For James.

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Summary

Everything Alec does is for James.

Notes

Written for the contrelamontre tenses challenge. Under 60 minutes, must use at least two different tenses for two different scenes.

James' body is lying halfway on top of Alec's, using his chest as his pillow, his arms as his blanket. Alec's free hand is tangled in James' southernmost curls while his gun hand is under his pillow, caressing his pistol. He has heard a step beyond the door, a step he does not recognize, and it sends a shiver of thrill through him. He is careful not to wake his lover as he slowly cocks back the hammer and brings the gun to bear as the door swings open. Two quick shots and it's over, the intruder's body slowly seeping blood on Alec's black carpet. James sighs softly against Alec's chest, the silenced shots disturbing him little in his dreams; a sound too familiar to awaken him, like the slow tang of an alarm clock, but infinitely more deadly.

Alec lets the gun fall to the floor and positions James so that he can stand. He strips the body quickly, searching for any identifying marks and is not surprised to see the tattoo of a rival Russian mob. So they have found Janus. Alec shivers in the stale air as he contemplates what that means. Certainly he shall have to move James, quite possibly headquarters as well. Plants will have to be activated to seek revenge on Sasha's organization and will have to be paid for every man they kill. And a sale to
complete by the end of the month to the biggest buyer in the Northern Hemisphere. Alec sighs again and dials an unlisted number.

"Da?" The voice asks, giving no name. The only people who have the number belong to Janus and they have no need of names amongst themselves. It's too risky to identify yourself over the phone. The KGB has a hit put out on the leaders of Janus and it wouldn't do to alert them to their quarry's locations.

"I need cleanup."

"Of what sort?" Alec can almost hear the man at the other end wonder what his leader and second in command got up to that evening.

"Complete. And identification on the body, as much as possible. Who's on security tonight?"

The anonymous voice lists the codenames of some of Alec's followers. "Cleanup will be arriving shortly."

"Very well." Alec files the names away for punishment later. Any man who lets an assassin in is a traitor and deserves shooting. And Alec would find that man. The phone makes little noise as it rejoins its cradle but James stirs nonetheless. Alec itches to join his lover in bed, but knows he cannot.

The stripped body makes small sucking noises as Alec drags it across the floor to the door to the rooms he and James share. Cleanup this night is a third-level technician who works during the day as a code programmer for the security system on their bank accounts. Alec nods to her as she zips the body into the bag to be examined, pulled apart, and then disposed of in ways to which the fish of Russia have long since been accustomed. Alec follows her down the stairs to the control room where he grabs a cup of tea and settles in.

"All clear?" Alec's voice is dangerous even to his ears, and the man on watch instinctively checks for his gun, but stops himself in time.

"There has been trouble all night, Janus."

"And the intruder in my apartment?"

The man pales. He obviously was not informed by the anonymous number as he should have been. "I-I...he did not show up on our sensors."

"Because my apartment is not shown on the sensors! And I want that remedied. Tonight." The man should have been seen coming into the complex, Alec wants to say, but he knows he has terrorized this man enough for the night. Such a mistake will not happen again, not on Peter's watch.

Alec watches in silence as Peter works the controls frantically, nervous to be under his leader's vigilent gaze. Peter is new to the Janus organization, barely six months plus training, and Alec finds himself annoyed that his old night watchman was inconsiderate enough to die on him. Shootout in a bar, over a girl, if Alec recalls correctly. Such a waste.

The streets around the complex are tinted green in the sensor screens but Alec can make out the car he has been expecting as it pulls up. Three bodyguards step out and surround their leader as the group makes their way to the gate of Janus' St. Petersburg headquarters.

Alec nods to Peter. "I'm going out to meet them. Put an eye on me." An eye is essentially a bug, picking up everything Alec says and everything that is said to him. No enemy of Janus, and very few
friends, are allowed into the complex. Normally Alec would have James with him, but he is loath to wake up his lover. James has just returned from a long journey to the Ukraine to hand-deliver a very delicate cargo of long-range missiles and is exhausted. Alec prefers to let him sleep rather than make him have to deal with yet another headache. "Gregor, Sergey, on me," Alec orders into the intercom and two huge men step out of the corridor to escort their leader to his rendezvous.

Sasha does not wait before speaking. "I apologize for my followers, Janus. They were...overeager, to their detriment."

"You sent them," Alec returns, though he knows that nothing more than threats will be exchanged this night. The bullets have already flown. Now it is time for the leaders to back off to fight another day. "Perhaps my followers are also eager."

"Your men are loyal to you," Sasha allows, making the best of the shadowed light to hide the fact that, compared to Alec, he is grossly overweight and flabby. Alec believes in training, which puts him as the direct opposite of most of his counterparts, who believe in the niceties that blood money can buy. Tsars of the Russian mafias can usually do no more than shoot straight, and even that deteriorates with time. Alec is fit enough to win a marathon. "That is a good thing. But perhaps it may prove to be a bad thing."

"My men know better than to betray their loyalty." And they do. All Russians live in fear of the government and the mafia, but even more they live in fear of the Cossacks. Russians have long memories and they know that marauding murderers have wreaked more harm on them at one time than all the government programs to 'better' Mother Russia. And the Lienz Cossacks were known as the worst. Alec has done his best to revive that legend. "Do yours?"

"Of course."

Alec nods. "Then we are in agreement. A foolish thing happened this night. It shall not happen again?"

"Of course not."

"Of course," and Alec smiles, hiding the rage he feels over the attempt. To kill Janus is one thing. To do it while in bed with another...unforgivable. He will ruin Sasha, he decides as the other leader turns to go. He will ruin Sasha. He will make him beg. And then he will kill him. "Oh, and Sasha?"

Sasha half-turns and his bodyguards grab their weapons. "Yes?"

"Next time do not leave this on your assassin's body." Alec reaches into his pocket and tosses a Czarist coin into Sasha's gun hand. It's the mark of a hit from Sasha's organization and they both know it. Alec prefers to leave a solitary rose, as they are far easier to come by, but he supposes that Sasha has his own reasons. "Until we meet again." Alec bows slightly and turns his back on his enemy, wondering if next time Sasha will go for James alone. Alec has never hidden his relationship with his friend and wonders if perhaps he should start. But, no. That would be unfair to James. 007 left his government for his friend. To belittle their relationship would be unforgivable, to Alec as well as to James.

When Alec returns to bed, James is awake and looking curiously at the bloodstain on the floor. Alec's smile explains everything and nothing as he crawls on to the bed and when he brings James' lips to his, it's like returning home.

Tomorrow Alec will activate cells in all parts of St. Petersburg and Moscow. He will wire sums of
money, send couriers with wads of cash, and he will put a hit out on Sasha Petrovich and his entire organization. He will have his vengeance and his justice, and it will be as bittersweet as Alec's ancestors loved, blood mingling with desire oh so dangerous. And tomorrow Alec will begin the death dance to bring that beloved flavor to his lips, orchestrating events so that James will not know until too late to stop the events in motion. And Alec will be reminded yet again why he loves the secret agent, why he will kill for the opportunity to taste James' lips, tasting sweeter than the bloodlust coursing through his veins like a memory. James will not like the pointless vengeance and will castigate Alec for abusing his contacts on such a useless exercise. Sasha, James will point out, is not worth the effort. And perhaps he won't be, but Alec will destroy him nonetheless.

And next week, or next month, or even next year, Sasha will fall and Janus will be there to pick up the pieces and move on. Janus will succeed where Sasha failed. James has yet to fail to kill a target and Alec's faith will be confirmed when James finally completes the task Alec will set for him. But Alec will save Sasha for himself, picking apart the fat man, will make him scream from the pain. And James will watch and shake his head, as Alec will expect, but will help Alec with the torture when Alec will appear to grow tired. James' dark side will be as well-fed as Alec's by the time honor is satisfied and Sasha dead.

But Alec will never wonder at the price, at the nightmares that will come to James during the night when he will doubt his choice. He will grow accustomed to the new ones as he has grown accustomed to the old ones. He will never let doubts gnaw at his lover as he never lets doubts gnaw at him. 'No regrets' will be hammered at him, at James, until there will be nothing but no regrets, until there will be nothing but delicious vengeance, nothing but Janus and its ultimate goal, nothing but Alec and James and England's debt. Alec will stop at nothing to achieve his goal, and will never wonder if he shall have to sacrifice James for revenge, for the thought will be utterly foreign.

Because everything Alec will do, he will do for James.

For James.

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