Q suspects that he’ll never have a more satisfying sexual encounter, but he knows he’d be stupid to think that he is anything more than another notch on James’ bedpost.

...in which a one-night stand with James leaves Q longing for more.

Sequel to "Out of Hours", but you can read as a stand-alone.
Chapter 1

Twenty-four hours after he discovers James Bond sitting on his sofa (uninvited), on a self-proclaimed mission of seduction (accomplished), Q ventures out to buy a pint of milk and is mildly surprised to find the world pretty much as he left it. A chill rain is beginning to fall, whipped up into stinging little flurries by the wind that howls ceaselessly through the estate: he’s glad that he decided to wear his parka. In the corner shop the selection of pies and sandwiches looks as unappetising as ever, but he reckons he’s safe enough with the cheese-and-tomato (no mayo) on white bread. So far, so ordinary. Only the ache in his thighs and the occasional twinge in his backside serve to remind him how these last twenty-four hours have been anything but.

James is long gone, of course. When Q realised that he should have been in work that morning, he felt he had little choice but to ring in sick. As Q described his terrible sore throat, just awful to the sympathetic Q-branch minion who picked up the phone, James was thoughtful enough to add a certain véracité to proceedings by tightening his fingers around Q’s neck. This had the happy side-effect of getting them both hard, and the remainder of the day passed in a pleasant blur of tea, toast and several rounds of mutual masturbation.

For the finale, James rubbed them off together, his big hand around both their cocks and with so much lube all Q could feel was the delicious, frictionless slide through his fingers, impossibly tight. James had a way of twisting his thumb at the end of each upstroke, pressing firm against the rim of Q’s cockhead, that made Q shake.

‘Yeah,’ James murmured, ‘you like me touching your dick just there, don’t you?’

Q liked it very much indeed, and demonstrated his liking by reaching for James’ bollocks. He could tell from their tautness against his palm and the harsh intake of breath in his ear that James was close.

‘Come over my cock,’ Q whispered, and the sight and feel of James ejaculating - hot, wet pulses of come spilling against both their cocks and straining bellies and James’ hand - made him gasp and buck and spend himself.

James pulled him close and kissed his forehead. ‘You gorgeous, insatiable boy,’ he said.

Q must have fallen asleep shortly afterwards, for the next thing he knew he was waking up in bed, sticky and alone and in dire need of a pee. In the bathroom, a newly-damp towel slung over the rail and a scatter of water droplets across the cubicle door told the tale of James’ departure. Upon returning to the bedroom, Q checked his bedside cabinet for a note: nothing. Nothing in the kitchen either, and he checked the floor and inside all the cupboards, just in case. But James had at least fed the cats on his way out, which was thoughtful of him, Q supposes - although they probably wouldn’t have let him escape otherwise.

So what now? Q lets himself back into his flat, scarfs down his mediocre sandwich while he waits for the kettle to boil. Play it cool, he tells himself. Play it cool.

He thinks about the first time he ever saw James, in the gallery. Prior to the meet, he’d been shown photographs, and video too - he knew exactly who he was looking for. But no amount of photos or videos could convey the man’s real-life presence, the easy physicality of him. Nor the way he looked Q up-and-down. If James had only given Q the nod, that icy blue gaze would have had him on his knees in an instant (Q has a favourite and very private fantasy in which the meet ends up with him blowing James in a toilet cubicle. This fantasy is embellished with either humiliation -
you dirty little cocksucker - or praise - such a sweet fucking mouth - according to mood). They’d fallen to bantering with each other right from the start, every exchange ripe with innuendo. Q has always recognised the tension between them as something akin to a peculiarly English way of flirting - even if he did not imagine that anything would ever come of it. Until now.

The kettle is taking a bloody age to boil. Q fiddles with it, threatens it with violence, then realises that he must have turned it off at the plug when he left the flat. ‘Fuck’s sake,’ he mutters to himself.

Q suspects that he’ll never have a more satisfying sexual encounter, but he knows he’d be stupid to think that he is anything more than another notch on James’ bedpost - the damn thing must be whittled down to clothes-pegs by now, he thinks, wryly. He just hopes it won’t be awkward around Q-branch. He especially hopes that nobody will find out, he won’t be able to deal with pitying glances across the workshop, or chin-up-lad slaps on the back.

The kettle boils at last, but even Earl Grey in his favourite mug and quality time with the cats can’t seem to quell the restless seasick lurching of his heart.

Oh no, thinks Q. Oh shit. For somebody so clever, he can be a total fucking idiot sometimes.
Q doesn’t sleep very well - he feels almost as if his subconscious is paying him back for managing to silence its yammering the night before - but that’s nothing new. The next morning, he gets himself ready for work as usual. Fortunately, he spots the still-lurid hickey above his collarbone whilst shaving, and takes appropriate action: the poloneck even fits in with the sore throat story. The Q-branch minions are concerned - the Quartermaster is never off sick - and rolls of cough sweets and mugs of honeyed tea keep appearing at his elbow. Their concern might be misplaced, but it’s concern all the same, and Q is in a filthy mood by the end of the day.

James does not put in an appearance, although Q scarcely expects him to. He’s not on a mission right now, and he’s not the only agent for whom Q is responsible. It’s only a couple of days later that Q thinks to check James’ planner, just, y’know, to see if 007 might be requiring the, um, services of the Quartermaster anytime soon.

James is on authorised leave for the next three weeks. He’s gone on bloody holiday. A few casual enquiries, and Q has the whole story: an old friend, a wedding (the groom’s third - the bride is barely older than his daughter), the Seychelles.

The bloody Seychelles, thinks Q, only a tad hysterically. The weather in London is dismal: the chill rain that started up the night after he slept with James has barely let up at all. Q tries not to think about James at the wedding reception, resplendent in a bone-coloured linen suit (there’s a lovely Paul Smith number that Q reckons would do the job nicely - if only James had asked for his advice). Or lounging in the sun, working on his tan, every muscle taut and gleaming. Q tries not to think about James going for a swim, clad in a ridiculously tiny pair of trunks, the ostentatious curve of his half-hard cock beneath the tight-stretched fabric. The sort of fabric that turns just a shade transparent whenever it gets wet. No, Q tries to put all of this out of his mind.


Q thinks about literally nothing else all day. Then he goes home and wanks himself silly.

That’s just the start. Sleeping with James seems to have reset Q’s libido in an unanticipated and frankly quite alarming manner: he feels like a teenager again. His brain replays scenes from their night - and day - together over and over, stuck in an endless repeat loop. Q makes himself come twice before he leaves the flat every morning and still needs to hold a newspaper over his lap on the tube. He has to excuse himself from meetings to go and lock himself away in a toilet cubicle, biting his free hand to stopper his moans as he pulls himself off: he can’t think straight. He stays up one night constructing a complex algorithm that sniffs out examples of a very particular type of porn video (namely: blond and muscled older man nails skinny, dark-haired young geek) and downloads them straight to his laptop. As a project, it’s not entirely successful. Oh, the code works well enough, and a few of the videos stand up to repeat viewing - but the tops are never quite insouciant enough and he’s jealous of the bottoms. After two weeks of this, he’s foul-tempered and developing carpel tunnel syndrome - and still absurdly horny.
In time, Friday rolls around again. James will be back on Monday: the thought fills Q with an equal mixture of excitement and dread. At least Q has an entire weekend off in which to try and compose himself, thank god. He’s just leaving Q-branch when his mobile pings - there’s a parcel waiting for him at the corner shop. Q’s not sure exactly what this might be. Probably a replacement bulb for the cooker hood or something equally mundane, something he can’t even remember ordering.

Q picks up the parcel on his way home, along with a crappy bottle of red and a tube of Pringles. The packaging is plain brown paper with no identifying stamps or logos - he’s still none the wiser. Back at the flat, he feeds the cats, pours himself a glass of wine and takes his penknife to the parcel. He folds back the lid, plunges his hand beneath the layer of foamy packing peanuts, and draws out a -

- bloody enormous purple jelly dildo.

‘Shit!’ Q flings the thing away from him. It hits the floor, bounces once and skids across the tiles, coming to rest against the bottom of the fridge.

Q does not own any sex toys. He’s not averse to them in principle, but somehow they always remind him of - well, there are a lot of things that remind him of the secrets people keep, some of which he can never hope to discover. The sense of dread is not unfamiliar, but he’s been caught unawares. His hands are shaking. He takes a deep breath and a gulp of wine. He needs to calm the fuck down: it’s a dildo, not a hand-grenade.

There are no bodies here.

Q knocks back the rest of the wine, and thanks his lucky stars that the package wasn’t delivered twelve hours earlier - he could have easily decided to pick it up on his way into Q-branch, and open it at his workbench. He’s not sure that any of the minions would have bought into the idea of an exploding dildo, but he files the idea away in his brain, just in case.

Q walks over to the fridge, touches the dildo with his foot. On closer inspection, it’s not particularly threatening - the deep purple colour lends it a playful, almost celebratory air. Q is reminded, somehow, of chocolates and cigarettes: the dildo is intended as a present, he recognises. An indulgence. He doesn't have to expend too much brainpower in working out the identity of the sender.

He picks the dildo up, examines it more critically. The long sleek curve looks designed to hit all the right spots. The size is a little intimidating, perhaps - but, yeah. And the girth of the thing, too, the way the head flares out. Q makes a rapid mental assessment. In terms of dimensions, it’s pretty much a perfect match.

If there’s one thing Q loves, it’s attention to detail.

Chapter End Notes

An entire chapter that was just an excuse to give frustrated!Q a sex toy. Stay tuned :)
Still damp from his shower, Q stretches out on his bed and performs a quick mental checklist. Cats, busy ripping the empty box to shreds in the living room: check. Refreshments, namely wine and Pringles, sitting on the bedside cabinet: check. Lube, a sufficient quantity within easy reach: check. Dildo, rinsed clean of any cat hair or crumbs it might have picked up on its journey across the kitchen floor: check. Self, suitably prepared for a long and luxurious wank: check.

Q folds his arms behind his head and smiles up at the ceiling, wriggling his toes with glee. Now he’s had some time to think about James’ gift and what it might mean, his mood has improved no end. James might be off sunning himself on some distant beach - surrounded by boobs and bums and bikinis, no doubt - but he’s still thinking about Q. Even if all he’s after is another bout of casual sex upon his return.

Q picks up the dildo, hefts its weight against his palm. It certainly beats a postcard. He closes his eyes. *Wish you were here*, he thinks.

At this, Q’s brain begins to whirr. If James really was sitting on the armchair in the corner of Q’s bedroom right now - clad in some absurdly sleek suit with his legs crossed at the knee, only the steady up-and-down of his foot betraying a tension barely held in check - what would he want to happen? What would he say?

*Put that thing down and let me see you.*

Q pulls a pillow under his hips, draws his heels up and plants his feet wide apart. Even though he knows in his head that he is alone, the thought of exposing himself to James’ cool gaze in this way makes his breath quicken.

Now touch yourself.

Q slides his hands down his body. With his eyes shut, his sense of touch is heightened. His fingertips catch against his nipples and bump-bump across his ribcage, trailing goosebumps in their wake, moving lower to dip into the shallow bowl of his belly. His hipbones are sharp as blades, the skin stretched thin over the bone just beneath. When he reaches the crisp hair at the root of his cock -

*No. Anywhere but your dick.*
Q bites back the whine of self-induced frustration that threatens to escape his lips. Instead, he runs his hands along his thighs, over the rounds of his knees. Clasps his fingers around the narrow bird-bones of his ankles, the arches of his feet.

*Getting hard for me yet?*

*Yes, thinks Q, yes.* With every beat of his heart, his cock is lifting, stiffening, before he has even laid a finger on it.

*Touch your hole. Tease it.*

Q taps a fingertip against his arsehole, and the muscle contracts hard enough to make him gasp. He licks his finger and touches it again, circling, probing just a little. His cock is fully hard now, flat against his belly, and he can feel wetness gathering at the tip of it as he eases a fingertip inside himself, hot and almost dry against the tender skin.

*Time to rub that cock.*

Q takes himself in hand: he’s absurdly hard, and leaking so much pre-come his hand slips easily up and down the shaft. He pulls his foreskin back, thumbs the wet around his slit. His balls are already drawing up tight. He could toss himself off like this easy as blinking, he’d be blowing his load with just a few good pulls -

*You should probably find that toy I bought you now.*

Eyes still closed, Q pats his hand over the duvet until he finds the dildo. He picks it up and rubs it against his lips, kisses the tip. It doesn’t smell or taste of anything much, but he can use his imagination, he can pretend that it’s James’ prick. The heady masculine scent of him, the salt-smeared of his pre-come. *God.* Q takes the head of the dildo into his mouth, cradles it on his tongue.

*That’s enough. I already know how you like sucking cock. I want to see it in your arse.*

Feeling a little groggy - that corner shop red is rocket fuel - Q opens his eyes and rolls over onto his side. Reaching for the lube, he applies great palmfuls of the stuff to the dildo, his cock, his crack - until everything is sleek and wet. He’s making a terrible mess, and he really could not give two shits.

*Can you get it in without fingering yourself first?*

*Possibly not,* thinks Q. But it might be fun to try. He raises his knee and rubs the the dildo against the base of his spine, lets it slip down into the cleft of his arse just a little with every stroke. He holds his cock in his other hand, gives it a couple of tugs.

*Go on.*

Q presses the dildo to his hole. The broad head of the thing feels positively intimidating, but he can work up to it, he can just lie here and rock himself forward into his fist and back against the dildo. Let it nudge its way inside, blunt and insistent.

*Harder now.*

Q squeezes his eyes shut tight and turns his face to the duvet, lifts his knee higher. Sweat is breaking out across his back with the effort of holding the awkward pose. He really could have done with fingering himself a little first, but he wants it to hurt the way it did when James breached him for the first time, that inexorable push, a slow deep burn only just on the right side of pleasure.
Push it in and bear down on it.

Q tenses, strains, and the fat head of the dildo is suddenly, outrageously inside him. Q cries out and his hips jerk away from the intrusion, but the tight clutch of his arsehole holds it fast.

Lovely, Q, that looks lovely in you. Can you take a little more?

Q breathes in through his nose and tries to ease the dildo in deeper. The drag of it makes him wince, and his erection flags - he stops trying to fuck himself for a moment, works his cock back to full hardness. Slowly, he thinks. A kind of corkscrewing slide seems to work better - yeah, that’s definitely more like it. He feels himself relaxing, opening up. Now he’s got some room to manoeuvre, he can start fucking himself in earnest. He angles the dildo further forward on the next stroke, and oh, god, there - a wave of heat all the way from his arsehole to the tip of his prick. Pre-come wells up beneath his fingers.

Can you come like that?

Yes, thinks Q, yes, yes. Just a few more strokes, and he’s going lose it completely. The thought of clenching down on the dildo as he comes is making him shake. He’s going to come so fucking hard. After this, Q thinks, James is most definitely getting that exploding pen. No, scratch that, James will be getting anything he bloody wants.

Bring yourself off for me. Do it.

Q moves his hand faster over his cock as he works the dildo into his arse from behind. He is so absorbed in his delightful fantasy world, he is oblivious to anything and everything else. Which means he almost jumps out of his skin when a warm hand settles on his hip and a familiar voice observes: ‘I know you asked for flowers, Q, but I couldn’t help thinking you might appreciate something a little more...practical.’
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

In which smut ensues. Apparently I promised plot at some point. Just not this one.

‘Jesus fucking Christ!’ yelps Q. He tries to slam his legs shut and wriggle away out of reach. Given his current state, this is both awkward and not a little painful. ‘For fuck’s sake -’

‘Calm down,’ says James. ‘You’ll do yourself a mischief.’

‘I was perfectly calm before you came creeping into my flat like the fucking Milk Tray Man! Is ringing the doorbell just not stimulating enough for you? Should I be grateful you didn’t abseil in through the sodding window?’

James eyes Q’s still-impressive erection, the dildo halfway up his arse, and smirks. ‘Mm. If this is you being calm, then I’d love to see you all worked up.’

‘Go to hell,’ gripes Q, but without any real venom. Now he is recovering from his initial shock and embarrassment, it’s beginning to occur to him that he’s very naked, very aroused, and James is looking him up and down (especially down) as if he is something delicious. James is also wearing a rather fetching suit that Q has never seen him in before, and a blue shirt that brings out the colour of his eyes. Q blinks at him, lets his legs fall a little open. He puts his hand back on his cock and they both watch in breathless silence as he drags the sleek, rosy head between the tight circle of his thumb and forefinger.

‘Are you close?’ asks James, softly. He squeezes himself through his trousers. Q can see that he is already hard. ‘Can I watch?’

Q narrows his eyes, pretending to consider this proposition. James grabs his wrist and presses his tongue to Q’s palm, licks the webs of his fingers. ‘Oh. Well - yes - but only if you get your cock out for me. Fair’s fair.’

A slow smile plays at the corner of James’ lips. He lets go of Q’s wrist, starts to unbuckle his belt. ‘Deal.’

James’ cock is just as impressive as Q remembers, thick and heavily veined, a wicked curve to the shaft. Q runs his fingers along the length of it, and it jerks in James’ hand.

‘Show me how you make yourself come,’ murmurs James, ‘and I’ll fuck you with this until you come all over again.’

‘Sweet-talker,’ says Q, but he rolls back over onto his side and closes his eyes, taking hold of his cock in one hand and the dildo in the other. It’s not long before he starts to feel the same deep swell of sensation he was enjoying a few minutes before, made all the more delightful by the fact that now he can hear James breathing heavily behind him, the tiny skin-on-skin sounds of him fisting his own cock.

‘Oh god,’ whines Q, helplessly, and then he is bucking up and writhing as James suddenly grabs the end of the dildo and shoves deep inside him, striping his fist and his belly and the bed.
'Take your position, Quartermaster,' says James. ‘Face down, arse up.’

Q groans, flings an arm across his face. He feels utterly boneless, like so much fucked-out jelly. ‘Look, I know I’m irresistible, but can’t you give me a minute to enjoy the afterglow?’

James reaches over and grabs hold of his ankle. Q kicks out half-heartedly. James merely growls in annoyance, seizes his other ankle and drags Q towards him.

‘Fuck! James, pack it in,’ Q protests. He thinks he should at least pretend to put up a fight, even though James is impossibly strong. He struggles ineffectually as James flips him onto his front and hauls him over his lap, toes scrabbling for purchase against the carpet. Such expert manhandling makes him feel dizzy. ‘Let me go - I’ll wreck your suit, I’m covered in spunk -’

‘Looks good on you,’ says James, sounding amused. He pins Q with an elbow between his shoulderblades and palms his arse. ‘Better than those terrible cardigans, anyway,’ he adds, under his breath.

Q splutters, feigning outrage as best he can. Given that he is both stark-bollock naked and in a somewhat undignified position, he thinks he manages this quite well. He can feel James' hard-on poking into his ribs. ‘Are you really insulting my cardigans, James? And who recruited you to the fashion police, might I ask?’

‘Q,’ says James, coolly. There’s a warning note in his voice that Q chooses to ignore.

‘I’ll have you know, Sergeant Self-Styled Sartorial Expert -’

‘Q -’

‘- that all my cardigans are carefully selected from -’

‘You should be quiet now. Or else I’ll -’

‘Or else what?’ snipes Q, deliberately goady. Yeah, sure, so he’s lying prone across James’ legs with his bare bum sticking up in the air like a target, but it’s not as if James is going to - the very idea is outrageous - surely he wouldn’t -

James whacks him across the backside. Hard.

Ah. Apparently, he would. Exactly that.

James applies himself to the task with gusto, spanking Q until he is limp and mewling. His hand is heavy and each blow seems to be calibrated to sting as much as possible. At first, Q thrashes and yelps and humps himself - not at all discreetly - against James’ thigh, but after a while James grabs hold of his balls with his other hand so Q has no choice but to lie still and take it.

‘James,’ wails Q, at last. ‘Stop.’

‘Did you say something, Q?’ James slaps him again. ‘I’m not sure I heard you.’

‘Please,’ whispers Q. He’s not sure whether he wants to laugh or cry. His arse is on fire. ‘Pleasepleaseplease stop now. I’m begging you.’

James stops. He spreads Q’s buttocks and blows softly against his hole, making Q shiver. Then he reaches between Q’s legs to grope his cock. ‘Kinky little devil,’ breathes James. ‘Christ, the things
I want to do to you. Get up.’

He gives Q’s arse one last parting smack and lets him go, shaking out his hand. Feeling somewhat light-headed, Q clambers off James’ lap and staggers to his feet. His cock juts out in front of him.

‘Reckon you can stop your bellyaching for a bit while I fuck you?’ James asks. He takes hold of Q’s hard cock, gives him a couple of pulls. Q nods, pushing himself forward into James’ fist, shamed and excited, his face burning almost as hot as his backside. ‘Good. Now bend over.’
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

In which things go a bit pear-shaped.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Q braces his hands flat on the bed while James mounts him from behind. The spanking has made Q tighten up a little but even so, the stretching he has given himself with the dildo ensures that James’ cock penetrates him in a single, voluptuous slide.

James works him over hard, his hands on Q’s shoulders, dragging him back onto his dick with every stroke. He hasn’t even bothered to undress, and rasp of the fabric of his trousers and the heavy cold slap of his belt buckle are harsh against Q’s over-sensitised skin. Q keeps a hand on his cock while James fucks him, although he’s actually not too fussed about coming again or even keeping his hard-on. He’s just basking in the sensation of being used, knowing that - for all his earlier promises - James is intent solely on pursuing his own pleasure.

After just a few minutes, James grunts and rams into him hard enough to force him down onto his belly, and Q realises from the erratic jerking of his hips that he is coming. He stays inside Q until his cock softens before at last he withdraws.

Q lets himself sprawl out on the bed, lying onto his front to spare his sore bum. He reaches back to touch his arsehole: he likes the way he aches after a hard fuck, sweet as a bruise, and feeling another man’s come inside himself is a always a dirty thrill - only he’s slick with lube and little else. How odd, he thinks, and suspicion niggles at him.

Q looks over his shoulder to see James tying off a condom. He realises then that James must have slipped the condom out of his pocket and over his cock just as he lined himself up: he was still so high from the spanking, he didn’t even notice.

Oh.

Q withdraws his sticky fingers, wipes them on the duvet. ‘Had a nice holiday, did we?’ he asks, propping himself up on one elbow. ‘Screw anyone special?’

James shrugs, but Q can tell from the infinitesimal twitch of his eyebrows that he has registered the sudden coldness in Q’s voice. ‘Well, I’m not about to go out looking for rings anytime soon.’

‘Oh, god.’ Q claps a theatrical hand to his forehead. ‘Don’t tell me you fucked the bride.’

‘Whatever do you take me for?’ James snorts as he zips up his flies. ‘David is an old friend of mine.’ He tosses the condom in the direction of the bin: a bullseye, naturally. ‘But I suppose I might call the bridesmaids...new friends. There were five of them, can you believe it? Such lovely girls. And the deputy manager of the hotel. Also lovely. Not forgetting the trainer at the gym - well, he wasn’t a girl, obviously - but you get my drift -’ He swipes at the stained front of his trousers. ‘Shit. Got a cloth for this?’

Q just stares at him.
‘What the fuck do you want me to say, Q?’ James stares right back at him. ‘You did ask.’

Yes, thinks Q. I did. But what he says is: ‘You should get your dick swabbed. I’ll book you in with medical, if you like. Just to remind you, drug-resistant gonorrhoea is a growing problem these days.’

Q knows he has no real claim on James, but he feels justifiably irritated all the same, given that James has opted for tawdry holiday shags over barebacking with him. Now it will be another three months at least before they can do it again. And what then? Q can see his future with James - such that it is - stretching out ahead of him like an infinity mirror, a wearying repetition of tentative hope (and admittedly off-the-scale sex) followed by inevitable, heart-sink disappointment. Messing with his head, messing with his work. Unsettling the cats.

He takes a deep breath, plunges in.

‘Right. So. This has been fun but it’s not happening again, James. You can’t just pitch up at my flat whenever you fancy some cock. I’m not a bloody rentboy.’

‘No, not anymore,’ says James, silky-smooth, and - woah.

‘How the actual fuck -’ Q manages to spit out, trembling, then - ‘No. No.’ He raises his hand. ‘I don’t want to know how you found out. I just want you to promise me that you’ll never mention it again.’

But inside Q feels sick. Frantic.

Just how much does James know about him? What did he have to do to get this information, why did he want it so badly, who did he have to bribe or threaten - or fuck? Q realises that it doesn’t actually matter. What matters is that James has chosen to use this knowledge against him, with the surety of a weapon. He feels wounded. Worse, he knows that this was entirely James’ intention.

Of course, Q’s background is not unknown to MI6, but it’s very, very far from being common knowledge, and certainly nothing that would ever ordinarily be disclosed to James. Q isn’t proud of this particular time in his life, although he recognises that self-reproach is largely a waste of time: looking back, it’s not difficult for him to chart his own downfall from club kid to sex worker. There’s a fine line between sex on drugs, and sex for drugs. And once you’re having sex for drugs, then you might as well be having sex for money, because all the sex and all the drugs don’t really leave much time for anything else.

So it went, for a while.

Q managed to clean himself up, get out. Then, after Alex’s death, everything went quite spectacularly to shit and he found himself being sucked into that particular cesspool once again. A narrow escape, this time. The only good thing to come out of the whole tragic mess was that it set him off on a trail that led - eventually - to Q-branch.

Q gets up off the bed and pulls his trousers back on. His hands are shaking so badly he can barely fasten his zip. Tea, he thinks. He needs tea, and to curl up with his cats for a bit and to think about all the screw-ups he has made in his life, and how the past keeps coming back to bite him on the arse again and again. James is still standing in the middle of the room, watching him, saying nothing.

‘You can see yourself out,’ Q says, as he stalks off to the kitchen.
Look! Look! Plot and everything! :P
Monday lunchtime, and the first sunny day in what seems like forever, so Q decides to venture to a café in an attempt to rid himself of the worst of his screen-tan. Of course, a sunny lunchtime means that Riverside Walk is heaving, and even though Q manages to bag a seat outside, it’s not long before he is beginning to regret his decision. He can’t out stay out for long, and the crowds of office workers in cheap polyester suiting are offending his delicate aesthetic sensibilities and giving him a headache. Worse still, there are a couple of street-sellers working the tables, and being hassled to buy things he could not possibly want always sets Q’s teeth on edge. One of the street-sellers is peddling selfie-sticks (a symbol of a civilisation in terminal decline, to Q’s mind), whilst the other is carrying a bucket full of plastic-wrapped red roses with blackened petals.

Q takes out his phone and hopes that this will be sufficient to convey the message that he does not wish to be disturbed. Within minutes, the rose-seller is advancing upon him and reaching into his bucket with a flourish. Q shakes his head and holds his phone up in front of his face in an attempt to deflect the inevitable spiel: *a rose for your girlfriend, your wife, your mother.*

‘No, thank you,’ he says, swiping pointedly at the screen.

The rose-seller does not move. Out of the corner of his eye, Q can see that he is holding out a rose.

‘I said, no thanks.’

‘It’s for you.’

‘I don’t want to buy a rose.’

‘But he said it was for you.’

At this, Q looks up. The rose-seller is pointing the rose at his head like a gun: Q recoils despite himself.

‘What? Who said?’

‘He did!’ says the rose-seller, gesturing behind him. Q follows the direction in which he is pointing, but can see nobody he recognises: just more worker-bees buzzing up and down the walkway, giddy with sunshine and café frappés. The rose-seller shrugs, throws the rose down on the table and saunters off.

Q unwraps the rose from its cellophane sheath. He can see now that it is quite different from the rose-seller’s other offerings. It’s beautiful, for a start, and the bloom is white rather than red: white as fresh-fallen snow with petals only just beginning to open, leaves like green patent leather folded tight against the stem. He picks it up for a closer look, and immediately drops it again. The entire length of the rose is etched with vicious, dark-red thorns, all hidden beneath the leaves.

‘Shit!’ he says. Blood wells up on his fingertip.

When a waiter appears, Q orders an Earl Grey for himself, and a glass of tap water for the rose.

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‘Good evening, Quartermaster,’ says James.
They’re in Q’s workshop. Everybody else has long since gone home. Q has been sitting here for hours, his backside going slowly numb. The bench before him is strewn with tools and circuit boards and half-drunk cups of tea, although an empty Club-Mate bottle holding a single white rose provides a somewhat incongruous addition to the usual clutter. Earlier on, the rose had attracted a variety of comments from the minions, ranging from snide to speculative - or at least until Q began to muse aloud about his plans to use its thorns as a poison delivery system. Beneath a blue sticking-plaster, his finger is still throbbing.

All day, Q has been waiting for James to put in an appearance at Q-branch. All day, he has wondered what he might do or say when he did. Now that James is finally standing opposite him, he realises that he does not even know how he feels.

‘Was there something you wanted, 007?’ Q asks.

‘Yes.’ James leans over the bench. ‘I wanted to see you.’

‘What unfortunate timing.’ Q chases a bead of solder into place with the tip of his soldering iron. ‘As you can see, I am remarkably busy right now.’

‘I’m sorry,’ says James, abruptly.

Q puts down the soldering iron. He reaches up and yanks the head of his desktop lamp around so that the light is angled directly in James’ face. James blinks and screws up his eyes against the glare, but stands firm.

‘I’m sorry,’ he says again.

‘Are you,’ says Q.

‘Yes.’ Then James steps sideways, out of the light. ‘Q. You of all people must know I’m not good with -’

‘Your issues with intimacy are well-documented, James. In every psychological assessment you’ve ever deigned to attend. Which isn’t many, granted, although that’s a discussion for another day.’ Q steeples his fingers. ‘Chronic difficulties with forming lasting or meaningful attachments. Ascribed to a long-standing history of trauma.’

James speaks softly. ‘That’s something we both understand, then.’

Q takes off his glasses and grinds the heel of his hand against his forehead.

James continues, in the same soft voice, ‘Now I know what happened - to you - to Alex -’

Q flinches at the mention of the name. ‘Don’t,’ he says. ‘Just don’t.’

There is a silence. James picks up a screwdriver from the bench. Q frowns at him and plucks it from his grasp.

‘Q,’ James tries again. ‘You know I am -’

‘A heartless, self-serving bastard who takes perverse pleasure in hurting people?’

‘Well yes,’ says James, as if this is quite an entirely reasonable thing to be - and in a double-oh’s world it probably is, Q supposes. ‘But I’m still sorry.’ He pauses. ‘Although I seem to recall that you are not entirely averse to me hurting you, under certain circumstances.’
Q snorts. ‘Touché,’ he says, but the words trigger a sudden rush of memory: James taking him naked over his lap and spanking him, his heavy hand raining down blow after blow on Q’s bare arse. James entering him, filling him, making him catch his breath with both the pain and pleasure of it. How James seems to understand intuitively Q’s need for these things without asking, or even being told. His cock stirs.

As if sensing Q’s flare of arousal, James sidles around the bench to stand behind him. ‘I am finding myself,’ he says, ‘stupidly attracted to you, Quartermaster.’ His hands settle on Q’s shoulders.

Q harrumphs. ‘Well I don’t see what’s so stupid about it, myself.’

James laughs, warm and low, touches his lips to the back of Q’s neck. ‘Come here.’ He eases Q off his stool and into his arms. He starts to move in as if for a kiss, but Q places a hand flat against his chest, halting him.

‘I was warned about about you. When I started.’

‘Were you now.’ James does not seem displeased by this. He leans forward and mouths insistently at Q’s throat, just below his ear, his hands sliding over Q’s back.

‘James. Everybody is.’ Again, this revelation does not seem to bother James in the slightest. He simply seizes Q’s head and kisses him, his tongue delving deep and forceful into Q’s mouth until Q feels himself growing hot with the implicit promise of penetration. Then he turns Q around and pushes him up against the bench: Q lets him. He has a feeling that he might live to regret giving in so easily, although it’s difficult for him to afford more than a passing thought to this possibility when James is breathing such wicked words into his ear.

‘I could have you right now -’ he is saying, and each word is punctuated with a grind of his hips, so that Q can feel the prod of his dick against his backside, ‘- just take your pants down and bend you over and screw your tight little arse.’

Q knows he is fighting a losing battle, but there are still standards to be upheld. ‘No,’ he says, trying to wriggle free but James is holding him fast, ‘no.’

‘No?’ James seems taken aback. His mouth stills on Q’s neck.

‘I mean, no. Not here, for a start, and not like that. Not more hit and run.’ Q can feel a blush crawling across his cheeks. ‘If you want me, you’ll have to make it worth my while.’

‘Christ, do I need to spell it out for you?’

‘Mm.’ James kisses him again, presses a smile into Q’s skin. ‘I’ve already bought you a present. And flowers. You’ll be asking me to take you out for dinner next.’ His hand creeps between Q’s legs, cups him there. ‘God. You’re so hard.’

‘Give over.’ Q pushes James’ hand away and twists around to glare at him, outraged. ‘You bought me a dildo because you thought I’d be home alone pining for your cock while you shagged your way around the Seychelles. Then you bought me a flower - singular - because you dredged up a particularly hurtful episode from my past purely in order to offend me.’ He takes a deep breath. ‘And I’ve still been stupid enough to let you fuck me every which way. The bloody least you can do now is take me out for dinner.’
James just looks at Q for a long moment: Q meets his gaze unwaveringly. At last he says, ‘Friday, then. Eight o’clock. I’ll send a car to pick you up.’
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

All the feelings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Q is not sure what to expect - ostentatious West End glamour? A burger joint? A part of him still wonders whether James will be unable to resist the opportunity to take the piss - but the restaurant turns out to be a tiny family-run Italian place way out east. Red leather banquettas, a minimal menu of daily specials scrawled on a chalkboard hung behind the bar, perilously guttering candles in every corner. Even though his own tastes incline towards the type of artfully-styled eateries where the definition of a plate is flexible at best, Q is impressed: he recognises a well-guarded local secret when he sees one.

James is already seated, drinking a glass of wine and reading the cricket scores on his phone: he’s wearing a charcoal-grey suit and a black shirt open at the collar.

‘Why, James,’ says Q, with a grin, ‘you look exactly like a highly-trained assassin.’

James puts his phone away, looks him up and down. Q decides not to mention the fact that he has spent an entire hour fretting over what to wear: flinging various items of clothing all around the bedroom, checking out the shape of his arse in the mirror and finally, in desperation, consulting the cats (he went for the jacket they sniffed at first).

‘I’d say that the last time I saw a jacket like that you weren’t even born,’ says James at last, ‘but I’m sure you’ll only tell me that it’s achingly fashionable and very expensive, so I’ll just observe that you scrub up nicely, Quartermaster.’

‘You’re learning,’ says Q.

The food is predictably delicious. Q wades manfully through a platter of antipasti and is making inroads into an enormous bowl of fettucine alfredo when he realises that James is watching him with unconcealed amusement.

‘What’s so funny?’ he says.

‘I’m impressed,’ says James. ‘Where on earth are you putting it all?’

‘The average brain burns approximately eleven calories an hour,’ Q tells him. ‘Think about it.’

‘Good that you’re taking some serious carbs on-board though. You’ll need to keep your strength up.’ James gives him a meaningful look.

‘You are,’ says Q, twirling pasta around his fork, ‘literally the most appalling man.’

James grabs Q’s wrist. ‘Kiss me.’

‘What, here? Now?’ Whilst Q considers himself to be very much out of the closet, he doesn’t know this place, and he finds public displays of affection distasteful. He looks doubtfully towards the
bar, where a grey-haired man he takes to be the owner of the restaurant is polishing glasses and laughing with one of the waitresses.

James follows his gaze. ‘Antonio? You think he’d care? Gay as a goose, my young friend.’

Antonio catches Q’s eye, and winks at him. James raises a hand and Antonio waves back.

‘Christ, James, they know you here?’

James raises an eyebrow. ‘Is that a problem?’

‘No - of course not.’

‘So why so shy, all of a sudden?’

‘No reason. I mean - only -’ Q hesitates. He’s not without vanity, and he knows full well that his whippet-hipped boyishness is considered attractive by some: he’s never been short of offers. But he also knows that James favours women over men, as a rule, and he’s seen these women. He wonders if Antonio has seen them too, and he wonders just how odd he and James must look together in comparison. ‘I was just thinking.’

‘Terrible habit. What about?’

‘You could have anyone you want.’

‘Oh, I’m planning to.’ James gives him a lazy smile. ‘Assuming he can even bring himself to kiss me.’

Q steels his nerve and leans across the table. He’s planning on a quick peck, but James has other ideas. The kiss is lingering, suggestive. James’ hand cups the back of Q’s head, and his tongue probes Q’s mouth: he tastes of red wine.

Settling back into his chair, Q adjusts himself surreptitiously under the table before sneaking a glance around the restaurant. Nobody - Antonio included - is paying them the slightest bit of attention. Only James is looking at him, that same lazy smile playing at the corner of his lips.

Q feels something suspiciously, unnervingly close to happiness.

James pays for the meal: Q does not so much as offer to split the bill (the bloody least you can do). As he sits fiddling with the stem of his wineglass, Q is tense with anticipation. Before leaving his flat, he’d stashed condoms and sachets of lube in his pockets - like a good Boy Scout, prepared for any eventuality - but even though James has made his intentions pretty clear, Q is still not entirely sure how or where the night is heading. Or whether an occasion that seems to have all the trappings of a date truly is the start of something.

Q holds his breath as James exchange pleasantries with the waitress. She is dark-haired, pretty: Q watches James closely. Although he sees him look her up and down - it’s like he can’t even bloody help himself, thinks Q - he doesn’t turn on the full blast of his charm. When she finally walks away to fetch their coats, with a hefty tip tucked into her apron, James reaches out to touch Q’s hand across the table.

‘Will you sleep with me tonight?’ he says.
:)
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

C'est porn! And pretty much nothing but porn, for 1,500 porny words of, um, porn :)

‘What do you want, Q?’ asks James softly. He pushes Q’s unbuttoned shirt off his shoulders. ‘Tell me.’

There are all sorts of things that Q wants. Some of which he thinks it might not be prudent to voice aloud, and others that he thinks James might be more receptive to hearing - although he’s finding it hard to prioritise right now, given that they’re kneeling face-to-face on the bed and James is turning his attention to unbuckling Q’s belt.

‘I…’ Q lifts a hand to stroke James’ cheek, traces the deep grooves between his nose and mouth. He touches his finger to James’ lip and James bites at his fingertips, looking amused, quizzical. Oh you, thinks Q. You. He feels stricken with longing, but what he says is, ‘will you touch my cock?’

James laughs, pushes him down onto his back. ‘A man of simple pleasures. I like that.’

Q lifts his hips so James can tug down first his trousers and then his pants. His cock is already half-hard. ‘I’m feeling a little inebriated,’ Q confesses as James licks and kisses his way down his body: his nipples, his hipbones, his belly. ‘Don’t think badly of me if I can’t keep it up, will you?’

James gives him a condescending glance. He dips his tongue into Q’s navel, making him squirm. ‘Oh, you’ll keep it up all right.’

They’re in the bedroom of a serviced apartment overlooking the river. Q knows that this apartment is not James’ home - and it’s quite possibly a place where he regularly entertains his conquests, all elegant Danish furniture and an enormous bed decked out in grey linens - but he’s not about to press the issue. At any rate, the view across the river is spectacular: a panorama of glinting dark water and the dazzle of buildings beyond, the night sky umber with reflected light.

And the view from the bed is even better, Q thinks, eyeing the muscular turn of James’ bare chest and shoulders as he sits up to shrug off his shirt before tossing it aside.

James had laughed when Q - dizzy with lust and alcohol - emptied the contents of his pockets on the bed almost as soon as they entered the room, but now he reaches for two of the sachets of lube. He stripes the contents of the first along the length of Q’s erection, the cool gel making Q breathe in sharply. The second he applies to his own palms.

‘Remember the other night?’ James says, quite casually, as he rubs his hands together. ‘I loved watching you play with yourself. You got so worked up, didn’t you? You don’t even know how many times I’ve beaten off thinking about that.’

‘Oh god,’ whispers Q.

‘Maybe I’ll show you one day. Tie you to a chair and make you watch me pull my dick. Would you like that?’ Q can only moan in reply. James drags Q’s hands up above his head, wrists crossed, and sets to work. ‘Don’t you dare move.’
Q couldn’t even begin to count the number of hand-jobs he’s given and received, both at his own hands and those of other men. None of them compare to the sensation of James’ strong, confident hands stroking him up and down. Sometimes James uses both hands on his shaft, sometimes he massages Q’s balls or circles the head of his cock with his palm.

It’s not long before James pauses to unzip his flies and bring out his own cock: he growls at Q to stay still when he moves as if to reach for it. Even though Q can tell James must be aching to be touched - his cockhead is flushed deep and shiny with precome, the foreskin peeled right back - he only gives himself the odd stroke, concentrating instead on bringing Q to the edge.

‘God, James, you’re getting me close,’ Q manages to say. He squeezes his eyes shut tight, trying to hold back the swelling tide of pleasure. He is desperate to come, and yet he never wants it to be over.

‘Don’t close your eyes, Q. Watch me milk your cock.’ James’ voice is low, authoritative - it’s a tone that goes straight to Q’s dick - but then, unexpectedly, he chuckles. ‘Your sex flush is very fetching, by the way.’

‘You absolute shit,’ Q snorts, opening his eyes to look down the length of his body to where James’ hand is moving fast on his cock. He’s ferociously hard, the entire length of his prick straining and sleek with lube. Suddenly he is gasping and pushing his hips up as his orgasm takes him unawares. ‘Oh. Oh,’ he gasps. ‘James, I’m coming -’

‘Fuck,’ hisses James as semen pulses from the tip of Q’s cock, ‘fuck -’ He rears up to shove down his trousers and underwear to his knees before bracing himself with his elbows on either side of Q’s head, leaning in low to drag his cock back-and-forth through the warm slick of come on Q’s belly. Their cockheads bump and jostle together, making them both gasp. ‘Now,’ James says, ‘I need you to pump my dick, sweetheart -’

Q doesn’t need to be told twice: he takes hold of James’ cock in both hands and works the skin up and down over the rigid shaft. James groans and thrusts himself forward into Q’s hands, his balls slapping against Q’s knuckles. Once, twice, three times - and he is tense and shaking, hot spurts of come lashing against Q’s skin.

‘Q,’ he breathes, ‘oh god - you make me come so fucking hard -’ He reaches between them and closes his fingers around Q’s still-twitching cock, squeezing and rubbing at the head until Q - now hopelessly overstimulated - makes a low, desperate noise of protest. ‘Too much?’

‘A little,’ Q confesses. He’s still holding James’ cock, and James is still pushing himself into his hands, more gently now as he begins to soften. ‘Can I call time for a bit?’

James laughs and lets him go. He kisses Q’s lips, his jaw, his neck, circles his fingers through the mess on Q’s chest, painting his nipples with their mingled semen. ‘You best be up for seconds, my lovely boy,’ he says. ‘Because I’m nowhere near finished with you yet.’

***

Q opens his eyes.

‘Out for the count,’ says James. ‘One hour, eighteen minutes and forty-five seconds.’

‘Known in the trade,’ yawns Q, ‘as a disco nap.’

They are lying naked together on the bed, James’ hand resting on Q’s hip and Q’s face buried in James’ neck. There’s a blanket drawn up around their waists: Q realises that James must have
covered the pair of them sometime after he fell asleep. He feels oddly touched. Up until now, James’ solicitude towards Q has consisted largely of ensuring that he gets off and making him the occasional cup of tea - and whilst this has certainly not gone unappreciated (the tea almost as much as the sex), Q has tried not to interpret such actions as any demonstration of commitment. But it seems as if a brief gesture of affection on his part might well be acceptable at this stage, so he lifts his head to touch his nose to James’. James nuzzles him right back then presses his lips to his forehead, which makes Q’s heart clench. Stop that, he tells it. A thought strikes him. ‘Hey. Have you been watching me sleep? Because that’s just weird.’

‘You looked so peaceful,’ says James.

This is not at all the answer Q expects. To cover his consternation he rubs his eyes and sits up, reaching for his glasses. Emotionally, he’s feeling pretty good, but physically - he’s been better. The dull throb of an imminent hangover is just beginning to make itself known. And his teeth feel furry. There’s a glass of water on the bedside table. He can’t remember getting it. James must have put it there for him. He drinks it down. He’d like a cup of tea, but he’s not sure if James’ shag-pad contains anything as prosaic as a kettle and teabags, although there’s probably a fancy Gaggia tucked away somewhere.

‘Bleugh,’ says Q. ‘My mouth feels like something died in it.’

Before he can even protest, James has pulled him back down onto the bed and is kissing him. He runs his hands down Q’s back, over the sharp wings of his shoulderblades and the long bony ladder of his spine, down to squeeze his backside. His fingertips edge into the cleft, seeking, stroking. That first touch against Q’s arsehole has Q angling his hips in a wordless plea for more. James circles the tensing muscle with a fingertip, his tongue exploring the inside of Q’s mouth in sensual counterpoint.

Just as Q is feeling himself opening up to James’ caresses, his cock beginning to lift again, James pulls away and mock-grimaces. He ignores Q’s whine of frustration. ‘You’re not wrong,’ he says. ‘Your arse tastes better than that mouth.’

Q punches him on the shoulder. It’s like punching a sandbag, no give at all. ‘Well then, why don’t you kiss my arse instead?’ says Q. ‘Seeing as you’re so bloody keen.’

James gives him a wolfish look. ‘They did tell me you were a genius,’ he says, kicking the blanket to the foot of the bed, ‘but I’m not sure if I believed it up until now. On your front.’
As James licks and kisses his arsehole, Q wonders dizzily if it is possible to actually die from too much pleasure. He’s not even sure how long he has been lying here like this, a pillow under his hips and his legs spread, with James’ tongue working its obscene magic: sometimes teasing and soft, bridling wetly against him, sometimes pushing, probing, the tiniest and most intimate penetration. Until at last James gives his backside a parting kiss and Q can hear him sitting up, the rasp of his stubble as he wipes his mouth on the back of his hand.

‘You ready to fuck now? Want some cock?’

‘God,’ says Q. ‘Yes. Yes. Put it in me.’ He expects to be taken as he is, from behind: he has a feeling that James likes it that way and he does too. It’s the animalistic nature of it, the sweet humiliation of submitting, offering himself up on his knees and elbows. So he’s surprised when he feels James’ hand on his shoulder, pulling him back.

‘Stand up,’ he says.

Q clambers off the bed, clutching his cock, feeling a little unsteady. He turns to find James sitting and eyeing him expectantly, legs spread, one hand toying with his erection.

‘Fancy a ride?’

Q blinks, looks him up and down. He raises his eyebrows. ‘I’m not going anywhere near that thing til it’s wrapped and greased.’

James smirks and picks up one of the condoms and sachets of lube strewn across the bed, and throws them at him. Q fumbles to catch the small packets against his chest.

‘Lazy bugger,’ he says. ‘What did your last servant die of?’

‘Bliss,’ says James, which makes Q roll his eyes, but he kneels between James parted thighs all the same.

‘Right,’ says Q, as he splits the condom from its foil. ‘This used to be a bit of a party trick of mine, so to speak. Let’s see if I can get it on first time.’ He puts the reservoir of the condom between his lips.

The expression on James’ face is a picture: it’s all Q can do not to spit the condom out laughing. ‘You can have as many goes as you like,’ he says.

Much as Q is tempted to make a hash of things just for the sheer naughtiness of having to do it again, his habitual desire to demonstrate his proficiency wins out. He takes hold of James’ cock and eases it into his mouth in one smooth movement, sliding down the condom at the same time. The taste of latex is vaguely unpleasant - he’s sure James would prefer to be sucked off bare too,
although he only has himself to blame on that score - but beneath it he can feel the solid heat of
James’ prick against his tongue.

James’ hand settles on his head as Q pauses for a moment to unroll the end of the condom with his
other hand. ‘I’m beginning to think there’s no end to your talents, Q.’

Q bobs his head up and down a few times before pulling off James’ cock with a wet, lascivious
smack of his lips. ‘You’re right. There isn’t.’ He tears the corner off the packet of lube and smears
it along James’ shaft before wiping his fingers in the cleft of his own backside.

‘Mm. Arrogant little thing, aren’t you?’ James’ fingers tighten in Q’s hair, gripping hard enough to
be almost painful. He jerks Q’s head back, making him hiss. ‘Wonder if you’ll be acting quite so
superior when you’re sitting on my cock?’

Q deploys his best come-hither smile. ‘Want to find out?’

In return, James fixes him with a look of such rapaciousness, such unbridled lust, Q feels a wave of
heat rush straight to his groin. ‘Get up here.’

Q stands, conscious of his own cock swaying stiffly between his legs as he does so. He climbs up
on the bed and squats astride James’ lap, draping his arms around his neck. It feels a little perilous,
but James keeps one hand in the small of Q’s back to anchor him, and Q knows he will not let him
fall.

‘Here.’ James reaches down between his legs to steady his cock. Q feels the head nudge against his
arsehole. ‘Now sit.’

It’s easier said than done: Q knows he can’t take it all at once. He has to go slow, rub himself open.
Before long, his thighs are trembling with the effort of holding the awkward posture. They both
gasp when the head of James’ cock finally breaches the tight muscle and sinks inside.

‘Christ,’ James groans, ‘I’ve been eating your little arse for hours, and you’re still so fucking
tight.’

Q is sweating, writhing as he tries to ease himself down. ‘Or maybe you’re just hung like a bloody
horse. Fuck -’ He gasps as James grabs his hips and thrusts up into him.

‘Come on,’ says James. ‘You can do better than that.’

Q mewls as James’ cock presses deeper inside him, inch by slow inch, until at last he is fully
seated in James’ lap.

‘Look at this,’ James breathes. He runs a finger along the underside of Q’s cock, teases the slit. Q
squirms: the sensation of pressure inside him is making him wet. ‘Look at you.’ James strokes his
hands up and down Q’s back and gives him a slow, wicked smile. ‘Shall we take a little walk,
darling?’ He hooks his elbows under Q’s knees and stands up, hoisting Q into the air as if he
weighed no more than a feather.

‘For fuck’s sake -’ Q yelps, half-delighted, half-enraged. ‘James - put me \textit{down} -’

James grabs hold of Q’s arse with both hands, spreads him. ‘Oh, I don’t think you mean that, do
you?’ He bounces Q up and down on his cock. Q hears himself make a startled, guttural noise.

‘No,’ says James. ‘I didn’t think you did.’
He crab-walks them both to the wall, slams Q against it hard enough to make him gasp. Q reaches back to brace himself with one hand and manages somehow to get the other around his prick, even though he’s laughing so much he can hardly breathe. His spine is grinding up and down the wall as James angles his hips and fucks up into him, driving in deep and hard - he’ll be sore all over tomorrow.

He doesn’t care. Not when James is kissing and biting at his neck, his shoulders, anywhere within reach. Not when he can feel his orgasm already building in his arsehole, his balls, pleasure spreading from the root of his cock right the way to the tip -

‘James,’ gasps Q. ‘You wonderful, ridiculous man.’ As he comes, he cannot stop laughing.

***

Q knows insomnia - how the watchfulness of 3am gives way to the teeth-grinding frustration of 4am, the limp resignation of 5am - so when he wakes in the early hours he’s not surprised to find himself lying alone in the bed, the room lit by the tiny, insect glow of a mobile phone screen. He turns over, fumbles for his glasses on the bedside table.

James is sitting on a chair by the window. He is barefoot and his shirt is only half-buttoned but he is otherwise dressed. He’s frowning over his phone, scrolling rapidly up and down with impatient flicks of his thumb.

‘Why don’t you come back to bed?’ Q says. ‘You won’t disturb me.’

James looks at him. His expression is distant, preoccupied. After a moment, he shakes his head.

***

A thin grey light seeps through the gap between the curtains. Q sweeps his hand across the empty space in the bed next to him. The sheets are cold: he wonders whether James has even moved from the chair all night. Then the mattress shifts and Q realises that James is sitting on the edge of the bed. Q props himself up on one elbow. James is pulling on his jacket. Q registers - with a fast-growing sense of dismay - that he appears to be in something of a hurry.

‘James? What’s happened? Where are you going?’

James half-turns, tugging at the cuffs of his shirt. ‘I didn’t mean to wake you. I’ll leave the keys with the concierge. You can just can let yourself out when you’re ready.’

‘But why -’ Bemused and chill with apprehension, Q sits up, reaching out a hand to touch James’ shoulder. Then he falters, lets his hand drop: James’ face is as impassive as a wall.

‘I don’t think I can be the man you want me to be, Q.’

***
Three weeks later, James is on a mission in Odessa when all contact with him is unexpectedly, irretrievably lost.

***

Seven years later, in accordance with UK law as pertains to missing persons, the High Court issues a Declaration of Presumed Death for Commander James Bond.

Chapter End Notes

Still two more chapters to go!! Don't hate me! (Please!!) ;P
Chapter 10

Seven years, six months and three days later, Q is in Room 34 of the National Gallery, sitting on a bench in front of Turner’s *Fighting Temeraire*. In the half-hour that has elapsed since he sat down, three different but equally seedy-looking men have tried to pick him up. He wonders if he is giving off vibes, or whether he has somehow failed to notice that this particular spot is in fact some kind of cruising ground. Unlikely, though it might explain why James gave him short shrift the first time they met.

This idea makes Q shake with laughter, which he tries his best to disguise as a cough. All right then: maybe he should just go with the flow. Maybe the next guy to try his luck will be more Q’s type. A little bit older, somewhat worn around the edges, but still in good nick. It would be nice not to go home alone.

‘Do you come here often?’ one of the seedy men had asked him, the oldest line in the book - *I used to*, Q wanted to say. *Not anymore*. There was a time when he found himself drawn to the gallery as if pulled by a magnet, if he wasn’t in Q-branch he was sitting staring at that fucking painting. The staff who regularly worked Room 34 started saying hello to him. They must have thought he had some kind of fetish, or else they were worried he was going to turn out to be one of those nutters who likes to carve up masterpieces for laughs. He was always faintly surprised he was never told to indulge his weird obsession elsewhere, or taken aside and told that there were millions of other paintings in the world, whenever he was ready to move on.

This is the first time he’s been to the gallery in ages.

Almost a month has passed since James’ memorial service. Q was asked to give a reading, in his capacity as James’ friend and erstwhile Quartermaster. *Not* as his - well, whatever. Q knows he’d be deluded to describe himself as James’ lover, but even so, he likes to think that he was more than just another casual fuck. And he has to smile at the fact that their affair remains a secret: MI6 might be a hotbed of office gossip and intrigue, but not one of his colleagues has ever realised what was going on, right under their very noses.

As for the service, Q knew there was only one thing he could possibly read. He’s proud that he made it almost to the end before his voice started quavering:

*There’s a far bell ringing*

*At the setting of the sun,*

*And a phantom voice is singing*

*Of the great days done.*

*There’s a far bell ringing,*

*And a phantom voice is singing*

*Of renown for ever clinging*
To the great days done.

Afterwards, there were drinks, followed by more drinks - and even more drinks in an impromptu piss-up back at Q-branch, with everyone who had ever worked with James swapping stories of his most obnoxious behaviour and narrow-squeak escapes: the newer recruits were agog. Q’s hangover lasted for two days.

The white rose he wore in his lapel lasted a little longer, in a shot-glass of water on his kitchen windowsill.

Q has long since stopped blaming himself for what happened. For sure, James’ sudden departure from the apartment that morning knocked him for six. But Q was foolish to allow himself to hope that a man notorious for his lack of commitment and denial of his bisexual tendencies would suddenly decide that, actually, a long-term gay relationship with a bitchy, bespectacled code monkey fifteen years his junior was exactly what he wanted.

No, Q was only ever going to get his heart broken.

Although it wasn’t just about that, of course - there was all the stuff with Alex he’d never properly dealt with. Not to mention his time on the game. His fucked-up sleep and flashbacks, forever trying to hide from his past: everything coming to a head all at once.

The morning after his last night with James, Q went into MI6 on what was supposed to be his day off, where he made a number of wince-inducing confessions: he wasn’t feeling so well, he needed time out, a good six weeks or so at least, and whatever support people got to help them deal with seeing their murdered lover’s body rotting in a trunk every time they closed their eyes.

Yeah. That.

Everyone was so very understanding - still, why wouldn’t they be? In his more cynical moments, Q reminds himself that he was - he is - far too valuable an asset to national security for MI6 to lose.

But it meant he wasn’t guiding the mission when James disappeared.

He’s gone through the logs a thousand times. He can’t fault Q-branch’s handling of the mission in his absence. The situation wasn’t even considered high-risk: nobody could have foreseen that what seemed at first to be a simple breakdown in comms - a mere technical hitch - would signal the arrival of a disaster that remains both unknown and unexplained. There’s nothing that Q himself could have done any differently, had he been there. The outcome would have been exactly the same, only he would have had to live with the memory of James’ voice cutting out in his earpiece, replaying the moment in his head over and over again.

A part of him is glad that he doesn’t. Call it selfishness or self-preservation - he doesn’t care to work out which.

This is what Q tells himself, and it seems to be working. He’s taken up running, of all things - Alex would surely laugh, if only he knew - and the faster he goes, the further the demons fall behind. Despite everything, he feels stronger than he has done in - well, forever, really.

He’s not sure if he’ll ever come back to Room 34 again.
The poem Q reads at James’ memorial service is - naturally - ‘The Fighting Temeraire’ by Sir Henry Newbolt.
Q takes out his phone and checks the time. He needs to get going soon. The woman who has been sitting next to him for the last few minutes gets up and wanders off, and somebody else takes her place. A man. Q can tell this without looking, from the added weight on the bench and the bulk of the presence beside him.

Q’s senses are suddenly on high alert. Something about the way the molecules of nitrogen and oxygen and carbon dioxide in the air have scattered and rearranged themselves has set his skin tingling: he’s always maintained you can’t live with cats all your life and not learn something. He finds himself inching backwards, trying to steal a glance at the newcomer without actually turning round and giving himself away, when -

‘The inevitability of time, I think you said.’

‘Oh. Oh my god.’ Q hides his face in his hands. He can’t look. He can’t breathe.

‘Q. Q. Look at me, please.’

‘Why the hell should I? You’ve been dead for seven years, James. Seven fucking years -’

‘All right. Keep your voice down. There’s no need to be so bloody dramatic.’

‘Dramatic?’ Q is trembling - furious - but he knows he must try not to shout, must not draw attention to himself in this public space. He takes a deep breath, looks up and there, sitting right beside him, is James: undeniably alive and seemingly unscathed, dressed in his habitual suit and tie. ‘What the actual fuck - where on earth -’

James shakes his head. ‘I can’t talk about it, Q. At least, not here. And not yet.’

For Q, who has spent his entire adult life in the business of secrets - both the keeping and the unearthing of them, secrets belonging to himself, to other people, to networks and agencies and governments - this is not an unreasonable answer. And he knows that right now, it is the only answer he is going to get. He nods. ‘Understood,’ he says, tightly. Even though he wants to grab James by the elbows and shake the secrets right out of him.

Calm, Q tells himself. He clenches and unclenches his fists, wills his breathing to settle. Calmcalmcalmcalm.

‘Christ,’ says James. ‘I’m glad you’re still alive. They wouldn’t tell me a bloody thing.’

James is staring at Q as if he is some kind of mirage, something that he has thirsted after for an eternity yet expects to disappear at any moment: it’s almost frightening, to be regarded with such intensity. Q stares right back. James looks greyer, craggier, thinner than he remembers, a new scar bitten deep into his temple, although his eyes are still the same clear, cloudless blue. Then Q realises that James is also searching for evidence of change in his own face, and he wonders what he finds there.

It’s James who blinks first and looks away. ‘Still got a ridiculous haircut,’ he says.
Q, who has only recently paid a visit to his current - and scandalously expensive - barber at a fashionable little place on Frith Street, lets this go.

‘Beard’s good, though. You look almost legal.’

Q rubs his chin. ‘Never bothered you before, you old pervert.’

‘No,’ says James. ‘But you were so damned young,’ he adds, almost to himself, as if he’s only just realised.

‘What the fuck? You can stop lamenting my lost innocence soon as you like.’ Q does not even try to conceal the irritation in his voice. The adrenaline rush of his initial shock is receding, leaving a shaky queasiness in its wake. ‘I was hopelessly corrupted long before you ever got your hands on me.’

‘Shame,’ breathes James. ‘There’s a mission I wouldn’t have minded taking on.’

Q doesn’t reply. His smile feels thin, and tired.

An awkward silence follows.

‘Still got the cats?’ asks James, for all the world as if they’re just catching up over tea and biscuits.

‘One of them. But I’ve got two Russian Blues now as well. They’re a bit more chilled than Bengals. As a breed.’

‘Lovely,’ says James.

Q shrugs. ‘They’re undemanding company, at any rate.’ He is quite sure James wouldn’t know a Russian Blue from a back-alley mog if it bit him on the arse.

‘Q. Is there…’ starts James, apparently with some difficulty.

Q glances at him.

‘...somebody,’ James finishes.

Q blinks, looks down at his feet. Right now, his shoelaces seem unaccountably fascinating. ‘No,’ he says, at length. ‘There isn’t. Not at the moment. But to save you wondering - all this time - well, I haven’t been living like a monk.’

‘Me neither,’ says James, softly. And that’s that.

All around them, people eddy and swirl: schoolchildren, art students clutching sketchbooks, Japanese tourists with outsize headphones and backpacks shaped like animals. They come and go. Still Q and James sit together on the bench.

‘You know,’ says Q, gesturing at the Temeraire, ‘this kind of stuff is all very well, but sometimes I think I’d prefer something a bit more modern. Just for a change.’

James, looking down at his hands where they rest upon his knees, does not reply.

‘Something a little more...forward-looking.’ Q’s heart is pounding as if he’s just come back from a run, so hard it almost hurts.

James appears to consider this for a moment. ‘There’s always the Tate,’ he says.
Oh, thinks Q. Here we go. The casual levity, the absolute, bloody-minded refusal to ever come close to anything that might be misconstrued as a genuine emotion: it’s all too familiar, Q finds, and exquisitely painful, a welter of long-healed wounds springing open all at once. He wants to tell James how it makes him feel - and there are a million things he wants to tell him, a million things he needs to ask - but he’s not even sure that he even has the words. He can only sit and stare at the Temeraire until the blaze of colours runs together.

At last, Q lifts his glasses and wipes his eyes with his fingers. ‘Actually,’ he says, ‘right now, I just want to go home.’ He settles his glasses in place, jams his hands deep into the pockets of his coat and stands up.

James does not look up at him, does not move when Q turns away.

It's a good job that Q knows the gallery so well, as otherwise he’d surely just be walking around in circles as he makes his way blindly towards the exit, shouldering through the crowds. He finds himself walking faster and faster, until he’s almost running by the time he makes it to the main doors. Outside, the sudden brightness of the sun and the dizzy carousel of cars and buses and people careening around Trafalgar Square is disorientating, and he half-trips, stumbles. But then there’s a hand on the small of his back, strong and familiar, and the sure touch steadies him.

He doesn’t have to turn around to see who it is: he already knows.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, and for all the comments and kudos :) I hope you enjoyed it, because I had a blast writing every smutty/snarky/emotionally manipulative word of it :D

23/06/16, ETA: All right! Am bowing to pressure, and the series is now tagged as 'unfinished' :)