
pulled down her hood, revealing the cut on her face," I mean, I did give you a chance."

A flicker of recognition skated over his features," Y-you're that crazy chick, the one that ran around with that ginger."

Kylie sighed," I don't like the word crazy. It implies that something is wrong up here," she said, tapping the tip of the blade gently against her temple," and there's not. Which is worse if you think about it, it means I understand what I'm doing and what I've done while being totally in control."

The man took another step away from her as she neared him, weight on his one good leg," Get away from me, please. I'm begging you. I just wanted food, food for my kids."

"Do you think your children would feel right eating what you stole from someone else?" she questioned with a scowl," I also highly doubt that food would have been the only thing taken from me."

He took another step and let out a cry as his back hit the opposite alley wall. Dirty water sloshed onto Kylie's boots and soaked the bottoms of her jeans as she walked carelessly through a puddle.

"Please, I have a family," he pleaded again," My kids."

"will be better off without you."

She closed the remaining distance between herself and the man swiftly, plunging the blade deep into his chest," If they even exist."

His eyes were wide, staring back into hers with surprise. She stared back, cold gaze unwavering as the light slowly faded and went out. Kylie removed the knife from his body with a squelch and stepped back as he slumped onto the stained pavement. His head made a solid thunking noise as it made contact with the ground. This was the first person she didn't feel bad about killing. He wasn't like those kids at the birthday party or the gala attendees. He tried to rob her, tried to hurt her. The man had probably done the same thing to all kinds of other people, people who couldn't defend themselves. He unlike all those who had died because of her before, had deserved what he had gotten. He deserved to die. Kylie wiped the stained knife on the side of her jeans and pulled the hem of her hoodie down over it before she pocketed it. With a final look of contempt at the crumpled form of her attacker she turned and continued down her previous path, confident that if anyone else had been lurking in the shadows they wouldn't bother her now. She had only taken a few steps, however, when the toe of her right boot made contact with something metallic. It rolled across the asphalt a little ways until it collided with a trash bin with clank. It's surface glinted in the muted sunlight that filtered between buildings. After adjusting her bag on her shoulders, the blonde reached down and let her pale fingers wrap around the cylindrical object.

When she stood straight again the dirty label of a can of dark purple spray paint greeted her. It wasn't entirely empty, in fact it was a little more than half way full. Someone must have dropped it while running. Blue eyes flitted back to the dead man a few feet away before the clank of a can being shaken filled the space. Soon, one carefully drawn question mark decorated the stained brick above the carnage. Her arm throbbed as she removed her bag from her back in order to place the paint inside and she felt something warm and wet slide across her skin. Kylie zipped the pack and gingerly put a hand to her right arm, where she had been shot. It came away red, very red. She cursed and wiped her hand on her jeans, she didn't have any other way to stop the bleeding, which was worse than it had been when she had first been wounded. By the time she had her bag on again and had reached the opening of the alley, the sleeve of her hoodie was soaked through with the crimson liquid. It was in the late evening and the sun was in the process of setting, making the streets dim enough for her to not have to worry about someone noticing her arm. Though she doubted anyone
would care. With her hood up she navigated the streets of Gotham dodging business types as they rushed to get home. She couldn't count how many times someone jarred her arm. Eventually, her mind only unregistered a state of constant pain and it was getting hard to remember where she was going. If she had turned to look behind her she would have seen the trail of blood soaking into the sidewalk. When the crowd finally thinned the sun had just set and she was beginning to stumble over her own feet. The blonde couldn't quite remember why she was near the Arkham District or why she had walked into this rundown apartment building.

Despite her confusion and the fact just curling up on the floor for a quick nap sounded really nice, she climbed up the stairs. To her the door she collapsed outside of seemed ordinary but something itched at the back of her brain, telling her to knock, to do something, otherwise the person inside would find her dead the next day. She rapped weakly with her left hand, which was stained after her futile attempts to staunch the bleeding, before letting her heavy head rest against the cheap wooden door. There was a noise from inside the apartment that she didn't hear, a voice that asked who was there but her eyes had already fluttered shut. Kylie didn't think one little nap could hurt, even if that pesky little voice in the back of her head screamed at her to stay awake. What did it know about anything? It was just a voice. The sound of a doorknob turning never reached her ears. The feeling of the door giving way and her body slumping to the floor didn't cause her any pain. Her eyes didn't see the look of confusion that the brown haired man at the door gave the body in his doorway. She didn't hear the panic clawing at the edges of his voice as he realized who she was. The blonde failed to stir as she was lifted into strong arms and carried into the apartment.

Kylie never felt the pair of lips press against her forehead after her arm had been cleaned.
Ed was, for once in his life, happy. The person he loved was back in from the dead and delivered straight into arms. It wasn't ideal and e didn't think this was how lovers in those bargain bin romance novels were brought back together, but what did he know? It wasn't like he had ever read one. His phone began to ring, sending vibrations through the metal desk and causing a few papers he had been filling out to shift. The smile that had so often graced his features for the past few days began to slip as the person on the other line began to speak.

"Again?" Edward finally sighed into the phone, "Did you try jiggling the handle?"

He raised his eyes to the ceiling of his office in annoyance. Oswald Cobblepot, the most recent admission to Edward's makeshift hospital, had clogged the garbage disposal again. He was starting to rethink his decision to leave Kylie in the care of the former King of Gotham. If he couldn't use a basic appliance, how could he possibly be a fit guardian of an unconscious woman?

"Well, what did you put down it?" the scientist demanded, touching the tips of his fingers to the center of his forehead. A small, yet annoying, pain was beginning to blossom there.

A corner of his mouth tugged downwards at the man's reply, but before he could offer his opinion on the man's lack of competence the clicking of a pair of heels pulled his attention away from the conversation. He snapped the phone shut and slid it away from him as a dark-haired woman peered into the room. All Edward could do now was hope that the apartment was still in one piece when he got back.

"Doctor Thompkins," he greeted with a forced smile, "Can I help you?"

"Hi, Ed, this is the autopsy on the dead monk," she informed him as she handed over the folder, "Jim wants you to run toxicology."

He flipped it open and skimmed over the report, "Fascinating," he quipped, "the need to inflict that kind of pain on oneself." (A/N how I feel about my AP Language class tbh)

This would make him late getting home. Again.

Edward paused and looked up, hiding his annoyance, "Is there anything else?"

"No," the doctor replied but as she turned away she changed her mind, "Well, yes."

He raised an eyebrow inquisitively.

There was a pause, "Was that Kristen you were just talking to?" she inquired, pointing at the cell phone laying on top of a stack of papers.

A sliver of panic buried itself in his chest as he swallowed and scratched the back of his head, "What?"

"Oh, sorry," Leslie started, "It just sounded like you were talking to someone in your apartment and who besides-"

"I was talking to my plumber," he interjected hastily.

Why was she asking questions?
"Oh," her eyebrows furrowed, "Well have you heard from Kristen? I know she said she was sick but I -"

"As it happens she is not sick, she lied, to all of us. I just found out Miss Kringle left town with Officer Dougherty," he bluffed smoothly.

There was a brief silence as Doctor Thompkins processed the information and Edward hoped she would believe the lie.

"She left Gotham with Dougherty?" she questioned, disbelief lacing her words, "but he was abusive."

Edward let out a derisive chuckle and shrugged, "Love."

She swallowed, "I'm stunned -"

"Who's sorry now
Who's sorry now
Who's heart is aching for breaking each vow
Who's sad and blue
Who's crying too
Just like I cried over you "

Edward glanced at his phone and saw the display light up with Oswald's name. He was really going to have to change that song.

Leslie raised an eyebrow at the ringtone, "Do you need to get that?"

"No," he replied as he tapped his pen on the desk, "I don't think so."

There was a brief pause before Ed came up with the one surefire way to get the woman out of his hair. He took off his glasses, allowing his head to fall into his hands and a sob to escape his throat. Emotional distress makes everyone uncomfortable, especially those who are uneasy around you to begin with.

"Oh, Ed," Leslie said, sickening pity woven into every syllable, "You must be devastated."

He lifted his head as a comforting hand rested on his shoulder and nodded, keeping his eyes trained on a folded piece of paper on his desk, "Right now," he sniffled, "I'm just trying to focus on the job."

Which was true, in a sense. It was difficult to focus on the job at hand when the one person he cared for was comatose and lying on a bed in a drafty apartment with her blonde hair fanned over a pillow. Not to mention the fact she was under the watchful eye of a defunct crime boss who has trouble finding spicy mustard in the fridge. It was hard not to worry about her.

There was an awkward pat, "Well, let me know if you ever want to talk," she offered as she took an uncomfortable half step away.

"Thank you. That means a lot."

He waited until the woman had left to slide his glasses back on with a scowl of annoyance and grab his phone, which had started to ring again. He wondered what Penguin had broken now.

"What?" he snapped angrily, expecting to be asked even more ridiculous questions about the apartment.
"Ed," an excited voice bled through the speaker," She's awake."

It took a moment for him to process what the man had said.

"Put her on," he sputtered after a moment of stunned silence.

The exchange was muffled but nothing sounded more clear and sweet than her feeble voice as it filtered through the line.

"Eddie?"

The brightest smile broke out on his face and lit brown eyes with delight. Never had he felt lighter.
part two

someone run

someone run

and tell the world she has a gun

pointed at the city's head

boom

pow

someone's dead

and the shows not over

'til she's said
When the young woman opened her eyes, she immediately wished that she hadn't. The lighting, while not bright at all, still managed to burn her sensitive blue orbs. She squeezed her eyes shut and realized that everything felt like lead. How much had she and Jerome drank last night? A whole liquor store? She made a noise and dragged a pale hand across her face. Eventually, the sound of a bad soap opera penetrated her ears, forcing her to grab a pillow from the other side of the bed and smash it over her face in an effort to drown out the noise. When a particularly scandalized screech onscreen made it clear that wasn't going to happen, the pillow was discarded as she struggled to sit upright.

"Turn that shit off, Jerome," she groaned, throat scratchy from disuse, "it's too early for that brand of garbage."

She heard the sound of a body shifting on a sofa but no response. Her eyes cracked open and then blinked in confusion when they met a pair of icy blue ones staring from a worn green couch.

"Oh," she whispered to herself, "right."

Kylie fell silent then, remembering the glint of metal and the unnatural red that had resulted from blood mixing with her friend's fiery hair. The pink that had stained the skin of her fingertips for all of those days spent in hiding, no matter how much she scrubbed them in restaurant bathrooms. A hand went to her left arm and fingers brushed over nylon sutures and ridged skin. He was dead. She was hoping she had dreamt that.

The sound of a throat being cleared made her look up, "I'm glad you're awake," Oswald said into the silence, "Ed and I were beginning to worry."

She remembered the odd looking man visiting her once, warning her about the gala, helping her arrange the escape that was supposed to get both she and Jerome out. The one that, in her eyes, failed. And Eddie, she had thought of him often while she was away, wondering if he hated her for the things she did to protect him. She could just be here because he owed her for helping with Tom.

"How long was I out?" she asked suddenly.

Oswald thought for a moment, remembering the knock that made he and Ed both look up from the television, "Almost five days."

He watched the young woman, intent on gauging her reaction but all she did was stare at the frayed quilt covering her legs.

"Do you really not like Days of Our Lives?" he asked jokingly.

The way the pale girl sat silently made his skin crawl.

"No."

The word flew from her mouth before she realized what she was saying. It wasn't entirely a lie, as she had hated shows like that since middle school but it wasn't exactly the truth either. She had grown fond of the program because of Jerome. She remembered the very first time he had stolen control of her television back at the penthouse. Fighting with her over the remote and eventually switching it to Days of Our Lives. She had stared incredulously at the screen before bursting out in laughter. She had even snorted a few times. Of all the things a homicidal psychopath could've
watched... She remembered when Jerome would lean in every now and again and whisper a quip about whatever had just been said onscreen and she'd giggle. That was his special power, twisting moments into something laughable. She'd never hear that laugh again. She'd never mess up his hair and grin at the annoyed look he'd give her. She'd never be able to have another pillow fight with him, never be able to gloat over a victory against him again. He was gone because of Galavan, because she couldn't save him.

He blinked, taken aback by the forcefulness of the word and had started to respond, having half a mind to make her never speak to him like that again but something stopped him. Fingers, fingers still stained pink with the remnants of blood, curled into the blanket, bunching the fabric until knuckles turned white. He stopped before he started, leaving scathing words unsaid. While it made his chest burn with anger, refraining from upsetting Kylie was for the better. He had seen those hands up close. Saw how dry and cracked they were. He knew what that type of damage was from. It was from washing and washing your hands, hoping the crimson would disappear along with the memory of what caused it to be there. So he let her be, choosing instead to change the channel to some cartoon and hunt down his phone to make a call.

It rang a few times on the other end before it was answered but Kylie listened hard, hoping that the birdlike man was calling who she thought he was. Moments later, a distorted and rather clipped voice escaped from the speaker and the blonde smiled for the first time in over two weeks. She hadn't realized just how much she missed the sound of Ed's voice. Oswald only spoke a couple words before Ed replied, sounding much more cheerful than before. The cell phone was shoved into the hand of her good arm rather quickly and she held it, wide-eyed, for a moment before bringing it to her ear.

"Eddie?" she breathed into the speaker, voice still scratchy.

There was a brief silence followed by an exhale on the other end, "I'm here," he replied giddily, "How- how are you? Are your stitches still in? Does your arm hurt? What about-"

His voice cut out suddenly, no doubt realizing that he was firing off questions too quickly for her to answer. He started to apologize but was cut off with the sound of static filled laughter.

"I'm fine, Eddie, the stitches are still in and I can't really feel my arm, which is probably a good thing," she added, her voice lilting in the way in always did when she made a joke.

He almost sighed at the familiar sound of it, something he took for granted before she was taken from him by that ginger menace but refrained, "Good, that's great. Is anything else bothering you? How is Oswald? Not bothering you too much, I hope."

"No," Kylie said shortly, "and Oswald's fine, just has a bad taste in television."

They both laughed, voices get higher and trailing off.

"I missed you, Kylie," he said suddenly, voice cracking over the speaker.

"I- I missed you, too, Eddie," she said softly.

There was silence.

"Will you stay on the line until I get there?"

Her lips curved into a smile despite being chapped to hell, "Will you?"
HOLY HECK GUESS IS BACK YOU CAN ALL SLEEP PEACEFULLY

1. I'm super sorry about the hiatus there is really no excuse

2. Guess has its own tumblr! I figured the fanart thing would be easiest to do there with the whole submission and inbox thing. I can also post story related edits there so there's that. Hit up @ guessofficial with questions or art or random crap and I'll respond.
To Edward's dismay, he didn't hear Kylie's voice for very long. She was halfway through reassuring him that her arm was fine for the second time when the line went dead. The sudden static blaring through the speaker startled him into veering towards a lane filled with traffic heading the opposite direction. The horns that blared did nothing to ease his flustered state as he re-corrected, mind racing a mile a minute. He had worried, God, had he worried that she wouldn't wake up. She had lost so much blood before making it to his apartment that he had feared the worst when he had dragged her, unconscious, through the doorway. It had been weeks since the gala had been held hostage, days since she disappeared. He had wondered where she had been, wondered how she escaped, wondered about Jerome Valeska and why she had let him touch her. How much had he touched her? It had hurt the first night they were televised together at that birthday party, seeing her hang all over him, seeing her plant kisses on his cheek. He was angry then and even more so when the gala appeared on live television. They were even closer. They had pet names.

"Puddin"

The mere thought of her smiling at that ginger maniac and letting that word fall from her lips was enough to make him grit his teeth and grip the steering wheel a little harder. He had searched for footage of the failed charity party after speaking with Dr. Thompkins and was overcome with glee when the scene where Galavan drove a knife into Jerome's throat was the first result. He had watched with a feeling of satisfaction as he slid to the floor, blood spurting from the wound and played it over and over on a loop. The feeling only wavered when another clip was angled with the camera showing Kylie, his Kylie, shoving Galavan away to try and help the dying boy. She had been crying, panicked and when he died, angry. He had seen her like that only one other time when she had threatened Dougherty but it had seemed colder, more deliberate. Watching her put a knife to that vile pig had sent a rush of excitement through him back then, though it quickly faded to anger when she had been hurt. The emotion she displayed onstage was much different than that. It wasn't controlled. It was wild and uninhibited. The death of that little freak had caused it. Why did she care so much? Why did she suddenly have positive feelings about someone who lied to her, someone who murdered their coworkers and kidnapped her? WHYWHYWHYWHYWHYWHYWHYWHY?

He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

While loosening his grip on the steering wheel and relaxing his shoulders, he let his mind clear. He needed to think through how he was going to learn all this information. He would stay away from the topic of her kidnapping as long as he deemed necessary as while they had been close before it happened, he had no idea of her emotions regarding the situation. He didn't want any problems like he had initially had with Oswald but with a bit of time, focus on her current state, and small displays of affection she would open up about her time away from him.

He parked his car in front of his building and rushed inside. He needed to sound as breathless in person as he did on the phone but the endless flights of stairs took care of any worries he had. Edward had wondered many times how Kylie, weak and exhausted from the days in hiding and blood loss, had managed to make it to his door. She should've collapsed long before she made it across town. He fumbled with his keys for a moment before shoving the correct one in the lock and throwing the door open. A look to his immediate right yielded the sight of a wide-eyed young woman with rumpled blonde hair.

There was a brief silence while something like relief was over Kylie's face but it was gone as soon as it appeared, smoothed away by a smile.
Words she might have spoken got caught in her throat as he threw his arms around her. It was one thing to hear her voice over the phone and imagine her opening her eyes again but to hear her speak to him in person, to see her blue eyes light up like the rest of her face when she smiled, that was something a whole other world away. He felt her hug him back and pull closer, her fingers knotting into the fabric of his sweater. For a split second, he smelled a faint touch vanilla hidden under the smoke and gasoline whose odors had seeped into her hair.

"How long are you two going to stay like that?" A sudden voice inquired haughtily, "It's kind of disgusting to watch."

Edward, startled at the sudden interruption, pulled away from Kylie, partly in embarrassment and partly out of annoyance. He opened his mouth to fire a comment back at the man who couldn't figure out how to use a garbage disposal but was stopped in his tracks.

"Then don't watch, Ossie," the girl beside him retorted, voice still hoarse from disuse.

The reaction was immediate and Edward almost snorted as an indignant expression passed over the dark haired man's face.

"I told you not call me that."

"I told you to change the channel to Cartoon Network."

"Those shows are garbage."

"And the dramas you watch aren't?"

Before any more dialogue was exchanged between the two, Edward cleared his throat loudly and flashed a look of warning to Oswald, who turned back to the television with a huff and increased the volume in retaliation.

"God, I hate that show," the blonde muttered under her breath while giving the TV screen a sour look.

The corner of Edward's mouth quirked into a small smile. She still had her moxy, that was good. He was a little worried that she would be a broken mess of a person like Oswald had been. He would've had to figure out how to put the pieces back together, something that was more of a nuisance than an obstacle. However, it didn't seem as if he had to do that this time. He really needed to stop underestimating her.

He was about to ask how she was doing when she suddenly turned towards him.

"I really missed you, Eddie," she said softly.

He took her left hand gently as he sat beside her on the edge of his bed, "I missed you, too," he admitted.

"They threatened you, you know," she whispered, almost as if she didn't want him to hear.

Threatened?

He blinked in confusion from behind his glasses, "What do you mean?"
"They threatened you, you know..."

Kylie's words swirled about his mind as soon as they were uttered. Him? Threatened? How would anyone involved in her kidnapping know about him? And why would they target him, of all people?

In the midst of his speculation, the woman in front of him spoke up with the obvious intention to elaborate.

"You saw that birthday party on television, right? You told me that you always watch the late night news before...", she paused and something in her eyes changed, they were steely serious.

"I want you to know that they made me do those things but I also want you to know that I don't regret any of them-"

Ed's jaw clenched and his eyes shifted to an empty space just to the right of her face. She didn't regret anything, she said. She didn't regret letting Jerome touch her. She didn't regret kissing him or hugging him or calling him that disgusting -.

His thoughts were interrupted by the feeling of Kylie's cold fingers gripping his chin and forcing him to look back at her. His brown eyes went wide and there was a flustered look on his face at the sudden, and rather harsh, action.

"- because," the blonde continued," it was all for you, Eddie. All of it."

"When I was kidnapped, I was given a choice. Join or die. It was a rather predictable situation and I gave a rather predictable answer. For a short amount of time, it was about me surviving until I received information on that party. I refused to do it. I failed to see the reason for killing a bunch of kids and told Galavan to find someone else for the job."

Ed started to speak but the fingers still gripping under his chin tightened their hold ever so slightly. A warning to not interrupt.

"Of course, I didn't get away with that and Galavan had to make use of a different method of persuasion. He mentioned your name and told me how he'd make you disappear, make you suffer, if I didn't go through with it."

He blinked. All of it...had been for him? All of those lives lost so he could retain his? He knew he should be disgusted. He knew he should be horrified. Instead, he felt giddy at the thought that she was like him. Helping someone get away with murder was was one thing, but actually doing the killing was a whole other level. It was rather romantic if he really thought about it as the both of them extinguished lives in order to save each other. He certainly wasn't expecting blackmail as a motive in the very beginning. The dark haired man had believed she had been tormented to the point of insanity when he had seen her onscreen. He had been the reason for all she had done but how she had managed to make it all feel so real? Suddenly, the night of his first murder came to mind, specifically the moment he had slipped into Kylie's room without her knowledge. He remembered eyeing her bookcase curiously, eyes flitting over mystery, thriller, and sci-fi novels before settling on a shelf of theatre books. They were old instruction texts, covering the theory and mechanics behind acting. Those books had been the only thing hinting to an experience in that art and so he hadn't really given them any thought until now.

At this point, her hand slipped from his face and rested on the frayed quilt that lay over her legs. He
took this as his chance to ask questions. He had quite a lot in need of answers.

He cleared his throat before posing his first," So, the whole "Guess" persona, that was all an act?"

A smile flicked at the corner of her mouth, half caused by the lack of revulsion she detected in her Eddie's reaction and half due to the fact that he had made the connection. He didn't know it but she had found out about the little unsupervised tour Ed had given himself of her bedroom. She had awoken the next morning to find her underwear drawer slightly open, the items inside noticeably rumpled, to her eye anyway. He also put one of her books back in the wrong place as, to him, there was no order into how they were arranged, and in addition, one of her glass animals (the snake) was position a little too far to the left. He wasn't as careful as he should of been.

"It was all the fruit of years of school plays and private lessons." She replied smoothly.

Oswald lowered the volume after that particular line reached his ears. She hadn't been acting that way a few hours ago. He peered over the top of the couch, icy blue eyes taking in the two people sitting across the room and their conversation.

Edward tilted his head curiously," You never told me that you enjoyed acting."

Something glittered in Kylie's eyes as she let out a derisive snort," That's because I never enjoyed it. My mother had done theatre while she was in school and wanted me to as well. It was a rather miserable experience but it obviously had its future benefits. Forcing me into it may have been the one useful thing she did for me in her entire life."

Brown eyes searched blue in astonishment. She had never spoke of her mother before this, granted, any talk of her family was a rarity but the way she spoke of her parent was much different than the soft tones in which she remembered her twin with. The mention of her mother sparked another question that fueled his befuddlement.

"Why didn't they use your family as leverage? Why did Galavan immediately identify me as the one to be targeted if things went wrong, why not someone else?"

"That's because there isn't anyone else," Kylie admitted, "My family is dead. Father had a heart attack a few months after Kailyn's funeral and Mother had an aneurysm during my last year of college. So you see, you were the only person I was deeply connected to. Besides, "she smiled," if my parents were alive and Galavan had decided to use them as bargaining chips, I would've walked right out of his study without looking back."

Both Ed and Oswald sat in silence but the two were thinking along rather different tracks.

He was the only person she was close to. He was someone she cared about, someone she'd kill for. That meant Jerome had been nothing to her. Ed filed the information away carefully, trying to not let his excitement show, and noting how easily she spoke of her parent's deaths. There was blatant animosity towards the deceased couple but now, now he wanted to know why. She kept giving him all of these little glimpses into her past and it made him start to realize how he had never known all that much of his friend's life before Gotham. He didn't even know the details of her sister's accident as it seemed whatever town the blonde hailed from didn't have the resources or desire to digitize its records. Although the complete radio silence when he did a search on her name made him even more curious. Kylie couldn't possibly be hiding anything from back then, could she? He almost smiled at the absurdity of the thought. Her? Hiding something? Out of the question for sure, especially when he was involved, as there wasn't anything online that he couldn't find. Ed recognized the woman's intellect, it was one of her best qualities in his opinion, but there was no way she could outsmart him. He chalked up the thought as pure coincidence and decided to pose another question. One that held a
little more...personal interest.

Oswald, however, knew for a fact there was something not quite right with the girl across the room from him. Well, if he was being honest, there was something not quite right with all of them but that wasn't the point. He got a definite strange feeling whenever she spoke. He didn't know if Ed had picked up on it, as to the blue eyed man, the other seemed to have a slight difficulty in reading others emotions, but gauging others was what Oswald did for a living. It had taken him a bit of time after Kylie and Ed had started speaking to each other to pick up on it. However, he had smiled when he did.

That blonde devil was leading Ed off-topic.

It was subtle and indiscernible to someone like his bespectacled friend, who took every piece of bait that fell from the lips of the woman in front of him. Oswald believed that she knew what questions he had on his mind from the very beginning and purposefully danced around them, offering Ed instead, chances to learn more information about her personally. His blue eyes twinkled with interest as with each snippet of conversation it became clear that Kylie hadn't let anything slip that pertained to her involvement in the murders of her home town prior to being abducted. (He had secretly copied and read her file before he approached her with the proposal of joining forces.) He also noted how she completely avoided the topic of Jerome Valeska by steering Ed in the opposite direction. Now, what was her intention behind that? She had said the ginger's name casually when she had woken up earlier, almost like she was accustomed to the boy's presence near her. It certainly gave the impression that their relationship was personal but how personal? And after the blonde seemed to remember his death, she became sullen. She mourned him. Despite overhearing her proficiency in acting, Oswald had a hard time believing the emotion he witnessed her express in regards to Jerome Valeska were a complete farce. He needed to find time to rewatch her appearances with the ginger. Maybe he could figure out what was real if he started from there. His gaze shifted back to the bed, where both Ed and Kylie sat. When had spoke to her in regards to escaping The Maniax! a few weeks ago, she had made it clear that she wanted Jerome to make it out with her. Which, according to a few informants, was completely contradictory to her view of him a few days prior. She had allegedly punched Valeska in the face and bloodied his nose in retaliation for being lied to. So her request had surprised him. However, he didn't think into it too much because it worked out for him in a way. Bail out two people fully capable of murder from under the oppressive thumb of a complete nutjob and use their debts to you as a means to wrangle them in for a plan to free your mother and destroy said nutjob. It had sounded simple enough but of course, nutjobs never stick to the plan, hence Valeska's untimely end, Kylie's push into hiding, and the failed attempt at saving his mother. The only positive thing in all of this is that a certain blonde was still in his debt, doubly so with the knowledge of a certain string of murders. He fully intended to cash in on that favor in the future and turned his attention back to the television after turning the volume back up.

Kylie felt a little guilty as she watched the man in front of her. He had taken her in after all of the horrible things she did and didn't seem to hate her at all for any of them. Right now, he was silent, no doubt thinking how to best word his next question. It was a bit taxing, flitting around the subject of Jerome but never touching. She saw the curiosity in his eyes, saw the query that swam in them. The blonde made sure to twist the conversation away from the ginger, no matter how hard Ed made it. Jerome was an open wound that was nowhere near healing and it confused her. When she had first started working with him, she hated his guts and still harbored quite a bit of rage at being lied to. She had been beaten at her own game and it had infuriated her. He was just infuriating in general if she was being honest. Rare were the times he wasn't pestering her and all times were fair game, including while sleeping or showering. In correlation, the times he wasn't bleeding profusely from the nose due to a well placed punch were rare as well.

But...as time went on she began to realize that for all the stupid things he did and jokes he told, he
never once hurt her. One night, after spending the day training with Theo's sister, Tabitha, Jerome had snuck into her room while she was showering. When she heard the television after drying off Kylie had been fully prepared to haul the ginger out of her room with a bloody nose for the sixth time in the span of a day and a half but when she walked out of the bathroom he was simply sitting on the edge of her bed with a tray of food. Before she could even say a word he said that he noticed how she missed dinner because of training. He thought she'd be tired and hungry so he brought her dinner to her. They talked while she ate and after a while it got harder and harder to keep herself from laughing at some of the things he said. He was so kind to her. He made her feel special after Ed's rejection. Kylie's chest ached when she thought about him. She was still so confused. The blonde knew for a fact that she still loved Ed but what was Jerome? They were so different. Ed made her smile and feel like her entire body was made of butterflies. Jerome made laughter bubble up from a place she thought had died along with sister. All she knew was that Jerome's memory was special to her and that she didn't intend to share those memories with anyone. Not even Eddie, who had finally emerged from his own thoughts.

She watched as his hands slid over hers, covering pink stained fingers before looking up the man curiously. Was he...? From behind his horn-rimmed glasses brown eyes shone with affection as his lips parted to allow his next question to slip past them.

His voice was quiet,"Why? Why did you do all of that for me?"

A soft smile graced her features and her eyes held something tender as she leaned closer," You're all I have, Eddie. Galavan knew that I only had you. He said that his favorite people to manipulate only had one person they were fond of. He knew what made me tick. He knew I'd do anything for you."

Her response gave him the bold streak he needed to pose the next question.

"Do you love me?" he whispered lowly, brown eyes looking earnestly into hers.

He didn't particularly care if they were overheard by his other guest earlier in the conversation but now he wanted this one moment to be private, untouched by outside interference.

Kylie's pretty blue eyes widened and from where he sat so close to her, he could see the small golden flecks near her pupils shine in the dim lighting of his apartment.

The blonde let out a shaky breath that carried the answer that a part of him had wanted to hear since the very beginning.

"Yes."

Edward felt a wide grin spread across his face and he leaned in closer to the young woman in front of him," That's good because I've been wanting to do this for a very long time."

His lips brushed hers and he hummed happily when she let out a small gasp before pushing herself closer to him. Ed's hands slid from their place over hers and found a new one on the spaces of mattress on either side of her body.

Similarly, Kylie's found a new place as well, brushing up over the brown haired man's shoulders and winding around the back of his neck. The kiss wasn't rough like the very first they had shared after Dougherty's death, it was soft and sweet and made her head swim with a pleasant buzz. They pulled away slightly moments later foreheads pressed together and lungs burning from a lack of oxygen.

"I love you," Ed said breathlessly.

Kylie couldn't stop the wide smile that stretched across her face," I love you too, Eddie."
i'm screaming because the ending really sucked. I've never written anything that really qualifies as 'lovey-dovey' so if it's a cringe fest then i'm sorry. feel free to roast me. on another note i made a poll to help decide what my next story will be even though this book is a long way from being finished. The link to will be included below. i hope you guys enjoyed this :) feel free to share your thoughts with me bc i love talking to all of you!

http://freeonlinesurveys.com/p/T0nZBWZH?qid=964232
Chapter 23

Kylie felt lighter than air. She had been for the past few days after she and Ed kissed. The blonde wasn't really one for all those sappy, cliche love stereotypes but it certainly felt like she was living in a romance novel, albeit a slightly strange one. Her arm had healed enough that she could move it without reopening the wound, she finally regained an adequate amount of strength to be able to move about Ed's apartment, and Galavan had been arrested, so in a sense, things were looking up. Of course, there was a downside to the whole situation after the gala, being that she couldn't ever really leave the apartment when she was a criminal in hiding and all. (Even if her staged death had been seen by all of Gotham) All that she could do was lounge around the place and watch television with Oswald, which was what she was currently doing on a late night. He had actually let her pick this time, throwing the remote at her head when she spoiled an episode he hadn't watched yet. She was sure he hadn't intended to throw the remote and relinquish control of the TV but in a fit annoyance grabbed the thing closest to him and hurled it. She had dodged it by an inch and cheered when she realized what he had thrown. Oswald, however, regretted his decision immediately after. He was currently moping about the kitchen in hopes of finding something suitable for a late night snack. In the midst of channel surfing, Kylie was struck by a sudden thought.

"Hey, Ossie," she called out, turning her body to face the man's direction," how in the hell did you end up here anyway?"

It was something she had wondered in the first few moments after she had regained consciousness in the apartment but forgotten in all that had happened after. Now, it was a question that burned through her brain, igniting an all-consuming curiosity inside of it. Especially since Eddie had never mentioned knowing the mobster past the awkward encounter in the precinct lobby she had witnessed one day. She still couldn't believe the scientist had sprung a fun fact about penguins on the blue-eyed man.

Oswald froze. His fingers had just brushed the package of a pudding cup when the blonde's voice rang out with the sudden question, the question his gracious host had begged him to answer carefully. Ed had came to him after Kylie had fallen asleep the night after the two had spoken for the first time since the gala and confirmed what the man had already inferred from the conversation. The young woman had no knowledge of the murder of Kristen Kringle and Ed had wanted to keep it that way. Of course, Oswald was intrigued to know the reasoning behind it and with a bit of prying, gleaned a bit more information. It was interesting to know that when his bespectacled friend had committed his first murder, it was Kylie that helped him dispose of the evidence. It was even more interesting to know that Ed was still afraid that the blonde would abandon him after killing someone who hadn't been a person of the same caliber as Tom Dougherty. Personally, Oswald had a feeling that if the blonde was willing to join a team of insane Arkham escapees and murder a whole slew of teenagers just for Ed then the man shouldn't worry about her leaving him behind. However, it wasn't his business and he sort of owed it to the scientist to keep his secret.

The dark haired man let his fingers wrap around the cool plastic container of chocolate pudding and pull it from the fridge," It's nothing too exciting;" he admitted nonchalantly," A plan of mine failed. I ended up in a bad position. Your boyfriend happened to be the one to find me," the fridge door closed and he peeled the wrapper from the top of the snack," and brought me here."

There was a brief silence as Kylie thought over Oswald's words. He was being unnecessarily vague and what other plan could have gone wrong than the one she never got to aid in executing?

"You went after Galavan without me didn't you?"
Oswald scowled and threw away the wrapper he had just finished licking clean. He was half hoping that she'd forgotten about that part of the arrangement they had made.

Taking his silence as a 'yes', she continued on," We had a deal, Oswald. You help Jerome and I escape Galavan, we help you kill Galavan. Why did-

"Did you expect me to think that you'd honor the deal after your little ginger died?" Oswald sneered suddenly, causing Kylie's eyes to widen in surprise," My mother was suffering and I couldn't sit around waiting for some crazy serial killer who may or may not show up! I didn't know how you would react to Valeska's death! I didn't know who you'd blame, I didn't know what you'd do! I made a decision and went in with a few trusted men and -" The ferociousness in his voice started to disappear quickly, like it was being sucked right out of him," and I failed. I was betrayed and my mother was murdered right in front of me because I couldn't save her..."

She felt guilty. The young woman hadn't thought she could still feel that particular emotion. She was so sure it had been gone for a long time. Now it clawed at her, leaving jagged rips and tears in her conscience. If she had been able to save Jerome, if she had been able to get the two of them away and to Oswald in time, his mother would still be alive. Kylie had wanted to meet her. She was curious about the old woman, curious about what a real mother was. Oswald had talked about her when they had met and Gertrude Kabelput sounded like the exact opposite of Charlotte Wood, her own mother. Where there was kindness and support from Oswald's mother, there had been only cruelty and pressure from her own. She felt guilty for putting a good mother in an early grave.

"Oswald, I'm-

"Don't bother," Oswald interjected bitterly," While you were instrumental in the operation, I don't blame your inability to contribute for Mother's death. I blame myself. The plan Galavan had written up for the gala had been modified after we received the initial intel. In all honesty," he said with a sigh," It was a miracle that you made it out alive." She blinked. So the plan had been altered. The blonde had thought as much when Galavan had first stood up and challenged the ginger's presence at the charity event. As she mulled over a few ideas, one came to the forefront of her mind.

"Is there," she started," is there any chance that the information you received was false?"

The two sat in silence while Oswald spooned pudding into his mouth. He looked as if he wanted to say something after swallowing but the sound of the cordless phone ringing interrupted his line of thought. Kylie picked it up from where it sat on the seat next to her and picked it up.

"Hey Eddie!" she chirped, her countenance brightened up almost immediately after reading the caller ID.

Oswald ate another bite of pudding as he watched over their conversation. It was interesting to observe the couple's interactions, especially when he knew all the the secrets the two hid from each other. He didn't get to listen for long, though, because soon Kylie was on her feet and holding the phone out to him.

"Here, Eddie wants to talk to you," she said with a smile before heading to the fridge, intent on getting a pudding cup of her own.

He grimaced at the sweet way she said the pet name before putting the receiver up to his ear, "What
"Listen, Oswald," he replied with a desperate whisper," I need you to get rid of Miss Kringle's glasses, and fast."

The dark-haired man rolled his eyes at the request but moved towards Ed's desk, careful to not draw the attention of the other occupant of the apartment.

"Why did you keep her glasses to begin with?" Oswald asked icily as he pulled them from one of the drawers.

There was a panicked noise on the other end of the line," Keep your voice down-"

"Yeah, yeah I know the drill, Ed," he spat," your girlfriend can't know about what you did because murder is just a deal breaker when it comes to relationships."

"Look," the scientist said irritably," just get rid of them. Doctor Thompkins is suspicious."

The other end went dead and Oswald glared at the phone. He pressed the red end call button with the same hand the held the dead woman's glasses, "Amateurs."

"What was that?" Kylie asked from her place next to the kitchen counter.

A bit startled, Oswald rolled his eyes," Ed just called to make sure you I wasn't bullying you and that he still had pudding to come home to."

She looked down at the half-eaten treat in her hand regretfully,"That last part is a no-go."

There was a moment of silence as the dark-haired man allowed her comment to register in his mind.

"You ate the last pudding cup?" he asked accusingly, arms crossing over his chest to better hide the pair of glasses," you know he's going to sulk all night, right?"

"I can just make it up to him later," she replied slyly before taking another bite.

Oswald's face twisted in disgust and he shook his head," You two are absolutely disgusting -"

He had a few other choice words for the blonde but was distracted by the sudden heavy knocks rattling the door to Ed's apartment. Kylie looked at him questioningly and slowly moved from her place behind the counter. She probably thought someone had found out about the two of them. The mobster, however, limped over to the door in annoyance and peered into the peephole. His mood further soured as he glimpsed their unwelcome guest through the warped glass.

He ignored her question about who was at the door in favor of swinging it wide open instead.

"Gabe," he seethed," when I gave you this address, I was not inviting pop-ins."

Kylie took a few steps towards the door until she could clearly see the man speaking with Oswald. He was older and seemed to be distressed. Curious about the reason for him to stop by, the young woman inched closer to the two and in doing so, accidentally caught the attention of their visitor.

Her cheeks burned as the man looked at her. She had forgotten that all she had on was one of Eddie's old shirts from his days at Gotham University and a cheap bra and underwear set he had bought her. No one had made it to pick up things from her old apartment yet.

"Uh," Gabe stuttered embarrassed," sorry to bother ya, Boss but I figured you needed to hear this
before it hit the news."

A look of confusion briefly flitted across Oswald's face and he turned around to follow the man's line of sight. The expression morphed into one of disgust when he realized what Gabe had assumed. Him being in a robe and her in that shirt didn't exactly look the best in front of outsiders.

"That is not what's going on here, Gabe. This is Kylie, the woman we helped at the gala. We just happen to know the same person."

"Oh, uh, pleased to meet you, Ma'am," the man said with an awkward nod of his head in her direction.

Kylie forced a smile, cheeks burning even redder after the misunderstanding.

"Hey," Oswald said forcefully while snapping his fingers not clutching the glasses," what do I need to hear, Gabe? What was so important that you had march all the way down here?"

Nervous eyes darted between the two criminals standing inside the apartment and their owner cleared his throat before speaking again.

"Galavan's been let go."

There was silence.

Kylie blinked. How could a man who had mountains upon mountains of evidence incriminating him on a wide variety of atrocities just walk away from a trial without any charges? There was no way, not with the documents she and Oswald had managed to scrape up from that penthouse, that he could've ended up scott-free. Not legally anyway. It was jarring, to say the least. When she had heard of his arrest, the blue eyed woman had been pleased. She figured with the connections that Oswald still had, bribing security guards and murdering the bastard would be easy. The blonde would have gotten rid of a man who threatened her Eddie and slaughtered Jerome. She had actually started feel a bit freed from the turmoil Galavan had thrust upon her while at the apartment. She had the man she loved by her side and had a new friend (of sorts). She had been okay. Now, however, the gaping hole of grief and rage had been ripped open again. Kylie, despite her efforts, had failed Jerome a second time.

There was no way in hell she was going to let there be a third.

Her eyes, now filled with a steely determination shifted to Oswald, who still stood in the door way. His entire figure was tense and his face was twisting in ways she didn't know were possible. Something clutched in his right hand cracked and the pieces began to litter the floor.

Kylie swallowed. Galavan being free created a whole host of problems. His plans for Gotham could continue, he could end up finding out that she and Oswald were alive, which put Ed and everyone else around them in danger, and he would get away with the murders of Jerome Valeska and Gertrude Kabelput. She would do anything to make sure that Theo Galavan got what he deserved.

Her voice, quiet but strong, broke the thick silence that had reigned over the apartment.

"Where is he?"
There was a flurry of purposeful movement after Gabe eventually spit out Galavan's location. Kylie had hastily scribbled out a note to Eddie, who would no doubt come home to an eerily empty apartment, that there was leftover macaroni and cheese in the fridge for him to heat up before running out the door with Oswald and his driver. The man had brought Oswald a freshly pressed suit to change into before departing but the blonde was obviously less fortunate than the mobster. She was still clad in the same dismal attire that just screamed "I ate 16 pudding cups and watched three seasons of Forensic Files all in one day." Attention was brought to that fact as soon as she and Oswald ducked into the backseat of a shiny black car worth more than her yearly salary and she received a rather judgmental look.

"Gabe, we're going to have to make another stop."

Fifteen minutes later, she was knocking on the door of her landlady's apartment and convincing the old woman that she had misplaced her key earlier that day. When she was handed a spare, Kylie let out a sigh of relief and gave a big smile. After thanking the lady, she and her two companions began the trek up to her own home. By the time they reached her door Oswald was complaining about his leg and Gabe was breathing hard while leaning against the hallway wall. She might of felt bad about dragging the two all the way up four flights of stairs if she wasn't 100% sure that they would leave her behind in favor of getting to Galavan faster. After jigging the key a couple times, the front door creaked open like it always did and she stepped inside. It felt strange to flick on the light in her apartment and walk in just like she used to do after work every day. In reality, she had only been away for about a month but felt more like years to her. Just a month ago she was scrubbing blood from one of Eddie's dress shirts in her kitchen sink.

"Hey, Kylie," Oswald interjected suddenly, breaking the blonde's reverie," we kind of have revenge to exact so if you could stop standing around and do what we came here for, that'd be great."

She blinked, mildly startled, as he pushed past her and into the living room. How long had she been standing in the foyer?

"Sorry, Ossie," she apologized, taking steps towards her bedroom," It's just been a while since I've been here."

The dark haired man snorted as he swiped a finger over an end table he passed by on his way to the living room," I can tell."

Her blue eyes narrowed at the man but she ultimately decided that retorting wasn't worth the effort. She instead turned to Gabe, who was still standing awkwardly in the entry way.

"If you're hungry, feel free to check the fridge or the food pantry. I'm sure there's something that's not expired somewhere."

With that, she slipped through her bedroom door and closed it, not wanting Oswald to scold her again. She did her best to ignore the waves of nostalgia sweeping over her as she threw open her closet. Her arm throbbed weakly at the sudden movement but she pushed on, she didn't really know how much time she had before the ill-tempered mobster decided to leave without her. She let her eyes scan quickly over its contents before stopping on a particular dress. It was purple and one of her favorites. She had bought it just before she had been kidnapped and so she had never gotten the chance to wear it. The blonde pulled it out and sat it down on her bed carefully. She swallowed hard. It was almost the same color as her magician's assistant outfit she wore to the gala. It was perfect for
tonight.

After shedding her current outfit and slipping into her new one, she raced to gather up more clothes. All kinds of essentials were thrown into an old duffel bag, including a certain item from her underwear drawer that Eddie had been interested in during his brief stay. She packed the photo of her and Kailyn last and zipped the bag. Resolving to do her makeup in the car, she left her bedroom.

"Took you long enough," her bird-like companion spat as she stepped into the living room.

Kylie only smiled, "Murder is the most fulfilling when you look good while committing it, Oswald. I thought you of all people would understand that with all the gaudy suits you wear."

Gabe snorted quietly as the man scrambled up from his spot on the couch, "I'll have you know that this suit is -"

"Late for revenge," she interjected, "Let's go. You can whine about your designer whatever after we kill Galavan."

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The car ride was tense. Kylie tried to fix her eyeliner, cursing each time the car hit a pothole, and Oswald sat next to the other window, silently fuming. He only spoke after the blonde beside him let out a small cheer after making both eyes look identical.

"Your lighthearted attitude concerns me, Kylie," he seethed, "We are on our way to destroy the man who killed my mother, who kidnapped you and threatened Edward and you're...putting on make-up."

The blue eyed woman hummed in response, not shifting her focus from the compact mirror in her hand," I told you earlier that there isn't any fun in killing someone while looking dismal. The show you put on is half the-"

A hand came up and smacked the compact from her grip. It fell to the floor and its powdered contents littered the carpet.

"fun," she finished.

"Don't give me that bullshit," Oswald warned, "All it takes is one call from me and you're gone from this little excursion. Whether or not you live hasn't been decided yet."

A close lipped smile spread across the blonde's face but her eyes went cold as she leaned in close to him.

"Oswald," she said sweetly, "You've read Galavan's file on me, haven't you? And you know that I'm the one who helped Ed with Dougherty's body, right? Now, at the moment, I'm in a good mood because I'm about to tear apart the man who threatened and murdered people I care about."

Her voice changed from a gentle lilt to something laced with malice,"But, if you keep threatening me, you'll only end up in as bad of a place as everyone else who's made me angry," she tilted her head," and I haven't yet decided whether you'll live through it or not."

Oswald's jaw clenched as she moved away from him and reached down to retrieve her compact but he remained silent, furious blue eyes burning holes into the side of the woman's head. As he glared, he started to notice bit by bit how similar she looked to the day of the gala. He didn't really pay close attention during the rush to get out of the tiny apartment but it was clear that she was doing her best
to recreate that night. The young woman had busied herself yet again, adding the finishing touches to her makeup. Oswald watched her lips flick up ever so slightly into the tiniest of smiles.

"It's rude to stare, Ossie," the blonde stated as she snapped the compact closed and put it back into the bag at her feet.

Caught in the act, he turned," You've made yourself look like you did at the gala," he deadpanned, "What exactly are you planning?"

"I'm not planning anything, really," she admitted honestly as she rummaged around in her duffel," I just want to do what I should have done weeks ago."

Her hand closed over a cool handle and she pulled the object out. Blue eyes stared back at each other unblinkingly but the gun barrel never once shifted towards him.

"All I want is one shot at Galavan. I want the last thing he sees to be me as the light leaves his eyes. I want to watch him die."

The mobster blinked. She was asking him. He was a bit taken aback at her plead, as he had expected her to just go after Galavan herself or even betray him in order to have a chance for revenge alone. When had she planned all this?

"Please, Oswald, you can beat him bloody within an inch of his life but let me end it."

He swallowed," You-you weren't going to go after him yourself?"

"No," she replied quietly," I thought about it for a split second as we left Eddie's place but I owe you and I wouldn't screw you over like that. Out of the two of us, you deserve this more than I do. I mean, in the grand scheme of things, you lost your mother and all I lost was a crazy ginger kid that I met a couple months ago."

There was a moment of silence.

After heavy deliberation, the dark haired man spoke again," I apologize for my outburst earlier. I was under the impression that you weren't taking the situation seriously," he paused," and that you could double-cross me at any given moment. It seems as if my concerns were unwarranted."

"No," Kylie breathed," I would have done the same thing. I've been running every situation that you could leave me behind through my head, trying to come up with ways to stay ahead. Even if you did abandon me at some point, I would've understood."

Oswald nodded, thinking hard," You can kill him," he affirmed," but not until I make him beg for it."

A wide smile broke out on her face and Kylie fought the strange urge to throw her arms around the man next to her. She didn't want to push her luck. The blonde couldn't believe she was going to do it, she hadn't thought that Oswald would have agreed with how strange their relationship was. One moment they were all chummy watching TV and eating Eddie out of house and home but the next they could be threatening to gut each other. It was always interesting, though, because no matter how creative they got with insults each knew that they couldn't kill the other. Both were important to the one person who brought them together and neither wanted to know what kind of consequences would arise if one were to slaughter the other.

Oswald sank back into his seat as well and the car ride continued in silence for a short time before the vehicle came to a smooth stop. The tinted divider that was the only barrier between the front and
"We're here, Boss," Gabe announced as he handed a shotgun back to the dark-haired man. Another was almost given to Kylie but she spoke up before it even passed over the divider.

"That's okay, Gabe. I brought my own," she reassured the man as she held up the shiny revolver. Oswald squinted as he loaded his own gun, taking notice of the firearm's certain details, "How did you get Valeska's gun? That thing was swept up into an evidence locker, wasn't it?"

A crooked smile played across the blonde's lips, "A magician's assistant never reveals her secrets, Ossie."

Before he could say a word about the vagueness of her reply or the ridiculous name she had called him, Kylie had swung open the car door and slid out into world beyond.

"C'mon, I think we're gonna have to save someone's ass," she called as she heard the unmistakable sounds of fighting from the warehouse in the distance.

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Hey losers i'm back! My marching band season just came to an end earlier today so I immediately decided to work on Guess! I'm sorry for the long wait but between band and all the existential crises that come with being a senior this year i had to take a break. However, now that's all over you all can tune in for regularly scheduled updating.

- xoxo Mel
It was foggy and the wind nipped at her skin as she ran towards the warehouse. She had always hated the docks. The air rolling in off of the ocean was always cold and smelled like fish and rot. As Kylie ran past a marked police car, the pained groans she heard seemed to amplify. Whoever it was, it was clear they weren't winning the fight. Oswald was somewhere behind her, not too far, because every now and then she could catch the string of curses pouring from his mouth as he hobbled. She skidded to a halt at an open door. There were two policemen, nightsticks in hand, wailing on someone who was sprawled on the ground. One of the men shifted, bringing his stick high into the air and allowing her to clearly see who was laying down in a heap. Her gun raised and she pulled the trigger in one fluid motion, bringing down the cop before he could hit Jim Gordon another time. The other had barely enough time to look up before the sound of a second gunshot echoed through the building. Gabe stepped though the door, shotgun still smoking, with Oswald close behind. The birdlike man's eyes were furious, most likely because he had gathered pretty quickly that Galavan was long gone. She watched apprehensively as he approached Gordon and grabbed him by the collar.

"Hello, Jim," he seethed," Lucky for you, Gabe had people following Galavan," he said with a tilt of his head towards his driver.

The detective's head lolled to one side and Oswald's eye twitched.

He gave the man a sharp shake and pulled him up off of the ground," Now, where is he?"

Gordon's eyes fluttered a few times before sliding closed and Kylie took a hesitant step forward. Oswald was about to fly off the handle, she was sure of it, and it wasn't going to be the kind of tantrum he threw when she spoiled his dramas. It was going to be something a lot worse.

"Where's Galavan?!"

His voice was growing in volume and she could see how his body was starting to quake in rage. She had to do something before it escalated into something that could get anyone hurt any more than they already were..

"Oswa-" she started, only to be cut off almost immediately.

"Tell me!" he shrieked suddenly, shaking Jim harshly over and over, "Where is Galavan?!"

Gordon's head lolled around like a doll's coming painfully close to smacking off the hard concrete floor. This had to stop right now or whatever information the mobster was trying to glean from the detective was going to end up splattered on the ground.

"Oswald!" she screamed, half hoping that getting his attention would make him come to his senses. He ignored her, though she wasn't sure if it was because he couldn't hear her over his own yelling or if he just didn't care. He dropped Gordon on the ground and raised a fist, still demanding the whereabouts of Galavan. Kylie's eyes went wide and Oswald's fist cracked down on the detective's already battered face.

She rushed forward in horror, if he didn't stop he was going to kill their only lead on that lying bastard.

"Oswald, stop it!" she demanded, as she gripped his shoulder tight with one hand.
He snarled and shook her off almost immediately, bringing another fist across the unconscious man's face. Her jaw clenched in frustration and this time she clapped both hands firmly over both shoulders after holstering her gun. With one hard shove she managed to topple him from his position over Gordon. He let out noise somewhere between a grunt and a scream as he hit the ground.

"What do you think you're doing?" he spat, eyes filled with venom," I could have you-"

"I told you to stop it," she snapped," Look at him, Oswald! Do you really think that man can tell you anything after having his ass kicked like that. All you've done is made his condition worse!"

Oswald looked briefly to Gordon, whose chest rose and fell with labored breaths, and his bottom lip quivered in frustration.

"I don't care!" he exclaimed, voice trembling as he struggled to his feet," I need to know where Galavan is now and if you get in my way again, I'll have Gabe put a hole in the center of your forehead."

She started in protest but his shoulder roughly bumped hers in warning as he pushed past her to have another go at the detective. The dark haired man lifted Gordon by his collar once more and Kylie let out an annoyed huff as she pulled out her gun, gripping the handle tight in her fist before slamming the barrel against the side of his head. She winced as both Oswald and Jim smacked the ground.

"Sorry, Ossie, but we need him alive if we want a shot at finding that slimy piece of shit," she said with an apologetic look towards the mobster crumpled on the concrete.

Foot steps shuffled over and stopped right beside her. Kylie looked to her left and was met with Gabe, who was looking down at Oswald as well while shaking his head slightly.

"You did what you had to, Kid," he sighed," There wasn't gonna be any calming 'em down from a tantrum like that, not without costing us our only lead anyway."

The blonde holstered her revolver again," Thanks Gabe, although I have a feeling he's not going to be feeling much happier with me once he wakes up."

He shrugged in agreement as he stooped down with a grunt to pull Detective Gordon from his sprawled out place on the ground and a bit of guilt surged through her system.

"I'll get Oswald," she offered, bending down to lift the wiry man into a position where she could sling one of his arms over her shoulders.

Gabe blinked a few times in surprise," Oh no, you don't have to do that -"

"Actually, I do," she interjected," I'm the one who knocked him out so I should be the one to haul his ass out of here."

With a shrug, the driver slung Gordon's whole body over one shoulder and started out the door with Kylie trailing behind with Oswald in tow. About halfway to the car, she realized that she had grossly misjudged the mobster's weight. How was she supposed to know that the pale, almost sickly looking, man was so heavy. The way she was forced to carry him left his shiny black shoes scraping the ground, something that she was sure to pay for if he didn't murder her for knocking him out. Gabe helped her get him inside the car after unceremoniously dumping Gordon into the trunk and she did her best to keep Oswald upright as she buckled him in after climbing in herself. All throughout the drive back to Ed's apartment Kylie was forced to keep one hand on the man's shoulder to keep him from slumping over on top of her. It was rather annoying but the blonde supposed this was part of her punishment for knocking him out cold.
When the car finally pulled up to the apartment building, she reassured Gabe that she could get Oswald out of the car herself and unbuckled his seat belt. He was already hauling Gordon through a side entrance by the time she had wrestled the mobster out of the car. With his arm slung over her shoulders once more, the young woman started carrying him towards the building. It was an ordeal getting the both of them through the heavy door and she may have smacked her companion's head against the door frame a couple times. Accidentally, of course. Thankfully, there was no one in the lobby as she dragged him across it and attempted to climb the stairs. She had to shift the way she carried him, figuring that it be easier to pull him up eight floors rather than chance sending the two of them tumbling. So, with arms hooked under his, Kylie cursed each time she went up a step. There were a lot of steps and with each one Oswald's feet made muffled thumps as they smacked against the dingy carpet and her left arm throbbed in protest. Lucky for her, Gabe ran into her on the landing of the 5th floor.

"You want me to take 'em up the rest of the way for ya," he offered after taking in her exhausted state.

She felt a bit ashamed that she couldn't make it all the way but the pain in her arm won out over wounded pride and she reluctantly let him carry Oswald up the remaining flights. By the time she made it up to Ed's door there was a light stream of blood trickling down her arm. It was obvious that she hadn't fully recovered from that stupid gunshot wound and carrying Oswald only made it worse again. The moment Gabe shouldered open the door, Ed began to fuss over her. It was very endearing.

"Kylie!" he exclaimed with relief as he immediately enveloped her into a tight hug,' The way Jim and Oswald were brought in had me so worried."

He was so warm and sweet that she couldn't help but smile, exhaustion melting away for a brief moment," Sorry, Eddie. There were a few complications but I'm alright and now we have an ally for when we take down Galavan."

Ed pulled away from the hug, brown eyes swimming with concern as he noticed where her skin had pulled away from her stitches. Warm fingertips traced tenderly around the wound and she shivered.

He sighed as he looked at her," I worry about you, you know. Your arm...what if you go after Galavan and you don't come back. I don't think I could take you being gone."

Kylie's chest constricted painfully as he spoke, knowing that his concerns could very well become reality," Eddie, you know I have to help Oswald go after him. He threatened you, he threatened us and there's no way I'm going to let there be a chance that you could be hurt." Ed's eyebrows knitted together and she could tell that he wasn't liking her answer," But he won't come after me now. He thinks you're dead, remember? He wouldn't waste his time with a dead woman's lover," he appealed.

"Okay," she sighed," he wouldn't come after me as long as I stayed dead but what would I do? Stay cooped up here until I die? Or would I change my name and my hair and hope that he never found me? Because I don't want to leave Gotham, Eddie. This city is my home and it's the only one I've got."

"But I could be your home," he muttered," We could leave together and go anywhere. Metropolis, Central City, anywhere, you name it and we could go."

Ed didn't really want to leave Gotham, it was the place he had started over. He had earned his degree here, gotten his first apartment, landed his first real job, found love and killed for it here. But even
with all this sentiment locked away in the cracked pavement and burnt out streetlights, his fear for the safety of the woman he loved made him willing to leave it all behind. Although, in this moment, as Kylie shook her head, face full of a soft kind of sadness, he knew that she wasn't going to abandon Gotham. He understood why, how couldn't he? Only a dolt would be unable to see how much this cesspool meant to her, it's significance in her life probably rivaled that in his own.

She swallowed hard at his offer to disappear together, "Eddie, I can't. I can't do that to you, you love your job and you love Gotham. And I can't abandon the place that took me in and let me have a life of my own for the very first time. I can't leave this place behind with Galavan at the wheel, not after what it gave me," she let a small smile lift her mouth as she looked at him, raising a hand to let her finger brush softly over his cheek, almost like she was trying to smooth away the worry that was so evidently displayed on his face.

"I understand," Ed breathed, with his skin tingling pleasantly. He didn't really approve this by any means, in his mind, Galavan was on a level out of Kylie's reach. She was brilliant, that much was true, even though she wasn't as much so as himself, but at the end of the day, the blonde was just a girl with a history degree and a thirst for revenge. He didn't think either of those things would really aide in the demise of a homicidal billionaire who had the city at his beck and call.

Too soon for his liking, her hand was gone and she was whispering an apology as she stepped away from him.

"I really am sorry, Eddie," she told him gently, "but I'm glad that you at least understand why I have to help Oswald get rid of Galavan."

He cleared his throat," Do you need me to look at your arm? You've pulled your stitches again," he asked in an attempt to change the subject.

Kylie caught onto his intention but she went with it anyway, not really wanting to keep speaking about a subject she wasn't going to budge on, even if the way Ed looked at her made something in her chest twist uncomfortably tight.

"Yeah," she replied sheepishly, I tried to carry Oswald up the stairs. It didn't really work out."

Ed shook his head in admonishment as he steered her to the bathroom, his disapproval made known the whole way there. It was a playful kind of chastising filled with teasing and sarcasm but the initial tension was still there, concern covered hastily with lighthearted banter as Kylie's arm was restitched. When her skin had been sealed once again with nylon thread, Ed helped her change into some of the clothes she had brought from her apartment. They discovered her duffle bag resting on the kitchen counter along with a short note from Gabe listing his number and to call him if they needed help with Oswald.

As Kylie pinned the wrinkled piece of paper to a cork board above his desk, he wandered over to the living room, where a dark haired man sat slumped in a recliner.

"Do I want to know what happened?," Ed inquired curiously as he drew a blanket around Oswald's shoulders, eyeing the swollen bruise on the side of the man's head.

The blonde drove a push pin through the paper, "To Jim or to Oswald?"

Ed adjusted his glasses and glanced towards her, eyebrows slightly furrowed, "Both?" he replied, although it sounded more like a question.

"Ah, well," she said, scratching the back of her neck sheepishly, "Jim was getting the hell beat out of
him when we got there and after we handled the guys doing it, Oswald kind of lost it when he saw that Galavan wasn't there. He tried to beat information about him out of Gordon, but he was going to end up killing him."

He glanced over to the detective, who lay sprawled out on the couch a few feet away, remembering how bloody his face had been when Gabe had hauled him in.

"I knocked him out," she admitted, taking a few steps closer with her arms crossed to peer at the damage she had done.

"He'll be fine," Ed blurted out the moment her fingers gingerly brushed aside Oswald's hair.

He didn't like the way she looked at the mobster or how she adjusted the blanket wrapped around him.

"Really?" she asked with worry, "That was the first time I ever did it. I've only seen Tabitha do it once but he didn't listen to me. I didn't know what else to do."

Ed plucked her hand away from Oswald and held it in his own," You did fine," he assured her," he should be up by tomorrow."

"Okay," she said with a small sigh of relief," but what about Jim?"

Her head turned towards the pull-out cot and she took a hesitant step closer to catch a glimpse of the damage. She was surprised when the grip on her hand didn't loosen as she walked. Instead, his hand tightened it's grip and she was pulled backwards with a gentle tug.

"He's okay, too," Ed informed her hastily," Nothing broken or fractured, no brain injuries."

He looked at her with large brown eyes," I know you're worried about them and I know that I can't just ask you to stop worrying because you're a good person and good people worry about other people but I also know that you're tired and no matter what kind of person you are, you can't function properly without sleep."

A thin smile graced her lips as he spoke, touched that he was concerned for her," You're right. I just, I just feel like sleeping when we're so close to revenge is, I don't know, weird."

"Well," Ed started," I will admit that it is a bit strange to perform normal day-to-day operations with both a wanted criminal and an over-zealous detective unconscious in my home," he told her as he gently steered her towards the bed.

"However, no matter how," he paused," extraordinary our situation may be, keeping some kind of a routine will help each of us stay grounded and focused on the tasks at hand."

Metal springs creaked slightly as he pulled back the blankets of a perfectly made bed so she could crawl under. When he went to tenderly cover her back up, a warm pair of lips met his own, pressing softly.

"What would I do without you, Eddie?" Kylie breathed, blue eyes looking at him with such fondness his chest tightened," In all the chaos of this city, you're the one person who can keep me sane."

He blinked in surprise as her arms wrapped around him and she buried her face into his chest. One of his arms cradled her as the other fumbled to gain purchase on the edge of the worn quilt separating them and pull it back.
In a few moments, the two were pressed close and laying under the warmth of the thick comforter.
Chapter 26

She smiled as the sound Ed's playing and Oswald's singing drifted through the apartment. The blonde, while tired from the previous night's excursion, had tore herself from bed extra early and stolen one of Ed's aprons to make everyone breakfast. She brushed a strand of hair away from her face as she flipped a pancake, sighing in contentment. In this one moment, things were okay. She was cooking and Ed was playing and Oswald was singing and as strange as that sounded it felt right. It felt...happy. Like there wasn't a crazy billionaire trying to take over the city or an unconscious man on the couch.

So, she flitted around the small kitchen stirring and frying and flipping until there were plates of warm soft pancakes piled high on the counter. Kylie sang along towards the end of the song as she set the table and just as the last notes of the piano faded away, Oswald changed his focus to an unseen point in the living room.

"What the hell?"

The mobster smiled, still in high spirits, at the groggy detective, "At last. How are you feeling?"

Gordon groaned as he shifted in an attempt to stand," Not so good," he answered truthfully before looking at Ed in confusion, "Nygma?"

The forensic scientist leaned away from the piano with a grin," Hi!"

Oswald chucked as Jim's face remained twisted in befuddlement," Long story. He's a friend."

And before the detective could even begin asking questions, the bird-like man in front of him spoke once more," Oh, and it's not just Ed and I here!! We've got one more person, like The Three Musketeers," he said happily.

"Good morning!"

The man's eyes slid behind Oswald, where a woman stood with an apron cinched around her waist and an arm draped casually over Ed's shoulder.

"Wood?"

"The one and only," she said with a smile," I never got the chance to thank you, Jim. So, Thank you, really, you gave me another chance and I'm going to make sure I use it."

Her words were so sincere it made him uncomfortable but he gave a strained smile in return, "Don't mention it."

He turned his attention back to Oswald, who had watched the little interaction with mild interest," So...you're all...friends?

"You're welcome, by the way," he interjected, avoiding the question," No thanks needed, saving your life and all."

Gordon rubbed his jaw tiredly," Yeah. Thanks...I guess."

Oswald leaned in closer ,"No really," he said seriously with a half shrug," what are friends for?"

At the detective's uneasy look, the mobster smiled," You got beat pretty bad. That Galavan is a
pistol, isn't he?" he inquired, his voice turning sour at the utterance of the name.

Even Kylie tightened her hold on Ed ever so slightly at the sound of it.

Gordon shifted slightly and looked behind him at the windows," Yeah, he is," he agreed as he stood up."

He stumbled a bit and Oswald followed close behind," Oh, you're free to go, of course, Jim.

There was a pause.

"Desperate fugitive from the law though you be," he looked at Jim with knowing eyes," But I beg of you, sit and consider. Kylie made breakfast for all of us and I would hate for it to go to waste."

Gordon turned, looking unamused and Oswald back-tracked," You, Kylie, and I, the three of us share a bond in Theo Galavan," he said in veiled desperation," A passion, if you will."

"If there was ever a time for us to work together, now is that time."

There was a knock on the door in the late evening. Ed was still at work but Oswald had called Gabe and a small army of other men over to discuss plans for moving forward. It was him who answered the door. Kylie looked up from the gun she was loading as their visitor stepped inside.

Doctor Thompkins' eyes were wide in disbelief as she took in her surroundings. From the guns to Penguin to the dead girl in the kitchen, she saw it all. Then Jim swooped in.

"Lee!"

The reaction was instantaneous.

"What the hell are you doing?" she demanded, voiced laced in panic.

He ignored her," I need to get you out of town," he said leading her over to the kitchen and farther away from the group of gangsters," Penguin has a reliable man who can take you upstate."

"Things are gonna be unsettled for a little while."

A dozen emotions flew across her face,"Unsettled?"

Oswald smiled coldly," We're gonna take down Galavan."

"Are you out of your mind?" She whispered to Jim furiously.

Oswald looked anxious but at a loss for words. Kylie had an idea that talking to women had never been the man's strong suit.

"Doc, please," the blonde interjected," I can assure you that-"

Jim held up a hand to stop her," He has to be stopped, Lee."

The doctor looked at him in disbelief," By you? And these people?" she asked, gesturing to the gang members, Kylie included.

Jim took a deep breath and held his ground," He has to be stopped."
"You keep trying to kill yourself," she said, eyes searching the detective's face, "Have I got you all wrong? Are you just crazy?"

Jim looked away and shoved his hands in his pockets, "Of course not."

"You're on the run from the law. You wanna attack the mayor with the help of a depraved sociopath and a woman who faked her own death."

She stopped.

"How did she do that?" she demanded with an accusatory tone, "You're the one who shot her. You're the one who found the body. How'd she get away, Jim?"

He swallowed, "She had information on Galavan. She knew Penguin. I couldn't just let him kill her."

Lee shook her head, "None of that sounds crazy to you?"

"I can hear you," Oswald said, mildly offended.

"Me too," Kylie informed her, just as miffed as her partner.

"Shh! Don't speak," the doctor demanded with a glare.

She turned back to Gordon, "Jim, don't do this. Let's get out of town together. I don't care what you've done already, or what you have to leave undone. Let's just go," She pleaded.

"I can't. I can't let Galavan win this way," he told her with determination, hands holding her shoulders.

"I'm pregnant."

Jim reeled back in shock with a little noise of surprise.

Oswald rolled his eyes and sighed heavily while Kylie just let her head fall into her hands.

______________________________________________________________

It was such a quick turn of events. Gordon was supposed to be long gone with Lee when he marched back into the apartment with three other men in tow. The all-too-familiar Harvey Bullock, Bruce Wayne's butler, and a well-dressed man named Lucius Fox. It was an interesting trio to say the least. Harvey looked surprised to see her for a moment before clapping her on the back and saying something to the effect of how not even under-paid assistants can die in Gotham. The butler (whose name turned out to be Alfred) didn't seem too taken with her. He most likely remembered her from the Gala and not even a voucher from Gordon himself made.

Organized chaos was best way to describe the flurry of movement in the apartment. There were people in every corner in various states of preparation. Some were lacing boot, there were a few loading guns but most were like Kylie, focused on strapping on their bulletproof vests. She'd gotten ready like everyone else, stocking her own guns with ammunition just like Tabitha had shown her weeks ago and fitting extra rounds onto her belt. The only thing setting her apart from the rest of the makeshift militia was the forensic scientist fluttering around her in worry. He was doing his best to help, making sure her vest was in the correct position and fastened in all the right places. He asked her questions from time to time, wanting to know if that buckle felt okay or if a certain strap was too
tight. They were straightforward and terse. She knew that he didn't want her to go. Hell, she didn't even want to go and leave Ed all alone but she knew that she had to do this.

Kylie had to be there tonight, had to be sure that Theo Galavan was disposed of first-hand. It was the only way she and Ed could be safe again. The only way for her to get the files he had on her. The only way to avenge Jerome.

Her fingers of her left hand skimmed over the cool metal of his old revolver as the smooth wood inlaid handle rested in her right. She'd pulled it from the pocket of Jerome's suit jacket after he'd been stabbed. Tonight it was going to be his gun that blew out Galavan's brains. Nothing was going to get in her way.

"That's quite a gun you've got there," a voice commented offhandedly from over her shoulder, his fingers adjusting one last strap," where'd you get it from?"

Blue eyes shifted over to the man beside her as she gauged his expression. Something about him had changed in the past few seconds since she'd picked up the revolver. His face was neutral and the only feature that betrayed his mood were his eyes. They'd always been exquisitely expressive and full of feeling but now something was different. His warm brown eyes were cold as they roved over the gun in her hands. His face held a slight tightness.

"It looks familiar," he stated matter-of-factly," It looks a lot like the one Jerome Valeska used at the charity gala."

She flipped it over in her hands, the metal catching the dim lighting," That's because it is," the blonde admitted," I grabbed it before I ran."

Edward stared at the woman in front of him, face impassively cold as he surveyed her. She wasn't lying to him, which was smart, because he'd done some research. The man had scoured the web for images of the gala after he'd first laid eyes on the gun tucked away in her duffel bag. His jaw had clenched so hard that his teeth ached when he had made the connection. He didn't know as much as he'd like regarding the red headed maniac but seeing her handle a possession of his with something akin to reverence made his heart feel like it was pumping molten lava through his veins. However, he was calm now. Kylie wouldn't lie to him. She couldn't lie to him. There was no way should ever slip anything past someone like him and besides she loved him. People who loved each other didn't hide things.

Before he could ask why she'd taken the firearm Gordon's voice cut through the clamor, making her look away from him and focus instead on the head of the group.

"All right, " the detective said as he holstered his weapon," Everybody set? Let's go."

Bullock interjected immediately, looking at Jim expectantly," Woah, woah, woah, what's the plan?"

Gordon looked out across the room," We get in there, we find Galavan and we put a gun in his mouth until he gives up Bruce."

Kylie rolled her eyes. Jim Gordon as a cop with admirable dedication but his planning skills always left something to be desired in her opinion. Not that his plan mattered to her, anyway. She wasn't sticking with this ragtag group of butlers and police officers and mobsters the whole time. Once they were in, she was peeling off to find Galavan's study. He had some things that belonged to her and she intended to get them back before the GCPD confiscated all of his files. But Gordon didn't need to know about that. In fact, the only person who knew now stood directly to her left.
"And then I," she elbowed the dark-haired man and Oswald met her eyes briefly before looking away, "sorry, we kill him slowly."

Gordon stared impassively back at the duo, "No. Then we arrest him."

The mobster's face twisted in frustration but the blonde was the first to speak up this time.

"Yeah, I don't think so," she spat coming nose-to-nose with the detective, "Are you nuts? After all he's done you're just going to slap on some handcuffs and let the people decide? How well did that work out the first time, huh, Jim?"

"He's going to stand trial," Jim said calmly, "Gotham needs to know who he really is."

Kylie's left eye twitched imperceptibly and Ed watched with interest, "Gotham needs him dead!" she snarled, "He's killed more people than you can imagine, put more people at risk than you can save in your entire career. Are you really going to think he's going to get a fair trial?!"

"Rabbit, rabbit, rabbit," Alfred muttered annoyed, "Can we just stop the bunny and just first get in there, please, chaps?"

He looked between the two as they glared at each other.

"Yeah," Kylie agreed, voice still laced with malice, "Let's go."

She pressed a quick kiss to Ed's cheek with a promise to be home soon as Lucius Fox blinked in befuddlement.

"Seriously. That's it? You have no plan?" he looked at Gordon expectantly, "How are you even going to get in the building?"

"I know a way," a clear voice rang out from behind him.

Everyone turned to the window where a teenage girl in dark street clothes perched. Both Kylie and Ed peered at her from their spot standing in the living room.

Lucius looked around at group in exasperation, "Who is she?"

"Fox," Harvey introduced, "that's Cat, Cat, Fox."

Jim looked at her approvingly as she stepped through the window, "You know a way in?"

Her head cocked to one side confidently, "Yeah, I know a way in, Gordon," she confirmed, arms crossing in front of her chest as she walked though the apartment.

"How do we know you won't stitch us up," the butler demanded, "I mean you switch sides often enough. How do we know that you're not working with Galavan right now?"

Kylie observed with curiosity. Everyone here seemed to know this kid who had just broken into her boyfriend's home except her and Ed. The blonde looked up at the man whose arm still rested around her shoulders.

"I think you need to invest in a better security system, Eddie."

The girl returned Alfred's look of evident distaste and struggled to avoid rolling her eyes, "How do I know that you're not a Martian in a rubber suit?"
"I trust her," Gordon said suddenly, "You're in, Cat."

Alfred looked at him in disbelief as he continued to speak, "Thanks for your help. Grab a vest and let's go."

Lucius cut in again just as everyone began to move again, "People, surely we should have a backup strategy given the strong possibility of failure."

Oswald smiled as he hefted a shotgun over his shoulder, "Au contraire, Mister Fox. Failure is not an option," he declared with gusto.

Kylie nodded in agreement as she holstered her revolver, "Yeah, what he said."

Ed's arm released its grip on her as Gordon shrugged.

"As you like," Fox relented, clearly disapproving of the whole situation.

The blonde shot him a quick look a sympathy before giving Ed another tight hug. The brown eyed man watched her slip out the door in misery. He didn't know what she was thinking. She was just a normal person. She wasn't a crime boss like Oswald or a trained officer like Jim, Kylie could very well walk in that place to never come back out. He just didn't understand why she felt like she had to go. One person wasn't going to be the difference between that man living or dying, especially if that one person was her. It would have been so much better for the two of them to just wait out the whole thing snuggled together on the couch and watching Forensic Files.

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It must've been a sight to see. Two cops, a butler, a street kid, a dead girl, and a gang all marching purposefully down street, each with their face set in determination. Oswald hobbled furiously next to her, breathing erratically. She couldn't tell if it was because of the pace or because of how angry he was. The wind blew her bangs around her face and she was pretty sure that her pony tail smacked into Gabe a few times as they walked under the streetlights. Kylie was nervous but also excited and dead set on making Galavan pay. She ran though her own plan over and over.

"Get in, get to the study, get the files, get out, and get back to the group before they notice you're gone. And kill anyone who gets in your way."

She exhaled and felt a pair of eyes trained on her. One glance and she was staring straight over to Gordon, who looked away almost immediately. He didn't completely trust her, which was probably a good thing in his case.

Galavan was dying tonight whether he wanted him to or not.

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