Almost a year following the completion of Project Alistair, MI-6 is on the brink of a merger that could spell the end of the double-o section. But this is just the beginning of their problems. While Alex must find a way to keep both his work and the man he loves in safe hands, Bond and Q's relationship is hanging by a thread. While one chases a ghost from his past, the other braces for the future. As Bond risks it all on a one-man mission, the one who may stand to lose the most is Q.
Prologue

Chapter Notes

This fic is a product of my desire to fix Spectre as well as continue my little 00QAD verse. I suppose this could be a stand alone if you squint, but I recommend reading part one first. Special thanks to all those who commented and encouraged me along the way through the first story. Now all aboard the pain train! >:)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Q sat alone at the table- their table, drumming his fingers against the surface. The little box tucked away in the inner pocket of his jacket weighed heavily against his ribs. He knew they hadn’t discussed it, had never expressed an interest in such sentimental things; but it was a pet project Q had been working on for quite some time and he knew James would like it. And if he just so happened to present it to him tonight of all nights, well, he figured a year for them was worth marking in some way.

He had spent the past half hour fidgeting with his tie- an emerald green silk that James liked- and checking his phone every five minutes. The ambient sounds of the restaurant did little to drown out the nagging voice in his head.

He’s late.

He had said seven, had he not? Typical of James to be late when he knew Q had gone to the trouble of making a reservation. He took a long drink from the wine glass at his elbow and picked up his phone.

Where are you? – Q

There was no reply. He waited a few minutes and tried calling instead. It went straight to voicemail.

Q drained his glass and ordered another.

Just after eight o’clock, he dropped a few notes on the table and left.

He caught a cab home and toed off his shiny black oxfords in the entryway, bending to pet Pascal and Turing as they rubbed against his legs in greeting. It was then that he noticed James’ go-bag by the door. Frowning, he rose to his feet and headed up the stairs.

Most of the house was dark, but as he reached the top floor landing he could see a light coming from the bedroom. He paused in the open doorway as he spotted his lover, still dressed in the dove grey suit Q had seen him in earlier that afternoon.

“James?”

He paused beside the bed, lifting his icy gaze to travel over Q in his black tailored suit before coming to rest on his face. His expression was a mask. “I didn’t think you’d be home yet.”

“I’ve been calling you,” said Q a bit crossly. “Did you forget about dinner? I waited over an hour-”

He paused, just noticing the open suitcase on the bed, half stuffed with clothes. He frowned. “Did M call you in? I haven’t heard-”

James was shaking his head. “No, Q. He didn’t.”
For a moment Q stared at him, and he returned his gaze to the suitcase with a crease in his brow. He noted the various personal items strewn across the bed- their bed- and tried to ignore the cold feeling creeping into his chest. Among the items was the hideous ceramic bulldog that M had left him. He lifted his gaze to meet glacial blue eyes, his next words driving the air from his lungs. “You’re leaving.”

James’ expression remained carefully neutral. “I’d planned to be gone before you got back.”

“Did you-” Q swallowed hard. “Were you even going to say anything?”

James shrugged a shoulder, both hands shoved in the pockets of his trousers. “I figured you’d work it out.”

“I see,” he answered softly, trying to focus on breathing past the tightness in his chest.

James gazed at him evenly. “Look, it’s nothing personal,” he said. “It was always going to end sometime, we both knew that. I just decided there was no sense prolonging the inevitable.”

“Well,” said Q, “you’ll forgive me for not being privy to that arrangement. But then I guess it really doesn’t matter, does it? You’ve made your decision and nothing I say is going to change that, so I suppose that’s that.” He took a breath, turning towards the door. “I’ll leave you to it then.”

“That’s it?”

He paused in the doorway, glancing back at the older man over his shoulder. “Is that what?”

“‘I’ll leave you to it then?’ That’s all you have to say?”

Q stared at him. “What did you expect?” he answered frostily. “You know exactly how I feel, James. What’s left for me to say? Did you expect me to throw myself at your feet as well?” He swallowed hard past the lump in his throat. “Do you want me to beg?”

James took a step forward and reached for his hand. “Q-”

“Don’t,” he snapped, jerking his hand away. “Don’t you dare patronize me. Whatever it is you may think of me, I do have my pride.” And he turned on his heel and fled the room, pulling at his tie as he descended the stairs. Only when he was well and truly out of sight did he allow the first tears to fall.

Danny was bored.

While he was eternally grateful that he no longer had to spend hours of his life at the warehouse, lately he seemed to have too much time on his hands. It did wonders for his writing, to be sure. Just that afternoon he’d filled another one of his notebooks and would have to buy another the next time he went out. But still, when his creativity lulled and he had the house to himself, he had a hard time keeping occupied. Not to mention he was lonely.

He twirled the ring on his finger absently from his place sprawled on the sofa. It had been a week since Alex had been sent to Morocco and he wasn’t supposed to be back for at least another week. While he was able to keep in contact, communication was limited. Alex was undercover after all. But the knowledge that he was safe and even the periodic updates from Q couldn’t keep him from missing him terribly. Speaking of Q…

Danny didn’t get to spend as much time with his brother as he would like, but they did text quite a bit. It was times like this that he tended to talk to him the most, but tonight he was out on a date. An
anniversary date, though neither of the idiots deigned to acknowledge it properly. Danny was optimistic about a wedding in the future, but they sure were taking their time. Well, it wouldn’t hurt to shoot him a text anyway, he thought. Since he didn’t have anything else to occupy himself this evening, he may as well be nosy about his brother’s love life. He smirked. If they were busy he could always text him back after. He reached for his phone on the coffee table- only just managing not to fall off the sofa in the process- and typed out a message.

*So... how did dinner go? ;)*

Two minutes later, Danny’s phone chimed. He frowned at the text on the screen. *What does he mean ‘it didn’t’?* He sat up and typed a reply.

*What happened?*

There was a long pause before his phone chimed again.

*It’s a bid complicated. – Q*

Danny rolled his eyes. *Well that says a lot.* He sat for a moment, debating, before pressing a few keys and raising the phone to his ear. As the phone began to ring, he chewed on his thumbnail, growing more anxious as the call went unanswered. It wasn’t until the fifth ring that he heard a voice on the other line.

*“Hi Danny.”*

*“Ethan?”* he asked, reverting to Q’s given name. He was still getting used to Q. *“What’s going on? What’s happened?”* He frowned at the silence on the other end. *“Are you okay?”*

*“I’m fine,”* he answered in a voice that most definitely did not sound fine.

*“Did James get called away at the last minute?”* he pressed. *“Is that why you didn’t go to dinner?”*

*“No,”* Q answered. *“It wasn’t that. He, um…”* there was a long pause, a shaky intake of breath.

*“He left me, Danny.”*

For a moment Danny didn’t respond, struggling to process what he had just heard. *“He what?”*

*“I came home when he didn’t show up,”* Q explained. *“He was packing his things. Didn’t even plan on telling me. Said he figured I’d work it out.”* He laughed breathily. *“I guess I finally managed to drive off the infamous 007.”*

Danny frowned. *“I’m coming over.”*

*“No, Danny-”* a sigh. *“I’m sorry. I wasn’t going to say anything. Anyway, I’m not very good company tonight.”*

*“But-”*

*“I’ll be fine, Danny. Don’t worry about me,”* said Q. *“We can talk more tomorrow, okay? I love you.”*

Danny sighed. *“Love you too. But you call me if you need anything, okay? Promise?”*

*“Alright,”* he answered. *“Goodnight Danny.”*

He frowned, entirely unconvinced. *“Goodnight.”*
It wasn’t long before the thought of Q alone in that house became too much to bear. Like it or not, he was not going to shut Danny out. In less than an hour he found himself on his brother’s doorstep. The street was quiet now and the house appeared cloaked in darkness; not a single light illuminating the windows. He shifted his weight, deliberating for a moment before finally reaching for his key and letting himself inside.

The house was quiet as he closed the door behind him, toeing off his shoes in the entryway. Scanning his surroundings, he found Q’s anorak hanging beside the door. He slipped out of his jacket and hung it on the peg beside it.

“Ethan?”

He was met with silence.

A moment later a bundle of white fur came bounding up to greet him, yowling all the way as he approached. Danny bent to stroke Pascal’s fur as he placed both front paws against his thigh, headbutting him affectionately.

“Hello you,” said Danny, scratching between his ears. “Miss me?”

Pascal purred.

“Where’s Ethan then, eh?”

Almost as if he’d understood, Pascal dropped back down to all fours and padded down the hall, heading toward the living room. Frowning, Danny rose to follow.

The room was dark as he entered, and for a moment he thought that Q had actually gone to bed. His gaze followed a fluffy white tail as the cat ducked behind the coffee table and he caught the shine of Turing’s emerald green eyes on the opposite end. As he flicked on the lamp beside the armchair he could finally identify the figure slumped between them. He moved closer, frowning as he identified his brother’s slight form. “Ethan?”

Q sat on the floor with his back against the sofa, clad in a pair of flannel pajama bottoms and a grey t-shirt that was nearly two sizes too big, the crest of the Royal Navy emblazoned over his heart. Turing was pressed against Q’s side while Pascal tried to worm his way into his lap in spite of the fact that he had one knee drawn up to his chest. He held a half-empty bottle of scotch by the neck in one hand, and when he lifted his head at Danny’s approach his eyes were glassy. “You should be home.”

Danny knelt down to eye level. “How full was that when you started?” he asked, indicating the bottle.

Q shrugged. “James left it. Figured it shouldn’t go to waste.”

Danny breathed a sigh. “Come on,” he said taking him by the arm. “Let’s get you off the floor.”

The felines scattered as Danny pulled him up, and Q immediately collapsed onto the sofa, still holding the bottle. When he went to take another drink he gently pried it from his hand and set it on the coffee table out of reach. “That’s not going to help, love. Believe me, I’ve made that mistake enough times to know.”

Q slumped against the sofa cushions, drawing his knees up to his chest. “Was worth a try.”
Danny scooted closer, absently tugging on the sleeve of Q’s oversized t-shirt. He didn’t have to ask where it came from. “So what happened?” he asked gently. “I thought things were going great with you two.”

Q smiled sadly. “So did I.” He picked at a loose thread on his pajamas. “I suppose I just…” he sighed. “I fucked it up is what happened. There’s no other explanation.”

Danny frowned. “What d’you mean?”

“I’ve always known that James wasn’t the ‘relationship’ type,” he said. “But after this long I thought- I’d hoped- that maybe I was the exception. Then last night…” He closed his eyes for a moment and took a steadying breath. Danny’s chest ached as he could tell he was holding back tears. Q hated to cry. “Last night I told him that I loved him.”

“What’d he say?” he asked.

He shook his head. “I didn’t expect him to say it back,” said Q. “I didn’t expect him to ever say the words, but I still thought he might feel the same. I guess I was wrong.” He continued to pick at his pant leg, refusing to meet his eye. “I suppose I’m just too hard to love back.” At these last words a single tear slipped free unbidden, which he hastily wiped away with one hand. He removed his glasses as another quickly took its place.

Wordlessly, Danny pulled him into his arms as the floodgates opened and he began to sob against his chest. “That’s not true,” said Danny as he began rubbing circles on his back. “You are the most loving, kind, and selfless person I have ever known. I think James does care about you.”

He shook his head. “If he gave a damn about me he wouldn’t have left me here alone,” he choked out, his words muffled into Danny’s t-shirt.

“He’s running scared,” said Danny. “I’m sure he is. Just give it time, he’ll come around.”

Danny knew there was nothing more that he could say, so he simply held his brother tighter. And as Q’s shoulders continued to shake with sobs, he could only hope that he was right.

Chapter End Notes

...Don’t kill me, this is only the beginning. >:)

The next chapter is going to jump ahead a bit. My goal with this prologue was to establish the, ahem, current state of Bond and Q's relationship. Future interactions are going to make much more sense this way. ((Cue maniacal laughter))

Please leave your thoughts in the comments! :D
Hey guys. I apologize if this is a little bit of a head fake, but I really needed to redo this chapter. It was boring and there were a couple scenes I had forgotten to add back and it's taken me until now to deal with it. I hope you agree that the changes are a decided improvement!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“M’s looking for you.”

Q lifted his head just in time to keep from colliding with Moneypenny as he exited the conference room. He took a moment to straighten the budget reports he held before regarding her over the top of his glasses. He really hated meetings. “Oh?”

She hummed an affirmative. “He said it’s urgent.”

Q shifted the files to one arm to dig in his pocket for his phone and frowned at the screen. “He hasn’t called.”

“Apparently this is something he wants to discuss with you in person,” she answered, turning on her heel.

“Did he at least say what it’s about?” he asked, easily fell into step with her long strides as she headed toward the lifts.

“Don’t know,” she answered, heels clicking against the hardwood floor as she walked. “But I can hazard a guess.” She pressed the button to call the lift and turned to regard him with an arched eyebrow.

Q gave her a pointed look. “I’m not going to like this, am I?”

She waited for the doors to open and they both stepped inside. “I’m assuming you heard about Mexico?”

He sighed inwardly. Oh yes. He’d heard. Even within the self-inflicted isolation of his branch, the gossip still travelled. “Yes.”

“007 made quite a spectacle of himself.”

“007 is always making a spectacle of himself,” he said. “The trouble is that this time there wasn’t even a mission sanctioned. God knows what he was up to.”

“I think that M is hoping you know.”

Q gave her a withering look. “Moneypenny, we’ve been through this. I am not 007’s keeper. I equip him with what he needs, I give support over the comms whenever necessary, but I do not keep tabs on what he does off mission.”
“I know that Q,” she answered, almost soothingly. “But you have to admit, there isn’t a single person in all of MI6 who knows the man like you do. Probably not another soul in the world. Look, I know you’ve not been around as long, but Bond is not the type to let people get close to him. There was M, of course, before she died. But since then there’s only been you.”

Q kept his gaze fixed on the metal doors of the lift, his free hand clenching and unclenching at his side. “Moneypenny, it’s been three months. And in that time we have not spoken anywhere outside of work and only when absolutely necessary. I hardly know the man anymore. I’m not sure I ever did.” The last part he said quietly, but Moneypenny must’ve heard all the same. He could feel the pitying look she was giving him without even turning to face her. He hated it. “Whatever this meeting with M is about, all I can offer is my professional assistance as Quartermaster. I can’t offer any insight as to the man himself.”

The doors to the lift opened and he stepped out into the corridor with Moneypenny hot on his heels, striding in the direction of M’s office.

“Well, whether you like it or not, I think we’re going to need your help on this one,” she said as she quickly caught up. “With this merger on the horizon, M’s not taking any chances of 007 mucking things up for the double-o section. He’ll utilize every resource, including you.”

Q paused at the door to the antechamber that led to M’s office, stepping aside to allow Moneypenny through first before following her inside. “Well I can already tell you that I don’t like it,” he muttered under his breath.

Moneypenny gave him a pointed look as she took a seat behind her desk. “I’m sure it won’t be that bad.”

Q simply gave her a long suffering look as he proceeded to M’s door. Well, here goes nothing. He lifted a hand to knock at the heavy oak frame.

“Come in,” came M’s voice from inside.

“Good luck,” said Moneypenny.

Q resisted the urge to roll his eyes. “I don’t believe in luck.”

“Q, good morning,” greeted M as the heavy door closed behind him

“Good morning, sir,” he answered, lingering a bit near the door. “Miss Moneypenny said you wanted to see me?”

“Yes, I did.” M took a seat in the large chair behind his desk and straightened his jacket. “Have a seat, Q.”

Q sat, resting his stack of files in his lap. He hated M’s office, to be honest. It always made him feel like he was twelve years old again, being called to the headmaster’s study for hacking into his teacher’s files. Again.

M leaned forward in his seat. “How’s the Smart Blood project coming?”

Q blinked. “Oh. Well, I’d say it’s going rather well,” he said, stumbling a bit over the unexpected turn the conversation had taken. “I’d like to run a few field tests before launching it entirely, but I’d say we’re nearly there.”

“Excellent,” said M, looking genuinely pleased. “I’ve got the perfect guinea pig for you.”
Danny sat curled on the sofa, pressed against Alex’s side while long fingers stroked absently through his hair. He’d long since stopped following the film on the screen, but it made no difference. He was content to simply share his lover’s warmth, matching rings clicking against each other as their fingers intertwined. He breathed a happy sigh and rested his head against Alex’s shoulder. At this rate it wouldn’t be long before he fell asleep like this.

Alex pressed a kiss to his temple, continuing the idle motion of his fingers. “You’re bored,” he said, clear amusement in his tone.

“I’m not!” Danny chuckled. “I’m happy just like this.” He brought Alex’s hand to his lips, pressing a kiss to his palm. “I’m happy to have you home.”

“But you’re bored of the film,” said Alex.

“Well, I might’ve stopped paying attention around half an hour ago,” he admitted sheepishly.

Alex grinned. “Then I guess I’ll have to find other ways to entertain you,” he said, leaning in to capture his lips in a kiss.

Danny smiled against his lips as he was pressed into the sofa cushions, drawing his knees up as Alex covered his body with his own. “Hmm, I like this idea. But we’ll have to- make it quick-” he said between kisses. “I’ve got a lasagna in the oven that needs to come out in ten minutes.”

Alex pulled back, quirking an eyebrow at him. “I need more than ten minutes,” he said, nipping beneath his jaw.

Danny pushed him back, giving him a mock glare. “If you make me burn dinner-”

“You’ll what?” Alex teased, reaching down with both hands to tickle his sides. “Tell me, Danny.”

“Alex stop,” he giggled, squirming in his grasp. When he finally stopped tickling him, Danny reached up to wind his arms around his neck. “I’ll make it up to you later.”

“After dinner?” asked Alex.

Danny smiled. “After dinner,” he promised, pulling him in for a kiss before Alex let him up. He leaned back against Alex’s chest and drew his knees up, snuggling in as Alex wrapped an arm around him and pressed a kiss to his temple, the film forgotten.

“How’s your brother?” he asked.

Danny sighed. “I wish I knew,” he admitted ruefully. “I hardly see him anymore. I’m lucky to get a text every few days. And then it’s usually him asking if I can check on the cats.” Danny twisted a little, allowing him to look at Alex properly. “I’m worried about him. He’s got to be working at least twelve hours a day. If he does go home I think he’s mostly just been sleeping. I managed to get a hold of him last Saturday and he had just woken up. It was four in the afternoon.”

Alex frowned, a slight crease forming in his brow. “Has anyone been by there?”

Danny shook his head. “Not when he’s been at home anyway,” he said. “He’s been keeping Eve at arm’s length as well.”

“I haven’t been by Q-Branch in a while either,” said Alex.

“I’m sure he’s still there now,” said Danny. “Last I got out of him he had some big project he was
working on. I wouldn’t be surprised if he doesn’t go home at all.”

Any further thoughts were interrupted by the beeping of the timer in the kitchen and Danny slowly extricated himself from Alex’s hold and got to his feet. “I’m sorry,” he said as Alex followed. “We don’t have to talk about it anymore tonight. Ethan is a stubborn arse and that’s not about to change anytime soon. D’you want to help me set the table?”

Alex did well to distract him for the rest of the night. After all, it had been almost a week since he had been home and Danny had missed him. He could hardly bear sleeping alone. The bed felt so large and empty without him there. Danny barely got the dishes into the sink from dinner before Alex began to let him know exactly how much he had been missed as well.

Alex had come a long way since their first night together. Whereas before he had been tentative and altogether unsure of himself in the bedroom, he now moved with confidence. It was fascinating really, how their dynamic would shift depending on his mood. Danny still took the lead a lot of the time, but sometimes- like tonight- Alex took control and the sex took on a more possessive quality. It was never especially rough between them- neither of them liked it like that- but the way Alex would arrange their every position, the way he gripped his hips while he fucked into him; Danny was heady with it. Not that he didn’t still like to top, or that Alex didn’t seem to enjoy being on the bottom just as much, but for Danny there was nothing like being able to relinquish control like that. Nothing like trusting a lover so completely as to become putty in his hands; trusting him to give him pleasure just as much- if not more- than he himself received. It was intoxicating.

When they were both sated and had settled in for the night, Danny lay curled against his chest, Alex’s fingers trailing lightly up and down the expanse of his back. But as comfortable as he was encircled in his husband’s warmth, his thoughts returned to Q. He wondered if he was sleeping at all tonight.

“What are you thinking?” asked Alex, an echo of his own words what felt like a lifetime ago.

Danny smiled softly as he cuddled in closer. “Nothing,” he said, not really wanting to darken the mood after such fantastic sex.

“You’re worried about him,” said Alex, more of a statement than a question.

Danny sighed. “I just don’t like the idea of him being alone,” he admitted. “That house is too big when you’re by yourself.”

“I think he’s a lot tougher than you think,” said Alex.

“He thinks he is,” said Danny. “He tries to be all stoic, but he’s got a bad habit of burying things until they fester. He loved James. I know he did. And I know he’s far from over it. No matter what he says otherwise.”

Alex frowned. “Well, there isn’t much we can do tonight,” he said. “Tell you what; why don’t we invite him over for dinner tomorrow? It will give him a reason to get out of the house for a change.”

Danny lifted his head, trying to seem him better in the dark. “Really? I mean- you’re alright with that?”

“Of course,” said Alex. “He’s family. And I care about him too, you know.”

Danny smiled, leaning in to press a kiss to his lips. “Have I told you that I love you today?”
Alex smiled back. “Twice.”

“Then this is the third,” he answered, leaning in for another kiss. “I love you.”

“You should get some sleep,” Alex grinned against his lips. “Unless… you have other ideas.”

In answer, Danny rolled on top of him, smiling so much that his cheeks hurt. “I could think of a few things,” he said, and he leaned down to capture his lips once more.

Danny awoke as Alex slipped out of bed for his morning run. Why the man insisted on getting his exercise at such an ungodly hour, he would never understand, but before he knew it he was opening his eyes again to find him dressed for work. He blinked up at him sleepily as he sat on the edge of the bed.

“I’ve got to go in for a few hours,” said Alex, reaching down to brush a stray curl out of his eyes.

“There are a few things I need to wrap up then, I’ll be home this afternoon.”

“Alright,” said Danny, stifling a yawn.

“I’ll swing by Q-Branch before I head home,” he said. “Maybe I can coax Q away from his work if I go there in person.”

Danny smiled softly. “Thank you Alex. Tell him dinner is at six. And I’m not asking, I’m telling, so he’d better be here. I’ll see to the cats later ’cause I’m sure he’s going to ask anyway.”

“Okay,” Alex chuckled.

Danny propped himself up to meet him in a goodbye kiss. “I’ll see you later.”

Q sat at his workbench fiddling with the parts to what had once been a rather advanced piece of weaponry—until one of the double-o’s had gotten their hands on it. (Surprisingly, it hadn’t even been Bond this time.) He was wearing his best suit (not counting the few tailored ones he had buried at the back of his wardrobe that he couldn’t bear to look at) and had traded his customary cardigan in favor of a blue button down. His hair was combed—though perhaps in need of a trim—and he’d even used a bit of product to keep it mostly in place. But all of this had nothing to do with a certain double-o who was due to arrive any minute. Really.

While from his conversation with Moneypenny Q had expected an interrogation from M concerning the habits and psyche of a certain double-o, his new directive was so much worse. Not that he wasn’t eager to see exactly what his Smart Blood program could do, but of all the test subjects for him to be assigned did it have to be Bond? And not only that, but M’s true purpose was to simply make sure the errant agent stayed in the country. What he had been given wasn’t even really a field test; it was more like babysitting duty.

He took a deep breath at the sound of approaching footsteps and let it out slowly. By the time the metal door swung open, he had effected a flawless air of calm indifference. He didn’t even look up from his workstation.

Bond strode into the room with Tanner at his heels, a presence he could almost feel rather than see as he kept his focus on the machine parts in front of him. But even without looking directly he could tell that Bond hadn’t spared him a glance either. In fact, he had bee-lined straight to the modified rifle on the bench in the center of the room. Bloody typical.
“Ah, 007,” he greeted as though he had just noticed his presence.

“Q,” came the curt reply, the agent not taking his eyes off the weapon he now held in his hands.

“Please excuse the mess. Everything’s a bit up in the air, what with the changes and all. A couple of things to get through.” He approached the agent who had yet to acknowledge his presence beyond the simple greeting. As Bond lifted the rifle to look through the sights, Q moved forward in one simple motion and removed the weapon from his hands. Finally, that icy gaze fell on him and he had to suppress a shiver. After three months of only ever seeing each other in passing, he had forgotten what it was like to be pinned beneath that gaze. “Shall we get started?”

The man radiated heat. Even through his latex gloves, Q could feel the warmth seeping into his icy fingers. On cold nights he often dreamt about that heat pressed against his back. Then he awoke to cold sheets and an empty bed. He hadn’t been sleeping much.

Shoving these unbidden thoughts aside, Q focused on the task at hand. He positioned Bond’s arm carefully, making sure everything was aligned to his satisfaction before closing the housing. The injection of the Smart Blood may have been… a bit more forceful than necessary, but Q must have been feeling more vindictive than he realized. He couldn’t help the small satisfaction he felt at eliciting a curse from the stoic 007. The car may have been a bit cruel though.

Bond had known about the DB10 for ages. In the early design stages, Q often found his blueprints and sketches strewn about various surfaces around the house, notes in Bond’s hand filling the margins. He would never admit it, but he had designed much of the final product specifically with him in mind. But a lot had changed since then. Q’s brother-in-law would be taking the car on his next mission instead. He might have enjoyed Bond’s reaction to this if he hadn’t been so preoccupied by what he held in his hands.

For three months the watch had sat in a drawer in Q’s nightstand. Still in the box. Still with the ribbon marking it as the gift he had intended. He wasn’t sure why he hadn’t gotten rid of it sooner; assigned it to another agent on their next mission. The watch had been a labor of love in every sense of the word- and he couldn’t bear the sight of it. Not after that night. But he couldn’t bear the thought of it being tucked away in a drawer either. Best to just give it to the man to destroy at the next available opportunity.

Bond gazed at the watch with a critical eye, weighing it in his hand. “Does it do anything?”

“It tells the time,” Q answered, just half a lie really. “Might help with your punctuality issues.”

If Bond caught the dig, he made no indication.

In handing him the watch, Q felt as though a weight had been lifted, at least in some small part. Yet there was also a finality there that made his chest ache. He was ready for this meeting to be over. After one final obstacle- Bond of course having stopped to regard the skeleton of his beloved DB5 which Q had been rebuilding in secret- Q swiftly dismissed the agent and, with a slight nod to himself, returned to his workstation, and that was that.

“Q?”

Or perhaps it wasn’t. “Yes?”

“Now that you know where I am all the time, will you do something for me?”

Q tensed, keeping his gaze forward. “What do you have in mind, exactly?”
Bond was leaning against his workbench now, carefree as you please as he fastened his new watch to his wrist. “Make me disappear.”

Finally, Q turned to him, lowering his voice to barely above a whisper. “Um, may I remind you that I answer directly to M,” he said sternly. “I also have a mortgage-and two cats to feed.”

Bond, the infuriating man, gave a simple shrug. “Then I suggest you trust me,” he said, his tone conspiratorial, “for the sake of the cats.”

Q stared at him, taking a moment to process what he had just heard. “Trust you?” he said. “After that stunt you just pulled in Mexico?” He shook his head. “You’re going to have to do much better than that, 007.” He had had enough. And right now all he wanted was to put as much distance between himself and James bloody Bond as he could. He quickly side-stepped the agent, intent on making a bee-line for his office, when a hand caught his arm. He glared in warning. “Bond-” Of course Tanner, damn him, had chosen this moment to make himself scarce. The workshop was empty save the two of them now.

“I found him.”

Q blinked at him. “You found… him? Found who?”

The grip on Q’s arm tightened, and the sharp blue gaze boring into him was almost pleading. “Sciarrà.”

Q froze, feeling as if he had suddenly been doused in ice water. Of course that’s what this was about. How had he not realized it sooner?

When M died, Q felt like a complete failure. Not only had he been bested by Silva on his own turf, but they had lost the head of the department because of a plan that he had helped execute. He was sure his days as Quartermaster were numbered. How would anyone trust him after that?

Then two days after her funeral, Bond had approached him. It was the first they had spoken since he’d asked him to lay the trail for Silva.

“I need to show you something,” he’d said. “Meet me when you’re done for the day.”

Out of curiosity as well as a sense that he had nothing left to lose, Q had agreed. And after leaving the office on time for once, he soon found himself in James Bond’s living room, such as it was. It looked as if the man had just moved in. James wasted no time on small talk. Instead he dropped into an armchair-still wearing his shoulder holster, he’d noticed-and turned on the TV. Q stared in shock as M’s stern visage filled the screen.

“If anything happens to me, 007, I need you to do something. Find a man called Marco Sciarrà. Kill him. And don’t miss the funeral.”

“I found it in my mailbox this morning,” Bond had explained.

“Who else knows?” Q asked once he found his voice.

Bond’s gaze was steady as he answered. “Just you.”

And it was in that moment that something had changed between them. In spite of all that had happened as well as the agent’s past history, James Bond had given him his trust.

Q’s thoughts returned to the present where as close as they now stood there was a gaping chasm
between them. The realization broke Q’s heart just that much more. “That’s what you were doing in Mexico.”

Bond nodded. “The funeral’s in three days. I need your help.”

He frowned. “So you want me to turn a blind eye while you go off to god knows where-”

“What?” he supplied.

“Fine; Rome,” Q huffed, “to execute some sort of personal vendetta-”

“And what would you have me do?” he shot back. “Ignore her final directive? Just let it die?”

“Take it to M,” Q answered calmly, immune as he was by now to the agent’s mercurial moods. “The man has more than proven himself by now. I don’t understand why you still won’t trust him.”

“She left it to me,” Bond answered. “Not Mallory.”

“So it’s a matter of your stubborn pride then.” Q sighed. “Alright, I can’t promise you anything. There’s too much at stake and neither of us can afford to undermine the department right now. But,” and he really hoped he wouldn’t regret this, “I’ll think about it. That’s the best I can do.”

“Well, think quickly,” said Bond. “Because we’re running out of time.”

Danny wound his way through the city, slowly headed towards home. After checking on Q’s cats he had decided to meet Alex for lunch, and now he was heading back to start dinner for tonight. He could’ve taken the tube of course, or even a cab for that matter; money wasn’t really an issue anymore. But in spite of Alex’s concerns about his safety Danny enjoyed walking. He’d always felt a sense of freedom he didn’t find elsewhere.

The mid afternoon sun was heavily overcast, and there was a distinct chill in the air heralding the approach of winter. He wrapped his jacket tighter around himself as he ducked down another side street to escape the wind. The street was unusually quiet, but if he quickened his pace he told himself that it was out of a desire to get out of the cold; he wasn’t being paranoid. Maybe a cab wasn’t such a bad idea after all.

He heard footsteps tapping along the pavement behind him and started to walk faster, feeling his heart rate beginning to climb. If he made it passed the two buildings up ahead he’d have made it to the main road. Suddenly a man emerged from the shadows up ahead and Danny froze. A quick glance over his shoulder revealed that the figure behind him had stopped as well. With a terrifying sensation of déjà vu, Danny recognized the very real threat.

The fingers of his right hand travelled over the ring on his left, and with a subtle twist he felt a ‘click.’ The slight pulsing he felt radiating toward his palm told him that the distress signal had been successfully activated. In what he knew would only be a play for time, Danny bolted down a side street. As two sets of footsteps pounded the pavement behind him, he could only hope it would be enough.

Chapter End Notes

So I hope the added Danny/Alex fluff makes up for the re-post. I'm also hoping this
flows much better in this context.

Please leave your thoughts in the comments. :)

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

As some of you may have noticed, I actually reposted the last chapter because I hated it and I'd left out some scenes. So if you haven't seen it, you may want to take a look first.

Now back to the show!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Q stood at his workbench elbow deep in a tangle of wires, soldering iron in hand. Ever since Bond left his workshop, he'd been feeling agitated. Who the hell did he think he was anyway? Making demands as easy as breathing and expecting Q to simply fall in line. Bond may not have been concerned about his own career- he never had been- but Q… Q needed this. The problem was that there was some validity to Bond’s request.

Q had trusted M- the old M- completely. Not only had she been the one to recruit him, but she saw potential in him where no one else had. After headquarters blew and she appointed him Quartermaster, he recognized the level of faith and trust she in turn had placed in him. He didn’t want to let her down, even now. If she had left this task to 007, there had to be a reason.

Not that Q didn’t trust Mallory. On the contrary. But Mallory was under the microscope right now; his every action being called into question. And Q had a feeling that he wasn’t the only one being watched.

His thoughts were interrupted as the door to his workshop opened with a creek of rusted hinges. He should really do something about that soon, but then again it also made it so no one could enter his domain unnoticed. He lifted his head, prepared to berate Bond for coming back so soon, only to find a visitor he had not been expecting. “Oh! 009,” said Q, blinking in surprise. “What brings you down here?”

“Good afternoon, Q,” Alex replied, stopping a few feet from Q’s station with his hands folded neatly in front of him. “I had my debrief with M and finished my report, so I thought I would drop by.”

“Oh! 009,” said Q, blinking in surprise. “What brings you down here?”

“Ah. So you were in the neighborhood then,” said Q with a polite smile. “I trust your debriefing went well? I understand your mission went quite smoothly.”

“It did,” he answered. “Q… I wanted to ask you something.”

Q unplugged the soldering iron and set it aside to cool. When he next met Alex’s gaze, the guise of Quartermaster and agent had fallen away and he was addressing his brother-in-law wearily.

“Danny’s angry with me, isn’t he?”

“I wouldn’t say that he’s angry,” said Alex. “He is… concerned.”

“I see,” said Q. “Well, you can tell him he needn’t be. I’m perfectly fine. I’ve just been rather busy lately, that’s all.”

“I understand,” said Alex. “But I think that Danny would feel better if you came by and said so yourself. We hardly see you anymore. I came by to ask you to join us for dinner tonight.”
“Oh. Well, thank you, Alex. That’s very kind,” he answered. “I wouldn’t want to impose-”

“You’re not imposing, Q, you’re invited,” said Alex. “And Danny was rather insistent.”

That startled a laugh out of Q as he read between the lines of that statement. Once his little brother set his mind to something he was rather persistent. And stubborn. It was something they had in common. “Well,” said Q, “I have been rather remiss in my brotherly duties, haven’t I? Alright. What time should I arrive?”

Alex smiled. “Dinner is at six, but you can come over as early as you like.”

“Very well,” said Q. “I suppose that gives me a couple of hours to finish things up here. Actually- if you’re not busy, Alex, I wonder if you may grant me some insight.”

They spent the next hour or so with their heads together over a few new prototypes Q had been working on. He always appreciated Alex’s input- due to his keen intellect that offered a challenge to his own, and for his practical experience in the field. He’d thought often of stealing him for R&D if he wasn’t such a brilliant agent, but M would never give him up. They were in an intense discussion over what features were most practical in the very rifle Bond had examined earlier when both of their mobiles went off at the same time. Not half a second later an alarm blared from Q’s laptop as well.

Q lunged for his laptop, not needing to look at his mobile to identify the alert. “Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit,” he muttered, fingers flying over the keys as he launched various programs. He met Alex’s gaze as the younger man looked up from his mobile, his face pale. “Danny.”

Danny had no idea where he was going. He’d turned down so many different side streets that he’d completely lost track of where he was. He felt like a rat in a maze. And all the while the footsteps drew closer.

He came up short as he hit a dead end, clutching the stitch in his side. When he spun around, meaning to double back, he discovered that his path was blocked.

“Nowhere to run now, Danny boy,” said the man blocking his escape.

“How do you know my name?” he demanded. “Who are you? What do you want?”

The man sneered, calling back over his shoulder. “Over here, Trevors. Keep up!”

Danny frantically searched for an exit. There was a chain-link fence to his left. If he could just get past this guy, he may be able to climb over. While the man’s attention was off of Danny, he bolted toward the fence- only to be caught roughly from behind.

Danny fought against his hold. “Get off me!” He kicked back with his heel, catching the man in the shin, but before he could twist away he was shoved forward against the wall. He couldn’t help the whimper that escaped him as his arm was wrenched painfully behind his back.

“None of that now,” growled a voice in his ear. “Trevors! Get it ready!”

Danny renewed his struggles, but the grip on him only tightened. He tried to focus on breathing as footsteps approached, but it felt like he had a metal band wrapped around his ribs. The way the man had him pinned, he couldn’t see the approaching figure which only made it that much worse. He felt the man twist around behind him.
“What the-?”

The grip on Danny was released as his attacker was suddenly pulled off his back with a shout of surprise. He spun around and pressed his back to the wall, cradling his arm against his chest. Even though there were no longer hands on him, he found that he couldn’t move.

Within moments his attacker lay in a heap, unmoving, while a broad shouldered figure knelt beside him. The figure checked his pulse and rose to his feet. Danny’s knees nearly gave out in relief as the figure turned. James.

“Well, he’s not getting up for a while,” said James, nodding over his shoulder. That piercing gaze swept over Danny, a deep furrow forming in his brow. “Danny, are you alright?”

Danny remained rooted to the spot. His breath was coming too fast and too shallow. He couldn’t speak.

James reached him in a few easy strides, cradling his head between work-rough hands. “Are you hurt?”

He managed to pull himself together enough to shake his head, his fingers twisting unconsciously in the front of the older man’s wool coat.

James gave him another once over before he appeared to relax- if only marginally. “Alright,” he said with the sort of gentleness one might use when approaching a cornered animal. Slowly, he placed his hands on each of Danny’s slim shoulders and pulled him against his chest. “It’s alright.”

He tucked his head beneath James’ chin, breathing in the scent of wool and James’ cologne as he stood trembling in his arms. He felt a hand smooth over his hair, the other rubbing soothing circles on his back.

“It’s alright, love,” James murmured into his hair. “You’re alright. Take deep breaths.”

A few moments passed before Danny began to relax, finally able to breathe normally again. He stepped out of James’ embrace, though the older man kept a gentle grip on his elbows to steady him.

“Come on,” said James. “Let me take you home.”

Danny sat in the passenger’s seat of James’ Jag while the older man made a call- presumably to MI6. Apparently he had incapacitated “Trevors” about a block away from where he found Danny. He only caught snatches of the conversation, but he gathered that Six would be sending people to pick up his would-be kidnappers.

James slid into the driver’s seat as he finished his call, giving Danny another once over before starting the engine and putting the car in drive. “You okay?” he asked.

Danny nodded. “I’m fine,” he managed, finally finding his voice again. “How did you find me?”

James took his eyes off the road just long enough to spare him a sideways glance. “Your ring,” he said. “When your brother wrote the program, he set it up to notify three points of contact with your location if the distress signal was ever activated; himself, Alex, and me.” He shrugged. “I suppose he never took me out of the program. Obviously I was closest when you activated it, so I’m glad the alert came through.”

Danny gave a nod, absorbing this new information. “I see,” he said.
“Speaking of which,” said James, “you’d best call Alex and let him know that you’re alright before he goes and burns down half of London looking for you.”

Danny’s eyes widened. “Shit.” He dug through his pockets, fishing out his mobile, and made the call.

Alex answered on the first ring. “Danny? Where are you? Are you okay?”

Danny released a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding. “Alex. I’m find, I’m okay. James found me, he’s taking me home.”

“James?”

“Yeah. Can you meet us there?” He closed his eyes, sinking deeper into his seat. “I really really need to see you right now.”

“Of course,” came the answer. “I’m on my way. Danny, what happened?”

“I’ll explain when we get there,” he said. Suddenly he was exhausted. “Do me a favor; let Ethan know okay? I don’t want him to worry.”

“I will,” Alex promised. “I’ll see you soon, okay? I love you.”

Danny smiled, resting his head against the window. “I love you too.”

Once Danny was in his own home, on his own sofa, with all the doors and windows locked and a double-o agent in his kitchen, he was considerably calmer. As James emerged he accepted the mug that was pressed into his hands with a grateful smile. James took a seat on the other end of the sofa as he sipped his tea, letting the warmth of the mug seep into his fingers.

“I want to thank you,” said Danny, “for finding me when you did.”

“Don’t mention it,” James answered easily.

They sat in silence for a moment and Danny took the opportunity to study the older man, noticing for the first time how tired he looked. No, not just tired— weary. He’d seen the same look on someone else recently. “We’ve missed you around here, you know,” he ventured. “Game nights haven’t been the same without you. And you can’t really play teams with three.”

“Well,” said James, “things did get a bit complicated. I don’t think your brother wants to see me anymore. He’s been avoiding me like the plague.”

“But you did see him today?”

“This morning, yes,” James answered. “But that was under M’s orders.”

Danny gave a nod, his fingers twitching around the mug in his hands. “D’you miss him?” he asked. At the look James gave him, he backpedaled. “I’m sorry. I suppose I just still don’t understand what happened. You seemed happy then. You both did.”

James quirked an eyebrow at him. “And now?”

Danny sat a little straighter, meeting his gaze evenly. “I think you’re both miserable.”

He received a half-hearted chuckle in response before the older man shook his head. “He deserves
better,” came the mumbled reply.

“Have you considered what he wants?” he answered.

James breathed a sigh. “Danny—”

“Is it ‘better’ to be apart from the person you love? He deserves to be happy. You both do.” Danny leaned forward in his seat, his eyes as grey as a storm tossed sea. “Do you love him?”

James tightened his jaw. “It’s not that simple.”

“It’s always that simple,” he countered. “Do you love him?”

They were interrupted by the sound of keys being turned- a bit forcefully- in the lock and the front door all but burst open as Alex stepped inside, Q hot on his heels.

“Danny?”

Danny set his mug on the coffee table and rose to meet him as he entered the living room and his husband visibly sagged with relief. “Alex,” Danny murmured against his shoulder as he stepped into his arms. Suddenly it felt as if they had been apart for days and not hours.

Alex held him tightly, one hand tangled in his hair while the other stroked up and down his back. Reluctantly, he took a step back to look at him properly, cupping his face in his hands. “Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

Danny shook his head, one hand closing loosely around his wrist. “I’m fine,” he answered, “really.”

He released Alex as Q stepped forward, allowing his brother to pull him into a crushing hug. It felt like he was shaking, but his voice was steady as he spoke. “What the hell happened?”

“Your brother was attacked.”

They turned to James, standing at a distance behind them with his hands in his pockets.

“What do you mean attacked?” Q demanded, one arm still wrapped around Danny’s back, reluctant to let him go.

“Hired muscle,” said James. “Professional, though not very good. One of them was carrying this.” He pulled what looked like a pen case from his pocket and flipped open the lid, revealing a syringe with some sort of clear liquid nestled inside.

Danny flinched and felt Q’s grip on him tighten in response.

“I think we can safely rule out a common mugging,” said James, slipping it back in his pocket. “Six should have picked them up by now, so as to who they were working for and where they’d planned on taking him we should know soon enough. But whoever it was,” he looked pointedly from Alex to Q, “clearly they planned on using him to get to either one or both of you.”

“Over my dead body,” growled Q, pulling Danny against him with one hand curled at his nape.

“Don’t say that,” Danny whined into his shoulder, hugging him back tightly.

He felt a hand on the small of his back as Alex moved closer, effectively fencing him in on both sides. “That’s not going to happen.”
“Well, we need a plan,” said James. “M’s on a flight to Tokyo for the summit, but he should probably be informed when he lands. In the meantime, I suggest you all lay low and,” he pointed between Danny and Q, “neither of you go anywhere without an escort.”

“Do you think Q could be in danger?” asked Alex.

“I think it’s best to be cautious,” James answered.

Q released a breathy sigh. “I should get back,” he said, pressing a kiss to Danny’s temple before finally relinquishing his hold. “Sorry love, I’ll have to take a raincheck on dinner.”

“Just text me when you get home tonight, okay?” said Danny, having gravitated back to Alex’s arms now that he’d lost his brother’s warmth.

“I will,” said Q before turning to Alex. “I know I don’t have to ask you to take care of him.”

Alex smiled, holding Danny closer. “Take care of yourself as well, Q.”

“Don’t worry,” said James. “I’ll see the Quartermaster safely home.”

Q said nothing as he hefted his messenger bag onto his shoulder and headed towards the door. Before Bond could slip past as well, Alex extended a hand. “Thank you,” he said, gripping James’ hand firmly, “for keeping Danny safe. And for bringing him home.”

James inclined his head, returning the firm handshake, and followed Q to the door.

“James,” Danny called.

The older man paused, turning to meet his gaze.

“Think about what I said.”

For a moment James just stared back, his expression a mask. Then without a word he simply turned and followed Q out the door.

Q left the house wondering how this day had gone so spectacularly from bad to worse. Danny was safe now, he was sure. Q designed and installed the house’s security himself. Between the systems he put in place and Alex’s presence, nothing could touch him there. But that knowledge did little to settle him after the scare he’d just had- and he still needed to figure out who was behind the abduction attempt. There was also the matter of Bond.

He was already drained from their earlier encounter, having not expected to be face to face with the man again so soon. He didn’t have the energy to protest as Bond held the door to his Jag open and ushered him inside. Neither spoke as Bond climbed into the driver’s seat and put the car in drive.

The house was several blocks behind them when Q broke the silence at last. “I suppose that’s twice I owe you now,” he said, keeping his gaze forward. “Thank you. For saving my brother.”

“Don’t mention it,” came the gruff reply.

“I don’t think you understand,” said Q. He hated this tightness in his chest, though lately it never really left him. “Danny is all I have. So thank you.”

He could feel the man’s eyes on him, even in the periphery as he drove; but James said nothing.
Q took a breath. “I can give you forty-eight hours,” he said abruptly. “Any more and people will ask questions. There’s already enough eyes on us so you’d best be discreet as well. None of your usual theatrics, if you don’t mind.”

He caught Bond’s smirk out of the corner of his eye. “Thank you, Q.”

He heaved a sigh. “Don’t mention it. And when I say that I mean really- don’t mention it.”

Q spent the next few hours hunched over his keyboard, seeking every possible lead as to who had targeted his brother. He kept up communication with interrogation, but it seemed they were getting nowhere with the two thugs Bond had sent their way. But giving that they both had concussions, it may have been too soon to tell. Q has torn between being agitated and vindictively pleased at Bond’s methods.

When it became clear that there was nothing more to be done tonight, or rather when Q’s vision began to blur from staring at the screen for too long, he decided it was best for him to just head home. He’d already fired off his report to M and left very specific instructions with the night crew before he finally shuffled out of Q-Branch.

Bond had quickly disappeared after dropping Q off that afternoon and that, Q had assumed, was the end of it. He’d be on his way to Rome by now. So it was quite a surprise when he found the man waiting for him as he stepped outside.

“I promised I’d see you safely home,” said James.

Q simply nodded, too tired to care how much of a bad idea this was.

James insisted on walking him to the door when they got to the house, and Q was acutely aware of the man’s heat at his back as he disengaged the locks. How many times had they been in this position before? With James standing just a little too close as he fumbled with the lock, sending a shiver down his spine that was just a hint of things to come. By the time he finally got the door open, the cats were practically yowling at the door.

“Yes, yes, I know,” said Q, trying to usher them further inside. “I’m home. Turing-!”

Before he could stop him, the Russian Blue slipped past Q, bolted out the door… and went straight to James.

Q froze as the man scooped up Turing and stepped inside, closing the door behind him. Turing purred like a small engine in James’ arms, closing his eyes as James scratched between his ears. While he could only stare, Pascal wriggled out of Q’s grip and darted forward, rubbing against the agent’s legs.

“Alright, alright,” James mused, kneeling down to set Turing on the floor and pet them both.

Something tightened painfully in Q’s chest as the cats melted beneath his touch. “They’ve missed you,” he said with a watery smile.

“So it seems,” said James, chuckling as Turing rolled onto his back and batted at his hand playfully.

He met Q’s gaze and something shifted behind those icy blue eyes; something that hinted at the way he used to look at him before. Q broke away, turning towards the kitchen.

James stood to follow after. “Q-”
“Would you like a drink?” he asked with his back to James, rifling through the cabinets for a pair of tumblers. He didn’t wait for a response before reaching for the scotch on the top shelf and turning back to set the glasses and bottle on the counter between them. He poured a good measure in each before sliding one across to James.

“I didn’t think you liked this stuff,” he commented, accepting the glass.

Q gave a shrug. “I may have developed a taste for it,” he answered, lifting his glass. He knocked the whole thing back in one go and poured another.

James finished his slowly and set down his glass. When Q reached across to refill it, he caught his wrist. He adjusted his grip, examining the fine bones and doubtlessly realizing just how easily his hand closed around his wrist. “You’ve gotten thinner.”

Q swallowed. “Let go, James,” he said, barely above a whisper.

Slowly, James complied, allowing him to withdraw his hand. “I’ve been meaning to tell you for a while; I’m sorry for the way things ended. I never meant to-”

“Don’t,” Q answered sharply. They were not having this conversation. He didn’t want to hear a word. It was not remorse he was seeing in his ex-lover’s eyes; it was pity. And he hated it. “What’s done is done. You made your choice. There’s nothing left to say.”

He picked up the glasses and carried them to the sink, if only for something to do with his hands-anything to keep from facing him. But of course, James followed.

“Q. I said I’m sorry, alright?”

Q ignored him as he reached for the bottle of dish soap.

“I never meant to hurt you.”

He started the tap.

“Q, would you stop being so bloody stubborn and just listen to me?”

James gripped him by the arm and spun him around to face him. The next thing he knew, he had his back to the sink with James arms braced on either side of him, fencing him in. He was so close that he could smell scotch and musk and James and it was almost more than he could bear. Q set his jaw.

“You should go,” he said flatly. “You’ve got a limited window as it is and I’m sure you have a plane to catch.”

James stared back at him for a long moment before the mask slipped firmly back in place and the lover he’d known was gone again. Or perhaps that had been the mask all along and now he was seeing the man for what he was. Then without a word, he turned and headed for the door.

Q could hear both cats’ displeased cries as James stormed out and the door all but slammed behind him. He left the glasses in the sink and the bottle on the counter and went upstairs to shower.

When he came back downstairs to make sure everything was shut in for the night, Turing was still pawing at the front door, meowing pitifully.

Q sighed. “Come on, Turing, it’s time for bed. You can’t stay here all night.” He tried to scoop him up, but he wriggled out of his grasp and resumed his cries. “Turing-” Q knelt down beside him,
reaching out once more. “Come on. He’s not coming back.” As the words left his lips he felt the tears forming behind his eyes and a tightness in his throat. “He’s not coming back…” And he sank to the floor and cried.

Chapter End Notes

All aboard the pain train! I made myself sad... ;_;

So I'm going to keep doing as much as I can, but things may slow down a little for a while update wise. My RBB work is going to be a MUCH greater undertaking than I originally anticipated and needs attention, but it'll be worth it! (I hope.) I really like my artist and am really excited to share the story we have in mind. :)

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed this latest. I've got a pretty solid plan here so the only challenge is finding the time to actually write it, so I'm going to do as much as I can to keep this up alongside my RBB work.

Tomorrow is my Monday, so please leave your thoughts in the comments so I have something to get me through! ;)
Chapter 4

I have finally crawled out of my shame hole of a failed RBB project and returned to the story I wanted to be working on all along. Apologies that it has taken me this long to get to this point. I hope this update somewhat makes up for the wait as things are really starting to get interesting.

I type this at 4 in the morning, having just finished my edits, so I really hope I don't look at this later and find a bunch of stupid typos.

Special thanks to a-forger-and-a-point-man for screaming about this verse with me. This one's for you. <3

P.S. If you want to die of feels, you should listen to this song-https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z77ChEkJn5M (I'm sorry, the old lady of -almost-28 doesn't know how to link shit in here.) It's entirely the theme for this chapter. YOU'RE WELCOME.

He took the fucking car.

The moment Q stepped into his workshop to find the DB10 gone, he didn’t even have to ask. It couldn’t have been anyone but Bond. And now the prototype he’d spent the better part of a year working on was gone. And he wasn’t fool enough to think he’d ever get it back. Then the man had had the nerve to leave a bottle of champagne where the car had sat. What the hell was he playing at?

Q spent the rest of the morning in a sour mood, the minions giving him a wide berth. Alex, fortunately, didn’t seem to mind about the car, other than the position it put Q in. But he’d had no plans of leaving Danny’s side anyway; not until they were sure that the threat had passed. Q took some comfort in this, knowing that at least his brother’s safety wasn’t something he needed to worry about. The investigation into the abduction attempt had thus far been inconclusive, the higher ups chalking it up to an isolated incident, but he and Alex weren’t about to take any chances. Still, his thoughts kept drifting back to Bond.

How many times had James used him now? How many times had he caved to the point that the man assumed he didn’t even have to ask any more? And what did that say about their relationship? Had James decided to get close to him simply for what Q could do for him? Had he ever meant more than that? The thought turned his stomach.

He worked well into the night and returned just as early the next morning. For a long time, no one disturbed him, and he was grateful to be left to bury himself in his work. Then the call from M came. And the first words out of the man’s mouth were like being doused in ice water.

“Tell me Bond is in London.”

Numbly, Q pulled up the map. No. Definitely not London. And not Rome either, for that matter. Altaussee. What the hell was Bond doing in Austria? Q made a split-second decision he hoped he
would not regret.

“I have him sir, he appears to be in Chelsea.”

M seemed to accept his answer. Somehow that made him feel worse about the lie.

As soon as he hung up, he tried to get in contact with Bond. He needed an explanation. But either the man was on radio silence or simply chose to ignore him, which gave him no other choice. Q started looking at flights.

Packing was simple enough, wrangling the cats was not. He had no idea how long this was going to take and didn’t feel right leaving them on their own. Besides, Danny could use the distraction.

When he got to the house, Alex appeared just slightly confused as he ushered him inside, but he didn’t ask questions. It wasn’t uncommon for Q to bring the cats around, although they usually spoke about it beforehand. As soon as they were free of their prison, Turing and Pascal made a beeline for Danny, happily winding around his feet.

Danny sat cross-legged on the living room carpet so he could greet them properly. One hand petting Pascal who had already planted himself purring in his lap, the other scratched Turning between the ears. He frowned as he took in Q’s expression. “What happened?”

“I’m going away for a bit,” said Q. “There’s something I have to take care of and I’m not sure how long I might be gone.”

“Is this about the car?” asked Alex. “M’s not sending you out for it, is he? He knows it wasn’t your fault.”

“Not exactly,” said Q. “Although I may possibly have lied and told him that Bond is currently in Chelsea and therefore did not wreck my prototype.”

Alex seemed distressed at this. “Q-”

“Well, if he’s not in Chelsea, where is he?” Danny asked.

“Altaussee,” he answered. “He’d told me he’d be in Rome-”

“I thought he wasn’t supposed to leave London,” said Alex.

Q sighed. “Technically, he wasn’t, but there was something he was supposed to take care of. Something no one else could. Now I can’t reach him, so I’ll just have to go after him myself.”

“Why don’t I go?” asked Alex. “Stay here with Danny. It isn’t safe, Q.”

“No, Alex,” he said. “Thank you, but no. I feel much better having you here. Look, this is my mess-”

“Bond’s-”

“-and I will deal with it personally. I’m sorry to dump the cats on you, but I’ll come back as soon as I can.”

“It’s not the cats we’re worried about,” said Danny. “I don’t like this, Ethan. You shouldn’t go alone.”

“I have to, Danny,” said Q. “There are too many eyes on us already, I can’t pull an agent. As soon as
I can get a handle on the situation, I’ll come right back.”

Alex frowned, his arms folded across his chest. “As your agent, I shouldn’t let you do this.”

“But as my brother in law, you will,” he grinned, setting a hand on the shoulder. “Anyway, I outrank you. You can’t make me do anything.”

Danny looked helplessly between them, but if Alex’s expression was anything to go by, he knew he had him there. He gently extricated himself from the two felines and got to his feet, wrapping his arms around Q and hugging him tight. “Just promise you’ll be safe. And that you’ll come back.”

“Of course I’ll come back,” Q laughed. When Danny did not loosen his hold, he hugged him back tighter. “Danny, I’ll be fine. I promise. I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

“You’d better,” came the muffled reply.

Alex walked Q to the door while Danny focused on keeping the cats from getting outside. Once they were out of earshot, Q pulled the agent aside.

“Alex, there is one more thing I need you to do for me.”

“Of course,” he said.

Q reached into his bag and pulled out a simple looking grey laptop, not much larger than a tablet, and deposited it in his hands. “This computer is linked directly to my personal laptop. Any files I save will also be retained here,” he explained. “It can also get you into Six’s network through a back door that only myself and R know about. Hold onto it. Keep it hidden as well as you can and don’t let anyone else know you have it. I may need your help later.”

“Understood,” said Alex.

“Good. I’ve left some instructions with Moneypenny as well. Apparently, Bond has had her digging into a few things for him, so she knows the situation. If you need anything, you can go to her.”

“Q, what is this about?” he asked. “Somehow I get the impression there’s still something you’re not telling me.”

Q hesitated. “It has to do with M. The previous M,” he explained. “The reason both Bond and myself ended up at Six in the first place. She left one final directive. Something that she made certain would be carried out even after she died. I’m hoping that Bond actually has a lead and just can’t risk normal communication right now. If not, it’s going to have to go to Mallory.”

“Do you really trust him?” asked Alex. “Bond, I mean.”

Q considered his answer, choosing his next words carefully. “I do. I have to.”

Alex looked doubtful. “How can you be so sure?”

“Because she did,” he said simply. “That’s what it’s always come down to; why I’ve always trusted him. Whatever our… personal history, I have to trust him with this. Because this is who he is. Loyalty to Queen and country, above all else.”

Alex gave a nod, though he still did not seem entirely convinced. “Just be careful,” he said.

“I will,” said Q, giving his shoulder a reassuring squeeze. “I’ll be back soon.”
Q hated planes. No matter how sound the science, how conclusive the statistics, he would much rather take a train than fly no matter how much time it saved. Time, unfortunately, was not something he had to spare. And so, he gritted his teeth through the turbulence, cursing Bond to next Tuesday if this trip was anything short of worth it.

A quick check of his tracking system placed Bond at an expensive private health clinic high on the mountain. He didn’t waste time trying to deduce what the hell he was up to. Instead, he quickly checked into a hotel at the base of the mountain and headed for the aerial lift station that would take him to his destination. Fortunately, the little dot on the map labelled BOND had not moved by the time he began the ascent.

As he entered the clinic- which resembled more of a resort really- he spotted Bond almost instantly at the bar. Typical. He fought back a smirk. He was probably in the process of trying to order a drink at a place that most certainly did not serve alcohol. He spared a quick glance at the menu board and strode up beside him.

“He’ll have the proteolytic digestive enzyme shake.”

The man behind the counter was quick to comply, posing no question as to the fact that Q was ordering for the man he was waiting on. He simply went about his task, seemingly rather pleased to do so.

Bond didn’t even bother to turn around. “If you’re here for the car, I’ve parked it at the bottom of the Tiber.”

Q clenched his jaw. He knew this all too well, and quite frankly, did not appreciate the blunt reminder. “Not to worry, 007. It was only a £3 million prototype,” he quipped.

“009 wasn’t too cross, I hope?” He could hear the smirk in his tone.

“With me? Of course not. Though I shouldn’t need to remind you that he does like me a great deal more than you. Something to do with family,” said Q. “No guarantees if he ever gets his hands on you, though.”

Bond had yet to so much as spare him a sideways glance. “Why are you here, Q?”

“Oh, I just fancied a break really,” he drawled. “I’ve been a tad stressed at work recently. What with C’s people crawling all over us and the fact that M wants my balls for Christmas decorations.”

It was perhaps a bit too satisfying to see the muscle in his jaw twitch. “Get to the point.”

“The point, 007, is that Franz Oberhauser is dead. Dead and buried. So, you’d better have a good reason to be here ignoring all my attempts at communication other than to be chasing a literal dead end.”

“I know what I saw.”

“What you thought you saw. Christ, Bond the man died in an avalanche twenty years ago.” He was rapidly losing patience. “What the hell does any of this have to do with Sciarra? I gave you this opportunity to complete the task that M assigned to you, not to run around Europe chasing ghosts.”

Bond finally met his gaze. “I know what I saw,” he repeated. “And it is connected. I just haven’t fit all the pieces together yet.”

Q straightened. “So, you have a lead?”
“I have a name,” he answered. “L’Américain.”

Q could’ve decked him. “Well, that narrows it down.” He hastily gathered up his coat and hefted his messenger bag onto his shoulder, the familiar weight of his laptop resting against his hip. “Time’s up, 007. Either you come back with me right now and do this through proper channels, or I go directly to M. My career is on the line here, as is Moneypenny’s. And, quite frankly, I’ve risked enough for you already.”

As he turned to leave he found Bond blocking his path. “Do one more thing for me,” he said, “and then you’re out.” He reached into his pocket and pulled out a silver ring, dropping it into his hand. It had what appeared to be an octopus etched into the band in glossy black. “Find out what you can from this.”

Q weighed the object in his hand. Half of him wanted to throw it back in his face. Yet the symbol seemed distressingly familiar. If he could only place it. He closed his hand around the ring, took a deep breath, and made a decision. “I really really hate you right now.”

Bond’s smile seemed almost genuine. “Thank you, Q.”

He slipped past without a word, eager to put some distance between them so he could think. Just as he got to the exit, Bond called out to him.

“Where are you staying?” It appeared that security was attempting to get him to vacate the premises. Q didn’t even want to know.

“The Pevsner. Room 12.”

“One hour.”

Q resisted the urge to roll his eyes. *Fine*, he thought as he slipped out the door. He tried not to think about what that statement would’ve meant three months ago. The pang he felt at the reminder only angered him that much more. No. This was going to be the last time. He was done sticking his neck out for James Bond. This would all end here.

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He should’ve known it wouldn’t be that simple. Nothing involving James bloody Bond was ever that simple.

His heart was still racing by the time he made it back to the hotel and engaged the locks behind him. It was a simple matter to add extra security measures to the electronic lock on his door. It was simpler still to hack the hotel’s security feeds to keep an eye on the cameras. He still had no way to reach Bond, and would just have to trust that he would meet him when he said he would. He had about thirty minutes. Who the two men on the lift were, he had no idea. But instinct had told him to run, so he ran. So far there was no sign that he had been followed.

After adjusting his alert settings to be sure he had a heads up before anyone came near the room, he settled in with his laptop to try and pull as much information as he could on the ring Bond gave him. He had clearly changed hands a few times. There were too many fingerprints to pull anything conclusive save his own and Bond’s, but the trace amount of blood on the band had identified Marco Sciarra. Okay. So, Bond had gotten the ring off of Sciarra. That told them nothing they didn’t already know.

He set to work running as many image searches as he could, using the various programs at his disposal; some from Six, some of his own design. By the time he completed his query, he had every known database searching the image. But he still had to visually comb through a lot of the results,
and before long it was starting to give him a headache. Finally, he started to see a pattern in the results. The same names were beginning to show up; names he recognized from Bond’s files. These were people and organizations he had operated against before. Quantum in particular Q was intimately familiar with. He had just moved up to Q-Branch during that time and earned quite a reputation for his ability to decrypt any of their files he managed to get his hands on. Only this was bigger than that. From what he could find, it seemed that Quantum was only one piece of an even larger organization.

An alarm on his laptop nearly caused him to jump from his seat, but a quick scan of the security cameras revealed it was only Bond coming down the hall to meet him. Except Bond wasn’t alone.

Q was at the door by the time he knocked and quickly disengaged the locks. Bond shouldered past him as soon as the door was open.

“Dr. Swann, Q, Q, Dr. Swann,” was the hasty introduction.

“Hello,” she said politely.

“Enchanted,” Q replied dismissively. He swiftly closed the door behind her and turned to the agent. “Bond, we need to talk. Alone.”

“She knows,” he answered simply.

“But, Bond-”

“She knows,” he said. “What have you got?”

Q deflated a bit. There wasn’t time to argue now. And he wasn’t too proud to admit where he had misjudged. “It seems I owe you an apology, 007. You were onto something.” He returned to the desk where he had set up his laptop, not surprised to find Bond at his elbow the moment he sat down. He reviewed his findings as concisely as he could, pulling up various images he had gathered to corroborate his report.

“This organization,” said Bond when he was through, “do we know what it’s called?”

Q hesitated. This was the one bit of information that had alluded him, and it was infuriating. “No.”

“SPECTRE,” offered Dr. Swann, having remained silent up to this point. “Its name is SPECTRE.”

“How does she know that?” asked Q, a bit crossly.

“Because my father was part of it,” she answered.

Q did not have the energy to even begin to consider the implications of that statement. “Well, whoever they are, they’re clearly gearing up for something bigger. Based on my findings, they seem to be linked to this latest string of terrorist attacks. Attacks which have now occurred in every country presently taking part in the summit M just attended to vote in C’s Nine Eyes program. South Africa was the only nation to vote against it and they were hit just this morning.” He shook his head. “I don’t like the look of this, we need more information.”

“Q, get back to London,” said Bond. “M’s going to need your help.”

“I will,” said Q. “But you need to find L’Américain. He’s the only lead we’ve got.”

Dr. Swann shook her head. “It’s not a person,” she said. “It’s a place.”
Within minutes, Q had aliases for all of them, flights booked, and after a quick stop to allow Dr. Swann to gather a few things, they were headed to the airport. Their flights were fairly close together; Bond and Dr. Swann heading to Tangier while Q was bound for London— but the flight to Tangier would leave first. Though he couldn’t quite rationalize (or rather refused to admit to himself) why, Q was irritable for most of the drive and quite eager to part company.

When they got to the airport, Bond seemed to go out of his way to assist Dr. Swann, offering his hand as they exited the cab, holding doors, helping with her luggage. Whatever charm he poured on however seemed lost on Dr. Swann as she deflected him at every turn, yet the silent battle raging between them only served to further sour Q’s mood. He’d seen this dance before. Been party to it more times than he could count.

Once they were through security, Q made a beeline towards his terminal without looking back at the pair of them, determined to find a quiet corner to hole up in before he had to board his flight. He was brought up short by a hand on his arm. He turned to find Bond at his elbow.

“Where are you running off to in such a hurry?” asked the insufferable man.

“My gate, Bond,” he quipped. “I trust you don’t need my help finding yours.”

“Your flight doesn’t board for another hour,” he countered, still gripping his arm. “We should stay together. You’re not safe until you’re back in London.”

Q glared. “I don’t need a babysitter.” He spared a glance over his shoulder, noticing Dr. Swann standing off to one side. “And it’s rather rude to keep the lady waiting.”

Bond narrowed his eyes at him. “Is that what this is about? What, are you jealous?”

He could feel his cheeks burning, but he did his best to mask it, finally pulling free of Bond’s grip. “I—”

“For Christ’s sake, Q,” he cut it. “This is ridiculous. Now, stop acting so bloody juvenile and come with us until you need to board.”

“Or what?” he challenged, drawing himself up to his full height. “I don’t take orders from you, 007. I am your superior and you will do best to remember that.” He turned to leave only to find his arm caught in an iron grip.

“Do I need to put you over my knee?” Bond growled in his ear.

Q went stock still, his words dripping venom as he shot back, “Take your hands off me or I will make you regret that we ever crossed paths. Just because you were given permission to touch me before, that does not grant you permission now or in future.”

Bond’s expression was carefully neutral as he met Q’s icy glare, but he did as he was told, relinquishing his hold and slipping both hands in his pockets for good measure. “My apologies, Q,” he drawled. “I was under the impression that you still had a sense of humor.”

Q laughed darkly. “Of course,” he said. “Because this is all a joke to you. Always has been.”

He frowned. “What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“It means you don’t give a damn,” he spat, “about me or anybody else. You use people for what you can get from them because you think it’s your due. And damn the consequences for anyone who does what you ask. You just take what you want with no regard for the people you hurt.” He wasn’t
sure what finally pushed him to say all this now, but now that he’d started, he found he couldn’t stop. It was like a dam had given way. “Don’t you dare think everything I’ve done for you you’ve had coming just because I slept with you. Everything I’ve done I did because I trusted you. Because she trusted you, and I knew that was no small thing. Then I made the mistake of falling in love with you and you threw it back in my face. Because I made the mistake of thinking that all that time meant at least a fraction to you of what it meant to me. Then I thought we could move past it. That we could maintain a working relationship based on mutual respect; that maybe we could even be friends. But I was wrong about that too. So, I’m done. Whatever this is, it ends here. No more favors, no more turning a blind eye so you can chase your own agenda. We speak only as much as is professionally necessary. I don’t want to see you any more than I absolutely, unavoidably, have to. You will go your way, and I will go mine. Do you understand?”

Bond had remained stoic and silent as he raged, and for a moment, he did not answer, as if he were judging whether or not the question was rhetorical. When Q did not continue, he finally spoke. “I stand by what I said to you before, Q; back in London. I never meant to hurt you, and I’m sorry. But, if that’s really what you want, I’ll make sure you never have to speak to me again unless it’s entirely unavoidable. Anything I need from Q-Branch, I’ll take directly to R.”

He shook his head, angry at himself when his breath hitched as he spoke. “Don’t, James. Don’t pretend you care, because I know you don’t,” he said. “You know, Danny was convinced that you leaving when you did was all some sort of knee-jerk reaction to your fear of commitment, and that you’d come around once you’d had time to think things through. But Danny’s always been a bit of a romantic. You and I both know that was never what this was, so don’t insult me by pretending otherwise. Let’s just leave it at that.”

“How could you hate me enough to do this?”

“Q-”

He retreated a step as James moved towards him. “Don’t. Just don’t, James. I’ve had enough.”

Q turned away and continued down the terminal, only somewhat relieved when James didn’t follow. He’d have thought that unloading on him like that would make him feel lighter, yet somehow the heaviness he’d carried for the past three months felt that much worse. But he couldn’t think about that now. He had a job to do. They had a job to do, and everything else came second.

Once he located his gate, Q ducked into a nearby restroom, hoping that it would be a bit quieter and he’d have a chance to clear his head. Fortunately, it appeared to be vacant, so he made his way to the sink against the far wall, setting his bags down and turning on the tap. He set his glasses on the ledge and splashed cold water on his face, standing for a moment with his eyes closed as he leaned against the sink. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

Q reached for a paper towel and dried his face before reaching again for his glasses. Satisfied that he looked at least a little more put together, he turned to retrieve his bags. As he reached first for the bag containing his laptop, he suddenly sensed a presence behind him. Alarmed that he had not heard footsteps before, he turned around and found his path blocked by the same man he’d encountered earlier that day as he’d tried to exit the lift.

For a moment, time stood still as he froze in his tracks, realizing now that he was completely cornered. In a split-second decision, he struck out at the man with what would have been a perfect uppercut had he not managed to dodge it. The next thing he knew, there was a gloved hand over his mouth that had him pinned against the wall. He felt a prick at the side of his neck and suddenly his limbs began to feel heavy. As he fought to maintain consciousness, another man entered behind his attacker. A man he realized, even as his thoughts became muddled, was also familiar. He was suddenly struck with the image of Danny standing in front of the ruins of the old MI6 building, the
man that entered holding him captive. Then everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

...I may enjoy leaving you guys with cliffhangers a bit more than I should. >:

And now we finally get into the meat of the story I've been working toward all along! A bit of an angst fest, I know, but I enjoy #suffering.

I will make no promises as to what the update schedule is going to look like going forward only because LITERALLY EVERY TIME I DO, I jinx it, but I'm feeling pretty good about things.

Please please please leave your thoughts in the comments! Because shouting into the void is only fun for so long. ;P
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Hello lovelies!!

Apologies for the delay. (I feel like I’m always saying that...) Not sure why this chapter was so difficult to write, but here we are. I’m not sure if I’m entirely satisfied with it, but that’s probably because I’ve been staring at it way too long.

Special thanks to the lovely a-forger-and-a-point-man for helping me get over the last hurdle and POST THIS THING.

I hope you all enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

James lingered longer than he should have, watching Q’s retreating form disappear into the crowd. When he turned back, Madeleine was watching him intently; probably had been for some time.

“Will your friend be leaving us so soon?”

“He’ll find his own way,” said James.

“He didn’t seem very pleased with you,” she observed.

“He rarely is.” He surveyed the area with sharp eyes, scoping things out of habit as much as to avoid that cool, calculating gaze. “Come on,” he said. “We should find our gate.”

They had a couple of connections on the way to Tangier; the first in Frankfurt, then the Charles de Gaulle Airport before they transferred to Paris for the final leg of the trip. They didn’t speak much on that first hour hop from Salzburg to Frankfurt, but Bond couldn’t help but notice a newfound interest in the furtive glances Madeleine sent his way; like he was a puzzle to be solved. She made no attempts at idle conversation, however, which was fine. He had enough dialogue going on in his own head. James knew he had fucked things up with Q. He just hadn’t realized quite how badly until now.

He had spoken honestly when he said he had never meant to hurt him. He really had. He’d come to realize that his timing had been godawful when he left, but it had been his intention to make it a clean break in the hopes that Q would just move on. He was wrong. But the worst part was that now Q thought he’d been using him all along. And he was beginning to see the justification behind that line of thought.

If he were honest with himself, he hadn’t really put any thought behind what he asked of Q; or ever really acknowledged just how much he asked. James went to Q because he trusted him. For reasons he could never quite explain, he always had.

Trust was not something that came easily to James, and yet he had trusted Q completely and Q, he thought, had trusted him in return. He wondered now if he ever would again.

Their layover in Frankfurt was brief; long enough to grab a quick bite to eat before they needed to
catch the next plane. There were no new messages when he checked his phone in between, although, what he had expected, he couldn’t be sure.

The next flight also lasted little more than an hour. Madeleine seemed content to occupy her time with a book. James tried to focus on the task at hand, willing away the image of stormy hazel eyes and the straight-backed form retreating from him to disappear into the crowd. He was only marginally successful.

They would need to take a cab from the Charles de Gaulle airport to Paris, and so after they had gathered their luggage, they made their way to the ground transportation terminal. About halfway there, Bond remembered to turn on his mobile- to find several missed calls from Moneypenny. Before he had a chance to check for messages, his phone started ringing. He stepped off to one side, out of the flow of foot traffic, to take the call.

“Bond.”

“Tell me he’s with you.”

He frowned. “Sorry?”

“Q,” she snapped. “You know, the skinny boffin who followed you to Austria in spite of having no experience in the field? The one that’s managed to save your sorry arse more times than any of us can count?” She was sounding more agitated by the second. “His flight arrived an hour ago, and he’s not here. I had R check the manifests under the alias he gave me, along with every other name he’s ever used. He never boarded. I want an explanation. Now.”

Suddenly it felt as if he had plunged into the loch on the grounds of his childhood home in the dead of winter. For a moment, it was as if all the air had been forced from his lungs. Something must have shown on his face because Madeleine was looking at him in what can only be described as alarm. “We got to the airport together, but he took off as soon as we got through security,” he said. “I haven’t seen or heard from him since.”

“And you let him go? Without an escort?”

“He wouldn’t listen to me, Eve,” he ground out. “I don’t know if you’re aware of this, but he’s been a bit cross with me lately. We had a row. Then he left for his gate and I left for mine.”

“Fucking hell, James!” He had never heard her so angry- or afraid. “If anything’s happened to him, I swear to God-”

“What did R find on the cameras?” he pressed on. “Is there any chance that he got on another flight?”

“Nothing,” said Eve. “R has pulled everyone she can to look into this, but we’re extremely limited. C is watching everything. From what we can find, it’s as if he vanished. There’s nothing on camera and none of his aliases are coming up on any flights leaving Salzburg. Anyway, he wouldn’t have changed his plans without telling us.”

For a moment, James was silent, aware of Moneypenny’s shaky breathing on the other end of the line.

“I’m going back.”

“No,” she said. “If he’s been taken, I doubt they’re still in the area.” She took a steadying breath. “Right now, L’Américain is the only lead we’ve got. We need you to get there and see what you can
“Alright,” said Bond. There really wasn’t any other option. “Just keep me posted if you get any new information. We’ll find him, I promise you.”

“You’d better hope so,” she answered, and the line disconnected.

“What’s happening?” asked Madeleine as he stared at the screen.

“Q’s missing,” he answered, already moving back into the flow of foot traffic that would lead them to a waiting cab.

She practically had to jog to catch up with him. “I gathered that,” she said. “What are we going to do?”

“We get to L’Américain,” he answered. “We find SPECTRE, we find Q. I’ve got a pretty good feeling they’re at the heart of all this.”

“We don’t even know what we’re looking for,” said Madeleine. “Are you sure this is the best option?”

“It’s the best we’ve got,” said James. “I don’t care if I have to burn down the entire bloody organization. I’m the one who got him into this mess. I’m going to get him out.”

As Q awoke, it felt as though he was emerging from deep within a body of water. There was a sense of weightlessness, yet the closer he came to consciousness, the more his limbs began to feel like lead. He was aware of a bright light as his eyes began to open, but as he tried to lift a hand to shield his eyes, he was met with resistance. His heart leapt to his throat as he came to the realization that both of his wrists were bound to the arms of the chair in which he sat, and his muddled thoughts slowly began to catch up with recent events.

“Ah, you’re awake.”

The voice seemed familiar, yet he could not place it immediately. As he struggled to bring the world into focus, realizing belatedly that he was missing his glasses, he identified the shape of a man standing before him. The man was impeccably dressed in a dark grey suit and black button down, no tie. At a glance, he was the image of a wealthy businessman and he was smiling in a way that could almost be construed as friendly, open. But there was something just slightly off- like looking at a reverse image in a mirror. Something about the eyes were unsettling. Cold, calculating, yet almost lifeless; like a shark.

“It’s quite fascinating,” said the man, head cocked to one side. “The resemblance between you is even more striking without your glasses. You could be twins.”

Q froze as realization crashed over him like a wave. His hands clenched into fist as fear gave way to an icy rage.

“Blofeld,” he hissed between clenched teeth.

The man’s grin widened. “I’m flattered that you remember me so well,” he said. “How is your brother?”

Q strained against his bonds, wanting nothing more than to strangle the man with his bare hands. “Safe. You’ll never get your hands on him again.”
“Yes, that is quite a fortress you’ve built for your brother,” said Blofeld. “I’m impressed. Not that we haven’t tried. But it appears that Agent Turner is rather particular about who he so much as allows to approach the house.” He gave a shrug. “No matter. I’ve no need for either of them now that you’re here.”

“So, this is still about Project Alistair then,” said Q, feeling a sense of pride at his handiwork as well as a keen fondness for his brother-in-law.

“I’ll have Project Alistair soon enough if I so choose,” said Blofeld. “Friends in high places, you see. Max has already proved himself quite useful.”

Q felt his blood run cold. “Max Denbigh? The new chairman of the security council?”

He grinned.

“The merger. Nine Eyes is yours, isn’t it?”

“Very good,” said Blofeld. “You are clever. In 48 hours, when Nine Eyes goes live, I will have full access to all of SIS as well as numerous security services around the world. All I need now is to have you out of the way.”

“I see,” said Q. “So, you drag me all the way out here to gloat, and then what? Kill me?”

He laughed. “Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. I have no intention of letting you live, that much is true,” he said. “But first, I must attend to some unfinished business. And you are going to help me.”

“And why would I do that?” said Q.

“Because you have something I want,” he said. “And when someone stands in the way of what I want, you’ll find that I can be very persuasive.”

He let the threat hang in the air. Q only glared.

“I know all about your Smart Blood program,” he went on. “And I want it. Unfortunately, none of my people have been able to access it for me.”

“So?” said Q. “If you’re about to gain full access with Nine Eyes, what does it matter?”

“Because I need access before Nine Eyes goes live,” he said. “You see, I want Bond. He is my unfinished business. And you are going to track him for me.”

Suddenly, all of the pieces began to fall into place- SPECTRE, all of Bond’s past missions; the way they were linked. It wasn’t a ghost Bond was chasing at all. “You’re Oberhauser.”

He grinned. “Right again. So, Quartermaster, what’s it going to be?”

A door opened to his right and another man entered holding Q’s laptop. He placed it on the table that was pushed off to one side, setting Q’s glasses down on top. The man then stood at attention, heavily muscled arms folded across his chest as he met Q’s gaze unblinking.

“Will you make things easier on yourself and grant my request?” Blofeld went on. “Or shall we do this the hard way?”

Q returned his gaze to Blofeld and met him with an icy glare. “Well, let’s see,” he began. “You kidnapped my brother, you hurt him and nearly had him killed. You are connected to nearly every case I’ve ever had my hands on since I joined MI6, and now you are the head of what has to be the
largest terrorist organization in the world which is on the verge of collapsing national and global security as we know it. Now I’m here and you’ve made it quite clear that no matter what happens, you are going to have me killed either way. So, in a word, no, Mr. Blofeld. I’m not giving you a goddamn thing.”

For a moment, Blofeld simply regarded him with the same even stare he had worn throughout their entire exchange. He stood with his hands folded in front of him, head cocked to one side, then he lowered his gaze, giving a solemn nod. “How disappointing,” he said with a put-upon sigh. “Then, I guess we’ll have to do this the hard way.”

No one paid any mind to the boy on the train.

He sat at the back of the carriage, knobby knees showing through ripped jeans as he held a tattered backpack to his chest like it was his only friend in the world. Beneath a mess of dark curls, grey-blue eyes much too serious for such a young face watched each station pass, counting down the stops to his destination.

The train came to a stop and he bolted onto the platform, pushing through the crowd in spite of standing only chest high compared to his fellow passengers. He mounted the stairs two at a time until he emerged onto the London street.

In what felt like an instant, the familiar block of flats came into view. It was already fully dark as he reached the door. He barely had to scan the panel for the number he sought before muscle memory brought his hand to the buzzer.

“Yes?” a voice crackled over the intercom.

“Can I come up?” he asked without preamble.

“Danny? Is that you?” There was worry in the familiar voice. “Hang on- I’ll buzz you in.”

He raced up the stairs the moment the door opened, not stopping until he reached the flat on the second floor. A young man stood in the doorway, seeking him from behind a pair of thick rimmed glasses. He brushed dark curls out of his eyes and smiled as he approached.

Danny nearly bowled him over when he reached him, wrapping his arms around the slim chest tightly. He felt him chuckle where he’d pressed his face against his chest. Long fingers carded through his hair as he returned the embrace.

“You should have told me you were coming. I’d have met you at the station,” he said.

When Danny did not relinquish his hold, he felt him tense.

“Danny, what’s wrong?”

“Can I stay here?” he asked, pulling back just enough so that he could see his face.

“Of course, you can stay tonight,” he said.

Danny shook his head. “Not just tonight. Please, Ethan. I don’t want to go back. I want to stay here with you. I promise I won’t get in the way-”

“Danny, calm down,” he said gently, resting both hands on his shoulders. “Of course, you can stay here. You can always stay here.”
Danny sniffed and rubbed his eyes. “You’re not gonna tell me not to run away?”

Ethan smiled. “That’s never dissuaded you before. Not even when you were just a boy.”

Danny turned to follow as he moved away to find they were no longer in Q’s tiny flat in Islington, but in the living room of his two-story home in South Lambeth. He could see Pascal and Turing curled up on the sofa. When he looked up, he and Ethan were of a height.

“I don’t want you to go,” Danny found himself saying.

Ethan’s returning smile seemed sad. “It’ll be alright.”

“Ethan-”

As the retreating form rounded the corner out of sight, Danny felt a sudden panic that he could not explain. He quickly followed, rounding the corner just behind- but he was gone.

His search became frantic as the house transformed into a labyrinth of rooms and stairways and he just couldn’t quite seem to get to where he wanted to go. He called and called, but his brother was nowhere to be found. Finally, he came to the top of a set of stairs leading down to the basement. The stairs seemed to descend forever into darkness, but at the bottom he could see a single bare bulb illuminating the center of the room…

Danny awoke with a start, alone in bed in the early light of dawn; save for the bundle of fur curled against his side. Pascal released a small *mrrrp* of displeasure as Danny sat up, jostling him a bit with his movements. For a moment, he sat there, idly stoking his fur and allowing his heart rate to come down as the last vestiges of the dream gave way to reality. He couldn’t understand what had gotten him so panicked.

After deciding that going back to sleep was not an option, he set his feet on the floor and rose from the bed, dragging the blanket along with him and wrapping it around his shoulders. He stepped out into the hall, Pascal trotting along in his wake. A quick sweep of the place revealed that Alex wasn’t upstairs, and so he made his way down to the den. Surely, he would find his husband in his usual haunt; where he ended up when it was far too early by Danny’s standards and he was too wired to sleep.

Sure enough, there sat Alex at the edge of the sofa, typing away on his laptop. Turing, it seemed, had taken up sentry and was curled against the back of the machine, emerald eyes blinking at him idly. Alex lifted his head as Danny approached, eyes brightening in a way only he ever got to see. “I’m sorry, did I wake you?”

Danny shook his head, wrapping his blanket cape a little tighter around his shoulders as he stepped around the coffee table to join him on the sofa. He tucked his feet under him as he sat and curled against his side, resting his head against his shoulder. “Strange dream.”

“Nightmare?” asked Alex, abandoning the laptop in favor of wrapping an arm around Danny and pulling him closer.

“Not exactly,” he answered, almost a question. “It started out fairly normal; only it was more like reliving a memory than an actual dream.”

At a puzzled look from Alex, he decided to elaborate.
“I ran away from home a few times as a kid,” he said, relaxing against his solid form. “Usually after a row with my parents. Ethan had his own place by the time I was about 10 or 11, so I always ended up there. He’d always let me stay the night, but he’d make me go back in the morning. I didn’t really understand why until I got older. Me being a minor, it could’ve meant a lot of trouble for him. For both of us, really. But it was the same conversation almost every time. Mostly, I think he wanted to make sure I finished school. But, no matter what, every time I showed up he always let me stay the night.”

“So, you were dreaming about one of those times?” Alex asked.

Danny nodded. “Except it was different. One minute I’m just a kid again and we’re standing in his old flat. The next, we’re older and we’re in the living room in the house up the street. Then all of a sudden I can’t find him and it feels like the whole world’s turned upside down.” He glanced up from where his head rested on Alex’s shoulder. “What do you think it means?”

Alex only took a moment to consider his answer. “Dreams have a way of manifesting our emotions in different ways,” he said. “You’re worried about him. You have been for some time. You feel guilty about all the times he took care of you and you feel like you’re not doing enough to return the favor; even though you know he doesn’t want you to feel that way. Him taking off after Bond like he did isn’t helping. You feel helpless because you can’t be with him right now.”

Danny offered a small smile, fidgeting with the blanket absently. “You should’ve been a psychologist.”

Alex smiled in return. “I think I just know you pretty well.”

They lapsed into an easy silence and Danny snuggled closer, Alex rubbing his arm lightly through the blanket. He breathed a sigh. “I really am worried about him,” he said after a moment. “I just- I know he’s not been okay, no matter what he says otherwise. And you’re right; him diving head first into whatever James has gotten himself into- I don’t like it. Especially given the state of the two of them. I feel like he’s not thinking. Ethan, that is. I’m afraid he’s gonna do something stupid.”

“I understand what you mean,” said Alex. “But you and I both know that once he decided to go, there was no telling him otherwise. They’re both professionals. We just have to trust that they’ll finish the mission and come straight home. Either way, I think Bond will make sure your brother doesn’t stay longer than is necessary.”

He gave a sullen nod. “He still cares about him, you know,” he said. “James, I mean.”

Alex regarded him curiously. “How can you be so sure?” he asked. “Did he say something to you?”

“It’s more what he didn’t say,” said Danny. “Or rather, what he won’t. I think he’s realized how badly he fucked it all up and he just doesn’t know how to fix it. He needs to pull his head out of his arse.”

Alex chuckled. “And what about Q?” he asked. “Would he even want to pursue a relationship now?”

He nodded resolutely. “I know he does,” he said. “He’s been badly hurt, but he loves James. If James would make a decent effort to fix things, I know he’d take him back.”

“If James pulls his head out of his arse,” Alex echoed.

Danny grinned. “Exactly.” He yawned widely, stretching like a cat before sinking down into the cushions to curl on his side. “Is it okay if I stay here?” he asked. “I don’t want to go back to bed
“Of course,” he answered. “Or I can come back up if you like.”

“S’okay. I know you’re working,” said Danny, resting his head against his hip. “S’plenty comfy here.”

Alex gazed at him affectionately as his eyes fell closed, long dark eyelashes brushing his cheeks. Within moments, he was sound asleep.

He pulled the blanket a little higher over his shoulder and returned his attention to the laptop, careful not to jostle his sleeping partner. When the screen came to life, he returned to the files he’d been perusing; several new uploads from the day before. There were a lot of links back to previous cases that 007 had worked over the years; several names making recurring appearances. He followed the data to discover what Q had concluded: all these prior cases, along with several more recent events, were linked to a single organization called SPECTRE. There was a heavy crease in his brow as he finished reading the report. If this was as big as it appeared to be, he was becoming more concerned that Q and Bond were apparently handling this on their own. There wasn’t much he could do on a mirrored laptop and Moneypenny, he knew, had to keep up appearances. They were all being watched.

As he scanned the last few recent documents, an alert flashed on the screen. Suddenly, he felt his blood run cold. It was a security alert from Q’s laptop; the connection was being severed. Someone had executed the kill command.

Alex’s fingers flew over the keys as he entered commands on his end. He managed to enter the correct security protocols before the memory wipe command was executed on this device as well. Then he called up a new window, which soon displayed the GPS location of Q’s laptop. It was far from Altaussee.

As calmly and quietly as he could, Alex closed the laptop and extricated himself from Danny’s sleeping form. Turing regarded him coolly as he rose from his seat. He was dialing Moneypenny before he’d fully slipped from the room.

James was pissed.

After spending most of the day scouring every inch of L’Américain, they’d come up with nothing. Just a honeymoon suite in a quaint little hotel in the heart of Tangier. Nothing more.

The sun was beginning to set as James drank directly from the bottle he’d liberated from its hiding place in the wall. Already, it was half gone. He paced the floor like a tiger trapped in a cage; a powerful predator with no outlet for his aggression. And all the while Madeleine continued her silent study of her unlooked-for companion. He was so close to snapping. So ready to take out his anger on whatever target had the misfortune to fall in his path. He was on the brink when the silence was finally broken; and her words stopped him in his tracks.

“You care about him.”

He gripped the neck of the bottle tighter, jaw clenched as his gaze remained fixed on some undefined point beyond the window. “Of course I care,” he grumbled. “I told you; I’m the one that got him into this in the first place. He shouldn’t have even been there.”

“But it’s more than that,” she said. “I was watching. I saw the way you danced around one another; there was intimacy there. I saw the way he looked at you, and the way you looked at him when you
thought he wasn’t looking.” She took a small step closer, stopping somewhere behind him. “Do you love him?”

James heaved a sigh, nearly a low growl in his throat. The echo of Danny’s words to him just a few days prior reverberated off his skull. “You’re off the clock, Dr. Swann,” he said. “And I’m not one of your patients.”

“Because it’s rather obvious that he’s in love with you,” she continued as though he hadn’t spoken. “So, what happened?”

He took a long drink from the bottle and resumed his pacing, suddenly weary. He was beginning to feel some of the anger siphoning off; being quickly replaced by something else. Realizing she was not going to let it drop, he finally deigned to respond. “I left him.”

He could tell by the creak of the mattress that she had taken a seat on the bed. “Why?”

“Because he deserves better,” he said. “And I was fool enough to think that I was protecting him. From me. From this.” He shook his head solemnly. “Fat lot of good it’s done either of us.”

“So, you regret it now?” she asked.

The whole time, he had kept his gaze to the window, leaning heavily against the wall on one shoulder. He took another long drink before finally meeting her eye, his expression a mask. “Yes.”

Madeleine met that piercing gaze evenly, something close to a smile playing at the corner of her mouth. “Well then,” she said. “Are you going to stand around until you drink yourself into a stupor, or are you going to do something about it?”

“We’ve already done all we can here,” he answered irritably. “There’s nothing here; it’s just a dead end. What else do you suggest?”

Madeleine rose from her seat and took a bold step toward him. “You’re the master spy,” she said, a challenge in her gaze. “Figure it out.”

Of all the breaks Bond had ever gotten on a case, this had to be the first time there was ever a rodent involved; or any animal for that matter. It was just a tiny little field mouse, scurrying across the floor in the early light of dawn. When it disappeared behind a wall, he realized what was standing right in front of him this entire time.

Madeleine awoke to James literally tearing down the wall beside her. They quickly discovered a hidden room; the vault of information they’d been looking for. After just a few minutes of searching, they had a set of coordinates. James was reaching for his phone just as it started to ring.

“Bond.”

“We have a lead,” came Moneypenny’s voice over the line.

James’ grin was nothing short of predatory. “So have I. How fast can you get on a plane?”

Chapter End Notes
WE'RE GETTING SO CLOSE TO THE END. OMG.

Events didn't progress QUITE as far as I'd anticipated in this chapter, but I felt like I needed to work in more of Danny and Alex. I want them involved. I promise there will be more action in the next chapter!! (And more Q whump/h/c MWAHAHAHAHA!)

Until next time! Please leave your thoughts in the comments. :)

Chapter 6

Apologies that this chapter is shorter than previous ones. I really wanted to post and I think breaking up the rest into smaller chapters might actually help me get some momentum back. I should also note that this is where the "Canon-Typical Violence" tag comes into play. Warnings include implied/references to torture. I promise there's nothing graphic!

He had no idea how long they left him there. Was is hours? Days? There was no way to measure time in this plain white cell. No windows, one door. The only thing he did know was that everything hurt.

Q was acquainted with torture. He’d seen the videos, read his agents’ files; and while his training wasn’t nearly as extensive as the double-o’s, he’d received what Six had deemed necessary. He knew the coping methods. He knew what to expect.

He’d played their game in the beginning; let them think they’d broken him; let them think they’d won. He only needed access to his laptop for a moment; just long enough to enter a few key strokes, then his work was done. The whole hard drive self-destructed in seconds. He could smell the fumes of burning metal and plastic as his security protocols insured that nothing would be salvageable. It was a short-lived victory.

Blofeld’s vengeance was swift and brutal as Q received the worst beating of his life. After that, they’d confined him here; hanging by the wrists with his feet just barely able to touch the ground. He could never hope to sleep this way; not with the constant ache in his shoulders and the way the ropes bit into his wrists, rubbing them raw. But then, sleep deprivation, he knew, was just another tool in a torturer’s toolkit.

He hissed as his shifting aggravated the deep cut along his ribs. “A scar to match your brother’s,” Blofeld had said. “Not that you’ll live long enough for it to scar.”

Q pressed his forehead against the inside of his arm and tried to focus on breathing. They would try again, he knew. Blofeld may have had his fingers in every aspect of MI6, but he couldn’t get past the firewalls surrounding Q’s work. He still wanted the Smart Blood program. Q wasn’t going to give it to him.

As he clung to consciousness, his body desperate for sleep, he thought of Danny; the hours he’d spent as Blofeld’s captive. How terrified and alone he must have felt. But it was alright now. Danny was safe and he was happy. He had Alex to protect him now. Q only hoped that Danny would understand. That was his only regret; that he couldn’t keep his promise. He would not be coming home.

His thoughts drifted to Bond. To James. His James. A vision of icy blue eyes rose to the surface of his memory unbidden, gazing down at him full of mirth; a look reserved only for Q. How he had loved him then. How, he realized, he loved him still. He thought of his parting words to James; how he wished it could’ve ended differently. Would he even mourn his passing? A little voice assured
him that he would. It didn’t help. He wondered if James even knew he was gone.

The door swung open to his left, interrupting his thoughts and setting him instantly on edge. He glared defiantly as Blofeld entered the room, though it was a bit difficult to focus without his glasses. He dutifully ignored the imposing figure trailing in his wake- and the rod he held in his hand.

“So,” said Blofeld, turning to face him. “I trust you’ve had some time to reconsider?”

Q said nothing, his lethal glare unwavering.

After a long pause, Blofeld conceded with a simple shrug. “Suit yourself,” he said. “You won’t keep your silence for long.”

As Blofeld stepped aside, his gruff companion entered Q’s field of vision. Q kept his gaze straight ahead as the figure moved closer, a looming shadow at his side. He heard the telltale flick of a switch and the instrument in the man’s hand crackled to life. Q took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

Madeleine practically had to jog to keep up with Bond’s purposeful strides as he led them through the crowd. The sun was high in the sky and the streets were filled with tourists and locals alike. Nevertheless, they made swift progress towards their destination. It only took one look from Bond, it seemed, to clear their path. She could sense the deadly energy simmering beneath the surface as she held tightly to his hand so as to not get lost in the crowd.

He did not slow down until they reached their destination; a small café at the edge of town. A beautiful dark skinned woman rose from her seat at their approach, her tight curls lightly tousled in the breeze.

“Dr. Swann, Ms. Moneypenny. Ms. Moneypenny, Dr. Swann,” Bond supplied briefly.

“Madeleine,” she offered, extending a hand which the other woman accepted in a firm handshake.

“Eve,” she answered.

“What have you got?” demanded Bond.

“The coordinates you gave match the location Turner traced the signal to from Q’s laptop,” said Moneypenny. “It appears to be empty desert, but when we blew up the satellite photos it became clear that there is some sort of facility there.”

“Then that’s where they’ve taken Q,” he said. “And that’s where I’m going.”

Moneypenny gave a solemn nod. “There’s just one problem,” she said. “I spoke to M. He said that Six can’t help us. If we do this, we’re on our own.”

“What do you mean?” Madeleine asked.

She shook her head. “C’s people are everywhere. I managed to get away under the guise of taking a holiday, but he can’t send anyone else in. It’s too much of a risk.”

Bond stared. “So, what? We’re just supposed to abandon him?” he growled. “We’re talking about Q. He didn’t sign up for this. He’s not a field agent. And we have no idea what they plan to do with him.” He shook his head. “He wasn’t even supposed to be there. I’m not going back without him.”

Moneypenny cocked her head to one side, squinting at him in the sun. “I thought you might say that,” she said. “Or at least, I hoped you would. I have something for you.” She reached behind her
and picked up a small black case, depositing it in his hands. “It’s not much, but R scraped together what she could. Your Walther, a fair bit of cash in a few different currencies, and documentation to get you both home.”

“I’ve made do with less,” said Bond, briefly inspecting the contents before sealing the case once more. When he lifted his gaze, his expression was suddenly weary. “Does Danny know?”

She nodded sadly. “You know Alex wouldn’t lie to him. He’ll always want the truth. No matter how bad it is.”

“I know he does,” he conceded. “Moneypenny, take Dr. Swann and go back to London. If Turner’s gotten any information off Q’s laptop, I’d like you to help him sort it out. See if there’s anything we’re missing. I’m going for Q.”

“Do you think you can bring him back all on your own?” asked Madeleine.

“I have to,” said Bond. “Either I come back with Q, or I don’t come back at all.”

Q was barely conscious as the two men half dragged him down the narrow corridor, the toes of his shoes skidding along the linoleum. At the end of the corridor, they stopped, hinges creaking as a large metal door was wrenched open by the man on his right.

Suddenly, he was launched forward into a roofless metal cell, where he all but collapsed onto the floor. He heard the creak of the hinges once more before the door was slammed shut behind him, and the scraping sound of a bolt being slid into place.

He lay where he fell, thankful to finally be horizontal and ease the ache in his shoulders. As he blearily scanned his surroundings, he wondered if these four walls would be the last thing he’d ever see. He closed his eyes and let the darkness take him.

The train ride seemed to stretch on for eternity as James made slow progress to his destination. And with each hour that passed, he knew his chances of finding Q alive were rapidly decreasing. He tried not to dwell on what might be happening to him at this moment, but he had little else to occupy his time.

The attempted hit was a welcome distraction, though he did have a few close calls. But the fight allowed him to release some of his frustration, and he couldn’t help the small satisfaction he gained from throwing his would-be assassin off the train. One thing was certain; they knew he was coming.

This was proven further by the appearance of the car at the desolate train stop; apparently sent to pick him up. He had no choice but to go along. Since stealth wasn’t really an option, he might as well let them walk him right through the front door.

He endured a tour of the facility, making a map in his head, knowing it would come in handy once he made his move. Finally, he was led to a room filled with computers, flat screen monitors lining the wall. The personnel lining the space could so easily pass for Q-Branch techs that it was unsettling, but the reality of it was much worse. Nine Eyes, the merger; it was all being orchestrated by the man in front of him—a man that supposedly died twenty years ago. They’d all been played. The enemy was operating right under their noses. James scanned the room for exits. So far, he had seen no sign of Q.

“You seem distracted, James,” said Blofeld, as casually as if they were discussing the weather. “Have you lost something? Or, should I say, someone? A friend of yours, perhaps?”
James fixed Blofeld with an icy glare, his tone razor sharp when he spoke. “Where is he?”

Blofeld grinned, as though impossibly pleased with the secret he held. “You’ll find out soon enough.”

And then there was pain, and everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Q. Why must I cause him pain? ;_; I promise that all will be well by the end.

The next chapter will finally have James and Q sharing scenes again, and we'll check back in with Danny and Alex as well. Stay tuned!

Please leave your thoughts in the comments. :)
Chapter Notes

I'M SO SORRY THIS TOOK FOREVER. My life is utter chaos right now, but I finally managed to carve out some time for myself to do some writing, and I enjoyed it immensely. Although, this one did take quite a bit of thought to decide how I wanted it to go. I am rather winging it at this point. The only well thought out part of this story that remains will be the epilogue; so here there be dragons!

Rush edited by me since I'm too impatient to wait for someone to beta for me, so I apologize for any mistakes.

Chapter warning: torture mention. Nothing graphic.

If I was too evil, you can all blame Linorien. She encouraged the evil. ;p

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Danny stood at the bedroom window, watching the rain pour in rivulets along the glass. Further off, the city lights sparkled off the Thames. As he stood hugging his arms tightly, he couldn’t ignore the dull ache that he felt with every breath.

Q had been missing for two days now, and in that time, he’d barely slept. As hard as he tried, he couldn’t help but dwell on the what ifs, and what might be happening to his brother right at this very moment. It didn’t help that he had little else to occupy his time.

There was no telling how long he’d stood at the window, or how many times Alex had called his name before he felt strong arms encircle his waist, pulling him close. Danny laid his hands over his as he leaned into the embrace, willing the tension out of his shoulders with little success.

“James will bring him back,” Alex breathed against his ear, knowing exactly where Danny’s thoughts had drifted. “If there’s even the slightest chance of it, he’ll find a way.”

“I know he will,” said Danny, equal parts believing it as much as trying to reassure himself. “I just can’t stand the waiting. And not knowing.” He sighed. “I feel so useless.”

“You’re hardly useless,” said Alex, pressing a kiss to his temple. “And you’re exactly where he’d want you to be right now.”

He frowned. “What, hiding out at home?”

“He wanted you safe,” said Alex, holding him a little tighter.

“When I was taken, Ethan never stopped,” said Danny. “He worked through the night. He faced down armed gunmen for me. All I’ve done is sit here.”

“Ethan is also the Quartermaster of MI-6,” he answered. “He had agents at his disposal and nearly unlimited resources. There are people that are still loyal to him. We’re not going to abandon him now.” Alex ducked his head, resting his chin on his shoulder. “We’ll work out a plan. The others should be here any minute.”
They made their way downstairs just as the doorbell rang, and after a quick check of the camera feed, Alex went to let their guests inside.

Moneypenny stepped into the entryway with a blonde-haired woman close behind. She quickly folded the large umbrella in her hand, shaking it out a bit just outside the door before ushering her companion further inside. Each of them held a small suitcase. She then turned to greet Alex, introducing her companion as Dr. Madeleine Swann, before working herself out of her coat.

Danny lingered back near the entrance to the kitchen throughout the exchange, unsure as to why he suddenly felt so bereft. When Eve met his gaze, he found that words had failed him.

She smiled sadly. “Danny,” she greeted, reaching out to him with both hands. “Oh, sweetheart, I’m so sorry.”

He felt tears pricking his eyes as he stepped into her embrace, hugging her back tightly.

“We’ll get him back,” she assured him, rubbing circles on his back. “Whatever it takes, we’ll make sure he makes it home.”

Danny wiped at his eyes as she released him, giving her hand a final squeeze before they separated. He took a steadying breath, pulling himself together again as he turned to greet Dr. Swann.

Her eyes were kind, if a little sad, as she took his hand. “Madeleine’s fine,” she said. “And I would like to help in any way I can.”

“Thank you,” he said sincerely. He felt a steady hand on his back as Alex took his place beside him.

“So, what do we know?”

James was well acquainted with pain. He’d endured beatings, he’d endured loss, he’d endured torture. None of it would compare to this.

Blofeld’s men had beaten him after he regained consciousness, but it had seemed like an afterthought. He had experienced much worse. He knew Blofeld had something worse in mind for him; something far more sinister, and so he put up his walls, steeling his mind against whatever torture the man could contrive.

When they hauled him off to the next room, he was ready, but instead of a chamber filled with instruments of torture, the room contained only a single chair- and a television screen. He was left alone bound to the chair in the center of the room to puzzle over this turn of events, until the sound of footsteps alerted him to someone entering the room.

“Are you planning to bore me to death with crap telly?” said Bond, arching an eyebrow as Blofeld stepped into view.

“You’ll find out soon enough,” he grinned. “Personally, I think you’re going to find this presentation very interesting.”

The screen before him flickered to life, bringing a still photograph into view. Brilliant green eyes looked out at him accompanied by a smirk that could cut glass. A name echoed in his mind, though it did not pass his lips. *Vesper.*
“Beautiful, wasn’t she?” Blofeld mused. “Dark hair, sharp eyes. And an even sharper tongue. Brains and beauty. It would seem that you have a type, no?”

James met him with a lethal glare, jaw clenched as he did not deem to respond.

“It’s unfortunate,” he continued, “that she had to get in the way. But then she was only the first. You’ve left a lot of collateral damage in your wake.”

He returned his attention to the monitor as different faces began to flash across the screen. Some he remembered well, others he’d long forgotten. There were images from case files he thought no longer existed. Women he had seduced for Queen and Country, later caught in the crossfire. More images of Vesper. Mathis. Agent Fields. M- his M. Until finally the blur of photographs settled on an image of Q.

He was seated at the table of a café James knew well, taking advantage of a rare sunny day to enjoy his lunch out of doors. From his posture, he was obviously engaged in conversation with someone seated across from him, regarding them with a slight tilt of the head and that half smile of his that hadn’t quite grown into a smirk. Yet the look in his eyes, while sharp and considering, was also incredibly fond. James knew exactly who was sat on the other side of the table; and his heart gave a painful jerk at the memory. He tore his gaze from those beautiful hazel green eyes to fix Blofeld with an icy glare.

“Where is he?” he growled.

“You’ll join him soon enough,” said Blofeld. “The film isn’t over yet.”

The screen changed to static before switching to a video feed- and for a moment James would swear that his heart stopped beating. He was looking at a plain white room- more of a cell really- that appeared to contain only one door. No windows. And hanging from the ceiling directly in the center… was Q.

The camera was positioned behind and just to his left. He couldn’t see Q’s face from the way he hung his head, but he could just make out the rise and fall of his chest as he labored to breathe with the bulk of his weight straining from his wrists and shoulders. He was dressed in the same trousers and white button down he’d had on beneath his jumper when Bond last saw him at the airport. The white fabric made it all the easier to see the blood seeping through the slash across his side. There was clear evidence that he’d been beaten as well.

James looked on as the door to Q’s left opened and Blofeld stepped inside- proof that James was looking at a recording and not a live feed. A heavily muscled figure shadowed Blofeld, closing the door once more behind them. He held something in his hand that James couldn’t quite make out. Q lifted his head, glasses nowhere in sight, as Blofeld made his approach.

“So,” said Blofeld. “I trust you’ve had some time to reconsider?”

Q said nothing, meeting Blofeld’s gaze with a defiant glare.

“Suit yourself,” Blofeld shrugged. “You won’t keep your silence for long.”

James watched as Blofeld stepped aside and his hired muscle stepped forward; and with a mixture of cold dread and fury he finally identified what the man held in his hands. The camera picked up the spark at the end of the rod as the device was activated. James dug his nails into his palms.

“It would have been so easy to avoid all this,” said Blofeld. “All he had to do was track your location for me. But he refused to give you up. Touching, really.”
James forced himself to watch as the figure drew closer and everything he had feared came to fruition before his eyes. He had caused this. In every way imaginable, this was entirely his fault.

The screams that followed would haunt him in his dreams.

“SPECTRE.” Danny formed his mouth around the word that had come to leave a bad taste on his tongue as he set the pot of tea in the center of the table, collecting mugs to be refilled. “What’s their end game? What’re they trying to accomplish?”

Madeleine gave a shrug as she accepted her tea with a nod of thanks. “To control the world? Use governments for their own purposes. It’s always about power in the end, is it not?”

“But how far does the organization go?” Danny asked, taking a seat with his own mug.

“It’s difficult to say,” said Alex, tapping away at the laptop Q had left him. He’d spent countless hours reviewing the files that were copied before the connection was severed, trying to fit all the pieces together. “They’ve done well to cover their tracks over the years; disguising themselves beneath the titles of various organizations. They’ve made connections to a lot of powerful people. There’s no knowing the extent of their network.”

“And this all connects to James somehow?” Danny asked.

“So it would seem,” said Eve. “Nearly all the missions he’s ever taken part in since he gained double-o status have been connected to Blofeld—formerly Franz Oberhauser.” She gave a shrug. “Some kind of vendetta he has against Bond.”

Danny frowned. “And who is Oberhauser to James, exactly?”

Eve took a sip of her tea. “A foster brother, I suppose? His father took James in for a time after his parents died. Supposedly the two were killed in an avalanche some twenty years ago while James was off at school. Apparently, Franz survived.”

“That doesn’t explain what he’s got against James,” said Danny.

She shrugged. “No one knows. Not even James, I don’t think.”

“The point is, this network is vast,” said Alex. “They may have infiltrated our own government. We have no idea who we can trust.”

“I would be very surprised if there weren’t members of SPECTRE within the British government,” said Madeleine. “I know that they’ve had dealings in the UK in the past.”

“What about the merger?” said Alex. “This whole global security initiative? C has been going to great lengths to install new people in various parts of SIS.”

Eve frowned. “Do you think Nine Eyes could be part of it?”

“I wouldn’t rule it out,” he answered.

“And that would put Max Denbigh at the head,” said Eve.

“That would be perfect,” said Madeleine. “What better way for SPECTRE to infiltrate the government than to take over the National Security Council?”

Eve turned to Alex. “We need more information. We’ve got to do some digging on Nine Eyes.”
“I’m on it,” he answered, already typing away.

“I’m going to find out what I can about Denbigh. See if I can link him to any known members of SPECTRE,” said Eve, getting up to go get her laptop.

Madeleine rose to follow. “I’ll help you.”

Danny sighed inwardly. “And I’ll... keep making tea.”

Alex reached over and gave his hand a squeeze. “Why don’t you stay here with me,” he offered. “You know Q better than I do. Maybe you’ll see something I don’t in his files.”

Danny looked doubtful. “I’m not like him though,” he said. “I don’t understand computers like he does.”

“A second set of eyes can never hurt,” said Alex.

Danny gave his hand a returning squeeze. “Alright.”

Meanwhile, Pascal and Turing perched in the window like a pair of sentinels; keeping sharp eyes on the street as the house set to work.

Bond only put up a token fight as he was led down the corridor, Blofeld somewhere close behind him. As they came to a halt before a large metal door, he jerked against the hands on is arms.

“Where is he?” he demanded, as he had for the last few hours now. “Where is Q?”

Blofeld appeared at his shoulder, pointing towards the door to the right of where they stood. “Your next-door neighbor,” he said. “He was determined to hold out until the end, it would seem. The man is barely alive, but I saved him so you might watch each other die. Considerate of me, no?”

As the door to the left was opened, James planted his feet where he stood. An immoveable mountain. “Put me in there with him,” said James, nodding towards the door on the right. “You’re going to kill us both anyway. Put me in there so I can speak to him. You can give me that.”

Blofeld considered him, like a puzzle he was trying to solve. “Getting sentimental at the end, James?” he asked. “Or do you really enjoy having the people you love die in your arms?” He gave a shrug. “Well, who am I to deny a man’s last request?”

At a wave of his hand, the door to the right was opened and James was thrust inside, the metal door closing behind him with a bang.

“I’d like to stay,” he heard Blofeld’s voice from the other side. “But I’m afraid I’m on a rather strict time table. Besides, there really isn’t anything to see- too bright for the naked eye.”

He could hear him chuckling to himself as three sets of footsteps retreated back down the corridor.

But Blofeld had already slipped to the back of his mind. No sooner had the door closed than James had dropped to his knees beside the figure curled on the floor in the center of the room. He was still. Too still. His chest tightened painfully as he tentatively reached out a hand. “Q?”

Q didn’t stir as he gently brushed his hair away from his face, revealing a few bruises and a cut on his lip. A quick check revealed that he was still breathing, if shallowly.

“Q, can you hear me?”
After barely a moment’s hesitation, James slowly began to shift his prone form, rolling him gently onto his back. With a little more careful maneuvering, he soon settled with Q in his lap, cradling him as tightly as he dared against his chest.

“Q, wake up. Please,” he begged, brushing his thumb across his cheek. “Just open your eyes for me.”

Above their roofless cell, the sky was a pale grey with the approaching dawn. Once the sun rose fully, they were done for. And even if he didn’t need to carry Q, the walls were far too high to climb out. He needed a plan, and he needed it soon. But first, Q had to wake up. He tried to assess the extent of his injuries. Lots of bruising, a few minor cuts and scrapes. The wound on his side would need a few stitches and James had concerns about possible broken ribs. His wrists were torn up from the bindings as well. He stroked a hand through his hair.

“Come on, Q.”

After what felt like an eternity, Q finally began to stir in his arms, brow furrowing as consciousness began to bring awareness to his pain. He drew a shaky breath, shifting a bit before he finally opened his eyes. “James?”

James felt relief for the first time in days while, simultaneously, something twisted painfully in his chest. “Good morning, Q,” he said, dutifully ignoring the wetness in his eyes. “It’s about time you woke up.”

Q frowned. “Where are we?”

“Solar furnace,” James supplied. “Blofeld decided to leave us in here to meet our end.”

“Lovely,” Q commented with a groan, closing his eyes for a moment. “Bit comic book villain, don’t you think?”

James chuckled. “Well, he certainly has a flair for the dramatic.”

He hummed in response, squinting a bit as he tried to take in their surroundings. “You wouldn’t happen to see my glasses anywhere, would you?”

James cast a glance over the space, surprised when he actually did spot his glasses just a couple of feet to his left. “Just over there,” he nodded in that direction.

“Considerate of them,” he mused.

Q’s eyes were drifting closed again and relief soon turned to alarm as the first rays of sunlight began to illuminate the sky above their heads. “Q, it’s going to get rather hot in here soon,” said James. “Any ideas?”

Q took a breath, rousing himself as he began to slip from consciousness. He reached out a hand, grasping at Bond’s weakly. “The watch, 007,” he said. “I lied about… the watch.”

James’ brow furrowed at the hand clasped loosely around his left wrist, just brushing the band of the watch Q had given him what felt like ages ago. His eyes began to widen as he understood Q’s meaning.

With some quick and careful maneuvering, Bond helped Q prop himself up with his back to the far wall, looking a bit more alert now with his glasses returned.
“The bezel on the outside,” Q instructed as Bond worked to free the watch from his wrist. “Sixty seconds. The blast radius should only be a few feet. So, if you slip it under the door-”

He nodded. “I think I get the idea,” he grinned. “What’s the sequence?”

Q lifted his head to meet his gaze as a small smile reached his eyes. “007.”

For a moment James just looked at him, then without giving it a second thought, he took his face in his hands and planted a kiss firmly on his forehead. He pulled back with a grin. “Sixty seconds?”

Q nodded, smiling weakly. “Sixty seconds.”

James turned the bezel on the face of the watch- 0-0-7- and slid it under the door. Then he retreated back against the far wall, counting down in his head. “Here goes.”

As the explosion shook the walls, blasting the door off its hinges, he shielded Q’s body with his own. He was getting them out alive, and nothing was going to stand in his way.

Chapter End Notes

Finally to some action! Prepare for some bamf!Q in the next chapter. Don’t count him out just yet! And remember, I only cause pain to give you fluff. ;p

Please leave your thoughts in the comments. :D
Q didn’t have a chance to think on how little space lie between them before Bond was moving again, running towards the now gaping hole in the wall ahead of them. The door had taken out at least one of the guards when it was blasted off its hinges, and he wasn’t likely to get up for a while. Q looked on as Bond immediately launched himself at the second guard.

While the two were locked in fierce hand to hand combat, Q took a moment to steady himself. He could feel the adrenaline start to kick in, until he finally felt like he could move again. As he worked to get his legs underneath him so he could stand, Bond finally got the guard to relinquish his hold on his gun. It skidded across the floor, landing at Q’s feet. It was then that Q spotted the third guard—leveling a pistol at Bond’s head.

Without hesitating, Q picked up the gun at his feet, took aim, and pulled the trigger. The guard lay dead before his brain even caught up to what he’d just done. For a moment, he stood frozen with his back to the wall, the gun shaking in his hands. He couldn’t tear his eyes from the body that lay crumpled in the hallway. He felt a hand curl around his wrist.

James gently pried the gun from his grip, those icy blue eyes seeing straight through him when he finally met his gaze. And it was Q’s own words, repeated back to him from what felt like a lifetime ago, that brought him back to the present. “Sometimes a trigger has to be pulled.”

Q took a breath, gave a firm nod, and allowed James to lead him from their prison.

They wove through the compound, James keeping the way clear with the help of a few weapons he picked up along the way. As they cut through one of the main buildings, Q suddenly brought them up short, tugging back against the hand on his arm. “Wait.”

James frowned, but relinquished his hold as Q slipped into the room they were just about to pass, following close behind him.

Seeing the coast was clear, Q made a beeline for the console in the center of the room. He tapped a few keys, grinning dangerously as the display came to life. “Oh, perfect.”

James kept one eye on the door, the other curiously over Q’s shoulder as his hands flew over the keys, calling up programs and executing commands nearly faster than the eye could follow. As he finished typing with a flourish, several warnings began to pop up on the screen. Before Bond could even ask, he was heading for the door.

“Time to go.”

As they reached the edge of the compound, Q could feel the adrenaline wearing off and his limbs starting to feel like lead. He didn’t bother to protest after the second time he stumbled and Bond lifted

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Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

What's this? An update within a week?? IT'S A SUMMER SOLSTICE MIRACLE.

As always, unbeta'd and quickly edited by me. No warnings on this one. Enjoy! :) See the end of the chapter for more notes.
his arm to wrap around his shoulders, bearing his weight as they headed towards the helicopter up ahead.

“Talk to me, Q,” said James as he started to lean more heavily against his shoulder. “What was it you did back there?”

“I wanted to make sure they couldn’t follow us,” he answered. “At least, not right away. I may have done a little creative power rerouting to overload their system.”

“Alright,” said James, shifting his weight as they reached the helipad. “And what will that do?”

“Two possible outcomes,” said Q, breathing hard. “Either whatever safety protocols they have in place will shut down the entire system, or—”

He didn’t get a chance to finish as the center of the compound exploded in a ball of flame behind them, a chain reaction setting off the surrounding buildings until the whole place went up in fire and smoke. Q’s self-satisfied smirk told James everything he needed to know.

“I think I get the idea,” he said approvingly.

As James helped him into a seat, Q once again became aware of every scrape and bruise he bore until his whole body ached. As James got the helicopter into the air, he finally allowed his eyes to fall closed, knowing his agent would get them home.

“And you’re absolutely sure about this?”

Gareth Mallory met the eye of each of the four around the table in turn; two MI-6 operatives, two civilians. He didn’t like the odds.

While he trusted both Turner and Moneypenny in their judgment, he was less than pleased with the involvement of his Quartermaster’s younger brother in these matters. Although, seeing as his and Turner’s home had become their base of operations, he supposed he could hardly not be. As for Dr. Swann, it seemed she had made herself a valuable asset.

“Positive, sir.” It was Moneypenny who spoke. “There is far too much evidence to deny it. Max Denbigh has had frequent, direct dealings with agents of SPECTRE from the time he joined the Secret Intelligence Service. Nine Eyes will give him access to nearly every key intelligence agency in the world.”

“Access that he will then hand over to SPECTRE,” said Dr. Swann.

“That isn’t all of it, sir,” said Turner, quiet as he’d been throughout most of the briefing. “The developers behind the Nine Eyes program; most of the names have been redacted- which would not necessarily be unusual, given the level of security clearance needed to access the full file; however, there is clear evidence to support that most of the early development of the project came from sources outside of British Intelligence. C has gone to great lengths to cover his tracks since the beginning.”

He took a breath, sparing a sideways glance at his partner seated to his left. “Not to mention the fact that he was so keen to keep Q from being involved in the project from the start. Seeing as Q is the head of national cyber security, I’d say there is enough cause for suspicion.”

M nodded slowly, absorbing all of this new information with a heavy crease in his brow. “Alright,” he said. “Say that C is planning to hand over global intelligence to what is potentially the largest criminal organization in history. The man has the PM in his pocket, along with the rest of the Security Council. And Nine Eyes goes online at midnight. How do we stop it?”
Turner shifted uneasily in his chair— which in and of itself gave M cause for concern. 009 was not easily rattled. “I can get into the system to an extent; enough to potentially destabilize the network and cause a delay, but not enough to bring down the system entirely. My skills in this area will only take us so far.” He met M’s gaze evenly. “We need Q.”

And therein lay the problem. M frowned. “What about R?”

“R is being very closely monitored right now,” Moneypenny chimed in. “We can’t risk tipping off C. And even if we managed to get past that, I don’t think she can get us much farther than 009 can. She’s good—she’s very good. But she’s not Q.” She shook her head. “I don’t think anybody else in the world has the same level of skill as he does.”

M nodded, understanding all too well. “And even if Bond does manage to retrieve him in time, there’s no telling what condition he’ll be in.”

The younger Holt tightened his grip on Turner’s arm, looking— if possible— a shade paler.

M frowned. “So, what do we do?”

Turner shifted one hand from the keyboard in front of him to lay across his partner’s. “We do as much as we can to delay the system going online,” he said. “And trust that Bond will bring back our Quartermaster before it’s too late.”

Q remembered nothing of the flight to London. If asked, he could say nothing of what became of the helicopter, or how they reached the safe house. When he next regained consciousness, it was getting dark and he was lying in an unfamiliar bed, his whole body aching. As he struggled to bring the world into focus without his glasses, he registered a figure leaning over him, and a pair of hands working to undo the buttons of his shirt.

He made a quiet sound of protest, flailing weakly at his assailant, only to have one wrist trapped in a firm but gentle grip, the other hand coming to rest against his cheek.

“Hey, hey, shh. It’s alright, Q. It’s me.”

Q stilled at the familiar voice, blinking up at blue eyes looking down at him with concern. “James?”

The smallest smile softened the older man’s features, and Q couldn’t help but lean into the touch as he carded a hand through his hair. “Yeah, I’m here.”

For a moment, Q allowed himself to relax into the pillows as he started to fully come awake, his brain booting up in stages like various programs on one of his computers. As James once again reached for the buttons on his shirt, suddenly his eyes snapped open wide and he grabbed his wrist.

James sighed. “Q, you really need to let me take a look at that—”

“What day is it?” said Q, not relinquishing his hold.

He frowned. “What?”

Q tightened his grip. “Seriously, what day is it?”

“It’s Thursday,” said James, looking thoroughly confused. “But I don’t see why- Q!”

He pushed himself into a sitting position, trying to shove past Bond in search of something in the room. He spotted his glasses on the bedside table and quickly slipped them on. “Is there a phone?”
“Q, slow down-”

“We need to get in touch with M. Now,” he answered firmly. “Nine Eyes goes live at midnight.”

James froze. “Shit,” he muttered, running a hand over his face tiredly. “Alright. But we can’t just call. There’s too many people listening. I’ll try to arrange a meeting at another safehouse. Figure out what old code I can use to get a message through under the radar. Just-stay there, alright? I don’t know how badly you’re injured and I don’t want you up and about making things worse. You should be in Medical-”

“We’ve got bigger things to worry about right now,” he answered, trying to push past him. “I need to get in touch with Alex. He has one of my laptops. I’m going to need it if we’re going to shut down Nine Eyes.”

“You’ve already done enough!” James gripped him firmly by the shoulders, as if he was afraid he might disappear if he broke contact for more than a second. “Look, you’ve been missing for two days. You look like you’re fit to collapse. You need to let us handle it, alright?”

Q met him with a stubborn glare, clenching his jaw. “I’m fine, James,” he declared.

“The hell you are,” he answered, even as he allowed Q to shoulder past him. “You’re not doing yourself or anyone else any favors by claiming otherwise. I saw what they did, Q.”

He stopped dead in his tracks, his breath caught in his throat as though he’d just been doused in a bucket of ice water. Both fists clenched at his sides. He turned to face him, trying to keep his expression neutral. “You… what?”

When he met James’ gaze, the older man suddenly appeared to have aged beyond his years. The lines on his face seemed more pronounced somehow as blue eyes regarded him with a degree of pain few live to experience. “I saw what they did,” he said, resigned. “And I know why.”

For a moment neither moved, or spoke. And Q swallowed hard as he suddenly began to feel nauseous. “I’m going to have a shower,” he said finally, and slipped quietly from the room.

It didn’t take much searching for Q to find a clean set of clothes in one of the safe house’s supply cupboards, kept stock by MI-6 staff. He had half a mind to burn everything he was presently wearing.

It took a bit more work to strip out of his clothes, as every movement seemed to trigger a new set of aches and pains, but soon enough he stood under the spray of a long overdue shower. He tried to ignore the blood running down his side and into the drain as he gingerly tried to clean the wound and scrub the past few days off of the rest of his person.

By the time he stepped out of the shower, his legs were shaking and he was breathing hard. Still, he took a few minutes to clean his teeth- so desperate to feel totally clean again- before slipping into the clean pants and track bottoms he had procured. The shirt, he realized, would have to wait. As he stood leaning heavily against the sink, there came a knock on the bathroom door.

“Q?”

“It’s open,” he managed, realizing that the task of walking back into the bedroom seemed suddenly quite daunting. He straightened as best he could as the door was opened.
He looked a sight, he knew, but the look on James’ face, seeing so much abused skin on display, made it that much worse. Sharp blue eyes came to rest on the wound at his side, which was bleeding steadily now. “You need to let me look at that,” he said.

This time, Q didn’t argue.

James led him back into the bedroom, where he sat heavily on the edge of the bed. While Q was gone, he had managed to locate the first aid kit, which now sat open on the bedside table; evidence that James had already dealt with a few scrapes of his own. Taking in Q’s pallor, he urged him gently, “You should lie down.”

Again, Q did not argue.

Scooping up the first aid kit, James moved to the other side of the bed, taking a seat on the mattress on Q’s left. It only took one look to confirm what he’d suspected- and feared. “You need a few stitches.”

Q nodded, his left arm draped across his eyes as he took a deep breath. “I figured as much,” he said resignedly. “Do what you have to do.”

James sifted through the contents of the kit, seeking all the supplies he would need, and cursed inwardly. There were a few painkillers, but there wasn’t any kind of numbing agent in this kit.

Upon reporting this to Q, the younger man repeated just as calmly as before; “Do what you have to do.”

All in all, he needed five stitches, and James’ hands worked with practiced precision; though much gentler and much neater than he had ever done for himself. Q bore it with little more than a grimace, taking deep and even breaths through the entire process. James thought over all the ways his Quartermaster had proven himself just as tough- if not tougher- than any agent in the department over the last few days.

Once finished with this task, James turned his attention to the numerous bruises covering his torso. After a bit of poking and prodding, he didn’t find any broken ribs, but those bruises would take a while to fade. It took a level of self-control not to follow the paths of his fingers with gentle kisses- as though such things might take away the pain. He must have stayed that way for a while; his fingertips ghosting over the far too prominent curve of his ribs, before he felt a hand over his. Hazel green eyes studied him intently.

“I’m sorry,” said James, just barely above a whisper.

“It isn’t your fault, James,” said Q. “Something like this was going to happen sooner or later. It’s part of the job.”

He shook his head. “Not on my watch. And not because of me. All of this,” he said, “is because of me. I should never have gotten you involved.”

Slowly but surely, Q pushed himself into a sitting position so that he could meet Bond’s gaze evenly. “I made my own choices, James,” he said. “You didn’t put a gun to my head, you didn’t make me follow you to Austria. And you sure as hell didn’t make me go off on my own at the bloody airport.”

“But everything that happened after, everything they did; they were trying to use you to get to me,” said James. “I know what they did, Q.”
“I know,” he answered softly, carefully avoiding his gaze.

“You should have given me up.”

Q stared at him. “I would never have done that,” he said. “They’d have killed me anyway if I had. But even if that wasn’t the case; I never would have because—” he reached out a hand, stopping with his fingertips just short of brushing his face before withdrawing once more, folding his hands in his lap. “Well. You know why.”

Now it was James’ turn to stare. “You can’t,” he said. “You can’t possibly still love me. Not after all of this.”

Q kept his gaze fixed firmly on his lap.

When he said nothing, James leaned forward and took his face in his hands, lifting his chin with the gentle press of his fingers. “Oh, darling. I’m so sorry. I never meant for any of this. I never wanted to see you hurt; least of all because of me.” He shook his head sadly. “I don’t deserve for you to love me.”

“But it isn’t about ‘deserving,’ is it?” said Q. “You can’t control what your heart wants. Who you fall in love with. ‘The heart knows reasons that reason can never know.’”

James smiled. “Blaise Pascal.”

He gave a shrug. “Well, I didn’t pick the name just because I fancied the way it sounded,” said Q.

“Well, no,” he admitted. “I always assumed it was because of his contributions to mathematics and physics.”

“Hmm. Probability theory isn’t nearly as romantic,” he answered with a cheeky grin.

James laughed. “God, I’ve missed you,” he said softly.

At this, Q went quiet, searching his face. Then he reached up with one hand, curling his fingers gently around Bond’s wrist, and pressed his cheek against his palm. “I’ve missed you too.”

This, it seemed, was all James needed; and he pulled him closer until their lips met in a gentle kiss.

He lowered them gently to the bed, careful of his bruises as he made to devour him with his mouth. They spent a long time kissing languidly, slowly becoming reacquainted with one another. At times, James would pull back to pepper gentle kisses against his cheeks, along his jaw, and down the pale column of his throat. Everything he couldn’t put into words, he tried to say with each kiss. But when he stopped a moment to stare into those beautiful hazel green eyes, he knew it just wasn’t enough.

“Q, I…”

“Don’t say it,” he said, pressing a finger to his lips. “Please, don’t say it. Not now. I need to know that you mean it; that you’re sure. Once this is all over, and we go back to our normal lives again; if you still feel the same way…” He swallowed hard. “I just- I can’t hear those words, and then watch you walk away again.”

Too well, James understood. He took his hand and pressed a kiss to his palm. “Alright,” he said, sitting up on the bed. If his internal clock was anything to go by, it was going on 9 and he needed to get moving. “I haven’t gotten a response from the others. It may be a while before they get here. You should get some rest. There’s nothing more we can do until then.”
Q nodded. Already, his eyelids were growing heavy.

As James rose from the bed, he pulled the covers up around his shoulders, and pressed one more kiss against his temple. “Sleep, Q,” he murmured against his hair.

And he did.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, Blaise Pascal. Mathematician, physicist, and philosopher. I had a few reasons for picking the name for Q's kitty. :) And I couldn't resist slipping a favorite quote of mine in there as well.

I hope you enjoyed the little bit of fluff. More to come later. :) I feel like I had more to say about this chapter buuut I guess not, lol.

Please leave your thoughts in the comments!
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Apologies for my lapse in updates. July was stupid. But I'm all moved to the new place, the kitty is happy, and now I can get back to work!

Now back to the action. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“No.”

“No-”

“I won’t do it.”

“We have no idea what we might be walking into-”

“I’m not going to just sit here and wait for you all to come back!”

Danny stood with his fists clenched tightly at his sides, only marginally hiding how badly his hands were shaking. It had been less than an hour since they received word that Bond was back in London, and he wanted to meet. A cryptic message from M had designated a time and place- and a request from Q for Alex to bring his laptop. Q was alive. His brother was alive and holed up somewhere nearby. It was more than he had dared to hope. There was only one problem; Alex, along with the others, had deemed it too dangerous for Danny to come along to the rendezvous.

Nevertheless, when Eve and Madeleine left to get the car, he’d put on his trainers and grabbed his jacket, determined not to be left behind. As he stood facing Alex, who suddenly looked more weary than he’d appeared in days, he felt a tightness in his chest; desperation that threatened to consume him. He fought back the tears he felt pricking at his eyes. He was not going to cry now, damn it.

“I can’t do this anymore,” he went on, struggling to keep the tremor from his voice. “I can’t bear not knowing if the people I love are dead or alive and being expected to just wait around until someone decides to tell me.” He shook his head. “I can’t.”

Alex stepped closer, reaching out to cup his face between his hands. “Danny, I know how hard this has been for you,” he said. “I understand. But it’s my responsibility to protect you. Q wouldn’t want you in harm’s way, and neither do I. We just don’t know what we might face tonight. It’s best if you stay here.”

“I can wait in the car. I promise I won’t get in the way,” he pleaded, fists clenched in the front of Alex’s jacket. “Please don’t make me stay here alone.”

An alert from the security feed drew Alex’s attention as the cameras revealed a black SUV parking on the curb out front. He sighed. “I have to go. I’ll send updates to your mobile as often as I can. I promise.”

Danny was following close behind as Alex slung his laptop bag over his shoulder and headed to the door. So, it was no wonder that he nearly collided with his shoulder as Alex froze in the open
doorway. Eve and Madeleine were not the ones standing on their front porch.

He took a small step back as Alex instinctually moved to one side, partially obscuring Danny from view of the two suit clad men presently framing their doorway.

“Alex Turner?” inquired the man to their left.

“Who are you?” Alex demanded.

“Agent Hartford. MI5,” he answered. “And this is my colleague, Agent Collins. You and Mr. Holt are to come with us.”

Danny’s pulse spiked and he could see the clear line of tension in the set of Alex’s shoulders, watched his grip tighten on the strap of his laptop bag.

“Whose orders?” he shot back, voice pitched dangerously low.

“Max Denbigh,” said Collins.

Hartford took a small step forward. “You both will come with us now.”

As the agent made to side step Alex, moving towards Danny, his reaction was instantaneous. He dropped his bag to the floor and swung, his fist connecting with Hartford’s jaw and sending him reeling. The agent lost his footing and fell unceremoniously into the shrubs beside the front steps. Collins drew his gun, but Alex was faster. He grabbed the wrist that held the weapon and slammed a knee into the man’s ribs, breaking his grip. He then struck the agent hard against the temple, knocking him cold with the butt of his own gun.

Alex snatched up his bag as a screech of tires announced Moneypenny pulling up to the curb.

“Get in!” she shouted from the open window, Dr. Swann visible from the passenger’s seat beside her.

Danny was pulled, quite literally, from his shocked daze as Alex gripped him by the wrist and led him through the door, slamming it shut behind them.

He pushed Danny ahead towards the idling SUV before taking a moment to shoot out the tires of the vehicle parked behind them. As Danny was all but thrust into the back seat, a bullet glanced off the side of their vehicle. Alex dove in after him and slammed the car door closed behind them, almost completely covering Danny’s body with his own as Moneypenny tore off down the street.

It wasn’t until they’d rounded a corner that Alex straightened and allowed Danny to sit up properly. He frantically looked him over. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Danny answered truthfully, mentally shaking off the shock of the last few minutes. As they settled into their seats, Danny couldn’t help but stare at his husband with sudden renewed interest. “You know… that was actually sort of hot.”

For a moment Alex stared at him as though he must have suffered a blow to the head. Then gradually he began to smile, Danny mirroring his expression. He leaned forward and kissed him hard on the mouth.

“Oi, save it for later you two,” said Eve with an amused chuckle.

Danny grinned as Alex blushed furiously, and pulled him in for another kiss. Maybe, he thought, just
maybe, they would all make it out of this just fine.

Q stood at a familiar desk, sifting through various half-finished projects in search of the innocuous looking thumb drive that would serve his purposes. It was a risk, but they had stopped by Q’s home to gather a few much-needed supplies. He had reasoned that it was less of a risk than stopping by his office at Six, to which Bond had agreed.

When they arrived, Q took the opportunity to change into some better fitting clothes; now much more comfortable in his own trousers and well-worn cardigan. But they were running short on time now, and he needed to move quickly. Reaching into one last drawer, he let out a small sound of triumph as he finally located the drive. James appeared in the doorway just as he pocketed the device.

“We need to go,” he announced. “Are you ready?”

Q nodded. “I think I have everything I need.”

He allowed Bond to lead them down the stairs and to the front door where he grabbed his jacket and scarf, slipping them on as they stepped out into the night. He could sense the worry in the sideways glances Bond sent his way as they drove to their destination.

“You sure you’re up for this?” James asked, not for the first time.

“I’m fine,” Q answered, likely not for the last time.

If James still was not convinced, he held his tongue for the rest of the drive.

Q cursed his exhausted muscles as they ascended yet another flight of stairs to their destination. “Did you have to choose a location that was so… high?” he asked as Bond stopped- again- to wait for him to catch up.

“There’s only so many places we can be sure C and his people don’t know about,” answered Bond, sounding rather apologetic.

Q gave a nod as he tried to catch his breath, and followed him through a door. “I’ve never even heard of Hildebrand,” he commented, noting the printing on the glass.

“That is the general idea with safehouses,” he answered.

By the time they reached the top, Q’s legs were shaking and he was breathing hard. Once they were inside, he all but collapsed into a nearby chair. God, he was tired. He felt a hand on his knee and glanced up to find James kneeling in front of him.

“Q-”

“I’ll be fine,” he said, unsure as to who he was trying to convince more. “I just need to catch my breath.”

James searched his face. “Maybe you should stay here. That drive of yours will grant you remote access anyway, right?”

Q shook his head. “We can’t risk it. I haven’t tested the range yet,” he answered. “Besides, going down is easier than climbing up, yeah?”
James appeared entirely unconvinced, but probably knew Q well enough by now to know that there was no point in arguing. This was his Quartermaster. He would do whatever it took to get the job done, including sacrificing his own well being. He always had. James sighed. “Alright.”

The waiting was hell, but at a quarter to eleven M appeared at the door to their hiding place, Tanner and Alex close behind. Q felt a bit of relief as he spotted the laptop bag slung over Alex’s shoulder. He always felt so much more at ease when he had his tech. It grounded him. With a keyboard at his fingertips, he felt fully in control.

M acknowledged each of them with a nod in turn. “007. Q. It’s good to have you back.”

His gaze lingered on Q, who stood a little straighter under his scrutiny. The worst of his injuries were well hidden, but he was sporting a cut lip and a bruise on his cheek. Not to mention he knew he must have looked a sight having not really slept in days. Even so, he refused to show weakness. Not now when they needed him the most.

“Sir,” Q answered with a curt nod. He turned to Tanner and Alex, the latter of which was studying him even more intently than M had. “We have a lot to discuss and very little time.”

The plan was simple. 007 and 009 would infiltrate the CNS building up to C’s office. Once inside, Alex would connect Q’s drive to the main system, allowing him direct access to the servers on which Nine Eyes was being housed. Alex had already managed to break through a couple of levels of security, causing some delay in the system’s launch, but it would be up to Q to finish the job.

There was no doubt that C would show up once things started going offline, if not before, but the two double-o’s would be waiting for him. Once C was apprehended, they would call M to bring him in. They had plenty of evidence against him now.

With everyone up to speed, they made their way back down to ground level, Q struggling to keep up the pace without losing his footing a few times. He found Bond’s hand on his elbow more often than not as they descended, and he didn’t miss the furtive glances Alex sent his way. But he tried not to let his irritation show. He was fine, damn it. He just needed to finish the job.

When Alex approached him once they’d made it to the street, Q changed the subject before he had a chance to speak. “How’s Danny?”

At this, Alex demeanor changed. Suddenly, he almost looked… guilty? “Well…”

“At this, Alex demeanor changed. Suddenly, he almost looked… guilty? “Well…”

“Ethan!”

Q whipped his head around as he heard his brother call out, confirming his fear as Danny exited a black SUV parked across the street. He could hear Moneypenny calling out to him. He turned back to Alex. “You brought him here?”

“A couple of agents showed up at the house,” he explained quickly. “They wanted to bring us both in. It was more of a risk to leave him.”

But Q was barely listening. Already his feet were carrying him toward the other side of the street, as though he was being pulled by some magnetic force. He braced himself as Danny nearly bowled him over, pulling him into a crushing hug.

“My god, Ethan, I was so worried,” he half sobbed against his shoulder. “I thought the worst had happened. I thought I’d never see you again.”
“It’s alright, Danny,” he soothed, petting his hair. “It’s alright. I’m sorry I worried you.”

Danny pulled back—allowing Q to breathe properly once more—and wiped at his eyes. When Q failed to hide a grimace at the agitation of various injuries, he frowned. “What happened to you?” he asked, fingertips ghosting over the bruise on his cheek.

“Never mind that now,” said Q, placing both hands on his shoulders. “Danny, listen to me. This could get dangerous. I want you to stay with Eve. She’ll keep you safe. I’ve got to go with the others.”

“Ethan, you look like you’re ready to collapse,” he answered. “Are you sure you’re up for this? I think you need a doctor.”

“I’ll be fine,” Q insisted. “Just promise me you’ll keep your head down, alright?”

He looked up as Moneypenny approached, rather surprised to see Dr. Swann following in her wake. She looked as if she wanted to hug him just as tightly as Danny had. “Don’t worry,” she said, wrapping an arm around Danny’s shoulders. “We’ll look after him.”

“Thank you, Eve,” said Q, giving her hand a squeeze.

Behind them, Tanner called urgently, “Q, we need to move.”

“I’ll see you when it’s all over,” Q assured, giving Danny a quick hug.

“Be safe,” offered Madeleine.

Q gave her a nod and adjusted the laptop bag on his shoulder. Then without a backwards glance, he ran to catch up to Tanner, where they joined M in another SUV idling nearby.

As soon as the doors closed, Tanner threw the car in gear and stepped on the gas. As Q pulled out his trusted laptop and got his programs up and running, he could only hope that James and Alex would make it in time.

Chapter End Notes

Danny and Q have both been through it, haven't they? Originally, I wasn't going to reunite them until the end, but I decided to have mercy- on Danny mostly. Plus, I needed to bring him and Alex back into the action.

Let's see how well the two double-o's work together in the next chapter. Our story is rapidly drawing to a close!

Please comment! :)
Nearly one year, three months, and ten days after I started this fic, we reach the penultimate chapter of our story. (Minus the fluffy epilogue, that is.) I want to thank everyone who has followed along since the beginning. You guys are the reason I keep going.

Now, enough sap. Back to the action!

Bond’s reckless driving got them to the new CNS building in all of ten minutes. After stashing the car out of sight, they made their way to the entrance, keeping to the shadows as much as possible.

Not surprisingly, the entrance was locked and needed an access code to override it. Just as Bond was weighing the pros and cons of putting a bullet through the keypad, Alex slipped ahead of him, pulling a small device from an inner pocket of his jacket.

“Electronic lock pick,” Alex explained as he lined up the device with the keypad.

He hummed his approval. “Q gives you all the best toys.”

“That’s because I always bring them back, 007,” was the cheeky reply.

Bond scoffed. “Details.”

The lights on the keypad turned green and Alex pocketed the device as they stepped inside. The building was dark, and so far they had yet to encounter any guards. Just the same, Alex followed Bond’s lead and drew his gun as they made their way to the upper floors.

Their footsteps made no sound as they moved through the hall and into C’s office; which, surprisingly, was already unlocked. He must not be far then, James concluded.

Once inside, he took up sentry position at the office entrance while Alex moved further inside. It didn’t take the younger agent long to find his target. He gave Bond a nod from behind the console where he stood once the drive was in place.

James took out at his phone and placed a call on speaker. “Q, we’re in.”

“Excellent work,” Q’s voice came over the line. “I’ve already disabled C’s online access and should be able to get past the rest of the firewalls in a few minutes.”

“Is there anything more we can do from here?” Alex asked.

“Nothing as of yet,” said Q. “Just keep an eye on things from your end and let us know as soon as you get your hands on C. Make sure he doesn’t escape.”

“With pleasure,” Bond answered darkly, his grip tightening reflexively on his Walther.
“We probably should keep him alive,” Alex chimed in rather regretfully.

“I’ll play nice if he does,” was Bond’s reply.

“Just stay sharp,” said Q. “I’ll let you know as soon as the system is down-”

Suddenly, there was a loud crash from the other end of the line and James stiffened. “Q?”

“Buggering fuck,” he supplied helpfully. “It appears we have company.”

He could hear the screech of tires- no doubt Tanner maneuvering them out of harm’s way- then came the unmistakeable sound of gunfire and broken glass. “Q?” said James more urgently.

He locked eyes with Alex across the room, the younger agent staring back, jaw clenched.

Q’s response was not in any way reassuring. “Standby.”

Q was certain his heart missed a beat as a bullet pierced the window to his right, whizzing just behind his head. He crouched down as much as he could, trying to keep his laptop balanced on his knees and continue his work while he struggled just to keep his seat. He was jolted violently to one side as Tanner turned sharply down a side street.

“You need Moneypenny; call for back up.” James voice was insistent through the bluetooth in his ear.

“I’d rather they not get too close,” he answered.

“You may not have a choice.”

He struggled to keep his laptop steady as Tanner made another sharp turn. One last firewall. He was nearly through. An alert flashed on the screen. “Tanner, we’re getting out of range.”

“Shit.” Tanner jerked the wheel sharply to one side and whipped down another side street, starting to double back.

“You may need to work faster, Quartermaster,” said M from the passenger’s seat.

“I just need a little more time,” Q answered through gritted teeth.

Their pursuers were gaining fast in spite of Tanner’s expert maneuvering through London’s streets. But just as they’d nearly closed the gap, there was a loud crash as another large SUV clipped the pursing vehicle’s back end, causing it to do a near complete 180. Turning sharply in his seat, Q recognized Moneypenny behind the wheel.

As she threw the car into reverse, he spotted Dr. Swann leaning out the passenger’s side window and the report of gunfire as she expertly blew out the tires of the enemy vehicle, crippling it completely. For now, they were in the clear.

And Q was nearly through.

It was embarrassing really, how easily C was apprehended. But then, Bond supposed, that was what the bastard got for being cocky. He’d never suspected a thing.

He kept his Walther pointed unflinchingly between his eyes while Alex kept an eye on Q’s
progress. From what Alex could tell, the system was almost completely stripped, and they still had time to spare. But then, James was hardly surprised. He knew Q would get it done.

“He’s through,” Alex announced just a few moments later, as red text flashed across every monitor in the room. “Nine Eyes has been eradicated.”

“Excellent,” Bond smirked. “Tell M we’re done here.”

“Done, you say,” said C. “As if that’s the end of it. You bring down one system and the whole organization falls.” He sneered. “SPECTRE is everywhere. And they will hunt you down before you can find them all. There’ll be a price on your heads so great that every member of the organization will be lining up to kill you.”

“Save your threats, Denbigh,” said Alex. “You won’t be making good on any of them from prison.”

“Such little regard for yourself,” he mused. “So like a double-o. Nothing more than a blunt instrument for Queen and country. But what about the people closest to you? Like your partner?” He turned to Bond. “Or your precious Quartermaster? And hasn’t he lived through enough already?”

Bond tightened his grip on his Walther as he met C with a deadly glare. “What would you know about it?” he growled.

C grinned. “Oh, Blofeld gave me an excellent little play-by-play,” he said. “I have to admit, your Q is a scrappy little thing, but he’s not without his limits. One must wonder just what it will take to finally break him. After this little stunt, I’m sure Blofeld, and others, would like to find out. He’ll be lucky to make it ‘til dawn—”

James didn’t let him speak another word. In the next instant, he brought down the butt of his Walther and struck him hard across the temple, knocking him cold. Then he turned on his heel and headed for the door.

“Bond!” Alex called after him, quickly shaking himself out of stunned silence. “Where are you going?”

“Blofeld’s in London,” he answered, not breaking his stride. “That’s what he was hinting at. That bastard’s in London. And I’m going to find him.”

“But—”

“Stay here. Guard C until M gets here,” James called over his shoulder. “And tell the others to be on the lookout. He’s not getting away this time.”

And he was gone.

Q released a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding as SYSTEM ERADICATED flashed in red letters across his screen. They’d done it. Nine Eyes was no more. Now they just needed to take C into custody and it would all be over. Or so he thought.

He answered on the first ring when Alex rang his mobile. “Alex, we’re through,” he answered preemptively. “We’re on our way to—”

“Bond’s just left,” Alex cut in quickly. “He’s going after Blofeld.”

“He’s what?” Q frowned. “How is that possible? We don’t know Blofeld’s location.”
“C essentially confirmed that he’s in London,” he explained. “That was good enough for Bond.”

“Shit.” He pinched the bridge of his nose beneath his glasses, trying to stave off the headache he felt coming on. Now that some of the adrenaline was wearing off, his whole body was starting to ache. “And where exactly does he plan on finding him?”

“Sir,” said Tanner as he drove toward the CNS building. “Who do you suppose would have clearance to launch a helicopter from up there at this time of night?”

M leaned forward in his seat, following Tanner’s line of vision with a frown. “No one that’s a friend to us.” He turned to face Q. “If Bond’s going after Blofeld- which I’m assuming to be the case based on your end of the conversation- he’d best start by following that chopper. I’m willing to bet he’ll find our man.”

Q nodded. “Alex, there’s a helicopter getting ready to take off right over your head. Alert Bond as quick as you can, but stay with C and be sure he doesn’t escape. We’re coming to you.”

“Got it.”

Q sighed inwardly as he clicked off the call. He was ready for this to be over.

James was already in the car when Alex’s call came through. “Thought as much,” he answered. “I’m headed for the bridge. I’ll see if I can bring it down. If you can, meet me when you’re done.”

Alex pocketed his phone and turned to his charge- just in time to see a fist aimed at his jaw. He managed to dodge the punch, but the surprise caused him to counteract just a moment too slow. Before he could regain control, C was going for his gun, and he was suddenly caught in a deadly game of tug-of-war with his own weapon.

The weapon discharged, shattering the glass that served to guard the landing from the sheer drop to the floor below. Alex fought to keep his feet among the broken glass while keeping the firearm from going off in his face.

In a calculated move, Alex shifted his weight and used the sudden leverage to throw his opponent off balance, simultaneously twisting his grip on the gun. The end result had C sprawled on the floor and the gun at home in Alex’s hands.

“Don’t move, Denbigh,” 009 warned, aiming the weapon at his chest.

C lunged.

Alex pulled the trigger.

He was dead before he fell to the floor below.

Q followed Tanner and M as they entered the CNS building, noting the broken glass- and the body of Max Denbigh sprawled in the center of the floor. With a muttered curse, he reached for his mobile and fired off a text.

C is dead. We need Blofeld alive.

It was all up to Bond now.
James threw the car in park at the end of Vauxhall Bridge, watching the helicopter start to head his way. Gun in hand, he strode over to the railing and took aim.

As the chopper drew closer, he opened fire on his target. It was a long shot, but after a few hits, and thanks to the special rounds Q had equipped him with, there was a flash of flame and the engine choked. He took a few steps back as the chopper began its forced descent, falling toward the center of the bridge.

Bond smirked as the chopper crashed onto the street, holding his Walther at his side. He could hear the wail of sirens as he strode casually toward his target.

There was a wall of emergency vehicles in place by the time the two groups converged on the bridge. Q was relieved to see that Danny looked no worse for wear as he followed Moneypenny and Dr. Swann from their vehicle.

“You two stay here,” said M, indicating Danny and Dr. Swann. He then beckoned the rest to follow him past the police tape.

“We shouldn’t be long,” Q assured when Danny appeared about to protest.

The younger folded his arms with a frown, but he didn’t press the issue.

Q turned to follow his colleagues through the sea of emergency personnel, but with every step, he could feel that his strength was fading. Still, he pressed on until he came to stand at Moneypenny’s side.

In the center of the bridge, he spotted James towering over Blofeld who was half sprawled on the ground. It was then that he finally felt a true sense of relief. It was over. Nine Eyes was gone and they had the head of SPECTRE in custody. His work was done.

As he noted M’s retreating form making his way to their agent and the soon-to-be prisoner, Q began to see spots in his vision. He was only vaguely aware of Eve shouting his name before his knees gave out and everything went black.

James stood with his gun raised as the helicopter was enveloped in smoke and flame. “It’s over, Blofeld,” he said, smirking as the man tried to crawl away from the wreckage. “Your puppet Denbigh is dead and SPECTRE has been exposed. We’re bringing you in.”

Blofeld chuckled darkly, the bleeding gash running down one side of his face making him look all the more sinister. “Over, you say. We’ll see,” he sneered. “I’ve got friends in high places. I’ll be out soon enough.”

“The only friend you’ll have will be the guard that brings your meals down in solitary,” said M, striding up to stand beside Bond. “Save your speeches.”

At a wave of M’s hand, a pair of armed officers stepped forward and began hauling Blofeld to his feet. As they placed him in handcuffs, he suddenly started to laugh, his one good eye fixed on a point somewhere behind them. “How is your Quartermaster, by the way?” he said. “Do send him my best.”

James turned sharply towards the direction that M came, scanning the line of emergency personnel, fire and emergency vehicles at the front. A flurry of movement towards the center of it all caught his gaze and his heart leapt to his throat. Moneypenny and Turner were knelt beside a prone figure,
easily recognizable even at a distance with that ridiculous striped scarf he’d insisted on bringing barely an hour before. Further back, he could see Tanner running towards the group of ambulances waiting behind the line.

“That is,” said Blofeld, “if he survives until morning.”

James was running before his mind could even catch up to his actions.

Moneypenny lifted her head as he all but crashed to his knees beside Q, her gaze all-knowing and sad. The figure between them was so very pale. It took him a moment to find his voice. “Q?”

His fingers brushed soft curls, but the figure did not stir. His breathing was shallow and he was far too still. James barely acknowledged the hand on his shoulder as Alex knelt beside him. “Please, don’t do this,” he pleaded softly, willing those hazel eyes to open. “Not now that I’ve found you again.”

As the medics moved forward and they were all pushed aside, a long forgotten yet painfully familiar sense of dread threatened to consume him. He prayed to any god that would listen that he would not lose his lover again.

Chapter End Notes

I couldn't resist one more cliffhanger. ;)

Please leave your thoughts in the comments!
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Hello, my dears! I'm back with another chapter. So hard to believe this story is finally drawing to a close.

Just one warning on this chapter; it does deal with panic attacks at one point and though I don't feel I got too terribly detailed, I don't want to catch anybody by surprise. Please feel free to skip the second to last break in the chapter if you're worried about possible triggers! <3

Q awoke to the artificial glow of florescent lighting and the unique smell all hospitals seem to share; all disinfectant, antiseptic, and overly bleached linens. The cut on his side was throbbing dully and his whole body ached from various bruises that seemed to cover most of his person. He slowly forced his eyes open, frowning at the IV line attached to his hand- that was going to ache for days when they finally took it out- and tried to shift into a more comfortable position on the bed.

A quick glance around the room revealed that he was actually in the medical wing at MI6 rather than a civilian hospital, which he felt a little bit better about. At least he knew the staff here- and had a better chance of talking his way out of the place sooner rather than later- but that wasn’t all that was familiar.

To the right of the bed, slumped in one of those horrible plastic chairs fast asleep, was James.

Q blinked, trying to bring the world into better focus without his glasses, sure he must be dreaming. But no. James was still there.

Likely sensing that he was being watched- given the ever-present diligence of a double-o- he began to stir, and Q soon found himself pinned beneath those piercing blue eyes.

James sat up straight, instantly alert, and moved closer to the bed. “Hey,” he greeted softly.

“Hey,” he replied, voice hoarse from disuse.

“How are you feeling?”

Q sighed. “Like… I’ve been run over,” he said; and god, his ribs ached when he breathed too deeply. He frowned. “What happened?”

“You collapsed,” answered James. “You’ve been here all night.” His expression was painfully serious. “You pushed yourself too far, Q.”

“Fuck,” was his eloquent reply. “What did the doctor say?”

“Exhaustion, severe dehydration, four cracked ribs, that cut on your side got infected and had to be restitched.” There was an edge to James’ voice. “Do you want me to go on?”

Q threw his head back, sinking deeper into the pillows with a groan. “They’re not going to let me go
home yet, are they?"

“Not a chance,” he said. “They’re going to keep you at least one more night.”

“Fuck,” he reiterated, very much displeased at the prospect of another night in medical. He let his eyes fall closed with a heavy sigh. “I just want to go home.”

He felt a hand on his arm, a calloused palm slide down to his wrist and then two hands encasing his own. He’d forgotten how warm James’ hands were.

“Q,” he sounded strained, his voice raw in a way that he hadn’t heard before. “We could have lost you.”

He opened his eyes to stare into endless blue, and something tightened painfully in his chest. There. That was the look. The one he used to get that said he was the most important thing in the world, though James never said a word. There was the lover he had mourned for what felt like an age now.

James tightened his hold on Q’s hand. “I could have lost you.”

He didn’t notice the tears that had slipped free until James brushed a thumb against his cheek. “I’m sorry,” he said.

James shook his head. “No. I’m the one who should say sorry. Not that that would even begin to cover it.” He brushed a few stray curls out of his eyes. “But I am sorry. For everything. For running away and then for having the nerve to drag you into all of this.”

Now Q shook his head. “You didn’t drag me into any-”

“None of this would have happened if it wasn’t for me,” said James. “It’s like you said before, back in Austria. I wasn’t thinking about what consequences there might be for you. I just had my own goal in mind. One last mission from M. And I did use you; even if that was never my intent. I took you for granted and then left you to clean up the mess, because I knew you would. And I’m so sorry. I won’t ever make that mistake again.”

For a moment, Q was silent, slowly processing everything he’d just said. Then he took hold of James’ hand and brought it to his lips, pressing a kiss to his palm. “Thank you, James,” he said softly.

James laced their fingers together and brought the back of his hand to his own lips. “Do you think you could ever forgive me?”

Q smiled, his eyes shining with unshed tears. “I already have.”

He drifted off to sleep with his fingers laced with James’; at least until the doctor came in and he had to endure their poking and prodding; James parroting one of Q’s own lectures about being a cooperative patient for the staff in medical. Q resisted the urge to throw a pillow at his head, though he knew he really was being rather difficult. But he wasn’t going to be happy until he was home in his own bed with the cats piled in alongside him.

Although getting Danny into the building had proven difficult, he and Alex, Q found out, had been there most of the night. At least, until Alex had dragged him off home insisting he get some proper rest. Q would blame the drugs for getting emotional later and all but demanding to see his younger brother when he found out security was being difficult.
By the time Danny was finally allowed in again, he had managed to pull himself together. Danny, however, started crying the moment he saw him. Q allowed him to climb into the bed with him, and for a long time he laid with Danny’s head on his chest while he idly ran his fingers through his hair; injuries and medical advice be damned. James and Alex sat outside to allow them some time together- and kept the medical staff at bay as long as they could get away with.

Q was forced to spend one more night in medical, but the very next morning he was ready to stage a coup and they acquiesced to let him leave if he went straight home. Preferably with supervision.

James stood by to help him get dressed, as he was still a little unsteady on his feet. But before they left the room, Q took his hand, giving it a squeeze. “Come home with me,” he said, trying not to sound too hopeful.

James smiled, and Q would forever adore the crinkles around his eyes when he did. “I was hoping you’d ask.”

Alex and Danny had already dropped the cats back home by the time they got in, and both Pascal and Turing were crying loudly before James and Q could even get in the door. It was obvious that they’d both been terribly missed.

By the time they got settled, Q was exhausted, and so he went upstairs to change into a pair of flannel pajama bottoms and a faded grey t-shirt James recognized as his own. Then he climbed into bed with James following close behind.

“I missed you,” he said as he lay pressed to James’ side, his head pillowed on his shoulder. James kissed his hair and simply held him closer. There was nothing more that needed to be said.

Q was back in his branch barely a week later, much to everyone’s dismay. But Q was as stubborn as they came and refused to stay at home when they still had such a mess to sort out. Between the massive investigation into C’s demise and all of his previous activities, and dealing with the fallout of the head of SPECTRE’s capture, the next few weeks were chaotic to say the least. But between their respective missions, James and Alex took it in turns to make sure Q went home at a decent hour every night, regardless of his workload; even going so far as to get R involved; locking him out of their systems- and his own office at one point- whenever he became especially recalcitrant.

There wasn’t a single night James was on home soil that he did not spend at home with Q, and by the end of the month he had completely moved back in. Q was unspeakably grateful to have his lover back- as was James- but he was nearly as grateful for the nights he did not have to spend alone.

As much as he didn’t want to admit it to himself, Q’s life did not return to normal once he escaped SPECTRE’s clutches. Though his wounds had healed, leaving a few faded scars, his mind, it seemed, would take longer to process everything he’d been through.

When James was home, the nightmares seemed less frequent, though there were still occasions when he would wake up screaming. On those nights, James would hold him that much closer, often lying awake until the sun came up. The flicker of guilt Q would glimpse in his eyes was almost too much to bear.

It soon got to the point that they always maintained some sort of physical contact while they slept. And the more time passed, the more James tuned in to the little cues that indicated his partner wasn’t resting peacefully. Being a double-o meant that he was already a light sleeper, but now even the
slightest twitch from the man laying beside him brought him instantly awake. When he could tell Q’s dreams were troubling him, he would wrap an arm around his waist, pulling him closer to his chest until he settled once more. Then he would place a gentle kiss behind his ear and be sure to at least keep an arm draped over his side for the rest of the night. They were sure to wake up in a tangle of limbs on those mornings, if they didn’t already.

On nights when James was away, Q didn’t sleep very much.

The first time Q had a panic attack, fortunately he and James were at home. It was stupid, he would say. Completely irrational. But it was terrifying.

It was a rare, quiet Saturday afternoon and Q was tinkering with the coffeemaker, of all things. It was a hobby that James found equal parts endearing and exasperating; the way Q was always making modifications to various household appliances. He had recently developed a new voice recognition program and was in the process of rewiring the coffeemaker to try and get it to accept voice commands. He had just gotten everything opened up to begin working on the electrical components when he made the rookie mistake of not grounding himself properly and the damn thing shocked him.

It was a minor electrical discharge; nowhere near enough to harm him, but enough to hurt like hell and cause him to sharply withdraw his hand. No big deal. It was the sort of thing he’d experienced thousands of times. Until, suddenly, he felt like he couldn’t breathe.

James must have heard him when he knocked over the stool beside his workbench, because he came bursting in just a moment later to find Q on the floor hugging his knees and on the verge of hyperventilating.

He immediately dropped to the floor beside him, taking his face between his hands. “Q, I need you to take a deep breath. Tell me what happened.”

But it was as though he had completely lost the ability to speak. There were only white walls and phantom pain radiating throughout his entire body and the smell of ozone in the air. He shook his head, trying to bring his senses back to the present. He was home. With James. He was not back there…

Eventually, James managed to talk him through it, coaxing him to take long, deep breaths until his pulse and breathing rate returned to normal. When he finally calmed down and was able to tell him what had happened, James understood all too well. He remembered what they did. He’d seen the footage. Those screams would haunt him to his grave.

PTSD. That was the verdict when he was finally forced into a psych eval. It didn’t encourage him to talk about it more. He refused to speak to anyone from psych for weeks; even the newly appointed Dr. Swann who had more success with their agents than any psychiatrist Six had yet to employ. He didn’t want to talk about it or try to understand it. He just wanted it to go away.

With James’ help- and personal experience, he found ways to work through it. James stayed grounded from missions for a month so he could spend as much time with him as possible; watching for cues, identifying possible triggers and helping him stave off attacks. The antistatic wrist strap was a stroke of genius on Q’s part. Its constant presence on his wrist would pose no questions when he was elbow deep in computer components, and the grounding wire was usually pretty well concealed by his shirt sleeve when he wasn’t. Only a select few really knew its true purpose, and anyone else who noticed the little wire attached to various metal surfaces as he worked had enough care and
sense not to draw attention to it. And it helped, even just knowing it was there. It helped a lot.

Eventually, he did start visiting regularly with psych. He had weekly evaluations- *therapy* sessions- as Dr. Swann was always reminding him (she didn’t like the stigma surrounding the words “psych eval”) and slowly but surely, he started to feel like he was regaining control over himself and his life. There was no guarantee that he wouldn’t still have occasional episodes, but he was learning to be kinder to himself when he did.

By Christmas, SPECTRE was all but completely eradicated and the double-o section had practically returned to normal. But, best of all, Q had his partner back, and James had Q. And if Q noticed the smug look Danny would shoot James every now and again, he never mentioned it. He felt he had a pretty good idea what that was about. And if James pulled him a little closer or surprised him with a kiss in those moments, well, that was fine too.

Chapter End Notes

Fluffy epilogue coming soon!

Please leave your thoughts in the comments. :)

Chapter Notes

Hello, old friends. Here we are on the last page...

I CAN’T BELIEVE I FINALLY FINISHED IT. It only took, like, a year and a half, but you know. Thank you so much to everyone who cheered me on and kept me going along the way. It’s been fun!

A little extra here; I’ve had this song in my 00Q playlist on repeat for SO LONG, and it is entirely the theme of this chapter. Pretty well sums up James and Q’s relationship after the SPECTRE fallout. You should give it a listen. ;)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3nPaL0YGSc

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Q let the front door close behind him with a soft thud, tiredly reengaging the locks before toeing off his shoes and letting his messenger bag slip to the floor. It had been a long day and all he wanted was to crawl into bed and sleep. Maybe he could coerce James into giving him a massage first. Hmm… there was an idea.

Frowning at the lack of felines winding around his legs in greeting, he trudged up the stairs. Most of the lights in the house were off, but he could see light coming from the bedroom. But when he stepped inside, James wasn’t there.

Suddenly, he froze, taking in the state of their bedroom for the first time since he’d walked in. Turing and Pascal currently occupied two open suitcases that lay open on the bed, content as you please. That paired with the pile of James’ clothes laid out beside them suddenly gave Q a sickening sense of déjà vu.

A rustle of movement turned his attention to the walk in closet.

“James?”

There was a muffled curse and the sound of hangers shifting on the rack before James emerged in a well worn pair of jeans and a faded t-shirt, looking a bit guilty. “You’re early.”

“R threatened to lock me out again if I hit the twelve hour mark.” He tried to sound conversational despite the a sense of dread spreading in icy tendrils down his spine. “I figured it wasn’t worth arguing.” He cast his gaze over the room, looking anywhere but at James; afraid of what he was about to ask. “Are you-” he swallowed hard, trying to keep his voice steady. “Are you leaving?”

For a moment, James actually looked confused. Then he flicked his gaze between Q and the open suitcases on the bed, realization slowly dawning on his face. “Oh, shit,” he breathed, rubbing a hand over his face tiredly. “I’m an idiot.”

Q remained glued to the spot, hugging his arms uncertainly.

James shook his head, beckoning him closer with an outstretched hand. “Come here.”
Tentatively, Q complied, until he found himself pressed firmly against James’ chest, a hand carding through his hair.

“No, love. I’m not leaving,” James murmured against his hair. “Not without you, anyway.”

Q released a breath he hadn’t realized he’d been holding, allowing the tension to bleed from his frame. He hugged him back tightly and blinked back the tears that had begun to form behind his eyes. “Oh. Well, that’s a relief,” he attempted lightness. “What would I have told the cats?”

James hugged him tighter. “I’m sorry, love. I didn’t think.” He pulled back a little, taking his face in his hands, and began placing gentle kisses first to his forehead, then his cheeks, and down along his jaw. Then he tilted his head back and pressed a lingering kiss to his lips.

As the last of the tension bled out, work rough hands dropped to Q’s hips, and he shivered as he felt James’ fingers slide beneath his shirt to tease at his sides. One hand slid around to the small of his back, pressing him closer while the other hand curled around his side. “Alright,” said Q as another kiss was placed beneath his jaw. He reached up to wrap his arms around his neck, tilting his head to one side inquisitively. “Now that that’s settled; what are the suitcases for?”

James smiled, his hands settling once more on Q’s hips. “We,” he said between a few soft pecks on the lips, “are going on holiday.”

Q pulled back a little, staring at him incredulously. “What? When?”

“Starting tomorrow,” he answered smugly.

Q blinked. “But- I can’t go on holiday,” he insisted. “I’ve got a million things to do and three agents in the field right now. Who’s going to run ops?”

“R can handle it,” said James. “Anyway, it’s all been arranged and M’s already signed off. You’re not allowed back to work for three weeks. Starting tomorrow.”

Q’s eyes widened. “But-”

“No arguments,” James cut in. “Like I said; M signed off. You’ve been working nonstop for months, Q. You deserve this.”

He shifted a bit in his arms, trying to absorb this. He quirked an eyebrow at him. “And what are we going to do for three weeks?”

“Well,” James purred, wrapping his arms more securely around his waist. “I thought we’d start by traveling someplace warm. Nice beaches, blue water, seaside resort; that sort of thing.”

“Hmm,” he mused. “Warm sounds nice.”

“We can get a private villa,” James went on, “so even when we do decide to stay in bed all day we can still enjoy the view.” He pressed a kiss beneath his ear, just behind his jawline. “And not worry about being disturbed.”

Q started to realize that he was slowly being backed towards the bed, their feet maneuvering around each other like a dance. James dipped his head to begin mouthing at his throat.

“You have put some thought into this,” said Q, keeping both hands on James’ shoulders to steady himself.
James pulled back with a wicked grin. “I might have made some arrangements.”

Both cats abandoned their perches and fled the room as James began to shove things aside on the bed. Any reprimand Q might have had about spooking the cats was silenced by James’ mouth. Then James was pushing him down on the bed. There was a moment of weightlessness before his back hit the mattress and James hovered above him, straddling his hips. His tie ended up on the floor somewhere a moment later and then James was working to divest him of his cardigan. Q giggled and ultimately took over as he tried to work the article over his head.

“Too many layers,” James complained, nipping beneath his jaw.

Q let his eyes fall closed as deft hands began to undo the buttons on his shirt. “It’s cold in Q-Branch,” he answered defensively. He gave a little shiver as the shirt fell open and his skin came in contact with the open air.

“That’s exactly why I’m taking you someplace warm,” said James, starting to pepper kisses along his torso.

“And what if I didn’t say yes?” he asked, just to be difficult.

James responded by dipping his tongue into his navel, the sensation sending a jolt through him that reached all the way down to his toes. “But you are saying yes,” he said, keeping him firmly in place with both hands on his hips as he placed teasing nips across his tummy.

Q struggled not to dissolve into giggles; which James only took as encouragement.

James’ kisses soon began to trail above the waistband of his pants, and Q’s breath hitched for a different reason as he began to undo the flies on his trousers. Then James surprised him by slipping to the floor between his knees. The kiss that was pressed to his now naked inner thigh felt like a promise.

Q released a shaky breath, his toes curling under his lover’s ministrations. “James-”

“Shh.” His fingertips teased along the waistband of his pants, making him squirm. Another kiss was placed below his navel. “Let me take care of you.”

And, oh, the things that man could do with that mouth.

The following morning, Q found himself on a plane bound for Mykonos; and if James had anything to say about Q cutting off the circulation in his hand during takeoff, he wisely kept it to himself. But however much Q hated the flight, their destination was well worth it.

The little villa that they would call home for the next week was gorgeous; all polished wood floors and clean lines in black and white. The single bedroom housed a plush king size bed and was connected to a luxurious marble bathroom, complete with jacuzzi. The living space had plenty of furniture for lounging as well, with floor to ceiling windows allowing for a spectacular view.

Their villa was situated on an upper level of the resort, the rear deck space giving them a full panorama of the Aegean Sea below; the view of which they could also enjoy from their own private infinity pool looking out over the clear blue water. All in all, the place was heaven.

Q leaned back as strong arms encircled his waist, still marveling at the view.

“Do you like it?” James purred in his ear.
“It’s gorgeous,” he answered. “I’m not so sure I’ll want to leave our rooms.”

He could feel James smirking against the side of his throat. “Works for me.”

They did venture out a bit, though, during their stay. Mykonos had a buzzing nightlife and a few evenings were spent at beach nightclubs dotted around the island. James even managed to get Q out on a speedboat for an afternoon; and Q had to admit that the rush was as good as any of the Aston Martins he’d test driven in Q-Branch.

A few afternoons found them sprawled on the loungers on the rear deck, often necking like teenagers. On the second night, James convinced Q to go skinny dipping in the infinity pool. No one was going to see them in the privacy of their villa anyway. A few rounds of playful tussling led to some fantastic sex, and Q got to cross fucking in a swimming pool off a list. James decided that he needed to make Q more of an exhibitionist.

On their last evening in Mykonos, they curled up on the rear deck to watch the sunset; the breeze warm and pleasant as they lay in a tangle of limbs. Q felt quite content with his head pillow on his lover’s shoulder, occasionally leaning up to exchange lazy kisses.

James’ breath was warm on his neck when he finally said, “I love you.”

Q’s eyes snapped open and he turned so he could better see his face.

“I’m sorry I never say it,” said James, sliding his fingers through dark curls. “But I do. Have done for years.”

Q could formulate no response. Instead, he firmly brought their lips together, pouring everything he couldn’t say into the kiss.

James seemed to get the message.

The following week had them move on to Amsterdam, where Q had always wanted to see the cherry blossoms. They spent much of their time just wandering the streets, stopping into different places on a whim as they passed. It was nice not to have any sort of agenda.

They found a nice little café with outdoor seating for lunch one afternoon. Q enjoyed watching the little pink petals rain down above their heads; covering the table and the various patrons, while others drifted away to float into the canal. It was the most romantic setting he’d ever had a meal in.

Every once in a while, Q would look back to find James’ watching him silently; the fondest expression on his face. But there was something deeper behind that look that he couldn’t quite put his finger on. And it never took long for him to form a blush and have to look away. As they stopped in the middle of a bridge overlooking the canal, the blossom leaves floating in splashes of pink on the water, Q found himself pinned under one such look.

“What?” he finally asked, feeling a blush sweep across his cheeks.

James smiled, those lovely lines forming around his eyes. He studied Q with a slight tilt to the head, contemplating something for a long moment. What he said next was not what Q expected. “Marry me.”

Q blinked at him dumbly, sure he hadn’t heard him correctly. “I… sorry?”
James’ grin broadened before his expression seemed to sober. “Look, we’ve been at this for a while; and in this business tomorrow isn’t guaranteed for either of us,” he said. “And every time I go away, all I can think about is getting back to you.” He reached out a hand, brushing a stray curl out of his eyes as his hair was tousled by the breeze. “So,” he gave a shrug, like it was the most obvious thing in the world. “Marry me.”

For a moment Q just stared, at a complete loss for words. Then he was smiling and he couldn’t help the laugh that bubbled up in his throat. “You are a ridiculous man,” he said, his tone nothing but fond.

James smirked. “That’s why you love me.”

The laughter had ceased, leaving behind a smile that made light dance in his eyes. “I do,” he said. “And, yes. I will.” Then he took hold of James by the lapels and pulled him in for a kiss.

It felt like coming home.

The last week of their holiday they chose to spend at home, for which Q was grateful. Their travels had been wonderful, but he was ready to be back in his own home with the cats.

On their first day home, they stopped by their local register office to give notice of their intent to marry. Neither of them was interested in making a big fuss over it and they’d both agreed that a simple civil ceremony would suffice, so they set a date for as soon as notice would allow.

Of course, as soon as Danny was told of their plans, he was having none of it, and insisted that they do something more than just a basic ceremony to mark the occasion.

In the end, they agreed to a small gathering of only their closest friends and colleagues immediately following the private ceremony. Q had a new suit tailored for the occasion- all white except for the waistcoat and tie, which were a dark navy blue to compliment James, who wore his formal dress uniform, designating his status as a Commander of the Royal Navy. (Q may or may not have swooned the first time he saw him in it.) Together, they made a stunning pair.

When they returned home, James made a show of lifting Q bridal style and carrying him across the threshold- to which Q squawked and smacked him on the shoulder. He was returned to his feet and once Q had reengaged all the locks, it was practically a race to the bedroom.


“So demanding,” came the cheeky reply.

Once they had both reached an appropriate level of undress, James moved things to the bed; and Q never tired of being caged in by those arms while James covered his body with his own. But for a moment, James stopped, hovering over his smaller form with a hand tangled in his hair.

“You’re so beautiful,” said James, pressing a soft kiss to his lips. “And I get to keep you.”

Q smiled, examining the simple metal band on the ring finger of his left hand, now braced lightly against James’ chest. “Yes, you do,” he said.

He dropped his head back against the pillows as James’ trailed kisses along his jaw, working down the pale column of his throat.

“I love you,” James breathed with a brush of lips just over his heart.
Q ran his fingers through the close cropped blonde hair at his nape as warmth spread through his chest. “I love you too.”

As James proceeded with his ministrations, working to cover every inch of his body with reverent kisses, Q had never felt more content.

Chapter End Notes

THE END.

And that's a wrap, folks! Thanks again for following me this far.

If you liked this, feel free to check out my other works as well. I'm pretty much all 00Q/00QAD all the time. And this certainly won't be the last time I write in this verse, so feel free to subscribe! :)

If you're interested in seeing where Q and Bond stayed in Mykonos, here is what I had in mind; https://www.cavotagoo.com/accommodation/private-villa/

P.S. Forger, I know I didn't use your exact suggestion for the proposal, but there were flower blossoms! ;p

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