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**Shades of Gray**

by [tunglo](http://archiveofourown.org/users/tunglo)

**Summary**

Various Jim/Penguin oneshots. See the [Chapter Index](http://archiveofourown.org/chapters/8250412) for more info on individual stories.

My other Gobblepot stuff:

★ [Shadows](http://archiveofourown.org/works/8250412). (Smut Swap 2017 Exchange Fic)
Because I am an idiot and didn't realise you can manage chapters and rearrange them. Behold, an excuse to put my obsessive need to list and categorise to good use...

1. Chapter Index. (You are here!)

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Gobblepot Winter 2016

This event was a bingo card of seasonal prompts - read more HERE. I managed to fill the whole thing! :) 

2. Christmas Tree. Jim's mother comes to stay with him for the holidays; she mistakenly comes to the conclusion that he and Oswald are dating. [G] 

3. Mistletoe. Oswald saves Jim's life, Jim repays the debt by visiting him at the hospital - aka the glurgey Christmas coma fic. [G] 

4. Champagne. Jim makes up for never turning up to Oswald's club opening in S1. [G] 

5. Ice. Jim slips on an icy sidewalk and loses his memory. [G] 

6. Skating. The duo meet as teenagers. [G] 

7. Mittens. Jim gains custody of baby!Babs - he can't cope with it. [G] 

8. Mulled Wine. Jim gets drunk and pays Oswald a visit. [E] 

9. Decorating. Ed and Oswald hatch a plan to get rid of Jim, but Oswald has second thoughts. [T] 

10. Scarf. Oswald offers Jim money to take his virginity, but Jim doesn't know if he can go through with it. [T] 

11. Christmas Sweaters. The GCPD holds a raffle to determine who will represent the department at Mayor Cobblepot's Christmas engagements. Jim pulls the lucky straw. [G] 

12. Fireworks. Oswald sees sparks. [E] 


15. **Sleigh**. Oswald breaks Jim’s heart. [G]

16. **Treat You Better**. Jim wants Oswald to break free of Nygma's influence. TW for domestic violence. [T]

17. **Santa**. Jim finds Oswald's childhood Santa letters while searching an apartment. The discovery forces him to acknowledge that Oswald is human after all. [G]

18. **Angel**. Jim gets over invested in a child murder case and can't let go. TW for dark themes, suicidal thoughts, etc. [T]

19. **Caroling**. Fake Marriage Trope - Oswald gets Jim to marry him so he can't testify against him. [G]

20. **Through The Years**. Jim visits Oswald on his deathbed. [T]

21. **Free Space - Meet The Family**. Jim's Mom wants him to bring his (imaginary) boyfriend home for Christmas; Oswald duly obliges. [G]

The following all exist in roughly the same universe...

22. **Baking**. Oswald is starting to fill out his suits, Jim finds it relevant to his interests. [G]

23. **Pumpkin Pie**. Oswald worries about his weight - Jim assumes Oswald has grown sick of him. [T]

24. **Snow**. Jim stands Oswald up... except maybe there's more to it. [T]

25. **Party**. Jim tries to explain to Oswald that he doesn't have to spoil him. The problem is that he has never been very good with words. [G]

26. **Eggnog**. After a raid on a sex club, Jim worries that he isn't exciting enough. [T]

27. **Do Over**. Oswald arranges for them to do over their disastrous date from 'Pumpkin Pie'. [E]

Along with these...

28. **Taste**. Oswald thinks Jim is cheating on him. TW for jealous, possessive behaviour. [E]

47. **Strawberries and Cream**. Jim feeds Oswald chocolate covered strawberries. [G]

58. **Ice Cream**. Just some established relationship feels. [G]

---

**MonthlySuperGo Challenge**

The [Dreamwidth comm](https://www.dreamwidth.org) holds monthly challenges. This particular month was a mini prompt table for the five senses. I wrote:

28. **Taste**. Oswald thinks Jim is cheating on him. TW for jealous, possessive behaviour. [E]

29. **Shaving**. 'Touch' fill - Oswald helps an injured Jim with his ablutions. [T]

30. **Tickling**. 'Sound' fill - Harvey is scarred for life when he walks in on the pair of them. [T]

31. **Road Trip**. 'Smell' fill - a road trip necessitates bed sharing. [E]
32. **What are Friends For?** 'Sight' fill - inspired by a prompt on the Gotham kink meme: some random criminal kidnaps them both and gives Oswald the choice of watching or taking Jim himself. TW for dubcon. [E]

---

**Gobblepot Week 2017**

This was another prompt challenge, read more [HERE](#). I only managed two fills for this one though...

33. **Musical.** Oswald uncovers some dirt on Jim, but for some reason can't bring himself to use it. AKA the one where Jim was in a pop-punk band. [T]

34. **Fake Relationship.** Jim's life is turned upside down when his brother dies - Oswald thinks he might be able to help him financially. [T]

---

**Gobblepot Summer 2017**

Bingo card challenge - find out more [HERE](#).

★. **Free Space - Books.** Jim has terrible taste in literature. [G]

★. **Water Bottle.** UST at a fun run. [G]

★. **Summer Job.** Jim's porntastic past comes back to haunt him. [E]

★. **Sunglasses.** Jim misuses a GCPD interrogation room. [E]

★. **Shorts.** Oswald arranges for Jim to wear his summer uniform. [G]

★. **Sunburn.** Quick doodle of Oswald being fed up of the sun. [G]

★. **Lifeguard.** Oswald meets Jim pre-show and never forgets him. [T]

★. **Ice Cream.** Just some established relationship feels. [G]

★. **Fan.** Future fic in which Jim is desperate to be a good uncle to Barbara. [G]

★. **Sunset.** Oswald punishes Jim with Sofia's riding crop... [M]

★. **Beach Ball.** Fanmix. [G]

★. **Practically Perfect.** For the 'tan' square, Oswald remains insecure about his leg because he sees Jim as perfect. Jim reveals that he struggles with a disability of his own. [M]

★. **Trip.** Jim has an accident at the Iceberg Lounge and wants Oswald to make it up to him. [T]

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**Gobblepot Week 2018**

Find the full details of the event [HERE](#).

★. **Heart.** School reunion AU. [G]

★. **Bed Sharing.** Jim talks in his sleep. [T]
★. **Arranged Marriage/Fake Relationship.** Jim and Sofia team up to seduce Oswald. [E]

★. **Soulmates.** There was a time when Oswald thought they were soulmates - that time has gone. [G]

★. **Free Day.** Jim has to give a talk on car seat safety. It doesn't go well. [G]

---

**Gobblepot Spring 2018**

Find the full details of the event [HERE](#).

★. **Free Space.** The guys are snowed in - Jim "hates" it at the beginning, but then warms up to it.

★. **Sunshine.** College AU.

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**Tumblr Asks, Kink Meme Fills, and Other Randomness**

35. **It Started With A Kiss.** Valentine's Day Fic. [G]

36. **Future.** Jim saves Oswald's life, way in the future. [G]

37. **Gone.** Oswald is targeted by a serial killer. [T]

38. **Revenge.** Oswald wants to make things up to Jim. The first Gobblepot I ever wrote! [T]

39. **I Never Meant To Clip Your Wings...** Jim is forced back onto uniform patrol as a punishment. [T]

40. **Trust.** Jim knows it's wrong, but he's the only weapon in their arsenal. [T]

41. **Trust, Part Two.** Companion piece to Chapter 40. [T]

(A lovely anon made the most gorgeous cover art for Trust too - check it out [HERE](#))

42. **Get Well Soon.** They each look after the other when they fall ill. [G]

43. **Handcuffed.** Jim and Oswald are forced to spend the day handcuffed together. [G]

44. **Vampires.** Vampire AU. [T]

45. **Call Me Maybe.** Oswald rings Jim when he's frantic about Ed's disappearance in S3:E7 - it quickly becomes a habit. [G]

46. **Second Chances.** AKA the syrupy time travel AU absolutely nobody asked for. [G]

47. **Strawberries and Cream.** Jim feeds Oswald chocolate covered strawberries. [G]

48. **Oswald writes bad erotica.** What it says on the tin. [E]

49. **Peace and Quiet.** Jim just wants to sleep, no matter what the cost. [E]

50. **Complicated.** 'Discovering Oswald's secret love for stockings/heels/panties awakens something in Jim.' [M]

51. **I Fought The Law...** Jim refuses to accept that he and Oswald are the same. [T]
66. **Deep Breath**. Drabble - Jim attempts to save Oswald from drowning. [G]

67. **Tetch Virus PWP**. Jim loses his self control. [E]

73. **Dirty Talk**. [E]

74. **Family Feels**. Jim and Oswald raising Martin together after defeating Sofia. [G]

78. **Was It Worth It?** Established relationship, Oswald-centric POV, Oswald Cobblepot and Jim Gordon grow old together. [G]

79. **Groveling**. Jim has to apologise for leaving Oswald on the blimp after S4:E18. [T]

80. **Post-Apocalypse**. Double drabble on the theme. [T]

81. **Nixie AU**. Jim is a water sprite - Oswald knows. [T]

82. **Insecurity**. Sometimes Oswald is surprised by Jim's emotional baggage. [T]

83. **Smut**. Jim riding Oswald because his leg is hurting. [E]

84. **Tears**. Jim cries on Oswald's shoulder. [G]

85. **Jealousy**. Jim has never been any good at getting what he wants. [T]

86. **Librarian/Avid Reader AU**. [T]

---

**With a Side of Gordlock**

My other ship in Gotham fandom is Jim/Harvey. The two inevitably cross paths sometimes!

★. **Witness**. Harvey sees Jim with Oswald; it's not what he expected it to be. [M]

★. **Oswald taunts Harvey with what he can't have**. [M]

★. **Oswald tries to break Jim and Harvey up**. [T]

★. **Second Best**. Harvey knows what Jim is doing behind his back. [T]

★. **Threesome!** [E] **Plus a sequel** where Jim and Harvey get together. [T]

★. **Drinking Contest**. Oswald and Harvey go head to head for Jim's affections. [T]

---

If you have a prompt, feel free to leave it here as a comment or send me an ask over on Tumblr @serenwib. :)
"Marvelous news, darling," his mother’s voice crackles over the phone, "I’m coming to you for Christmas."

Jim stops dead, right in the middle of the street so that people curse loudly and push past him, and his own voice sounds strained and distant as he asks,

"What about Joseph? What about Roger?"

"Your stepfather and I have had a little tiff," his mother says, slurs, because it’s obvious now that she’s been drinking. "And your brother is vacationing in Europe."

Of course he is.

Jim could argue, he supposes. Explain that he’s on the rota to work Christmas, just as he has every other year since moving back to Gotham. State simply that he doesn’t want her to come, that, really, these days they are little more than strangers.

It would be useless, he knows, and only sighs into the handset,

"When can I expect you?"

After his shift ends, and after another couple of hours spent helping the booking sergeant and dealing with paperwork, he gets back to his cold dark apartment and looks around him with something approaching panic. There’s nothing but mold in his fridge, and his kitchen cupboards aren’t much better. He pours the alcohol down the sink, to remove temptation, then goes back out into the cold night air to do some shopping.

The grocery store is a nightmare, too crowded even at this late hour, and maneuvering his way around the narrow aisles feels more stressful than being out on patrol, back in Afghanistan. He doesn’t know what to get, doesn’t remember if his mother had loved eggnog or loathed it. It goes in the cart anyway and, when he’s at the checkout, he wonders why he’s bothering.

They have never fallen out, not in a blaze of drama like people do in the movies. He just grew up, and she never got over the fact it was him they pulled alive from the crash wreckage, not his father.

She had sent him stilted letters when he was in the military, all the same, every three months like clockwork, and he had dutifully taken Barbara home to meet her, after he had decided he was going to ask her to marry him. Had watched anxiously as Barbara poured drinks, one after the other, and made excuses later, when Barbara cried because his mother had been too loud, telling Joseph that
they were completely unsuited, and if Barbara said yes they would both be miserable.

Still he hauls the bags along the icy streets, and stops to look at the Christmas trees being hustled along the sidewalk. There’s one all fixed up with lights and baubles, and it makes him think of how excited he had been for the season as a kid, before the accident. He’s so lost in thought that when someone taps him on the shoulder, he almost has a heart attack.

There are four more days until Christmas when Jim opens the door to his apartment, bruises darkening his jaw and blood staining his shirt, ready to sleep the sleep of the dead - and has to simply stand and stare for a minute.

Because it’s like he’s walked straight into Santa’s grotto. There are garlands, and swags, and right in the center of his sitting room, where that morning there had been nothing but a pile of unopened mail and a basket of laundry, is a picture perfect Christmas tree. The lights are twinkling, the tinsel glittering, and Jim has to swallow around a sudden lump in his throat because, just for a moment, he’s eight years old again, awestruck at the sight of their suburban paradise.

Then he has his cellphone pressed to his ear, no time for preamble,

"What were you thinking!?"

"A 'thank you' would have sufficed," Oswald answers, and Jim can hear the other man’s smile. "Consider yourself welcome."

"This is my apartment," Jim hisses instead. "You had no right to break in here."

Oswald sighs, but his tone is calm when he says, "I didn’t break in. I asked your cretinous colleague Bullock for the key and he supervised. It was meant to be a nice surprise, for you and your mother."

Jim doesn’t know how to respond, anger and guilt and frustration that he had ever opened his stupid traitorous mouth all warring with each other. Oswald had seen the way he looked at those trees out on the street, Jim knew he had, and it had been Jim who had offered the information about his mother’s visit.

Sometimes it’s hard to remember that they aren’t actually friends, not when Oswald insists on treating him like they mean everything to each other.

"Thank you," he manages eventually, his gaze sweeping back over the tree, "it’s beautiful." It really is, and he still feels like a heel, and that’s the only reason he keeps going, adding, "You really shouldn’t have. You must be busy enough with your own preparations?"

"Jim Gordon!" Oswald exclaims, delighted, picking up on the question mark, "Is that an invitation?"

Jim clenches his jaw, wishes Oswald wasn’t so adept at getting under his skin, even as he snaps, "I was just being polite. Penguin."

His mother reacts to the tree much as he had, gasping and staring as he locks the main door and brings her luggage through from the hallway.

"Did you do all this for me?" She asks, too knowing, and Jim has to look away from the tears in her
eyes, guilt gnawing at him.

"A friend," he says simply, and she nods. Doesn’t push or question, claiming exhaustion from the flight and the chaos of the airport.

Jim stays awake long after she has gone to bed, cell in his hand. He ought to apologize, ought to offer a sincere sign of gratitude. In the end he does neither. He and Oswald aren’t friends, and if he backs down now all it will do is encourage him.

Christmas Eve dawns gray and freezing, but it doesn’t depress him as badly as it normally does. He determines not to think about work, and how Harvey got his shifts switched with an order to try and enjoy himself. Not to think about Oswald Cobblepot either. He agrees to his mother’s suggestion they go out for lunch, and then walks with her through the park, unprepared for the way the memories accost him.

He had had a happy childhood before his father died. Had had just about everything he could have wanted. It hurts to remember that, sometimes.

His mother puts a hand on his arm before they leave, meets his gaze and smiles at him sadly.

"You look so much like him," she says, "he would have been so very proud of you."

He can’t answer, doesn’t know if it can all be forgiven so easily, and her voice is barely more than a whisper when she finishes,

"I’m proud of you, Jim. All I want is for you to experience what we had. To know that you're loved, that you’re happy."

It’s as close as he’ll ever get to a sorry and perhaps it makes him weak, foolish, but he takes it. Places his hand over hers, the very briefest of touches, and says in a whisper of his own,

"I hope I get there."

The truce between them is new and tenuous, and the following morning, when his mother comments,

"You should have finished the prep last night, it would have made things so much easier,"

It takes all Jim has not to yell at her.

He should have prepped the night before, should have done a whole lot of things. Like realized all the kitchen implements he thought he owned had been either Lee’s or Barbara’s, and that he only has two dull knives and a single saucepan with which to cook Christmas dinner.

He’s stabbing one of the knives into a canned ham, the key laying useless on the counter, when there’s a knock at the door, followed by his mother telling him she’ll answer it. That’s for the best, he thinks. He’s not in the mood for dealing with anyone.

Then a familiar voice wafts through from the doorway and he’s slipped with the knife, cursing as blood gushes all over what was going to be his culinary masterpiece.

His mother doesn’t close the door on Oswald in light of this, the way a sane person would. Instead she stands by and lets him stride into the kitchen, and it must be catching because of instead of ordering him out, Jim just lets him take charge of the situation. Says nothing as Oswald holds his
hand under the tap to clean the cut, and stays silent when he retrieves the first aid kit from the
bathroom cabinet and patches him up with sticking plaster.

"What were you thinking!?!" Oswald demands when he’s done, the knife sticking through the side
of the can all too telling. "You could have seriously hurt yourself."

"I offered to cook," his mother says, choosing this as the perfect moment to join the conversation.
"Jim has always been too stubborn."

"Oh, I know," Oswald agrees, and it hits Jim that the man’s coat and scarf have disappeared, and
that all three of them are sat in his sitting room. Worse, because neither of them have let go, he and
Oswald are *holding hands* in front of his mother. He pulls his hand away brusquely, pushes it
through his hair to hide his discomfort.

Refuses to acknowledge the look Oswald gives him, mournful and disappointed.

'What the hell are you doing here?' He wants to ask, and Oswald answers his unspoken question,
addressing his mother with,

"It’s so kind of you both to invite me. I’ve found the season so lonely since my own dear mother
passed away."

"I’m sorry," his mother says, sounding sincere, and Jim pushes to his feet because this is all too
surreal.

"We need to talk," he grinds out. "It won’t take a moment." Then he’s dragging Oswald back into
the kitchen for some modicum of privacy. Pressing him up against the counter, voice low and
dangerous, "I don’t know what game you’re playing but you need to stop it. Right now."

Oswald blinks up at him, the blue of his eyes too distracting, to say nothing of their frame of dark
lashes.

"Let me stay," he says, gaze flickering to the mess around them, "and I’ll fix dinner."

It’s not as awful as it ought to be. Not the meal Oswald has somehow salvaged, nor the fact he’s sat
around his tiny dining table with his mother and a career criminal. This time last week the thought
alone would have been torture.

"How did you and Jim meet?" His mother asks, fishing.

"Through work," Oswald says ambiguously, and charms her like he does the public at all his civic
functions. It’s as startling in his own home as it has been every other time Jim’s witnessed it.

He can’t work it out, doesn’t know how it’s possible, that a person can be so bad - so rotten - and
yet sit there, no outward sign of it.

"I wondered if it might have been the army," his mother says, and Jim wishes he had been able to
think of a plausible sounding reason not to let Oswald open the wine he had brought with him.
"Because of your leg, I mean. Jim never talks much about his time in the military."

The man’s polite smile doesn’t falter, though Jim can feel heat prickle at the back of his own neck.
Embarrassment, perhaps. Or anxiety.

"Of course he never even told me he was dating again," she turns to him, and in place of the
expected accusation he is met with the expression he had seen at the park. The one that had built bridges. "I want you to be happy, Jim," she reiterates, "I don’t care that you like men. I never have."

"We’re not -" Jim starts, because it’s easier than accepting that his mother has always known something he has never told her. Has only rarely told anyone.

"Oh," Oswald breathes, and it’s instinct, or the hope that his mother will finally stop nagging him. It’s an apology for the way he acted over the tree, and all the other cruel things he’s done. (Arkham, his brain supplies, unhelpfully.) It’s the way his heart clenches in his chest, torn at the certain knowledge Oswald never got to hear that open acceptance from his own mother.

Whatever it is he takes Oswald’s hand and squeezes it, and has to look away when Oswald meets his eye, questioning.

His mother takes a nap after dinner, so that it’s just the two of them, and Jim is going to say sorry for his behavior. For overstepping the boundaries. Oswald doesn’t give him chance, helps him carry the dishes to the sink in silence and then turns the tables on their earlier position, crowding him back against the kitchen counter.

"I want to say thank you," he says, entirely too close, tone entirely too intimate. "For inviting me," his lips quirk, "or for not kicking me out, at any rate. And," he continues before Jim can interrupt, "I want to give you your Christmas present."

"You shouldn’t have," Jim begins, because he never imagined Oswald would have, and it’s bad manners not to reciprocate.

"Don’t be silly," Oswald chastises, and in spite of himself Jim stops arguing. Struggles just to breathe steadily, head spinning as though he were the one to drain a bottle of expensive wine over dinner. Oswald grins, and there’s a flash of it now, the predator, and says, "Besides, I’m reliably informed it’s worthless, unless we share it with each other."

That makes no sense, none of it does, and then Oswald is kissing him, hands braced either side of him.

Jim kisses back, like this is exactly what he's always wanted. Slides one hand along Oswald's jaw while the other clutches at the fabric of his jacket, trying to get him closer. He's a mess when they pull apart, flushed and breathless, and when Oswald presses one last chaste kiss to the corner of his mouth and says,

"Merry Christmas,"

before rolling up his sleeves and starting on the washing up, like nothing at all has happened, Jim just shakes his head and gives in to the absurdity. Laughs and takes the proffered dish towel.

"Merry Christmas, Oswald."

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Mistletoe

Chapter Summary

My second #GobblepotWinter2016 fill, this one is for ‘Mistletoe’. I just can’t stop writing glurge. I’m sorry.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim complained about the upcoming event to anyone who would listen. He didn’t want a certificate, he didn’t want to be recognized for his contribution. He didn’t want to stand in front of a crowd of mob controlled media outlets and smile for the cameras, Oswald Cobblepot’s arm around his shoulders.

“Suck it up,” Harvey advised, as helpful as ever. “We could use some good publicity.”

They really could, Jim knew. Barker’s trial for corruption was making the headlines, and two uniformed officers had just been indicted for police brutality.

“So you’re saying I should take one for the team,” Jim said, shaking his head at the way Harvey sniggered, and drained the last of his beer. Went home to his grim apartment where he spent another night passed out on the sofa.

“I’m proud of you,” Lee told him in the morning, making him glad he had spent the extra time to find a shirt that wasn’t already blood stained.

“You’re a credit to the force,” the Commissioner said, stiff and formal, and shook his hand before disappearing for a confidential talk with the acting Captain.

“Jim,” Oswald breathed, fingers reaching out to fix his tie, and smooth his lapels, as though this were completely acceptable. “This is going to be my defining moment as Mayor.”

Jim raised an eyebrow, wished he knew what it was about Oswald that made it impossible for him to walk away. To simply break eye contact.

“It will,” Oswald insisted. “How many people get to publicly award their dearest friend for his bravery?”

He could feel the blush heat his cheeks, in spite of his best efforts, and forced himself to say, yet again,

“We’re not friends, Oswald.”

The other man only smiled at him, wistful, “I have faith that one day you will think differently.”

Jim couldn’t stop thinking about it, not as they were guided out to the steps of the precinct, and not as Oswald gave a seemingly off the cuff speech, waxing lyrical about Jim’s commitment to Gotham, and his dedication to duty.
“I’m so proud of you,” Oswald said softly, for his ears alone, as he presented him with the certificate and Jim wasn’t unaware of how the words echoed Lee’s earlier congratulations. Or the way his reaction really wasn’t any different, right down to the fluttery sensation in his stomach.

“I was just doing my job,” he said in turn, face aching from the enforced smiling, and then there was a scream, a gunshot, and Oswald was pushing him down, pushing in front of him, and Jim had no time to think, no time to get his bearings, before Oswald was nothing but a dead weight on top of him, and the air was full of the sound of tires squealing.

“Jesus, Jim,” Harvey cursed, dropping down to crouch beside him, and there were flash bulbs everywhere, chaos breaking out all around them.

“Is he dead?” One of Oswald’s PAs asked, looking like she might be sick all over their crime scene, and finally his training kicked in and he forced himself not to think about anything but taking control of the situation.

---

“Gotham City Mayor, Oswald Cobblepot, is said to be in a critical but stable condition tonight following a shooting incident at the headquarters of the Gotham City Police Department. We spoke to Harvey Bullock, Acting Police Captain, who gave us this statement…”

There were whistles and catcalls from the bullpen, more than one cry of it being true what they said about ten pounds and the camera. Jim clenched his jaw and bit back the urge to yell at them. Oswald had almost died - might still die - trying to save him, the least they could do was not stand around laughing about it.

Harvey clapped him on the shoulder, too knowing, and said, “You gotta laugh or cry in this job, you know that.” And when that didn’t get a response, Harvey sighed, “Look, why don’t you go and check in at the hospital. There’s nothing more you can do here. Not until the morning.”

He was going to demur, going to take another look at the video footage and the photo database. But his shoulders ached from being hunched over a computer screen, and his head was swimming. Perhaps the doctors would be able to tell him something, and at least then he’d be being useful.

“He’s out of surgery,” the nurse confirmed, and after he had showed his badge and flashed his most winning smile, she sighed and led him down the corridor to a room with closed blinds at the window.

Jim pushed the door open carefully, mindful of the eerie silence, punctuated only by the blip and whir of monitors and machinery. Oswald seemed to be hooked up to just about everything going, his thin frame almost lost in the maze of tubes and wires.

“What you did today was incredibly stupid,” he said, as though Oswald could hear him. Put his hands on his hips and just stood there, staring. “I’m going to get them,” he promised. “I’m going to put them behind bars.”

He ran a hand through his hair, took a step closer, something twisting inside at how small Oswald looked. How vulnerable.

“You’re not going to die because of this,” he said finally, gruff and determined. “I owe you enough already.”
The bullet was meant for him, it turned out, and somehow that only made it harder to deal with.

Oswald had made dozens of enemies who wanted him dead. Hundreds even. But it had to be one of Jim’s who had pulled the trigger.

He pressed the shooter into the floor far harder than necessary when he made the arrest and, when the guy emerged from the interrogation cell with a black eye he hadn’t had before entering it, it frightened Jim, the cold satisfaction it gave him.

That was what Oswald did to him. What he had always done to him. Robbed him of his moral compass, made it harder to see what was the right thing to do, and what simply felt right in the moment.

Harvey went on the evening news, again, to announce that they had their man, and the newspapers delivered daily updates on Oswald’s condition. He had been moved from the ICU, after getting over the pneumonia that had had Jim standing at his bedside, offering up a silent prayer to a deity he had long since ceased to believe in, and being taken off the ventilator.

Still there was no sign of him waking from the coma, and Jim settled into a routine of visiting the hospital when he finished work, no matter what time that might be.

“You should talk to him,” the nurses encouraged, “it will be comforting for both of you.”

That was around Valentines’, and it didn’t take long for Jim to realize that the heart holding bears on the cards at the nurses’ station were expressing exactly the same sort of sentiment they believed his monologues were full of.

It hadn’t helped that he had brought a bunch of flowers on one of his early visits, because that was what you did, surely, for a man who had taken a bullet for you?

He told Oswald about it, uncomfortable in the plastic visitor’s seat, in between sips of the god awful coffee from the machine downstairs.

“They think you’re my boyfriend, you know. They say I can hold your hand, if I want to.”

Oswald lay there, silent and unresponsive, and Jim didn’t act on the offer.

Didn’t comment on the way media interest tailed off. On how the coverage moved on to the appointment of the interim Mayor, and the merits of going ahead with the election if need be, on schedule. He didn’t even say anything about the way the courtesy visits of staff and business associates, legitimate and otherwise, trickled away, until it was just him.

Just him at Easter, and just him on Memorial Day.

“I’m not brave,” he told Oswald on the latter, because what did it matter if you spilled secrets to an audience who couldn’t hear you. “My CO said I had a death wish. For a while maybe,” his voice had dropped to a whisper and, somewhere along the line, he had taken Oswald’s lifeless hand in his own, “it was true. I didn’t want to come home. I didn’t have anything to come home to.”

Once he had started he couldn’t stop, telling Oswald things he had never told anyone. Not Lee, not even Barbara. He stroked patterns across the back of Oswald’s hand with his thumb, and by Flag Day it felt natural, as he was getting up to leave, to press a kiss to the center of it.

“It wasn’t your fault,” Harvey said finally, when Jim divulged his plans for Independence Day. “You don’t owe him anything.”
“He hasn’t got anyone else,” Jim countered, discomforted at seeing his actions from the outside for the first time.

Harvey just shook his head and sighed,

“That still doesn’t make him your problem.”

“Your hair’s a mess,” Jim said in the middle of summer, because it had been a long day, and he was hot and uncomfortable. “Not that it’s usually much better. My father would have made you get a buzz cut.”

He laughed at that, sounding just slightly crazed, and a passing nurse glared at him. They had moved Oswald onto a regular ward, full of people who got regular visits during official visiting hours. He had been warned that if he made too much noise his own privileges would be revoked, and it had felt like a punch to the gut, the idea that Oswald would just have to lie there, while all around him the others were spoken to by their friends and their families.

So he pulled the chair closer to the bed, and reached out his fingers to push the lank strands of hair away from Oswald’s forehead. They clipped his nails, and shaved his face, but his hair had been left to its own devices, so that it fanned around his head on the pillow when the nurses moved him.

“I kind of like it though,” Jim confessed, brushed the backs of his fingers along one sharp cheekbone then sat back again. “The way you style it. It suits you.”

The next day a case took him to a music store and after getting his mugshots identified, inspiration struck and Jim bought two sets of headphones and a splitter. That night he didn’t even need to talk, just played some of his favorite songs, wondered if Oswald would ever consciously enjoy them. When he opened his eyes it was to find he had fallen asleep in the plastic chair, cheek pressed against the starched sheets, one hand still linked in Oswald’s.

On Labor Day, Harvey lost his temper.

Turned up at the hospital to find him with his chin propped in one hand, the other petting at Oswald’s hair, his ears full of some sentimental love song.

“I’ve been trying to get hold of you,” Harvey said, and he obviously hadn’t been told about the noise rule, because it all but echoed in the silence. “I should have known you’d be here, molesting the unconscious.”

“I’m not,” he said, abruptly pulling his hand back. “I don’t -”

“What the hell is wrong with you?” Harvey cut in, pulled another plastic chair over and sat beside him. When he spoke again his tone was gentle, “Before this you couldn’t stand the sight of him, now you’re here every night. It’s been months, Jim.”

“He saved my life,” Jim pointed out, stubborn, and Harvey sighed, slouched back into the seat, and tried to make him see what everyone else saw,

“This is Gotham, I get that. Everything’s a little fucked up here. But this isn’t a love story. This is just weird.”

Jim tried after that, really he did. But he felt lost, purposeless, and he caught himself a dozen times a day, thinking of how he should remember some comment or other, so he could tell Oswald about
His apartment was cold and unwelcoming, and though his couch was soft and comfortable it felt wrong. It smelt wrong.

He gave in on Columbus Day, sporting a black eye and a bruised rib, courtesy of a clash between protesters. He had left his arrests in the capable hands of the booking sergeant, hadn’t even suppressed a smile at her comment about the caliber of prisoner, and how it was surely a comment on their self-proclaimed quest for racial purity, and knew there was only one thing - one person - in the world who was going to help him feel any better.

“Did you miss me?” He asked, plaintive, and it helped to melt the frost around the night nurse’s heart, even if Oswald didn’t hear it. She brought him a mug of decent tasting coffee, pausing only to say,

“It must be hard, to see him like this, but you can’t give up on him. When he wakes up he is going to be so happy to see you.”

If, Jim thought sadly, but smiled at her all the same, grateful for the pep talk.

“I give up,” Harvey said at Halloween, the two of them on a tedious stake out, just like the good old days. “When have I ever talked you out of anything?”

“Chip?” Jim offered, because he still had an unopened bag, and he meant it to sound like ‘thank you’.

He settled back into his established routine: sleep, work, hospital, and though he listened dutifully, he was beginning to doubt the doctors would ever have good news for him. That he was going to do this forever, or until he was killed on duty and Oswald really was left all alone.

It wasn’t a comforting thought.

Still it was the one that was preoccupying him at Thanksgiving, the ward full of noise and chatter as for once he had managed to make regular visiting hours. One moment he was rambling about his mother’s notoriously dry Thanksgiving turkey, and the next he was on his feet, his heart hammering frantically.

He had thought he saw - he had. He really had.

Because Oswald’s lashes were fluttering against his cheek, and Jim had seen him with his eyes open before, had learned not to get his hopes up. But this was different, it felt different, and when the nurse responded to his excited yell, she was cautious and careful, but it hardly mattered.

Oswald had had his eyes open and, if only for a few moments, his gaze had focused.

It became a semi-regular occurrence over the following days, and the doctors confirmed that Oswald had been tracking the penlight, even as they cautioned Jim not to get carried away. They didn’t know what the extent of the damage was.

For the most part, Jim took their advice on board. But it was difficult not to get excited, not when Oswald’s fingers twitched, then curled, until one night Jim’s whispered encouragement to squeeze his hand paid dividends, and Oswald actually did it.

“He’s going to wake up,” he told Harvey back at the precinct. “He’s really going to do it.”
Harvey hugged him, told him he was happy for him, then added,

“Jim, I hate to be the voice of reason here but, as far as he’s concerned, you two aren’t even friends.”

“I know,” Jim said, and didn’t care how it sounded, “but he always said that one day we would be.”

The nurses decorated the ward with cards and tinsel in honor of the season, and one of them fixed up a sprig of mistletoe above Oswald’s bed. He never had gotten around to explaining the real situation to them.

“Jim,” Oswald managed a few days before Christmas, or at least something approaching it, and was lucid for a few moments before falling asleep again. Jim wished he didn’t have to go to work, just in case, and made the nurses promise to ring him if anything significant happened.

He woke up more than once that day, slurred a few words and seemed aware of where he was, seemed to understand what the doctors told him, though he was too deeply asleep to respond to anything when Jim got to snatch a few moments with him.

Work was busy, what with just about everyone with family taking time off for the holidays. It was late Christmas Eve when he finally clocked off himself, a stern warning from Harvey that his name was the very first on the roster, if they needed someone.

He was surprised when he arrived at the hospital. Oswald had been moved back to a private room, as though he were going to disturb the other coma patients, and Jim found him propped up against the pillows, his hair cut and spiked up, the way it had been before the shooting.

“When did that happen?” He asked, because his brain couldn’t catch up with the rest of what was happening.

Oswald smiled at him, a real smile, and said slowly, brow furrowing with the effort of it, “I know you like it. I heard you say so.”

Jim grinned at that, wide and stupid, and wondered what else Oswald would remember. All the embarrassing things, knowing his luck. He gravitated towards the bed, took Oswald’s hand, suddenly overwhelmed with emotion.

“You saved my life,” he said, gaze fixed on the circles his thumb was busy stroking against Oswald’s skin. “It was a stupid thing to do, but I’m so very, very grateful.”

Oswald squeezed his hand, and when Jim glanced up he gave him a look that spoke volumes. It was full of what the nurses had told him, and all the one sided conversations he had been aware of. Of the hand holding and the kiss Jim had pressed to his temple a few days earlier, before he had remembered himself.

“I think we’re even.”

“I love you,” Jim blurted in turn, though he hadn’t been planning to. His stomach churned then, waiting for a response. For anything. The moment stretched a beat too long, leaving him anxious and breathless, and then he felt another slight tug at his hand and followed Oswald’s gaze upwards.

The mistletoe was still there, and Jim didn’t need words to get the message.
He was an award winning police detective.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwij or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Champagne

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'champagne' prompt. Jim makes up for never turning up to Oswald's club opening in S1.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I didn’t think this was Penguin’s scene,” Harvey said as they pushed their way through the foyer and into the club proper. Jim flashed his badge, trying to clear a path through the crowds of drunken revelers, and gave Harvey a look which said he shared the sentiment.

He might never have been a regular at Oswald’s, far from it, but he had been there often enough to be certain nothing like this would have made it onto the playlist. The music was blaring, all bass and volume, and it felt like it was vibrating through him, setting his teeth on edge.

They caught a glimpse of the man then, looking even more absurdly overdressed than usual, surrounded by a sea of half unbuttoned dress shirts and scandalously short miniskirts.

“Jim!” Oswald cried when he finally reached him, offering him a handkerchief with one hand - for the sticky liquid a girl probably young enough to be his daughter had spilled all down the side of his jacket - and a glass of champagne with the other. He took the former, out of necessity, and Harvey helpfully disposed of the latter.

“I didn’t think this was your kind of thing,” Jim said, for lack of a better greeting, and Oswald gave him a fond smile, the type you might bestow on a child, and leaned in close to confess, “You don’t have to like something for it to make you money, silly.”

Jim couldn’t argue with that logic, not when the turnout was so obviously impressive. People had been lining up around the block, waiting to get in. Harvey was similarly impressed, busy tipping his hat at a girl who was definitely young enough to be his daughter.

“I hope you’re double checking their IDs,” Jim said, his stance shifting unconsciously, until he had his hands on his hips. Could have been back in uniform on one of his underage drinking sweeps. Nobody on the force had had a better detection rate. Nobody.

Oswald just looked amused, gestured at one of the bar staff to hand Jim a soft drink, and patted the stool next to him. Waited until Jim had given in and sat down before leaning back in, gesturing out at the writhing mass of humanity,

“I’ve made sure nobody’s dealing in the toilets either. Scout’s honor.”

He gave some kind of half salute to accompany that and Jim glared at him as he took a sip of his soda,

“You were never a boy scout,” Jim said, beginning to relax a little. “They would have instilled some discipline into you.”
“I thought that was what I had you for.”

Jim coughed and choked, the words provoking a whole array of completely inappropriate imagery. Oswald fussed over him; clapped his back, and pushed his hair back off his forehead, touch lingering. They ended up just staring at each other, lost in each other, and even with the inadequate soundtrack, Jim had to admit that it was kind of romantic.

“I was worried you weren’t going to come,” Oswald said finally, breaking them out of the moment.

“You gave me an invitation,” Jim countered, shoved his hand in his pocket and brandished the slightly crumpled cardstock, victorious. “And you sent me a text message.”

Oswald shrugged, aiming for casual, but Jim could hear the hurt, still raw, when he said,

“It didn’t make any difference last time.”

Jim looked out at the crowd, pulled a face at the frankly worrying moves Harvey was pulling out on the dancefloor, and came to a decision. Because it was one thing to show up at the opening of Oswald’s club, and publicly accept his hospitalty. To drink, and talk, and even stand too close and gaze deeply into his eyes, like they would be able to communicate without words, if only he tried hard enough.

It was another to actually outright admit it in front of a room full of people, including the Gotham Gazette’s gossip columnist.

He caught one of Oswald's hands with his own, and used the other to tip his chin up with his fingers, so that Oswald had no choice but to look at him - albeit through downcast lashes. Put his lips to Oswald's ear to have a hope of being heard over the music, and said,

“Last time, I was an idiot.”

Then he kissed him, soft and tender, and Oswald positively beamed at him when they broke apart, cheeks flushed and eyes sparkling.

“I think this calls for more champagne,” Oswald said, smile never dimming, and this time when he handed him a glass, Jim accepted.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Ice

Chapter Summary

Another #GobblepotWinter2016 fill, for the 'ice' prompt.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Jim Gordon to see you,” Davies announced, and Oswald couldn’t help the satisfaction it gave him, to see Jim glance at the man warily. He had given up on hiring staff for their brains, it had a tendency to backfire on him.

“What can I do for you, old friend?” He asked breezily, getting up from his desk to better enjoy the moment. Jim only came to him as a last resort these days, so he determined to make the most of it. Poured Jim a generous measure of whisky, and pushed it into his freezing fingers.

He could feel the cold, even with the heating, even with the fireplace in his office, a gnawing ache in his ruined leg. Jim had spent the entire morning outdoors judging by the red of his face, his cracked knuckles. He wondered if Jim would accept something warmer, and stay the time it took to brew it.

“I’m on duty,” Jim pointed out, stubborn, and Oswald did his best not to let the disappointment show on his face. This was going to be a fleeting visit then.

“Do you know this man?” Jim asked, with no further preamble, and Oswald studied the picture carefully, taking as long as he dared, but had to shake his head. He had a good memory for faces, he had to in his line of work, and he was certain he didn’t know this one.

Jim just nodded, put the untouched glass down on Oswald’s desk, and hesitated for a moment. As though he were going to say something. Then he was shaking his head and turning on his heel, stalking right back out of there and leaving Oswald torn between dismay and frustration.

It wasn’t fair, it wasn’t sporting, and if Jim was going to keep doing this - ignoring and avoiding, turning up out of the blue and pulling old wounds open all over again - he was going to have to start instructing his men not to let Jim over the threshold.

He picked the glass up. Imagined he could feel the imprint of Jim’s fingers before bringing it to his mouth and draining it. The whisky burned down his throat, the heat welcome given the falling snow visible through the window, and he was about to do something useful, something distracting, when a yell wafted up from the sidewalk. He didn’t even need to look to know who it came from.

Jim Gordon was going to be the death of him.

“Is he alive?” Davies said, peering down at Jim’s prone form. Oswald glared at him, silently rethinking the brawn over brain hiring policy. He crouched awkwardly beside Jim, mindful of the biting cold air and his lack of overcoat. Of the thick ice Jim had clearly slipped upon, and the sickening lurch in his stomach at the thought of the force with which he was told Jim’s skull had made impact with paving stone.
“Jim?” He tried, fingers touching the other man’s cool cheek, and when that didn’t work he pushed at Jim’s shoulder, voice louder, “Jim!”

The third time was the charm, and Jim blinked up at him, eyes slowly focusing.

“You shouldn’t frighten me like that,” Oswald chided, pulse hammering, wishing this scene wasn’t playing out quite so publicly. People had gathered to watch, hungry for drama. “Do you think you can stand?”

Oswald was on his knees now, though he’d have sooner let anyone else die than ruin his current masterpiece of bespoke tailoring, and couldn’t quite bring himself to break contact with Jim, telling himself it was for support. That the embrace he used to help Jim into a sitting position was completely necessary.

“Do you need to go to the hospital, Jim? Do you want me to go with you?”

Jim simply frowned, half pained grimace and half hopeless confusion.

“I’m sorry,” he said, one hand reaching to rub at the fast forming lump on the back of his head. “Do I know you?”

Inside, in the warm and the dry, away from the gawking bystanders, it quickly became clear that Jim wasn’t joking. That the panicked confusion on his face was very real, only growing worse when Oswald reached into Jim’s jacket pocket and showed him his warrant card.

“Is this a training exercise?” Jim whispered then, more lost than Oswald had ever seen him. “Am I hallucinating?”

Because, it turned out, Jim thought he was smack in the middle of a war zone, on his first tour of Afghanistan. Freaked out when he realized he wasn’t wearing his dog tags, and looked like he was gearing up for either fight or flight, at least until a triage doctor at Gotham General shone a light into his eyes, and told him he was going to get a second opinion.

“Are we friends?” Jim asked, while they waited, and it wasn’t his brightest idea but Oswald nodded. It wasn’t a lie for him, at any rate.

“You’re my best friend,” he said, just to compound it. “You had just been to visit me.”

Jim studied his face, seemingly weighing up the truth or otherwise of his statement. Finally he nodded, a sharp, stilted movement, and said,

“Thank you. For being here for me.”

He might have explained then, might have admitted the truth of the situation, but then the professionals were bustling in, and it wasn’t the right moment. They poked and prodded, asked invasive questions and finally discharged Jim into Oswald’s care, their new status as bosom buddies apparently something Jim had readily accepted.

“I don’t know where I live,” Jim said, hand clutching at his arm, when they left the hospital, and the outright terror on his face was more than Oswald could stand.

“I’ll take you there,” Oswald said, hoping Jim wouldn’t hold the spare key he had had cut against him, “it might jog your memory.” It would come back when it did, had been the doctors’ verdict. Providing it ever came back in the first place. That was brain injury for you, apparently.
At Jim’s apartment Oswald unlocked the door, wavered for a second, because he had never actually set foot in the place with an invitation. Finally he forced the doubts aside and pushed the door open.

Jim looked about the place with his jaw set, back straight and shoulders tense. Oswald could understand a little, knew what it meant to have part of you stripped away, to not know yourself anymore, and simply hovered in the background, in case Jim wanted him.

“Do I really live here?” Jim asked suddenly, looking to him for confirmation, and Oswald looked at the apartment through fresh eyes. It was cold and uninviting, with no personal mementos on display, no knick-knacks. The bedroom wasn’t much better. A tin containing what Jim had left of his father’s life, and a few photographs in an envelope.

“That’s Barbara,” Oswald supplied, “you were going to get married.”

“Were?” Jim questioned and Oswald shrugged, uncertain how much of that story it was advisable to share while Jim was still so delicate.

“She wasn’t good for you,” he said simply, and turned back to the pictures. “I don’t know who the others are. Sorry, Jim.”

Jim shrugged this time, sank to sit on the edge of the bed and motioned for Oswald to join him. “It’s all right, I do. Those are my parents,” he pointed to one photograph, “and that’s my brother, Roger.”

Oswald doubted Jim would ever have shared this with him, in his right mind, but did nothing to put a stop to it.

“That’s my high school girlfriend, we broke up last - well, we broke up,” Jim corrected his time frame, “and that’s my unit.” He sobered then, perhaps wondering how many of them had made it back to their families. “It’s miserable here. It’s not where I imagined I’d be.”

It pulled at his heart, made something twist painfully inside of him, and it was entirely for Jim’s benefit he suggested,

“I think you should stay with me, until you’re feeling better.”

Harvey tracked them down the next morning, and where Jim looked only mildly interested at the intrusion, Harvey was positively murderous.

“What have you done to him, Penguin?” The older man demanded, threatening, and that had Jim on his feet, putting himself between them, all that righteous anger Oswald was so familiar with for once directed away from him.

“Who the hell are you?” Jim questioned, voice low and menacing, “That’s my friend you’re talking to.”

Harvey looked from one to the other and back again, shook his head, and dropped onto Oswald’s expensive upholstery without waiting for an invitation.

“I can’t leave you alone for two minutes,” he told Jim, exasperated, and when Oswald had explained the basics - and Harvey had verified them for himself, and done his best to empty the entire larder - he sighed, fond, and said, “What am I going to do with you?”
“I could go back to work,” Jim said, expression eager because he had always wanted to be a police officer, or so he had told Oswald in the early hours, before falling asleep in the guest room.

“No, you couldn’t,” Harvey countered, tone brokering no argument. “Not until you learn how to use this again,” he held up Jim’s smartphone, “and can tell me who the president is.”

Jim’s face fell, but even he could see the wisdom of the suggestion.

“You take advantage of this,” Harvey warned on his way out, hand tight around Oswald’s throat as punctuation, “and I’ll see to it you wish you hadn’t.”

“I’d never hurt Jim,” he protested, fixing his tie and straightening his collar. Harvey didn’t say anything, didn’t need to.

They both knew that wasn’t what he had been referring to.

The days which followed were wonderful, near perfect, and Oswald didn’t need to be told it was pathetic how happy he was to spend time with a man who had only temporarily forgotten how much he hated him. He was well aware of it.

They talked for hours, all the same, ensconced in his private sitting room. The fire crackling and popping, highlighting the blond of Jim’s hair and his easy smile. They talked about nothing, about everything, and Oswald almost told the truth, told Jim what they really were to each other, biting the words back at the very last moment.

He took Jim to what passed for Gotham’s beauty spots; City Hall, where he had once been sworn in as mayor, then the park, and the aquarium. Jim showed him the spot where he had broken his arm as a child, fighting over an ice cream cone with his brother, and laughed innocently at the antics of the penguins, eyes bright like Oswald had never seen them.

“Do we come here often? Did you work here before you were mayor?” Jim asked. “Is that why people call you Penguin?”

Oswald said nothing, already used to the onslaught of questions, and wished suddenly that it were true. That he was the kind of man Jim believed him to be.

He took Jim to lunch instead, for once not feeling out of place, an outsider, because he had someone who wanted to be with him. Someone who wasn’t merely tolerating his presence. Who didn’t flinch when Oswald touched his hand as he talked, wanting the moment to last forever.

They went back to his rooms afterwards and this time, when he poured out two tumblers of whisky, Jim accepted gratefully. Swallowed down the liquid and looked at Oswald with determination, “Do you know why I left the army?” He asked, cheeks flushed but gaze steady. “Did I,” his fingers reached for his dog tags, instinctively, before dropping away. “I’ve been warned once - I mean, I was warned,” he stopped, sucked in a breath. “Are we more than friends, Oswald?”

The words knocked the breath from him, completely unexpected. Jim looked down at his hands, into the empty tumbler,

“I - I hope we are.”

He couldn’t keep lying then, couldn’t stand the pretense a moment longer, and took Jim to the dockside, to the place where Oswald had begged Jim for his life. Where Jim had shoved him into
the freezing cold water. Jim stared at him, aghast, and Oswald almost burst into laughter, hysterical, at the idea that he was corrupting Jim all over again.

“Why did I do it?” Jim asked, voice strained, and Oswald leaned heavily on his cane, the memory exhausting.

“I’m a bad man,” he said finally. “You hate me.”

“We’re friends,” Jim protested and Oswald shook his head, appalled at the sting of tears burning behind his eyelids.

“You hate me,” he reiterated. “You have plenty of reason to.”

Jim slept at his own apartment that night and Oswald drank until he could almost pretend it didn’t bother him.

His head pounded in the morning. Afternoon. He wasn’t keeping track of it.

Eventually he hauled himself out of bed. Made himself look presentable and set about catching up on business. None of his underlings could be trusted without supervision, not a single one of them.

He yelled and he argued, went over the ledgers and finally, when he was left alone, broke down and wept, great wrenching sobs that left him feeling wrung out and empty.

There was a note waiting for him when he returned home, Harvey Bullock’s untidy scrawl, *Whatever you did, it worked. He’s remembered.*

The emotion surged anew, and Oswald picked apathetically at his dinner, his mind’s eye full of the vision of Jim sitting next to him, inhaling food as though he were starving. It wasn’t late when he decided to just give in. Go to bed and hope things somehow looked brighter in the morning.

But there was a knock at the door, a familiar tread being led down the hallway.

“How,” he managed, not trusting himself to say more, and the other man just strode towards him, confident and self-assured, the way he hadn’t been since hitting his head on the sidewalk.

“I don’t hate you,” he said when they were standing in front of each other, no more than a foot or so between them. “I don’t think I’ve ever hated you.”

Oswald nodded without making eye contact. Wished Jim would just say his piece and leave him to his wallowing.

“You could have done anything these last few days, but you didn’t. I wanted to say thank you.” Jim stepped still closer, so that Oswald had no choice but to look up into his face. Into the dark blue of his eyes, and to take note of the way their gaze flickered down to his lips and back again,

“I wanted to thank you properly.”

Jim’s lips on his were a revelation, everything he had ever hoped they would be, and when Jim deepened the kiss Oswald could only cling to him, afraid his legs were unequal to the task of supporting him. Jim pulled back then, studied his face carefully, and when Oswald smiled at him, Jim beamed in turn. Cradled his jaw with one hand and kissed him again, this time chaste and delicate.
“You know you don’t have to thank me,” Oswald said, because he felt it needed saying, then turned his head to press a kiss to Jim’s palm, exactly the way he had imagined doing, back at the city aquarium. “But,” he grinned, Jim’s face brightening in understanding, “please don’t let that stop you.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Skating

Chapter Summary

#GW16 fill for the 'skating' prompt using the 'haven't we met somewhere before?' trope.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Why are you crying?"

Jim looked up to see a younger boy staring at him, all messy black hair and bright blue eyes. His first thought was to tell him to get lost, that it was none of his business. That if someone was huddled up in a corner of the hospital garden in the middle of winter, bawling their eyes out, they were most likely not in the mood for talking about it.

The boy kept staring though, curious rather than pitying, and what he actually said was,

“My dad died. We were in a car crash.”

“What was he like?” the boy asked, like that was the acceptable thing to say, and sat down on the ground next to him without any invitation. “I never knew my Father.”

Jim swallowed thickly, tipped his head back a little like it could stop any new tears falling, and managed,

“He was a good guy. Everybody loved him.”

There was silence for a moment, like the information was being processed, and then,

“The crash - was it his fault?”

“No!” Jim scowled, bit back the urge to thump the kid in front of him. There must have been hundreds of people who had wanted to talk to him since the accident, who had wanted to remember his dad, or find out how he was doing.

None of them had suggested such a thing.

The kid only shrugged, stared back at him evenly.

“It sounded like it was yourself you were trying to convince, that’s all.”

“Why are you here?” Jim asked rather than think up a response to that statement. Took in the pallor of the other boy’s cheeks for the first time, and the skinny flashes of pale leg that protruded between his socks and his trouser hems.

He hoped the boy wasn’t dying. That would be awful, to have almost hit somebody that ill. His father would have been so disappointed in him. His vision blurred again at the thought, and the kid just waved a hand vaguely,
“My Mother is unwell. I come to visit her.”

“Sorry to hear that,” Jim said, because manners cost nothing, and besides he was sorry. He’d hate it if his mom was ill. There was a slight nod in acknowledgment and the silence stretched this time, nothing but the distant bustle of the hospital and the misting of their breath in front of them.

Jim wondered if he should suggest they go inside. The kid was shivering against his side, his overcoat looked too thin for the weather.

“I don’t think you were only crying for your Father,” the boy said, just as Jim was about to open his mouth, and faced with Jim’s confused frown he elaborated, “I see you here every week at this time. You go for physiotherapy, and then you come out here and cry for half hour.”

“So, what,” Jim demanded, temper finally flaring, because he was embarrassed that anybody might have noticed, “you thought you’d come over and make fun of me for it?”

“I have better things to do with my time,” he got in response, like that was the obvious answer. “I just wanted to know why you cry about it.”

“I -” He opened his mouth to argue and then closed it. The kid was so weird, would never get it. Instead it spilled out of him, like he couldn’t help himself, “I bust my leg up in the crash. Now I can’t play sports, I can’t go skating. I might never get into the army - that’s what I want to do, when I grow up.”

“Good,” the kid said decisive, and Jim was going to beat him, sick mother or no. The boy just kept on talking, oblivious, “I wouldn’t like to hear that you’d died. You’re too sensitive for the military.”

“I’m not sensitive!” Jim protested, affronted, and the boy grinned at him in a way that made his nose look more crooked,

“You had better tell me your name then. I’ll keep an eye on the obituaries.”

“Jim,” he said in spite of himself, “Jim Gordon.”

“Nice to meet you, Jim Gordon,” the kid said, stuck out his hand and kept it there until Jim gave in and shook it, icy fingers against his own. Then he was glancing up at the clock tower and pulling himself to his feet. “I have to go now, Jim. Thank you for talking to me.”

Jim thought he should move too, knew his mom would be out in the car park waiting for him.

“Will I see you again?” Jim asked, feeling stupid because the boy was a year or two younger than him, easily. This wasn’t going to improve his street cred.

“I’m sure you will,” he said, solemn, and it was only when he was in the car, staring out of the window, that Jim realized he had never thought to ask the kid his name before they went their separate ways.

*Chapter End Notes*

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr [@serenwib](https://serenwib.tumblr.com) or Twitter [@falsteloj](https://twitter.com/falsteloj). :)
He and Roger had been close once, a lifetime ago when Jim’s biggest worries had been the monster living in his closet and the size of his Pog collection. Then they had grown up; he had joined the military, and then the police force, seeking reason and order, while Roger was more interested in drifting, being a free spirit, and convincing Jim’s high school prom date to go along with him.

It was still a shock to get the news, still made him sink into his seat, legs weak, and accept the whiskey Harvey pressed into his hand, even though he was on duty.

“Take the rest of the day,” Harvey offered. “Let me know if you need time off for the funeral.”

Jim didn’t. Couldn’t. Just sat hunched at his desk as he ploughed methodically through his paperwork. Spent a small fortune on a wreath, as though it could make up somehow for his non-attendance. On the day they committed him to the ground, Jim took it out on Gotham’s habitual lowlifes, newly grateful for their tendency to resist arrest, proof that Blackgate had taught them nothing.

He toasted Roger that night, silently, and then drank another beer, numb, and told himself it was for the other fatality the crash had claimed, Roger’s wife, Thelma.

When he finally fell asleep or, more accurately, passed out on the sofa, he had the nightmare again for the first time in years. The one where he could see that they weren’t going to stop in time. The one where he screamed and screamed but couldn’t do anything about it, not before the impact, and not afterwards when there was blood everywhere and he couldn’t feel his legs, crushed up beneath the dashboard.

He woke fully clothed, sweating and shaking, and stood under the shower for a long time, trying to wash away the memories along with everything else. He wished he wasn't alone then, and would have settled for just about anyone's company. Even Oswald, imposing himself and asking Jim to tend his wounds, would have been better than the loneliness.

It was afternoon when he received the call and he reassessed just how desperate he was for company. Stared at the handset for a long moment, speechless.

“What about Thelma’s parents?” He managed finally, and the woman on the other end of the line only rustled some papers and said, coolly,

“They’ve been dead for over ten years, Mr Gordon.”

That was how he found himself at Gotham International Airport, four days after his brother’s
funeral, waiting to take custody of a niece he had never even laid eyes on.

“What will she eat?” He asked the representative of Child Protective Services, plaintive. “What am I supposed to do with her?”

“You’ll get on fine,” the woman said, all patronizing tone and dismissive smile. “And she isn’t a baby, she’ll eat whatever you do.”

Jim looked at Barbara - and hadn’t that been Roger all over, to steal the name of his ex-fiancée? - and wasn’t exactly reassured. She wasn’t tiny, like the newborns in the incubators at Gotham General, but she was still small, hands hidden inside mittens on strings, and when she started getting teary, the CPS lady pacified her with a drink in a sippy cup.

She couldn’t talk much, couldn't walk far, and when Jim settled her into the back of a taxi the smell permeated everything, sickening, until the driver wound the window down and said, pointedly,

“I think somebody needs their diaper changing.”

That was a whole new drama, with him pacing back and fore the baby aisle at the supermarket, attempting to work out which size he was supposed to get. He went for a selection, in the end, and piled the cart high with all kinds of other paraphernalia, from barrier cream to jars of baby mush.

Somehow he didn’t think Barbara would appreciate leftover gyro.

By the time they reached the checkout Barbara was screaming, and she kept it up all the way back to his apartment, uncaring of the way everyone stared at him, like he was some kind of child abuser. The sippy cup had lost its magic charms, apparently, and when he tried the jars she only spat it out, all over him.

“How, just stop,” he pleaded after getting through half a dozen diapers before succeeding in getting one fastened. “Please stop crying.”

Barbara only screamed harder, and he sat on the floor with his head in his hands, aching and exhausted, until she finally cried herself into submission.

There was no way he could do this. No way he was cut out for child rearing. Lee had seen it, had moved halfway across the country because she knew he was right. He would have been completely useless.

It hit him then, somewhere deep in his chest, that their baby - his baby - would have been about Barbara’s age now. They would have looked like Lee, Jim thought. Had her eyes and her beautiful smile, just the same way Barbara had Thelma’s. There was something of Roger about her jaw though, and her stubborness - that was definitely a Gordon family trait, right there.

She was soon putting it to good use again, because although he felt utterly wrung out, it was scarcely an hour until she was ready for a second round. It was worse this time, if anything, and she screamed and screamed until his neighbors above and below banged on their floors and ceilings, respectively.

She screamed until she made herself sick, down her front and all over his carpet, and he was so stressed that when someone rang the doorbell he walked halfway to the door and back again before finally just yanking it open. Perhaps Harvey had taken pity and come to help him, maybe Lee hadn’t simply deleted his desperate text message.
On his doorstep stood Oswald Cobblepot, hair a mess and bruises all down the right side of his face. Jim swore under his breath because he didn’t have time for this, didn’t have the energy for it. Was in such a weakened state he couldn’t even pretend he didn’t want to reach for the other man, as though his touch could make it any better, and have Oswald cling to him in turn, to offer him comfort.

Because Barbara screamed yet louder, making him afraid she was going to do herself an injury, and Oswald frowned at him, confused, before pushing past and taking control of the situation.

“There, there,” he soothed, voice calm, and picked Barbara up without hesitation, though he was wearing a fancy suit and she was covered in vomit. “What’s her name?” he asked, gaze fixed on her face, and Jim was too stunned to do anything but say,

“Barbara. She’s my brother’s daughter.”

Oswald did shoot him a look at that, a look that said he had heard the news and that he was sorry. Jim knew. He had recognized Oswald’s handwriting in one of the condolence cards he had received, for all that the other man hadn’t signed it.

“She won’t stop crying,” he said, and he felt close to sobbing himself, though he couldn’t remember the last time he had cried over anything.

Oswald shifted his hold on her a little, so that she was tucked in close, head nestled in the crook of his elbow. He talked to her softly, slipping out of English and into something Jim couldn’t really make out, though it sounded vaguely Germanic.

It worked whatever it was, and he watched, amazed, as Oswald first got Barbara to stop crying, and then to actually eat something. Cleaned her up and redressed her in one of the overly complicated sleepsuits, then settled her in the makeshift crib and actually kissed her forehead like a human being capable of kindness, instead of a scheming, manipulative monster.

“How did you do that?” Jim asked when he was done, the apartment all but silent, and scooted over on the couch so that Oswald could sit beside him.

“I keep telling you I have hidden depths, Jim,” Oswald said, mysteriously, and he must have seen the disbelieving awe on Jim’s face because he smiled and added, seemingly out of nowhere, “she’s very sweet, I could see the family resemblance.”

“I’m not sweet,” Jim protested, but he had to yawn at the end of the sentence and, besides, there was no real bite to it. “Do you want me to look at your bruises?” He asked, fingers halfway across the space between them before he could put a stop to them.

Oswald shook his head, then rested it against the back of the couch and just looked at him.

“You would have made a fine nurse,” Oswald said, speaking from ample experience of their late night patching up sessions, “but really I just wanted your company.”

“I’ve told you not to come here,” Jim countered, struggling to keep his eyes open. He was a cop, Oswald was a criminal. Could he make it any more obvious? The latter was not supposed to keep turning up on the former’s doorstep, blinking up at the cop like a kicked puppy and then playing on his kindhearted and caring nature so he could stay the night.

“I can leave you to it if you prefer,” Oswald said in response, and Jim didn’t have to open his eyes. He could hear the smirk. “You seemed to be doing so well without me.”
“Fine,” Jim muttered, finally, too tired to argue. Then, for reasons he didn't want to dwell on, found Oswald a blanket and donated one of his pillows, so he would be more comfortable on the sofa. "Don't get eyeliner all over it," he warned as he handed it over, and Oswald maneuvered the exchange so that their fingers brushed, and Jim had to clear his throat, awkward.

"I won't," Oswald promised, and Jim only raised an eyebrow before deciding sleep was more important than continuing the conversation.

He would, he always did, but they could talk about suitable recompense - babysitting duties, maybe - in the morning.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the prompt 'mulled wine'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first time it was the drink - the cheap beer and the cheaper whiskey chasers after work, and the mulled wine Harvey talked him into accepting while still on duty. There was a reason why he typically kept a clear head.

It helped him remember why it was an absolutely terrible fucking idea to spend any length of time with Oswald Cobblepot.

Because the man was an expert at getting under his skin, at encouraging him to make stupid decisions. Like first pressing multiple murderers up against walls, and then pressing his lips against theirs.

“Jim,” Oswald said in response, half questioning and entirely startled, and Jim just kissed him silent. It wasn’t so very long ago that Oswald had offered to be his slave for life, the least he could do right now was let him have this one moment and attempt to get it out of his system.

He would have stopped then, that was what he told himself afterwards. But Oswald wasn’t content to simply stand back and let anything happen, and twisted his fingers into the back of Jim’s jacket. Kissed him back until they were both panting and breathless, and it seemed a good idea to drop to his knees, suddenly thankful for the plush carpeting.

Oswald gasped, tipped his head back against the office wall, and this wasn’t how it was supposed to happen.

It wasn’t supposed to happen at all, of course, but sometimes, late at night, when it was harder to lie to himself, he had imagined it. Given in to the memory of the blatant want in Oswald’s eyes, and his own burning need to put Oswald in his place. To take back control of their relationship.

Except perhaps he was in control. Oswald was breathing hard, all but trembling with excitement, and Jim did nothing but stare for a few seconds. Reveled in the fact that it was he who had done this, him making Oswald gaze down, eyes dark and mouth hanging open.

And then they were just about even because Jim was scrabbling at Oswald’s clothing, half desperate, the alcohol in his system giving him the courage to just go for it, to not worry about how much he was likely to regret it in the morning.

“Oh,” Oswald whined at just the idea of what was coming, and Jim had to touch him then. Had to trail kisses up the length of his inner thigh, and let his fingers wander. Had to close his eyes and breathe in the other man’s scent, one hand pressing against himself, frantic, as he got his first taste of him.

It was wrong and dangerous and wonderful, and when Oswald’s hips bucked forward, helpless, it
should have been a cue to slow down, not groan around him and encourage it. Oswald didn’t take advantage, not exactly, just couldn’t seem to curb his body’s reactions, and Jim came to the conclusion that it really didn’t matter how he felt about this later.

He was going to be getting off to the memory for a long while.

Oswald’s hands fluttered, uncertain, and then Jim relaxed his throat, took him deeper, and they were pulling at his shirt, his collar, like he couldn’t get enough air and was going to pass out otherwise.

Jim’s hands were busy too. One still working his own erection, and the other taking over from his mouth so he could say, voice wrecked,

“You look so - This is so - *Fuck,”*

before swallowing him down again.

It couldn’t last long after that, Oswald chanting his name, pleading, and his own arousal so completely and utterly past the point of reason. He rested his forehead against the overheated skin of Oswald’s thigh in the aftermath, enjoying the way Oswald shook and shuddered, slowly coming back to himself.

This was going to cause problems, going to prove to have been the stupidest thing he had ever done. But right there, right then, he could only smirk in agreement when Oswald threaded his fingers through his hair and said, voice scratchy and worn,

“Jim, you really need to get drunk more often.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'decorating' prompt. Jim has a special task for the holidays - as usual it turns into a disaster.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jim has sacrificed a lot for duty.

He’s been shot and he’s been beaten. He’s walked away from people he’s loved and stood, helpless, as they walked away from him.

He’s worked every Christmas since he joined the police force, and spent too many of the ones before that stationed abroad, pretending to be selfless for donating his talk time on the telephone when the reality was that he had nobody back home interested in hearing from him.

It shouldn’t be too much to ask, he thinks, that just this once he be allowed to go home and not be disturbed until it’s all over.

Because he hasn’t felt right since the beginning of December, worn out and run down, and it’s finally manifested itself in a stinking head cold. It’s the kind that even the city’s lowlifes shy away from, lest their Christmas stay in the cells be even more dismal.

He coughs and sneezes all through the planning meeting, but all the Captain does is hand him a tissue, and tell the Commissioner how perfectly suited Jim is to the operation.

“They have a history,” he says. “For a time, Penguin was Jim’s official informant.”

That’s not true, nowhere close, but the Commissioner looks pleased and puts his gloves on before offering him his hand to shake, in case it’s catching.

“It might not be so bad,” Harvey consoles afterwards, then takes one look at the file - at the threats Nygma has issued, and how the department isn’t going to stump for more than the most basic safe house - and says, “Fuck, Jim, it’s going to be awful.”

It is, of course it is. Oswald is veering between sycophantic gratitude - draping tinsel around the tiny one bed apartment and talking about baking - and murderous rage that he can’t be sure which of his men are loyal, necessitating this enforced confinement.

Jim draws on his training. Spends the first day double and triple checking security, and talking Oswald back through the death threats, looking for something new, something that will lead his colleagues to the Riddler.

“Why did you do it?” He asks finally, because he has never been able to make sense of that aspect. Oswald isn’t stupid, has proven that over and over again, but it was never going to help his purpose - Jim, hands still stained with the blood of his own love rival, knows that better than anyone.
Oswald looks away, moves across the room to fuss with the tacky Christmas decorations, and Jim is resigning himself to never getting an answer when Oswald admits, quietly,

“That first night I went to your apartment, the plan was to slit Barbara’s throat. She didn’t deserve you, Jim.”

Jim’s stomach churns at that, though he had believed at this point there was nothing Oswald could do or say that still had the ability to shock him. Oswald shrugs, crunches a cheap bauble into pieces like he isn’t even aware he’s doing it,

“He’d only known her a week. How could he have loved her?”

Jim hopes Oswald doesn’t expect him to have an answer.

The second day it’s a struggle to do much of anything. He dreams of standing under a scalding shower until he feels human, but the plumbing is ancient and Oswald has already used all the hot water.

He makes do with a wash down in the sink and settles in front of the generic seasonal films on the television, praying for it all to be over. Oswald flits and fidgets for a while, before coming to sit beside him, and perhaps Jim has a death wish because he finds himself asking, without invitation,

“Why didn’t you kill her? Barbara, I mean?”

Oswald frowns, eyes dark and stormy, but his tone is calm when he says,

“Ed and I share certain predilections when it comes to committing murder. I knew you would never forgive me.”

Jim finds himself nodding, as though that’s any real justification, and somewhere between the current film finishing and the next one starting, Oswald makes him a bowl of soup which Jim eats without comment. He can’t tell how kind a gesture it’s meant to be; he’s too ill to taste anything. The third day - Christmas Day - Jim clings limpet like to the sofa bed and wonders why the world is spinning. He feels sick and he’s damp with sweat, and if his superiors are hoping to kill two birds with one stone, they’re going to be in luck today. If Nygma does track them down, he’ll be too busy already dying to prevent the inevitable.

Given his train of thought it’s not as surprising as it should be, when he succeeds in cracking an eye open and sees Nygma. An unfocused vision of green and black looming ever closer.

“Don’t fight it,” the man says, voice at once right in his ear and echoing in the distance. “The poison is fast acting.”

“Oswald,” Jim tries, slurs, and it hurts worse than the pain in his head when Oswald actually appears, pressing close to Nygma and smiling.

“Shh,” he says, and sits beside him to brush a blissfully cool hand against his fevered forehead. “I’m sorry it has to end this way, Jim.

After everything he’s done for this city, everything he’s done for Oswald, Jim refuses to accept the apology. Is firing on nothing but rage as he reaches for his gun, for anything. But he’s too ill, too full of whatever drug he has had flooded through his system, and he can’t move quickly enough.

Maybe it’s just that Oswald is quicker, and the gun goes off like an explosion inside his skull, and
it takes a moment for him to understand that the screaming isn’t coming from his own mouth. That Nygma is on the floor, clutching at his leg, blood welling up and over his fingers.

The rest is a blur. Yelling and footsteps, whispered arguments and the blip of monitors.

He wakes up in hospital, a drip in his hand and a bone deep ache all over. The room shifts, focuses, and he’s startled but not displeased to find Oswald sat in the chair beside his bed, chin propped in one hand as he watches him.

“I thought you had double crossed me,” Jim confesses through cracked lips, and his voice is so wrecked he can hardly recognize the sound.

Oswald grins, an ugly twist to his face that Jim knows he should find frightening.

“I changed my mind. Ed really is quite angry with me.”

He wants to ask a barrage of questions at that. Did they get him? Is it finished? What the hell did Jim do to deserve this anyway? Oswald only brushes the hair back from his brow, the way he had back at the safe house, and leans in close to breathe,

“We’ll make it up, we always do.”

When Jim next opens his eyes, there’s no sign of him. They’ve gone to ground, the pair of them, and when they re-emerge he still isn’t much use to the sting, because his hands still tremble all the time and the doctors won’t sign him off desk duty.

It’s better by the trial, not perfect but close, and he swallows thickly when Nygma is sentenced back to Arkham, while Oswald is given a ceremonial slap on the wrist - three weeks in Blackgate.

The man beams at him as he’s taken down, even as Nygma kicks and thrashes, and Jim doesn’t know what to make of the card waiting on the floor of his apartment. He doesn’t make it official, and after the third read through decides he’s not even going to tell anyone.

_Perhaps you and I aren’t so very different, Jim - I’ve realized I could never forgive anyone who murdered you._

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Scarf

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'scarf' prompt. This was going to be some quick smut... but ended up being like 5k of no smut.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim looked up from his desk to see Oswald walking towards him, and panic washed over him. Because that wasn’t a good sign, had never been a good sign, and over the last few months it had only come to mean yet another disaster.

Death, destruction, and some new twist to the never ending turf war.

Except, this time, Jim knew for a fact that Barbara was still out of town, and Nygma - or ‘The Riddler’, as he had told the judge he wanted to be known - was finally locked up in Arkham.

Oswald looked anxious too, rather than murderous, and when Jim raised a questioning eyebrow the other man leaned in close, glancing about himself, so he could whisper,

“May I speak with you, Jim, privately?”

That was new too. Not the privacy concerns - Oswald seemed to thrive on being mysterious and secretive - but the genuine hints of compassion and decency in his voice, as though if Jim said no he wouldn’t simply pull a switchblade and demand he get moving.

So of course he said yes, and ended up letting Oswald into his empty apartment, what with neutral ground being in short supply, and Oswald’s residences being full of staff, hangers-on, and lackeys. Oswald looked around, at the blank walls and the boxes he had never bothered unpacking, but didn’t comment.

He seemed to be too busy fidgeting. Procrastinating.

“What is it?” Jim pushed, somewhere between the gentle coaxing they recommended in training, and blunt exasperation.

“I have a proposition for you,” Oswald said, proving you couldn’t learn everything from a manual, and reached into his jacket to pull out a bulky envelope.

He should have known. Should have never let his guard down when it came to the self-proclaimed King of Gotham.

“No,” Jim shook his head, moving to put a greater distance between them, “I won’t do it. I will never be on your payroll.”

Oswald gaped, momentarily confused, and then he was rushing to offer explanation, words tripping over each other,
“This isn’t - I wouldn’t - I mean, it is money, but it’s not dirty. I inherited it, from my father.”

Jim couldn’t really see why that would make a difference, especially if he had no intention of accepting and spending it. Oswald must have known it too, or else was better at reading him than Jim realized,

“I’m not asking you to compromise your position as a police officer,” he said, avoiding eye contact, “and I’m not asking for a favor either, not exactly. The money is just - I want you to have it. Because you will think it distasteful, Jim, I know, but there is nobody else of whom I could ask this. Nobody I could ever trust enough.”

He pressed the envelope into Jim’s hands, the way he had his club invitation, all that time ago.

“She said, with all the strange intensity Jim had come to expect from him, and then he was limping away, leaving Jim alone with a frankly bewildering amount of money and another envelope, this one crisp and white, with ‘James’ on the outside in perfect copperplate.

The best thing to do, for his job, for his sanity, would be not to look at it. To just return it or, better yet, hand it all over to the fraud department. He hadn’t become a detective by accident, however, and it was minutes not hours before his curiosity became unbearable.

It was a letter, a single sheet of expensive feeling writing paper, and as Jim scanned the words he got the feeling it had gone through a lot of re-drafting. There wasn’t much evidence left of Oswald’s speech patterns, and he had seen enough of the other man’s handwriting to know that the flow wasn’t particularly natural, either.

And perhaps he was over-analyzing form at sake of content, but that was because it was something he could do. Something he could understand. He had to read it through three times before he could even bring himself to believe what Oswald was asking, that he had actually meant to ask it.

Oswald wanted him to take his virginity.

In the days which followed Jim couldn’t stop thinking about it. Couldn’t get the idea to quit accosting him, every time somebody made the most oblique mention to sex or the Penguin.

“I always said he was weird enough,” Adamski was saying around a beer when he managed to combine the two, because Jim apparently had nothing better to do in his spare time than be forced to bond with his fellow detectives.

Harvey was a terrible friend sometimes.

“Yeah?” Simmons shot back, her tone dubious in that way that was expected of partners, “Because I’m struggling to remember the time you said, ‘Hey, that nerdy little freak is going to end up on his knees for the Penguin.’”

“I want to know where he got the practice in,” Harvey said, just to bring the tone down further. “Nobody murders the love rival for a biter, not even Cobblepot.”

“I don’t think they had that kind of relationship,” Jim said, drink cutting off the control switch between his brain and his stupid mouth, and the other three just looked at him, before bursting into laughter.

Harvey put a fatherly arm around his shoulder, struggling to keep a straight face as he said,
“Now this might come as something of a shock, Jimbo, but your good friend Oswald has been stepping out on you.”

Adamski sniggered, helpless, and when Jim glared, annoyed, it only inspired greater mirth, with some silent and some not so silent reminiscing about the many visits Oswald had paid to the precinct over the last few years, invariably demanding he speak to Jim or no one. Simmons patted his arm and soothed,

“Don’t worry, he’ll come crawling back before you know it. They don’t allow conjugal visits in Arkham.”

Jim forced himself to smile, and let the raucous laughter wash over him. Left at the first opportunity and went home, lay on his bed and read Oswald’s letter all over again.

He hadn’t seen him since that night, and Oswald hadn’t attempted to contact him. The ball was in his court, he just had to work out what to do with it. It should have been easy, because Oswald was a criminal, a murderer, and Jim shouldn’t need more than a second to consider whether or not he wanted to accept wads of cash to make such a man feel better about himself.

But there were other factors at play, factors Jim couldn’t simply gloss over. The pity he had felt at Oswald’s sincere conviction that he was the only person in the world who could be trusted with this, who wouldn’t hurt him or use it against him. The hunger he couldn’t quite pretend he didn’t feel, the urge to take Oswald up on the offer, and finally be free of the unresolved tension that had always existed between them.

The ugly jealousy that pulled at him, overwhelmed him, at the knowledge he was the runner up prize. The last resort Oswald had only turned to when it became obvious he was never going to get what he really wanted. That was what Jim had meant back at the bar, that things with Nygma had never got that far - not that Oswald hadn’t wanted them to.

It was that thought which made his mind up for him. The next day Jim returned the money, and did his best to ignore Oswald’s obvious disappointment.

“You’ll find someone,” he said awkwardly, because it seemed like the right thing to do, and Oswald only smiled at him, sadly, and said,

“Thank you for considering it.”

That was supposed to be the end of it.

It wasn’t, of course, and while their interactions had never been normal, everything they said and did now had an extra dimension to it. The way Oswald greeted him, genuine delight on his face, and the way something twisted in Jim’s chest, every time Oswald requested his assistance.

“There should be more than enough grounds for an arrest,” Oswald said some three months later, sliding a paper folder across the desk of the interrogation room. Jim reached for it, misjudged, and had to swallow thickly when their fingers brushed against each other.

Oswald glanced up at him, blue eyes Jim couldn’t look away from, and it hit him suddenly that this wasn’t a new thing. It was always how Oswald had made him feel - he had just refused to admit the other man could be the cause of it.

“If you wanted to make your own observations, he’ll be at my Christmas party.”
Jim shifted, tried to regain control of himself. They were talking about some lowlife drug dealer, not an invitation to do something about the letter he still hadn’t disposed of, stashed away in his keepsake tin, along with his Grandma’s eternity ring, and mementos of his parents.

“I wasn’t planning on going.”

Oswald didn’t beg, didn’t plead. Simply looked up at him through dark lashes and said,

“You don’t have to wait for a special occasion, Jim. You’re always welcome.”

With hindsight his reaction alone should have been reason enough to stay well away from anything to do with Oswald. He had already been through this, had already made his decision.

Except perhaps a few hours observation were called for, might lead him up the food chain. Oswald’s presence during this would be nothing more than incidental. At least, that was what he had told himself, and he was so unconvincing he didn’t even tell Harvey he was going, and when things started going sour, hesitated for a moment in calling for back up.

That moment had apparently been crucial, and not seizing it led to Oswald blue lipped and shivering on the floor of a little used cold store, and him desperately applying pressure to the stab wound, voice unsteady as he said,

“Stay with me, Oswald. Focus.”

They had taken his gun and his cell phone, right about the same time they had done their best to bust his nose. Maybe they had succeeded; he could feel the blood dripping down his chin, hot against his otherwise chilled skin.

“I told you this would happen,” Oswald said, almost accusing, and it was marginally better than listening to his teeth chattering. “I’m going to die a virgin.”

“You’re not going to die,” Jim snapped, though the prospects weren’t good. There was blood everywhere.

Oswald laughed in response, loud and hysterical, and then long thin fingers clutched at his arm so that Jim had to look at him. The fear writ plain across his face, and the hopelessness.

“I’ve never even been kissed, not properly. Isn’t that funny, Jim?”

It wasn’t, not that he could see, and it made him lose his grip on reason, enough so that he turned to bargaining with the devil,

“If we get through this, I’ll do it. I’ll do whatever you want, you just need to keep talking. You need to concentrate.”

He was still talking when the GCPD’s finest found them, and an ambulance crew took Oswald from him. Perhaps he was still talking when Harvey laid a hand on his shoulder, reassuring, and said,

“He’ll pull through, Jim. Come on, you’ve done all you can here.”

Jim nodded at the half lie, thankful, and let himself be led away.

There was nothing more he could for now, that much was true at least.
It was a close thing, but Oswald did pull through.

“The man’s a cockroach,” Harvey told him, around a mouthful of something that crunched disconcertingly. “30 years from now, that’s all Gotham will be. Rats, cockroaches, and the Penguin.”

Jim gave him what he hoped was an approximation of a smile, and Harvey only shook his head and sighed,

“What’s the point? Why don’t you take those mugshots and get over to the hospital?”

He didn’t need to be told twice, and Oswald beamed when he caught sight of him, in spite of everything. Jim went through the motions with the photographs, then simply sat with him a while. He doubted the man had been overwhelmed with visitors.

“I’m glad you’re going to be okay,” he said when it was time to leave, awkward and stilted, and Oswald smiled softly, pulling at his split lip,

“Me too. I haven’t forgotten your promise, Jim.”

There it was, the statement he’d been dreading - even as it was the same one he was hoping for.

Because it was really going to happen. That was the thought that wouldn’t leave him alone, not when he was at work, going about his daily business, and not when he was alone in his bed either, trying to pretend that the idea didn’t leave him breathless and excited.

Oswald turned up on his doorstep when he was discharged from the hospital, and Jim crossed his arms, determined to stay in control, because it was far too soon. Oswald probably wasn’t even in his right mind, high on painkillers.

“I came to return this,” Oswald said, and pulled out the envelope, the one that had started it all.

“I don’t want your money,” Jim said, his gut crawling at the idea. A dozen emotions flickered across Oswald’s face, frustration chief among them. “I’ll keep my word,” Jim clarified, because he couldn’t have backed out now, not even had he wanted to, “but I don’t want your money. I don’t need to sell myself.”

“It’s not,” Oswald stuttered in turn, horrified. “I never meant it like that, Jim, please believe me. I just wanted to recompense you in some way, for the inconvenience.”

Jim nodded, stiffly, and it should have been the most stilted, awkward meeting in history. Instead he offered Oswald a drink which the other man accepted, and though the air was charged it wasn’t an imposition, to spend an hour in Oswald’s company.

It couldn’t have been because he did it again a few days later, and then again a few days after that. It became a regular occurrence, and it took Jim a few weeks to realize it, but it was like they were dating. He found himself eager to get home on the days they were meeting, taking extra pains over his hair and the suit he wore, though typically it wasn’t something that preoccupied him.

It didn’t go unnoticed either, not in a station full of detectives, and Harvey smirked at him as Jim eagerly wrapped up his paperwork one night,

“She must be hot stuff, this new girl of yours. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you leave here on time before.”
Jim might have gone along with it, might have tried for mysterious, and used one of Harvey’s own lines, about not kissing and telling. But Oswald chose that moment to put in an appearance, face lighting up like the sight of Jim was the most wonderful thing he could imagine, and there must have been an answering something on his own face, because Harvey all but gawped at him, and the next day he was too aware of the way people couldn’t stop gossiping and speculating.

“Are you sure this a is a good idea?” Harvey asked him, finally. “You saw what happened to his last boyfriend.”

“It’s not like that,” Jim said, and he didn’t know about Harvey, but he couldn’t make himself believe it.

“I’m sorry,” Jim said the next time they met, and to avoid looking at Oswald he stared around at his apartment. The domestic touches that had begun to creep in, under Oswald’s influence.

“What for?” Oswald asked, genuinely perplexed, and Jim felt it twist in his gut, how badly he wanted this to be real and not just a rather strange business transaction.

“We need to end this tonight. We can’t keep doing this.”

“Oh,” Oswald managed, weakly, and Jim forced himself to keep going,

“Do you still want to -” he broke off, flustered. “We don’t have to.”

Oswald looked away for a moment, the fingers of his left hand curling and uncurling. Then he was the Penguin again, scheming and calculating.

“I thought you were a man of your word, Jim. I hope you’re not planning to renege on me.”

If it were anyone else Jim would have stopped and made them talk to him. Would have worked things through, and would have ensured they both felt happy and comfortable with what was happening. But it was Oswald, and he could only pull him in close by the lapels and kiss him roughly, nothing at all like the careful, tender kiss he had spent the last few weeks imagining.

“Is that what you wanted?” He demanded when they broke apart, Oswald’s cheeks flushed and his own pulse racing, and Oswald clung to him, grip so tight it was painful.

“I’ll take whatever you’re willing to give me.”

It made him feel worse, if that were possible. He wanted to give Oswald everything, to be given it all in return, and he pushed Oswald back against the couch and bit sharply at his lip, to cover his unwarranted sentimentality.

Things didn’t get any better.

His blood burned, and his heart hammered. Oswald gasped and groaned into his mouth, clutched at him, helpless, and appeared content to let Jim do what he would. But it wasn’t what Jim wanted and, worse, wasn’t really what Oswald wanted either, for all that he whimpered, helpless, when Jim pulled away from him.

“This is wrong,” Jim said, gaze fixed on the way Oswald was struggling for breath, eyes dark and desperate. Oswald blinked at him, like he was too far gone to focus, and begged,

“You can’t leave me like this. Please, Jim, do something.”
His perfect suit was rumpled and untidy, and Jim had to force himself to look away. His own arousal was stoked high, clouding his thought processes, and it would be so easy to give in. To simply leave the guilt and the worrying for afterwards.

He couldn’t though. He never had been able to.

“You’ll regret it,” he said, as calmly as he could. “It’s not me you want, and,” he sucked in a breath, the better to resist temptation, “I don’t want to just mess about, I’m too old for that.”

Oswald stared at him like he had lost his mind, and when it became clear Jim was serious he ran a hand through his hair, seemingly forgetting about the amount of product in it. Fixed his clothing with stilted, awkward movements, and bundled himself back into his his gloves and his overcoat, like it was armor.

“I’m sorry,” Jim tried again, because this wasn’t how he had envisioned this happening. None of it was. Oswald only glared at him, hair wild and his lips still swollen,

“You could have just said no, and then you wouldn’t have had to insult us both.” He hesitated a moment in the doorway, then let the words fall, accusing, “And don’t tell me what I do and do not want, Jim. I wanted you right from the start, and you know that.”

This time, the break really did appear to be final. There were no late night knocks on his door, no rambling voicemail messages left on his cell phone. Oswald still came to the precinct, couldn’t seem to stay away, but now he asked to speak to anyone but Jim, and refused to make eye contact, when they passed each other in the corridor.

The only proof Jim had that any of it was real was the letter, stashed away in his closet, and Oswald’s scarf. He had been wearing it the night Jim had ruined everything with over-thinking, and left it behind in his haste to have nothing more to do with him.

Perhaps he didn’t need proof though, not with the way people talked behind his back, falling suspiciously silent whenever he walked into the rec room. Simmons sought him out after the second time Oswald asked for her in favor of Jim, and said sheepishly,

“I just wanted to say I’m sorry, for that night in the bar. If I’d known, I wouldn’t have taken it that far.”

Jim was going to protest, to deny that there had ever been anything between them. But he lacked the energy, and she wouldn’t have believed it anyway.

“It’s worked out for the best,” he said instead, and spent the rest of the day finding things to keep him busy. Busy enough that nobody else engaged him in personal conversation, and busy enough that he didn’t check his pockets for Oswald’s scarf, and do anything ridiculous like sniff it.

Not at the precinct, at any rate.

At home it wasn’t quite so easy, and after another evening spent staring at the television he picked it up, and took a cab halfway across the city to return it. It was only as he was trudging up the driveway that he began to rethink the wisdom of his decision. It was an expensive scarf, sure, and not something he’d ever be able to justify spending money on. But Oswald was rich, filthy rich, the kind where you could offer people upwards of twenty thousand dollars as an incentive to have sex with you.

He wasn’t going to be wondering where a single scarf was.
But by then it was too late, and Jim removed his coat and waited anxiously in the ostentatious drawing room, just as the maid had told him to.

“Jim,” Oswald greeted, and Jim had never appreciated the usual accompanying smile enough, because the lack of it physically hurt, now it wasn’t forthcoming.

“I brought your scarf back,” he said, dumbly, and held the bundle of fabric out. Oswald frowned, because of course he hadn’t even noticed it was missing—except...

“I thought I’d lost this. Thank you, Jim—my father gave it to me.”

And there was the smile, the one Jim had missed so badly. It did things to him, that smile. Like sever the connection between his impulses and his sense of self-preservation. Because one minute he was thinking about what an awful idea it would be to kiss Oswald, and the next he was doing it. It was perfect too, soft and slow, and his fingers were reaching up to slide along Oswald’s jawbone before he could think better of it.

He should stop, he knew, and if he couldn’t do that, he really oughtn’t to make things worse. There was no way he should be deepening the kiss, leaning in closer and encouraging Oswald to kiss him back, and wrap his arms around the back of his neck. No way he should be reduced to such a mess, gasping and desperate, when Oswald pressed against him, determined and obvious, and whispered in his ear,

“Can you tell now how much I want it?”

In response it was Jim who made embarrassing noises. Jim who clung to him, frantic, and Jim who stood there dazed and confused when Oswald pulled away, though he supposed that he deserved it.

“Because I’m not sure I just want to mess about either.”

It took a moment for the words to properly register, and longer still for him to pull himself together enough to formulate an answer to them, and the accusing tone they had been delivered in.

“I’m sorry,” he managed, finally. “I shouldn’t have done that.”

It wasn’t the right answer, and Oswald scowled, spiky anger to mask the hurt,

“Then why did you? If you find the idea so detestable, why do you keep taunting me with it?”

“I don’t,” Jim said because he was still turned on, felt like he couldn’t remember a moment spent in Oswald’s company when he hadn’t been. And then, because that hadn’t made things as clear as he had meant it to, “I want you, that’s never been the issue.”

Oswald glared at him, like he couldn’t let his guard down enough to believe it, and there was no point in trying to protect his own pride. There probably never had been.

“I want more than sex from you. I don’t want to be the person you turn to because you don’t think you have any other option.”

It didn’t feel any better, to have the truth between them. It made him feel awkward, stupid, and this time it was he who left. He who wanted to get away, so he could lick his wounds in private.

Oswald watched him make to leave without a word, the silence heavy, like neither of them knew how to salvage the situation.

He stood a moment too long on the threshold, wishing he was better at this. Wishing he had been
better at everything. But the words wouldn’t come, and finally he turned away before he could embarrass himself any further.

Work dragged the following day, nothing but paperwork to fill hour after interminable hour, so that he almost longed for an armed robbery or even a murder. There was still at least an hour to go before he could clock off when a ripple went around the station that the Penguin was at the front desk.

“And get this,” Simmons told them, expression torn somewhere between disgust and encouragement as she passed the gossip on, “he’s refusing to speak to anyone but ‘the incomparable Jim Gordon’.”

Jim didn’t scramble to his feet, or get flustered with anticipation. At least not outwardly. He grimaced, jaw clenched, and got up slowly. Forced his pace to stay even and steady as he made his way through the bullpen, as he caught sight of Oswald, all impeccable tailoring and absurdly endearing haircut, drumming his fingers impatiently.

“What do you want, Oswald?” He asked, tone deliberately stripped back, even as Oswald closed the distance between them and said, not caring who overheard,

“Jim, I need to talk to you.”

It was the opposite of the encounter that set the whole train of events in motion. Oswald was needy, demanding, but the way he took Jim’s hand was anything but private. Might as well have been a neon sign attracting the attention of every officer in the building.

“I don’t think there is anything left to say,” Jim said, sadly, thinking of the night before. Mind stuck on the image of Oswald watching him walk away. “It’s better that we put it behind us.”

Oswald made a sound at that, peevish and exasperated, and then he was surging forward, kissing him right there in the middle of the station.

There were catcalls and jeers and, when Oswald pulled away, Jim stared at him, dumbstruck, and said,

“I’m at work.”

“I know,” Oswald assured, “and I respect that. But it needed doing. I couldn’t see any other way of getting what I’m about to say through your thick skull.”

It wasn’t nice to insult people you had just kissed, at least not in Jim’s experience, but Oswald’s tone was light, the look he was giving him soft.

“I’ve wanted to do that since the very first time I stepped foot in this place. Before, even. You’re not my last resort, Jim. I just never dreamed you could ever feel the same way about me.”

Jim kissed Oswald that time, though he hated workplace PDAs in the best of circumstances. It wasn’t a simple peck either, lasting long enough for everyone to see. For everyone to know. He couldn’t bring himself to care, not even when he had to lead Oswald back to his desk so he could collect his things, and his colleagues all watched on, not bothering to hide their opinions.

“I’m leaving early,” he told Harvey, and felt like a rebel for all that the clock on the wall read that it would only be by thirty minutes. “I’ll see you in the morning.”
Harvey looked from him to Oswald and back again, like he couldn’t believe what he was witnessing. He grinned at Jim all the same, clapped him on the shoulder and said,

“Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do, Jimbo,” then, as the words settled, added, "at least, never tell me about it."

Jim flushed, helpless, at the thought of exactly what they might do. Of what they had almost done on multiple occasions already now, and how completely undone he was by just the prospect of taking things further. Oswald saw it, of course, and laid a possessive hand on his arm, knowing and confident in a way that threatened to leave him breathless. Then he gave Harvey a sweet smile and said, entirely too aware of the effect it would have,

“You’ve nothing to worry about. Jim always keeps his promises.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the prompt 'Christmas Sweaters'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“Pick a number,” Harvey said, and pushed him the chart and a marker pen. Jim didn’t even deign to look up from his paperwork,

“I’m a homicide detective, you can’t be serious.”

“We’re all equal under the law, Jim,” Harvey said, and when that didn’t get him moving, added, “if you don’t pick a number, I’m going to put your name forward anyway.”

Jim scowled, muttered uncharitable comments under his breath, but dutifully wrote his name in the first empty box on the grid. Capped the marker with more violence than was strictly necessary, and glared at Harvey’s grin as he moved on to the next victim.

The whole thing was absurd, completely and utterly ridiculous. His caseload seemed to be growing by the minute, and Harvey still wanted him to put his name into his idiot sweepstakes. It was more like Russian roulette as far as Jim was concerned; nobody had wanted the ‘honor’ of representing the GCPD at all of Mayor Cobblepot’s Christmas engagements, so Harvey had dreamed up a novel way of finding a volunteer.

It didn’t matter, Jim told himself. It wasn’t going to be his number.

He definitely wasn’t going to be spending a week in dress uniform. He wasn’t going to have to stand next to Oswald, wasn’t going to have to make awkward small talk, nor was he going to have to suffer the humiliation of Oswald introducing him to the city’s great and good as his dear old friend, James Gordon.

Except when the day of reckoning rolled around, Jim just knew what was coming. Mouthed the digits along with the pretty new clerk Harvey had picked to announce the (un)lucky winner.

Harvey just clapped him on the shoulder, trying and failing to conceal his glee, and said,

“Looks like you better hotfoot it down to the dry cleaners.”

“Jim!” Oswald exclaimed first thing Monday morning, raking his gaze over him. Jim stood in the doorway of Oswald’s office feeling spectacularly uncomfortable. His dress uniform was over starched, his formal shoes felt too tight, and Oswald was looking at him like he was about to make his life a misery.

It was the predatory curve to his smile, the gleam of triumph in his eyes.

The unspeakably hideous Christmas sweater he was holding out, tone bright as he said,
“First stop - the Greater Gotham Knitting Circle Charity Christmas Gala. My, isn’t that a mouthful?”

“I don’t have to wear that?” Jim asked, because suddenly his dress uniform was seeming a whole lot more appealing. Oswald thought about it for a moment, face scrunching in a way that ought to have been comical, then looked him dead in the eye and said,

“It’s either you or me, so yes. Yes, you absolutely have to wear it.”

He wanted to protest. Wanted to walk out of there and get back to doing some real police work. But Harvey had pulled him aside after the announcement, explained that this was what the Commissioner wanted, and if he messed up it wouldn’t just be his head on the chopping block.

So he wore the sweater. Forced himself to thank the grandmotherly type who had created it, and did his best to grimace for the photographs.

He peeled it off in the back of Oswald’s limo afterwards, so he could shrug back into his uniform jacket, and steadfastly refused to acknowledge the open way in which the other man watched him, even with his new Chief of Staff present.

She was beautiful, glamorous, and looked at him like he was something that had marred the soles of her expensive Manolo Blahniks.

“It’s the grade school choral ‘extravaganza’ next,” she said, consulting her tablet, “followed by lunch with the Gotham Prison Officer’s Association.”

Oswald flashed him a toothy grin, because Jim’s popularity with the latter had only hit new lows since his exploits in Blackgate. Jim stared out of the window and prayed that today would be the day one of Gotham’s criminals succeeded in putting a bullet in him.

By mid-afternoon he was still injury free, discounting the ‘accidental’ scalding his left thigh had been subject to when he had made the mistake of asking a close friend of Carlson Grey’s for another cup of coffee.

“I could have his throat slit for you,” Oswald whispered into his ear, so that he almost choked on the slab of dry fruit cake he was given at their next appointment. “Or I could have the Neighborhood Code Enforcement team go out and find something to fine him for. Your decision.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Jim assured, sarcastic, and Oswald only shrugged easily, and said,

“Don’t say I didn’t offer.”

Then he was back to nodding, solemn, as senior citizens shared their memories of Gotham at Christmas. Smiling politely at all the right junctures, and not zoning out every few moments, the way Jim found he was completely unable to prevent himself from doing.

“You get used to it,” Oswald consoled later, when they were on their way to a carol service. “It just takes practice.”

“I know how to deal with the public,” Jim snapped, because he didn’t need to be patronized, and Oswald only raised an eyebrow and stayed silent. Somehow it was more infuriating than anything the man could have said to him.

He was still worked up over it when they arrived at the church. Oswald slid an arm around his
waist for the photographer without so much as a warning, and when the singing began and he was forced to admit that Oswald’s voice - unlike his own - wasn’t terrible.

“I have many hidden talents,” Oswald confessed afterwards, and there was something about his tone that made Jim shift awkwardly against the leather upholstery.

It wasn’t at all fair that his body couldn’t recognize evil incarnate.

Oswald just smiled sweetly, innocent, and indicated that they had reached their destination. Jim clambered out of the car, clumsy and uncoordinated, and made straight for his apartment building, choosing not to acknowledge Oswald’s parting.

“Until tomorrow, old friend.”

The next day was worse, an endless cycle of interminable boredom and excruciating embarrassment.

“Detective Gordon would love to play an elf,” Oswald said at the pre-schoolers’ Christmas showcase, and insisted he put the elf hat back on, at every nursing home they dropped in on.

When he finally got to take it off, at a community center meet and greet, Oswald was too busy defending the city’s position on filling potholes to intervene, leaving him to field countless angry queries about the GCPD’s internal complaints process.

“Are you a veteran?” One man asked him, in the midst of a rant about obstructive parking, and Jim nodded and did his best to keep his tone respectful,

“I served in the military for ten years, sir.”

“But did you ever lose a leg?” The guy demanded, up close and menacing, and once Jim had admitted he hadn’t, he simply carried on complaining.

“I see you’re getting to know my regulars,” Oswald told him when he finally escaped, and shrugged over dramatically when he added, “And I’m the one they sent to Arkham!”

Perhaps it was relief that he wasn’t being blamed for something, perhaps it was the mention of Arkham, the lingering guilt over the way he hadn’t believed Oswald, after everything he had done for him. Whatever the reason, when they were interviewed for the Gotham Gazette about the newly repaired links between the GCPD and the Mayor’s office, Jim didn’t kick up a fuss when Oswald sat a fraction too close. He didn’t complain even when Oswald overdid it, when asked if they were friends as well as colleagues.

They were scheduled to attend a dinner that night, the kind Jim hated, overly pompous and formal. Oswald led him through the winding corridors of the Van Dahl mansion after their final appointment, and it was only when Jim found himself sat on the edge of some chintzy love seat that he recognized the scenario.

Because Oswald primped and preened in the mirror, and held up various ties for Jim’s opinion, as though they didn’t all look exactly the same to him. It made him think of waiting for Barbara to get ready, before dragging him to something to do with the art gallery.

“They all look good, you’d look good in anything.”

He said, the way he would have back then, just to get things moving, and he really was in the
wrong head space because when Oswald smiled fondly at him, he smiled right back, instinctively.

The assignment still sucked, sucked so bad, but it was a day closer to being over. That was what Jim told himself as he got ready the following morning. As he combed his hair into submission, and shined his shoes until even his most critical CO back in the military would have been impressed with them.

He inspected his face in them before putting them on, and briefly in the bathroom mirror as he cleaned his teeth. He looked tired perhaps, overworked. Certainly nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing to account for the way people stared at him on the subway - his overcoat was covering his dress uniform, and he was holding the hat rather than wearing it.

Still people looked at him curiously as he pushed through the crowds on the city’s busy sidewalks. Trudged up the steps leading to City Hall, and through the foyer towards Oswald’s office.

It was there that he finally learned what the sudden fascination with his image was.

“We made the front page,” Oswald told him without preamble and handed one of the tabloids over. Jim frowned at the sight of the knitted monstrosity, then forgot it completely in favor of being outraged and scandalized.

The caption read: ‘City Mayor, Oswald Cobblepot, steps out with new beau, GCPD detective, James Gordon.’

“I’m not - we’re not -” Jim sputtered, rendered speechless, and Oswald beamed at him, so clearly pleased with himself, as he said,

“But, Jim, we make such a handsome couple.”

He gestured at one of the other papers, the Gotham Gazette, which had actually conducted the interview. They had used a picture from the carol service, the one where he had Oswald’s arm around his waist and, inexplicably, didn’t look at all perturbed by it.

“You have to fix this!” Jim demanded, squeaked, and Oswald just waved a hand dismissively.

“Melody’s working on it.”

Melody chose that moment to appear, Louboutins today, silent as they moved across the expensive carpet. She spared him a glance, expression suggesting he was a distasteful smell lingering about the place, and then reeled through the day’s agenda at breakneck speed. At least she wasn’t going to be accompanying them.

Jim reevaluated how happy he was to be spending the journey alone with Oswald when, instead of sitting opposite, the other man slid into the seat next to him, the better to properly brief him on how today was all about local business, with a Christmas market and the traders’ association.

In the afternoon they had a civic function, which was apparently also serving as the City Hall equivalent of the office Christmas party. There was enough drink flowing at any rate, and people he had never met come up to congratulate him, like the newspaper had printed an engagement announcement, not a public outing.

“There’s no need to be coy,” one of the councilwomen assured him, “it’s the 21st century. How did you meet Mayor Cobblepot?”
Jim glanced over to where Oswald was crouched down, speaking to some children who were also being forced to suffer for the occasion. He looked sweet, charming. For that reason Jim said bluntly,

“He was beating a snitch with a baseball bat.”

Then he excused himself and found the washroom. Splashed cold water on his face and refused to look up when the door opened and Oswald’s distinctive gait told him he had company.

“Everybody’s talking about your dry wit,” Oswald said, but it wasn’t accusing. Their eyes met in the mirror and Oswald attempted to smile. It made Jim feel guilty. “I will get them to print a retraction, Jim. This wasn’t my intention.”

He nodded, dried his hands, and resolved to do his best not to think of anything until tomorrow.

It might have worked too, if it weren’t for that school bus full of meddling kids. Oswald’s leg gave out on the steps of City Hall, muscles spasming from crouching down to their level, and on instinct Jim reached for him.

Pulled him close, protective, rather than see him topple down the steps, and it was that image which ended up plastered all over social media. Harvey rang him, scarcely able to breathe for laughing, and the denials which did it make it to the back columns of the local papers the following day dripped with incredulity.

“I thought you said Melody was fixing things,” Jim hissed, as though Melody wasn’t sat in the back of the limo with them, and the look Oswald gave him was contrite enough, although what he said was,

“Melody isn’t a miracle worker.”

Jim might have accepted that, notwithstanding the time he had literally seen Melody make an embezzlement case completely disappear, if they hadn’t been on their way to the precinct to spread Christmas cheer and pose for photo opportunities. If Melody hadn’t immediately embraced the clerk who had pulled his name from the raffle draw, while Oswald said something about family resemblance.

“You planned this!” Jim accused, angry because he was supposed to be one of the GCPD’s finest. Oswald went straight into self-preservation mode, blinking up at him and stuttering, and if Jim had any sense he’d rather spend time with.”

“I may have arranged for your name to chosen, Jim, but that’s only because you’re my friend. There is nobody else I’d rather spend time with.”

“What about that?” Jim hissed, pointing to the newspaper clippings that had already been taped to the station notice board. “Was that your doing?”

“I swear, I didn’t plan that. I just,” he gave Jim the look, the one that had already kept Jim from killing him on multiple occasions. “Well, I wasn’t very upset about it either.”

Jim was going to say something about that, most definitely, but then Lee was making her way over and while those wounds weren’t fresh, they weren’t exactly healed either.

“I'm pleased for you,” she said, and though the smile was a little strained, Jim could hear the sincerity.
“We're not,” he started for what felt like the hundredth time, but she only touched his arm, briefly, and said before moving off,

“I just want to see you happy, Jim.”

Oswald glanced at him, anxious, and Jim took the drink he had been sipping and downed it one smooth motion. Took him by the hand and made the introductions himself, and either it was completely believable, or people were afraid to tip him over into total insanity, because nobody commented and nobody questioned it.

Even Harvey settled for simply raising an eyebrow, and Oswald was so taken aback he couldn't come up with a reason why he shouldn't accept the obligatory comedy gift from the squad: a hideous Christmas sweater in opposing colors to the one he had made Jim wear. The one he was wearing in the photographs stuck up all over the place.

“It really suits you,” Jim said, gleefully. Oswald blinked up at him, bewildered, and it felt so good to not be the one on the backfoot for once that Jim just went with it, and pressed a chaste kiss to his cheek before adding, “Why don’t you try it on, Darling?”

Contrary to all his expectations, Oswald did after only a few moments of hesitation, though it truly was appalling, and way too big for him, into the bargain. Maybe he had gone mad, driven past the point of no return by Lee's final rejection. Perhaps he had just had a lot to drink; he certainly had been through quite a few glasses.

“I can't believe you made me wear this,” Oswald complained when it was over, when they were sat in the back of the car, slightly tipsy and way too close together. Jim knew then exactly why he had done it. Why he would turn up on time the next morning, hangover and all, and let Oswald tell the world the breach between the police and the civic authorities had been completely mended.

He was sick of fighting the inevitable.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Oswald doesn’t know how to react when Jim is like this. He doesn’t have the experience to draw on.

Can’t make sense of the look in Jim’s eyes, soft yet focused, nor the catch in his voice, when he asks if he’s all right, if his leg is hurting.

That’s not to say that he hasn’t done this before, because he has. He’s been pushed to his knees, and taken his own pleasure. Been forced roughly against walls, and stolen moments in dank alleyways, crying out into the silence. He isn’t delicate, doesn’t need to be treated as such, but his protests make no difference. Jim will not be hurried, stubborn as usual.

Kisses him, and coddles him, and drives him to the brink of madness with his outright refusal to just get on with it.

"Please, Jim, please," he begs, pulse racing and voice wrecked, because maybe this is what Jim wants. To ruin him, to have him completely at his mercy. To see him reduced to tears and whimpers.

It wouldn’t have been that way with Barbara, or Lee, or Valerie, but then he isn’t Jim’s girlfriend. Isn’t anything to Jim, not really, and on the occasions he had dared to allow himself to imagine what it might be like, this had been the kind of scene he had conjured - even his fantasies grounded by Jim’s antipathy.

Jim would be drunk and sloppy, angry at Oswald and disappointed in himself; his fingers digging bruises into his hips as he made Oswald tell him just how very much he wanted it. How far he would go, what he would sacrifice, just to have Jim lay his hands upon him.

Except that isn’t the answer either, because Jim is the one who gasps and groans in response to his words. Presses hard against him, desperate for relief even as he struggles to regain control of his actions.

“Just let me,” he pleads in turn, the brush of his lips too light, the touch of his fingers never quite enough. “I want to do this properly.”

If it’s done any more properly it’s going to kill him, that’s what Oswald wants to say. But he’s too far gone, too frantic, and he settles for breathing heavily beneath Jim, limbs trembling. He means to watch, to commit every move Jim makes to memory, but it’s no easy task.

Not when Jim finally begins to take pity, his hand slick and wet where it moves between them.

And it’s nothing like the frenzied encounters he had once dreamed of, so far removed from what he
had ever believed possible. Jim isn’t pretending he’s somewhere else, with someone else, and when Oswald reaches to reciprocate, to do something, instead of losing interest in what he’s doing, Jim simply catches his hand and presses a kiss to it.

Kisses his mouth, his chest, his stomach. Tastes, and teases, and works him open so agonizingly slowly Oswald doesn’t know what to do with himself. It’s about then that he realizes, belatedly, what exactly it is about the situation Jim is getting off on. Thinks of Barbara, all teeth and knowing smile, as she told him he would never know what it meant to be subject of Jim’s undivided attention.

Because perhaps it doesn’t matter who it is, so long as Jim can treat them like they’re something precious and fragile. Can be careful and noble, and self denying, holding off until they’re both so close it’s painful.

“That’s it,” Jim soothes as he replaces his fingers, and none of it compares. Not the nameless faces or the acquaintances with benefits. Nothing has felt like this, and when Jim shifts so he can kiss him again, he wonders if anything else ever will.

“I can’t,” he manages then, because it’s all too much, too intense, and it’s like a thousand cliches playing true as he comes apart, seeing fireworks.

Jim pants in his ear, whispered confessions giving way to sounds Oswald can’t even make sense of. Buries his face in the crook of Oswald’s neck and whines, appreciatively, when Oswald clutches at his back, holds him as he shivers through his own climax.

In the aftermath he waits for Jim to pull away. To shrug into his ugly suit and leave without looking back, like none of this ever happened. But Jim only moves so far as to ensure he isn’t going to crush him, and when Oswald turns to look at him it’s to find that though he’s the one who has been broken apart and put back together, it’s Jim who looks frightened, expression open and vulnerable.

“Do you want me to go?” Jim asks in response to whatever he sees in his own face, subdued and hesitant. He has never been able to master the art of self-preservation when it comes to Jim, so it’s all too obvious when he says,

“That’s the last thing I want, Jim.”

Jim smiles at that, genuine rather than mocking, and somehow he finds himself wrapped in Jim’s arms, both of them cocooned in the blankets. Oswald shouldn’t let himself be taken in, he knows. Shouldn’t read more into Jim’s words than the scratching of an awkward itch, nothing but a few moments of mutual satisfaction. Reality can wait until the morning he decides ultimately, by then it will have worn off, this sense of contentment, and he’ll be better equipped to deal with it.

For now he only burrows closer to Jim, comfortable and sated, and imagines a whole new set of scenarios in which Jim is precise and sober, and later, when they share secrets in the darkness, he doesn’t worry about waking up alone - he knows there’s nothing he can say that will make Jim turn his back on him.

Chapter End Notes
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

Salvation Army

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'Salvation Army' prompt. My initial thought for this prompt was Victorian AU. Then somebody left me a Tumblr ask today pointing out this Victorian AU prompt -
http://otpprompts.tumblr.com/post/154468620106/victorian-au-person-a-is-wealthy-but-has-no

So, Victorian AU it is, folks!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim knew what his colleagues thought of him. Heard what they said when they believed him out of earshot, the disparaging remarks about his faith and his bearing. About his blue ribbon badge, and his involvement with The Salvation Army.

“Lord preserve us from Johnny Uprights!” his new captain had exclaimed, on his very first day with the division, and his initial arrests had all been released back onto the street without so much as a slap on the wrist, his new partner explaining,

“You're not policing the West Village now - you have to learn how to pick your battles.”

It was true, at least, that the dock district presented endless opportunities for evangelizing. Crime was rampant, ubiquitous, and even the children stared at him with hard eyes, set deep in their wizened little faces. Their parents had been the same once, looking to a future of ceaseless struggle and unrelenting poverty, and now they were living it chose to dampen the realities, spending money they could ill afford in the dive bars and the gin palaces.

He came across the same faces again and again, on his patrols of these less than salubrious quarters, one etching itself indelibly into his memory.

“Call me Oswald,” the man told him on more than one occasion, and the others might think him naïve but he knew what it meant, combined with the smirk and the lingering press of hands. He had been a soldier.

“Cobblepot is intimate enough,” Jim said in response, and hated the way he began to seek out his advice in spite of it. Relied on him for his insight, and grudgingly admired the way he pulled himself up from the bottom of the pile, refusing to let his crippled leg stall his progress.

Others noticed it too, enough so that one night in early December the female holding cell erupted with laughter, gleeful at the sight of his obvious discomfort.

“I should never have tried if I had seen it was you, Detective,” one grinned, proud of her debauchery, “I know what close friends you are with the Penguin.”

“Haven't you children to think of?” He snapped at another to hide his embarrassment, recognizing the woman from his work with the soup kitchens. “A husband to get home to?”
She pulled her thin shawl about herself, stared him down as determinedly as any of the other unfortunates on his charge sheet,

“Don’t you dare judge me, copper. God alone knows how I suffer.”

They dredged her body from the river less than a week later, beaten and broken. Arrested the husband and placed the children in the care of the local poorhouse.

“I suppose you’re happy now,” Harvey hissed and for once Jim had no answer. Turned his badge over and over in his hands and wondered how he was meant to protect the innocent when they were also the criminals.

It colored his every action, his growing uncertainty about his purpose, and when he all but stumbled across a familiar figure in the snow he didn’t hand them a couple of pennies or simply deliver them to the station. He hauled them up and took them home. Fed them and cleaned and dressed their injuries. Bundled them in his own dressing gown, even, in front of the fireplace.

“I cannot begin to adequately express my gratitude, James,” the pitiful figure said, and Jim had to look away, torn at the sincerity in the other’s voice and his own knowledge of what this man was capable of.

“Do you not have your own lodgings to get back to?” He asked instead, and because he wasn’t unfeeling, understood only too well that it likely had a bearing on the situation, “I was sorry to hear about your mother.”

Oswald offered him a watery smile, “Thank you. I fear I have not been as prudent as I might have been these past weeks.” Jim raised an eyebrow and Oswald clarified, “I’ve nowhere to go. They took everything but the clothes on my back in payment.”

“Don’t make me regret letting you stay tonight,” Jim heard himself say, gaze drawn too easily to the pale flesh visible at Oswald’s open collar. Oswald only nodded, over eager, and pledged,

“I won’t, James. I promise.”

One night became two, and two nights became a week, and then longer. Oswald repaid him with surprisingly hearty meals and intelligent conversation. Showed him how to soak his work shirts to get the blood out, and played his rickety upright piano, picking out notes as pretty as might grace any aristocratic drawing room.

In turn Jim found himself looking forward to going back to his apartment for the first time since he had moved back to Gotham. Thought of it as home rather than simply the place he slept.

It couldn’t last indefinitely.

“Please tell me you haven’t,” Harvey demanded when the news spread. “If that’s what you want there are places you can go. Discreet young men who’ll never breathe a word of it. There’s no need to sink so low as the Penguin.”

“Don’t be disgusting!” Jim all but yelled in response. It wasn’t like that, couldn’t be like that. “I took him in out of Christian charity.”

“There’s no amount of charity that can fix him,” Harvey said, quiet, and Jim realized that his fists were still clenched. His cheeks still burning. He raked a hand through his hair and drew in a shaky breath, even as he heard uneven steps behind him,
“I know that.”

He had just hoped, because without hope what was there?

When he returned home that night it was to find Oswald long gone, the apartment in darkness and the ashes in the grate gone cold. It was for the best, he told himself, and though there was a preacher he had wanted to hear speaking just a few blocks away, he couldn’t find the energy to move.

Couldn’t do anything but sit with his head in his hands, and think of how desperately he needed salvation, now more than ever.

Because Harvey had been right, had seen right through his claims of piety.

He knew exactly what Oswald was and had hoped, had wanted, for the other man to do what he couldn’t and reach out for him.

In the run up to Christmas Jim threw himself into his work. He needed the distraction. After hours he went out with his pamphlets. Accompanied respectable ladies into the area’s dens of iniquity and stood in the biting cold, extolling the virtues of abstinence and temperance.

“You want to live some, Detective,” one of the city’s many degenerates sneered at him. “I hear the Penguin tried to loosen you up a little.”

“Do you want to spend Christmas in the cells?” Jim asked, voice low, and chose to ignore the laughter, just as those he would show the error of their ways ignored his proselytizing.

It was late when he finally gave up, his fingers and toes frozen. His apartment wasn’t far, and he wrapped his scarf more closely about him, in deference to the latest snow fall. He was almost home when a noise caught his ears, a groan perhaps. It came again and, no, it was more of a whimper.

His heart caught in his throat when he traced it to the doorway of his own apartment building. To none other than Oswald Cobblepot, his clothes damp through with cold and his brow sweat slick with fever.

“Oswald,” he managed, voice rough, and it was the work of a moment to gather the other man in his arms. To get them both up the stairwell and into his apartment. To bang frantically on his neighbor’s door and beg him to send for the doctor.

He banked the fire and called upon his army training to strip Oswald out of his wet clothing. To bury him under layer after layer of blanket, and put his feet against a bed warmer.

“You appear to have things under control,” the doctor said when he arrived, and nevertheless poked and frowned and prodded. “It is in God’s hands now,” he said eventually, in verdict, and Jim thanked him solemnly and showed him the door.

Dropped to his knees in prayer and appealed to the Lord’s clemency, though Oswald was a sinner and he was far from deserving. Couldn’t promise to stay true to the scriptures, not even if his wish was granted.

“Please don’t die on me now,” he said later, pushing dark hair back from Oswald’s forehead to soothe him through his delirium, the way he cried out for his mother. “I liked having you here,” he confessed in the stillness of the early hours, “I enjoyed your company.”
He had, so very much. Had felt more human than he had in such a long time, more alive than he could ever remember.

“I think I love you.” he admitted finally, a whisper as morning approached, exhaustion making his limbs ache and his eyelids heavy. It shocked him then to feel a hand squeeze his own, to see the fever broken and lucidity in the bright blue eyes staring back at him.

“I’ve loved you since the first moment I saw you,” Oswald said, so serious Jim had no choice but to believe the claim. To bring the hand to his lips and kiss the knuckles, his heart thudding in sympathy when Oswald lifted the other, fingers trembling, to touch his cheek.

“It’s Christmas Day,” Jim said stupidly, unnecessarily, the church bells ringing the message out to all and sundry.

Oswald leaned forward, movements weak but careful, and brushed their lips together. Pulled away when it was done and smiled at him, hopeful and breath taking.

“Just the day for miracles.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

His mother always said that he was destined for great things, and Oswald believed her.

Every harsh word, every playground beating, it was just training for something bigger. Something better. The pain toughened him up, the loneliness made him independent.

When he proclaimed himself the King of Gotham it wasn’t grandstanding - it was destiny.

The other predictions his mother had made, those were the ones he struggled with. Because how could he be loved, how could he be happy, with his mother gone and nobody else in the world who he - Oswald - mattered to more than the Penguin.

His subordinates feared him, the way that it should be, and those he would count as his equals did their best to avoid him.

Ed hated him, could scarcely bear to look in his direction, and Jim treated him like something contagious. Like just being in the same room was something sordid and filthy.

Perhaps it was.

His world was rotten and wretched, and it only made sense that it would leave a stain. Leach into his skin and blacken his soul until he truly was untouchable.

That was the reason Jim was resisting this so stubbornly, he supposed, preferring to freeze to death than share Oswald’s body heat.

“I don’t bite,” he said, to stop his teeth chattering, and Jim looked at him, really looked at him, for the first time since they had been locked in together.

“Jesus,” Jim cursed, and the way he crossed the small room suggested that it wasn’t only to his own ears those words had sounded slurred.

Then he was hallucinating, he had to be, because Jim was taking his hands and encouraging him to slide them inside his jacket. Was all but hauling him into his lap, and wrapping his own arms around him.

“Jim?” he tried, his cheek against the other man’s shoulder, his fingers curling into the fabric of Jim’s shirt, soaking up his warmth and his goodness.

“You can’t die on me now,” Jim told him, and the conviction in his voice existed only in Oswald’s imagination. “You’ve caused me too much trouble already.”
“I try not to,” Oswald murmured, because he was too young to die. He had so much more to achieve, so many events to influence.

His mother’s faith in him to do justice.

“You don’t try very hard,” Jim said in response, following the alternative line of conversation. “My life was straightforward before you came into it.”

“Do you wish you’d never met me?” He wondered aloud, burdened suddenly by all the evil deeds he had done, the sins he had committed.

The silence stretched, cruel confirmation, but then Jim shook his head. Sighed and clutched him still closer, like this was a real embrace not a medical necessity.

“I should but I don’t. You’re under my skin, Oswald.”

He relaxed against Jim at that, breathed in the scent of him. Thought that if Jim was marred by his touch, dragged further into the shadows, then he was made cleaner, Jim’s presence shining like a light through the darkness.

Of course his mother had been right, he saw that now.

He and Jim, they were meant to rule Gotham together.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'sleigh' prompt. Kind of how I really see Gobblepot going down, with all the angst and tragedy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He and Barbara have history, and if she thinks she can get to him through Ed, that’s fine. She’s already given him the perfect weapon.

They had laughed about it - her bitter and angry, and him barely clinging to sanity - but he had been making mental notes. Knows more about Jim now than he thinks Jim knows about himself.

Understands the failures and successes of his previous attempts, and modifies his approach accordingly.

Plays to Jim’s sense of chivalry and his too obvious hero complex. Pretends to be frightened, desperate, then tells Jim he can manage alone. That he’s sorry he ever even mentioned it.

“I don’t want you to compromise yourself for me,” he says and Jim laps it up, so moved by his apparent self-sacrifice that he gazes at him in a way Oswald once would have killed for.

“I thought Ed was my friend too,” Jim confesses after another of his loyal associates turns up dead and horribly mutilated, incongruous against their festive backdrop of sleigh bells and sugar plums. “I always put my trust in the wrong people.”

Oswald looks up at him through his lashes, makes all the right noises, and grins inwardly with glee. He has already wrought his revenge on the opposition.

Because they’re good but he’s better, and everything goes to plan, right down to the jealousy writ clear on Barbara’s face when they think they have him at their mercy and Jim breaks the door down.

His white knight rushing to the rescue.

“Did they hurt you?” Jim asks even as he has his gun trained on Ed’s handsome face, and Oswald smirks behind his back. Pitches his voice just right when he replies,

“No, Jim. I don’t think so.”

He uses the limp to its full advantage, and Jim actually supports him out to the car. Helps him in and searches his face with real concern.

If only he had known it could be this easy, back when he was Fish Mooney’s umbrella boy.

But Jim is oblivious, wants so badly to believe him a reformed character. Pulls him close after another failed assassination attempt fills the newspapers, and personally overviews City Hall’s
security procedures.

“You’re too good to me,” Oswald tells him, tonight opting for wide eyed and virginal, and Jim finally kisses him, careful and tender, and whispers,

“Please let me protect you.”

He and Barbara had laughed themselves sick at this side of Jim, at his over earnestness, and how he couldn’t keep it outside the bedroom. Barbara regrets it now, perhaps, because she looks him up and down with disdain the next time their paths cross and says,

“Jim really needs his eyes testing.”

Ed scarcely reacts at all, no jealousy, no anything, and that night it’s frustration that lets him lay it on thick, until Jim is on his knees in front of him, asking if he’s sure. If he’s certain.

They haven’t done this, he hasn’t been willing to give up on Ed, and when he nods he doesn’t have to pretend for once. The nerves are all natural.

Jim isn’t in any hurry. Strips him bare, leaves him exposed, and then sets about kissing him everywhere. Spends so long exploring his bad leg, his ruined knee and his twisted ankle, that for once he can’t feel the pain, can’t feel anything but the overwhelming need for Jim to keep touching him.

“I love you,” Jim says afterwards, when he’s still struggling to draw breath, and for the first time he wonders if this was such a good idea.

Really questions it when Jim outright rejects Ed’s accusations, refuses to even listen to Barbara and Tabitha’s well informed comments. Puts him on the pedestal previously occupied by Thompkins and draws way too much attention, seemingly on a one man quest to prove that the Penguin has been rehabilitated.

It can’t last.

For all his faults, Jim is a good detective. He can’t ignore the evidence forever.

“You left me in Arkham,” he says when the showdown eventually comes. Wishes he could convince Jim his tears are genuine when he explains, “You refused my offer of friendship.”

“You broke my heart,” Jim admits, years later, when they’re older and wiser. When he’s a mostly respectable club owner and Jim is the police commissioner.

“I’m sorry,” he says without hesitation. Thinks of reaching out and begging for forgiveness. Dreams of erasing the hurt and driving back the loneliness.

Jim only sighs and shoves his hands in his pockets. Looks up into the night sky, gaze fixed on the bat signal, and says sadly, finally,

“Not as sorry as I am.”

Chapter End Notes
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Treat You Better

Chapter Summary

Because I saw this fanvid by Nekomata589 and had to write something based on it. TW for domestic violence. #GW16 fill for 'presents'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim shouldn’t care, shouldn’t interfere, but he’s been a police officer a long time. Long enough to recognize the warning signs.

The panicked conciliation and the cringing subservience. The way his gaze constantly flickers to his partner as he talks, seeking validation, and the way he flinches, when it’s the opposite which proves forthcoming.

It makes Jim uncomfortable. Makes him want to shake some sense into the man, to tell him he doesn’t have to live like that, not if he doesn’t want to. But there are other forces at play here because these aren’t normal circumstances, and Oswald Cobblepot isn’t a normal anything.

Nygma is a murderer, a psychopath, and Oswald probably gets off on it. Probably begs him to hit him, to humiliate him. To treat him like dirt and undermine him at every possible opportunity, even - perhaps especially - in public.

And it’s not as though Jim is in a position to judge anybody who wants to hurt the Penguin. He was the one who left him to die. Pushed him into freezing water, body broken and bleeding, and abandoned him at Arkham, even after Oswald begged him to help. To do something.

Maybe that was all Oswald had ever really wanted from him, to be made to feel worthless, and the mere idea makes him feel sick to his stomach.

Jim overhears them arguing, while he’s waiting for someone to ID his mugshots. Oswald is pleading, offering frantic apologies, and Jim has to ball his fingers into fists at the sound of a cut off cry, his gut twisting.

It might be consensual, and Oswald might be a monster, but that doesn’t mean Jim won’t have to pretend it doesn’t bother him.

Because he does; he has to focus on his breathing, on the pattern of the carpet. Anything other than the unsteadiness in Oswald’s voice and the redness which is going to develop into a spectacular black eye, if Jim is any judge of such injuries.

Nygma stays silent in the background, cold and disinterested, as Oswald dutifully looks through the photographs and Jim can’t help but shift and fidget. He’s done all the training, spent too many hours taking witness statements at refuges and hospitals. Seen too many of them later, laid out on a mortuary table.

“Call me if you remember anything,” he says when they’re done and, when Oswald shows him to the door, can’t help adding, “If you need anything.”
Oswald doesn’t, of course, and Jim tells himself that it’s better that way.

That if Nygma kills him, if they kill each other, Gotham will only benefit.

Except their paths keep crossing, and Jim has to keep pushing. Catalogs the injuries he can see, imagines the worst about the ones he can’t. Stares pointedly at the finger-shaped bruises ringing Oswald’s throat, visible even over his wing collar, and says,

“Asked for that, did you?”

Oswald tenses visibly, his own fingers reaching up before he forces them back down to his side again.

“Stay out of it, Jim,” he warns, but there’s no real heat to the words. “You have no idea what you’re talking about.”

It still doesn’t stop him. He doesn’t want another death on his conscience. He wants to see Edward Nygma back behind bars. He wakes hard and panting from a dream featuring Oswald front and center, and hates himself even as he slides a hand under the covers, disgusted with how little it takes for it to be over.

“He’ll go too far one day,” is what he tells Oswald. “Is it really worth it?”

“I love him,” Oswald protests, but he doesn’t sound as certain as he once did. “I deserve it.”

It’s the last part that bothers him, not because he can’t believe it but because he can. Oswald has bitten and clawed his way to the top, has clambered over everyone blocking his progress, and done things Jim would once have deemed beyond human capability.

He’s sick and he’s twisted, and all Jim can think one night, when Oswald is sitting across from him in the interrogation room, is that he doesn’t care. He wants him anyway.

“That’s some present,” he says, tone even though beneath the surface his emotions are raging, “he really is a romantic.”

Oswald frowns, cradles his ruined hand to his chest, and says,

“You don’t understand. He loves me.”

It takes a long time to heal, longer than it should, and they’re in the middle of a police raid when Jim notices the way Nygma grips it. Keeps Oswald next to him, as though offering support, squeezing so tightly Oswald’s face is paper white, cold sweat beading across his forehead.

Jim unholsters his firearm, crosses the room with purposeful movements and demands Nygma stand against the wall. Kicks his legs further apart and twists his arm back. Hisses in his ear, all under cover of a narcotics search,

“Is pain what does it for you, Ed? Is that why Kristen was trying so desperately to get the fuck away from you?”

Nygma fights back at that, though Jim’s the one with the gun, and it’s only Harvey stepping in that prevents a fatality.

“Don’t get involved,” Harvey advises, as though that’s ever been an option. “You’ll only provoke the situation.”
It’s true, at least in this instance, because Oswald turns up at his apartment a few nights later, bruised and bloody. Jim cleans him up, careful and tender, and he truly believes that he’s done it, that Oswald is planning on making the break, so that it’s like a knife to the heart when the other man tells him, matter of factly,

“He just gets carried away. He doesn’t mean it.”

“He’s going to kill you,” Jim says in response and he wants it to sound angry. Threatening. Instead it’s little more than a whisper and, after a long night twisting and turning on the couch, it’s Oswald who looks at him with pity, when they separate to go about their business.

It’s not the last time.

He’s stuck in some kind of vicious circle, whereby he finds Oswald on his doorstep, voice hoarse and cheeks tear stained, and then sees him out in the mornings, free to make the same mistakes all over again. His own head is a mess, his heart pushed past breaking point. Jim doesn’t know how he’s supposed to help, if Oswald won’t even admit there’s a problem.

“I can’t do this,” he says finally, gazing into clear blue eyes, too aware of the blood staining his fingers. “It’s killing me.”

Oswald’s face twists, a smile that falters and never quite makes it.

“Anybody would think you were jealous,” Oswald says, mocks, and that’s it, that’s the limit, and Jim scrubs his hands across his face, streaking blood, and his voice doesn’t crack but it’s a close thing when he accuses,

“You know I am.”

For the first time Oswald doesn’t take him up on his hospitality. Disappears into the cold night and Jim stares at the wall of his apartment until his vision swims.

When the news comes over his police radio, weeks later, it’s not that Oswald’s dead, but that Nygma is in the middle of trying. Harvey warns him to to hold back, to not do anything stupid, but Jim has long known that he’s in way too deep for that.

“He murdered Isabella!” Ed tells him when he arrives, and there’s none of the cool, collected genius Jim has come to expect of him. Instead he’s firing on emotion, eyes crazed and movements jerky. “I have to do this. I had to do everything.”

Jim swallows back bile and wants nothing more than to put a bullet through his skull.

“I’m sorry,” Oswald cries, cowering, and when Jim meets his eyes Oswald doesn’t flinch, doesn’t look away, but his face crumples as he says, resigned, “I told you I deserved it.”

It should be the jolt he needs. Should be the kick back to reason, to reality. It isn’t.

“Step back,” he says, tone clipped. “Get back or I’m going to shoot you.”

Nygma shakes his head, expression determined, and it’s not Jim’s finest hour. Not something he’ll ever be proud of, but the crack of the gunshot fills the air, and Nygma collapses even as Jim’s colleagues burst through the door, immobilized by the wound in his shoulder.

Oswald doesn’t cry in the aftermath. Sits still and silent on a bench at the precinct, shock blanket draped around him. Jim drops down to sit next to him, close, but not quite touching.
“He’ll live,” he says, tone neutral, and Oswald doesn’t move, doesn’t even acknowledge it. The silence stretches and Jim’s going to stand, going to walk away, when Oswald whispers, barely audible,

“Stay.”

So he does, just sits with him, the both of them lost in thought and exhausted.

It’s enough, for now. Enough to know that there is still hope, because this has always been what Jim is good at.

Picking up the pieces.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
“You’ll never guess who used to live here.”

Jim surveyed the tiny apartment, mentally mapping out all the spots that might be concealing a murder weapon. He wasn’t in the mood for guessing games.

“The Queen of England? I don’t know, astound me.”

Harvey glared at him, like he was the one in the wrong here.

“Close, Jimbo, but no cigar. The King of Gotham.” Jim still wasn’t paying attention so Harvey rolled his eyes, put unnecessary stress on the next word, “Penguin.”

That did the trick. Jim looked around the small space with fresh eyes, trying to imagine Oswald Cobblepot, with all his eccentricities, growing up in such an environment. It was a rough block, a rougher area, and suddenly Jim could picture it all too clearly.

Bullying and loneliness outside these walls, and the smothering attentions of Mrs Kapelput within them.

He wasn’t alone in his interpretation, clearly, and Harvey tipped his hat back and made a start on the nearest cupboard,

"Almost enough to make you feel sorry for the creep, isn’t it?”

Jim murmured, non-committal, and focused on the other side of the room, checking for any irregularities. It was more than enough for him, though he hated himself for it. His willingness to make excuses for Oswald - Penguin. To justify what he already knew to be inexcusable.

It played on his mind all through the search of the single bedroom, and then the diminutive bathroom and kitchen. He wondered when they had moved away, and how they had scraped together the money to do so.

There was only the main room left to search now, and the chances of finding a blood stained knife, or anything incriminating were diminishing by the second. Harvey had all the cushions off the sofa, gloved hands gingerly feeling down the grooves of the fabric.

Other than that there was scarcely any furniture in the room. Their guy had already split, taking everything movable with him. Jim checked underneath the battered coffee table, to be thorough, and then made a sweep along the skirting boards, before turning his attention to the fireplace.

Fireplace was a generous term, really. It was an ugly old gas fire set flush against a molded ply-
board surround. He was about to give it up and suggest they get back to the precinct when he spotted something, slightly protruding through a gap between the molding and the wall, a crack where the two didn’t quite match up properly.

It wasn’t big enough to get his fingers in for leverage, and he had to unclip the multi-tool from his belt so he could give it another go.

“Go on, Jim,” Harvey encouraged, mocking, and Jim glared as best he could, gritting his teeth as he pried the gap open, spurred on by the sight of something.

“A little help would be good,” he said, pointedly, and Harvey dragged it out a moment before doing some work and fishing the white object he had seen out. It wasn’t a knife handle, nor a signed confession.

“No way!” Harvey exclaimed, shaking the dust and grime off what was now clearly a small collection of envelopes. Jim took in the wobbly handwriting, the copious amount of red crayon, and agreed with the sentiment.

He had just uncovered Oswald’s childhood letters to Santa.

“You’re such a killjoy, Jim,” Harvey complained out in the car, on the way back to the precinct. “He’s the worst kind of lowlife, you don’t owe him anything.”

Jim shifted, uneasy, but refused to concede the issue.

He was going to hand the letters back to their rightful owner, or else simply bin them. It wasn’t right to photocopy personal property and stick it up all over the station, no matter how much his partner wanted to.

It would be best if he didn’t even read them, and channeled his curiosity into something more useful.

“He probably asked for a gun and a switchblade every year,” Harvey opined before finally dropping the matter, “he’s weird enough.”

It wasn’t that weird, Jim defended, in the privacy of his mind. He had asked for an air rifle three years running before accepting that his mother was never going to allow it, lest he shoot his eye out. He was certain Oswald hadn’t been planning murder at the age of six. Reasonably certain, anyway. The problem was that he couldn’t stop thinking about it, preoccupied with what it was that turned a seven-year-old who used such copious amounts of glitter into a ruthless killer.

He lasted out longer than he had expected, and it was not one but two days before he gave in and opened the first letter. It was easy enough to work out which that was. Oswald had written his age on the envelopes, next to his name, and besides the linear improvements to the childish scrawl were obvious.

There was Oswald at four asking for a ‘frend’ and Oswald at five explaining ‘now I am at kindergarten I would like a nice boy or a nice girl to sit next to.’ At six the letter was full of assurances that ‘I love my mommy lots but if I had a friend to play with too I promise I would be very very good,’ and at seven badly concealed disappointment that ‘I know you must be very busy and have lots and lots of good children to help, but it was very hard to be good this year because nobody ever wants to talk to me.’

Jim didn’t know if he wanted to continue, wished that the letters had been requests for weapons
and cute fluffy animals to try them out on. Anything would be better than the crawling sensation in his gut, the unbidden memories of the blatant hurt on Oswald’s face, every time he had rebuffed the younger man’s offer of friendship.

He had come this far though, and read a rambling confession from Oswald at eight, stating, ‘I am sorry I hit Kyle and made his nose bleed. I don’t normally hit him back, you know, but he was nasty about my mother and it’s not her fault she isn’t well in her mind sometimes.’

It made Jim think of his own encounters with Mrs Kapulput. Her lack of stability and Oswald’s obvious worry that Jim would think less of her for it. Jim couldn’t relate to a lot of this, not really; he had been happy for the most part at school, good at sports, good at his lessons, and popular enough that he always had people to hang around with. He knew that feeling well enough though, remembered the uncomfortable mix of protective pride and guilty embarrassment, whenever his own mother had broken down on school premises, over memories of his father.

The last letter was from Oswald aged nine, and Jim could imagine him speaking the same way that he wrote, even at that tender age, precocious and cynical.

‘Writing to somebody who doesn’t exist is a very futile exercise but it makes my mother happy to see me to do it. At least I already know this year that I’m not going to get what I ask for. It doesn’t matter really. I don’t want a friend. I don’t need one.’

Jim had to pour himself a drink when he was finished, and stared at the small bundle of paper for way longer than was healthy. He had heard similar sentiments from Oswald in the present, in the aftermath of the mess with Nygma.

It made Jim want to turn up on Oswald’s doorstep, uninvited, because over twenty years later, that line still wasn’t fooling anyone.

The letters - and their author - were never far from Jim’s mind in the weeks which followed. He ought to simply return them, like he said he would, but Oswald was too shrewd. He would know Jim had read them and be angry. Upset, even. And that shouldn’t matter to him but it did. It kept him awake at night, as he replayed each and every meeting that had taken place between them.

He wondered what things would be like now if he had been willing to bend a little. If he had returned Oswald’s smiles, and accepted his drinks. If he had gone to Oswald’s club opening, and pulled the man into his arms when he heard the news about his mother, the way he had wanted to.

Better still, if he had never found the stupid letters and been forced to reconsider everything he thought he knew about Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot.

Because Jim couldn’t quit thinking about him when he was out of bed either. It was Oswald his mind conjured every time he collared a criminal of their mutual acquaintance, and he found himself daydreaming about what Oswald might be doing in his off duty hours, whenever he picked up details of the Penguin’s latest exploits over the radio.

It was mid-December when a case took them to what Jim knew from the files had once been Oswald’s elementary school. Harvey tracked down their potential witness to the cafeteria, and Jim loitered in the main corridor, scouring the sea of faces on the wall until he hit upon Oswald’s class photo.

He wouldn’t have needed to be a detective to recognize him, not with that mess of dark hair, and that nose, even if back then it had looked entirely too big for him. Oswald had been scrawny, his
unfashionable clothing hanging off his frame, and Jim thought of how cruel kids could be, and how he wished he could stop caring about things which may or may not have been said and done to the man over two decades ago.

They weren’t even friends and, if that wasn’t for Oswald’s lack of trying, Jim had nothing to feel guilty for. God knows how many people he had killed in the interim.

The headteacher came to stand beside him then, Harvey in tow, and she told them both, without irony,

“It was before my time, but did you know that Mayor Cobblepot was one of our pupils?”

“Speaking of our illustrious mayor,” Harvey said as they made their way out to the car, “I may have dropped you in it earlier.”

“May have what?” Jim asked, genuinely confused. He had seen Oswald a few times since that day they had searched his old apartment, but it had always been in company, and usually at a distance. Harvey was a good detective, he couldn’t deny that, but Jim didn’t think he had been that obvious, not outside of his private imaginings.

“We might have exchanged a few harsh words,” Harvey procrastinated, “as you do, and when your name came up, well, I might have suggested he wanted you to dress up as Santa so he could sit on your lap and read those old letters out to you.”

“What!” Jim demanded, because he really didn’t know where else to start with such a statement.

“I thought you were going to give those letters back,” Harvey shrugged, trying and failing for contrite, while Jim just stared back at him, bewildered.

Trust Harvey to make the whole thing his fault.

When they got back to the precinct Jim was strangely disappointed not to find Oswald making life difficult for the desk sergeant. Part of him had wanted to see that again, Oswald turning up out of the blue and demanding to see him. They were past that though.

Jim had told the man over and over again that they weren’t friends, that they never could be. It wasn’t Oswald’s fault if he had finally started to listen to him. Except Officer Dean was pushing her way through the bullpen towards his desk, slip of paper in her right hand.

“Message for you,” she said without preamble, “from City Hall no less. The Mayor wants to see you.”

He was going to ignore the summons, or at least keep Oswald waiting. It’s what he would have done if he was in his right mind, surely. Those letters had done a real number on him though, and he only told Harvey he had a lead to follow up before going to collect them and face the music.

He had already spent too long running from this moment.

Because he had wanted to believe that the last few weeks had been about pity. That the letters had revealed a lonely little boy Jim wanted to save from himself. But that hadn’t been it at all, not really. The letters had forced him to see Oswald as he was and not as he wanted him to be - human, rather than a monster.

A man who was capable of feeling, and a man Jim had no choice but to admit he had feelings for.
Jim rapped on his office door when he reached City Hall, anxious but determined, and though Oswald greeted him without his customary enthusiasm he was still pleased to see him. That smile was genuine, Jim knew. He had dedicated more than enough time over the last few weeks to cataloging his expressions.

“I believe you have something which belongs to me,” Oswald said, and Jim noted the uneasiness in his voice, along with his fidgeting. “Have you - Does anybody know about this, other than you and Bullock?”

“Harvey hasn’t read them,” Jim blurted in response. “I wouldn’t let him.”

Oswald looked surprised at that, but grateful, and Jim went on without being prompted,

“I was going to give them to you. I just -” He reached into his jacket and took out the letters. Laid them on the desk and swallowed thickly as Oswald trailed his long fingers over them. “I let curiosity get the better of me.”

Oswald watched him closely, like he was trying to work out exactly what Jim was up to. His sincerity, or lack thereof, and whether he was going to use this scenario to call in a favor. Jim let him, for once. Did his best to maintain eye contact, but didn’t challenge. Didn’t push and yell to distract from what he was thinking. It worked, because when Oswald spoke the honesty in his words made Jim uncomfortable,

“I hadn’t thought of these in years, until I met you. You were the kind of friend I would have wanted, Jim. Good enough to have principles, bad enough to stand up for them. And you never disparaged my mother.”

Their eyes met and Jim had to suck in a breath because they never alluded to this, for all that it was always there, under the surface. The night that had truly bound them together, proved that the two of them weren’t so very different. That he was more than capable of pulling the trigger, when the situation warranted it.

“I’m sorry,” Jim said in turn. “I shouldn’t have read those, and I shouldn’t have treated you the way I did, either.” He rubbed a hand at the back of his neck, wished he was the type of person who knew what to say to make things better. “I do consider you a friend, you know.”

Oswald raised an eyebrow, less mocking than incredulous, and Jim couldn’t help but smile sheepishly,

“You might have noticed I’m not exactly overrun with them. I guess I’ve never been very good at showing my appreciation.”

“Then let’s toast to that,” Oswald said and smiled back. Poured them both a drink and gestured for Jim to sit, sliding one of the glasses over to him. “It means a lot to hear you say it.”

Jim was going to refuse, and spout his usual line about being on duty. But he was standing in the Mayor’s office, and this had to count as working towards better police and civic understanding.

More importantly, he just didn’t want to.

So he sat, and drank, and effectively talked about nothing until Oswald’s new chief of staff knocked on the door to remind him of a meeting, and Jim realized that he really ought to be getting back to the station.

“Thank you,” Jim said before he left, meaning the drink, and the conversation. For Oswald’s
Oswald beamed at him, the way he did in Jim’s memories, and said, “Not at all, Jim. Try not to leave it so long, next time.”

Jim didn’t get much mail, not beyond bills and circulars, so when he came home a few days later to find a handwritten envelope addressed to him, it inspired a thrill of curiosity. Most people would just contact him via the station, and he didn’t have anyone he sent letters to.

It was probably a Christmas card, he decided, and pushed away the mild disappointment when he was proved right, because he had already received one from his family meaning the sender was still a mystery.

The picture was innocuous, trees and snow and nice lighting, and his eye went straight to the printed greeting when he opened it, telling him the card was from the Mayor’s office. Oswald had written all around it though, cramped but elegant, an adult version of the traits which had already been evident in those Santa letters.

‘To my dear friend James Gordon,’ it started, making Jim’s heart flutter, ‘I’ve written the following many times this year, but I truly do wish you a happy and peaceful holiday season, and all the best for the New Year. My greatest hope is that I will see more of you, I do so enjoy your company.’

Jim was aware he was grinning stupidly by this point, but it wasn’t as though there was anyone around to judge him. Nobody was going to know that he felt happier than he had in months, just at the thought of a convicted criminal wanting to spend time with him.

‘I once wrote that asking for things at Christmas was a futile exercise, but I must admit to having changed my opinion. It might take a while, but it does seem you get what you wish for eventually. With that in mind, I wonder if you would care to join me for dinner one evening? I wouldn’t presume to name a day, and with the nature of our professions it would be rather pointless, but if you ring me we could arrange something.’

Oswald had written his private number underneath, careful printing as opposed to the flowing scrawl elsewhere, and Jim was reaching for his cell phone even as he read the parting greeting. They were friends, were going to eat dinner together, and even if it was greedy for him to want yet more, he couldn’t help the mental wishlist he was already compiling.

At least it was the right time of year for it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Angel

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'angel' prompt. So this one is kind of dark - Jim gets overinvested in a case and can't let go. TW for mentions of suicide, abuse, murder, etc.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim’s life changed forever the day they caught Janie Davidson’s killer.

Because Janie Davidson was just eight years old, all pigtails and freckles, and her parents had put their trust in him to bring their daughter home, safe and sound.

Mrs Davidson had wept, hysterical, while Mr Davidson visibly shook, waxen and helpless, as he explained that he had only turned his back for a moment. That Janie had lots of friends, was very popular. That she was careful, sensible, and wasn’t allowed to use the internet without supervision.

“You will find her,” he asked, voice little more than a whisper, “won’t you?”

Jim stood on the threshold, Janie’s most recent photograph in his hands, and had to look away. Had learned enough from the Wayne case not to make promises he might not be able to keep.

That sometimes his best just wasn’t good enough.

“I’ll do everything I can,” he said, finally, and went to face the hastily convened press conference.

Janie’s picture went up everywhere; flashed across every news bulletin and was shared far and wide, on social media. Out in the streets Jim handed out flyers himself, and pounded on the doors of every lowlife he could think of.

Prayed to God, if he were up there, to let her be all right.

To just let her live through it.

Night fell even as they organized search teams and briefed the dog handlers. Released the first wave of likely candidates from the holding cells, and latched their hopes to the arrival of the federal task force.

He snatched a fractured hour’s sleep, in the back of a squad car, and woke sweating and trembling, his mind stuck back in Afghanistan. There had been lost children there too, injured and frightened, and when he closed his eyes he sometimes still saw them, along with the bloodied bodies they had dug out of the rubble and the broken mothers who had identified them.

They hit the 24 hour mark and pretended that it didn’t mean anything. Chased flimsy leads and followed up every potential sighting. Tracked down recently released criminals, and made heartfelt appeals to the public because somebody, somewhere, had to know something.

“Please don’t hurt her,” Mrs Davidson pleaded, sobbed, for the cameras, and Mr Davidson
swallowed convulsively, over and over again, staring out into a sea of flash bulbs.

Jim had to clear his own throat before he could speak, raked a hand through his hair when he was asked to repeat Janie’s last known whereabouts, and realized with a start that he hadn’t washed, hadn’t eaten, since before the call came in.

Oswald Cobblepot turned up at the front desk on the third day, his pasty complexion not out of place for once, nor his nervous energy.

“Let me know how I can help, Jim,” he said, and placed a hand on his arm as though the touch would actually be welcome. “I want to be of assistance.”

Jim should have refused outright, oughtn’t to have even considered accepting help from anyone as twisted as the Penguin. But he had the contacts they lacked, and the manpower. He glanced over at the evidence board, all useless except for that central smiling photograph, and came to a decision.

“Do whatever it takes, Oswald.”

Perhaps if the offer had never been made, it would have been easier. If he had never allowed himself to hope that it might make a difference. That somebody could waltz in and strike gold when the entire department, the FBI, had achieved nothing.

Because when the call came, when Oswald couldn’t find the words to tell him, he didn’t even make it to the mens’ room before he was bringing up black coffee and bile.

The Davidsons’ asked him to be a pallbearer and, when the day came, Jim polished his shoes and the buttons on his dress uniform until he could see his face in them. Took in the dark smudges beneath his eyes and wondered how on earth he was supposed to get through it. He had been one of the first on the scene, had attended the autopsy. He knew what had been done, knew how she had suffered, and the fact they already had their man in custody was very little comfort.

If it weren’t for Harvey, Jim didn’t think he could have done it. Couldn’t have concentrated, couldn’t have focused, and when it was finally over, when the little white coffin was in the ground, it was Harvey who pulled him in close for a moment, and let Jim cry against his shoulder.

“Let it out, Jim,” Harvey soothed. “I got you.”

It was Harvey too who led him to the bar where the others had gathered, solemn faces at odds with the sheer amount of drink flowing. Harvey who pressed drink after drink into his hand, and told him that it would be alright, that he had done everything he could have.

Perhaps he had, but it didn’t change the outcome.

He left when the gathering was still in full swing, and walked the city streets until his head almost felt clear and he found himself outside Oswald’s latest front of a legitimate business. He thought of going inside, and goading Gotham’s criminal kingpin for a distraction.

Of Oswald simply repeating his lies about their being friends, about Jim being someone he cared for, and just for one night letting himself believe it.

Then reality caught up with him, and he went home to his empty apartment.

The following morning his alarm went off at exactly the same time as usual. Everything looked exactly the same as it always did; the weak sunlight fighting its way through the windows, and the
collection of blood stained shirts in his closet.

He caught the subway to work, crammed in tight against all the usual suspects, and tried to understand how life could go on as normal, when it felt as though he was dead inside.

Nobody noticed. He was too used to playing the game, had plenty of experience when it came to continuing to put one foot in front of the other. He refused the suggestion he back down now, move on to something else, and stopped the others from committing murder, and telling the world there had been another accidental death in custody. Withstood their disgust and their accusations, and forced himself to listen to every sickening detail.

“I wonder why you’re so concerned with my welfare?” Ackerley said, coy, and just being in the same room with him made Jim’s skin crawl. Made him want to throw aside all of his principles and strangle him, barehanded.

“Without the law we’d be no better than you,” Jim said instead. “No better than animals.”

“Oh,” Ackerley smirked, pulling at the split lip another prisoner had inflicted, “I thought it was because you enjoy hearing what I did to her.”

He had to leave the room then, had to struggle for breath in the corridor. Went to the restroom and stared at his reflection before putting his fist through the mirror, streaking blood everywhere. Then he washed his hands in the sink, calm as he wadded paper tissue around the cuts, and returned to finish the interview.

It worked. Ackerley’s lawyers had no leverage, no hook for a case of police corruption - police brutality. The Davidsons broke down in the public gallery, confronted for the first time with some of the finer details, and the judge wasn’t unaffected, when she sentenced Ackerley to a lifetime in Blackgate.

“You did it, Jim,” Harvey said, outside of the courthouse. “You should be proud of yourself.”

The Davidsons thanked him too, for all he had done for them, and that night Jim sat and stared blankly at the wall of his sitting room for hours, lost without the the court case, the battle for justice, to sustain him.

Perhaps it was beginning to show too, cracks creeping in around the edges.

“You’re no fun no more,” one of his regular collars complained, after an hour of attempting and failing to get a reaction out of him from across the interrogation table. “Even the boss says there’s no point in trying anything.”

Jim raised an eyebrow at the idea of Oswald dishing out advice on whether or not he was likely to lose his temper, but then the amusement was gone, and he went back to reading through the witness statements.

McKenna suggested, delicately, that he go pay the shrink a visit. That it couldn’t do him any harm to talk about it. He did, just to shut him up, and it was as big a waste of time as he had known it would be. He combed his hair before his appointments, sipped obediently at over sweetened tea and said all the things they wanted to hear, until they signed him off their books, fit and healthy.

Mr Davidson killed himself a few days before what would have been Janie’s ninth birthday. Jumped from an office block in the East End, overlooking the waste ground where one of Oswald’s lackeys had come across Janie’s body. Jim stared at his mangled remains on the mortuary table and hoped that it had been enough, and that he was at peace now.
He attended the funeral, never truly considered doing otherwise, and watched dry eyed as the coffin was lowered into the reopened grave. It would have done him good to cry, probably, but the tears wouldn’t come.

Something inside of him was broken.

Harvey took him for drinks again afterwards, observed him carefully as he tipped back glass after glass, desperate for oblivion.

“None of this was your fault,” Harvey said, serious, and Jim nodded.

It was easier than arguing.

Harvey hadn’t believed him, or else it was becoming too obvious. His inability to sleep, and the over the counter pills he was using to self-medicate. His frequent trips to the rooftop of his own apartment building, to stare down at the sidewalk and imagine what it would be like, to not have to be aware of anything.

Lee dropped by, like some kind of intervention, to tell him that he was a good man with so much to live for. That she was there for him, if he wanted to talk, and when he asked if Harvey had sent her she shook her head and flushed prettily, because she never had been much of a liar.

He thanked her, forced a smile, and once she was gone sat with his gun in his hands, wondering if any of his neighbors would notice if he used it to blow his brains out.

The answer came a few weeks later, when uniform were dispatched to investigate a suspicious smell and spied a slowly decomposing corpse through the letterbox. The scene was horrendous, even by Gotham’s standards, and Jim had to turn away and retch before he regained control of himself.

“The mob,” Simmons speculated.

“Domestic,” McKenna argued.

“He killed himself,” Lucius explained, patiently, and Jim filled in the blanks in the case file. He had been a good guy, a nice guy. Wasn’t mixed up with the wrong people, had never hurt anyone. Had just been so depressed and so lonely he had pressed a gun to his temple.

“Stupid fucker,” Harvey said when they went through his things, the faded family snaps and the love letters from an ex-girlfriend. The piles of outdated newspapers. Jim picked one up, front page announcing the serialization of Ackerley’s life story, in exchange for an undisclosed sum of six figures, and wondered why anyone bothered.

“You’re not the first cop to fail, Jim,” Harvey said finally, addressing the elephant in the room. “But you got friends, you got family. The only difference between you and this guy is that his couldn’t get close enough to see what was happening.”

“I’m fine,” Jim snapped, like he could remember the last time he ate a hot meal, or when he had last done his laundry. Harvey only shook his head, bit his lip like the words pained him, then finished, frankly,

“If you don’t accept some help and sort yourself out I’m going to suspend you from duty. You’ve left me with no other option.”
He left the station on time that night, though it was the opposite of his custom, and wandered aimlessly. Scarcely noticed when his feet took him to the roughest alleys of the East End, nor the junkies on the street corners who flaunted their wares, at least until their pimps recognized him.

“Slumming it tonight, Detective?” One asked, emboldened by his firearm, and Jim blinked as if waking from a dream, taking in his surroundings. Another figure emerged from the shadows, and then another, and suddenly Jim knew exactly why he was here.

It had been weeks and he still hadn’t worked up the nerve to pull the trigger.

This way was better. People might guess, might even be certain, but they wouldn’t be able to prove it. And if a couple of scumbags went down for his murder, that had to be more worthwhile than the department wasting their limited man hours so they could close the file on his suicide.

“What are you waiting for?” He needled, because even with mitigating circumstances, the men in front of him would still be looking at hefty sentences. “Get on with it.”

Except there was something he was missing, something which raised laughter instead of anger.

“You’re going to make me a nice little bonus,” the ringleader grinned, teeth flashing, and in the short moments between the blow to the back of his skull and unconsciousness, Jim resigned himself to the idea that even getting himself killed wasn’t going to be as straightforward as he had first imagined.

He came to slowly, struggling to work out where he was, and why his head hurt quite so badly.

“I’ve been waiting for this,” a familiar voice said, and Jim tipped his head to one side, shocked to see Oswald Cobblepot’s face filling his vision. The other man was knelt on the floor, though it couldn’t be comfortable, just so he could keep close tabs on what Jim was doing. “I would tell you how much I just paid for the privilege of having you brought here, but that would be rather vulgar.”

Jim tried to sit, head spinning viciously.

“Keep still,” Oswald instructed, not unkindly, and pressed blessedly cool fingers to his forehead. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

Jim swallowed thickly because this wasn’t something he knew how to deal with. He was weak, vulnerable, and whatever reason Oswald had for paying for his company, it wasn’t likely to be painless.

Oswald laughed, cold and bitter, but his fingers stayed gentle on his brow, moving to pet at his hairline.

“The idea dawned on him all at once, blinding in its obviousness, and he reached out to catch hold of one of Oswald’s wrists, so that the other man’s eyes went wide, almost hopeful.

“I know you’re a monster,” Jim countered, spurred on by the hurt in Oswald’s eyes and the sick feeling in the pit of his own stomach. “I know all your dirty little secrets, Penguin. How you worked your way up to umbrella boy. What you did to your own family. Why Nygma turned on you. Did you try this out on him too - pretending to care she was dead, pretending to be decent? We both know you’re not capable of it.”
Jim,” Oswald said, a low warning, and Jim pushed further still, rubbed his thumb across the fluttering pulse point, a mockery of a caress, and maintained eye contact,

“You know you aren’t. Even Arkham couldn’t fix you. I could get you sent back there, it wouldn’t be difficult. I read Strange’s files, he had the right idea. Maybe ten, twenty years from now they’ll let you out again. Imagine that, twenty years of nothing but isolation and shock therapy.”

Oswald wrenched away from him at that, the potent mix of fear and anger making him shake and reach for the ever ready switchblade.

“I’ll do it,” Jim assured, heart pounding. “If you let me walk out of here.”

If - and the words hung, silent but clear in the air between them - you don’t kill me.

When he came to the second time it was to find light filtering through the heavy drapes at the windows, and a blanket laid over him. His tie and collar had been loosened and, at some point, someone had removed his shoes so he could sleep more comfortably.

The details of the night before flooded back to him; what he had attempted to do, and the cruel things he had said to help him achieve it. The memories didn’t correlate at all with his current situation.

“I’m glad to see you’re awake,” Oswald said, tone even, and set about unloading a tray of tea and toast and orange juice, on a table a few feet away.

Jim sat up in a rush, and it hurt, but no worse than it usually did after spending a night passed out on the sofa.

“I -” he started, awkward, and Oswald only sat primly and said,

“Come and eat your breakfast.”

He hesitated for a moment before crossing the room. If Oswald hadn’t already killed him, chances were he wasn’t going to. He patted at his jacket pockets all the same, searching for the blister packs he had taken to carrying. It wasn’t illegal, and it wasn’t as though they were prescription. It just helped to take the edge off, to make the world a little less overwhelming.

“I’ve become something of an expert on painkillers,” Oswald said easily, buttering toast as though this was a scene they played out every morning. “So you should trust me when I say that you take way too many of them.”

“I’m not addicted,” Jim protested, as if to prove the man’s point, then reached for the orange juice, wanting a distraction.

He used the time to observe Oswald. His suit was as perfect as ever, Jim noted, and his hair had been teased into its usual ludicrous style. His face was pale though, paler than normal, and perhaps it was Jim’s imagination, but the skin around his eyes looked puffy, as if he had been crying.

“I’m not going to kill you, Jim,” Oswald said, out of nowhere, “no matter what you say to me. I know,” and there was a slight hitch there, “the feeling is not mutual, but I will always consider you a friend. I won’t stand by and watch you do this to yourself.”

Jim was tempted to ask what. To snap that there was absolutely nothing wrong with him. But he caught sight of his reflection in one of the room’s mirrors, and was shocked by how awful he
looked. The weight he had lost, and the state of his clothing. His hair was too long, lank and greasy, and even his eyes looked dull. Like part of him really was dead and buried.

“Eat that,” Oswald said softly, and put a plate of toast in front of him. “Then you can take a shower.”

He did as he was told for once, cleared one plate and half of another, and stood under the hot water until he almost remembered what it was like, not to feel completely numb. Oswald left clothes for him, and Jim didn’t care to think about where they had come from, or why they fit so well. Just dressed methodically and combed his wet hair back from his forehead. Shaved his face and ignored the strange feeling it gave him, when Oswald took the transformation in and smiled approvingly.

“You don’t scrub up too badly,” Oswald said, deliberately light, and Jim wished he had the words to thank him. To apologize for his behavior the night before, and to ask for his forgiveness. To try to explain the jumbled mess inside his head, and how he wanted it to get better, truly he did.

To ask Oswald simply to hold him and, in turn, let Jim wrap his arms around him.

“Thanks,” was all he actually managed. “I need to get to work.”

For a few hours it even felt as though that had been all he needed. A good night’s sleep, food and a hot shower. The custody sergeant quipped that she had barely recognized him, and Harvey put a hand on his shoulder and told him quietly,

“We’re all here for you.”

Jim gave him a half smile and turned his attention to his paperwork. Thought vaguely about taking some time on the weekend to go and get his hair cut. Then it was gone, the spark extinguished, and he buried his face in his hands because it was too much, and all he wanted was to sleep without interruption.

He hadn’t moved when Harvey found him an hour later, the pleased relief on his face replaced with something altogether less encouraging. Jim had been expecting it, really. Gossip traveled fast in a city like Gotham.

“What the hell were you thinking!?” Harvey hissed, demanding, and when Jim didn’t answer Harvey sighed, defeated. “I’m not going to lecture you about last night. You’re a clever guy, you know how stupid it was.”

Jim had to look away, could feel his vision blurring.

“I’ve got no choice,” Harvey said, quiet but resolute. “You’re suspended from duty pending a psych evaluation.”

“No!” Jim couldn’t help it, couldn’t stop himself. It would take weeks until he was assessed, months before he was cleared. If they cleared him. He felt sick, he had nothing left without the job. Nothing.

Harvey met his gaze, searched his face for something.

“You give me your badge and take a month’s leave. That’s the best I can do, Jim.”

It hurt, physically hurt, but Jim reached for his badge. Ran his fingers across it before handing it over. Harvey took it with a nod, and pushed it into his jacket. Picked up his hat and fished his car keys from another pocket,
“Come on, let me drive you home.”

“I can make my own way,” Jim countered, not wanting Harvey to see him break down, to witness the state of his apartment. Harvey only smiled sadly and said,

“It’s not negotiable. I don’t trust you to be alone right now.”

There he was, facing a Gotham winter with no badge, no purpose, nothing.

Harvey dropped in when he could, scouting the place for pills and rope, as though the next time he called would be the one he found Jim hanging from the ceiling. Jim tried, once, but the plasterboard wasn’t strong enough and when Harvey saw the debris, he didn’t say anything.

Simply forced him to eat and to move, and suggested he try getting some fresh air every once in a while.

That was how he found himself talking to Mrs Davidson on an icy sidewalk, her hair and face made up but her voice trembling.

“I have to keep busy,” she told him, and looked relieved when Jim offered to carry the heavy shopping bags she was shifting. “I can’t let her memory just fade. I have to make it all worth something.”

He nodded, unable to speak, and was glad that she willing to fill the silence.

“You’re probably wondering what all this is for,” she said as they made their way in the direction of the car park. Jim felt the weight of the shopping as if for the first time. It was no wonder Harvey didn’t want him on duty. “We’re hosting a children’s party, for Christmas. For those who wouldn’t otherwise get - Well, you know.”

Jim waited, polite, and Mrs Davidson dabbed at her eyes. Took a shaky breath and went on,

“It would mean such a lot if you could come.”

He had nothing but time and still he hesitated. Because this was his fault. If they had searched that scrubland earlier, perhaps, if he hadn’t wasted time overseeing the first wave of interviews. If, if, if.

Mrs Davidson put down her shopping bags, and took the ones he was holding from his unresisting fingers. Held his ice cold hands in her gloved counterparts, and looked him in the eye as she said,

“We never blamed you, James.”

Finally the tears came. He sobbed in her arms, even as she sobbed in his, and it didn’t feel like closure or a new beginning. It felt like he was ready to start dealing with it.

He bagged all the trash in his apartment that day, and opened the drapes in his bedroom for the first time since he could remember. Each day that followed became became a step in the right direction. He started eating regularly, and changed all of his bedding. Threw away the painkillers and the alcohol, and went to see a doctor for something that might actually touch it.

Agreed to go back to counseling, and responded to some of the personal calls and emails he had been ignoring for months or more. Went to the party a few weeks later, and watched the open delight on the faces of the kids with something approaching happiness.
“The former mayor donated all the money for the presents,” Mrs Davidson told him, and the smile on her own face was genuine, along with the pain in her eyes. Jim clasped her hand for a moment, in support, and looked around the hall again, wondering if Oswald was planning on putting in an appearance.

He hadn’t spoken to the other man since the morning after the night before, though he had bumped into Lee while out shopping. She had smiled at him, just as softly as had used to, and told him how glad she was to see him looking more like himself. How worried she had been when Oswald Cobblepot had asked her to pay Jim a visit.

It had made him question a lot things. Had made it even more imperative that he try and make things right between them. Oswald didn’t show though, for all that Jim lingered, and when he was asked if he wanted a ride he acted on impulse and found himself within walking distance of the Van Dahl mansion.

“I had your colleagues from narcotics here this morning,” Oswald said when he worked up the courage to go through with the idea. “I could argue police harassment.”

“I’m not on duty,” Jim said. Then because there was no point in being coy about it, added, “I’ve been unofficially suspended. I’m sure you’ve heard all about it.”

Oswald looked away at that, expression faltering. “It was in your best interests, Jim. I didn’t realize how bad things were.”

Somehow the confession didn’t surprise him. There wasn’t even any anger, and Jim dropped into the chair closest to Oswald’s, exhausted.

“It was good of you to donate the money. The kids had a really good time today.”

Oswald shook his head, scoffed, “Don’t worry, it wasn’t that selfless. You don’t need to re-evaluate what you think of me.”

Jim said nothing. Glanced around the room, at the sofa he had slept on, and the table they had eaten their surreal breakfast at. Eventually the silence became too oppressive and he couldn’t wait any longer.

“I’m sorry for what I said to you. I wanted you to lose your temper.”

“You wanted me to kill you,” and it was Oswald who looked unstable now, voice strained as he continued, “You wanted me to spend the rest of my life knowing I’d destroyed the only good thing that ever happened to me.”

“I -” Jim started but Oswald spoke over him,

“I can’t do this. I thought I could but I can’t. You need to leave.” Jim only blinked at him, bewildered, and Oswald stood, hands pushing at his shoulders. “You have to leave right now.”

In the past he would have. Would have stormed from the room and stamped down the problem to deal with some other time. Else he would have yelled and pushed back, reduced everything to the level of a playground spat, and pretended it was sorted when there was blood streaking his knuckles.

But that was what had got him here. What had almost got him nowhere at all.

It would be better if, just once, he went with his gut instinct.
“I’m not leaving,” he said, stubborn, though he did stand. “I haven’t finished apologizing.”

Oswald sputtered, apocalyptic with rage, and Jim sucked in a fortifying breath before pulling him close and wrapping his arms around him. Held him there until the other man’s protests died and the tension began to leach from his frame, until Oswald’s arms came up, tentative, to hold him back.

“I’ve wanted to do this for such a long time,” Jim said, and it was true. Had been true for longer than he had ever wanted to admit to himself. “I’m sorry.”

It wasn’t the best idea, not right there, not right then, but one moment Oswald was pushing back to look at him, and the next Jim was leaning in to kiss him. Then Oswald was kissing him back, desperate, and the rest of the world was fading away, until they were both left flushed and breathless. Until they had to move to the sofa, to take the weight off Oswald’s leg, and because his own head was swimming.

They stayed close though, so close that it didn’t seem strange when sitting became sprawling, him lengthways across the sofa, and Oswald’s head against his shoulder, laying on top of him.

“I don’t understand why you’re doing this, Jim,” Oswald said when their breathing had evened out, little more than a whisper in the oversized room, though his grip on him didn’t loosen. Jim didn’t have an answer, at least not a pretty one.

“I don’t want to keep lying to myself,” he said after some thought. “I don’t want to be alone.” He found Oswald’s hand and linked their fingers together, heart hammering because nothing had mattered this much, not in a very long time. “I don’t want to regret not even trying.”

Oswald looked up at him, silent but questioning, and Jim could see the lingering hurt. The damage he had done, maybe even all the damage he would do.

“I don’t want your only memories of me to be the ones where I’m hurting you.”

“You’ll change your mind,” Oswald said eventually, barely audible and Jim just tightened his grip and resolved to try. To make it all worth something.

His entire life had changed - it was down to him to ensure it was for the better.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Jim refused to give in until the very last moment. Ignored Harvey’s questioning gaze, and stubbornly refused to acknowledge the truth that if he were to just take the final step, he wouldn’t even need to look up the number. His thumb hovered over the call button, again and again, and when he pushed the phone away to bury his face in his hands he knew that it was already over.

Because everything came back to Cobblepot, in the end, no matter what he did. They were bound together, indelibly, and had been ever since that very first day, when the man had looked up at him, eyes wide and tone falsely innocent, and his own inaction had marked his first step on the road toward oblivion.

“I can help, Jim,” Cobblepot said in the present, eyes bright with victory, “but it’s going to cost you.”

Long ago words echoed in Jim’s ears, friends don’t owe friends, silly, and he pushed the memory away roughly. Oswald had never meant any of it, had never been anything other than cold and calculating.

“I won’t kill anyone,” Jim said, intending it to sound strong, calm. Resolute. Instead the ‘not again’ was almost audible, a desperate entreaty, and the other man’s shark grin was only further proof of how low Jim had fallen.

“I won’t force you to do anything you find truly offensive,” Oswald said, making eye contact, and Jim had no choice but to accept it.

To go home and lie awake in his bed, twisting and turning, waiting for a sign that it was done, and that this latest nightmare was over. It came just before dawn, in the buzzing of his cell phone, and Jim had it against his ear in an instant, Oswald’s voice soft and sinful,

“You can sleep easy now, old friend. Thank you for seeking my assistance.”

The bodies turned up, eventually, but it was a clean job, very clean, and the department had nothing to go on. Jim stared at the remains on the mortuary slab and swallowed back bile.

Because this was his doing. His weakness, his hypocrisy.

“Do you know anything about this?” Lee demanded when they were alone, the accusation making his stomach churn. He had done it for her - for her safety - and he hoped that that meant something.

“You should leave Gotham,” he said, not for the first time, and when the news spread throughout the precinct that she was actually taking him up on it Jim breathed a sigh of relief, ready for
Oswald to extract his payment.

Except the other man appeared to be in no hurry to call in his favor.

Every crony they pulled in, every case they built, Jim kept expecting the request to come in. For a witness to refuse to speak, for a vital piece of evidence to go missing. For a blind eye to be turned, for Jim to abandon all of his once dearly held principles.

For him to be the one who pulled the trigger, and take out some underworld rival or other. Yet when their paths crossed, inevitably, no mention was made of it. Not of his debt, and not of what Oswald had done to secure it.

“You’re looking well,” Oswald said instead, when a case brought Jim to his doorstep, and perhaps it was exasperation, perhaps it was something more, but Jim only ran a hand through his hair, exhausted, and said,

“Good, because I feel like death warmed over.”

“You work too hard,” Oswald told him, like Jim’s welfare was an actual concern, and pressed a drink into his hand before he could protest. “When was the last time you took a holiday?”

Jim thought about the exchange in the days afterwards. If it meant that Oswald was really going to let it slide, the blank check he had written him, and if he wasn’t, what exactly was it he wanted? He began to let himself hope, against all of his better instincts, and he left his apartment one night in the search of something halfway edible, and stood watching carol singers gathered on a street corner for a moment longer than he ought to have.

He came to in the back of a car, bound and helpless, his head covered.

“You won’t get away with this,” he managed, struggling, and it sounded like something he believed, not just something he was hoping for. “I’m a police officer.”

There was no comeback, nothing but silence, and Jim tried to focus. Tried to think up a plan, because his gun and his cell were gone, and the lack of noise from the outside world was enough to tell him they were already beyond the city limits. He was no closer when the car came to a halt, when strong hands hauled him up and out and forwards. Shoved him through a door, down a nondescript corridor, yanking the bag from his head and leaving him blinking against the sudden brightness.

He pushed away the rising panic, determined not to give his captors the satisfaction. He had been in worse situations and lived to tell the tale.

“I must apologize for the heavy handed method,” a familiar voice said, its owner’s face slowly swimming into focus, and Jim’s heart sank. This was it then. The long awaited favor. “The situation overtook me and, well,” Oswald shrugged, self-deprecating, “time was of the essence.”

Jim pulled at the ties around his wrists again, shoulders aching from having his arms behind his back for so long, and then Oswald was crossing the room, expression falling,

“I told them to be careful,” he murmured, fingers gentle first where they worked the binds free, and then where they rubbed circles into the skin of his wrist, encouraging circulation. “Idiots.”

Jim swallowed thickly, too aware of how close Oswald was, and of the heat leaching into his own skin. He pulled himself free, and turned around to face him.
“Come on then,” he needled, wanting to regain some control. Wanting it to be over with. “What do you want from me?”

“I want -” Oswald looked away, unable to maintain his gaze, and Jim’s nerves grew. The Penguin was ashamed of what he was about to ask him. It didn’t bode well. Oswald sucked in a breath, tried again, voice scarcely more than a whisper,

“I want you to marry me.”

For a moment Jim was frozen. Couldn’t move, could scarcely think, because while he might not have orchestrated the most romantic of proposals, he had least made some kind of effort. Flowers, dinner, the promise of an engagement ring. Abduction and a burly henchman aiming a gun at his intended’s forehead had never been part of the equation.

“I realize,” Oswald faltered, “that the circumstances are not what one might call ideal. I had hoped -” He cut himself off again, the self-assured statesman giving way to uncertainty, to the hapless figure Jim remembered from their early association.

“You can’t force someone to marry you,” Jim pointed out, doing his best to be reasonable. It was illegal, would never hold up in court, even were the union to be consummated.

He struggled to stay calm. Nothing was going to be consummated.

“I’m not forcing you,” Oswald said, and Jim realized for the first time that they were now alone in the room. “I’m asking you.”

“And if I say no?”

It was the obvious question but Oswald looked lost, utterly unprepared for the potential.

“I’d have to find another solution,” he said slowly, awkwardly, “and that would be… regrettable.”

There was something more at play, some reason for this beyond fulfilling the insane whim of a criminal lunatic. Still Jim preferred to take his chances. To make a break for freedom and leave Oswald to deal with his own problems.

“The least you could do is ask me properly.”

He was proud of the way his voice didn’t waver.

Oswald’s mouth fell open, shocked, and Jim couldn’t help his own sense of satisfaction. If he did it, Jim had a chance. Once down he would struggle to get up, would have to call for help if he needed to move quickly, and Jim would have a few seconds. Could try for the window, might even make it to the nearest vehicle.

Except Oswald limped closer, foot dragging badly, and took one of Jim’s hands in his own. Held his gaze this time, and Jim couldn’t act on the plan, even as Oswald sank to one knee, the movement pained and awkward.

And this, this was more charged than any of his real life proposals. The air thick with tension and Oswald’s eyes on his own, intense and hopeful, and Jim couldn’t look away, not even as Oswald pressed his lips to the skin of his hand, the kiss chaste but tender.

“Please, James,” Oswald whispered, and God help him, but something clenched in his chest, something as exquisite as it was painful, “I want you to marry me.”
“Why?” He asked, stuck to the spot though he should have been running.

Oswald’s gaze never wavered, so that the world was reduced to just the two of them, and said,

“I need an alibi.”

“I can give you an alibi without getting married to you,” Jim reasoned even as Oswald pushed a bundle of clothing into his arms. “I didn’t even need to be in the same state.” It wasn’t exactly his proudest moment, but it wouldn’t be the first time he had given false testimony.

“What guarantee would I have?” Oswald countered, and when Jim made no move to start getting changed, he began without him, maneuvering Jim that way and this, until he was free of his crumpled suit jacket. “Lawyers, Jim, they’re more thorough than the police. They get paid more.”

Jim couldn’t argue with that, not really, and at Oswald’s insistent urging took over the unbuttoning of his shirt. Shrugged out of it and into the fresh one Oswald had given him.

“I can’t go back to Arkham,” Oswald said, with more than a hint of hysteria, “and if you talk about the rest, they’re going to kill you.” He took over with the bow tie, knotting it at the base of Jim’s throat with quick, precise movements. “This way you can claim spousal privilege. There won’t be anything they can do about it.”

There were so many questions Jim didn’t know where to begin. Who were they? What were they planning? Why had he just allowed Oswald to dress him up, like some oversized Barbie doll, if he had no intention on going through with this madness?

“Don’t give me that look, Jim. I won’t explain anything until we have the certificate, it’s too dangerous.”

“We don’t have the right paperwork,” Jim tried finally, even as he took the comb Oswald held out obediently, and undid the work of the bag they had covered his head with. “It won’t be valid.”

Oswald raked his gaze over him, assessing, and then nodded. Led the way towards the door with a touch to Jim’s arm,

“I’m something of a big deal at City Hall. And,” he said reproachfully, “you need to think more about home security. It didn’t take me five minutes to find your documents.”

Jim opened his mouth to object. To tell Oswald that this plan, if it could even be called that, would never work. That he should just let Jim walk away and think himself lucky he wasn’t going to be arrested for his troubles.

But it was too late, the registrar was already there, waiting, and later Jim would blame it on the abduction, the surrealism, and the looming threat of violence. Anything other than the look of anxious hope on Oswald’s face when they stood opposite each other, and the memory of what had happened the last time he had tried to stop a wedding.

It was better to just go through with it. It wouldn’t be forever, not like killing somebody.

What Oswald made of his easy compliance, Jim couldn’t say, though they both watched the other carefully as they spoke their vows and went through the motions. As the registrar asked nervously about rings and Oswald patted down his pockets before finding the right one, and pushed a plain gold band onto Jim’s finger.
It fit perfectly, just like the suit he was wearing, and Jim resolved to find out exactly how later.

“You may now kiss the groom,” the poor woman said when it was over, habit overriding the choking tension and the fact the witnesses consisted of Oswald’s overarmed bodyguards. It was by no means the wedding Jim had once envisioned for himself but, on the other hand, the preparations for that one had ended with his intended threatening to slice open the face of his new girlfriend.

In contrast, this moment was almost romantic.

He leaned in and pressed an awkward kiss to the corner of Oswald’s mouth, as though to prove it, and then it was done, finally, and they were free to scrawl their names on the marriage certificate.

“We did it,” Oswald beamed, grin a fraction too wide, as he checked his watch yet again. “We really did it!” He laughed then, like he couldn’t help it, hand pressed over his mouth though it didn’t make any difference.

“Are you going to tell me what this is about now?” Jim asked, gruff to mask the way the display unnerved him. Oswald wiped at his eyes, hands shaking, and nodded over eager,

“Of course, of course. We just have to pose for the photographs, then I’ll tell you everything.”

“Why?” Jim demanded afterwards, patience wearing, when they were done checking in at the front desk for what even his limited experience of such things told him was going to be a disgustingly expensive hotel stay. Oswald pressed a finger to his lips and glanced pointedly in the direction of the elevators, where a small knot of people were standing.

Jim risked a glance of his own, settling on no particular candidate, but inclined his head slightly in understanding.

Oswald took it as permission to kiss him. Not the chaste peck Jim had bestowed during the ceremony, but a tender joining of lips, all soft pressure and breathy promise. It was so convincing he followed instinctively when Oswald pulled away, moving to whisper in his ear,

“I think we should get a room.”

They already had a room, but Jim agreed with the basic sentiment. Let Oswald lead him by the hand to the now empty elevators, the bellhop scurrying behind them. Oswald handed the boy his phone, asking him to take a photograph of the two of them, and as Jim forced a smile he couldn’t work out if it was something to keep him busy, or just something Oswald wanted.

“Why does there have to be so many photographs?” Jim asked once they were alone, sinking heavily onto the bed. That was nice at least, even if the rest of the room was overdone and somewhat stifling.

“For when people ask questions. This was a long wanted display of commitment, not a drunken mistake in Las Vegas,” Oswald said sniffily in return, checking methodically for bugs and security weak points. Jim watched him, quietly impressed, and loosened his collar.

“How did you know what size suit I take then? What size ring I’d need?” He said while Oswald finished, thinking it a relatively neutral topic, and stared at the jewelry in question, still snug on his ring finger. “Why did you bother even?”

Oswald fidgeted with the matching band on his own hand, then covered with exasperation, “I told you, this has to look real. And it was easy, I’ve spent a long time watching you.”
Jim looked up at that, shocked, and wondered if Oswald had any idea how creepy that sounded. It was Oswald, he told himself brusquely. He had just had him kidnapped so they could go through a marriage of convenience, of course he had meant it to sound weird.

“Why then? Why do any of it?” That was the real question, the one Oswald was still evading. The other man crossed the room and joined him on the bed, just a little too close considering the size of it, and launched into a rambling tale of Founders’ Dinners, and long laid plans, and something about courtly owls. It was a lot to take in, especially after the day he had just had.

“Is this happening now?” He asked suddenly, panic washing over him. He had been given his cell back but there had been no calls, nothing out of the usual. Oswald gave him a wary look, and said carefully,

“It’s already happened, Jim. I got you out of Gotham, just like they wanted me to.”

Jim stared at him, anger building because he had been played. Had been used and manipulated, and was probably going to be horribly humiliated into the bargain, when Oswald spread copies of their ‘wedding’ photographs everywhere.

Except Oswald wasn’t begging or pleading, or attempting to justify his actions, the way he usually did when an example of his double crossing was revealed. Instead he took Jim’s hand in his, calm and quiet, and said simply,

“I was supposed to kill you but I hope you find this preferable. I certainly do.”

“Won’t they be out for your blood now?” Jim asked, genuinely confused, and Oswald gave him a grim smile,

“Probably. They won't be much of a threat though, not now some dashing newlywed has wiped out their ringleaders.”

Jim gaped, understanding dawning, even as his cell began ringing and Oswald raised his hand and kissed it, like something out of an old romance story. It shouldn't have come as such a surprise, he supposed. Oswald had already told him he wanted Jim to be his alibi. The man grinned at him then, all teeth and self-satisfaction, and said,

“For better, for worse, eh, Jim?”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

A little late but #GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'through the years' prompt. I was determined to finish the card! TW for character death and general misery.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim had never been any good at knowing when to leave well enough alone. When to walk away, and when not to turn up at hospitals, demanding admittance to notorious criminals’ bedsides.

His reputation preceded him, clearly, because the burly lackey standing guard didn’t say a word. Simply held the door open, and Jim refused to let on how unnerving it was, the silent scrutiny as he stepped over the threshold.

Then he was inside and he couldn’t pretend any longer. Had to suck in a shuddering breath, shocked at the sight in front of him.

“Jim?” The figure rasped, one pale hand tugging away the oxygen mask, and Jim took a halting step closer. Sank into the chair beside the bed and swallowed back all the things he was sure he shouldn’t say.

*I didn’t know and you never said and this is it then.*

Oswald only smiled up at him, expression somewhere between fond and adoring, and it hit him again. Had him pressing a shaky hand to his mouth and wondering, not for the first time, what they might have been to each other had they met in some other place.

At some other time.

Years before, perhaps, when he was home on leave from the army and Oswald was impossibly, ridiculously young, decked out in drape jacket and bolo tie, like the first photograph in the man’s GCPD file.

Months earlier, maybe, pressed close against each other in a crowded subway car. A hopeful half smile spread across Oswald’s angular visage and shame faced guilt on his own, contrasting with his neatly pressed uniform and the engagement band he had sometimes worn on his finger.

A few hours later, even, their eyes meeting across Fish’s gaudy dance floor. Him wanting someone to protect and Oswald frail and sickly looking, lost without the umbrella or the baseball bat.

Jim had thought of him anyway, his oily skin and his uneven haircut. His elegant fingers and his piercing blue eyes, and when he pushed him into the water it wasn’t only for appearances. He had wanted his own interest to be sluiced away with the Penguin.

*Are you afraid?* He wanted to ask in the present. *Do you wish you had done things differently?*

“Thank you for coming,” Oswald wheezed, pushed the mask back to his face and struggled for
breath before finishing, “old friend.”

They had never been friends, he had never allowed them to be, not when Oswald had all but begged, and not when they were both older and wiser. When he had spent too many nights drinking too much at the Iceberg Lounge. When he had used it to his advantage, the helpless want on Oswald’s face, and extracted information without giving anything in return, not even the empty promise of a favor.

“Better late than never,” he said in response, his own voice strained and scratchy. Meant it as an apology for his rejection. For his cruelty. Then, because it was easier to accuse, added, “You should have told me.”

“Would it have made any difference?”

That was the real question, Jim thought. Would he have visited sooner? Would he have put aside his pride and his stubbornness?

If any of his fantasy scenarios had played out would he have taken the risk? Would he have admitted what he wanted, and would either of them have been willing to compromise? Could he ever have condoned Oswald’s actions, and could he ever have been reason enough for Oswald not to commit them?

He didn’t have an answer.

Settled for taking one of Oswald’s hands in his own and hoped there would be someone who cared enough to do the same for him, when his own time came.

“Would you do one last thing for me?” Oswald asked eventually, the whisper too loud in the silence. The fear that he would say no too obvious, even here, even now, and Jim nodded. Cleared his throat and forced himself to say,

“It depends, doesn't it.”

Oswald gave him a small smile, pained all around the edges, and weakly squeezed his hand.

“Would you kiss me?”

It wasn’t as surprising as it should have been. Shouldn’t have hurt as much as it did, clutching at his heart and all his pointless imaginings. He had already promised though, and he didn’t think about how cool Oswald’s skin was to the touch, or the sound of the death rattle in his chest. Thought instead of the heat of the hands which had once clutched at his shirt front, and the voice that had unfailingly driven him to distraction, so many years ago.

He brushed their lips together and just for a moment the decades melted away, he full of hope and idealism, and Oswald not yet hardened to the world, broken by loss and disappointment.

“Thank you,” Oswald managed, afterwards, and Jim didn’t cry.

Not until it was all over and it no longer mattered when or where they had met, who had done what or who had said the wrong things.

It was too late anyway.
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Meet the Family

Chapter Summary

This is some very silly, very cracky fic. I usually envisage Jim’s family being just as emotionally distant and miserable as he is. But watching too many Christmas films made me wonder what it would be like if they were actually really close and cheerful, and couldn’t wait to interfere in his life every time he’s forced to come home for the holidays...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim generally did everything in his power to avoid going home for Christmas. Volunteered to be sent to especially dangerous war zones, or ensured he pissed someone off just enough to have to spend the holidays in hospital, recovering from a gunshot wound.

That was how his mother saw it, anyway, and perhaps he had exaggerated - just very slightly - how important it was that he work around the clock over the Christmas period, in an attempt to put The Riddler behind bars. Actually volunteered to be the one to provide Oswald police protection, because if he had a legitimate reason to be in Gotham then he wouldn’t have to lie to her.

Not more than he already was, at any rate, because his mom saw it as a personal insult that he was closer to 40 than 30 and still wasn’t married. Nagged him endlessly at every possible opportunity about speed dating, and dating websites, and totally random men and women she met on public transport.

So, just to get her off his back, just for a while, when he had mentioned in passing that he had been asked out to lunch by Oswald, still amused and incredulous, he didn’t laugh off her guileless suggestion that Oswald was some nice man he had met, intent on wooing a homicide detective. Agreed in a moment of total madness that that was exactly what Oswald was, and from there it simply escalated.

The imaginary date went well, as did the second, and suddenly his mom believed he had a partner. Someone who loved him for himself, and didn’t keep changing their mind about it. Packed him lunch occasionally, just to ensure he was eating properly, and encouraged him to come home at night, rather than fall asleep over his paperwork.

He almost believed it was true himself sometimes, when he told her about how happy they were together, and it was only when his mom started talking excitedly about him bringing them home for Christmas that he realized what a mess he had created.

“You two are made for each other,” his mom told him, insistent, when he conjured up a falling out. “You have to fight for love, you know that.”

It made him think of the alternative, of the return to being sent syrupy daily emails about couples who met on Tinder, and by his next call home he and his perfect partner had patched things up again.
He should have realized it would only make her more determined to get him home. Knew from long experience that ‘work’ was deemed anything but a valid excuse, and had visions of his mom boarding a flight from Chicago and bodily dragging him back across state lines while the Riddler waved him off, because she refused to take no for an answer.

So he put the inevitable awkwardness off, stalled and procrastinated, and when the call came he really should have been expecting it. He wasn’t though. He had already hit speakerphone ready to talk timelines and action plans, Oswald Cobblepot watching him with frank curiosity, and instead of Harvey he got his mom launching into a debate over the merits of a whole bird over a turkey crown, without any kind of preamble.

Oswald stared too intently at the embarrassed flush on Jim’s cheeks and, when his mom began laying the guilt on extra thick, trotted out her usual line about it potentially being Great Grandma Gordon’s last Christmas, he looked absolutely stricken. Coughed, awkwardly attempting to attract his attention, and said,

“I never meant to come between you and your family, Jim. I really am very sorry.”

“Oswald,” Jim warned with a glare, mostly because he didn’t want to believe Oswald was capable of sincerity, and then he was desperately scrambling to get the call off speakerphone, because his mom had put two and two together and come up with the idea that he was deliberately refusing to introduce her to the co-parent of her future grandchildren.

“James Worthington Gordon,” she said, scandalized, “I am very disappointed in you. When were you planning on making the introductions? Am I still on the speaker phone? Oswald, has Jim told you that he never brings his boyfriends home to meet us?”

“Mom,” he hissed in turn, finally hitting the right button and achieving some modicum of privacy. The truth was there were no boyfriends, not for such a long time, and nobody at all since Lee had screamed and sobbed, grief loosening her tongue enough to tell him she wished it had been him that day, not Mario. The stress might have made his tone more vicious than he intended, because when he snapped, “How many times do I have to tell you? I have to work this year!”

His mom went deathly silent. His brother Roger made up for it, indignant in the background, and then there was a hitch in her breath, a sniffle like she was holding back tears, and Jim had to shift his cell to the other hand, horrified. Wished Oswald wasn’t still listening in, watching him fail at being a good son as completely as he had failed to track Nygma down and free them both from the necessity of further police protection.

“I don’t know what we’ve ever done to deserve it,” she said stiltedly, so that he felt bad for even thinking about a potential answer. “Do you think we’re prejudiced, is that it? Or are you just too embarrassed of us?”

“No, I just.” He swallowed and he must have been under a lot of pressure. Had spent weeks working longer and longer hours, only coming home to fall into bed exhausted. Was sick of recounting his fantasy life only to get off the phone and be reminded of how miserable and lonely he was. That had to be why instead of apologizing, rather than lose his temper, Jim simply looked over at Oswald’s outrageous ensemble and said,

“He’s shy, mom. Really really shy. He’s not used to big family gatherings.”

That part was true, at least, and Jim waited with bated breath. Hoped this would be enough to get him off the hook, and that this would be an acceptable reason for staying in Gotham for the season.
“Oh, Jim,” his mom breathed, just to give him a moment of peace. A single moment where he didn’t feel like he was letting someone down. Then it was gone and there was no room for argument, her words final, “It’s your job to convince him he doesn’t need to be. This could be Great Grandma Gordon’s only chance of meeting him!”

In a sane world he would have come clean. Would have rung his mom back and pleaded the pressure of the job, or the cumulative effect of the many head injuries he had sustained as a result of it.

It wasn’t a sane world though, and it was pitch black by the time they pulled up to his mom’s house in Chicago, the night before Christmas Eve. At least it would have been, had his mom and his step-father not covered every square inch of their property in Christmas lights, oblivious to the risk of fire and the threat to their neighbors’ retinas.

This was his last chance to back out. To turn around and go into witness protection, at least for a couple of years until his mom calmed down again. But he could already see faces pressed against the front window and all he actually managed before the hoard descended was,

“Oswald, just. Please don’t be yourself, all right?”

Oswald blinked at him, ridiculously overdressed for a day spent traveling, and then it was too late. His mom was pulling the car door open and all but yanking Oswald into a hug, what seemed like his entire extended family gathered behind her. He was left to gather their luggage and drag it along, everyone too busy trying to get a good look at Jim’s fabled boyfriend.

“Granny, Grandma, Nana, Grandma-ma, Great Grandma Gordon,” his mom was saying when he struggled indoors, pointing out the various matriarchs of their blended family. Oswald nodded politely, with just a hint of terror, and his mom launched into the names of the endless children his siblings had created between them. Jim Jnr, his own personal nemesis, grinned evilly at him and Jim stuck his tongue out in retaliation, just as Heather, his younger step-sister said,

“We thought you had made him up, Jim”

Sandra, the elder, looked Oswald over and asked, “Do we have to worry about this one murdering us in our sleep then?”

Jim shifted, uncomfortable, because Barbara had been ill, and, okay, maybe he felt more than a little guilty for bringing a serial killer home to meet the family. Great Grandma Gordon, not as sharp as she once was, covered neatly by asking Oswald,

“How have you been, Barbara? Have you put on weight, dear?”

“This is Oswald,” his mom said, or yelled, really, even as Jim flashed Oswald an apologetic look. “He was the mayor of Gotham.”

“She’s told everyone in Chicago,” his brother, Roger, confessed. “Literally everyone, she had a song played for you earlier, on the radio.”

Jim closed his eyes, counted to ten, and wished, just for a second, the Riddler had succeeded in killing him.

“It’s okay, Uncle Jim,” his eldest niece soothed, without looking up from her cellphone, “Only old people listen to the radio.”
Finally, after being plied with enough food to feed the 5,000, his mother led the way upstairs to his old bedroom. It was still just as small and poky, though it had been repainted a pastel pink and his old bed was made up with a pink comforter and a frilly valance sheet.

“I can just imagine Jim in here,” Oswald said, sly, and Jim dumped his suit bags to the floor and hoped their contents crumpled. Oswald looked horrified but his mom just kept babbling on, oblivious,

“Now I know that bed’s narrow, Jim, but you two haven’t been dating that long. I’m sure you’ll be happy to get pressed up close together.”

She winked and Oswald flushed. Jim wished again for a fatal bullet. Then they were alone and Jim thought he should put Oswald out of his misery. For once he really did owe the poor man big time. There couldn’t be many criminal kingpins willing to pretend to be a policeman’s boyfriend, just so the policeman could look like less of a loser.

“Don’t worry, I’ll take the floor.”

“You don’t have to,” Oswald said almost immediately. Looked bashful and elaborated, “I mean, this is your home, Jim. I don’t want you to be uncomfortable.”

“And what,” Jim asked, “you sleep on the floor with that leg?”

“I’ve had worse.” Oswald shrugged, though his eyes were full of memories. Jim looked away, didn’t want to confront the feeling the sight had induced in him, and said simply,

“My mother would kill me.”

The problem was that it was uncomfortable. Really, really uncomfortable. He wasn’t a teenager anymore, and it was a long time since he had been a soldier. It was too cold, and his pillow was too thin. He couldn’t settle, couldn’t keep still, and when he had been squirming about for an hour or so, Oswald whispered,

“This is silly, Jim. I don’t bite, you know.”

So there he was, two am in the morning, climbing into his childhood bed with Gotham’s most notorious criminal. The rest of the house was silent now and Jim winced as the bed springs creaked. As he almost fell out the side, which necessitated him clambering over Oswald so he could lie against the wall, mattress squeaking loudly.

“Jim!” Oswald yelped when Jim’s foot caught his bad leg, and he whacked his own knee against the cold wall, resulting in a pained,

“Fuck.”

The bed protested loudly as he collapsed onto it, whined as he wriggled until his nose was almost touching the wall.

“Don’t say anything,” he warned Oswald, not daring to look over at him. “Just go to sleep.”

He didn’t think he’d be able to follow his own advice, but even cramped and undignified, it was so much better than the floor. Oswald’s weight beside him was warm and comforting too, reminded him of what it was like to have somebody who wanted to sleep next to him. When he woke light was streaming through the curtains and, somehow, he had turned around, arms wrapped around Oswald, the other man’s back spooned against his chest.
Jim was working out how exactly to extract himself when the door crashed open, hitting the wall. Oswald jumped, jerking awake with all the speed of someone who’s lived by their wits for a long time, and Jim Jnr fired his pop gun at them with all the malevolence Jim had come to expect from the kid.

“Bang! I’ve killed you!”

Roger was already up when Jim ventured downstairs, practicing some kind of cross between tai chi and yoga in the living room. He and Thelma were big on natural living. Hemp, crystals, a lack of social boundaries.

“Sounds like you two were having a good time last night,” Roger said, turning so that Jim could see he had a baby strapped to his back. “It’s good for your chakras.”

Jim flushed to the tips of his ears, opened his mouth to explain, but Joseph, his step-father, chose that moment to emerge, decked out in hideous Christmas sweater and flashing reindeer antlers.

“No need to be embarrassed, Jim,” he said, reasonably, and sat crisply in his customary armchair with the morning newspaper, as though he were unaware what he actually looked like. “It’s perfectly natural.”

Jim had a horrific flashback to being 15 and being lectured on the birds and the bees, complete with diagrams and slideshow. It was almost a relief to see Oswald’s familiar hair round the corner, accompanied by his mother. Almost. Because he was wearing a neon sweater and his mom was holding up a matching atrocity,

“Grandma-ma knitted them just for you, Jim. Wasn’t that nice of her?”

Not twenty minutes later he was ensconced in scratchy wool, stuck on the traditional Talbot-Gordon Christmas Eve walk, not even his entirely sincere concerns about Oswald’s leg enough to get him out of it.

“I’ll be fine,” Oswald assured, leaning heavily on his umbrella, and Heather was there, apparently from nowhere, just to badger him,

“Put your arm around him, Jim.” Then for Oswald, added conspiratorially, “We tried so hard with him, practically raised him on Jane Austen. Didn’t do him any good though.”

Jim resigned himself to it. Slid his arm around Oswald’s waist and reminded himself how this was all his own doing. That this was what lying wrought on people. Oswald gazed up at him, cheeks and nose tinged pink with cold, and said,

“I’ve always found Jim to be a perfect gentleman.”

Sandra and Heather exchanged incredulous looks and Jim stared resolutely into the middle distance.

He didn’t even want to think about the favor Oswald was accruing.

After the walk came the visiting. The interminable, unbearable visiting.

They had lived in Gotham for most of his childhood, with only his dad’s handful of relatives to visit on a regular basis, but after his death his mom had wanted to return to Chicago. Claimed it
would be comforting to have her family around her.

Jim hadn’t realized until that first year just how big her family actually was.

Then she had met Joseph and all his teenage pouting and mood swings hadn’t prevented them getting married, and increasing the size of Jim’s extended family to frankly ridiculous levels.

Oswald was allowed to change out of the Christmas sweater, presumably so his mom’s excited revelations that he was the former mayor of Gotham City would carry more weight. Oswald certainly looked the part, all brilliant white wing collar and expensive neck tie. His suit oozed class, money, and aunt after aunt clapped their hands delightedly and asked to hear how he had been convinced to look twice at Detective James Gordon.

“Jim saved my life,” Oswald told them theatrically, like his actions had been heroic rather than self-serving, and answered awkward questions with statements like, “I’m not sure Jim even realizes how very much he means to me.”

“So romantic,” one aged great-aunt breathed, and his Uncle Arthur clapped Jim on the back and said,

“Maybe you’ll make it up the aisle this time, eh? Sixth time lucky!”

Three visits later they were still on the topic of the tragic history of Jim’s love life, and then they moved on to photographic evidence. Jim playing the donkey in his kindergarten nativity, and Jim flashing his braces at junior prom. Jim in his army dress uniform sporting the world’s worst mustache, and Jim beaming like his life was finally sorted, just after he had announced his first engagement.

He was beginning to wonder if it really was possible to die from embarrassment. If he was destined to set a precedent. Oswald didn’t take advantage of the situation though, at least not as it was happening, instead giving him amused half smiles, and keeping a straight face when he said the mustache had made him look distinguished. When they were eventually left alone for a few moments, everyone else off on a tour of his Aunt Pamela’s new bathroom suite, Jim plucked at his sweater and said earnestly,

“I know we’ve not always had the best relationship,” he glanced up to find blue eyes gazing intently at him. Jim swallowed, continued, “But thank you for doing this. Really, thank you. You didn’t have to.”

Oswald took one of Jim’s hands in his own, leaned closer without breaking eye contact,

“We’re friends, Jim, and friends help each other.”

Jim might have protested, told Oswald for the thousandth time that they were not friends, but Oswald kept talking, the confidence in his demeanor dissipating even as the intensity ratcheted up a notch,

“I want to thank you, for sharing this with me. I never had this, family. It means a lot to me.”

They just stared at each other, the air suddenly feeling overheated, and Jim was glad when his family bustled back into the room.

It prevented him doing something stupid.
“What are you putting on your list, Uncle Jim?” Chloe, one of Sandra’s twins asked him, all pigtails and gap toothed smile.

Jim sighed and stared at his blank piece of paper. Cursed whoever had introduced his mom to Pinterest, and tried to think of something he was going to let go of to balance out what he most hoped for this Christmas.

“What are riddles?” Emily, her sister asked, reading over Oswald’s shoulder.

“They’re things that never mean what you think they should,” Oswald said, bitterly, even as Jim’s stomach lurched. It was the first time in hours he had thought about Nygma. About the realities of life back in Gotham. About the fact that none of this was real and, after tomorrow, they were going to go back to being enemies.

“I’d give them up too,” Emily said, genuinely, and Jim Jnr emerged from somewhere just in time to spill juice all down Jim’s best dress shirt and say,

“I wouldn’t.”

Jim dabbed ineffectively at the stain with the handkerchief Oswald offered him, and eyed the boy up suspiciously. The kid had all the makings of a master criminal.

In the end, flustered by his mom’s constant chivvying, Jim scrawled his honest wishes onto his slip of paper. He wanted to give up lying, wanted it so badly. In its place he wanted… He hesitated for a moment longer, even though nobody was going to see it. He wanted the feeling he had earlier, lost in Oswald’s eyes, like they were only the two people on the face of the planet.

Just not with Oswald, obviously. That was ludicrous.

‘To be happy’ he wrote finally, and went to join the others outside where they were going to burn the bits of paper on a bonfire, to release their bad karma, or whatever it was Roger had been waffling on about.

Oswald smiled at him, almost shy, when he moved to stand beside him, and Jim grinned back because his mom had been busy. The sweater had reappeared. His second glass of mulled wine was probably helping too, had him feeling loose limbed and comfortable. Its effects on Oswald appeared to be similar, and he giggled, a weirdly bright sound, when the breeze in the air meant it took three tries for Jim to set his piece of paper on fire.

“You’d make a terrible arsonist,” Oswald told him, tone fond, and only because his mom was looking over at them, Jim put an arm around his shoulder and kissed his cheek, in lieu of thinking up a witty comeback.

Oswald didn’t pull away, not even when the combination of children and open flame had recaptured his mom’s attention. If anything he leaned in closer, clung to him like what they were portraying was real, and it wasn’t at all unthinkable that an honest cop could fall in love with a mob boss.

Jim let him, for reasons he didn’t want to examine, and he was so starved of human contact it was inevitable, that when he moved his arm to circle Oswald’s waist, his thumb started rubbing circles into the material of his shirt, just above his waistband and under the sweater. Oswald shivered against him, and Jim was going to do something idiotic like kiss his cheek again.

Like kissing him properly, without even the excuse of his mother’s liberal use of mistletoe. Oswald knew it too. Was looking up at him as though there was nothing he had ever wanted more. It was
going to happen, it was really going to happen -

And then the haze was pierced by high pitched screaming.

“Where did he even get it!?” Thelma demanded, shaking, and Jim stared at the mess of red on his mother’s cream carpet and fought the urge to vomit.

There was only one person in the vicinity likely to give a seven-year-old a switchblade.

He dragged Oswald by the arm out into the cold of the back yard where there was less chance of what he was about to say being overheard by anyone.

“It was an accident,” Oswald told him as soon as they were outside, proving that he knew exactly what the problem was. “I forgot it was in my jacket.”

Jim shoved him up against the wall, felt a kind of grim satisfaction at the flash of fear in the other man’s eyes.

“I told you specifically,” Jim ground out, low and angry, “No weapons. How did you even get it past airport security? No, you know what, I don’t want to know. I don’t know why I ever expected anything else from you. You say you want to be my friend - you don’t even understand what the word means.”

He pushed away from the wall, raked a hand through his hair. Wanted to scream, to punch something, because this was all his own fault, all his own doing. Oswald saw it too, was too stupid to let him walk away, tone cold and clipped as he said,

“I think I have a better grasp of it than you do. I have done nothing but help you, been nothing but good to you. Or is that it? You want me to be a monster to assuage your guilty conscience?”

“You are a monster,” Jim shot back because it hit too close, made too much sense. “Why would I need to feel guilty?”

There was a long moment of tense silence then Oswald hissed at him, eyes dark and menacing,

“I’m not the one who told his mother he’s in love with someone he finds so repulsive, perhaps you should think about what that says about you.”

Later, after his mom had glared at him, disappointed, and sequestered herself away with Oswald for the better part of thirty minutes. After Jim Jnr was brought back from the ER with nothing more than a bandage and a better appreciation of the damage a sharp knife could wreck to show for the incident.

After Jim had begun to feel just as guilty as he claimed he wouldn’t, Roger found him sat outside. Sat beside him and wordlessly offered him a drag of something that still held criminal penalties back in Gotham. Jim shook his head and felt his brother shrug easily.

“You problem has always been the same. You can’t go with the flow, you’re always fighting against something.”

“I’m not,” Jim protested, more out of habit than disagreement.

Roger blew out smoke, acted like Jim had never interrupted,

“You know that something’s not working, that it’s making you unhappy, and you stick with it.
Then, you turn up with a guy who adores you, who you obviously can’t stop thinking about, and you’re just itching to throw it away. I don’t get you, Jim.”

“It’s not - There’s more to it.”

Roger finished his smoke and looked Jim over fondly, the same look he used to give Jim after he had remembered the rules to the new game they were playing, or he had warned off the playground bullies.

“If you want to talk about it, I’m here for you. We all are.”

That night Jim slept on the sofa in the living room. Bundled the throw around him and pretended to be asleep when his mom came in to make her last three checks that everything was set up properly before going to bed. He relaxed when he finally heard her feet on the stairs, and then stared up at the ceiling. Wondered whether Oswald was awake too and thought about how well he had slept, with Oswald next to him.

He replayed the argument they had had in the garden. Pondered what Roger had said to him, and whether it was true Oswald looked like he adored him. He had liked him once, of that at least Jim was certain. But that was a long time ago - before Arkham, before Nygma.

Finally he told himself it didn’t matter, and lay awake until exhaustion cast its spell over him. It wasn’t ten minutes later - or at least it felt that way - when he was forced awake by the sound of footsteps, childish shrieks of joy, and a foot to his abdomen when someone decided it was quicker to go over than around the sofa.

“That’s what you get for going to bed without apologizing,” his mom told him, like he was the child, and then went back to festive cheer.

Jim hauled himself into a sitting position, pulled his blanket around him and blinked groggily at the steadily gathering crowd. Oswald appeared towards the end of the pack and, though he hadn’t followed his mom’s Christmas morning dress code of robe and pajamas, he was slightly more casually attired than usual. The cut of his suit was simpler, a neat black cross tie at his neck.

It made Jim think of the early days of his association when things had been, not easy, but less complicated. When Oswald had been an odd stranger and he had been about to marry Barbara.

He sat on the other side of the room, next to Roger and Thelma, and there were clearly no hard feelings because Jim Jnr squirmed into the last remaining gap beside them. Jim did his best not to look. To focus on the kids shrieking and laughing, the wrapping paper piling up everywhere, and not to freak out when it transpired that Oswald had supplemented the cheap wine and chocolates Jim bought every year with a huge stack of gift cards he had picked up at the airport.

He didn’t want to be in even more debt to Oswald.

Especially not when he watched his mom read the note accompanying the card Oswald had given her. The way she teared up and left her seat to hug him, like he was truly part of the family. It was inevitable that she followed that by handing Oswald a gift from under the tree.

“This one is from Jim.”

“You can tell by the state of the wrapping,” Heather chipped in with a smirk.

Jim frowned, suddenly anxious. He had had to buy something, knew it would look weird if he
hadn’t, but now everyone was watching, waiting, he was worried Oswald would hate it. Would make his opinion perfectly plain to all of them.

He didn’t. Smiled widely, like he couldn’t help it, and glanced over at Jim so that their eyes met, just for a moment.

“These are lovely, Jim. Thank you.”

As though to prove it he actually undid the pair of - doubtlessly far superior - cufflinks he was already wearing, and replaced them with the new pair. Black with a diagonal thin blue line running through it.

The design had seemed appropriate.

Once they were in Oswald held one hand out, as though to admire the link, and when he realized he was staring it was to find his mom inclining her head, like he should go over and sit with him. Jim stayed put, pretended he hadn’t seen, and accepted the gift he was handed with trepidation.

“From Oswald,” his mom clarified, needlessly, and Jim hesitated for a second, afraid that it was going to be something dangerous, or just cruel. Oswald was watching him quietly, resignedly, and Jim opted to just get it over with.

Tore the paper away and stroked his fingers across the soft material it revealed.

“What is it?” someone called, curious, and Oswald’s voice was soft when he answered,

“Just something I thought Jim would look good in.”

“You still scrub up well,” his mom said later, taking a break from stressing his step-father out in the kitchen. Jim smoothed his hands down the new suit jacket. It did look nice. Nicer than anything else he owned, easily. Rather than reply he looked back out of the window, where Oswald was layered up in coat and scarf, watching Roger and the kids make a snowman.

“It was an honest accident, Jim. All you need to do is swallow your pride and apologize.”

Jim wished it was that easy. His mom was always taking some lost cause under her wing, always thought the best of everyone. Had used to drive his dad to distraction, inviting waifs and strays in for tea and sympathy while he was attempting to jail them.

“You don’t know what he really is, mom,” he said finally. “The things he’s done.”

She put a hand on his arm, and waited for him to look at her.

“I’m not a dinosaur. I know how to Google.”

Jim opened his mouth to question, mind whirling to catch up with the revelation, but she kept talking,

“You always wanted everything to be straightforward, Jim. You wanted life to be simple - black and white, good and bad - but it’s not like that. Your dad, he was just the same.”

“He wasn’t,” Jim said, the hurt of his father’s betrayal still there, beneath the surface.

“He was,” his mom said simply. “He had to learn to compromise, to understand that sometimes right and wrong have to take second place to the good you can do.”
“I don’t think Oswald wants to do good in the world,” Jim said, throat aching.

“What about you? It’s easier to do good when you don’t use up all your resources being miserable.”

He stood there for a long moment after she left him. Until he felt more in control of himself. Until he was sure that if he didn’t do it, if he didn’t at least try, he would always regret it.

Oswald’s face lit up when Jim stepped outside, then went resolutely blank, like he didn’t want anyone to see it. It gave Jim hope, all the same. There was still something there. Roger tactfully suggested to the kids it was time to go indoors. Gave him a thumbs up on the way past, and Jim swallowed thickly.

He could do this.

“You’ll freeze without your coat,” Oswald said, looking him over, and Jim felt his cheeks heat up, in spite of the weather.

“I thought you’d like to see your handiwork,” Jim motioned at the suit. “I didn’t get chance to say thank you.”

“Yes, well,” Oswald seemed to snap out of whatever daze he had been. Moved to push past him and said, “pleasantries don’t much matter when one is dealing with a monster.”

Jim stepped with him, wouldn’t be put off so easily now that he had come this far.

“You’re not a monster. I’m sorry.”

Oswald paused, expression uncertain, like he couldn’t decide whether or not to believe him, and Jim had never been great with words. Had never known how to make pretty speeches, how to express the intensity of what he was feeling.

He was better at action.

Stepped closer still, and brought a hand up to rest against Oswald’s chilled cheek. Took courage from the fact he didn’t shrug the touch off, didn’t move away from him, and finally leaned in to press their lips together.

It started out chaste, scarcely anything at all, and then Oswald was kissing back, his gloved fingers coming up to clutch at Jim’s lapels. Jim only pulled him closer, deepened the kiss and angled his head better. Might have deepened it further, might have completely lost himself, but there was a cheer, and a wolf whistle, and Jim ducked his head, and wished again that his family weren’t quite so embarrassing.

“Lunch is almost ready,” they were told, their audience dispersing, and Jim clung to Oswald’s hands. Had to know they were on the same page.

“I know it won’t be easy. I know I don’t deserve it. But I want to be with you. I want it more than anything.”

Oswald tilted his head, assessed him for something - sincerity, perhaps. Trustworthiness, maybe.

“How did we come to be together,” he asked finally, “in the story you told your mother?”

“You asked me to lunch,” Jim said, sheepish, and Oswald smiled brilliantly up at him. Tugged at
his hand, and turned toward the house,

“In that case, Jim, will you accompany me?”

Jim grinned back, equal parts relieved and elated.

“Gladly.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
If there is one thing Jim’s learned since moving back to Gotham, it’s that Oswald Cobblepot is a glutton for punishment.

It doesn’t matter how clear he makes it, how many times he tells the man they’ll never be friends, never mean anything to each other, Oswald still turns up again. Like a bad penny.

“I was beginning to forget what you look like,” Oswald pouts, in the present, and Jim frowns at the other man when he looks up because it has been longer than usual, and Oswald really does look different.

Not massively so, not as though Jim wouldn’t know him - Oswald is so distinctive he isn’t even sure that’s possible. But regular meals and less frequent beatings have clearly been working for him. He looks less pointy, less angular, and it’s only when Oswald clears his throat that Jim realizes he’s been staring at him.

“Have you been listening?” Oswald asks, accusing, and Jim tells himself to get a grip, nods, and hopes he hasn’t missed anything important. Oswald rehashes it all for him, anyway, and Jim puts the encounter from his mind, determined to just be grateful that the underworld power battle finally seems to be under control for the moment.

Because he has heard all the rumors, has been spending his working days dealing with the fall out. A twisted tale of love, murder, revenge and hatred. Par for the course in Gotham.

Oswald seems to be dealing with it well, all things considering, and when the other man’s face brightens in recognition when their paths cross a few days later, Jim reasons that his answering smile is simple relief that Oswald isn’t out murdering someone.

It’s certainly not petty satisfaction that he’s no longer playing second fiddle to Edward Nygma.

Jim smiles the next time he sees him too, at his mansion, and Oswald looks flustered, embarrassed, to be caught in the middle of a meal, but Jim doesn’t mind. It’s good for him, Jim thinks, to be eating properly. Makes him look less like the tortured waif he had encountered back at Arkham.

That plays on his mind, always has done. Because if only he had listened, if only he had done something. He didn’t though, and to assuage the guilt he doesn’t yell at Oswald to get out when he turns up at the precinct. Accepts his offering of Christmas cookies without much argument, and for some reason he can’t quite fathom says,

“I’m due a coffee break; we could share them.”
They sit on a bench in the park. Not the one he had proposed to Lee on, but not far from it, and Jim doesn’t want to think about the fluttering in his stomach, the kind sane people get around beautiful medical examiners, not scrawny criminal kingpins.

Except Oswald isn’t so scrawny these days. His face has filled out a little, his cheeks are rounder, and even with all those layers Jim can still see the difference. Can’t stop seeing it, if he’s honest, and perhaps he’s being all kinds of obvious because their shared coffee breaks start becoming a regular occurrence.

Though Oswald doesn’t much like coffee, just to be awkward, and Jim starts paying attention to where all of Harvey’s favorite pastries come from, just so he can pass the suggestion on and watch Oswald eat them.

Barbara had used to say it was weird, unsettling, and it’s not as though his own mother hadn’t chastised it for him often enough. It isn’t polite to stare at people, especially not while they’re eating. So he tries not to, truly he does, but his gaze is forever flickering to Oswald and, though the other man blushes prettily under the scrutiny, he doesn’t tell Jim to stop doing it.

In fact, as the weeks merge into months, Jim begins to suspect Oswald is encouraging it. Starts suggesting they go for lunches, and then dinner, until one night it hits Jim that he’s helplessly turned on, aching, because of the flash of tongue he spies when Oswald licks clean his dessert spoon.

“Aren’t you going to try some?” Oswald asks eventually, one eyebrow raised, and Jim simply pushes his own plate across the table and says,

“I’m not hungry. It would be a shame to waste it.”

He can’t lie to himself after that, can’t pretend he isn’t thinking about Oswald when he’s alone in his bed at night, lonely and frustrated. What he might as well do, he decides, is take back control of the situation.

Oswald looks stunned when Jim turns up at his office, a bag full of something the girl behind the counter had assured him was disgustingly sweet and gooey clutched in one hand.

“I really shouldn’t, Jim,” Oswald says, tone reaching for light and breezy but failing as he glances down at himself. “At this rate I’m going to need a new wardrobe.”

“If you don’t want it, that’s fine,” Jim says in turn, and he wishes he could explain the way Oswald’s words make him feel. Guilty, disappointed, angry - all with himself for pushing the idea, and the wider world for convincing everyone that it must really be so terrible. He had attempted it once, with Barbara, and she hadn’t spoken to him for almost a week.

He’s no wordsmith.

Instead he finishes, simply,

“But it’s not like you won’t look good in new clothes, is it?”

“It’s not the clothes,” Oswald whines, so that Jim isn’t sure if he’s being deliberately obtuse or just can’t accept it. It’s the latter thought which finally forces him into action, has him glancing around to check they aren’t being overheard before leaning in and trying not to sound terrified,

“I think you’d look good out of them too, you know.”
Oswald’s eyes go wide, startled, and then his lips are curving into a shy smile, as though he isn’t a widely feared mobster. Jim resists the urge to squirm, to admit to being nervous and uncomfortable, and then Oswald finally puts him out of his misery and takes the bakery bag, whispers in his ear,

“Well, in that case, I suggest we take this somewhere more private.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for 'pumpkin pie'. This is kind of a sequel to the last chapter, because I got talking in the comments about writing 'some future set fic where Oswald has a crisis of self-esteem as he starts looking more like the traditional canon Penguin, and Jim is just clumsily trying to make him feel better by explaining that he's so so into it.'

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Does this look all right?” Oswald asked him one morning, abruptly, and it took Jim back in a good way because Oswald never asked his sartorial opinion. Had told him on more than one occasion that he was a philistine when it came to fashion. That nobody who knew the first thing about aesthetics would hide a face like his under that mustache.

He smiled at the memory and nodded, eyes fond when they met Oswald’s in the mirror.

“You look very elegant,” Jim said hesitantly, searching for the right words. “I like your tie, it brings out your eye color.”

Oswald only looked away and frowned in response, smoothing his hands down the sides of his already pristine jacket.

Jim puzzled over it all the way to the precinct, and probably would have continued to let the exchange preoccupy him, if Gotham’s criminal fraternity hadn’t had other ideas.

It was a busy few days which followed. Plots to foil, arrests to make. Paperwork to fill out - so much paperwork - that kept him at his desk hours after most of his colleagues had left for the evening.

He didn’t see much of Oswald. He was asleep by the time Oswald got home from the club in the early hours of the morning, and he had to leave long before Oswald showed any signs of surfacing. He made do with enjoying the few moments he got, pressed close to the other man’s form under the warmth of the blankets. The soft farewell kisses he left on his temple, heart lurching at the way Oswald mumbled nonsense in response, not quite aware of what was happening.

Because it wasn’t exactly conventional, their relationship, and he had long since been forced to accept that it was far from sensible. Cops and criminals should never be bedfellows, that was once his mantra, but the thought of giving it up, of losing Oswald, made him feel sick to his stomach.

It was that thought, perhaps. It was the enforced separation, maybe. It was the certain knowledge that he didn’t want Oswald to ever think he had been avoiding him, and he made expensive dinner reservations for the pair of them, feeling very pleased with himself.

At least he was until he was seated at the restaurant and received a harried call from Oswald, to let him know that something had come up, but that he would be there as soon as possible. Without his
company Jim felt stupid. Awkward and out of place, knowing he stuck out like a sore thumb among the city’s super rich and famous.

He was busy fidgeting with the menu, wondering if it was the done thing to get his cell out and google what the hell half the dishes were, when a familiar voice caught his attention.

Bruce was his own man now, was finding his own place in Gotham’s unusual justice system, but to Jim he would always be twelve years old, slightly naïve and a little too trusting. They hugged, briefly, and Bruce introduced him to his date, an impossibly gorgeous model who looked bored by the whole situation.

It only got worse for her.

Somehow Bruce had the waiters scurrying to action, rearranging tables so they could all sit together. Jim was grateful to be saved from himself, and he knew Oswald wouldn’t mind. Not really.

Except when he did catch sight of Oswald, raised his hand to wave him over, the other man’s steps faltered. His face dropped, just for a moment, before becoming carefully neutral, and Jim started to worry that maybe this wasn’t such a great idea. He touched Oswald’s hand when he sat down, a prelude to kissing him welcome, but Oswald tensed and refused to look at him.

Jim removed his hand, and did his best not to feel hurt and dejected.

His spirits only sunk further when the food was brought out. He had let the waiter recommend something, not wanting to look a fool in front of Bruce’s young lady, and now he couldn’t help but suspiciously prod a fork at the unidentified mass, feeling slightly nauseous. He tried a mouthful but it tasted no better than it looked, and he settled for pushing food around his plate, sneaking glances at what Oswald was doing.

Much the same, by the look of it, while the girl opposite nibbled on her salad. He watched her for a while, wondering if it was because her food was bad or because she was worrying about its calorie content - he remembered that all of his girlfriends had, deaf to anything he ever said on the matter. Only Bruce was eating with gusto, and the disappointment settled over Jim. So much for his grand romantic gesture.

Dessert was better, cloying and sweet, and Jim was so hungry his plate was empty in moments. Oswald scarcely touched it, however, and that was the most disappointing thing of all because Jim loved watching Oswald eat dessert. He loved to watch Oswald eat, period.

It made him happy to see Oswald taking care of himself, blessed that Oswald was willing to let Jim take care of him. Kind of shivery to focus on Oswald’s mouth, the visible pleasure on his face. Oswald played up to it sometimes, did positively obscene things to the flatware, until Jim couldn’t think, could hardly breathe, absolutely frantic with the need to touch him.

Instead Oswald was silent all through the journey home, and when Jim suggested he make some toast - he was not the world’s greatest cook - Oswald just shook his head and told him he was tired, disappearing in the direction of their bedroom.

It was Oswald who was swamped with work in the days that followed. Who offered him minty kisses when he eventually slid into bed, before pulling away and telling Jim that a deputy police commissioner needed his beauty sleep. It was true, probably. But he would manage without it, and one night he tugged Oswald back to him, dropping his lips to Oswald’s neck so that he squirmed, helpless, and complained about how it tickled.
That was the point, Jim smirked, and was suddenly desperate to show Oswald how badly he wanted him. How much he needed to be close to him, to run his hands over his soft flesh and cover him in kisses.

“Jim!” Oswald only huffed, and Jim didn’t need the hands pushing at his shoulders. The tone was clear enough. “It’s been a long day,” Oswald sighed, the words strained and distant, and turned on his side to make sure Jim had got the message. Jim stared up at the ceiling, silent, and tried to ignore the pit of ice in his stomach.

Things weren’t any better in the morning, and the night which followed was worse because Jim was left without any doubt when Oswald told him he was going to stay at the club. Oswald was definitely avoiding him.

He didn’t text Jim during his lunch hour, the way they had both become accustomed to, and when Jim tried ringing, Oswald’s cell invariably went to voicemail. That hurt worse than anything, worse even than waking up alone again and trying to work out what he had done that had been so offensive. Because he had leaned on all his officers for assurance that there was nothing going down that he didn’t know about. No ripples in the underworld which might account for it. So not only did Oswald not want to speak to him, he didn’t even want to simply cancel his calls, and have to admit to Jim that he had seen them.

Finally he clocked off early and turned up at the Iceberg Lounge, determined to make Oswald talk to him. If this wasn’t what he wanted, Jim deserved to know that, surely.

It really hit him then that perhaps this wasn’t a tiff. That perhaps Oswald had had enough and simply couldn’t find the words to tell him. There had been no fight, no temper tantrum. Just a growing distance between them, and Jim had been there before, knew how awful it was, to discover that the person you loved most in the world had nothing left to give you but indifference and apathy.

He ordered a drink for courage, and then another. He was nursing his third when Oswald emerged from his private rooms above, cheeks flushed and hair out of place, like somebody had been running their fingers through it.

Not massively so. Not so just anyone would notice. Jim did because he knew that look, had frequently been the cause of it, and he couldn’t stay a moment longer. Had to push his way to the door, lean against the wall of the club and suck in great lungfuls of cold night air.

He didn’t cry, he didn’t rage.

He wandered through the city streets, numb, and wondered what he was supposed to do without Oswald. It started raining at some point, though he barely noticed it, and by the time he got home he was soaked through. Oswald emerged in the hallway, as he was struggling to get his wet jacket off, and he looked paler than usual. Worried.

“I was worried about you,” he confirmed, and moved to help him, fingers working at the buttons of his sodden shirt. “It’s gone three in the morning.”

That did surprise him, though his feet were aching.

“I’m sorry,” he said, and he wished that Oswald wasn’t so close. That he didn’t smell so wonderful. It felt like his throat was closing, he could scarcely swallow around the surge of emotion.
“I saw you leave the club earlier. I tried to follow but,” Oswald shrugged slightly, clear blue eyes never leaving his own, “I couldn’t keep up with you. Was it work, Jim? What happened?”

This was it, the crossroads. He could pretend it was work and they could keep this charade going. Not indefinitely, perhaps, but longer. He would still have Oswald in his life, in his bed, and he wanted that so badly he almost started nodding.

But.

He would still know, and their problems would all still be there. Festering. Turning everything they had ever had rotten, until he wouldn’t even have his memories to console him when things got so bad they could no longer bear to look at each other.

“I saw you,” he said, and his tone wasn’t accusing, just exhausted. Oswald didn’t help, only frowned at him in confusion, so that he was forced to elaborate, “Your hair was a mess, your face was red. You don’t have to tell me who they are just - Please, don’t lie to me.”

Oswald stared at him for one beat, two, and then he dropped his hands from Jim’s chest. Took a step backwards.

“You’re actually accusing me,” he started, cutting himself off, disbelieving. He shook his head, and there was the anger, bubbling hot and brilliant between them. “You’ve got some nerve, Jim, after everything I’ve done for you.”

It was catching, sparkling in his own chest, and Jim found himself snapping,

“And what exactly have you done for me, Oswald? I’m the one who always has to turn a blind eye. I’m the one who everyone talks about, laughs at, for being with you.”

Oswald looked like he had been struck, eyes over bright, but Jim couldn’t stop himself,

“I’m the one they should have sent to Arkham.”

There was silence for a moment too long and then Oswald grit out, expression murderous,

“You’re going to regret saying that.”

Jim slammed his fist into the nearest wall.

He already regretted it.

The next day Jim got home from work to find his key was useless. Oswald had had the locks changed, and when it became clear Oswald really didn’t want to talk about it, Jim went back to the precinct. Spent the night on the hard cot in the psych cell, slowly taking in the fact that his life was falling apart around him.

Word spread quickly on the tongues of the station gossips, and it wasn’t even lunchtime when Harvey rapped at his door, looking just as disreputable on his own dime as he ever had on the government’s.

“I was going to congratulate you on finally coming to your senses, but,” he gestured at the dark smudges under Jim’s eyes, the framed photograph of Oswald on his desk he had spent the better part of the morning staring at, “it doesn’t look like it was your decision.”

Jim flashed his friend a grim smile and shook his head.
“I messed up, Harv. Same way I always do.”

“You’ve done worse,” Harvey consoled and took Jim’s jacket from the coat hook, held it out as a sign they were getting out of there. “Lee would agree with me.”

“You really know how to kick a man when he’s down,” Jim groused and Harvey only grinned, “Come on. We’ll figure something out.”

Jim explained the entire situation over lunch, fries and hamburgers at a greasy diner Oswald wouldn’t be seen dead in. Harvey listened, asked questions, and grimaced, appalled, when Jim got carried away with a description of how he’d like to make things up, given the opportunity.

“I’ll support you in anything, Jim, you know that,” he said, stealing the last of Jim’s fries from his plate. “But don’t put that sort of image in my head. I gotta sleep at night.”

Jim smirked into his coffee and let his mind wander.

That was a big part of why he had jumped to conclusions, in hindsight. Because maybe things hadn’t been right in that department for some time, longer than the last few weeks, when it could be blamed on work, or stress, or tiredness.

Oswald had pushed him away more than once, had pretended to be asleep when Jim knew he wasn’t. Had worn extra layers to bed when it really wasn’t cold enough to warrant it, and had distracted Jim so thoroughly, time and again, instead of letting him put the light on.

“Do you think he’d like me better if I shaved the mustache off?” Jim blurted, interrupting whatever it was that Harvey had been saying, and the older man stared at him, incredulous.

“What? No. We’re talking serious grovelling here, Jimbo. Flowers, chocolate, foot rubs. Disposing of evidence. I don’t know what kind of kinky shit you two get up to.” He held up a hand, code for ‘and I don’t want to’, and at the look on Jim’s face continued, more seriously, “Look, I’ve had a front row seat to this - this lunacy since the very beginning. I’ve suffered through PDAs no man should have to witness, and I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve listened to your drunk ass sing his praises. Worse, I’ve had to live through him singing yours. And that mustache, trust me,” He shook his head, reached for his drink as though to wash away the memory, “You’ve got nothing to worry about.”

Back at the office there was a bag on his desk, a holdall he vaguely recognized as one of his own. It certainly looked old enough. He unzipped it gingerly, to find that Oswald had packed half his wardrobe into it, all in the neat squared off way Jim had never mastered, not even in the military. He picked up the topmost shirt and breathed in, hoping for Oswald’s cologne but getting nothing but fabric softener. The movement did dislodge a note, the paper fluttering softly to his desk.

Its message was brief, left no room for ambiguity. Told him to inform Oswald when he wanted to collect the rest of his things, so the other man could ensure he wouldn’t be there.

There was no way Jim was going to do that.

He was going to follow Harvey’s advice for once. He was going to buy flowers, and pastries and pies from the dubiously staffed bakery in the East End, the one Oswald always said reminded him of his mother, along with some stupidly overpriced tie pin Oswald would insist he couldn’t call jewelry.

He was going to fight for Oswald and, if he had to, he was going to fight dirty.
When he was done shopping he went home and rang the bell insistently, for three minutes, and then he did something he hadn’t in a very long time. Worked a wire into the keyhole and jimmed it until he could turn the handle.

“My mother always said you should never trust a policeman.”

Oswald said, furious, when he turned around from shutting the door behind him. Jim dropped his bags to the floor and held his hands out, appeasing.

“Mine always said I was an idiot.”

He could see the first chink in the armor, the twitch of lips indicating that Oswald wanted to smile, in spite of himself.

“Please hear me out,” he said, and played his ace, counting on Oswald’s admittedly twisted sense of propriety. “Let’s talk about this like civilized people. I brought dinner.”

He waited, heart hammering, but Oswald acceded. Stood back with a gesture that told him to get on with it. Jim dragged out the preparations as long as possible, setting the table, putting the flowers in water, hoping that Oswald’s desire to kick him out would soften rather than intensify with his continued presence.

“It’s ready,” he said finally, when it was that or have Oswald demand he just say his piece and go away again.

Jim waited until Oswald took a bite of the pie, eyes closing, blissful, for just a second, and felt the familiar heat pooling low in his abdomen. He was definitely not giving this up without fighting tooth and nail to save it.

“I’m sorry,” he said, painfully aware of how inadequate it seemed. “It’s just, you were avoiding me, and I didn’t know what else to think.”

He wasn’t jealous, not the way he saw on the job, smothering and controlling. But he was only human and he hated - despised - the idea of Oswald wanting somebody else more than him.

“Who am I going to cheat on you with?” Oswald questioned in response. “For God’s sake, look at me!”

Jim jerked his head up, because that was something he could do. Unlike offer Oswald’s glare an answer. It wasn’t as though he had ever had a specific name in mind. Gotham was a big city, and Nygma was serving another stretch in Arkham.

Except apparently it had been a rhetorical question because Oswald went on, without any prompting,

“I was at the gym, if you must know. Not that it’s been working.”

His cheeks were pink, embarrassed, and the only thing Jim could think to say was,

“Why?”

It wasn’t the right thing, not if the exasperation on Oswald’s face was anything to go by.

“I don’t know, I’ve been trying.”

“No,” Jim corrected, because that hadn’t been what he meant at all. “Why are you trying to lose
weight?”

That really wasn’t the right thing to say, not with the way Oswald pushed to his feet, the sound of the chair scraping on the parquet floor loud in the otherwise silence.

“I get it, Jim, that you didn’t sign up for this. That people laugh at you, think you’re *crazy*, but you don’t need to make fun of me.”

Understanding suddenly dawned on Jim, and it made him want to laugh, hysterically, in relief. Weep, ashamed, because he should have seen this brewing.

“Because you’re laundering mob money,” he said instead, “that’s why people laugh at me. I’m a deputy police commissioner and you could shoot - you *have* shot - someone in front of me and I’d claim I hadn’t seen it. That’s why they think I’m crazy.”

Oswald wasn’t arguing back, seemed to be taking it in, so Jim went on,

“When it comes to what you look like, they’re just jealous of me.” Oswald raised an eyebrow, and Jim shrugged, thinking of Harvey, “And if they aren’t, they should be. If I ever said anything, if I ever did anything,” he finished, awkward, “to make you think otherwise I didn’t mean it. You have to know that.”

Because, yeah, Oswald was bigger than he had been when they met, but that was no bad thing. He had been frail and sickly back then, all sharp angles and prominent rib cage. It hadn’t stopped Jim wanting him, hadn’t been enough to prevent him thinking about it, even when it made him hate himself. But this was better, so much better, and the idea Oswald truly believed Jim thought otherwise was so off kilter he was struggling to get his head around it.

“You haven’t said anything,” Oswald admitted reluctantly, but quickly followed it with, “You haven’t done anything either. Except ignore me in favor of some stick thin girl young enough to be your daughter. Even the *Batman* noticed.”

Jim frowned, confused, mentally trawling through the past few weeks before hitting upon a likely candidate. The night in the restaurant, his mind supplied, the night that had gone so terribly.

“I was starving and she had appetizing food she wasn’t eating,” he said, bluntly. “And don’t call Bruce that, you know I told you in confidence.”

“We were at The Ocelot,” Oswald protested, as though the extra stress he put on the word meant something. “You had the foie gras.”

“I know, it was horrible.”

Oswald sat at that, like the anger was draining out of him, and said accusingly,

“You’ve ruined your palate, Jim, eating God knows what from those street carts. You would have been just as happy at a fast food restaurant.”

“Happier, probably,” Jim confessed, lips quirking, because this was more like it. The sniping, the bickering, knowing it didn’t mean anything except wanting to get closer and keep talking. “You didn’t eat it either,” he pointed out, bantered, and Oswald gave him a sad look as he said,

“I lost my appetite about the same time I began thinking you were going to trade me in for a trimmer model.”
Jim had to move at that, had to kiss Oswald. Had to make him understand that that was the very last thing he was ever likely to consider. Oswald made a noise low in his throat, encouraging, and it hadn’t been long, not really, but it felt like his blood was burning beneath his skin with arousal, making his balance unsteady and his breathing heavy.

He pulled Oswald to his feet, kissed him again, desperate, then led them single-mindedly to the bedroom, lest they find themselves with an audience.

Then Oswald was on the bed and he was staring, pulse rushing in his ears, overwhelmed by just how lucky he was. And then he was on the bed with him, fingers scrabbling against buttons and fastenings, wild with the need to be rid of them, though Oswald wouldn’t thank him for the cavalier way he dumped his silk vest and fancy cufflinks to the floor, afterwards.

In the present, he didn’t seem to care, his treatment of Jim’s shirt not much better, and Jim typically didn’t talk much during moments like these, not beyond ‘yes’ and ‘please’ and ‘Oswald’, but right now he couldn’t keep his mouth shut. Couldn’t quit telling Oswald how afraid he had been he was going to lose this.

In an effort to keep quiet, he latched onto the skin of Oswald’s neck, loving the way Oswald writhed under him, and the fact that it would leave a mark. A reminder. Oswald arched against him, clutched at his back, and Jim had to sink his own fingers into the soft flesh of Oswald’s side before sliding his hand further down, and wrapping it around him.

“Jim,” Oswald gasped, voice wrecked, and Jim had to shift slightly to better see, to watch what he was doing. It was still afternoon, sunlight streaming through the windows, and it was so good to have Oswald laid out before him. To be able to see the flush working down his chest and across his shoulders, and the way his hips pushed up into his hand, demanding and wanton.

“Don’t ever lose weight,” Jim said, pleaded, and then because it really wasn’t his place to give that kind of command, added, “I mean, unless you want to. Just don’t do it because of me, because you think I want you to.”

Oswald glared at him, eyes dark and impatient, and it had him twitching, helpless. Oswald took control, pushed him down against the sheets, and Jim could only pull him in tighter and pant into the heated space between them,

“This is so good, this is perfect. Don’t stop - Oh, God, don’t stop what you’re doing.”

Oswald didn’t listen, rarely had in all the years they had been together, and set about driving him to the brink and then keeping him there, until his limbs shook and he could scarcely see straight. The world seemed hyper-focused, blurred around the edges, and when Oswald finally - finally - took him into his mouth Jim’s only regret was that he couldn’t keep his eyes open, and watch Oswald swallow as he came apart, unable to hold back any longer.

He tasted himself in the kiss that followed, and when he reached for Oswald his fingers moved easily, slick with pre-come. It didn’t take long, didn’t take much at all, and they lay sprawled together afterwards, sated and comfortable.

“Am I forgiven?” Jim asked eventually, because he had never been known for his ability not to overthink the moment, and he could feel Oswald’s smile against his skin, even before he said,

“I’ll think about it. I did spot a very pretty tie pin among that mountain of food you brought with you.”
Jim found Oswald’s hand, brought it to his lips so he could kiss it, and offered up a smile of his own.

“I thought you said I had no taste.”

Once the words were out of his mouth, he worried about their suitability. About how Oswald might take them. But the other man only curled closer, contented, and said,

“You didn't. Not until you met me, obviously.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the prompt 'snow'. Set in the future, and loosely compliant with a few other fills I’ve written - Ed finds out about Jim/Oswald and hatches a plot to get revenge for Isabella. Which is somehow a front for fluffy proposal trope fic... :)
down, he believed he deserved it.

His next stop was Bullock. It wouldn’t be the first time the oaf had led Jim astray. Got him so drunk he couldn’t see straight, let alone be punctual. But he could hear the man’s frown,

“I thought you were going for some swanky meal. I told Jim I was sick of hearing about it.”

“He never arrived. I can’t get hold of him.”

Out loud his worries sounded foolish. Jim was a grown man; a war veteran and an experienced police officer. If he didn’t want to spend time with him, that was Jim’s business. Bullock didn’t seem to think so though, tone carefully calm as he said,

“I’ll put some feelers out. I think it would be helpful if you rang around the hospitals.”

He did just that, described Jim over and over, attempting to be thorough and objective. Trying not to think of Jim lying alone in a gutter somewhere, beaten and bloodied. Got nowhere and decided finally that he couldn’t sit and wait, so shrugged into his coat and instructed the bulk of his payroll to get out and do whatever it took to find Jim.

Jim’s usual haunts proved disappointing, and Oswald began on his own, in case Jim had been to see a mutual acquaintance. Pushed through the snow and visited backroom after backroom, temper worsening. Barbara greeted him over effusively when he made it to her club, tossing her blonde hair over her shoulder and offering him a cocktail. She was still beautiful, still deadly, and Oswald bit back the urge to yell at her.

“I’m not here to be sociable. Jim’s missing.”

“Oh,” Barbara gasped, hand pressed to her mouth in mock concern. “Poor Jimmy.” She tilted her head to the side, expression shifting, “If only I gave a damn.”

Oswald scowled. They had never had the most harmonious of relationships, and she had openly sided with Ed during the unpleasantness. Orchestrated the whole thing, most likely, and adding Jim to the volatile mix had only made things more of a minefield.

“I’m not asking if you’ve seen him,” he said in turn, clipped and cold, “I’m suggesting that if you were to choose not to volunteer such information, I may struggle to guarantee your continued personal safety.”

They stared each other down for one beat, two, and then she moved away airily, as though she was bored with the stand off.

“Somebody left you this, by the way,” she handed him an envelope from behind the bar. “Tell your brainless cretins not to use my club as a drop off point.”

Oswald took it silently. It felt like a card rather than money, and that made no sense. He wasn’t an inconspicuous figure, there was no reason not to bring something like this to one of his own businesses. He opened it and felt his fingers go numb, ice settling in the pit of his stomach.

“Oh,” Barbara breathed, eyes glittering, “Now this is exciting.”

“Edward Nygma, alias Riddler, alias Eddie Nashton, escaped from Arkham sometime after 17:00 hours yesterday. We can’t be more specific as yet; Nygma was in solitary and his absence wasn’t discovered until 6:30 this morning.”
McKenna sighed and stuck another photograph to the board.

“Jim Gordon, one of our own. Left the precinct at 18:20 and hasn’t been seen or heard from since. There’s a lot of history there - hard copy summaries are circulating - and at this point I think we have to accept that the two events are connected.”

Oswald crossed his arms across his chest, to halt his own fidgeting, and glanced around the room. It was packed with police, uniformed and plainclothes, and he had no doubt they were breaking a dozen or more regulations just by letting him stand there.

He could help though, understood Ed better than anyone. As much as Ed could be understood by this point. Bullock had argued his case, anyway, right before telling the captain he’d be staying too, though he had long since given up his badge to become a private investigator.

McKenna held up the card Oswald had received the night before, or at least a copy of it.

“This was handed in at The Sirens - the barmaid couldn’t remember by who and the CCTV was out of order.”

A groan went around the room, distrusting, and Oswald dug the fingers of one hand into his arm. He didn’t believe it either, for all his persuasion hadn’t resulted in a different answer. Simmons took over then, expression grim as she revealed what they had managed to glean from it. The green cardstock and the kind of ink Ed had used.

Oswald let the words wash over him, he had already worked out the riddle.

‘What is always coming but never arrives?’

Tomorrow.

Ed expected them to just wait for him to tell them what his plans were.

The second card arrived shortly after eleven, and Oswald suppressed a bitter smile. Ed never could resist playing his hand too soon.

‘A strength for some, a weakness for others. Some say it’s better to have lost than never to have known.

Will you?

Jim says hi. At least I think that’s what he’s trying for.’

He had to sit, could feel his legs about to give out on him, and McKenna and Bullock shepherded him into Jim’s office, wanting answers. It was the first time he had spent any time in it, usually met Jim at the front desk, if not outside, and it made something in his chest clench, painful, at the sight of things he had had no idea about.

The dictionary he had bought Jim once, as a joke, well thumbed instead of in the trash as he had always imagined. A cluster of familiar pens and notepads, and the potted cactus he had meant as an insult, because he had gone away on business for three days and Jim had all but killed every living thing he had been left responsible for.

Jim actually had a photograph of him on his desk, in a frame he must have bought especially. It wasn’t even an old photograph, one that any visitors he had might not recognize. Instead the picture had been taken about two years ago, three tops, though Oswald had no idea when he had ever
willingly smiled for the camera.

It shook up all of his preconceptions, turned them a complete 180, because to his mind Jim had always kept work and his personal life rigidly separate. Hated the idea anyone might think him unprofessional, and didn’t have to say he was ashamed of who Oswald was, what he did, for them both to hear it. To want to play pretend and make their relationship the worst kept secret at the precinct.

It felt like his throat was closing up, the burn of tears behind his eyelids. He might never get to tell Jim that he was sorry, for expecting the worst of him.

“We have to find them,” he said finally. “He’ll drag it out for a few days, a week maybe, but he wants Jim dead and if he thinks we’re getting close he’ll just go ahead and do it.”

The cards came thick and fast over the next two days, though they came no closer to tracing their origin.

“That crazy son of a bitch!” Bullock spat when the lab came back after the fourth to tell them that there had been blood mixed with the ink. That they had matched it to Jim’s and, no, there wasn’t anything else they could give them, no matter how much they were yelled at.

“It’s difficult to build up a psychological profile,” Simmons snapped, stressed and exhausted, “when it’s for someone who is just plain psycho.”

“He’s only had one visitor since he went back inside,” McKenna said, compassion giving way to suspicion, “and that’s you. Once a month, regular as clockwork.”

Oswald had known it was coming, still didn’t have a good explanation. Not one the GCPD would be interested in hearing, at any rate.

“Ed doesn’t have anyone else,” he offered. “Arkham is awfully lonely.”

The truth was that he felt responsible. It was his actions that had tipped Ed over the edge, past the point of no return, and he knew what that was like. To lose control completely, to be a slave to the animal hindbrain, fixated on being the cause of death and suffering.

He had wanted forgiveness, absolution, for taking Ed’s last chance at sanity from him. Instead he had shown Ed all of his weak spots, revealed too much in his quest to fill the awkward silence. Hung a death sentence over Jim’s head and never even trusted him enough to tell him what he was doing.

“Jim knew,” Bullock told him, like some kind of mind reader. “Thought it showed what a sensitive, kindhearted soul you are.”

“I take it you disagreed.”

Bullock snorted, “I’ve disagreed with him on everything to do with you, right from the beginning. Never made a blind bit of difference, did it?”

“I do love him,” he said quietly, because Bullock had been a good friend to Jim, in spite of it, and because he had to say something. Felt so useless and sidelined, making no progress though every minute that passed was another minute Jim was in pain, tied up and terrified. Ed had made that very clear, and Oswald saw no reason to question it.
“I know,” Bullock said, and laid a hand on his shoulder, just for a moment. “That’s the only reason you’re still breathing.”

He forced himself to dress that evening. To fix his hair and ensure his suit was perfect, when all he really wanted to do was sit and weep. He was sure that knowledge would make Ed very happy. But he had a scheduled meeting with his crime syndicate, and it wouldn’t do to have them see how desperate he was.

What was needed was a show of strength, a reminder of who was in control.

In the event he stabbed a fruit knife through the tendons of a distant Cassamento cousin’s right hand, and proposed that should the Arkham security contract be proving too challenging, it be given to one of the other families.

He returned from the meeting to find another note waiting, a memory card taped to it.

‘A picture is worth a thousand words. This video must be worth a million.’

Jim’s colleagues saw it as a breakthrough, a dozen potential leads to follow up on. Oswald just stared, silent, at the screen and remembered what it was like, to have his mother murdered in front of him. Because Jim was trying to keep still, to stay calm, but Ed had always been clever. Had always been adventurous.

He had to look away, before the end, and he left another too obvious voicemail on Bruce Wayne’s cellphone. The boy was happy enough to put Jim in danger so he could play with his capes and his flash cars, the least he could do now was return the favor. When he went back to the incident room the video was playing again, Ed tipping Jim’s chin up and grabbing at his visibly broken wrist,

“Come on, Jim. Wave for the camera.”

It was the fourth day when one of the technicians made the connection, emerging pale but excited from the computer lab. The place suddenly became a flurry of activity, and it took a few moments too long for him to realize McKenna was talking to him, tone brokering no argument,

“Stay here, Cobblepot. This is a GCPD operation.”

He made to protest, was overridden with,

“And that goes for you too, Bullock.”

“Bullshit,” Bullock opined, and grabbed him by the arm. Led him down to his laughable excuse of a car and drove it across the city like it was a Lamborghini. “Put that on,” Bullock demanded when they stopped, handing him a stab vest.

Oswald raised an eyebrow, his first thought for his outfit, and his second for his reputation.

“Put it on,” Bullock repeated tersely. “If Jim gets through this only to find out I let something happen to you. Well,” he shook his head, “let’s not even go there.”

He put the vest on, warmed through at the open recognition of how much Jim cared, and did his best to cling to that thought, and not the ones about them being too late. About Jim being too far gone to care about anything.

Ed was prepared, had learned from the master when it came to being two, three, even four steps
ahead of everybody. Had Bullock incapacitated almost the moment they entered the warehouse, and he ended up with his own hands tied behind his back, forced down until his knees made agonizing contact with the cold concrete.

“I must say, this is excellent timing,” Ed said, all smiles, Jim’s blood streaked across one cheekbone. “Jim’s been flagging a bit. Haven’t you, Jim?”

Jim groaned, and tried to open his eyes and focus, cheek pressed against the dirty ground. Oswald felt sick, tried to move to him, but Ed was too quick. Hit him hard across the shoulder blades, and flicked a switch that did something to Jim. Had him jerking and crying out, face wet with helpless tears.

“Don’t!” Oswald begged in response. “I’m the one who had her killed. I’m the one you want to hurt.”

“That’s true,” Ed agreed affably. Gave Jim a kick to the ribs to check he was still breathing. “Which is why I’ve enlisted the help of Detective, sorry, Deputy Commissioner Gordon. Do you know he was on his way to see you when I found him? He even had flowers.”

He could feel the moisture on his own cheeks now. Wished he could go back and shake himself, because Jim wasn’t the type of man to just forget. To stand him up and then ignore his calls about it. He should have known something was wrong from the beginning, and not wasted any time before doing something.

“Now that’s romance,” Ed went on, laughing in the unhinged way that made the hair on the back of his neck stand up. “That’s love. Perhaps you’ll crack too with that gone. We could be cellmates.” He hit the button again, so Jim twitched and cried. “Imagine the fun we’ll have.”

“I’m sorry,” Oswald tried, knowing better than to try and offer money, power. Ed wasn’t interested in it. “I’m so so sorry.”

Ed gave him a pitying look, so that Oswald thought for a moment - hoped for a moment - that he was truly considering it. Then he shrugged and twisted the dial forcefully.

“Not sorry enough.”

The GCPD came to the rescue, sirens blaring and warning shots sounding. McKenna hit the power, and somebody untied him even as Simmons went to Jim’s side, searching for a pulse. She shook her head, fingers trembling, and it was like he was moving on autopilot, dropping back to his ruined knee like it was nothing.

He knew how to do this. He was a businessman, a nightclub owner, had been through the all the training. Had put it into practice. But this was Jim and when the first cycle bore no results the fear was all consuming.

Jim couldn’t die now, not after everything. Not when what felt like the entire city police force had turned up to save him.

He breathed out again, fingers icy where they pushed against Jim’s chest. Went through another cycle, and then another. Kept going until he was forcibly pulled back, and then the paramedics stepped in, ready with the defibrillator.

There was a moment of nothing, of utter desolation, and then another charge and finally, finally, Jim was gasping for breath and the shock set in, leaving him boneless and insensible.
“You gave me the kiss of life,” Jim told him later, in the back of the ambulance, tone fond even around the oxygen mask and the endless wires. Oswald smiled at him through the tears and clung to him,

“Please don’t ever scare me like that again.”

He slept fitfully in the chair beside Jim’s hospital bed, after outright refusing to leave, and Gabe came by in the morning with fresh clothes and a get well card for Jim, proving beyond all doubt he had been right to promote him over the heads of so many of his sharper underlings.

Bullock turned up a couple of hours later, looking like he had just rolled out of bed, and for once Oswald didn’t judge him for it.

“They’ve carted him back to Arkham,” Bullock said, and Oswald offered to get him coffee. He drew a flask from somewhere in response, and took a long swig. “He says he’ll finish the job next time he’s out.”

“He won’t,” Oswald said, defiant, and touched the skin of Jim’s hand to prove to himself that he was there. That he was safe now.

“Maybe if you don’t go paying him visits this time, huh? You got Jim, that ought to be enough crazy for anyone.” He handed Oswald a police evidence bag then, a watch and a few other pieces visible through the blood smeared plastic. “Jim’s stuff. You might want to, you know, give it a wash or something.”

Oswald thanked him and huddled back in the chair, leg, back, and the crick in his neck competing for the title of most painful. A hefty dose of guilt on top and he just sat for a while, only startled out of his reveries by the sound of Jim’s rasping.

“You’re supposed to be resting your voice,” he chided without bite, and Jim swallowed dryly, stubborn as ever, and said,

“Can’t write. Broken fingers.”

“You have an answer for everything,” he said in turn, and fought back the urge to fight modern medicine to get his arms wrapped around Jim. Helped him take a sip of water instead and kissed his cheek, carefully. Jim just smiled, the expression incongruous on his battered face, and went on,

“Don’t listen to Harvey. This wasn’t your fault.”

“I wasn’t exactly blameless,” Oswald confessed and Jim reached for him with his better hand, maneuvered it so it was laying atop Oswald’s.

“No. Ed is ill. Trust me,” he shivered, “he’s been ill for a long time. Arkham’s no help. It never is.”

It had always been a sore spot, something they ignored for the most part. Jim wasn’t the most communicative of people, and Oswald generally did his best not to think of it, though it still haunted his nightmares on a regular basis. Jim would hold him then, ask if he wanted to talk about it. Make him breakfast in the mornings and treat him like he might shatter, ‘I’m sorry’ written all over every action.

“I’m not very eloquent,” Jim said then, and held his gaze, as though he were thinking of the exact same memories. His voice was rough, and not just from the screaming, when he spoke again, “I try but I mess up. I say the wrong thing.”
It was a fairly accurate assessment. Most of the arguments they had ever had could have been resolved by Jim just explaining himself, talking instead of walling himself in and playing stoic and silent. But perhaps he set too much store by what Jim said, and not enough by what he did. He thought of the photograph on Jim’s desk, the fact that some of the younger clerks had known him only as Jim’s boyfriend, and had no idea about his political and business ventures, criminal or otherwise.

“So I don’t say them,” Jim continued, his statements necessarily short and to the point. “I wait for the right moment. But it’s stupid. I could have died and - And I would never have said this to you.”

Jim gestured for the bag Harvey had delivered, and Oswald handed it over. Tipped it out onto the over-bed table for him, and followed his instructions until he picked up a jeweler’s box. Cufflinks, he thought in the face of Jim’s anxiety. An anniversary present.

“Is this for me?” He asked, just in case, and refused to dwell on the thrill it gave him, even here, even now, to think of Jim out buying presents for him.

“Yeah. I wanted to ask you properly. Make it special. I’d been planning it for months - I can’t wait any longer.”

The words were sinking in, slowly registering and challenging his assumptions, even as he opened the box and saw the ring.

“Will you marry me?”

He nodded first, dumbstruck, then remembered he should probably be verbalizing.

“Yes. Of course, yes, Jim!”

He did hug him this time, as awkward as it was, but Jim didn’t complain. Beamed back at him, and when he leaned in to brush their lips together Jim deepened the kiss enthusiastically, until a nurse came in and told them both off for ignoring the doctor’s orders.

They sat quietly after that, Jim dozing, and Oswald working up the will to leave him to rest for the evening. He may have fallen asleep himself, for a short time, and when he opened his eyes Jim was watching him closely, smiling stupidly.

“Have they given you more morphine?” He asked, softly, and Jim only carried on smiling,

“I’m alive, I’m on a lot of morphine,” there was a hint of a laugh. “I love you, and you’ve agreed to marry me. What more could a guy ask for?”

Not to be swathed in bandages from head to toe, probably. Not to have spent the last few days being tortured, that was likely a good one.

“I love you too,” he said simply, and knew in that instant how he would have answered Ed’s question.

Even if it was all ripped from him tomorrow, even if it hurt so badly he struggled to draw breath
for the rest of his life, he would never regret a moment of this.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwih or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Based on this prompt from Tumblr: 'you know what I want? a gobblepot fic where Jim and Oswald’s dating and Oswald just spoils Jim with anything and everything. Jim thinks it silly, since he doesn’t care about that kind of stuff, he’s fine with cheap stuff but he realizes that Oswald loves seeing him wearing the things he buys him or using the things he gets him so for Oswald sake he does.' Just some curtain!fic, and also my #GobblepotWinter2016 fill for ‘party’.

It started out innocuously enough, at least for Gotham.

Jim had just been discharged from hospital, his arm in a sling and his pride battered from his latest encounter with the city’s less salubrious elements.

“They were trying to make it harder to identify your body,” Harvey told him, in his clumsy attempt to be comforting. “They didn’t strip you just to humiliate you.”

He couldn’t even muster a response to that one. His best work suit was gone, either way, along with yet another wallet and the expensive leather duty belt he had bought on making detective. Getting back to his apartment didn’t improve his mood any. The cupboards in his kitchenette were still bare, and the milk in the fridge was visibly so far gone he didn’t even risk sniffing at it.

The worst - the absolute worst - was that after he retrieved his bundle of take out menus it hit him that his cards had all been canceled, and he didn’t have enough cash on him.

In fact he might have been contemplating something stupid. Like eating the container of something he had found in the back of the freezer, or calling Harvey to say he’d changed his mind about mixing alcohol with painkillers. He would have done it too, if there hadn’t been a knock at the door, and he hadn’t thrown caution to the wind and pulled it open to reveal Oswald Cobblepot and an armful of grocery bags.

“I hope I’m not being presumptuous,” Oswald said, a little sheepish, and Jim only grinned and pressed a kiss to his cheek before guiding him inside.

This was the kind of thing he could get used to.

They had been dating, he supposed that was the right word, since a few weeks before his hospital visit. But afterwards it was like something changed, like everything ramped up a gear, and when he woke up to find Oswald wrapped around him it didn’t freak him out. It felt perfect.

So perfect that he didn’t protest when Oswald handed him a pill box with his meds already divided into the relevant sections, though he was more than capable of remembering when to take them. It was so perfect he was the one to suggest they meet for dinner, if Oswald wasn’t too busy.
He found time, somehow, and they met a couple of blocks from the precinct when Jim was done for the day. Oswald listened to his objections, correctly deduced that they were more out of habit than sincerity, and took him to the same upmarket restaurant he had initially suggested.

The food was nice, though not worth the price tag, not to Jim’s way of thinking. Oswald enjoyed it all the same, almost flirting with him over his wine glass, and smiled happily when Jim fished the pillbox from his jacket pocket, right on schedule.

Jim swallowed the tablet down with a sip of lemon water, and the effects soon washed over him, leaving him relaxed and amenable. That was his excuse anyway, for the way he leaned across the table, uncaring of who might be watching, and kissed Oswald thank you.

Because on top of dinner, on top of everything, Oswald told him cautiously that he’d got him something, and produced a new duty belt with all kinds of attachments, and a super fancy looking pen with a UV light and a window breaker.

Jim pocketed it possessively, determining never to let Harvey borrow it.

“I’m not saying you need to wear all of those,” Oswald said, tone solemn, “but one or two wouldn’t hurt. Those thugs could have killed you, Jim.”

If Jim worried about people having the means and motive to kill him, he’d never leave his apartment, but he didn’t say that. It didn’t seem appropriate.

“If I don’t see you over prepared,” he said instead, pointedly, and Oswald patted at the breast pocket containing his switchblade and replied,

“I have the lines of my suit to think of. And,” he inclined his head in the direction of a table not so very far away from them, “well paid bodyguards. It makes a world of difference.”

Jim didn’t go overboard, it wasn’t his style. But he did start carrying his asp and his pepper spray, along with his handgun. Accepted the new shirts and shoes Oswald gave him and, in return, even wore his protective vest occasionally, for no better reason than he was feeling unlucky.

Harvey noticed, ever observant, and after the vest had come between Jim and a fatal stabbing, said,

“I’ll never understand you, Jim. You were sharing a bed with Barbara Keane, with Lee Thompkins, and you couldn’t wait to throw yourself in the path of a bullet. A few weeks shacked up with the Penguin and suddenly you care whether you live to see tomorrow.”

It was true, maybe. He had never really stopped to think about it.

“It’s been four months now,” he said instead, pedantic, and Harvey only shook his head and sighed, “Each to their own, Jimbo.”

He couldn’t forget the exchange quite so thoroughly, not now the idea was in his head. He had never set out for it to look that way. It hadn’t been Barbara’s fault he was so obsessed with his career, nor Lee’s that his head had been all over the place. It wouldn’t be Oswald’s fault either, when he messed this up just as spectacularly.

Because maybe this sense of contentment wasn’t him finally getting a grip and acting like an adult. This could just as easily be him getting complacent. Taking things for granted and setting himself up for heartache.
“You don’t need to keep doing this,” he said later, at another expensive restaurant. Oswald frowned at him, confused, and Jim elaborated, “This. Wasting money, showing off. It doesn’t matter to me.”

In his mind the speech had been a lot more effective. It had acknowledged that Jim was grateful for Oswald’s insistence on paying for him. That contrary to all his expectations he liked Oswald looking out for him, loved the useful stuff he had bought him just as much as the useless little trinkets he picked up simply because he had been thinking about him.

It had also made clear, sensitively, that Oswald didn’t need to do any of it. That he didn’t expect such treatment, and he would be just as happy if they ate cheap takeout forever and never went anywhere with a dress code. That sometimes it made him feel awkward and guilty that he couldn’t reciprocate, and it wasn’t like that was a new thing, because he had struggled with it constantly with Barbara too, no matter how many times she told him to get over himself and his outdated need to play the macho hero.

Out of his mouth the words sounded nothing but clumsy and cutting, and the look on Oswald’s face was enough to make Jim wish he had never voiced them.

“I didn’t mean it that way,” he said grimly, but it was too late. The damage was done and Jim wasn’t surprised when Oswald suddenly remembered he had something to do after dinner, and would be too busy to see him the next day, and the day after.

By the time they did meet again Jim had over thought the situation into whole new levels of complexity. Had considered everything from the possibility Oswald was so interested in replacing elements of his wardrobe because he was embarrassed to be seen with him the way it was, right through to theorizing he was planning on delivering all the receipts to the DA’s office as evidence of police corruption.

“You don’t have to wear those if you don’t like them,” Oswald said, watching the way Jim was fidgeting with the cufflinks he had put on as proof that he was appreciative of everything Oswald had done for him.

“I love them,” Jim said in protest, because the real problem was that he had a good idea how much they had cost, and was worried he was going to lose one. “I’d get you a pair,” he tried again, “if you didn’t already have hundreds.”

“I wouldn’t want you to waste your money,” Oswald remarked, just the wrong side of sniffy, and Jim tried to work out how it had taken him less than a week to ruin the easy banter they had spent months perfecting. Panicked that they were never going to get back to it.

“I just meant that they’d look better on you,” Jim offered. “You’re more,” he searched for the right word - eccentric, fashionable, stylish - “flamboyant,” he settled on and this time he didn’t even need to see Oswald’s face to know it was the wrong decision.

“Trouble in paradise?” Harvey asked the next morning, because Jim was silent and miserable, exactly the way he had been every day Harvey had known him until, as Harvey had previously told him, ‘insanity hit the water supply and you and Penguin started screwing.’

“Just me and my big mouth,” Jim said with a sigh. This was why he so strived to be the strong silent type. You couldn’t say the wrong thing when you weren’t saying anything.

Harvey looked unconvinced but didn’t push for details. Simply handed him a scrap of paper from
the mess on his desk.

“This will cheer you up. You’re invited to the Commissioner’s New Year’s Party.”

“I don’t want to go to a party,” Jim retorted, stubborn, and Harvey raised both hands,

“Don’t shoot the messenger. Might do you good anyway, spend some time with Cobblepot.” At Jim’s blank look he clarified, “He’s already RSVP-d; it’s on the notice board.”

It was too, when Jim went to look, right next to undesirable personages to keep an eye on in the docks area, and a list of people who were banned from the GCPD’s favorite watering holes. He moved the note over, next to the sign-up forms for event stewarding, and buried his head in paperwork until lunchtime rolled around and he could call Oswald.

That didn’t go so well either, because they had already discussed going, apparently, and clearly the problem was that he just hadn’t been listening.

“I don’t remember it,” Jim confessed, aiming for contrite, but Oswald’s tone was decidedly frosty when he replied,

“My flamboyant delivery was probably too distracting for you.”

The time had clearly come for Jim to get serious about this. It could be worse, he consoled himself. He could still be trying to work out what it was he had done wrong, or waiting days for each new installment of the argument, courtesy of the Military Postal Service.

To make up for it, Gotham conspired against him to make the day as long and as arduous as it could possibly manage. He’d scarcely wolfed down his hot dog at lunch before he was giving chase to a pickpocket, and when he skidded and landed on the slush covered sidewalk a low level mobster wanted for drug dealing caught sight of him, and punched him in the jaw for his troubles.

He was tripped up and spat at, shouted to and punched in the gut before he finally got to call it quits and go home for the day.

His initial thought was to shower and change before doing anything else, but when he saw his reflection in the locker room he figured it might play in his favor. Oswald was a sentimentalist and he looked pathetic, soaked through and the first bloom of a bruise rising along his jawline.

Gabe looked him up and down with sympathy at any rate, and told him Oswald wouldn’t be much longer with his meeting. It was difficult but Jim forced himself to sit still and not snoop on who was attending. Arresting half his business contacts wasn’t going to make Oswald more receptive to what he wanted to say to him.

“I need your help,” he said when he was eventually waved into the room, pleased with the way Oswald was up and out of his seat in an instant, gaze softening at the sight of his wet hair and the blood on his shirt, even as he said, cold and controlled,

“They’ll wish they never touched you.”

It wasn’t the sort of thing you should laugh at, not really, but Jim couldn’t stop himself. Oswald’s help would be a little over the top, in this instance, even if it was kind of sweet - and kind of twisted - that Oswald would offer it.

“I’m here to throw myself on your mercy,” he explained in the face of Oswald’s confusion. “This party, it’s white tie.”
Oswald stared back at him, waiting, and Jim shrugged, relieved that at least he wasn’t putting distance between them.

“I don’t own any.”

Oswald was in his element, engaging in serious discussion with his tailor about vents and facings, while Jim did his best not to squirm or grimace or otherwise complain about the situation.

He had asked for this.

It was his own fault for basing how long winded the process would be on the last time he had been forced into purchasing formal wear. Barbara hadn’t been anywhere near as exacting, and all he had had to do was go to the store and pick a suit off the rack. She had even let him get a pre-tied bow tie.

He wasn’t even going to suggest that option to Oswald.

“It will be worth it,” Oswald said, sensing his discomfort in spite of Jim’s best efforts. “You know how I like to show off at these things.”

The source of that comment was obvious, but this indignity actually seemed to be working. There was a half smile on Oswald’s face, a fondness to his tone, and if being bored for a while was all it took to get them back to where they were, Jim could with live that.

“I never said it was a bad thing,” he pointed out, almost forgetting that they weren’t alone, what with the eye contact and the dim lighting. “Just that you don’t need to do anything on my account. I love you anyway.”

Oswald froze at that, eyes widening, and then they really were alone, the tailor discreet enough to find a reason to leave the room for a few moments.

“I think I would remember if you had said that, Jim,” he said, breathless and disbelieving, and Jim had to go to him, uncaring of the pins and the fabric and how far his movement was going to set the end product back. Had to touch his fingertips to the rise of one sharp cheekbone, hand sliding to cradle the side of Oswald’s face.

“It’s what I meant,” because it was. Now he had said the words he didn’t doubt them, said them again just for the thrill of it, “I love you.”

They kissed then, soft and tender, and when Oswald pressed closer Jim did nothing to discourage him, even when it meant there were pins scratching at him.

“I love you too,” Oswald said when they pulled apart, eyes over bright but smiling widely. “I really really love you.”

He worked the day of New Year’s Eve, as did a lot of the precinct, but it was fairly quiet and he spent most of the day at his desk. It was still morning when the new clerk brought him a parcel, complaining that it wasn’t her job to act as his personal mailman. He apologized, distracted, and tried and failed to wait for Harvey to lose interest before opening it.

“It could be a bomb,” Harvey reasoned, even as he crowded closer, all open curiosity.

Jim glared but couldn’t quite banish the smile on his face. He recognized the handwriting on the
label and knew exactly who it was from.

Harvey leaned in closer still, “Come on, I know that look. What freaky shit have you two been up to?”

“None of your business,” Jim assured, and finally rid the package of ribbon and wrapping paper. The smile spread all across his face, the warm fluttery feeling in his chest enough to blot out the impending horror of having to make tedious small talk and pretend to look interested all evening.

“A dictionary?” Harvey asked, less than impressed, and Jim just set it carefully next to his in-tray. Snuck a look at the accompanying note and smiled all the harder. Sent a text to say thank-you and then pressed the paper into his pocket for safekeeping. In case he ever forgot how perfect a gift this was.

‘For the next time you’re struggling to say what you actually mean.’

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Eggnog

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotWinter2016 fill for the 'eggnog' prompt. Crack fic - Jim worries he's not exciting enough.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Off duty, Jim had never been particularly adventurous.

Work was always hectic, always stressful, and though he would make the effort if he had to, his down time activities of choice consisted primarily of sleeping and watching television.

Barbara had told him he was unimaginative, Vale that what he needed in his private life was a little spontaneity. Lee suggested they spice things up, do something exciting, and he struggled to find the words to explain that he just wasn’t interested.

That he had never been any different.

Because pills and powders had never appealed, nor extreme sports and ‘finding himself’. He had traveled some, with the army, but he was happy enough in one place, and what was the point in flash cars and fancy clothing, when you couldn’t take either on the subway?

It was only when things began to settle down, when it became clear that this was for the long haul and not the result of short term insanity, that he began to worry about how all of this sat with Oswald. It was one thing to be embarking on a whirlwind secret romance with a homicide detective, after all, and quite another to be coming home day after day to your significant other who also happened to be a police officer.

Oswald didn’t complain, didn’t insinuate, but Jim was sure he could see it anyway. The way he eyed up Jim’s taste in clothing, and the inevitable frustration, when the only unpredictable element in their evenings was whether or not Jim would be called back to the precinct.

He must think it a poor return, Jim thought increasingly often, for everything he was sacrificing. The concessions he made for Jim’s conscience, and the destabilizing effect they had on the syndicate. The chance to be with someone who looked the part - who could be relied upon in any given situation not to embarrass themselves.

Jim tried, did the best he could. Swore he would only rest his eyes for a moment, then opened them to discover he had spent three and half hours drooling over the sofa. Branched out when he replaced another ruined work suit, and bought a patterned tie, endless swirls of bright color. Oswald glanced at it, lips pursed, the very first time he wore it and it was Harvey, of all people, who finally said,

“Take that thing off, for God’s sake. It’s burning my retinas.”

His forays into more exotic cuisine fared no better. He was capable in the kitchen, providing he stuck to variations on cheese and pasta, but after spending hours sweating and cursing he scarcely
had enough salvageable food for one person, let alone two of them. He dished it up anyway, covered his own plate in salad, and though it was usually his favorite part of any meal, watching Oswald eat was painful.

“This is very, ah, unique,” Oswald managed, trying to get rid of it with as little chewing as possible, and as a reward for sparing his feelings spent the next three days in bed with food poisoning.

Worse yet was the realization that perhaps Oswald found him lacking in other areas.

It was Oswald’s information which enabled the raid to go ahead, Jim finding it better sometimes to ignore the hows and the whys of such intel, and simply to focus on the good it would do. The nasty characters it would put behind bars, and the illegal activity it would put an end to. Quite a lot, in this instance; the place made The Foxglove look like a tea party. Whips and chain and rubber, and a pile of seized equipment Harvey explained the purposes of but Jim didn’t really believe, not until he looked it up on the internet.

“I expect you know more about this than we do,” one of his colleagues from vice said with a wink, and her partner, someone he had never had much time for, sneered,

“So that’s the reason you risked your career for the Penguin.”

“Watch your mouth,” he snapped, and spent the rest of the afternoon unable to keep his mind from wandering. Because it wasn’t like that, they had never tried anything like that. They didn’t want to; at least, he had assumed that was the case.

Jim thought of his newly compromised search history and grimaced.

He had struggled enough when Barbara had asked him to role-play, because there was little more off putting than being reminded of the station holding cell and, besides, it was misuse of GCPD property. The other way around, with his hands cuffed to the headboard, had been all right, he supposed. At least until she expanded on the scene and he nearly broke his wrist in his eagerness to prove that he really, really wasn’t getting anything out of the situation.

Maybe that was the point of the thing, he thought with sudden panic, and once the idea was in his head that Oswald might want more from him, he couldn’t get it back out again.

“There were some crazy things going on there,” he said that evening, trying to gauge Oswald’s reaction. In response Oswald scarcely looked up from his book, simply laughed and settled more comfortably against his side,

“Jim Gordon, I never took you for such an innocent.”

“We don’t all have time to go visiting sex dungeons,” Jim said in turn, careful to keep his tone light, and Oswald only smiled up at him, fond, and spoke like it was just another day at the office,

“I’m happy to explain anything you found confusing. I’ve seen it all before.”

Jim demurred, all haste, and lay awake half the night worrying that Oswald had been disappointed.

It might not have amounted to anything, might have been simply forgotten. But it was less than a week later when a case had him calling at The Sirens, and Barbara had always known where to stick the knife and just how to twist it.

“There’s nothing here,” she protested, all evening gown and dry martini like it wasn’t 11 o’clock in
the morning.

“You won’t object to us searching then,” he stated, handing a pair of gloves to the latest rookie who had had the misfortune to be partnered with him. Barbara gestured expansively, drink spilling, and winked at his partner, tone becoming confidential,

“Jim always tries to be thorough. He just so rarely finds what it is he’s looking for.”

He flushed, the back of his neck burning, because the implication was obvious. Barbara only smiled sweetly at him,

“Or so I hear. How’s Oswald?”

She was teasing him, looking for a rise, but it played on his mind all the same. Made him worry all over again that he was failing on just about every level, and had him drinking a glass of spiked eggnog too many at what passed for the staff Christmas party, to work up the courage to broach the topic.

“Did you have a good day at work?” Oswald asked him when he got home, and kissed him on the forehead, like they were living out some black and white dream of 1950s suburbia. Like the man hadn’t spent the day striking fear into the hearts of the city’s lowlifes, threatening pain and violence.

“Do you want me to hurt you?” Jim blurted out, suddenly desperate for it to be over with. “Because I don’t think I can do that.”

He had given it a lot of thought, both in between and during the drinking, and didn’t see how he could come to a different conclusion. Because Oswald had seen it in him, right from the beginning, that he was happy enough to use his fists and his strength in the line of duty, but that it didn’t spill over into the bedroom. That being rough really wasn’t his thing, and the idea of being so now made him feel ill, reminded him too forcibly of the early days of their association, of the blood, and the pain, and the fear in Oswald’s eyes when he believed Jim was going to shoot him.

There was an echo of it there now, and Jim had to sit. Didn’t trust his legs to continue to hold him.

“I don’t understand,” Oswald started, and Jim cut him off. Had to get it out now before his nerve deserted him completely,

“It would have to be the other way around. I don’t know how much - it’s not something I’m into. But I’ll try, if it will make things better for you.”

Oswald just stared at him for a moment, like he was having trouble processing the statement. Jim squirmed, awkward under the scrutiny, and just so there could be no misunderstanding added,

“In bed, I mean. I know I’m kind of,” he groped for the right word, gave up and went with, “boring.”

He looked at his hands, waited for Oswald’s agreement.

“I’m not going to ask if I look like the type of man who enjoys inflicting the odd spot of violence,” Oswald said, and moved to sit next to him. Took one of Jim’s hands in his own and said, “we both know I am.”

Jim nodded, and wished he had never brought it up in the first place. Hoped it wasn’t going to hurt too much, whatever Oswald was thinking of doing to him.
“But you’re being awfully silly, Jim,” Oswald said instead, shocking Jim into looking at him. At the smile on his face, equal parts amused and reassuring, “there are some lines you don’t cross when it comes to mixing work with pleasure.”

He really had drunk too much, was struggling to decode the statement, but Oswald knew him just as well as anyone ever had, better even, and clarified,

“I have no desire to hurt you, or vice versa.” Oswald lifted Jim’s hand, pressed a kiss to his palm and then placed it over his heart. “I don’t think you’re boring. You only have to look at me to make my heart pound.”

It was true too, at least in that moment. Jim could feel the proof of it.

“That you don’t need to impress me, but I love that you try anyway.”

Jim felt a smile steal across his own face. Relief, gratitude, happiness. Love, he supposed that was the right word for it. He leaned in to kiss Oswald, his fingers splaying across his vest and shirt, and felt the way his heart raced.

“There is only one thing I would ask of you, Jim,” Oswald murmured against his jaw, when they let up for a minute. Jim nodded, wordless. Would have granted him anything. Oswald kissed his cheek, tenderly, and said, “Please never cook anything exotic again. Ever.”

Jim laughed, helpless, hugged Oswald close and loved that the other man laughed right along with him. That they could be open and easy with each other, boring and domestic, and Oswald was more than fine with it. That he hadn’t screwed everything up, and that Oswald wasn’t sick of him.

“It’ll be tough,” he said finally, all smiles, “but it’s a sacrifice I’m willing to make for you.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Do Over

Chapter Summary

Written to follow 'pumpkin pie' - Oswald arranges for them to do over their disasterous date.

I had this mostly written before Christmas, then decided it was too fluffy and wrote 'snow' instead. Now I'm clearing out my docs folder I figured I'd post it anyway. :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Some days, life in Gotham was depressing. His workload consisted of nothing but pain and murder, the dark depths of human cruelty, and his off duty hours were shadowed by the knowledge that no matter how hard he tried, what he did, his efforts never seemed to make a difference.

Other days, of which today was one, life in Gotham was wonderful. He attended meetings where he actually accomplished something, and even his paperwork was worthwhile. Approving grants for youth engagement, and writing deserved letters of commendation.

The radio out in the main office was playing music he didn’t intrinsically object to, occasionally even a song or two which he had actually heard of, and the clock was ticking down the minutes until he went home for a long weekend, and zoned out comfortably in front of the television.

He might crawl straight into bed, he thought with a mounting sense of anticipation, and sleep until the early hours when he would be refreshed enough to feel almost human, just in time for his favorite nightclub owner to put in an appearance.

It was all there for the taking, if only nothing came up in the next half hour or so which required his assistance.

There were just some ten minutes left to go when someone knocked briskly at his office door. Jim felt his heart sink even as he called out for them to enter. He had known what the job entailed when he had put his name down for it, there was no point in complaining about the demands on his time living up to expectations.

“Sorry to disturb you, Sir,” Officer Malone said, though she didn’t sound particularly sorry at all. “There’s a delivery waiting at the front desk for you.”

If Jim didn’t know better he would have said she was smirking, but that couldn’t be right. He ran a tight ship when it came to professionalism, especially when there could be anything up to and including a gift wrapped severed hand waiting for him.

Except Malone wasn’t the only one who struggled to keep a straight face as he made his way through the building. In fact, it seemed like half the force were gathering to watch the proceedings. He couldn’t blame them, not really, not when he reached the front desk and found it all but buried by flowers and pot plants.

His first reaction was panic - it always was - because Gotham attracted more than its fair share of
homicidal maniacs, and this was the kind of thing that had Poison Ivy written all over it.

“There was a note,” the desk sergeant told him from behind a particularly unattractive bouquet. “It’s addressed to you.”

Jim opened the envelope carefully, just in case, but it only took a single glance to assure him that there was no immediate worry. He would recognize Oswald’s handwriting, as well as his sarcasm, anywhere.

*You told me to donate generously to Bruce’s latest endeavor - it’s only fair that you deal with the outcome.*

Perhaps Poison Ivy hadn’t been so far off the mark then, because he knew Bruce was channeling his energies into Arkham again. It pleased Jim that at least he wasn’t the only person in Gotham who still believed in the powers of rehabilitation.

He looked at the note again, finding the postscript.

*I did my best but there was no escape, we’re going to Bruce’s charity gala. I’ve sent you a suit and the car will pick you up at 7. Don’t try to get out of it.*

Jim looked up to find Oswald had been true to his word, and there was a suit bag in among the foliage. The officers milling about pretended to be too busy to meet his eye, and Jim told the desk sergeant to distribute this wonderful token of the city’s esteem - Oswald had been mayor once, after all - to any member of staff who showed an interest.

Then he grabbed the bag and left them all to speculate. Peered inside, relieved to see black tie rather than white, and resigned himself to an evening of boredom and small talk. Still, he consoled his reflection as he changed in the men’s locker room, at least Oswald would be there and, besides, it was for charity.

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It was still early when the car arrived at his destination, and he tried not to feel disappointed that it wasn’t one of the Wayne Foundation’s usual venues but *The Ocelot*, Bruce’s latest acquisition and the birthplace of one of Jim’s least favorite memories.

He wanted to procrastinate a little longer, checked his cell one last time in case some villain or other had decided it was the perfect time to launch an attack on the city. There was nothing however, no calls and no messages, and he was left with no choice but to get out of the car and head inside.

“Have a good night,” the driver said, one of Oswald’s most trusted men, and Jim inclined his head in acknowledgment and hoped that Oswald wasn’t going to be late this evening.

He knew a few people to nod at as he made his way through the foyer, and couldn’t help but grin when Bruce greeted him effusively and introduced him to his latest girlfriend, as equally beautiful and haughty as he remembered the last one being. Just as uninterested in a middle aged deputy police commissioner too, and Jim supposed that these meet and greets weren’t one of the advertised perks of dating a billionaire playboy.

“I was so impressed with this place that time I ate here with you and Oswald,” Bruce said, so that Jim wondered if he really were the only person in the world not to rate the place. “I knew it would be perfect for tonight.”

Jim nodded, fond, at Bruce’s enthusiasm, and then made polite small talk with a couple of sitting
city councillors.

“You’re not here alone?” one asked, with real interest, their tenure having coincided with Oswald’s time as Mayor.

“There’s a seating plan,” the other said, as though that was supposed to be reassuring. Another glance around the room revealed plenty of people Jim would sooner avoid if possible. Business leaders, politicians, anyone who objected to having their private affairs looked into.

“Sorry I’m late,” a familiar voice said, like music to his ears, “I had another delivery of plants to dispose of.”

Jim smiled, relieved, and then found himself with a whole myriad of new things to be thankful for. Like the fact Oswald smoothly ingratiated himself in and then cleanly led them both out of the conversation, one hand on the small of his back as he maneuvered Jim towards a table.

Because Jim wasn’t at all sure he could have been trusted to carry on speaking until he had had a few moments to collect himself.

Oswald had ignored the dress code, as usual, and pushed past white tie into subtle contrast lapels and a fancy vintage fob watch Jim recognized as one of his more successful purchases.

“You look good. Really good,” he managed, as far away from suave and sophisticated as it was possible to get, but Oswald simply smiled at him, pleased, and reached up to fix his bow tie.

“One day I won’t need to do this,” Oswald said, fingers lingering way longer than Jim imagined was necessary, until Jim had to press a kiss to his lips, as though they had been apart for a week instead of since that morning.

“That day is never going to come,” Jim confessed when they broke apart to take their seats, aware of the general movement towards the tables. “I’d start messing it up on purpose.”

Oswald approved, he could tell, and he might have said more if he wasn’t steered right onto the head table, next to Bruce Wayne himself, with Oswald sat opposite. On the one hand it was a sign of how much money Bruce had succeeded in getting Oswald to part with. On the other it took Jim straight back to the last time they had been here, when Oswald thought he had spent the entire meal ogling Bruce’s girlfriend.

The look on Oswald’s face told him that was the intention and Jim made a pledge to himself. If Oswald wanted a do over of that night, he would make sure his behavior was beyond reproach this time around. He would even do his best to eat whatever he was served without complaining about it.

Apparently Oswald had his doubts on that score already, and ordered for him. Insisted he have a glass of wine instead of sticking to water.

“You’re not on duty now, Jim,” he said, all sly smile, and Jim wished they could skip right to dessert, the kind they really needed to be in private to devour.

Instead he tried not to blush. Forced himself to pay attention to what his neighbors were saying, and didn’t stare, transfixed, at the self-indulgent way Oswald pressed his fork past his lips, eyes fluttering closed as though it were really so incredibly blissful he just couldn’t help himself.

He did his best not to stare, anyway.
Because he barely tasted his own food. Could scarcely keep still, even, his breath growing short when Oswald winked at him, fully aware of what the view was doing to him.

“The chef is a culinary genius,” the woman sat to his right said as dessert was brought out, and Bruce nodded eagerly on his left, launching into a tale of some of the incredible food he had sampled during his trips overseas.

By this point Jim really didn’t care what he was eating. Really didn’t care about anything except not embarrassing himself in front of the shining lights of Gotham high society.

Oswald moaned, too loud and too obvious, and Jim drowned the strangled whimper threatening to escape his own mouth in his wine glass. Clenched his cutlery so tight his knuckles went white, the flush creeping down the back of his neck as Oswald set about delicately licking chocolate mousse off his spoon.

“Are you quite all right, Jim?” He asked when he was done, expression innocent but eyes twinkling. “You’re looking a little flustered.”

Jim would make him pay for this. Would think up some fitting punishment. Right now he didn’t trust himself to speak. Didn’t trust himself to move, so desperately aroused he was sure everyone present had to be aware of it.

Oswald had other ideas.

He stood easily and came around to put a hand on his shoulders. Smiled apologetically at the table and said, tone calm and even,

“Jim has been feeling a bit under the weather. We’re going to get some fresh air.”

Oswald took his hand then and Jim let himself be lead. Obediently followed the other man through first one door, and then another, until they were out on some secluded balcony, the lights of the city glittering in the distance.

“Don’t think this means I forgive you -” Jim started, mind still foggy, but Oswald only pushed him back until he was pressed against the wall of an alcove. Gave him a sweet little half smile before kissing him quiet, one hand pushing down between them.

“We can’t,” Jim gasped, startled, “you mustn’t.”

“I have to,” Oswald countered, stroking him through the material of his dress pants. “Do you have any idea what torture that was, watching you get so worked up and not being able to touch you?”

“It was your fault,” Jim managed, strangled, but then Oswald’s tongue was sliding against his own, and his hips were bucking up into Oswald’s touch, against his better judgement. It was such a terrible idea, so completely shameless, and then he was the one pressing Oswald back into the cool brick, kissing and kissing him, his own hands sliding up and under his vest, reveling in the softness of the figure against him.

He pushed one thigh between Oswald’s legs, lost himself when Oswald clutched him tighter, frantic and breathless.

Jim kissed him down from it afterwards, soft and slow, not quite able to believe they had just gotten each other off in a public place. A public place packed to the rafters with Gotham’s great and good, no less.
“You are such a bad influence on me,” he said when he finally felt stable enough to pull away, casting a rueful glance over the state of their clothing. Anybody would be able to work out what they had been doing.

Oswald only beamed at him, pleased,

"I told Bruce we’d be leaving early. There’s a car waiting. I just thought you might like to make some new memories of this place.”

This was what he got for falling for a devious criminal, clearly, Jim thought, even as he had to lean if for another kiss, the risk of getting caught in no way diminishing.

“I never said I didn’t enjoy it.”

“Good,” Oswald said, little more than a whisper against his cheek. “Because by the time we get home I think we’ll both be ready for seconds.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)


Chapter Summary

Miscommunication leads to misunderstandings, a trope I will never ever (ever) tire of. 'Taste' fill for my monthlysupergo five sense table. TW for jealous, possessive behaviour.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Love wasn’t about possession, wasn’t about all encompassing jealousy, or so Jim said.

Oswald was less convinced, but did his level best to go along with it. Thought about where envy had gotten him last time, and resolved not to see every person Jim spoke to as a potential threat. Or, at the very least, didn’t have them roughed up and followed.

For all that, he still rooted through Jim’s coat pockets whenever the opportunity presented itself, and sniffed at Jim’s collar for traces of powder and perfume. Listened in on his telephone calls, and kept track of the divergence between where Jim was, and where he said he was going to be.

It was underhanded, that was what Dr Strange would have said. Unfair to Jim, and a sign of both the fact he didn’t really trust him, and his own warped personality. Dr Strange was long gone though, and if Jim had nothing to hide then surely he wouldn’t keep lying to him.

Wouldn’t say he was meeting Harvey for a drink when Bullock was already passed out for the evening, and wouldn’t come home late from work relaxed and happy, not when he said he had spent the overtime helping the custody sergeant process rowdy prisoners. He most definitely wouldn’t start sending secretive text messages, and wouldn’t grin as he read a reply, only looking up distractedly when Oswald said his name for the third time.

“Sorry,” Jim said with all the contrition of a guilty conscience. “I was miles away.”

There was nothing else to be done about it, Oswald decided. If he wanted to find out what Jim was up to, he was going to have to play dirty.

For a detective, it really was worryingly easy to tail Jim and not be noticed.

Jim had reminded him that morning that he would be late back, and had kissed him goodbye so tenderly he had almost felt bad for leaning on one of his many informants at the precinct to check up on it.

Almost.

Because it turned out that, by Jim’s standards, he actually left his desk early and then did some furtive grocery shopping before Oswald’s man was accosted by the elderly shop owner, demanding that if he wasn’t planning to buy the cereal box he was peering over, he had better leave her establishment.
The next time Oswald was better prepared. Had one of his most capable people track Jim right to a mid-market apartment block, and then work out who Jim was likely to be visiting. Some woman from work, it turned out, and when Jim dared to shift closer to him in bed that night, Oswald feigned sleep and rather than cry thought about all the hideous things he ought to do to him.

He needed more evidence, he determined in the morning. It would do no good to rush in and accuse Jim before he had all the facts at his fingertips. Truthfully, he had to turn over every stone, had to find proof that it was all some horrible misunderstanding. Because it couldn’t be true.

It just couldn’t.

So, a few days later, when Jim said he was going to catch up on his paperwork, Oswald followed him across the city. Witnessed him buy expensive imported ingredients at one of his mother’s favorite old delis in the East End, though he had claimed to not know what any of it was when Oswald had taken him there. Then, to add insult to injury, he stopped at one of the corner shops to pick up a bottle of wine and a bouquet of flowers.

They weren’t even nice flowers, Oswald thought, snidely. Tawdry, cheap blooms for the tawdry, cheap woman Jim was keeping as his mistress.

Oswald wished she had been ugly with it, when he had orchestrated to run into her not far from her apartment building. Wished that her file photograph had been nothing but touch-ups and good lighting, and that she hadn’t apologized so politely, as though it were her foot which had tripped him up.

It would only have said something about himself, he admitted finally. At least this way he couldn’t say that he didn’t know what Jim saw in her. She was just his type, all dark hair and open smile, and it didn’t surprise him that Jim had thrown him over for someone so pretty, and sweet, and wholesome.

He had been waiting for it from the very beginning.

An hour had passed by this point. A whole hour of standing around outside with the cold seeping into his bad leg, and suddenly he was furious that he was skulking about in the darkness while Jim was indoors and plenty warm, no doubt sharing her bed and her body heat. It was that last thought which made him see red, got him limping stiffly across the street and waiting in the shadows until somebody left the building and he could catch the door before it fell closed again.

The elevator was out of order, naturally, and so he struggled up three flights of stairs, turning it around and around in his head, what he was going to do when he confronted them. He would kill her, he thought, manic. He would kill both of them. He would cut out Jim’s lying tongue and have her kneel at his feet, begging him for mercy.

Except Jim was already leaving when he hastily ducked back behind the opening to her landing, and Oswald watched frozen and helpless as Jim kissed her on the cheek and told her, “Thank you.”

Thank you. Was he really so repellent that Jim had to thank anyone willing to touch him, because he had been so irreparably tainted by the Penguin? Was Jim just that desperate to get away from him?

He shrank back further as Jim made for the stairwell. Watched as Jim bounded down the steps two at a time, smiling like he was proud of himself. Oswald slammed his fist into the wall when he was
gone, frustrated and angry.

He would never do anything to Jim, he knew.

He couldn’t.

Oswald didn’t go home that night. Went to the club and drank too much, and let Gabe make his
excuses when Jim kept calling. He debated staying there again the following night, but his staff
were all watching, theorizing, and even the very real threat of getting their skulls smashed open
wasn’t enough to stop the pitying looks they were sending him.

So he went home and let Jim kiss him, soft and slow, and breathe into his ear,

“I missed you.”

He let Jim touch him, and taste him, and in the morning, at breakfast, let Jim pour his tea the way
he liked it and read out anecdotes from the newspaper.

“Listen to this,” Jim said around a mouthful of toast, and read out a story about a man facing
bigamy charges after getting caught out in a complicated series of lies, culminating in him
exchanging the wrong wife’s gifts for store credit. “Some people are so stupid,” Jim said and
shook his head. Laughed about it and reached for the orange juice.

Oswald just stared at him. Tried to process what exactly was happening. To wrap his head around
the idea Jim Gordon, Gotham’s savior, was patting himself on the back, cheerfully bragging about
cheating on him.

“I’ll see you later,” Jim said easily before he left, kissed him on the cheek the same as he had his
new girlfriend.

It was too much, entirely too awful, and he had to take it out on something. Went out on collection,
and put through all the front facing windows of a restaurant which had been refusing to pay his
very reasonable business rates. Smashed every glass in a bar that had been skimming off his
profits. Pushed the face of its proprietor into the shards and warned him that if he wanted to run a
side business in future, he had better make damn sure it was one he approved of.

None of it helped. Not as it was happening, and not afterwards, when Jim was acting as though
everything was normal.

“Are you still staying in tomorrow night?” Jim asked, and that must have been the reason why he
had insisted Oswald stretch his legs over his lap on the sofa. Why he had been working his fingers
so carefully over his twisted calf muscles. He wanted to put him off the scent. Suggest he attended
to business instead so he could go and screw his fancy woman.

He wasn’t going to facilitate Jim’s infidelity.

“Yes,” he said, and his voice sounded almost unaffected. “I’ll be home all evening.”

“Good,” Jim said, and he was a better actor than Oswald had credited. He almost looked happy
about it.

It was easier said than done, to turn the other cheek. As the day passed slowly, drowned in shot
after shot of whiskey, Oswald began to question why he should have to.
He was the wronged party and, besides, he had never pretended to be a nice guy.

Had killed and maimed and ordered a hit on his last love rival, and if he had never gone into detail with Jim, it was because he had been taught tact and manners, not because he had ever believed Jim didn’t know about it.

The bottle was empty when he put the new plan into action. Assessed his reflection in the mirror to ensure his outfit was perfect, then double checked he had his cellphone and his switchblade, and made his way out onto the sidewalk.

She was even less of a challenge to follow than Jim had been, and with every step he took Oswald imagined cutting her throat open. Imagined how Jim would break when he realized it was his fault it had happened.

There was even the perfect opportunity. She turned down an alleyway, a shortcut, and Oswald turned after her, leg dragging. She quickened her pace, glanced anxiously behind her, and he could have done it. Could have surged forward and fisted a hand in her hair. Nobody would react to a scream here, not with the light already failing.

He didn’t.

Instead he cursed under his breath and gave up on the idea. Slumped against the dirty wall of the alleyway and let his head fall back against it, once, twice, so that the burn of the brick would ground him in reality.

Love was his most crippling weakness. Always had been, always would be.

If Jim wanted to leave, he wouldn’t stop him. If Jim intended to continue stringing him along, to use him, the pathetic truth was that he would let him. Would take whatever he could get until Jim finally put an end to it.

He laughed at himself, high pitched and manic, and when curious eyes peered at him from the end of the alley, a junkie and her dealer, he only laughed harder. Laughed until he cried, great painful sobs that had him sliding down the wall until he was sat with his knees bunched up against the chest, the way he had used to sit when he was hiding from his grade school bullies during recess.

It subsided, eventually. He hauled himself to his feet and brushed down his coat. Leaned heavily on his umbrella and stumbled through the door of the first bar he came across. He downed one glass, and then another, then sat and nursed a third while his head spun and his cell vibrated with Jim’s calls going through to voicemail.

Finally, he gave a thought to his position and his notoriety when the place began to empty out, and slurried a request for Gabe to come and collect him.

It was late when he arrived home, dark and cold outside, and Jim had the good grace to look worried when he met him in the hallway. He was wearing what passed as his best suit, and Oswald swallowed thickly. Jim had probably been to see her and then felt guilty when he got back, and Oswald still hadn’t appeared.

“You said you were going to stay in tonight,” Jim said, more plaintive than accusing, and Oswald pushed past him, not quite steady on his feet, and made for the dining room,

“We all say things we don’t mean, Jim. I shouldn’t need to explain that to you.”
Jim blocked his progress, confusion furrowing his brow. Concern and indignation warring for dominance.

“What’s that supposed to mean? Why have you been acting so off with me?”

Oswald scoffed, gestured with a grander motion than he might have when sober,

“What do you expect? You’re an intelligent man, James, at least for the most part. You must have known you couldn’t keep something this dismal a secret.”

That hit its mark. It must have done because Jim’s face fell. The anger draining away to leave his shoulders slumped and his face pallid.

“I know it’s,” Jim frowned, as though searching for the right word, “unconventional, but I thought you’d be pleased. I just wanted to surprise you.”

He was too drunk for this. No, he thought, surging forwards. He wasn’t drunk enough. Would never be drunk enough to listen to Jim talk about his affair like he expected Oswald to be happy about it. To congratulate him on his good taste and tell him how grateful he was, now he wouldn’t have to be the sole recipient of Jim’s affections.

What he needed to do was sit down and have another drink. Wait for something, anything, to make sense again. But when he got the door open it was to find half the furniture pushed back against the far wall. The table laid for two with the chairs with the least rickety legs set next to each other. Jim had to have enlisted help to do it. There were candles, linens, the good china Olga was loathe to let Jim handle without close supervision.

He turned to Jim for an explanation and the other man flushed and looked away. Shifted awkwardly and said,

“It was a stupid idea. I should have known better.”

There was something he was missing here, something critical. Because even stone cold, the food looked appetizing. Soup and salad, and an intricate looking coulibiac. Crusted bread and Madártej, just the way his mother used to make it.

“What is this?” He asked, too strung out for greater eloquence, and Jim shrugged, sheepish, and said,

“I know it’s not perfect but Lena said it should be passable, at least. She offered to teach me how to make it and I think she regretted that I took her up on it.”

“Lena,” Oswald echoed dumbly. Lena Marton, Detective Third Grade. Lena Marton, the woman he had been planning to gut like a fish for daring to touch his boyfriend.

“From work,” Jim elaborated, obliviously. “It took six attempts to get to this stage. I was running out of excuses to give you.”

He sank into the nearest chair, didn’t trust his legs not to give out on him. Buried his face in his hands because Jim had been thanking her for her help, not for sleeping with him. Had been sneaking about to learn how to cook something more elaborate than cheese on toast, so he could surprise him, when he paid a perfectly competent chef to deal with these kind of things.

“I still don’t understand why you did this,” he said, because the drink was starting to catch up with him now.
Jim sighed, and slouched back into his chair. Looked so miserable Oswald swore his heart actually hurt.

“It seemed like a good idea when I thought of it? It’s just, I don’t know, it’s our anniversary and I wanted to do something to mark it.”

“It’s not our anniversary,” Oswald said, confident on that point. He was hardly likely to forget the day Jim had chosen being with him over caring what other people thought about it.

“Not like that, I know,” Jim said and raked a hand through his hair. “I just hate that today is always the day I nearly killed you, not the day you wormed yourself into my head. It wasn’t a bad thing.”

Oswald blinked at him, wanted to be sure he was understanding correctly,

“You wanted to celebrate me convincing you not to shoot a mob snitch?”

Jim grimaced at the wording and, then, because he could see the moment Jim thought to ask what he had understood to be happening, Oswald blurted,

“I thought you were cheating on me. I thought about killing you.”

“That’s -” Jim offered, seemingly at a loss as to what to say to that revelation. His expression was horrified enough to get the sentiment across.

Oswald slumped back against his own chair. Noted for the first time that his shirt cuffs were stained with something.

“But I couldn’t. I wouldn’t,” he risked glancing up at Jim, he was still staring at him, frozen. Oswald ducked his head again and went on, “Or her. You’re in my head too, Jim. I’m not a good man, I don’t think I ever will be. But I’m better for knowing you. I hope you can believe that.”

The silence stretched and Oswald knew he should have kept his mouth shut. Shouldn’t have drunk enough to loosen his tongue in the first place.

“This wasn’t how I saw the evening going,” Jim murmured shakily, trying to make light of it. Then seemed to collect himself a little and took hold of one of Oswald’s hands. Gazed at him intently and said steadily, “I can’t accept it, not the way you could have had. But I try to understand and I - I trust you. I want you to be honest with me.”

He seemed suddenly to remember where they were, why they were having the conversation, and gave him an embarrassed smile.

“Like I should be honest with you.”

Oswald silenced him with a kiss. Clung tightly and showed him his appreciation. Ate the madártej when they were done, and enjoyed the way Jim watched him, flushed and mesmerized. Took care to lick the spoon clean as often as possible, and when Jim pulled him back to him, mouth hot and desperate against his own, Oswald pledged to live up to Jim’s faith in him. To make this celebration annual.

He might even send Lena some real flowers.

Chapter End Notes
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Shaving

Chapter Summary

A little shaving ficlet for someone who knows they are. ;) 'Touch' fill to finish off my monthlysupergo prompt table.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I could catch up on my paperwork. You wouldn’t even know I was there.”

Harvey shook his head, dumped his peace offering of a bottle of scotch on the kitchen counter, and said,

“Only you would be begging to go back to work.”

Jim sighed, winced as the movement jostled his bad - worse - arm. He was sick of convalescing. Sick of sitting alone in his grim apartment with nothing but the TV for company.

“Tell you what,” Harvey said, pouring himself a liberal helping from his own gift, “if you can get yourself to the precinct tomorrow, looking half human, I’ll let you stay.”

Jim tipped his own measure of scotch back in one smooth movement, painkillers be damned.

Challenge accepted.

The following morning Jim was reassessing how difficult it was going to be to get himself fit to be seen in public. His right hand was strapped up with a splint, the arm in a sling. His left ached almost as badly, the strained muscles protesting as he awkwardly cleaned his teeth and washed his face as best he could.

He needed to shave, badly, but it was effort he couldn’t face. Harvey couldn’t chastise him for it though, Jim thought, not when he looked like he couldn’t remember the last time he had seen the business end of a razor.

Ablutions done, he waged war with his shirt. He pledged never to take the ability to dress himself for granted again, not when his brow was slick with sweat, his teeth clenched against the pain, and he still only had one arm in the thing.

There was a knock at the door then and Jim couldn’t help but sag in relief. Harvey had taken pity on him.

Except when he pulled the door open, wisecrack on his lips, it was to find someone shorter and younger. Considerably more concerned with their appearance. Quite considerably concerned with Jim’s too, if the way his gaze raked over him was anything to go by.

“Oswald,” he said, resigned, and the other man beamed brightly at him,
“I came to see how you are, Jim. I hope my timing isn’t inconvenient.”

Jim just stood back and gestured with the arm still not in his shirt sleeve. There was no point in fighting it, especially not within earshot of his neighbors. This was all Oswald’s fault anyway. It was his life Jim had been saving.

Oswald wasn’t insensible to the fact, at least.

“I wondered if I might take you to lunch today. I heard you weren’t back at work yet and, well, I do so enjoy your company.”

Jim snorted, wished he had the resources to care more about the way Oswald was eyeing up his naked shoulder.

“You’re feeling guilty you almost got me killed. Again. Well, you’re out of luck. I’m going to work today.”

He was. Just as soon as he finished dressing himself.

“Are you sure that’s wise?” Oswald asked, sounding almost genuine. “You really ought to be resting. You’re looking -”

“Like shit?” Jim offered, and Oswald only glared,

“rather rugged, I was going to say. It seemed more polite than scruffy.”

Jim reached to scratch at the underside of his jaw instinctively. What he wouldn’t give for a close shave and a hot shower. It must have been writ clear on his face, either that or Oswald was a mind reader, because the next thing out of the man’s mouth was,

“I could shave you - and help you with that shirt. Unless that’s the look you’re going for.”

The obvious answer was no. Absolutely, positively, never in a million years, because the last thing Jim should have been considering was letting a multiple murderer loose with a razor blade. But he was tired, and uncomfortable, and maybe he was feeling the effects of his morning pain meds.

It wasn’t as though Oswald was going to kill him, besides. If he wanted to, he had already had plenty of opportunity.

“All right,” he heard himself say, and Oswald seemed just as surprised by his answer as he was.

Jim had always known that Oswald was the type of person to be given an inch and take a mile. Now he had been given free reign to do this, Jim just sat and watched in bemusement at the level of preparation the other man was putting into it.

He had gathered clean towels and filled the sink with hot water, and somewhere along the way had lost the suit jacket and rolled up his shirtsleeves. Oswald had even found the traditional looking shaving kit Jim had been given for Christmas one year, then never used because it didn’t seem like something that was going to make his life easier.

“Ideally, I would do this with a straight razor,” Oswald said as he whipped up the shaving soap, as though there wasn’t a perfectly good can of Barbasol in the bathroom cabinet. “But one learns to make do, my friend.”

Jim said nothing. Now the point of no return was almost upon him he was reminded of all the
damage even a safety razor could do, in the hands of the determined.

“Are you ready?” Oswald asked, shrewd as always, and Jim only hesitated a second longer before nodding.

He had already come this far.

“I hope you know, Jim,” Oswald said as he lathered Jim’s face, voice soft and confiding, “just how very much I appreciate everything you’ve done for me.”

Jim swallowed, suddenly all too aware of what an intimate act this was. Of Oswald’s ice blue eyes meeting his own, and the cold scrape of the razor blade against his skin. He shut his eyes, breathed out, and it really shouldn’t have felt like a huge weight was being lifted off his shoulders.

Because contrary to all expectations, it was calming, relaxing, and when Oswald got him to tip his head back a little, the press of the blade combined with the satisfying pull in his shoulders made him shiver. He was almost disappointed when Oswald was done, though he remained obediently still for the application of a cold washcloth, and then the gentle patting of a towel.

“Much better,” Oswald said, voice little more than a whisper, and Jim finally opened his eyes to look at him as Oswald gingerly touched his face, the backs of his fingers against the newly smooth skin of his cheek. It should have been startling, should have been offensive, but all Jim could do was breathe shallowly, and let his gaze flit between Oswald’s lips and his eyes, framed by sooty lashes.

He didn’t know which of them moved first, perhaps it was something they did together, but one moment he was telling himself not to do something he could only end up regretting, and the next Oswald’s lips were brushing against his own. They were barely touching, scarcely a kiss at all, but Jim could hear his pulse pounding in his ears, his entire body thrumming with excitement.

This time he was sure, it was he who deepened the kiss. He who tilted his head to make the angle better, and he who felt the low throb of arousal when Oswald gasped, helpless, at the slick slide of their tongues against one another. It made him want more, made him push forward, and then he was gasping himself, his stupid broken hand radiating agony.

“Fuck,” he ground out, breaking away, and Oswald’s hands came up as if for protection, as if he expected Jim to swing for him.

"I’m sorry,” Oswald told him, anxious, “I didn’t mean to.”

It was the perfect out, the ideal timing. He could tell Oswald to go, to never come back, and blame the entire incident on him into the bargain. But the sight of Oswald like that pulled at something within him, made him want to pull the other man close and apologize for all he had done to deserve the reaction.

“I did,” he said instead, and took Oswald’s right hand in his left, and put it back to his cheek. Waited with bated breath for Oswald to do something, and to close the gap between them.

“Jim,” the other man breathed, overawed, and when he kissed him, Jim melted into it.

He was in over his head already.

Harvey dropped by that evening, looked Jim up and down when he opened the door and said with a grin,
“I told you another day in bed would do you good. You’ve got some color back in your cheeks and everything.”

Jim shifted, embarrassed, and felt a fresh wave of color join it, the back of his neck and the tips of his ears burning.

“You shaved too,” Harvey said, dropped into an armchair while Jim took the edge of the sofa. “Not before time, I might add. We can’t both rock the handsomely unkempt look.”

“And now Jim’s clean shaven neither of you will be,”

Harvey jumped to his feet, startled, and Jim offered up his best puppy dog eyes when he felt Oswald move to sit beside him. Hoped Harvey wasn’t going to blow his top or, worse, put him on suspension. Harvey just stared at them, looked from one to the other, for the first time taking in the mottled red marks up the side of Jim’s neck, and the sight of Cobblepot without tie or jacket.

“You had better be in work tomorrow,” Harvey said, finally, and scrubbed one hand across his face, “because I get the feeling I’m going to be nursing the mother of all hangovers.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Tickling

Chapter Summary

Inspired by this prompt on the kink meme: 'Jim/Oswald. I just want Jim finding out Oswald is ticklish and taking advantage of that fact.' Established relationship fic, also doubling up as the 'sound' fill for my monthly supergo prompt table.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Harvey Bullock had known there was a good reason why he had never returned Jim’s spare key. The guy was a danger magnet, walked around like his sole purpose in life was to get himself murdered. Then the scream came again and though Harvey had the key in the door, just for a second he hesitated.

Not because he condoned murder exactly, he wasn’t that kind of copper, but because if anyone deserved to be laid out on a mortuary slab it was definitely the owner of the shrill voice screeching, “Jim, don’t! Stop, please! Please, Jim!”

Jim would regret it though, and there would be paperwork. So much goddamn paperwork. It was the latter thought that spurred him into action. Had him twisting the key and bursting into Jim’s miserable apartment.

“Mercy!” Cobblepot shrieked, outright shrieked like the yellow-bellied coward he had long pegged him as, and Harvey crossed the room in less than three strides. Pulled his gun in case there were more than the two of them and pushed open the door of Jim’s bedroom.

It was like time slowed down, just for a moment or two. Like he had no choice but to take in all the minor details. The way Cobblepot was panting, skin flushed and shirt only half buttoned. Jim’s disheveled hair and the rumpled bed sheets. The matching glasses of water, one on each nightstand.

“This isn’t what it looks like,” Jim said, awkward, and damn if his stomach didn’t roil even as he heard himself say,

“Aw, no. Sweet Jesus, no.”

This was exactly what it looked like.

_____________________________________________________________________

“If it ain’t about the damn case, I don’t want to hear it.”

Jim stayed silent. Shifted uncomfortably in the passenger seat and wondered how the hell he was going to dig his way out of this one. Somebody had been bound to find out eventually. He didn’t want to keep it a secret, even, not forever. Was done with putting himself through hell and back over who he wanted to be with.

He had just envisaged breaking the news slowly, carefully. Had never factored in early morning
dog walkers and Harvey suddenly developing a conscious, coming to offer a lift straight to the scene rather than first let him brave the subway.

Jim tried again at the precinct, without success, and at lunchtime paid for an extra hot dog, in the hope it might soften Harvey up somewhat. Harvey just glared at him, though he ate it, and finally turned on him moments before they were due back at their desks, demanding,

“What the hell is wrong with you, Jim!? You wanna screw the Penguin, that’s your own business. It’s disgusting, but each to their own. I ain’t gonna judge you for it.”

“I -” Jim started, but Harvey kept right on talking,

“You’re not just screwing him though, are you? I got a good eyeful of that his and his toothbrush set-up you got going on, when I was in your bathroom retching my guts up.”

It would go better if he kept his mouth shut and let Harvey speak his piece, but that had never been Jim’s style. He couldn’t ignore the indignation bubbling in his chest, had to argue,

“I was only tickling him. It’s not a crime, not last time I checked.”

“It ought to be!” Harvey shot back. “He’s a rat. He’s a flea on a rat. A cankerous plague carrying flea who is destroying this city from the inside out. You want to play house with that, maybe the GCPD isn’t the right place for you.”

That was too much, too far, and if they didn’t come to blows on the steps of the precincts, it was only because McKenna worked his way between them.

It was three days before they broke the stand off. Three days of tense silence and fraying tempers. Three days of the Captain threatening to knock their immature heads together.

Harvey didn’t out him, at least, when she demanded to know what the problem was. Just gestured a dismissive thumb over at Jim and said,

“He’s the one with the problem.”

Jim glowered in response, angry at himself as much as he was angry at Harvey, and insisted,

“I don’t have a problem.”

Harvey stared at him incredulously, and the Captain washed her hands of them.

“Get out of my sight. That goes for the pair of you.”

It might have gone on longer, Jim knew how stubborn he was, but they hadn’t long left the Captain’s office when the call came in. It wasn’t supposed to be a big deal, just another call out, but somehow their biggest concern went from not being the first to speak as they scoped the place out, to accepting that personal space could be a luxury concept.

“Stop squirming,” Harvey hissed after the footsteps had echoed into the distance, when there was nothing but the two of them, a confined space and total darkness.

“I can’t breathe,” Jim shot back, lungs burning, and then it clicked into place because Harvey wasn’t on top of him, not exactly, and it still felt like the walls were closing in around him. “I think I might be claustrophobic.”
Harvey cursed, but groped about until he found Jim’s bound hands and squeezed one reassuringly.

“I was only just asking myself if today could get any better.”

They were given plenty of time to hash it out, to unpick the ties around his wrists. It made no difference. They were stuck fast, at their captors mercy, and the seconds carried on ticking away.

“We’ll run out of oxygen,” Jim said at one point, panicked, and Harvey only scratched at his nose, like it was nothing, and said,

“It’s the concentration of carbon dioxide that’ll kill us. Didn’t the army teach you anything?”

Jim hit out at that. Kicked frantically at the sides of the box, and pounded his fist against the underside. Found himself half pinned down, the faceless fear slowly being replaced by the familiar smell of drink and sweat and the food truck they went frequented in their lunch breaks.

“Calm down!” Harvey insisted. “Someone will notice that we’re missing.”

“What if they don’t find us in time? What if we die in here?”

“If you die you won’t really care what happens afterward.” Harvey said, easily, and then when Jim tensed up all over again, added, “Relax, Jimbo. It’s not going to happen.”

Jim made to protest, to argue his point, but Harvey only lay back like he was trying to get comfortable.

“Last time I looked your boyfriend was the King of Gotham.”

Oswald was something of a mob boss at the very least and, when the sudden blinding light receded enough for Jim to make out his pale face, somebody’s blood smeared over his left cheekbone, Jim was so happy he could have kissed him.

Did kiss him, uncaring of who was watching, or how it might offend Harvey’s delicate sensibilities. Oswald kissed him back, arms coming up to link around his neck, and perhaps it was getting a bit much because Harvey cleared his throat and said,

“ Took your time getting here, didn’t you, Penguin?”

Oswald scowled and put his arms down, although he made no further attempt to put any space between them.

“It’s not too late to lock you back in. It was Jim I came for.”

Harvey scowled in turn but didn’t exacerbate things with a sarcastic comeback. Didn’t apologize either, but when they pushed out of the building into Gotham’s cold night air he did hesitate a moment. Fussed with getting his hat to sit at the right angle and said,

“This is going to end badly. I want you to remember I told you that.”

“I’m not going to give him up,” Jim answered, watched as Oswald barked orders to a couple of men who were so much bigger than him it was almost comical.

Harvey looked up to the sky as though in silent prayer. Sighed and said,

“I’ve got your back, Jim. I’ll always have your back. I just think you make stupid life choices.”
Jim thought about it later. Smiled to himself because it wasn’t approval, was hardly even acceptance. It was a start though, and that was a whole lot more than he had had that morning.

“What are you smiling about?” Oswald asked, tone soft and genuine, expression sweetly sincere, like he hadn’t been skirting the issue of what he had done to their erstwhile captors for the last hour. Jim grinned, just because he could, and shifted his fingers to Oswald’s sides before he could do a single thing about it. Had him squirming and giggling, and twisting about all over the place when Jim explained,

“I just thought of the perfect way to get you talking.”

“Jim!” Oswald exclaimed, writhed and whined and did his best to kick free, even as Jim pinned him to the couch, knowing full well it was almost too much. That he’d have to give in any minute.

“Didn’t you learn your lesson the other day?” Oswald panted when Jim finally took pity, hair sticking messily to his forehead. “You can’t go around tickling people.”

“I don’t,” Jim protested, scraped his blunt fingernails over the mussed fabric of Oswald’s shirt with just enough pressure to skirt the line between it being ticklish and it simply making Oswald shiver. “It’s only you I'm interested in tickling.”

Oswald blushed so hard it looked painful and Jim wondered whether Harvey would understand, if he could see it. If he’d see all the good mixed up with the bad, and realize how much more there was to Oswald than the criminal. If he’d recognize the undeserved loyalty that had landed Oswald in Arkham, and the tangle of insecurities, always just beneath the surface.

“I’m sorry I didn’t look for you sooner,” Oswald said then, seemingly from nowhere, “I thought that perhaps you just weren’t coming. That Bullock had succeeded in talking some sense into you.”

He was trying to play it casual, trying not to look as though he lived in fear of Jim deciding he wasn’t worth it. It tugged at something inside Jim, made him kiss him again, over and over until they were both a mess. Until he couldn’t be anything but honest.

“I told him I won’t give you up,” Jim confessed. “He said he had my back anyway.”

This time it didn’t even take fingertips against his rib cage to get Oswald to smile at him.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Jim sniffed again, as deeply as he dared, and decided that it was definitely Oswald.

Harvey’s beat up old banger had never smelled remotely pleasant, not even with the cheap pine air freshener Jim had procured for the current journey. It wasn’t him, either. His shampoo was all right, he supposed, but it certainly didn’t smell like that. He doubted anything that came from the dollar store was even capable of it.

Because whatever it was Oswald was wearing, it smelled expensive. Not overpowering by any means, but strong enough that Jim couldn’t simply ignore it.

Perhaps it was just that he didn’t want to.

“Are you coming down with a cold, Jim?” Oswald asked politely when he sniffed again. “My mother swore by mustard plaster.”

Jim grimaced and tightened his fingers on the steering wheel.

There was something to look forward to.

The next hour or two were spent in merciful silence, at least after Jim’s unambiguous no to the radio. He was having enough trouble concentrating without exacerbating the situation.

Because he hated driving, always had done, not least because he still sometimes woke drenched in sweat with his heart racing, overwhelmed with the memory of glass smashing and metal crunching. What he didn’t need were ridiculously agreeable scents assaulting his nostrils, or a voice that ought to send a repulsed chill down his spine lulling him into a false sense of security.

He definitely didn’t need whatever Oswald was doing right now, shifting around in his seat and digging his long pale fingers into the muscles of his thigh. Gasping out shallow breaths when the road surface grew bad, and outright whimpering when Jim couldn’t avoid a pothole.

“Do you want to stop - stretch your leg out or something?” Jim asked finally, though by rights he shouldn’t care if Oswald were sobbing over how painful it was. Should positively revel in the other man’s grimace, and the cold sweat bathing his forehead. Oswald had done things that made Jim feel physically sick. Would do them again, given the opportunity.

Oswald whimpered again, the sound having absolutely no right to do the things it did to him, and shook his head.

“Thank you, Jim, but it wouldn’t make any difference. I neglected to ensure I had my medication
with me and, well, it is rather cold in here.”

Jim hadn’t noticed, not until it was pointed out. He sighed and his breath misted in front of him, prompting him to switch the heater on and say,

“I think there are some pills in the glove compartment.”

He didn’t think, he knew. Had put them there himself, the last time he had got out of the hospital, beaten and bruised from yet another near death experience. Oswald read the label diligently, didn’t elaborate on what it was he normally took for the pain, and Jim handed over his own water bottle. Watched the way Oswald’s fingers trembled as he gulped down two tablets, relief on his face, and when he was done Jim took a swig from the bottle without bothering to wipe the touch of Oswald’s lips from it.

“They say sharing a drink is like sharing a kiss,” Oswald said, so that Jim glanced over again and caught a glimpse of bright blue eyes and dark lashes. The quirk of a smile and the hint of color in his cheeks the weather certainly didn’t merit.

Jim only took another swallow.

“Shut up, Oswald.”

The pain meds must have been stronger than the ones Oswald usually took, either that or the heater had really made a difference. The other man fell asleep, anyway, and Jim was left to focus on the road and pretend he wasn’t obsessing over a gangster’s choice in aftershave.

Harvey rang him in the evening to check on his progress, and Jim groused about the unfairness of it all. If a force upstate wanted Oswald to make a formal identification in person, it ought to be their responsibility to get him there.

“They’re paying,” Harvey said easily, and Jim glanced over at where Oswald was still only half awake, curled into himself in the passenger seat. Didn’t voice his suspicions about how convenient it was they had asked for a police escort in the first place, or the serendipitous timing of the accident that had left Harvey’s ankle in plaster.

“I still say it’s unnecessary,” Jim groused. There were video links, instant messenger. Photographs. They certainly didn’t need to go all the way there, just to come all the way back again. Harvey wasn’t even sympathetic, too preoccupied with the care Jim was taking of his car, along with the state of his ankle and the distance between his sofa and the refrigerator.

They rang off, Jim determining to complain more fully the next time they saw each other in person, and then everything was a rush of panic and sensation. The blare of a car horn and the blinding lights of oncoming traffic. The slick sweat coating his palms, and the pain in his jaw, where he was clenching his teeth together. He swerved, hard, and it was okay, it was fine. Everything would be just dandy if he could stop shaking.

It was a hand on his arm which finally brought him back to himself and he cut the engine. Bailed out of the door and leaned heavily against the metal framework. Sucked in breath after breath and begged himself to get a grip. To not do anything as stupid as break down entirely in front of Gotham’s self-appointed crime boss.

“Jim?” Oswald asked again, concern rolling off him, and when he stepped closer, put a hand between his shoulder blades, Jim was embarrassed by how comforting it was. Inhaled deeply and felt better, not for the fresh air, but for the lungful of Oswald’s intoxicating cologne.
“I’ll be alright,” he managed, appalled at the mess his voice was in. “Just give me a minute.”

Oswald shook his head, like he expected Jim to obey him, and said, “I can’t drive, not with those horse tranquilizers you call painkillers in my system, and I don’t think you’re in any fit state to keep going.”

“I’ll be fine!” Jim snapped, cheeks flushing, but Oswald didn’t pay it any attention,

“There was a motel a couple of miles back. It won’t make any difference if we reach our destination today or tomorrow.”

That much was true, at least. The plan had always been to stay the night at some hotel Oswald had insisted on paying for, then make the ID in the morning. He would still have argued, would have pretended he was more than capable, but when he took a step forward his left leg wobbled precariously so that Oswald had to pull him upright, and he was left with no other option.

His pride wasn’t worth dying for.

Throughout their entire acquaintance, Jim had been the one in control, at least nominally. It was he who told Oswald when and whether he would speak to him, and he who who decided when their conversations were over. Now the tables felt turned, Oswald making calls, and fixing arrangements, and directing him back to the correct turning, once he had finally proven himself able to get them there.

It was Oswald too who took charge of the booking, Jim following meekly behind with their luggage. The woman at the desk looked up at them disinterestedly, like it was a common occurrence to see a man decked out in eyeliner and a full morning suit, accompanied by a cop with a gun at his belt.

“We’ll take two rooms,” Oswald said, all mayoral authority, and she just shook her head and blew a gum bubble.

“We’ve got one room, a double. Take it or leave it.”

They were going to have to keep going, the next motel couldn’t be that far away. Jim would just have to suck it up; Gotham had no time for weakness. Oswald had other ideas.

“We’ll take it.”

He paid, not by card like a regular person, but with crisp notes from a billfold he pulled from an inner pocket, like something out of an old Hollywood movie. Even the limp didn’t detract from it, only served to give him a kind of gravitas, and Jim could half imagine himself some paid retainer Oswald kept around to carry his bags and open doors for him.

It occurred to him that, right now, he wasn’t even getting paid for it.

Then he couldn’t avoid thinking about the real problem because Oswald had found the room, and unlocked the door, and they were standing in the tiny motel room, both studying a bed that was seriously stretching the definition of double.

Oswald glanced up at him through dark lashes for his reaction, and he wasn’t going to be the one who freaked out over it. Pulled his tie loose to prove how unconcerned he was and said,

“I’m going to take a shower.”
It was only once he was in it that he started to panic about the night stretching out in front of him. It was still early, scarcely ten o’clock, which he knew from experience meant at least an hour or four of laying awake, stuck with nothing but his own thoughts for company. Except, tonight he’d have plenty of company. Would be pressed up tight against Oswald, soaking up his body heat and inhaling whatever it was that he had decided to douse himself in. He flushed, suddenly aware of another predicament, and twisted the dial viciously until the water was freezing.

Toweled off and cleaned his teeth while carefully thinking about nothing, then wished he had had the foresight to bring something other than boxers and an undershirt to sleep in. Hesitated for a few awkward moments before taking the plunge and pulling the bathroom door open.

Oswald looked up from where he was sat on the edge of the bed, and Jim didn’t notice the way his gaze raked over him. Definitely didn’t shiver as though the other man were physically touching him.

He simply crossed the room and got into the - thankfully - freshly laundered bed, and fussed about with his cellphone until Oswald disappeared into the bathroom. He lay down once he was gone and closed his eyes. Willed himself to fall asleep before the shower stopped running.

If he was asleep he wouldn’t have to deal with this.

He wouldn’t have to deal with anything.

Jim didn’t fall asleep. Had never really expected to, life wasn’t that kind to him.

He was hyper aware of every sound Oswald made, every slight movement, though he had made sure to face the wall and press as close to it as possible, to lessen the chances of Oswald touching him.

Oswald was trying to lay still too, that much was obvious, shifting ever so carefully as he attempted to get comfortable. Jim could still feel it though. The silky material of Oswald’s pajama bottoms rustling against Jim’s bare legs, and the damp brush of his hair against Jim’s shoulder.

He had made the mistake of glancing over at him when he emerged from the bathroom, at how different - softer, younger - he looked without his make-up and his hair product, and now he couldn’t get the image to quit accosting him.

Worse, he had promised himself that Oswald was going to wash off whatever that smell was he couldn’t stop thinking about. Instead Oswald smelled as though he had washed in it. Jim wanted to know if it was something he always used. If he had been wearing it that night at the club when he had hauled the man to him by his lapels. The night Oswald had turned up at his apartment, beaten and bloodied.

The absolute worst, the awful, unthinkable truth of it, was that the cold shower had done nothing. Less than nothing. It was just being so close to someone, perhaps, after so long relying on his right hand as a substitute. It was the lingering effects of almost living out his number one nightmare combined with the most sinfully intoxicating smell he had ever encountered.

It was just Oswald, he conceded, finally. This wasn’t the first time he had been in bed, hard and wanting at the thought of him. It was simply the first time he couldn’t lie to himself about it.

“Are you awake, Jim?” Oswald asked then, whispered into the darkness, and in direct opposition to everything his brain was telling him to do, Jim rolled over. Swallowed thickly at finding Oswald staring back at him, eyes huge in the dim artificial light filtering in through the window.
Oswald whet his lips, nervous, and Jim felt like he couldn’t quite draw enough breath. Like his skin was burning.

“You know I didn’t plan for things to pan out this way? I should have realized how you felt about driving. I’m sorry.”

It was no a surprise to hear that the trip had Oswald’s fingerprints all over it. He had suspected as much, right from the time the request had come in. What was surprising was the sincerity of his apology, the lack of judgment accompanying the statement. The implication that he was being stupid, that he should be over it. It pulled at something, deep inside, and it didn’t matter that it had come from a career criminal.

The right thing to do now would be to acknowledge it in the spirit it was meant then go to sleep. To put this whole disaster behind him, and in the morning get back to treating Oswald with all the distaste and mistrust his position asked for. What he did, of course, was let his leg press more fully against Oswald’s and say,

“What do you have to be so distracting?”

Oswald frowned at him, confused, and if he stopped now it wouldn’t have to mean anything. He could get up, walk out, and cling to his sanity. He had never been one for taking the sensible course of action and dropped his head just enough to bury his nose in the crook of Oswald’s neck. Breathed in deeply and maybe it was him making that noise, because it was Oswald’s fingers twisting in the back of his undershirt.

He had to kiss Oswald then, and it should have been strange, awkward. It truth it was perfect, Oswald arching up beneath him and deepening the kiss, the slick swipe of tongue robbing him of any lingering doubts about what they were doing. Had him sliding his hands up under Oswald’s pajama top, and whispering encouragement until Oswald was on top, his solid weight making Jim pant with excitement.

Oswald moved against him, slid in all that silk, and Jim frantically began stripping him out of it. Was hindered by the need to kiss the other man senseless, to latch onto his neck and raise marks against the pale skin he found there. To breathe in deeply, frantically, demanding,

“What is that?”

“Jim,” Oswald whined, otherwise occupied, and when Jim did his best to explain, to form a coherent sentence, Oswald only gasped, “I don’t know. I’ll buy a truckload of it.”

It would have to do, for the time being, and Jim rolled them again. Pushed his face against Oswald’s collarbone, down the side of his rib cage. curled one hand possessively around the thigh of his bad leg, hoped the heat might help somehow, and figured he should probably be panicking more. Should be hung up on how long it had been, and how he had no clue what to do.

Instinct seemed to be covering it though, and when he wrapped his hand around Oswald, he was gratifyingly loud in his appreciation. Gasped and groaned, and kept up a running commentary of,

“Oh, please, oh, there, like that, please, Jim, don’t stop, please, Jim, please.”

It was a turn on, massively so, and Jim couldn’t remember the last time he had been so desperate. The last time he had been so shameless, one hand working against himself because he had to do something.

One of Oswald’s hands pushed into his hair, tried to push him back, and it only stoked the flames.
higher, to feel how very close he was. To feel the quaking in his muscles, to taste him and know he was the cause of it.

Oswald collapsed back against the bed in the aftermath, one arm thrown across his eyes as he got his breath back. Jim followed, pressed close to his side and inhaled against his shoulder. Jerked, helpless, when Oswald’s hand took over from his own and, from there, it was never going to take long. Was only ever going to end in him shaking, and shuddering, and hissing Oswald’s name into his overheated skin.

“Was it worth it?” he asked after, when they had solved the problem of the narrowness of the bed by Oswald pillowing his head on Jim’s chest. “Driving halfway across state to share a bed with me?”

He felt Oswald smile against his skin, his own fingers petting at the hair at Oswald’s nape. He had meant it as a joke. Reassurance, perhaps, that neither of them were already regretting it. Oswald only reached for his free hand and said with a solemnity Jim didn’t think he would get over,

“You can be so silly, Jim. It was worth almost drowning just for you to notice me.”

Jim squeezed his hand at that, hoped Oswald understood what he couldn't articulate. He hadn’t known, had never planned it. But now it had happened, then perhaps, just maybe -

It had all been worth it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
What are Friends For?

Chapter Summary

Inspired by this prompt on the kink meme: 'Some random criminal who dislikes them both kidnaps them, ties Jim up, and gives Oswald the choice of either raping Jim himself or have one of their less then pleasant lackeys tear into him instead. Being Jim's DEAR friend of course Oswald says he'll be the one. Oswald didn't expect to get this into it.' Not explicit, but yeah. TW for everything you just read.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oswald had miscalculated. He had scoffed at their claims and told himself there was nothing they could do to really hurt him. His mother was already dead, along with his father, and Ed had hated him so much and for so long it had almost ceased to register.

He was used to pain, besides, and knew how to mentally remove himself from the situation when it became intolerable. Had already been an expert at it when the other kids his age were still learning how to tie their shoelaces.

It was nothing then to Ignore the white hot throbbing of his leg, and the raw sting of his wrists, though they were bound so tightly to the chair behind him. Barely anything at all to put what he had been told would happen next from his mind. He was under no obligation to touch anyone for their sick amusement, no matter what they threatened to do to either one of them.

“Do your worst,” he said, challenged, but in spite of everything he couldn’t bite back the gasp that escaped him when they played their ace and dragged a familiar figure from the shadows. Couldn’t prevent the way his stomach churned, the wave of sickness that washed over him, when they forced the man to kneel on the dirty floor in front of him.

Jim had been beaten, that much was obvious. Oswald suspected there was more to it though, something worse, something darker than the threat of what might happen, because Jim’s breathing was shallow and stuttering. His fingers were visibly trembling. He flinched, helpless, when a filthy hand touched his shoulder and it was suddenly clear that Jim’s presence was no opportunistic accident.

This was what they had planned from very the beginning.

Because the ringleader laughed, flashing a mouthful of sharpened teeth, and twisted his fingers into Jim’s hair until he had choice but to look up at Oswald. To force dark blue eyes to betray the stoic set of his jaw and his carefully controlled expression. To broadcast that beneath the mask he was completely, utterly terrified.

Oswald swallowed but didn’t look away. Hoped Jim could see what he was thinking. How he was going to make sure Jim got out of there, and though he couldn’t promise it wasn’t going to hurt, he would do his best to make it bearable.

“You’re shaking,” the man said to Jim, mocking, bending low to speak into his ear even as Jim
strained to shrink away. “And all we did was loosen you up a little.”

The words robbed the breath from his own lungs, rage overpowering his senses. He would have them all killed when he got free. Might do it himself, even. He would enjoy it, would drag it out until they begged for mercy. Until they broke down and sobbed for his forgiveness for having had the audacity to so much as think of touching Jim.

In the present he needed to keep his wits about him.

Sucked in a deep breath to clear his head, and let them explain the finer details.

“We’re reasonable people,” the second in command said to Oswald, all sweat slick skin and lecherous sneer. “We always told you this would be a quid pro quo arrangement. It was you who chose to make things difficult.”

He would take extra time with this one, Oswald thought. Would work him over and over with his switchblade until he prayed the next cut would kill him.

“So either you take us up on our generous offer or we’ll just have to let some of our dear friends do the hard work for you.”

Oswald grit his teeth together at having his own turn of phrase thrown back in his face. At the panic Jim couldn’t quite disguise at the sight of the hired muscle they had enlisted, the color blanching from his bruised and bloodied visage.

“I’ll do it,” Oswald said and his voice wavered in a way he hadn’t intended. “No one else is to touch him.”

Things moved quickly after that. He was untied while Jim was bound. He focused on the ache in his leg so he could ignore the ache in his heart. Forced himself to look deep into Jim’s frightened eyes and not at their audience, or the camera being used to pave the way for blackmail. He had scoped it already, knew any escape attempt would be worse than useless.

“I’m sorry, Jim,” he whispered before he kissed him, tasting blood and bitterness. “I’m so very sorry.”

He was, he truly was, because he had spent long hours floating between dream and reality, imagining Jim, if not exactly in this position, then something not so very far from it. Jim dropping to his knees and begging his forgiveness, Jim’s fingers soft and gentle in contrast to the fists of Maroni’s lackeys, Jim’s mouth hot and desperate against his own, wanting, so unlike their real interactions.

Except here, now, Jim went from shock still and unresponsive to surging forward against his restraints, kissing him like both their lives depended on it. Perhaps they did, Oswald wasn’t insensitive to the gun barrel tracking his movements. No more than he was unaware of what this truly was, or how Jim would despise him afterwards.

It was just too easy not to think about it, to remove himself from his surroundings and focus solely on Jim. To twist Jim’s fear until it was simple nerves, and to block out the chronic pain in his leg until he could almost believe it slight discomfort.

“I’ve never,” Jim confessed when Oswald’s hands found his belt buckle, and it wasn’t a last desolate plea for him to stop what he was doing, not in the space Oswald was occupying. It was something a real lover might say, because they trusted him enough to be careful with their secrets. To be as gentle as circumstances would allow, his fingers sodden with his own saliva before he
pressed them into Jim, for all that the damage there had already been done.

“Don’t,” Jim whined, broken, when Oswald replaced his fingers, and it was easier to crush their lips together than to accept there had never been a ‘stop’ to follow it.

Easier to shut his eyes and clutch Jim close, easier to feel the damp heat of Jim’s breath against his shoulder than to witness his disgust. To have it made certain that the spreading wetness on his shirt wasn’t sweat but Jim’s tears.

“Get on with it,” the ringleader snarled, somewhere behind him, and the fantasy dissipated. This was wrong, this was disgusting, and though he told Jim over and over that he was sorry, he couldn’t stop. Couldn’t help but push up again and again, and dig bruises of his own into the flesh of Jim’s hip. Circled his thumb against the head of Jim’s dick and when Jim gasped, harsh and surprised, it was too much.

Laughter rang out then, cruel and manic, and Oswald knew in that moment he had underestimated what this would mean.

There was no way back from this.

It was his own men who found them and, for Jim’s sake, Oswald was glad of it. They wouldn’t gossip, knew too well what his displeasure was like, and Jim would have hated it the other way, he knew. Would have let it eat him up inside, the idea that his colleagues had seen him spread open for someone he hated.

Jim did hate him, Oswald had no doubts on that score. He hadn’t before, perhaps, but that was forever changed now. He had torn away Jim’s pride, taken something irreplaceable from him. Worse he had enjoyed it. Woke flushed and panting with the memory of Jim’s muffled whimpers, and the feel of Jim’s weight atop him. It was no wonder Jim couldn’t even bear to look at him.

He flinched away when Oswald came into the station at Bullock’s request, when their shoulders almost brushed in the narrow corridor. Jim folded his arms tight across his chest when Bullock led them into the interrogation room, his fingers clenching white-knuckled into the fabric of his shirt as the mugshots of a series of corpses were laid out across the table.

“What do you know about this?” Bullock demanded and Oswald didn’t need to ask how much Jim had disclosed. It was writ clear in his body language, audible from his tense silence. Jim hadn’t told Bullock anything.

Oswald shrugged casually, wished Jim would at least glance in his direction, and said, “What a mess. Whoever killed them must have felt they deserved to suffer.”

“You think?” Bullock snapped, frustrated, and Oswald smiled sweetly back at him. Thought of how they had sobbed and screamed, just as satisfying as it had been in his imagination, and if he had gone further than he had planned… Well, it was of no consequence. It wasn’t as though he had been stupid enough to leave behind incriminating evidence.

“I don’t know if anyone could deserve this,” Jim said from nowhere, gaze fixed on the central photograph. The man who had finally admitted to using his ugly hands to put Jim through a practice run. Then Jim looked up at him, a fleeting glance that left him frozen, breathless, because his tone, his expression, wasn’t accusing.

Perhaps this was as close as he would ever get to forgiveness.
Bullock just looked from one to the other, suspicious. Sighed like it was too much effort and said simply,

“Get him out of my sight. You two can fix your own problems.”

Jim didn’t say anything. Not when he held the door open for Oswald to step over the threshold, and not as he swiped them back into the front of the building. It was Oswald who eventually broke the silence as they reached the entrance foyer. Overwhelmed by the memories of so many visits, of his pathetically misplaced hope that this might be the time Jim was happy to see him.

Might smile honestly at him, just once, and accept his offers of help and friendship without acting as though his proximity physically repulsed him.

It did now, Oswald thought, caught up in the way Jim had flinched away from him. Lost in how awful it was to have shared something that should have been so wonderful, so beautiful, only for his touch to make it sordid and miserable. Because he had brought Jim low before. He had stripped him of his morals and his principles, and at times he had done his level best to make Jim’s life difficult.

None of it had reduced Jim to weeping against his shoulder.

“I’m not sorry they’re dead,” he said, pitching his voice for Jim’s ears alone. “I wish they had never been born in the first place.”

Jim thinned his lips, crossed his arms again, defensively, and looked out at some point in the middle distance as he said,

“None of us can do that. Change what has already happened. It doesn’t matter how much we might want to.”

Oswald knew that, understood it better than anyone, but when Jim looked at him, nervous, he wasn’t stood with an enemy in a public place. He was back in that shadow land, drowning in Jim’s eyes even as he pushed into his heat, and it robbed him of his sense and his reason. Forced the confession from his lips,

“I’d change why it happened. Where, when, maybe. I’d never change that it did. I’d never want to.”

Jim stared at him for a moment, expression unreadable, and then the spell was broken and Bullock was calling, exasperated,

“What the hell is wrong with you today, Jim? We got work to do.”

Jim avoided him in the weeks that followed. Oswald couldn’t blame him, not even when it tore him apart. Even when he schemed and orchestrated behind the scenes, just as shameless in his quest to catch a fleeting glimpse of Jim as he had been in the early days of their association. It had been bad then, total torment, but now he knew how Jim felt in his arms. Had almost been forced to watch Jim be used and killed in front of him.

It gave him nightmares. Made him feel weak, vulnerable, and he began to prefer the ones where Jim cried and clawed to get away from him, because at least he knew he had had enough self-control not to do Jim any lasting damage. Not physically, at any rate.

He put some of his best men on Jim’s tail, and they frowned at him in confusion even as they grew
to anticipate what he wanted from them. Told him proudly of the thugs they had beaten for giving
Jim a hard time, and stiltedly recounted the details of where Jim went, and who Jim spoke to. How
much he drank and whether or not he made any attempt to eat something, afterwards.

“I think he knows, boss,” they told him, eventually, and he wasn’t angry. Hadn’t been conscious of
it, perhaps, but it was exactly what he had been waiting for.

Because after that it was only a matter of time before Jim turned up, scandalized and outraged on
his doorstep. It took less than a week, in truth, and Jim was practically vibrating where he stood,
like he was so angry he didn’t know what to do with himself.

He ignored Oswald’s greeting in favor of grabbing at his lapels, and pushing him violently against
the wall of his father’s drawing room. At least Jim was touching him he thought, suddenly, and had
to swallow back the laugh that threatened to escape, lest Jim think it was directed at him and not a
sign that he was feeling slightly hysterical.

“What do you think you’re playing at?” Jim growled, demanded, and this was more like the Jim he
knew. The Jim who lashed out first and apologized later. The Jim who didn’t cling to walls and
wear unnecessary layers. Who didn’t jump at his own shadow. “Haven’t you humiliated me
enough? What more do you want from me?”

That wasn’t what he had been expecting. Was startling enough to have him stammering.

“You’re my friend, Jim. I have never tried to humiliate you.”

Jim only glared, fingers still crumpling his expensive tailoring, and Oswald made the mistake of
getting lost in that gaze. Of confusing the here and now with the then and there, his own breath
growing short at the realization of just how close Jim was standing. His heart twisting painfully in
his chest with everything he had taken and everything he still wanted to give Jim.

“I just want you to be safe. I couldn’t even protect you from myself, could I?”

The truth hurt, stretched bare between them. Jim flushed and took a step back, relinquishing his
hold on Oswald’s jacket. Shook his head and said,

“I don’t need your help. I don’t want strangers following me.”

Oswald nodded, unreserved and over eager. Jim pushed a hand through his hair, the movement
mesmerizing, and it was though the anger had just drained away. His voice was quiet when he
said,

“I don’t blame you. I don’t –” he swallowed, looked so lost Oswald ached to wrap his arms around
him. “It would have been worse if you hadn’t done it.”

Jim could hardly get his words out, couldn’t look up from the carpet, and it was he who was
struggling to draw breath. His pulse which raced, pounded in his ears, deafening, as he reached his
hand out. As he placed it on Jim’s arm, paper white against the dark material of Jim’s jacket.

“I’m still sorry,” he said and hoped that just once, just this once, Jim wouldn’t question his
sincerity. Wouldn’t tell him that he wasn’t capable of the emotion, that even if he was he didn’t
want to be the focus of it. Didn’t want anymore to do with him, period.

More than anything he wanted Jim to tell him it was all right. That he didn’t hate him, that he
wasn’t the reason Jim drank too much. That it wasn’t the memory of his touch Jim was so intent on
erasing.
“I have a case I could use your input on,” Jim said carefully, gaze traveling slowly from Oswald’s hand to his face. Gave him the barest hint of a smile, “If you’re not too busy, that is.”

Oswald smiled back at him, positively beamed, and directed Jim to the most comfortable sofa. Sat on the edge of his own seat and rang for Olga to bring them some refreshments. Listened, and nodded, and pledged to pass on whatever information he heard on the grapevine.

Felt so stupidly, overwhelmingly happy because this, for such a long time this had been everything he wished for. For Jim to see him as an equal, to seek his advice and want to spend time with him.

“What do you want in return?” Jim asked when it was over, and it was like being doused in ice water. Like having the ground ripped out from under him, and he had to scrabble to hold onto the nearest surface, just to keep his balance. It must have shown, must have been obvious, because Jim grimaced. Gave him a small shrug and said,

“That was supposed to be a joke. I’m not very good at them.”

He laughed anyway, manic with all the hysteria he had bottled up earlier, and later, when he showed Jim out, he hesitated for a moment before saying,

“There is something I want, Jim.” Elaborated at the other man’s questioning look, “I want to do this again sometime.” He quirked a half smile, “If you’re not too busy, that is.”

Jim smiled back, lowkey but genuine, and said simply,

“Yeah, all right. We can do that.”

He had been wrong, he thought, even as he watched Jim walk away from him.

They would get past this.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)}
Musical

Chapter Summary

Oswald uncovers some dirt on Jim - but for some reason he can't bring himself to use it. Written for the 'musical' prompt for #GobblepotWeek2017.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I thought you might be interested in this, Boss,” Martín said, eager as a puppy and just as irritating, almost the very moment he made it through the club door.

Oswald tried to be as patient with his underlings as Maroni and Fish had never been with him, truly he did, but he paid them to do things like scout out talent and collate playlists. He didn’t want to have to be subjected to their ‘maybes’ along the way.

Martín was oblivious to his ambivalence, the glare that had reduced lesser men to tears, either that or simply didn’t care about it. Fussed about with the sound system, practically vibrating with excitement as rather substandard pop punk blared out over his empty dance floor.

“No,” he said, nose scrunching, already picturing the distaste of the upmarket Monday clientele, equaled only by the disgust of the hardcore crowd they pulled in on Friday nights. “I don’t think so.”

“No,” Martín countered, near breathless with whatever emotion those poorly executed guitar riffs were engendering in him, “you don’t understand, Boss. Look who this is.”

He shoved a CD case into his hands, the aged price sticker declaring it to be from the failing record store in the East End they had recently liberated from its previous owners. Oswald glanced at it, brow furrowing, because he wasn’t seeing anything to change his initial evaluation.

Bad haircuts, bad tailoring, way too many primary colors.

Except…

He gaped at the all too familiar face crowded in on the left hand side, underneath messy hair and a lip ring. Martín beamed at him, only too happy to confirm his suspicions.

“That’s Jim Gordon.”

It was definitely Jim Gordon, his research confirmed, though he had been going by Jimmy Worthington back then.

Had been willingly bouncing about in shell toe sneakers and sagging tube socks, flashing expanses of too pale leg below the hems of his cut-offs. Had been posing for terrible publicity shots with too much hair gel and a smile wider than he would have believed Jim capable of.

Oswald trawled the net for more information, couldn’t understand how he had missed this before.
He had assumed Jim was in college during the gap between him leaving high school and him joining the army, and this was just another example of why assumptions were dangerous.

Because this was a side of Jim he had never imagined. A side Jim had turned his back on completely, though not all their songs were as bad as the one Martín had played that first time. A couple had skirted the edges of the Billboard chart, even, and if they hadn’t been pulled apart by in-fighting they might have made the big time.

That was what one of the ex-band members said on their personal Facebook page, at any rate, right below his less than glamorous work experience, and Oswald wondered what exactly it was he ought to do with this new found information.

Jim would be embarrassed if it were made public, that went without saying. No poster boy for the GCPD was likely to welcome a reminder of the time they had released a single about how great it was to sit around and do nothing but smoke pot all day.

It was too easy though. Too crass. He would wait until the right opportunity presented itself, Oswald decided. He was in no hurry.

In the end it was Jim who pushed things along a little. Turned up at the club before the evening rush with a bundle of papers and a glare that could turn milk sour.

“If you want me to help you, we’ll have to sit down,” Oswald said, leading him through to his private office, just to see how Jim would react to the inconvenience. “It’s my leg, you know.”

Jim set his jaw, looked distinctly uncomfortable, but followed all the same. Took the seat Oswald proffered and wasted no time in handing over a mix of mugshots and gruesome crime scene photographs.

“Do all your contacts get the x-rated version,” he asked, the splatter pattern of brain tissue on the current picture as intriguing as it was disturbing, “or do you save it for me?”

“She was in a band called Swindle,” Jim said, stubbornly ignoring the question, “They played here last Thursday.”

Oswald couldn’t say he recognized her, at least not from that angle. Shuffled through the prints until he found one looking straight on and, yes, there was something familiar.

“What happened to her lip?”

It was bloodied and swollen, a pulpy mess, cut up bad - not the kind of damage a punch or a backhander would have left. Ed had been useful for something other than endless heartache, after all.

Jim looked down at the picture, winced visibly, and said,

“Somebody tore her lip ring out.”

And, ah, he did remember her. Remembered the sight of another lip ring too, and stared too openly at Jim’s mouth. Smiled in spite of himself at the barely there sign of a healed lip piercing.

“A woman is dead,” Jim snapped, flustered by both the smile and the scrutiny, “it isn’t funny.”

Oswald came back to himself. Plastered on his most professional expression and said, soothingly,
“I know. That’s why I’m going to help you serve justice.”

“He’s assisting me with the Riley investigation.”

Oswald smiled, as smugly as he dared, and Bullock looked him up and down in disgust before telling Jim,

“Don’t come crying to me when he gets you both murdered.”

With that they were left alone, Jim’s desk looking a little more lived in that he remembered it. It was still neat though, signs of the years in the military all over it, and Oswald found himself wondering again what had happened to the Jim Gordon who had toured the country in the back of a transit van.

The members of Swindle were still at it, blinking bleary eyed when Jim rapped authoritatively on the door of the cheap hotel room they were sharing. Oswald took in all the minor details - nothing was a faster way into Jim’s good books than competence in something work related - like the overflowing ashtrays, and the streaked mascara gathered under one girl’s chin, where the face wipe hadn’t caught it.

“We argued, of course we did,” said her companion, biting at her chipped nail polish, “you can’t spend all day every day with someone without them driving you absolutely crazy.”

Jim nodded, as though he understood only too well, and asked disarming questions about the guitars leaning against the wall, and the kind of amp rig they were using.

“She was going to quit,” a third girl said, hair pressed flat on one side, while the other was still spiked high. “Was going back home to Mommy and Daddy because she couldn’t hack it. And don’t think that means anything - this isn’t symphony orchestra. It’s easy enough to find another guitarist.”

“I know,” Jim said, like he did, and made careful notes of the relevant addresses and telephone numbers. Was given three names to check up on without any further prompting, and Oswald waited until they were at the end of the corridor before saying,

“Well, it wasn’t one of them. They were too upset, and besides they had no motive.”

“That doesn’t mean anything,” Jim said, back to his usual cheery self. “I’ve dealt with cases where a man has been killed for nothing more than a sandwich.”

Jim Gordon was nothing if not thorough, and by the time they sat down to lunch Oswald was feeling the strain of traipsing all over the city. Popped a painkiller with his wine and watched as Jim fidgeted with his glass of soda water.

“I didn’t think,” Jim said then, stiltedly. “Is it really hurting?”

It caught him off guard, the open concern in Jim’s tone, and Oswald rushed to reassure him. Realized too late that perhaps the pill hadn’t been the best idea. Because he was meant to be in control here. Was supposed to be lulling Jim into a false sense of security while he waited for the perfect moment to reveal all with a suitably grandiose flourish.

To illustrate to Jim that he, Oswald, knew everything there was about him, and that he ought to stop treating him like a particularly noxious smell if he didn’t want the rest of the world knowing it
Except here was Jim being considerate and apologetic, and all Oswald felt was the familiar rush of emotion he had once sworn was dead and buried. The fluttering in his stomach at the way Jim was looking at him, all blue eyes and strong jaw, and the cloying sense of hopelessness, because it still wasn’t quite the look he so wanted to receive from him.

“I’d put my money on it being personal,” he said to break the tension, the close scrutiny suddenly unnerving. “Boyfriend, maybe, or someone who wanted to be. They likely wouldn’t have focused on her face like that, not if it was random.”

He expected Jim to grimace in turn. Comment that he would know, wouldn’t he, and prove that Oswald’s dreams about what he and Jim might come to mean to each other were just as ridiculous as they had always been. Jim only nodded, solemn,

“You could have made a good detective, if you’d joined the Force.”

It was so unexpected Oswald halted his fork in mid-air, all but gaping at Jim. Did his best to cover it and said, carefully,

“I don’t think I was ever law enforcement material.”

Jim shocked him yet again. Smiled, just a little, and shrugged,

“It wasn’t always what I wanted to do either, you know.”

He knew, all right. Knew suddenly that he had to put an end to this, because he couldn’t go through it all over again. Couldn’t bear to let Jim back under his skin, along with the desperate clawing want that Jim was never going to reciprocate.

Couldn’t bear to admit that he had never rid himself of it entirely in the first place.

It didn’t take much to track down the girl’s on-again, off-again boyfriend, not when he said ‘jump’ and Gotham’s underworld asked ‘how high?’ Jim got to make the arrest, and Oswald saw him later on the evening news, telling the cameras that the GCPD operated a zero tolerance policy when it came to domestic violence, and that they took all such reports seriously.

Oswald doubted it, sincerely, because the rest of them were nothing like Jim. They weren’t upstanding and they weren’t honorable, and he shoved the CD in an envelope and scrawled Jim a quick accompanying note,

‘Your secret is safe with me, always.’

Jim turned up at the club a few nights later, a week to the day he had arrived wanting to talk about the dead girl. There were no photographs this time though, and if Oswald didn’t know better he would have said Jim looked nervous, though he put his hands on his hips and stood up straighter when he saw Oswald approaching.

“How can I be of assistance this evening?” Oswald asked, attempting for cool and professional but achieving more breathless and excited. Jim’s presence never failed to do that to him.

“I was -” Jim started before cutting himself off. Shifted his weight a little and tried again, “Can we talk somewhere?”
The plan - the mantra he had chanted all through the short journey from his private office - was to say no. He didn’t want Jim coming to him every time he had a problem. He didn’t want it because loving Jim from afar hurt - but loving him and being close enough to touch would only rip his heart out.

He knew from experience.

His mouth wouldn’t listen. Told Jim that of course they could, and wouldn’t he please follow him back along the narrow corridor. Offered Jim a drink and, when he accepted, commented, stupidly, that it really must be a special occasion.

“You could have made my life very difficult,” Jim said simply, staring into his whiskey. “But you didn’t.”

Oswald had no response to that. Not one that Jim would be interested in hearing, at any rate.

Jim swallowed down his drink and to Oswald’s amazement began talking about something other than work, or how Oswald ought to stay away from him.

“My mother thought I was wasting my life, wanted me to sort myself out and act like an adult.” Jim shrugged, and fidgeted with the glass in his hands. “I went overboard as usual. She cried for a week when I told her I’d joined the army.”

“Do you regret it?” Oswald asked, voice quiet lest it jolt Jim out of the strange mood he was in.

The silence stretched. Jim wasn’t going to answer. He was working up to some threat or other, probably, and would storm out of the place, angry at his own lapse in judgment. But then Jim was speaking, tone stripped bare with honesty,

“Sometimes. But you can’t do things over, can you?”

Jim’s gaze was too intense, hard resignation tinged with the slightest hint of hope.

“I returned from the dead twice. Anything’s possible.”

His traitorous heart pounded, waiting for Jim’s response.

“If I could go back, I’d do a lot of things differently,” Jim said, and the air felt charged around them. HIs breathing was rapid and shallow, and there was a flush of color in Jim’s cheeks as he maintained eye contact, “But I’d never change my decision at the dockside. I want you to know that.”

He had to sit, legs unsteady. It meant everything yet nothing, and he needed to stay in control of himself.

“What are you here, Jim?” He asked softly, unable to figure it out. Not trusting any of the conclusions he was coming to.

Jim paced for a moment, then moved to sit beside him on the low sofa. Put the glass down and folded his hands in his lap. Stretched them free again and tentatively reached for one of his own, so that Oswald's mouth went dry.

“I wrote a song once, about what I wanted most in the world. Somebody who would see all my mistakes and not think any less of me.”
That awful track Martín had played him that very first day, Oswald thought, dimly recalling the lyrics. Suddenly it didn't seem anywhere near as bad as he remembered.

“I'm not the same man I was,” Jim said and, though it was hard to believe, Jim's palm was damp against the skin of his hand. Jim really was nervous. “But that's still what I want. If you - I mean -”

Oswald took pity on him. Couldn't do anything else, not when the need to push closer to the other man was a physical ache, his fingers reaching for Jim's cheek, his breath skittering.

“I'd never think less of you,” he murmured, entirely certain in his conviction. “I couldn't.”

Jim kissed him, a barely there touch of lips, then pulled back and looked at him for reassurance. For him to let Jim know it was okay, that this was what he wanted. It made his head spin, the very idea that Jim might have any doubts on the score.

“You're a better man than you think you are,” Jim said and Oswald had to kiss him again. Had to press close and lose himself in the way Jim felt against him.

Perhaps it was true - perhaps it wasn't. For Jim, he wanted to be.

Surely that said everything.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
**Fake Relationship**

Chapter Summary

Jim's life is turned upside down when his brother dies - Oswald thinks he might be able to help him. Written for the #GobblepotWeek2017 'fake relationship' prompt.

ETA: Check out the awesomely perfect cover art for this [HERE.](#) :D

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Children had always been part of Jim’s master plan.

It was finding someone to have them with that he had struggled with.

He had come close a few times, and had really believed that he and Lee would be able to make a go of it. His dreams of dimpled cheeks and white picket fences had helped make Blackgate bearable, and it was only afterwards, when it was all over, that he realized it would never have worked.

Worse, they had both known it.

His focus shifted then. If he was destined to be miserable and alone, well, there was nothing to stop him pouring all of his energy into the job. To start thinking about climbing the career ladder.

Harvey encouraged him. Signed him up to the fast track schemes and sent him on the training courses, though he claimed it was all just to get him out from under his feet for a few hours. Laughed when he said Jim would be the youngest Police Commissioner Gotham had ever seen, but left the details of a mentorship program on his desk, all the same.

Then Roger died and everything changed in an instant.

He wouldn’t cope with a kid, he told himself on the flight over. Didn’t have the first clue how to take care of one. Took one look at Barbara’s tear stained face and knew that none of it mattered. He would do anything if it only meant he got to see her smile again.

He wrapped things up in Chicago and came back to Gotham a single parent. Moved apartment and scared away the monsters in the closet of Barbara’s new bedroom. Learned the optimum number of fridge magnets per painting, and how to cajole a seven year old to eat, even when the meal tasted nothing like the way her mother would have made it.

Read stories, and played games, and didn’t let on how desperately it hurt, the first time she screamed and screamed and screamed that she didn’t want him. That all she wanted was to see her dad again. She hugged him afterwards, cheeks still wet, and he hugged her back and understood for the first time that he needed to seriously reevaluate everything that had ever seemed important to him.

Because the job had been his life, the satisfaction of solving a case his only high, but one night he went to pick Barbara up from the childminder with a broken hand and a strapped rib. Could
scarcely manage to put one foot in front of the other, let alone act like he wasn’t in agony, and it was suddenly clear that he couldn’t keep doing this.

He was all she had, her last defense against being completely alone in the world, and that had bigger repercussions than not being free to spend every hour God sent at the precinct.

The problem was there wasn’t much else he could do, nothing he was qualified for. He could work security, maybe, but his reputation preceded him and when he put out feelers he was told in no uncertain terms that nobody would be willing to hire him.

He went to the new Captain, Harvey back on regular duties, and explained his predicament. The unmanageable hours and the looming threat that today would be the day some scumbag would put a bullet in him. The Captain only raised an eyebrow, unimpressed, and said,

“What do you want me to do, Gordon? I’m running a police department not a nursery.”

If he wanted regular hours then he could go back into uniform. If he couldn’t handle the pressure, he knew exactly where the door was.

Before he would never have stood for it. Would have walked away and made his own fortune. Now he had responsibilities and bills to pay. Had to consider his leave entitlement and the health insurance.

“It won’t be forever,” Harvey said, trying to be supportive. “Maybe if you keep your head down you’ll land some nice cushy desk job.”

They both knew that he would never manage to keep his mouth shut, but Jim appreciated the effort. Squared his shoulders instead against the dirty looks and the snide comments, and stubbornly focused on putting together a new campaign for the upcoming Police Union elections. Corruption wasn’t his soapbox this time but pay and conditions, and it was amazing how much easier it was to garner support, when what he wanted was the exact same thing as the rest of his colleagues.

It wasn’t okay that Gotham had one of the highest police fatality rates in the country, and it wasn’t okay that staff shortages meant the flexible working policy wasn’t being honored.

He won a landslide victory, much to the Captain’s disgust, then realized that all it was going to mean was extra work, more demands on his time, and apologetic excuses from everyone that there just wasn’t the money available to make a real difference.

Jim knew the feeling well enough, because no matter what he did it was a struggle to make ends meet each month. Roger had been in debt, mountains of it, so it had all fallen to his wage to get them out of the kind of neighborhoods where drunks and drug addicts slept in the stairwells of the apartment buildings. That had been where he was living before and it was fine. It was central, and convenient, and so entirely unsuitable for a child that it made him start paying attention to the newspapers, because he wanted to know what the new Mayor proposed to do about it.

Not a lot, it transpired, and it came to something when he had to admit that, for all his faults, Penguin had been doing an awful lot of good for the city.

When it came to entertainment, he turned to the cheap and the cheerful, and one weekend he took Barbara to the museum because they were having a free open day. Held her hand and smiled at the wonder on her face, as they walked around the exhibits. Let go for a moment to read an information card then looked down to find her gone.
He couldn’t breathe. Couldn’t focus. Panic washed over him.

Because while anyone would have a vague idea of the things that could happen, how easy it might be to abduct a child, he knew them with certainty. Had worked cases and seen things that he could never unsee, no matter how desperately he wanted to.

He pushed through the crowds, frantic, and his legs几乎 gave out with relief when he finally caught sight of her. Then a fresh wave of panic surged over him, because she was holding someone else’s hand, and that someone was none other than Oswald Cobblepot.

“What are you doing?” He demanded, not quite in control of himself, as he pulled Barbara close to him. “Why are you here, even?”

“You’re very welcome, Jim,” Oswald said, all polite smile. “I saw her wandering alone and knew you would be going out of your mind with worry.”

“I know you say not to talk to strangers,” Barbara said, just as precocious as usual, “but you weren’t there, and I made sure we stood right here where everyone could see and I would have screamed very loud if he tried to make me go anywhere.”

“Sorry,” Jim managed, shaking his head, relief and guilt and the weight of responsibility on his shoulders making his head spin. “Thank you.”

“An apology and gratitude. You can tell it’s my birthday.”

Jim frowned at him, the bulk of his attention still on double checking that Barbara was none the worse for her latest adventure. Oswald rolled his eyes, “That’s where you say, ‘Happy Birthday, Oswald’.”

“Happy Birthday, Oswald,” Barbara chanted, obediently, then looked back up at him and asked, “Does this mean we’re going to have cake? And ice cream?”

“No,” Jim said firmly, thinking of the exact subway fare in his pocket and wondering how it was that Oswald always managed to get under his skin so quickly. He felt awkward and off kilter, too aware of the fact he needed a hair cut, and that he had been waiting until payday to replace Barbara’s shoes, even though the toe of the sole had come away from the upper.

“I think that sounds a fine idea,” Oswald countered. “Let me take you both to lunch, Jim. It’s the least I can do - I very much enjoyed your article in Police News about how I wasn’t such a terrible Mayor after all.”

Jim could feel the heat in his cheeks, in spite of himself, and knew he needed to say no and get away from there. He didn’t want Oswald looking at him like that, like they were friends and this was normal, and he most definitely didn’t want to start giving Oswald the same kind of looks in return. It would only encourage him.

“Can we, can we, can we? Please.”

Barbara was smiling up at him, breathless and hopeful at the prospect of something other than his dismal cooking, and Jim knew he was lost.

“If you must, Oswald.”

It wasn’t so bad. It was uncomfortable and humiliating, certainly, to have to accept Oswald’s
charity, but Barbara enjoyed herself, and Oswald was surprisingly decent company when he wanted to be.

So decent that Jim couldn’t help engaging. Talking, smiling, laughing at one point, and it hit him that he couldn’t remember the last time he had done anything like this. Barbara was the only family he had left, and Harvey was the only friend he had. Other people generally did their best to avoid him, and as the meal came to an end he found himself wishing that it didn’t have to.

That was how Oswald caught him off guard, and convinced Jim to let Barbara have an extra ten minutes in the play area and listen when he said,

“I’ve got a proposition for you.”

He shouldn’t have, that quickly became obvious, because what Oswald wanted him to do was accompany him to dinner, in exchange for a little extra income.

“You want me to be your call boy?” He asked, startled and incredulous, and Oswald looked about them anxiously, suggesting that he should try and keep his voice down.

“Jim! You really must get your mind out of the gutter. I want your company and your conversation, and I know that you could use the money.”

There was no way, absolutely no way he was going to fall so far as to prostitute himself to a multiple murderer.

“You don’t have to decide now,” Oswald said, tone calm and even. “If you would like to try it next Thursday at 7, well, you have my number.”

He didn’t give Oswald’s offer another thought.

At least, he didn’t in the universe where his life wasn’t such a total mess. In this one the refrigerator decided to give up on him, and the utility company kept demanding payment. Barbara still needed new shoes, and Christmas was fast approaching.

The moment of no return came when his cell phone suffered a twelve story drop, shattering on the sidewalk, and he slapped the cuffs on the perp he had been chasing with a rising sense of resignation. He needed a phone, he needed the money, and back at the precinct he dialed Oswald’s number from the public telephone in the lobby and said,

“All right, I’ll do it.”

Even with the decision made he couldn’t help the bouts of panic he had over it. He ought to back out, wasn’t at all sure he had the stomach to go through with it. Because Oswald had said he only wanted to talk to him, but who knew what that would mean in practice. Vice always had plenty of horror stories.

Finally the day arrived and it was too late to back out. Nothing for him to do but lie through his teeth about being needed at union business, kiss Barbara goodbye, and ask her to try and be a good girl for Uncle Harvey.

“Who else is going to be at this meeting?” Harvey asked him, all lecherous smirk, and Jim’s stomach lurched. How could Harvey know? He had been so careful. But, no, Harvey was still talking, “Look at you, if you’re not tarted up for some woman, I’ll eat my hat.”
Jim couldn’t help but grin in response, laughter bubbling in his throat.

“Harvey, you have no idea.”

His good humor melted into nerves when a sleek black car arrived to pick him up. He had showered and shaved more carefully than usual. Combed his too long hair back from his face and gone through half the shirts in his closet before settling back on plain white combined with a tie. He still felt like an idiot, because no matter what he wore, he was going to look like a slob in comparison to Oswald.

“Oh, Jim, you look wonderful,” was the first thing Oswald said to him, all the same, and Jim could feel his ears burning.

“Oh, you too,” he tried because he was getting paid to be a good date. “I like your hair like that.”

It was flicking across his forehead from both sides. It was nice.

Oswald smiled, pleased.

“You don’t need to be so nervous. Just relax and enjoy yourself.”

Easier said than done in the company of a notorious criminal. What if someone saw him? He needn’t have worried - the restaurant Oswald had chosen was well above their pay grades. It was public enough that Jim didn’t have to worry about Oswald’s intentions, at least not for the duration, but private enough that he could relax somewhat.

Oswald was, yet again, surprisingly good company. Touched his hand, briefly, across the table but other than that stayed well away from his personal space. Instead he told him stories and asked him questions, acting as though he actually cared about the answers.

It made Jim forget where he was for a moment. What it was he was doing.

Then a waiter brought Oswald the bill and cold reality caught up with him. He felt sick when Oswald handed him an envelope after the privacy window had been wound up in the limo, just as easily as he had paid for dinner. This was it, this was the part where Oswald would tell him what he actually wanted.

Maybe it would be enough for him to use his hand, but somehow he doubted it. Tried to brace himself for the act of sliding to his knees and thanking Oswald for his generosity, because the sooner they started the sooner it could all be over.

Instead Oswald placed a hand on his arm, just for a moment, and gazed at him intently as he thanked him for a lovely evening. Then he dropped him off a couple of blocks away from Harvey’s place and Jim simply stood there watching as the car disappeared into the distance, attempting to make sense of what had happened.

He didn’t understand what Oswald had gotten from it. Humiliating him, perhaps. Knowing that he held power over him.

Neither conclusion sat quite right.

Oswald rang him not long after he got off duty a few nights later, in response to the new number text he had sent everyone on his contacts list, and asked him how he felt about a repeat performance.
He said no, obviously.

Took Barbara shoe shopping and bought her a burger. Finally got his hair cut and replaced the refrigerator. Two weeks later he was back to the usual edge of financial crisis and when Barbara told him excitedly about a doll that looked indistinguishable from any other he had ever seen, but cost well over $50, he swallowed what remained of his pride.

Gave up and gave in, and got fed at some of the swankiest restaurants in Gotham. Oswald never pushed for anything, never tried anything. Just bought him dinner and listened to him talk. Made him laugh, more often that not, then handed him an envelope and took him home.

He stopped laying awake at night worrying about money, and didn’t have to hide in the precinct restroom every time someone was collecting charity sponsorship money, or organizing a whip-round. Started to almost look forward to their ‘dates’, and caught himself wondering, more than once, what things would be like if it were a real relationship, not some strange business arrangement.

Oswald didn’t make such speculation difficult. Treated him like he was something special, someone who mattered, and when one night Oswald asked him if he would consider holding their meetings somewhere more private he didn’t hesitate because he was afraid Oswald would try anything - but because he was afraid that without the safety of numbers he might let the drink go to his head and do something stupid.

“I’ll pay you double,” Oswald said, misinterpreting, and the reminder of how Oswald really saw him made him nauseous.

He nodded his agreement, all the same, and later he stared at his reflection in the bathroom mirror for long minutes. The Jim Gordon he had once been would never have consented to this. Would never have sold his self-respect, and then wished that he could give something that Oswald had never wanted anyway.

Not really.

He couldn’t have. Because Jim had lingered in the car that evening. Had sat ever so slightly too close, ever so slightly too drunk, and wondered what the press of Oswald’s lips would feel like. He leaned in, suddenly desperate with the need to know, but Oswald put a hand on his chest and pushed lightly. Told him that it was late, and he was tired, and that perhaps he should think about what his reaction to this would be in the morning.

It was morning now, at least the early hours of it, and Jim felt sick. Foolish and stupid.

Rejected.

This couldn’t go on any longer, he could see that now.

He was already in too deep, all he could hope was that Oswald never realized it.

Jim was many things, but a coward had never been one of them.

Yet he stalled until the last moment and then canceled by text, denying Oswald the courtesy of even a phone call. Ignored his every further attempt at communication, and when the other man finally turned up at the front desk in person, Jim treated him as brusquely as he had in the early days of their association, if not more so.
“Have I done something to offend you?” Oswald pushed, insistent, and Jim could feel the curious eyes of his colleagues upon him even as he lead Oswald out on to the steps of the precinct. “I certainly never intended to.”

“I don’t need your money,” Jim said and it was such an obvious lie he had to correct himself, “I don’t want your money.”

Oswald looked stricken, like he actually cared beyond losing a regular source of low level police gossip and whatever weird mind games he had been playing. The ones that made Jim’s heart clench in his chest now, and the urge to reach out and apologize overwhelming.

Jim sucked in a shaky breath and concentrated on all the awful things he knew Oswald was capable of,

“Our arrangement is at an end, Oswald.”

“Is this because - “ Oswald started and there were McKenna and Alvarez, listening.

They couldn’t know, he thought frantically. Nobody could ever know what he had offered and who it had been turned down by.

The idea came to him and rolled around his head. It would be better to have a clean break.

Oswald was a killer and he was the president of the Police Union.

He needed to start acting like it.

“You’ve served your purpose,” he said, clipped and cold, and watched the way Oswald’s expression dropped when he added, “Penguin.”

Harvey found him afterwards and asked what was going on. If he had been doing anything stupid.

“It’s nothing,” Jim pledged. “It’s over.”

Harvey wasn’t convinced, Jim knew, but for once he didn’t push the issue. Sent him off to follow up some leads instead, and visited him later at the hospital, where he was being patched up and given a blood transfusion.

It was a deep wound, nasty, and though Harvey tried to convince him to take time off work and let him babysit, Jim refused to hear of it. Hugged Barbara as tight as he could bear through her tears, and promised her over and over again that he wasn’t going anywhere.

Harvey gave them both a lift home and asked him again if he was going to be alright, and whether he wanted anything.

“I’m fine,” he assured, and lay awake most of the night, the drugs in his system no match for the pain and the memory of the look on Oswald’s face when he told him to quit bothering him. It wasn’t any better when he woke a few hours later, nor the following Monday morning when he was walking Barbara to the childminder, because Harvey was at court giving evidence and he didn’t have enough money to hail a taxi.

They were about halfway when a sudden sharp pain shot through him, and when he clutched at his side his fingers came away bloody.

“Come on, Uncle Jim. We’re going to be late. Again.”
“I -” Jim tried, mind working feverishly to come up with a solution. He didn’t want to panic her, and he knew he wouldn’t make it far, not with the way his vision was swimming. He dialed Harvey’s number, hands shaking, but it went straight through to voicemail and Barbara was looking up at him anxiously now, her face pale.

“What’s wrong?” She asked. Clung to him so that he hissed with the pain, “Promise me you’re not dying.”

“I’m not dying,” he managed, the words strained, and went with what suddenly seemed the obvious answer.

He stood still as he waited, fingers clamped to his side and his teeth grit tight together. Barbara sat on her backpack and watched the empty street dubiously, looking out for the car like he had told her to. Jumped to her feet at the sight of it and Jim felt himself sag with relief because as crazy as it was, as counter-intuitive, he knew she would be in good hands with Oswald, no matter what happened.

Jim ushered her forwards, the few steps to the car tense and painful, and then he was collapsing heavily onto leather seats, blood pulsing past his fingers with the movement.

“Jim,” Oswald breathed, eyes wide, and then a mask of forced calm slid into place and he was telling Gabe to drive to a street Jim recognized as home to a mob doctor, and making breezy conversation with Barbara.

“Do you think you could teach that song to Gabe?” Oswald was asking of some comment Barbara had made about school as they pulled up outside a respectable looking townhouse. “It might take a while because he gets the words all muddled up.”

“That’s right, Boss,” Gabe agreed, playing along, and Jim was more grateful than he could say, even as Barbara launched straight into an off-key rendition.

Oswald turned his attention to Jim, helping him up and out, shouldering his weight in spite of his bad leg.

“You are the stupidest man I have ever met,” Oswald told him as he slowly helped him up the stairs and rang the doorbell.

Jim opened his mouth to protest but succeeded only in garbling something unintelligible. It hurt, it really hurt, and Oswald found his hand and let him grip tight, the sticky slick of blood binding them together.

There was a rush of action as soon as they were through the door, and Oswald gave his hand one last squeeze before handing him over to the professionals,

“If you die I swear I will never forgive you.”

It was a blur after that - pain and drugs and nothingness, and when he came to Oswald was sat at his bedside, watching him. Helped him sip water through a straw and told him that Barbara was fine, and that Harvey had already stopped by to look in on him.

“You could have died,” Oswald said, tone harsh, and Jim shut his eyes, overwhelmed with panic about money and how far his insurance was likely to stretch this time. It was like Oswald was a mind reader, either that or it was easy enough to deduce from his empty wallet and the permanently cracked face of his wristwatch, “If you need money, you only have to ask me.”
“I told you -” Jim started, his head spinning.

Oswald cut him off, quiet and a little scratchy with emotion,

“I lied that first day; I want everything from you, Jim. Anything you’re willing to give me. But I’m not a monster - I wouldn’t take advantage of your inebriation. I don’t want you to do anything you don’t want to do.”

Jim’s gaze flickered between Oswald’s face, the intensity in his eyes, and the hand touching his own. They were both clean now but he remembered the sight of the blood, like all the life and death that lay between them.

“I don’t want you to pay me to have dinner with you,” Jim whispered, the simple act of talking an effort.

Oswald’s face dropped, just for a moment, before he got his public face back in place. The mask he had worn as Mayor, the one he had only perfected after Jim had already seen past it. He concentrated, shifted his hand so he could link their fingers.

“I want us to eat dinner together just because we want to.”

He couldn't do more, couldn't lay himself bare like that, and hoped it would be enough.

Relief flooded over him when Oswald's face broke into a smile - the same smile he had been giving him ever since the very first moment they met each other.

“I want to kiss you,” Oswald said, thumb rubbing tenderly against the side of his hand.

Jim felt a smile curve his own lips, everything making more sense than it had in a very long time.

“I want you to.”

It was soft, chaste, barely there. It was a pact, a symbol, a promise.

It was the start of something big, Jim thought, and when Oswald brought Barbara in to see him, feigning all kinds of admiration for her Get Well Soon card, he couldn't stop smiling.

He was ready for it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
It started with a kiss.

Chapter Summary

Valentine's Day fic! The original draft of this was Nygma free, but I started catching up on S3 already so he managed to work his way in. :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It started with a kiss.

A foil wrapped Hershey’s Kiss sitting on the middle of his kitchen counter, right where Jim was beyond certain there had been nothing but half empty take out cartons when he left for work that morning.

It was enough to make him draw his gun. Search every room of his apartment before returning to the kitchen, half relieved and half unnerved to find it still there. Carefully, deliberately, Jim holstered his gun and crouched down to inspect the intruder.

There were no obvious signs of tampering. Nothing to suggest it wasn’t entirely innocuous.

He should still call it in, he thought, then dismissed the idea - for all that it would be playing by the rule book. He could already see the poorly hidden smirk on Harvey’s face, the scoffing of his fellow officers, if he admitted to being frightened by a single piece of candy.

Instead he collapsed onto the couch with a bottle and, if his gaze kept flickering from the TV to the kitchen worktop, just visible through the adjoining door, it certainly didn’t mean anything.

He woke to a crick in his neck and the fleeting certainty that someone was in his apartment.

Watching him.

But when he sat up, hauled himself to his feet, it was to find himself alone with nothing but his hangover for company. All the windows were closed, and there was no evidence of any disturbance.

Still the feeling stuck with him, all the same, and he washed and shaved as quickly as he could. Pulled fresh clothes on with precise, guarded, movements and paused for only a moment before leaving.

Just long enough to shove the chocolate into his pocket.

"What are you waiting for, Jimbo?" Harvey mocked when he put in an appearance, clasping Jim’s shoulder for a moment before dropping into his seat. “Worried about your waistline?”

Jim only grimaced, gaze fixed on the now slightly misshapen bundle of foil sat on the desk in front of him. He had spent most of the morning staring at it, and it had yet to reveal any of its secrets.
Even in his head that sounded ridiculous, and Jim wondered if perhaps Gotham had finally taken what remained of his sanity.

"See, that’s a problem I don’t have," Harvey went on oblivious. "I put on some extra padding and the ladies still love it. What am I saying? Everyone loves it. It’s my sheer animal magnetism."

Jim rolled his eyes at that. Shook his head and braced himself for the inevitable ribbing.

"I found it in my apartment. I think somebody left it there for me."

"You say that as though you’re the first person to ever be given chocolate on Valentine’s Day." There was a pause for one beat, two. "It’s suddenly so much clearer why your love life is non-existent."

Jim made to protest. He had been for a drink, once, with the new transfer from across the river and, besides, he was fairly certain that it wasn’t Valentine’s Day. Somebody would have reminded him about it.

Except, the world of bachelordom - of late night drinking and microwave meals for one - didn’t really set much store by romantic holidays.

"I don’t know who put it there."

Harvey only muttered under his breath,

"Show off."

The mystery of it niggled away at the back of his mind all day, like an ache he couldn’t quite eradicate. It was just the sort of thing he would once have taken to a young forensic scientist, before the man had attempted to ruin his entire life, just for the sake of it.

He thought of it as he filled out his paperwork, mind half numb with the monotony, and he thought of it as he chased a teenage boy wanted for questioning through the crowded shopping district, finally losing sight of him in the midst of a display of balloons and rose petals. And he thought of it during his lunch break, when devoted couples seemed to surround him on the steps of the precinct. He even thought about it as he followed a burly security guard into what the guys at the station had dubbed ‘Penguin HQ’.

They weren’t big on originality.

"Jim!" Exclaimed a man who could never be accused of sticking to the safe and the ordinary. "How wonderful it is to see you again."

The man beside him pushed his glasses up his nose, gaze cold as he offered a clipped,

"Detective Gordon."

"You must join us for a drink," Oswald said, gesturing at the well stocked office bar he had assembled. "Especially on a day like today. Valentine’s Day! Don’t you just love it when the world gives you an excuse for a celebration?"

Jim gave him a tight smile, steadfastly refusing to glance at Nygma as he said,

"I would but, you know, two’s company."
Oswald’s face dropped, so obviously torn over what to do, and Jim couldn’t help but feel a surge of satisfaction when Gotham’s most powerful man (at least according to the Gotham Chronicle) whispered something into Nygma’s ear, apologetic, and his would be killer was summarily ejected for the duration.

He was so pleased he may have even given him a sarcastic little wave on the way out, just for the torturously boring double dates Nygma had once made him endure.

"So," Oswald said once the door had shut, standing a little too close, tone a little too familiar, "what can I do for you?"

They talked for half hour or so and Jim tried not to dwell on the fact that it wasn’t the done thing, probably, to share an impressively expensive Scotch with the city’s current mayor and former most wanted criminal. Not on duty, at any rate.

But Oswald had information Jim needed, and the prospect of getting one over on Nygma was too tempting. It had become something of an obsession over the last few months, even moreso than the sickly sweet chocolate he had finally chosen to eat on the short ride over from the station. As though the destruction would put an end to his fascination with it.

"If I didn’t know better," Oswald said, cutting through his reverie, "I would say that you aren’t a fan of my Chief of Staff."

Jim drained his glass, habit sending his gaze to the framed certificates of sanity adorning the far wall.

"As far as convicted murderers go, he’s still not making my top ten."

Oswald studied him for a long moment, looking for what, Jim couldn’t say. Eventually he broke away, handed Jim one of the stacked favor boxes, a symbol of the mayor’s hospitality, from his desk - all black and white love hearts, in honor of the occasion - and gave him a crooked grin as he said,

"You’ll always be my favourite."

He was back at his desk before he remembered the little cardboard box. It was crumpled somewhat, the result of its stint in his jacket pocket, and Jim hesitated for a moment before opening it.

It might as well be a flashing neon sign, telling the rest of the bullpen he had paid yet another visit to Mayor Cobblepot.

He did it anyway, because nobody could fault him for promoting close civic ties, then dropped it, helpless, as though his fingers had been burned. Conflicting emotions flooding through him as one question was answered, and a hundred more formed to compensate.

There, in that little box, snug in a nest of tissue paper, sat a single foil wrapped Hershey’s Kiss and a tiny slip of paper.

*Happy Valentine's Day.*
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
This was how it had started, all those years ago. Him helpless, in pain, with Jim Gordon pointing a gun at his head.

Except this time nobody is begging for him not to go through with it.

"Do it!" Abbott screams, high strung and hysterical, and Oswald watches Jim’s hold on the firearm shift, just slightly.

It’s his own fault.

He should have seen that the boy was scheming, devious. Wanted so much more than a position as a lowly underling.

He had been the same, a lifetime ago.

"Kill him or I’ll kill you," Abbott reiterates, and where Jim is staring him down from a few paces, Abbott has the barrel of his gun pressed against Jim’s skull, waiting.

There’s never any sign of the Batman when you actually need him.

Because Jim’s afraid, Oswald can tell, for all that the other man doesn’t show it. He has spent decades studying Jim, cataloging his every expression. Carefully memorizing every look, every word, that has ever passed between them.

Dreaming of what it would be like if, just once, he could know the feel of Jim’s hands upon him.

"Do it," he urges, eyes locked with Jim’s, wanting them to be the last thing he’s aware of. "I rather think he means business."

Jim’s jaw tightens, like he’s gathering his resolve about him. And then things move quickly, one shot ringing out, and then another, and his legs can’t support him, even as Abbott slumps to the floor, lifeless.

Later, he’s told they dig a bullet out of the wall, just an inch or so from where his head would have been, and Jim is commended for saving a former City Mayor with his quick thinking.

In the present, Jim simply offers him his hand, so that for a moment he’s a young man again, lovelorn and adoring, gazing up at his incorruptible hero.

Reality is cold and unforgiving in comparison. His bad leg aches, his shoulders hunched with rheumatism. Jim is tired, hair gray and eyes dulled. Neither of them is the man they used to be.
Still they stare at each other for a moment longer, lost in their shared history. In everything they have gone through and, had Jim only been willing, everything they could have been to each other.

Then the spell is broken and Oswald is bereft once more, alone in a city full of people.

"Why?" He hears an officer ask, and Jim doesn't even look back as he answers, tone even,

"I owed him a favor."

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter Summary

Another drabble idea, this time Penguin is the one who gets abducted.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The press make the connection before Jim does because, as far as he can see, none of the victims have a damn thing in common.

A middle-aged recluse and an elderly priest who has spent his entire life out in the community. A teenager with good grades and a purity ring, and an activist with bright blue hair and a rap sheet as long as his forearm.

"It could be," Lee confirms, never quite making eye contact, and Harvey only sighs and shakes his head,

"It’s better than anything we’ve come up with."

Jim is less surprised than he supposes he ought to be when Oswald Cobblepot turns up at his apartment that evening, the Gotham Gazette tucked under one arm, and a bottle of something Jim doubts his ability to even pronounce properly in the other. He would have been horrified once, he’s sure, but all he can muster in the present is genuine gratitude for the company.

"Is this true?" Oswald asks after pressing a glass of wine upon him, refusing to accept that anyone could truly prefer a beer from the refrigerator, and places the newspaper in front of him.

"I don’t know," Jim admits, scanning the sensationalist reporting. The smug revelations that Gotham’s latest scourge is targeting the pure and the virginal, while the GCPD are still groping, helpless, in the darkness. "It’s possible."

Oswald looks at him strangely then, teeth biting into his bottom lip, so that Jim has to whet his own, in sympathy. A hundred possibilities flash through his mind, a hundred different versions of something he has spent far too long considering, and then - Then the moment is gone, and the conversation moves on, the tension shifting.

"You will be careful, Jim, won’t you," Oswald implores before he leaves, so earnest it makes Jim’s skin tingle, and all he can do is nod, dumb, and lean heavily against the door when he’s gone, wondering just when, exactly, he stopped hating Gotham’s number one crime boss.

He does his best to put it from his mind and in the morning their killer provides plenty of distraction, another body waiting on a slab for him. Another innocent he has failed.

"You can’t claim personal responsibility for every person you deal with," Lee says to him, too knowing, and he is brusque and silent in response, practiced gaze taking in all the relevant details.

"We’re going to get this bastard," Harvey assures him, hours later, when their footwork has proved the press speculation right. Left him feeling wrung through and filthy, trawling through another
person’s life and casting aspersions, desperate to uncover a hidden truth that might push the investigation in a different direction.

He isn’t disappointed that the night brings him no visitors, and he doesn’t stare forlornly at his cell phone, waiting wistfully for a communication that never comes.

It’s almost the end of the week before he hears from Oswald again, and then it’s via one of his cronies. The man finds him at the precinct, drawing more attention than he reflects, paranoid gaze all over the place.

"It’s the boss," he says when Jim leads him somewhere less visible. "He’s gone."

"What do you mean ‘gone’?" Jim asks, willfully slow on the uptake, and the man in front of him shifts from foot to foot, awkward like he expects Jim to dish out one of Oswald’s punishments for him.

"Disappeared. Gone. We thought he was just doing his own thing, but it’s been three days now."

The words hit him like a punch to the gut, because in his mind he’s suddenly back in his apartment, breathless with anticipation as Oswald gazes up at him, some confession swallowed back at the very last moment. With hindsight Jim doesn’t know how the idea has never occurred to him. How he’s never seen something that should have been so blindingly obvious.

"You’ve got to be kidding me," Harvey says when Jim brings the problem to him, and Jim can’t tell for sure if the reaction is for Oswald’s inexperience, or for the way Jim can’t help but call him Oswald in the first place.

"If they follow the same pattern," Jim answers, businesslike to hide the fear threatening to overcome him, "we have 12 hours. 24 at the outside."

They had all been kept for days, some missed, some not, bound and tortured, before being dumped onto the streets, forgotten.

 Imagined scenes come to Jim easy enough, fueled by the autopsy reports and the files they had recovered from Professor Strange, the impersonal transcripts of everything Oswald had said and done, in between pleading for mercy. The guilt claws at him still, that he hadn’t believed. That he hadn’t investigated.

That he had never apologized.

It’s enough to make him call in every favor, his knuckles bruised and voice hoarse from every accompanying piece of encouragement. His eyes gritty and his hands unsteady, nerves strained from the mixture of emotion and sleep deprivation.

"Whatever happens," somebody says, consoling, when the 15 hour mark passes, "you've done your best."

Jim only wishes it were true. Wishes that he had tried harder, listened more closely, been better.

Wish he had taken the initiative months ago, when Oswald first began turning up on his doorstep, and given into the urge to simply lean in and press their lips together.

Instead he scrubs his hands across his face and determines to stay focused, following up every possible lead until, finally, after 19 hours, they're gathered around an abandoned warehouse, his gun drawn and his heart hammering.
Because he doesn't know what's behind the door, waiting for him. If there's anything at all, even, and the true location is still out there, unidentified.

And then there's no time to think much of anything, not when the signal is given and they're swarming forward, cries of 'police' piercing the silence. Something, someone, moves and one of his fellow officers gives chase, even as his own gaze is drawn to a dark shape in the corner. His breath comes in sharp, painful gasps, and he can scarcely get his limbs to co-operate, terrified that they're too late, and whatever he finds is going to be leaving the scene in a bodybag.

"Jesus Christ," someone murmurs, shocked, and it's all Jim can do to drop to his knees beside the battered figure, trembling fingers pressed against a shallow pulse point, his own voice unrecognisable as he yells,

"Somebody call an ambulance!"

The hospital chairs are too small, uncomfortable, but he sleeps anyway, way past the point of exhaustion. For once the nurses leave him to it, perhaps because of his badge, maybe because of the identity of their patient, and when Jim wakes it takes him a long moment to work out where he is, and why he's so strung out and panicky.

"You found me," a voice says then, rough around the edges with overuse, and Jim presses closer to the starched sheets, his hands awkward at his sides, afraid to take the final step and close the distance between them. "I knew you would."

Jim finds he can't say anything, can't get a word around the lump in his throat, and when he hides his face in his arm, unable to hold back tears, Oswald is the one to comfort him, his heavily bandaged hand finding Jim's and carefully linking their fingers together.

"Why didn't you just tell me?" He asks later, when he has a better handle on himself, and the doctor has been around to assure that Oswald will recover, and in time to testify against the man they have festering in police custody.

"Would you have?" Oswald counters, intense, and though he's the one on painkillers Jim feels like it's he who's floating. "If our situations were reversed."

He wouldn't have, and they both know it.

"You're a stubborn man, Jim," Oswald says, tone light, like they're not actively clinging to each other, "but so am I."

So long as his luck lasts, Jim thinks, daring to finally - finally - press a kiss to the man in front of him, it's a burden he can live with.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter Index

Chapter Summary

Oswald wants to make things up to Jim.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

"Jim, your shirt," Cobblepot says, voice breathy in a way that makes Jim want to clutch what remains of it more tightly around himself. "It’s ruined."

"It’s only a shirt," Jim states in reply, awkward under the intensity of the other man’s gaze. It’s beyond redemption, it’s true, but he has long since learned not to spend extravagantly on work wear. It has a nasty habit of ending up torn and blood stained.

"Let me replace it," Cobblepot suggests, undeterred, all sycophantic smile and disregard for boundaries. "It’s the very least I can do."

He’s going to refuse. Get home - or at least the latest rental which passes for it - and scrub away all reminder of the last few hours. Eat, and sleep, and dream about a life in which his off duty hours are spent with friends and family, not saving the life of a notorious criminal, a murderer who gazes up at him as though he really is a hero.

"If you want to," he hears himself say, resigned, and chooses not to dwell on the rush of something the responding look of unmasked joy on the face of said murderer sends flooding through him.

He buys his own clothes in the sale, more concerned about the practicalities - machine washable, drip dry, non-iron - than what they might actually look like. It had used to drive Barbara to distraction.

Cobblepot too, apparently, because the man takes him somewhere Jim knows, from nothing more than the sneer on the shop assistant’s face, is going to be obscenely expensive.

"I don’t think," he starts when all his suspicions are confirmed, because accepting anything from a store which doesn’t believe in price tickets has to be tantamount to police corruption, but is cut off with,

"I must insist, Jim, my friend, really I must. I doubt this is the first garment consigned to the trash on my account."

The logic is sound, of course, even if there is room for Jim to quibble over the details. He doesn’t. He stands still instead, stony faced and silent as he’s maneuvered this way and that, Cobblepot fluttering between him and the assistant, suggesting alterations and making soft noises of approval.

Before Jim knows it they are alone in the dressing room, Gotham’s one time most wanted criminal pressed too close to his back, close enough that Jim can smell a heady mix of cologne, and soap, and something else he can’t quite pinpoint. Can feel the heat of the other man’s breath against his neck, too soft and too intimate, even as pale fingers hold a strip of gray silk against crisp white
cotton.

"The deal was a shirt, Cobblepot," Jim says, though doesn’t look away from their reflection.

"Oswald," the man corrects, tone fond, ice blue eyes meeting his own in the mirror, "and this isn’t business."

Jim quirks an eyebrow, dubious, and Cobblepot - Oswald - smiles in answer. Leans in impossibly closer to breathe into his ear,

"This is me saying thank you."

He wears the shirt, confident that its days are already numbered. Gotham’s streets are full of dirt, inch thick grime, and nauseous drunks. To say nothing of the street dwelling disillusioned and the switchblade carrying desperate.

The tie he shoves in first one draw, and then another, determined he can keep it from sight if not mind.

Because the memory still accosts him at night, alone in the darkness of his bedroom. The scent, and the feel, and the way his own cheeks had flushed as Gotham’s kingpin knotted the tie with careful, precise movements.

The way his stomach had twisted at the hope, raw and unmistakable, laid plain across the other’s face.

He remembers the way his skin had tingled and his pulse rate had soared. Remembers the almost touch of lips against his throat and clenches his eyes tight shut. Tells himself the entire scenario was repulsive even as his hand strays, touching and teasing, the way he imagines another might, until he gasps into the darkness, his traitorous limbs trembling.

He relives it all in glorious technicolor the next time their paths cross, too aware of the blue eyes taking in the stripe of dark blue poly blend around his neck. Of the disappointment Oswald tries and fails to keep from displaying.

"I," Jim swallows, and Oswald smoothly covers for him, a silent acknowledgment of Harvey’s presence beside him,

"It’s been too long, old friend. You must know by now that you’re always welcome."

"This isn’t a social visit," Jim snaps in turn, angry at the other man for his presumption, angrier still at himself for caring enough to want to offer justification.

"Don’t let the creep get to you," Harvey tells him when they’re back outside, and he’s sucking in fortifying lungfuls of cold air. "He has no hold over you."

The following morning he hesitates for one moment, two, before the decision is made and he is knotting the tie with quick, sure fingers, the rustle of silk loud in his otherwise silent apartment.

Nobody comments, the world doesn’t crumble. It’s only a tie.

It doesn’t mean anything.

Except he leaves his desk at the precinct around lunchtime to follow up a lead and a short time later
finds himself blinking, disorientated, coming to in a damp, dank, room, his wrist handcuffed to a rusting radiator.

Panic overwhelms him, just for a moment, because even he can’t cheat death forever. Then his training kicks in and he scopes the room as best he can, mentally cataloging anything which might be able to help him. Finally he takes the risk and jangles the cuff against metal, twists and tugs as best he can, in the hope of pulling himself free.

There is no give, and he forces himself not to react to the knowledge that the only way he’s leaving the room is with external help.

A vision comes to him, Oswald - Cobblepot - in the same position, pleading with him not to leave. Not to walk away and abandon him. Fear grips at him then, ice cold and disorientating. Perhaps that is what this is. Perhaps that is what this has always been.

Revenge.

The treacherous silk around his neck a broadcast signal that he is weak. Foolish.

Stupid.

But when he calls out, masking terror with rage, the man who appears isn’t anyone Jim recognises. Too tall, too thickset, too focused on having a cop - any cop - at his mercy to pick up on the relief Jim feels.

The story, when it unfolds, is all too familiar. A tale of police apathy, followed by police brutality, culminating in the early release of yet another madman into the cesspit of Gotham’s underworld.

It isn’t him, he’s assured. It’s what he stands for.

"I want the same thing you want," he bargains, because threats have got him nowhere, the beating has cracked, if not broken, a rib, and for once an assailant has had the good sense to strip him of anything which might have proved useful. "I want the GCPD to stand for what’s right. I want to root out every last corrupt cop in this city."

The man snorts, stubby fingers hook in the loosened loop of his tie, the pale silk marred with the blood trickling stubbornly from his nose.

"You can’t tell me you picked this up on a police salary."

"It was a gift," Jim protests, guilt and shame warring with indignation in his breast.

The man cracks his head back against the radiator.

"I bet it was."

He wakes to find himself alone again. He is still bound to the radiator, the skin of his wrist raw and bloodied. It’s a struggle to breathe, the pain making him reassess the likelihood of a break, and hauling himself into a sitting position has him gasping and coughing, and spitting blood onto his unforgiving bed of concrete.

He doesn’t know how much time passes that way - there is no natural light to help him determine - and he clings to thoughts of Harvey kicking down the door, armed and wisecracking, rather than imagined scenes of his own funeral, a political farce so like his father’s it makes him retch.
Or perhaps that’s the result of something internal. He doesn’t want to dwell on it.

Refuses to accept that this could be it. That it quite probably will be, when the hours merge together and each visit results only in another beating. Another rambling explanation of how he is paying for the sins of his colleagues.

Maybe he was always meant to. That’s the thought that lingers with him as he flits in and out of consciousness. Maybe it’s better that he bows out now, a blaze of moral glory, before Gotham completely destroys him.

Before there is more than a single tie to symbolize his descent into the darkness.

Long forgotten words struggle to the forefront of his mind,

*Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.*

"Why don’t you just kill me?" Jim rasps during the next visit, because by this point the idea of a quick death really has its merits.

"Not yet," is what he gets in response, and he has spent enough time among the inmates of Arkham to recognize the overbright gleam of murderous insanity. "Soon though. I promise."

Jim nods, tight and controlled, and braces himself for a blow which never comes.

The door crashes against the wall, footsteps filling the stillness, but there are no cries of ‘GCPD’ nor the reading of Miranda rights. Instead there’s a flurry of movement, and the sickening crunch of skull against concrete as the back of his captor’s head makes repeated contact with the filthy floor beneath them.

Blood pools, a stark contrast to the white of bone, and Jim knows he has to be the one to put a stop to it. That he can’t sit back and watch another man die, no matter how tempting it is.

"Stop!" he demands, weak though his voice is. "That's enough!"

There is another slam, still another, and finally the now lifeless body is allowed to drop. Icy eyes meet his, bright and glittering behind dark lashes, and the familiar figure pants, breathless with exertion,

"He was going to kill you, Jim. I couldn’t let that happen."

He gives his first statement from his hospital bed, gaze fixed on some indistinct point in the middle distance. Not Oswald’s intense concern, or Harvey’s suspicious scrutiny.

"He said he was going to kill me," he affirms, voice steady. "If Mr. Cobblepot hadn’t," he swipes his tongue across his lips, still chapped and swollen, "intervened I’d be dead. I’ve no doubt of it."

His gaze strays back to what is in front of him and Oswald beams at him, equal parts grateful and adoring. The Captain’s expression is less clear, weighing the truth against the reality, and it’s Harvey who breaks the tension by squeezing his better shoulder and warning Oswald,

"Don’t go expecting a medal."

"Oh, no, I didn’t do it in search of personal gain," Oswald assures, the words tripping over each other in his eagerness to please. "It’s just that Jim is my friend, my very good friend, and my
friends are important to me."

Important enough that the Captain lets whatever doubts he’s harboring go, at least for the moment. That Harvey waits for nothing more than his nod before leaving the two of them alone. That Oswald drops to his ruined knee beside Jim’s bed and clutches at his hand as though they are long separated sweethearts, not a bent cop and his informant.

Nobody appears to have ever explained the difference, not to Oswald, and Jim hasn’t the energy to take up the slack.

"I was so worried about you," Oswald tells him, words still spilling too fast and too honest. "So very worried. The police," his expression turns sour, just for a moment, "they couldn’t find you. But I would see this city burned to the ground before I let you die, Jim. I’d do anything."

Jim doesn’t want to know. Can’t stomach the details.

"I thought," he swallows, unsure of the wisdom of the confession but presses ahead, has to make his position clear. "At first I thought it was your idea. Revenge for leaving you cuffed. I wouldn’t have." He swallows again, the pain creeping back from the edges, "I wouldn’t have left you to die."

He so badly needs to sleep. So badly needs to give in.

Something brushes against his forehead, the slightest pressure that is too soon gone.

"Of course not," Oswald whispers, choked with emotion Jim chooses not to process. "I knew that, silly."

His hospital stay drags, they always do, with the monotony broken only by brief police visits or well-meaning nurses wheedling at him to eat something. He hasn’t seen Oswald - Cobblepot? Penguin. - since that first night, and he twists the situation over and over in his mind until he falls, exhausted, into sleep’s embrace.

Oswald beat another man to death with his bare hands for him.

In return, Jim has lied to his superior officer. Has told the nurses he welcomes visitors.

Forces himself not to glance at the door every few seconds during visiting hours. Not to listen, anxious hope quickening his pulse, for the sound of Oswald’s awkward gait.

Not to acknowledge the weight in his throat.

He doesn’t care if he never hears his name on Oswald's lips again.

Harvey drops in after a long shift, pack of cards in hand, and fills him in on all the gossip he is missing at the precinct.

"So she thought he was on a stakeout and walked in on the pair of them! Not a pretty sight that, I’d wager."

When Jim doesn’t respond quickly enough, thoughts elsewhere, Harvey sighs.

"It’s not your fault, there’s nothing you could have done about it. Penguin was going to kill him no matter what you said."
Jim says nothing. The murder he had helped cover up isn’t what has been preoccupying him, though it probably should have been. Harvey takes his continued silence for simple stubbornness and goes on,

"Hell, when he realised I wasn’t only saying I didn’t know where you were to piss him off I thought he was going to kill me. I always did say he was crazy about you."

He does make a noise then, helpless, though he tries his best to swallow it back.

"If you want to talk," Harvey begins before cutting himself off. Runs a weary hand through his hair before starting again. "The nurse told me he’s here every night. Holding your hand, mopping your brow."

Jim tries to sit up at that.

Wants to yell at Harvey that it isn’t true. Wants to beg Harvey to tell him that he isn’t lying.

Harvey only shakes his head.

"I’m not judging you, Jim. It’s this job. This city. It fucks with your head. We all know it."

"It’s not how you think," Jim says, lost, because for once he can see no black and white - only countless shades of gray.

"If it’s what you want…" Harvey trails off, shrugs. "Just promise me you’ll be careful."

Jim promises.

Eats a few spoonfuls of soup for confirmation that, yes, the dark haired gentleman had been visiting him when he was asleep. That, no, it wasn’t hospital policy but he was insistent - very insistent - and she had already seen just how much they meant to each other.

He flexes his hand, the one the nurse had seen Oswald cling to so desperately, and waits.

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Jim is floating by the time the sharp clip of an umbrella tip hitting the polished floor filters through to him. Part sleep deprivation, part painkiller haze, and without it he thinks he might feel sick. Might want to turn and run.

As it is he only pushes himself up against the pillows, wincing with the movement, and meets Oswald’s surprised expression with a gaze that doesn’t falter.

"You’re awake."

Jim nods, once, in acknowledgement. "You owe me a new suit."

"I didn’t," Oswald stammers, horrified that Jim is still pursuing that train of thought, revenge orchestrated by an enemy, his face falling so fast it ought to have been comical. Instead it makes Jim's fingers itch to hold him. "I wouldn’t."

Oswald takes a step closer, leg dragging badly - painfully - behind him, and Jim gestures at the free space on his starched hospital sheets. Smiles tightly when the other man fills it, a certain grace to the movement in spite of everything.

Jim reaches for one pale hand. Watches the way Oswald swallows thickly. The King of Gotham, unnerved by the innocent press of fingers.
"I don't mean that; It was my fault. I didn’t take the proper precautions. Didn’t tell anyone where I was going."

Oswald shuffles closer, the grip on his hand tightening, and Jim wonders if this is all a lie. If the real him - the real Jim Gordon - is still cuffed to that radiator, bleeding out on the floor of some abandoned warehouse. Oswald pulls his hand closer, and Jim can feel him trembling even as he presses his lips to Jim's knuckles, grounding him back in the moment. Anchoring him to reality.

"I was just distracted. Couldn't think of anything but you and that damn tie."

"I never thought you'd actually wear it," Oswald tells him, gaze lowered and expression wistful. "I just wanted an excuse to touch you."

It had driven Jim mad not so very long ago. This lack of self-preservation when it came to him, as though the other man was so sure he wouldn't take advantage of such an obvious weakness. Would accept this stranger's fragility and protect it, no matter what the personal cost might be.

It drives him mad still, for all that there has been a shift in his reasoning.

"I was afraid that people would know," he says honestly. "Would be able to tell."

That he wasn't the saint he had pledged himself to be. That a man he should hate made his breath catch. Made him struggle to remember the difference between what was right and what had to be so very, very wrong.

Oswald shrugs, self-deprecating. Like the universe was tilting back the right way and the only possible path was to accept it, with no more protest than a slight scowl at the idea his association was quite so distasteful.

Jim has other ideas. Tugs at the fingers still linked with his own until they are too close. Closer than they had been that fateful day, closer even than they had been in his fevered imaginings. Because this time he brushes their lips together, as gentle as the hammering of his heart is frantic, wishing all the while that his ribs weren't bound so tightly. That the air didn't smell of antiseptic and disinfectant. That it didn't hurt quite so much to shift until they were both lying on his narrow hospital bed, arms wrapped around each other.

"I'm not going to broadcast it," he whispers, divulging secrets into the scant space between them. "But I won't hide it either."

He can feel the other man's smile against his chest. Doesn't think about tomorrow, or the next day, or what happens when it's time to face the inevitable.

Life is too complicated to predict. That, he decides as the medication finally begins to pull him under, is what makes it worth living.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
I never meant to clip your wings...

Chapter Summary

Inspired by this prompt, over on the kink meme: Not exactly a fetish, but - somebody takes a keen interest in Oswald's leg/ankle injury and Oswald is initially horrified ("no it's ugly stop it") but ends up liking it a lot. The partner could be Jim, Maroni, Fish, whoever you think works best.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim had come to think of his career trajectory as somewhat cyclical. He took a step forward, gained a new commendation, put a dangerous gangland figure behind bars. And then he was busted back down to uniform to begin the slow climb all over again.

It could be worse, he consoled himself - he could be on traffic duty - even as he wheeled the GCPD issue bicycle down one of Gotham’s less salubrious streets. Because this was his life now; had been for the last few weeks, and would be for at least the following month or two. Neighbor disputes, parking offenses, Safer Schools visits, and regulation shorts in the warmer weather. He no longer questioned why so many of his colleagues turned to drink for solace.

As if on cue he looked up to find that he had been wool gathering for longer than he had imagined. That in place of flickering street lights and the scurry of rodents was the blinding flare of neon and the bustle of an entirely different breed of nightlife. It was off his beat, though not by much, and Jim wondered if he could get away with passing by more often. The sight of uniform was always more of a hindrance to business than plain clothes: it unnerved the punters. He must have lingered a moment too long, failed to hide his lack of purpose, because a burly bouncer was crossing the street towards him, and Jim came to a quick decision.

He wouldn’t be moved on. He would insist that they let him in, let him stick his nose where it wasn’t wanted. Let every last person in the club know that the GCPD were watching. Waiting.

It came as a surprise, then, when the furrow between the man’s brow was revealed to be nothing more than the effort of remembering an order, the words coming in a slow monotone,

"The Boss says won’t you come in and have a drink? It’s too cold to be standing on the street in your shirtsleeves."

Jim refused to let on that he was rattled. The plan could work just as well if his presence were invited. That was what he told himself as his bike and crash helmet were taken from him to be stashed temporarily in the cloakroom, and it was what he told himself as he was lead into the club proper, a familiar figure lurching to his feet, grinning fit to split his narrow face.

"Jim! How kind of you to drop in. I hope you don’t mind," Oswald Cobblepot gestured at a measure of whisky on the bar in front of him, "but I took the liberty. You look half frozen."
Customers peered at them with unguarded curiosity, a uniformed bike cop being offered alcohol by Gotham’s most notorious criminal, and Jim felt a flush work its way up the back of his neck.

"I’m on duty," was what he said by way of refusal, voice gruff to hide the burning sense of injustice.

He knew when he had been played.

"You’re a credit to your uniform," Cobblepot said, just to rub it in, no doubt, and tipped back the newly surplus whiskey with one smooth motion. "Come through to my office. I’ll make some coffee."

Jim shook his head, suddenly appalled at his own lapse in judgment. He had calls to log, shopkeepers to be visible to, and a Neighborhood Watch meeting waiting for his attendance. When this got back to his Sergeant he was going to be even less popular around the precinct, if such a thing were possible.

"Tea then," the other man wheedled, smiling as though his acquiescence was already certain. "I’d be a very poor host if I let you leave without something to warm you through."

"I’m due at the Community Centre," Jim said in answer, making a show of looking at his wristwatch.

"Oh," Cobblepot murmured, all mock surprise and fluttering lashes. "I received the flyer. Concerned residents coming together to make Gotham a better place. I’m a concerned resident, Jim."

Jim tightened his jaw, knowing what was coming.

"Let me accompany you."

"The problem," a middle aged woman in twinset and pearls said with all the malice of a hardened street thug,"is the lack of police presence. There is no deterrent."

Murmurs of assent rippled through the crowd and Jim plastered his best facilitating smile on his face. Maintaining positive relations between the general public and the GCPD at all times, just like the rule book stated.

Not everyone was content to be as conciliatory.

"I hope you’re not insinuating that Officer Gordon here is being remiss in his duties. Jim is the jewel in the crown of Gotham’s law enforcement."

Jim squirmed. He could feel the flush stealing across his cheeks, hyper aware of the way people were staring at him, including Adamski, the other officer assigned to this particular hour of torture. It was no wonder he kept finding doctored newspaper clippings of the Penguin’s latest exploits taped to his locker, not when the rota kept giving his counterparts front row seats for his complete and total humiliation.

Because Cobblepot had refused to demur that first night, though he limped as badly as Jim had ever seen all through the (mercifully short) walk along the darkened streets. The meeting had already started, and they could not have been more conspicuous in their arrival, especially when Cobblepot began spinning a yarn for the elderly attendees about Jim’s supposed refusal to let him walk alone when the threat of frost was in the air.
In his head, perhaps that was what had actually happened.

Jim had long since given up trying to figure out what Cobblepot took away from these scenarios. At first he thought the man came to gloat, to laugh at his fall from grace when instead of ensuring the innocent slept more soundly, he spent his evenings being criticized by grandmotherly types for the GCPD’s inability to prevent dog fouling on the city’s sidewalks.

Then he had wondered if Cobblepot was trying to discredit him. Blacken his name by associating it indelibly with that of Gotham’s one time most wanted criminal.

Finally he was forced to consider the idea that Cobblepot - Oswald as he kept insisting he call him - turned up at these things for no better reason than that he wanted to see him. Defend him. Flash him oddly shy smiles, and shake his hand afterwards with a touch that lingered far longer than was strictly proper.

It was too terrifying.

In the present, Oswald was still talking, his sense of the appropriate as wildly off kilter as usual, "Jim has saved my life on multiple occasions and it’s a travesty he is still in uniform. Even," the man smiled at him, eyes bright with the blatant adoration Jim had always mistaken for sycophanticism, "if he does look so very dashing in it."

"Your boyfriend is asking for you."

"He’s not my boyfriend -"

Harvey Bullock raised an eyebrow, victorious, and Jim shut his mouth. Clenched his jaw tight, and determined not to rise to the bait.

"What does Cobblepot want?" He asked instead, and refused to think about how close he had been to slipping up and using Oswald’s first name. About how he was going to have to walk through the precinct in front of men and women who had once looked up to him as a role model, and meet with a mob boss in summer issue shorts and ankle socks. Stand still while Oswald’s gaze raked up over his bare skin, the proof of whether he liked - or disliked - what he saw written plain across his delicate features.

Harvey only shrugged. "What does he ever want? Sing your praises. Ask you to dinner. Get down on one knee in the middle of the bullpen and declare his undying devotion."

It must have shown on his face, the flash of conflicting emotion - anger, pity, others he didn’t examine too closely - because Harvey clapped him on the shoulder, reassuring, and said, "I’m kidding. Although," a sly grin stole across the older man’s face, "it could have its advantages. No way would that creep let his wife flash leg like that."

There was too much wrong with the statement, he hardly knew where to begin. Jim settled for scowling and getting it over with. Spying the overdressed figure right about the same time Oswald exclaimed,

"Jim! You are a sight for sore eyes, my friend, truly."

Jim grimaced and attempted to move the conversation to a less visible location, without success. Oswald simply glanced at the motivational hand on his arm like a kid might at a room full of candy
"What did you want, Oswald?" Jim asked, tone snappish with embarrassment, and the other man seemed to shake himself out of a daydream before answering,

"My dear Mother," there was a hitch to the words which made Jim uncomfortable, unable to break the physical contact between them, "was a member of a ladies’ friendship circle and it would mean a lot to me - I can hardly tell you how much - if you were to attend a meeting and deliver one of your talks on home safety."

Oswald looked away, dark lashes sweeping against his pale cheeks in a way that reminded Jim - forcibly - that they were still locked in some kind of strange half embrace. He took a step back and Oswald continued,

"I encourage them to take every precaution, you understand, but it only takes a moment - a single mistake -"

The catch was back in his voice and Jim knew he ought to do the sane thing and say no. Refer the request to the proper department and tell the man, impersonally, that somebody would be in touch, in due course.

Deliver a few home truths about just why his mother had been targeted in the first place.

He couldn’t do any of it, and found a lump forming in his own throat as he said,

"Of course. Just let me know when you need me."

He had given dozens of these talks since being back in uniform. Explaining the merits of the deadbolt and the security chain, the myriad risks of identity theft, and just how seriously the GCPD took every 911 call that came through its switchboard.

He had never been subject to such intense scrutiny as he was under right now, in the eccentrically furnished sitting room of one of Gertrud Kapelput’s former bosom buddies.

"So handsome," he caught from one over loud whisper, and Jim wasn’t sure if it was directed at him or Oswald.

"Such a good boy," came another, much less ambiguous, and he followed a cataracted gaze to where Oswald was half devoured by chintz, posture prim and smile polite as he sipped tea from a twin to the cup Jim had yet to touch, for fear of breaking it. It seemed impossible the man could be responsible for dropping litter, let alone a string of vicious murders.

"Remember," Jim went on, wishing Oswald hadn’t worn the little black tie, the one he didn’t know the proper name for. It was distracting. "Your best defense against home invasion is to be prepared. It doesn’t matter how well-dressed someone is, how charming they seem, do not let a stranger in without verifying both their identity and their intentions."

The ladies tittered, like he was a schoolboy who needed the praise to get through recital, and his eyes flickered back to Oswald, the ominous voice in his head warning him to heed his own advice. The man might look harmless, ridiculously fragile in this overpowering room, but he was dangerous.

A monster.
Oswald lifted his head then, ice blue eyes full of gratitude, admiration. Something else Jim found himself afraid to put a name to. He couldn’t look away, couldn’t draw enough breath, and it was only when one of the old dears touched a hand to his arm he realised he had been standing there, dumb, completely lost in the gaze of her dead friend’s son.

He stammered through the rest of the presentation as best he could, self-consciously aware of the heat prickling beneath the collar of his standard issue uniform shirt. Of the too knowing glances that passed between the members of his audience. Of the sound that fell from the lips of a man feared throughout Gotham's underworld, helpless, when one patted his hand and said, without artifice,

"Your Mother is smiling, to see her Liebchen so beloved."

He wasn’t going to linger afterwards, wasn’t going to make the strange situation any more awkward. But Oswald begged to be permitted to show his thanks and, compared to some of the thoughts swirling around his head, dinner seemed positively professional.

"I am sorry," Jim said when the main course had been cleared away, and the single glass of wine had spread through his system quickly enough to make him glad he had changed into a shirt that was less stifling. "About your Mother. It shouldn’t have happened. I wish I had been able to stop if from happening."

Oswald swallowed, the pain still raw, and Jim wished he had kept his mouth shut. At least he did until pale fingers found his, linked them together, just for a moment.

"Thank you. You’re a good man, Jim Gordon."

This time he didn’t hesitate. Wheeled the bike right past the line of people waiting to get in and told the bouncer, the same man who had been tasked with welcoming him all those months ago, to inform Oswald of his arrival.

"Is he expecting you?" The man asked, gaze wary, and in response Jim smiled sweetly,

"No." Adding, when there was still no sign of movement, "I don’t have all evening."

He did, really. Nobody was going to lose sleep if he didn’t sign his equipment back in until the following morning. It was just something he wouldn’t do.

Clearly.

Because this was only a flying visit. To check in on Gotham’s creatures of the night. To prove he still did more active police work than search for lost pets and help confused seniors remember where they were meant to be. To convince himself that the twisting in his stomach every time he thought of the club’s proprietor was nothing more than well deserved revulsion.

He was waved in a few minutes later, and the staff refused to meet his eye as he made his way through the entrance lobby. For a moment, he let himself believe it was because they had finally developed a healthy respect for what the badge represented. Then he was met by a disheveled figure, all dark smudges beneath his eyes and tight lines around his mouth, and it was suddenly obvious that they had just been afraid of contradicting a direct order.

"Jim, I must apologize. I had asked not to be disturbed but -" Oswald paused, hand clenching around the handle of the umbrella he was using for support. "But if you need me. I’m at your disposal."
"What’s wrong?" Jim asked, demanded, and there was no denying the way his stomach twisted with something far from revulsion, concern making him itch to pull the other man closer and protect him from whatever, whoever, the problem was. Oswald gave him a tight smile, eyes over bright in a way that explained just as much, if not more, than the heavy drag of his foot as he turned, gesturing for Jim to follow him.

"It’s nothing; my leg. Some days it’s worse than others."

That was an understatement.

Jim was watching too closely to miss the hasty way the other man’s shirt had been buttoned, the dark suit an inadequate shield against the wider world, nor the strangled sob he couldn’t quite bite back when he stumbled on the narrow staircase that lead to his private rooms.

Jim took over.

Slid a supporting arm around thin shoulders and, as soon as the door was open, helped guide Oswald down onto the nearest piece of furniture. Waved away his misplaced concern about being less than a perfect host, and poured two generous measures of whiskey into expensive crystal tumblers. Oswald downed the liquid in a single swallow, just as he had with the glass Jim had refused, the night he had wandered, aimless, and found himself on Oswald’s doorstep. He wondered now if this had been part of the reason.

"I’m sorry you had to see me like this," Oswald said, less bitter than ashamed. "Let me know how I can help you."

"It’s not," Jim started, then thought better of it. Sunk to sit beside Oswald on the sofa, though the room had no shortage of other options. "This is a social visit."

Oswald’s head snapped up at that. Suspicion and desperate want warring in his eyes, so intoxicating Jim couldn’t help himself. Couldn’t help the way his hand reached out for the other man, the backs of his fingers brushing against one sharp cheekbone. Couldn’t help the way his heart hammered in his chest, frantic, while his breathing grew shallow, rapid.

They simply stared at each other for a long moment, the air electric. His mind racing to catch up with what his body - his heart - had known for a long time. Then Oswald surged forward, clumsy and inexperienced, and there was nothing Jim could do but clutch him close. Kiss him like both their lives depended on it, the slick swipe of tongue too much, not enough, and he pressed closer still, fingers tangling in soft black hair.

He dropped his head to focus on the pale expanse of skin at Oswald’s throat, his blood running hot at the way the man clung to his shirt. The way he arched back, Jim’s name mingling with breathy gasps of surprised pleasure. Each one tore through him, clouded his reason, and he angled his hips, half desperate, to push against Oswald’s thigh. Oswald cried out at that, and Jim did it again, latching back onto the other man’s mouth, his hands grappling with clothes - so many clothes - with all the finesse of an over excited teenager.

The cry came again, and then again, accompanied by the push of hands at his shoulders.

Jim pulled back, horrified, even as he panted for breath. For self control.

Oswald shook his head, swiped angrily at his eyes, as though he could hide the tears, "I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry."
"It’s my fault,” Jim said, ignoring the blood rushing in his head. The sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. "It was too much. Too fast."

He had harbored his suspicions on that front for a long time.

"No." Oswald shook his head, adamant. "It’s not. - You’ve no idea how long I’ve wanted this. How long I’ve dreamed about this." He sucked in a shaky breath, grimaced as he attempted to sit upright. "It’s my fault. My leg. My stupid, useless leg."

Jim pressed a gentle kiss to Oswald’s jawline, almost chaste, and let his thumb run through the fresh moisture on his cheeks. Waited until Oswald met his gaze before sliding to the floor, dropping to his knees between the other man’s legs.

"Is there anything I can do?" He asked, laying his hands carefully on Oswald’s thighs. He had no idea how bad the injury really was, he realised for the first time.

"There’s nothing anyone can do," Oswald whispered in response, though he didn’t break the eye contact. "It’s because I’ve done bad things. Do bad things. Evil always outs, you know."

Jim didn’t, but Oswald’s tone brokered little argument. He thought, briefly, of his meeting with Oswald’s Mother and decided not to make light of it. Instead sat back and gently lifted Oswald’s awkwardly angled foot into his lap.

"I want to see."

"It’s ugly," Oswald protested. "It’s disgusting."

"It’s part of you," Jim responded, half frightened by the strength of his own conviction, and wondered idly if he would have ever stepped over the threshold of this club if he had known. If he could have somehow foreseen, all those months ago, that he was going to end up here. On his knees in front of a man he ought to despise, warmth spreading through his chest as though it was where he was always meant to be.

Oswald winced but didn’t protest as he untied the laces, pulled the shoe off as carefully as he was able. When he peeled the sock away and let his fingers trace up the length of his calf, still hidden by his trouser leg. He could roll the fabric up, Jim knew, but it was likely to hurt, where it put extra pressure on the limb and so he quickly divested the other foot of both shoe and sock, and then bit at his lip. Uncertain if he could say the words aloud.

He didn’t need to. Oswald nodded, a sharp, stilted, motion, and Jim felt his own breath catch when long fingers worked between those layers of clothing, pushed the dark fabric over his hips. Jim did the rest, dropped it in a heap behind him, followed swiftly by his own belt, his gun, and the other police issue accompaniments hindering his movements.

"See," Oswald said, daring him to be repulsed by the patchwork of scars. The misshapen twist of his ankle.

Jim silenced him with a kiss to his kneecap, a feather light touch along the side of his foot. Then another, followed by yet another, his pulse quickening at the way Oswald shifted beneath the touch, his breathy gasp at the sensation making Jim breathe harshly in turn. It was the trust being placed in him. The certain knowledge that nobody else had ever touched the man in front of him in this way. The taste, the scent, the feel of Oswald’s gaze, heavy as a brand, on his skin. The painful press of his own cock against his fly.

He kept at it. Light, teasing touches which left them both breathless and trembling. Had Oswald
pleading, the color high in his usually pallid cheeks. Begging him to never stop, to give him more, to put an end to this torture. His dark hair was plastered to his forehead by the time Jim conceded, his lashes damp and his breath coming in ragged pants, the flush trailing down his neck and beneath his loosened collar. Jim pulled himself to his knees, breathed in deeply, and pressed a hand against himself, driven half wild by the heat in the other's eyes.

The need, raw and undisguised.

He couldn't wait any longer, removed the last of the barriers, and wrapped one hand around Oswald, the other working his own clothing free. Yanking at his zipper and touching - finally - even as he let his head fall forward, let the other man fill his mouth. It couldn't last, not for either of them, and he swallowed reflexively, shivering at the sensation of Oswald's fingers, sliding through his hair, petting rather than pulling.

"I-" Oswald gasped, warned, and Jim used his free hand to pull him closer, the other bringing himself over the edge, mere moments behind.

"Gordon," MacKenna called as soon as he made it into the precinct. "The Captain wants to see you."

He was late, unmistakably so, despite the manic way he had just cycled across the city, and his uniform was damp with sweat and crumpled from the day before. He hadn't signed in his equipment in from the previous shift, and it was really wishful thinking to hope that his last known whereabouts were not already common knowledge.

Yet, in place of the expected dressing down, he walked out of the Captain's office a reinstated detective.

Stumbled to his old desk, numb, and only scanned the room once before opening the envelope sitting in front of him.

He recognised the elegant script used to write his name. He had found a note written in the same hand on the bedside table when he had awoken, morning light streaming in through the window.

'If I had the choice, I would never leave your side. Alas, it is not so, and unfortunately I have business to attend to this morning...'

"Have you heard?" Harvey demanded, startling him away from the memory. "Did the Captain tell you what that sneaky son of a bitch has been up to? Paying them to keep you in uniform, all this goddamned time. I ought to put my fist right through that smug grin of his!"

Jim tried to muster the outrage. The anger he knew he should feel at having his life manipulated by a man who, not twelve hours previously, had professed, between lingering kisses, wrapped around him in an oversized bed he had never shared before, to love him. More than anything.

None came. He struggled instead to keep a smile at bay, the butterflies in his stomach fluttering along with the scrap of paper that settled on his desk.

It was past. Couldn't be undone.

Had served its purpose.

'I never meant to clip your wings - I was just afraid to let you soar.'
Apologies for the lingering Britishisms, I didn't realise how little I knew about US police until I started writing!

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

Trust, Given Not Earned

Chapter Summary

Jim knows it’s wrong - so very wrong - but he’s the only weapon in their arsenal.

ETA: Check out the gorgeous cover for this story too HERE. It's so pretty!!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

This information will help them make a difference. Protect innocent people.
Save lives.
It would just be so much easier, Jim thinks, if the other man would make it a little more difficult.
Because mob bosses ought to look at officers of the GCPD with mistrust. Disgust. Hatred.
Instead ice blue eyes gaze up at him with unmasked devotion. Hope so pathetically misplaced it makes Jim want to punch something.
"Will you do it?" He forces himself to ask again, refusing to dwell on the sight of flushed cheeks and trembling fingers. On the heady rush of power it gives him, to see Gotham’s number one public figure reduced to shivers by nothing more than Jim’s heated breath against his ear.
Stubbornly chooses to believe that Cobblepot is playing him for a fool when his breath grows short at the simple touch of Jim’s fingers against the pale skin of his wrist. Is just biding his time until he calls in some carefully plotted favor. He has to be, because the alternative makes Jim’s skin crawl.
Makes him want, suddenly, for it to be over - his own voice needy and agitated, "Will you help me?"
The other man doesn’t even attempt to dissemble. Just beams at him as though he really is the hero he has always wanted to be,
"I’d do anything for you, Jim."

It’s meant to be a one time thing.
Done, and forgotten, and never again alluded to, because Jim can’t be that cruel.
Not even to a monster like Oswald Cobblepot.

But the Captain calls him into his office, expression as grim as Jim’s ever seen it, and asks him to shut the door behind him. Tells him that they need to do something to keep one step ahead of the game. To prevent Gotham from becoming the Penguin’s own private fiefdom.
"I don’t know," Jim says in turn, mind reeling, because it’s wrong - so very wrong - but he’s the only weapon in their arsenal. The only one who can worm their way into his inner circle, no fake credentials or lengthy establishment period needed.

"It has to be your decision. Once you’re in," the Captain shakes his head, something about the motion sending a shudder down the length of Jim’s spine, "there’s no backing out. Not on this one."

He thinks about it ceaselessly over the days which follow.

Thinks about how he’ll have to live a lie, hyper aware of his every thought, every action. Have to present a false face to the world while, inside, he slips, slides, further and further away from everything he once held dear. Look another human being in the face and convince them he’s still capable of feeling anything.

It won’t be so very different, he thinks finally, staring at his haggard reflection in the mirror. There is nobody truly close to him, not anymore.

Nobody to be hurt by the fallout.

"I’ll do it," he says, back in the Captain’s office and the man nods, once, and shakes his hand before he leaves, the way his commanding officer had back in the army, when he had been the one to volunteer for what appeared tantamount to a suicide mission.

Nobody’s to know, nobody but him and the Captain, and it’s exhausting, attempting to work out what he should reveal about the part he’s now playing. How much and to whom.

Because at first he takes it slow. A slight shift in attitude, and then another, until rumors start to circulate and Gotham’s Kingpin is texting him late into the night, like they’re a pair of lovestruck teenagers.

"What the hell is wrong with you!?" Harvey demands to know after yet another visit. Another slow step forward, with him standing too close and Cobblepot taking what he can get, entirely too obvious. "Has that creep got some kind of hold over you, or are you really just that desperate?"

"It’s not - " Jim begins, but their privacy is only nominal and anybody could be listening.

At least that’s the excuse he gives himself.

"You have no idea what you’re talking about," is what he settles on, the stress making the words harsher than he had bargained for and, when Harvey leaves with nothing more than a shake of his head, disgusted, Jim slams a dent into his locker, shaking all over with frustration.

He has to speed things up, he decides then. Has to ensure the whole horrific charade is worth something.

The answer comes to him at the bottom of a bottle, and Jim drinks until he no longer cares about the things he’s read in Cobbelpot’s file. The good, or the bad, or the detailed descriptions of the way he had begged and pleaded for salvation, during Strange’s experiments.

He drinks until he screws up the courage to deliver himself to the man’s doorstep, pushing past bodyguards and Nygma’s suspicion alike, demanding Cobblepot talk to him.

"You’re drunk," Oswald says, the underlying concern audible, even through the haze, and Jim
crowds him up against the nearest wall, hating himself, even as he closes the gap between them,
"You need to stop talking."

It’s supposed to be a brief encounter, dirty and sordid, because Jim is only after one thing, and the
man in front of him is a criminal lunatic. But Jim has always known that this is going to have to be
about more than the purely physical.

Has had too long to observe the uncertainty in Oswald’s movements; the faltering attempts at
flirtation, and the clumsy inexperience.

"I’ve never," Oswald confesses unnecessarily in the half darkness, shy and awkward without his
hangers-on and his tailored jacket, and it’s all Jim can do to kiss him silent. To keep his lips busy
with a litany of ‘please’ and ‘Jim’ and ‘more’, as a guard against any further declarations.

He can see it in the other man’s eyes all the same, and he can feel it in the way Oswald clings to
him afterwards, as though he can convince Jim never to leave, if only he tangles their limbs
together tightly enough.

There can be no going back after that, and his methods have been so indiscreet the news spreads
like wildfire through the cesspit of Gotham’s underworld. Harvey chews him out in the middle of
the bullpen for his stupidity, the Captain watching on in knowing silence, and Barbara corners him
at the first available opportunity, right in front of his new paramour.

"Tell me," she says, all stage whisper and mock hurt, "just what has he got that I haven’t?"

Jim tightens his jaw, blushes, for all that the reaction is ridiculous, and tries not to flinch when
Oswald lays a possessive hand on his arm, even as Barbara continues, gaze lingering on Oswald’s
bad leg,

"You realize, of course, that Jim is leading you on? He doesn’t do in sickness and health. Do you,
Jim?"

That isn’t at all how it was, wasn’t at all why it ended, but it’s Oswald who glares back, tone cold,
"Envy, it’s such an ugly quality."

He’s rattled though, Jim can tell, and when they’re alone he drops to his knees. Clings to the other
man’s waist and says the words he would say if this were real, and he truly was trying to convince
Oswald - Cobblepot - that he wants him.

The wait is excruciating. His stomach churns, the sick feeling that never quite leaves him, and Jim
wonders when it became so hard to remember that it was a symptom of guilt and his preoccupation
with self-preservation, not genuine fear that Oswald might decide that this, whatever it is between
them, isn’t worth the effort.

Oswald drops to his own knees, graceless and painful, and frames Jim’s face with his hands, his
tone desperate to match the intensity in his clear blue eyes,

"If this isn’t real, tell me now, Jim. I’ll - It’ll hurt, but I won’t hold it against you. I won’t make
your life difficult. Only, please, don’t do this unless you mean it. I couldn’t bear it."

Jim’s heart thumps in his throat, his head swimming with the implications. It’s a trap, perhaps,
because he has been feeding information back to the GCPD since the beginning. Has been building
a dossier like nothing the DA’s office has ever seen before. It doesn’t matter either way, not really, and he clings to Oswald to stop his own shaking, certain of his sincerity, though not its reason, as he rasps, helpless,

"I love you."

Oswald trusts him implicitly, or at the very least wants very much for Jim to believe that. He isn’t expected to prove himself. Oswald’s wider circle is another matter entirely, and the Captain pulls strings behind the scenes, lets him cover up a shooting, and a stabbing, and the disappearance of one poor soul who begins to turn up only months later, divided into twenty different pieces.

Harvey tells him that he doesn’t know him, can’t understand him, and Lee refuses to meet his eye, the sting of it surprising, because he hadn’t realized he still wanted her to think better of him.

It will be worth it in the end, he tells himself. They’ll get justice then, all of them, and Oswald will be put back behind bars. With the evidence he’s accumulated, even the best defence lawyers will consider themselves victorious if the Penguin gets away with spending the rest of his life rotting, alone in some forgotten filthy corner of Arkham Asylum.

Occasionally he lets himself pretend, just for a moment or two. Imagines that the smile Oswald sends his way is simple and uncomplicated, and that the one he offers in return is genuine.

Other times he can think of nothing but the depth of his betrayal, of how it will continue to eat away at his soul, long after this part of it is over. The last night, the very last, is one of those times. Because it takes his breath away, every time his mind fixes on the fact that this is it. It’s almost over, he’s done it. Will be on a plane halfway across the country when the Captain turns up with half the precinct, search warrant in hand and a press crew, no doubt, to capture the moment Gotham’s sometime villain, sometime darling, is brought down by a combination of patience, perseverance, and long-term undercover police work.

He ought to be happy, he supposes.

In truth all he feels is despair, his throat constricted with the effort of holding back. Of keeping it together.

"What is it?" Oswald asks him, his fingers soft, petting. "Are you ill, Jim? Can I help you?"

He should say no, he knows. Shake it off, act normal, complain about the scheduled prisoner transfer that is due to take him to the skies tomorrow, before he goes home and begins to put this nightmare behind him.

It’s then that it hits him, full force. That this really is it. The last time they’ll be together like this. And suddenly it's a race against time to commit every detail of Oswald's features to memory. The arch of his brows and the bow of his lips, the softness of his hair at the nape of his neck, and the way his breath catches, even now, when Jim drops his head to raise marks across the porcelain skin usually hidden by his collar. He could spend an eternity touching, tasting, and reveling in the feeling of Oswald squirming beneath him, gasping and beseeching, begging him to do something, anything, if only he would do it quickly.

"Don't stop," Oswald pleads when Jim finally takes pity, the taste of him forcing Jim to wrap his fingers around himself, frantic. He wants to take his time, wants it never to end, but he needs too badly. Works Oswald up and up and over, and almost sobs in relief when finally, finally, he comes over his own hand.
Perhaps he's sobbing for real, because the next thing he knows Oswald has his arms around him. Presses chaste kisses to his face, over and over, and links their fingers together.

"I'm sorry," Jim whispers, voice wrecked, and Oswald doesn't understand what or why, but forgives him anyway, murmuring into his hairline,

"It doesn't matter. Whatever it is. I love you."

The following morning Jim makes his flight with plenty of time to spare, prisoner securely handcuffed, and a uniformed prison guard accompanying the pair of them.

He can't bear the thought of small talk, and they don't take the initiative, all three of them finding their seats in silence. Jim puts his focus on staring straight ahead, and concentrates on breathing, in and out. On clenching his jaw tight enough to prevent any slip in his expression. On not looking out of the window.

Perhaps Oswald found his coded warning - the hastily penned missive he had left beside his sleeping form - perhaps he didn't.

He refuses to let himself believe that it can matter either way.

It's over.

He made his choice. He always knew that one day he was going to have to live with it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Companion piece to Trust. I lay the blame entirely at druxykexy's feet for leaving this comment - 'My brain kept trying to come up with any way to fix it, and I started desperately wanting a sequel where it turns out Oswald bribed/blackmailed someone into making the Captain give Jim the assignment in the first place, not expecting Jim to ever care for him but wanting an excuse to pretend for a while... Oswald would have already have a way to save himself from the raid, and had just been trying to find a way to tell Jim...' :)

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Seduction is a subtle game, Oswald spent long enough around Fish and her weapons to see it in action. It’s about the tease, about the unspoken promise, and Jim is so utterly terrible at it that it really shouldn’t be inspiring any reaction.

But, then again, Oswald has next to no experience of being the one on the receiving end.

Jim’s breath is hot against his neck where he’s leaning in too close, and when Jim touches him, just the slightest brush of fingers against his wrist, it feels like electricity sparking between them.

He can’t help himself. Can’t stop his hands from trembling, nor his breathing from growing unsteady.

"Will you help me?" Jim asks, pleads, and Oswald has no appetite for pretending they don’t already know the answer. Simply smiles up at Jim, struck yet again by how badly he wants Jim to actually like him, and says,

"I’d do anything for you, Jim."

Oswald replays the memory of Jim’s attentions over and over again. At night when he’s alone in his bed, touching himself, and during interminable business meetings, when he’s doing his best not to murder someone.

"They’re going to put an officer undercover," his police mole says and Oswald has to clench his fingers into a fist.

"Why am I only now hearing about this?"

A ploy like that takes a lot of planning. If it’s reaching the grapevine the wheels must have been in motion for a long time. The guy’s eyes go wide, color blanching from his face, and Oswald simply sighs. He’ll deal with his informants later.

"Get me Deputy Commissioner Anderson on the phone," he demands. "I have a proposition for her."
Anderson resists at first - the best contacts always do - but the more the idea coalesces in his mind, the more determined he is to make it reality. Because if the GCPD wants a plant in his operation, why can’t it be someone he wants to spend more time with?

Jim would be thorough about it too, of course he would, and when word reaches him that Jim is considering the proposal, Oswald begins to let himself imagine. Imagine how it would feel to have Jim stand up for him, to stand beside him. To smile at him, almost genuine, and to press kisses to his cheek, as proof of his allegiance.

He’d let it go further, would let Jim do whatever he wanted, if only Jim would take the initiative.

"Gordon said yes," Anderson informs him, finally, and Oswald lets her disgusted tone slide. He owes her one.

Jim’s excuse for this latest meeting is paper thin, and Oswald can tell that Harvey knows it. They would probably have been able to get a hit in some database, with all the detail Jim’s just given him.

"I’ll see what I can do," he says all the same, refusing to break eye contact though Jim is blushing and Harvey’s watching, suspicious. "You know you can come to me any time. For any reason."

He can hear them arguing on the way out, Harvey angry and Jim frustrated, and Oswald wonders what more he can do to force the situation. Jim is still so hesitant, so nervous and, combined with the late night texting, it makes Oswald feel like he’s living the teenage romance he never really had any hope of.

Perhaps Jim just can’t do it, he thinks morosely. Maybe he really does consider him that repulsive.

The thought makes him clear his desk in wide, vicious movements. Fling the expensive decanter against the wall and watch with satisfaction as the liquid bleeds into the carpet. It was always a ridiculous idea, he tells himself.

Jim has made his feelings clear a thousand times.

Left him to suffer alone in Arkham, and by rights Oswald should really have killed him, not put him on a higher pedestal, as though he were a hero.

He’s going to end it, he decides. Is sick of settling for crumbs of affection Jim only drops out of a misplaced sense of duty.

Except that night Jim comes to him, the worse for drink but still aware, still capable.

"You’re drunk," Oswald says, and it comes out soft and concerned instead of accusing. Jim crowds him up against the nearest wall, so close Oswald’s heart hammers frantically, and hisses,

"You need to stop talking."

Oswald doesn’t know much about how this kind of thing works, but he has always supposed it to be quick and impersonal. It’s a way of scratching an itch, a business transaction.

Jim can’t know much about it either. Because his kisses, after the first wave of urgency is over, are soft and tender. His fingers tentative and careful.
"Your eyes are beautiful," Jim whispers in the half light of his bedroom, when there’s nothing but their shirtsleeves between them, and Oswald has to swallow back a surge of emotion, voice wrecked with the sudden need to be honest, to confess,

"I’ve never."

Jim’s response is to kiss him sweetly. To hold his hand and take an eternity, until Oswald can do nothing but call Jim’s name, and beg for him to do something.

"Please," he whines, desperate, and Jim holds him close, sucks a brand into the skin of his neck even as he wraps a hand around him.

Oswald clings to him afterwards, limbs heavy and heart soaring. He wants to tell Jim everything. Wants to assure Jim that he isn’t going to use this against him, isn’t going to hurt him.

He doesn’t.

Jim wouldn’t want to hear it, and those aren’t promises he can make, no matter how much he might wish he could. Instead he simply lies awake, listens to the steady rise and fall of Jim’s breathing, and allows himself to believe, just for a few moments, that what he feels for Jim is mutual.

It doesn’t take long for the news to spread, and Jim’s been so obvious, so blatant, that it makes no sense for either of them to act like it’s a secret.

He takes Jim to all his boring functions, then makes up for it by feeding him at all of Gotham’s most expensive restaurants. It makes Jim uncomfortable and, though that was the objective, Oswald changes tact, and cooks pasta at Jim’s apartment, just to see the other man relax slightly, relieved to be away from prying eyes for a few moments.

"Is this making things difficult?" He asks, gesturing a hand to encompass everything. "At the precinct."

Jim snorts, shoulders slumped. "Harvey thinks I’m an idiot. I think I agree with him." There’s no bite to it, no recrimination.

It must have its upsides too, Oswald broods. He’s warned every low life scumbag in the city that if they so much as think of touching Jim, his retribution will be far from swift, and it most definitely won’t be painless.

Has already proved it a few times over.

In the present he only presses closer to Jim, the thrill at being allowed just as intense as the first time, and says, lightly,

"You might be an idiot, but I love you."

Jim doesn’t say it back, not then and not in the weeks which follow. Oswald doesn’t know why he can’t stop torturing himself with it, not when he has so much more than he ever expected.

It just isn’t enough, perhaps it never will be, and he has never been big on self-delusion but the strength of his own jealousy still has the power to surprise him. They run into Barbara, at some event or another, and his stomach crawls the same way it had that first time, when he had been driven wild, taking in every sign of her and Jim’s shared life in her swanky over sized apartment.
She understands about the blackmail, about the bribery, Oswald has no doubts on that score. Her grin is too self-satisfied, too knowing.

"You realize," she says, gaze dragging over him, lingering on his leg just long enough to be calculating, "of course, that Jim is leading you on? He doesn’t do in sickness and in health. Do you, Jim?"

Jim stiffens beside him, guilt and shame writ all across his handsome features, and Oswald has never hated her more than he does in that moment.

"Envy, it’s such an ugly quality," he says, cold and clipped, and sends her a threatening note, anonymous to an outsider, telling her to just come right out and ask for what she wants. He isn’t known for his patience.

They leave early, Jim still shut off and silent, and once they’re behind closed doors Oswald steels himself for the inevitable rejection. The honorable Jim Gordon fighting against the charade they’ve created.

It doesn’t come, and it takes him a beat too long to process that Jim is trembling. Face pale as he sinks to his knees, clinging to Oswald’s waist as he murmurs apologies. Promises that Barbara is wrong, that it doesn’t matter how it started, this isn’t just a game to him.

All the honeyed lies he had rehearsed abandon him, the pain of seeing Jim like this worse than any beating he has ever endured. He drops to his own knees, the red hot twinge of protest nothing but a dull ache in comparison, and frames Jim’s face with his hands, his heart stripped bare because this is destroying Jim, he knows, and somewhere along the line Jim being happy became so much more important to him than Jim pretending to find him attractive.

"If this isn’t real, tell me now, Jim, I’ll - It’ll hurt, but I won’t hold it against you. I won’t make your life difficult. Only please don’t do this unless you mean it. I couldn’t bear it."

They’re both hiding truths, they’re both using each other to climb the career ladder. But that’s nothing, not really. This is different, this is everything he’s ever wanted. Everything he’s ever dreamed of.

Jim buries his face in his shoulder, clings to him like a lifeline, his voice shaking,

"I love you."

Things change after that, they have to. He stops parading Jim around on his arm, like a trophy, and Jim begins to let him see beneath the surface, offers him smiles that leave him wool-headed and breathless.

The GCPD is tightening its net around him, and the toll it’s taking on Jim, the weight it places on his shoulders, is always with them. He doesn’t make Jim talk about it, doesn’t want to make things any more difficult, and works instead with his network of informants and insiders. Arranges what will happen when the date is set for the sting, and leans heavily on Anderson and the other senior officers on his payroll to ensure that Jim won’t be penalized when the case falls apart.

When all the resources they’ve poured into this prove to be wasted.

Jim remains stressed, preoccupied, and Oswald tries but he can’t be sorry for setting this in motion. Not when it brought Jim to him.
He’s relieved all the same, when the date is finally settled on. Pulls strings to ensure that Jim will be well away from the firing line, escorting a low risk prisoner half way across the country. They should spend the night before apart, just to be on the safe side, but Jim comes to him and Oswald can’t turn him away, not when he looks so close to breaking.

"What is it?" He soothes, petting at Jim’s hair, unnerved to feel him shaking. "Are you ill, Jim? Can I help you?"

Jim just stares at him, so intent it makes him shiver, and then Jim’s kissing him, forceful and frantic, as though this is the last chance they’ll ever have to be together. Oswald attempts to calm him, to slow things down, but Jim is so focused and he’s only human. Can do little more than gasp and groan, cling to Jim and tilt his head to the side when Jim lays claim to the skin of this throat, to give him better access.

"Don’t stop," he begs when Jim finally takes pity on him, so close from the moment Jim’s lips touch him, his blood burning when he realizes the rhythmic bumping against his leg is Jim’s hand, urgently stroking himself.

He calls Jim’s name when he comes apart, and they’ve been doing this long enough for him to know that it’s not at all normal when Jim responds by bursting into tears.

"I’m sorry," Jim whispers, lost and frightened, and Oswald doesn’t know what it is he's done, doesn’t care because there's nothing Jim could do to change his opinion any. He pulls Jim into his arms and presses chaste kisses to his face, and into his hairline.

"It doesn’t matter," he says, voice thick with conviction. "Whatever it is. I love you."

Jim leaves in the early hours, while he’s dozing, and he knows he shouldn’t feel hard done by. Jim has a plane to catch.

The bed feels empty without him, nonetheless, and once awake sleep proves stubbornly elusive. He decides to get up and dress instead, washes his face and cleans his teeth, and then goes back to make the bed, Jim’s military instilled neatness clearly rubbing off on him.

That’s when he finds the note, written on a page torn from Jim’s pocket notebook. It's a warning, a plea for him to flee. The time the GCPD are due and ‘I’m sorry’ scrawled across the bottom, underscored for good measure. He has to read it through three times because it makes absolutely no sense.

It hits him then, full force, and he has to sit, his legs threatening to give out under him.

Jim doesn’t know, hasn’t understood, and in retrospect it’s so blinding Oswald can’t believe he ever thought otherwise.

He has to lay low for a few days, and all he can do is pick over every moment of the last few months, trying to work out where he let things go so wrong. His residences are clean, his business accounts spotless, and the GCPD begins to capitulate, language softening in an attempt to save face with the media. It's a calculated risk, he reasons, and dials Jim's number only to find it's been disconnected and he feels sick then - just because Jim felt guilty, it doesn't mean he ever meant any of the other things he said to him.

It is his own fault, that's the worst of it. He had wanted to live a lie, had paid handsomely for the privilege, and Jim had delivered. Had convinced him that they were head over heels in love with each other.
He lets himself cry about it, alone in the darkness, then pledges to pull himself together. To not stare at his cell, helplessly wishing, and not to loiter outside Jim's apartment block, like some kind of stalker.

Jim had never wanted him, not really, and he had been a fool. Taken in by an act everyone else could see was make believe.

He can't ignore Jim though, not when their paths cross, and for all his studied indifference it does affect him, to see Jim visibly withdrawn and miserable. He's lost weight, the first time they have no choice but to talk to each other, and the dark circles under his eyes contrast starkly with his skin's unhealthy pallor.

"Oswald," he says, sounding resigned and worn out, like he's expecting a bullet through the skull and lacks the energy to do anything about it. "You look well."

"I wish I could return the compliment," Oswald says in turn, wanting it to sting. Wanting Jim to suffer. But when Jim's face falls he hates himself for it, voice quiet as he says - because Jim can't still be unaware of the realities at play here - "Thank you for the warning and I'm sorry for putting you in an impossible situation. I'm just..." He doesn't know what else to say. "I'm sorry."

Jim frowns at him and they could continue this forever, passing guilt and apologies from one to the other. But then there's a hand on his arm, some official he has to pretend to want to talk to, and when he looks back Jim he's disappeared. The night drags on, and it's a relief when he can finally leave. When he can go home and close the door on the world and all its problems.

"It was all your doing," Jim's voice says, startling him with its unexpectedness. His staff let him in, Oswald supposes, he still has the slow painful death threat out there. "All of this, you were behind it."

"You started it," he counters, because Jim really does look like he hasn't had a good night's sleep in weeks. Not since. Well, not since the last night Jim spent here. "They were going to put someone in anyway, I thought it would be nice to see more of you."

Jim has his arms folded across his chest, expression grim, and Oswald drops the levity. Leads the way to his private rooms, where there will be less chance of anyone overhearing them.

"I didn't care if you were only pretending," he says when they get there, "I didn't care if it was all an act. I just wanted to know what life could be like. If you didn't hate me."

He shrugs, self-deprecating, because out loud it only sounds more pathetic. Jim steps closer, so close his pulse races, and up in his personal space it's only more obvious how little care Jim has been taking of himself.

"I thought that I was going to have to live with this forever, I thought that you had no idea about any of it. I thought you were going to end up in Blackgate, or back in Arkham," Jim shuts his eyes for a moment, like it's his spine the shudder is making its way down. "It gave me nightmares, just working there," and the way he's clutching at Oswald is bordering on painful, the raw fear in his eyes more convincing than any apology, "Why would you do that? Why didn't you just say something?"

"I thought you knew," he says, soft. "I didn't want to worry you. I wanted you to see I could handle the GCPD, and you didn't need to compromise yourself for me."

"Don't do it again," Jim says, and it's supposed to be a warning but his voice cracks, and this time
it's Oswald who takes charge, kisses Jim like he's making up for every second they've been apart from each other.

"I won't," he promises Jim later, watching the other man's sleeping form. He won't need to.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

Just some cutesy taking care of each other while they're ill fic.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim Gordon is an idiot. A stubborn idiot with an indomitable hero complex.

That’s what Oswald is thinking as he does his best to haul Jim off the floor of his office, his leg protesting hotly as he drags him up and on to the - thankfully - low sofa. He has to rest a moment, catch his breath, and it gives him plenty of opportunity to observe Jim close up.

The unnatural pallor of his skin, and the sweat beading across his forehead.

The pained hitch in his breath when Oswald attempts to wake him, and the burning heat of his cheek, where Oswald presses the backs of his fingers against it.

"What happened?" Jim groans when he comes to, helped along by a forced mouthful of obscenely expensive whisky, and Oswald thanks whatever deity might be listening, because he was beginning to worry he would have to call an ambulance.

"You passed out," Oswald tells him, moving the glass to the floor. "You ought to be home in bed, Jim. Gotham will get by without you."

Because Oswald keeps close tabs on Jim. Close enough to know that he spent much of the early morning in the ER, and that the bruising visible along his jawline is only the tip of the iceberg.

"I have work to do," Jim counters, moving to sit - and then falls back against the sofa, the rest of the color draining from his face even as his hand clutches at his side, a grimace twisting his handsome features.

And it’s that last thought which coalesces the idea in his mind. Jim is his friend, and Jim is in pain. Is completely incapable of taking care of himself, and there couldn’t be anything more natural than Oswald opening his mouth and suggesting,

"Stay here. I’ll look after you."

Jim looks at him like he has lost whatever tenuous hold he has on his sanity, and Oswald has to force himself not to look away. To not pretend he never said it.

"What do you want?" Jim asks, suspicious. "Why would you do that for me?"

He must know, Oswald thinks. He’s a detective. But he doesn’t volunteer the information, and Jim doesn’t push further.

"I’ll be all right," he says instead, though his breathing is shallow and his knuckles are white, where his fingers are digging into the armrest. "I just need a moment."
"You need to rest," Oswald insists, too aware of his own weakness. "You need to take better care of yourself."

There is a long moment of silence, a long moment in which Oswald steels himself against the inevitable rejection. But then Jim is nodding, accepting his outstretched hand and leaning against him, trusting, as Oswald leads him to his own bedroom.

"This doesn’t mean we’re friends," Jim says, even as Oswald helps him lay down and get comfortable, and Oswald can only smile, fond, as he agrees,

"Of course not."

Oswald Cobblepot is a monster. A villain with a river of blood staining his hands, and the audacity to act as though he is the victim.

Jim shouldn’t care if he lives or dies, he knows this, yet still the words fall from his lips, the concern in his tone entirely too genuine,

"You don’t look well. Do you want me to call someone?"

Oswald laughs, a clipped bark that Jim finds unsettling. "You’re too good for this city, Jim," he says, and when Jim has no snappy comeback he sighs, seemingly unaware of the way his fingers are trembling, "There’s nobody to nurse me. Mother’s gone and I’ve given up on waiting for my knight in shining armor."

Jim looks away, doesn’t want the other man to see the way his words affect him. Because Jim knows what the problem is, has a crook in the cells down at the precinct who was all too eager to brag about the beating he dispensed to the Penguin.

He would have stopped it, had he known. He would have barged in and hauled the thug off of him.

In the present Oswald shifts, wincing as the movement antagonizes some injury or other, and Jim hates that he wants to reach out and offer comfort. The man in the cells is there for his own protection.

"You’re hardly a damsel in distress," he says instead, and Oswald grins, blood welling where it pulls at his split lip, and then he’s trying to stand and the smile is gone - and so is his consciousness.

Jim curses, loudly and with feeling, because this is his home. He doesn’t want the GCPD’s number one enemy bleeding all over his carpet.

He doesn’t want to be responsible, some treacherous voice in his head whispers, because he remembers a situation not unlike this all too clearly. Him broken and bleeding, and Oswald hovering over him like a mother hen, feeding him soup and watching him sleep, curling as close as he dared without actually touching him.

Things were different then, Jim tells himself. Because that was before Arkham, before Nygma. Before things ended terribly with Barbara, and Lee, and with Valerie, and before he had ever once admitted to himself that he wouldn’t have been all that averse to Oswald closing that gap between them, not really.

He has to do something though, that much is obvious, and he hesitates for a long moment before pulling Oswald up and into his arms, and depositing him down onto the sofa in the living room. He
doesn't want Oswald in his bed, no matter how vivid his memories of the reverse might be.

The man opens his eyes at Jim's urging but he’s still out of it, gaze glassy and unresponsive, and Jim can’t help the panic that washes over him. He doesn’t want a renowned mobster and former city mayor to die in his apartment. A little panic is perfectly reasonable.

He fetches water from the kitchen, forces Oswald to drink it. Slumps in relief when long fingers clutch at his arm, voice pained but aware as he asks,

"Where am I? What happened?"

"You passed out," Jim responds, and he doesn’t move away from the other man’s grasp. Doesn’t put any distance between them. "I carried you into the living room."

"You carried me," Oswald echoes, the smile back, and Jim reaches out to wipe away the smear of blood, before he even realizes he’s doing it. The silence stretches, and Jim can hear nothing but the sound of his heartbeat and Oswald’s breathing. Can see nothing but the shocked suspicion in Oswald’s eyes, and the way it morphs slowly into something softer.

"You should stay here tonight," Jim says, and it was always going to come to this, always. Because the two of them are bound together. Have been since the moment Jim first lay eyes upon him. He slides his hand to cradle Oswald’s jaw, the rapid pounding of his pulse making him feel lightheaded, "I’ll look after you."

Silence returns, continuing too long to be comfortable.

He's going to demur, Jim realizes, and then thinks that it really shouldn't surprise him. This Oswald is older, wiser. Has the whole of Gotham's underworld at his feet, and isn't likely to risk it all on a cop who ought to know better. Except, suddenly, Oswald is pulling him closer, down into a kiss that is every bit as demanding as it is desperate.

"Does this mean we're friends?" Oswald asks when they finally pull apart, his own face flushed and Jim breathless.

"Probably," he concedes, and he knows he's lost when something in his chest clenches, something exquisite and painful, at the genuine, open smile which steals its way across Oswald's features.

"Good," Oswald says simply and Jim smiles back, happy to bask in the wonder of the moment. There will be fallout, he knows, but he'll deal with it later.

Right now it's just them, nothing more, nothing less. A mobster who can't stop wearing his heart on his sleeve and an idiot cop with a hero complex.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Handcuffed

Chapter Summary

Oswald has been on the run, Jim finds him. Written for an ask on Tumblr: they have to spend the day handcuffed together.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Unhand me this instant! I am the Mayor. I have connections.”

Bullock didn’t look at all impressed, shoved him face first against the wall as though he still had Fish Mooney’s protection, and Oswald was still nothing but her umbrella boy.

“If you don’t let go of me,” Oswald ground out, changing tact, “I will make you suffer. I will see to it that even Detective Gordon can’t identify your body.”

“Hear that, Jim,” Bullock said easily, “Penguin here is openly threatening a police officer.”

Oswald stiffened at that, heart thudding. He might not be at his best, might be unwashed and sleep deprived, but that didn’t mean he was so far gone he was happy for Jim to see it. He risked a look over his shoulder then wished that he hadn’t.

He couldn’t look away, couldn’t do anything but stare at the bruise blossoming on Jim’s cheekbone, and the way it only seemed to highlight the blue of his eyes.

“Sounds like we had better take him in,” Jim answered, gaze never wavering, and Bullock pulled hard at Oswald’s aching arms, slapping the metal of the handcuff around one wrist and hauling him over to the car, where Jim was waiting.

Oswald felt his cheeks flame, searched desperately for something intelligent to say, and then Bullock was snapping the other bracelet around Jim’s wrist and he was being urged into the back seat, Jim’s face carefully neutral even as they began making their way back towards the city.

Even as Bullock switched on the radio, bad music blaring, and he shifted almost imperceptibly closer, until their knees were almost touching.

“Don’t try anything,” Jim murmured, barely audible for all his sudden closeness. For all that the words had him shivering, Jim’s breath hot and damp against his ear. “This is for your own good.”

Then it was gone as though it had never happened, Jim swapping off-color comments with Harvey, in between staring out of the window.

There was a bug, Oswald deduced. It was likely only Jim’s physical proximity that had prevented him already being taken out with a bullet through the back window. He shuddered, the exhaustion and the stress warring with the realization that Jim was risking his own life. Was sparing him just as surely as he had that day at the dockside.

Jim touched his fingers to Oswald’s own, just for a moment, and it hurt more than every indignity
he had suffered over the last few weeks combined.

Kindness brought him low, it always had done, and when Jim marched him up the steps of the precinct some half hour later, Oswald was glad for the heavy rain soaking his crumpled clothes and plastering his hair to his forehead.

It meant the photographers couldn’t see what an absolute mess he had already been in.

Inside everybody gawped. Sniggered and nudged each other as Jim marched their elected mayor past the front desk and down the maze of dimly lit corridors. Past the holding cell and the custody sergeant, and into one of the interrogation rooms, the lights flickering to life.

“I’m not going to run,” Oswald said when the silence stretched. When it became clear Jim wasn’t going to do anything but move both chairs to one side of the table and gesture for him to sit in one of them. “You don’t need to stay cuffed to me.”

“I thought you liked my company,” Jim responded and Oswald was too tired. Had scarcely eaten in days, too worked up and too aware that any moment could be the one they tracked him down. The one they killed him. He couldn’t make sense of what Jim was trying to tell him.

Jim sighed. Stretched his legs out in front of him and said without looking at him,

“Harvey’s going to bring a towel. Some clean clothes maybe. I can’t put you in a cell until I’m sure you’re not going to leave it in a body bag.”

Oswald stared, swallowed around a sudden swell of emotion and wondered why it was that Jim had to keep finding him at his most vulnerable.

“You can sleep if you want,” Jim went on, finally glancing at him, a note of amusement coloring in his tone, “I’m not going anywhere.”

It was tempting but he needed to keep his guard up. Needed to stay alert, needed - The fight drained out of him.

He needed to shut his eyes. Needed to let his head loll back, needed to just stop thinking.

When he woke it was to find Bullock had been good to his word. There was a neat pile of clothing on the table. A towel draped over him like a blanket. The man was nowhere to be seen though, and for that at least Oswald was thankful.

Because Jim had kept his promise too. Was flipping through a file, awkward with just the one hand free, and didn’t seem at all perturbed that Oswald’s head was on his shoulder. Hadn’t once reveled in his downfall, or pointed out that the ways in which he had contributed to his own ruin.

“Why are you doing this, Jim?” He murmured, voice still scratchy from sleep. Body still pressed against Jim’s side, Jim’s warmth so very comforting.

“You’re going to become a valuable asset,” Jim said easily, confident and businesslike, and it hurt. Wrenched at something deep inside because what had he been expecting? Jim to smile at him and say that he was putting his career on the line because he liked him.

Except Jim was smiling at him. Almost, anyway, the curve of it on his lips as their fingers brushed again, the touch sparking a kaleidoscope of emotion.

“You’re no use to anyone dead.”
Oswald didn’t pull away. Scarcely dared breathe lest Jim think to do so.

“I have no intention of dying,” he said finally, when he had enough confidence Jim wasn’t going to disappear.

Jim smiled for real this time, and the sight of it was enough to wipe out weeks of uncertainty. Months of sorrow and suffering. He shifted subtly until his hand was in Jim’s, the metal of the cuffs clanking as they found the best angle.

He relaxed back against Jim’s shoulder. Jim went back to his case file.

There were worse ways to spend an evening.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :}


Chapter Summary

Short little ficlet for an ask on Tumblr - vampire AU. :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim was no stranger to dead bodies. Working homicide it kind of came with the territory.

There was something about this corpse though, something that made his heart hammer and the hair on the back of his neck stand on end. Something that made him want to get as far away as possible, as though the killer was still in the alleyway with them.

Watching.

Waiting.

The autopsy only raised more questions. The body was drained of blood, the job clean and thorough, yet all the evidence pointed to the murder being committed where the body was discovered.

It didn’t make sense, didn’t seem possible, and when the new ME pointed to two small incisions on the corpse’s neck Jim had to swallow back a sudden wave of nausea.

There was a rational explanation. Rational for Gotham, at any rate, and he worked the case the way he would any other until another body turned up in identical condition. Then another, and another, and then the press got wind of it and speculation about the so called Vampire Killer was splashed all over the front pages.

Jim had no clues, no leads, nothing at all to go on. Nothing but his cop’s nose, and he scoured his memory for the lingering scent that he knew was familiar, even if he couldn’t place it.

He worried at it all night and most of the following day, his mind returning to the problem every time his concentration wandered for a moment. Looked up from his reports and case notes to glance over at a commotion at the front desk, gaze settling as it so often did on the Mayor’s portrait.

On Oswald’s portrait, and the force of the sudden recognition stole the breath from his lungs.

It was stupid, didn’t mean anything. Whatever it was Oswald typically doused himself in - cologne, shower gel, pomade - it had to be used by hundreds of other guys in Gotham. Surely.

Just because Oswald had been uncharacteristically quiet lately. Just because he had been calling off day time engagements and staying out of the limelight. Just because Jim was giving serious consideration to the idea that vampires were a real phenomena… It was hardly a watertight case against the man.

He couldn’t shift the idea, all the same, and when another blood drained corpse was discovered in
the warehouse district Jim looked into their lifeless eyes and made his mind up.

Oswald was a major player in the city’s underworld. He had previous and connections. There was nothing unusual, not overly, in Jim paying the man a professional visit.

There was nothing unusual, either, in the way Oswald’s eyes lit up at the sight of him. The sultry smile that spread across the other man’s face wasn’t entirely unprecedented, and the pale hand he lay upon Jim’s arm had haunted Jim’s nightmares.

The dreams which should have been nightmares, too, and Jim felt his heart pound in response to the simple action. Found himself unable to look away from Oswald’s gaze, and when the King of Gotham took a sip from his elegant wine glass then smiled to reveal elongated canines, he couldn’t run in spite of what his brain was telling him.

Instead Jim just stood there, breathing hard as cold sweat gathered on his brow, and Oswald stepped closer.

Touched cool fingers to the skin of Jim’s jaw and said,

“I knew you would work it out, James. I always said you were clever.”

Jim swallowed convulsively, still rooted to the spot, and asked as quiet and anxious as he wished he were loud and confident,

“What are you going to do to me?”

Oswald only stepped closer still, eyes sliding shut as he pressed his nose to the column of Jim’s throat, sniffing deeply. Jim thought wildly of black and white monster movie marathons, and of all the things he should have done differently.

“I told you, Jim,” Oswald said, at once so very soothing and so utterly terrifying, “it is better to walk with a friend in the dark than it is to remain alone in the light.”

Jim shivered and closed his eyes.

It was too late now, he understood that.

Perhaps, in some twisted way, it was what he had been hoping for.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Call Me Maybe

Chapter Summary

Based on this prompt from tumblr: 'Could someone write me a gobblepot fic where Jim or Oswald accidentally calls one another really late at night due to the person not being able to sleep or some other reason and then it becomes this nightly ritual between the two and they kinda become dependent on having these late night calls and start developing feelings for each other although they won’t admit it. And maybe they refuse to acknowledge its happening when they run into each other during the daytime. And during these phone calls they really learn more about each other. Jim learns there’s more to Oswald than just the mobster and likewise. If someone could write this that would be perfect! Pretty please?'

It kind of morphed a little, but I hope it still hits some of the bases. :) Set during and after S3:E7.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first time Jim isn’t asleep, although he probably should be.

"What do you want, Oswald?" He demands, determined not to let the other man know he’s glad of the distraction, "It’s two o’clock in the goddamn morning."

"It’s Ed," Oswald says, and if it were anyone else Jim might actually care that he sounds more than a little hysterical. "He hasn’t come home - I’m worried about him."

What a shame, Jim thinks, sarcastic, and says only, "if he turns up here, you’ll be the first to know," before putting an end to the conversation.

The morning brings no reports of Nygma’s demise, at least not any Harvey is willing to share with him, and Jim has too many problems of his own to devote much time to feeling disappointed. He remembers the strangeness of the call well enough however, especially when Oswald disrupts another bout of insomnia,

"He can’t love her, Jim," he slurs without preamble, drunker than Jim’s ever heard him, "he’s only known her a matter of hours."

Jim can’t help but smile at the ceiling, because he’s a detective - at least, he’s going to be, if Barnes doesn’t make his return difficult - and he knows how to put the pieces together.

"You decided we were friends without any supporting evidence," he points out, because even now Oswald seems entirely oblivious to the realities of their relationship. The other man only huffs, annoyed, and says,

"Yes, well, that was different."

He doesn’t get a call the next night, nor the next, and Jim is ready to chalk the whole experience up to Oswald’s general instability. But the night after he’s counting sheep one minute, and the next
he’s shifting to get more comfortable, even as he says,

"This had better not become a regular occurrence."

It does though, because Oswald is desperate to unburden his lovesick heart to somebody, and Jim because, well, he doesn’t like to examine it too closely. He likes being trusted with secrets, he supposes. He’s building a good working relationship with someone who can make his working life a whole lot easier.

Oswald’s catty descriptions of Nygma’s love interest make him laugh, and it’s better than lying awake, thinking about all of his own failures.

Neither of them goes so far as to verbalize it but, when they meet, it’s by mutual agreement that they don’t mention it. They snipe at each other, just the same as always, and it must sound natural enough because Harvey doesn’t push, or prod, or ask Jim why he had glanced at Nygma so speculatively, like he was trying to work out what exactly it was that Oswald found so appealing.

"He’s just…" Oswald flounders when Jim comes right out and asks him the question. "He believes in me."

"Right," Jim says, noncommittally, and ignores the tightening in his chest, because the Penguin doesn’t need his pity.

It doesn’t stop him thinking about it though, not during the rest of the call, and not the next day at work either. He wonders what Lee would have said were she asked the same question. Or Barbara, or his high school girlfriend. What he would have said in return, and what it means that he continually falls from one relationship into another, seemingly without any real input into the situation.

"My dear Mother always said that you only have one true love," Oswald tells him over the phone a few nights later. "What’s the point in wasting time with pretenders?"

"Just because things don’t work out, it doesn’t mean the whole relationship was a waste of time," Jim snaps, unnerved and defensive, and Oswald sighs into the handset and says,

"You know as well as I that I am speaking in the hypothetical. Not all of us can look like you, can we?"

Jim coughs, shifts, changes the subject, but he can’t deny the way the back of his neck burns. He stares at his reflection in the morning, critical under the harsh bathroom lighting, and wonders what it is Oswald likes about it. Then he remembers the rest of the discussion and swallows thickly, because he really doesn’t want to ruminate on the idea of Oswald saving himself for somebody.

The problem is that the idea still accosts him, at all the worst possible moments, and after their next visit to City Hall Harvey does pull him aside, and asks him if he’s coming down with something. His cheeks are flushed, he can feel it, but Jim shakes his head, adamant, and complains about the unseasonable temperature.

It’s still hot and humid that night, such a rarity in Gotham that nobody knows how to deal with it. The heat at the precinct is stifling, his colleagues irritable and the villains unpredictable, and when he gets home the first thing he does is ring Oswald’s number.

This isn’t how they do it, not ever, but Oswald answers almost immediately and Jim can’t stop talking. Work, school, love, hate, all of it jumbles together and they bounce from topic to topic, on and on, until he realizes with a start that the weak morning light is streaming through his window.
and Oswald is barely awake on the other end of the line, but hasn’t once suggested hanging up and getting some shuteye.

After that it gets harder and harder to lie to himself. To act like their late night phone calls aren’t the highlight of his days - his life - and the mere mention of Edward Nygma doesn’t make him sick with jealousy.

"What you need," Harvey says one night, while Jim’s still busy nursing his first drink of the evening, "is to work off some of this frustration. That new transfer, the blonde, she’s been flirting with you."

Jim grimaces, because he hasn’t noticed and even if he had he’s too obsessed with a multiple murderer to want to do anything about it. Aloud he simply says, "Not interested," before draining his drink and counting down the minutes until he can make his excuses and go home to his apartment.

He complains about it to Oswald, about Harvey’s nagging, and the rumors which are now swirling around the station, that he must be hung up on somebody.

"And are you?" Oswald asks, oblivious, and when he doesn’t answer Oswald’s grin is audible as he demands Jim describe all their doubtlessly wonderful qualities.

"They believe in me," Jim says softly, remembering how he had once thought it such a terrible answer. "They probably know me better than anyone."

"You should tell them," Oswald says, as though he hasn’t been ignoring his own advice for all the time they’ve been doing this. "Only a complete fool would turn down Jim Gordon."

And just like that, somehow, they arrive at a new status quo. Because now Jim is the one lovesick and brokenhearted, and it feels like it’s slowly killing him. He thrills every time Oswald forgets about Nygma, mentions him in passing without it meaning anything, and is sullen and miserable every time he doesn’t. It claws at him, constantly, that it can’t work, will never happen, and he doesn’t remember it ever hurting like this, not even when he was a teenager.

"You have to stop this," he snarls finally, though he’s the one who rang Oswald. "I’m a police officer and you’re a common criminal."

"There’s nothing common about me," Oswald says in turn, light and teasing, and Jim spills out all the home truths they have both been studiously ignoring. Lays it out, just like he had promised himself, then sobs into his pillow, the way he had on his first tour, when he had received his Dear John letter.

They don’t speak for a week afterwards. Jim twisting and turning, and staring unseeingly at late night television to fill the silence. He drinks too much one night and spends almost an hour reworking a text message, before coming to his senses and flinging his cell against the wall of the washroom. At the precinct people avoid him, his mood notorious, and even Harvey is wary when he tells him they need to pay yet another visit to Mayor Cobblepot.

Jim looks a mess, a lucky punch from an earlier arrest purpling at his temple, and his suit jacket is creased, from long hours bent over paperwork. There’s nothing he can do about it, he knows, and his treacherous heart skips in his chest when Oswald greets them, pale skin for once unblemished and tailored suit perfect.

"What can I do for you, Detectives?" Oswald asks, cold, and then his gaze falls on Jim’s bruised
face and his expression changes, softens. Jim can’t quite draw enough breath, can’t stop staring. Harvey has to deal with business while he stands there, dumbstruck, and when he gives in and rings Oswald’s number, late that night, he doesn’t know how to describe the sense of relief he feels when Oswald actually answers.

"I’m sorry," he manages, no plan to work from. "Please don’t hang up on me."

"Give me one good reason," Oswald says, churlish, and Jim can’t take it any longer. Can’t bear the wishing and the hoping, can’t deal with the not knowing.

"I love you," he says simply, breathlessly laying all his cards on the table.

There’s silence on the other end of line, stretching and suffocating, and Jim’s skin is cold and clammy, waiting.

"You love me?" Oswald repeats eventually, quiet and incredulous, and the fingers of Jim’s hand are trembling, the other pressing the handset tight to his face so he can lose himself in the darkness long enough to whisper,

"So much. I don’t know what to do without you."

He braces himself for the inevitable. Curses himself for not keeping his mouth shut.

"Perhaps - perhaps my Mother was wrong," Oswald stutters, referencing their long ago conversation, and Jim could fly he’s so happy.

"Perhaps," he says, and the smile makes his tone fond, "you just got lost along the way."

"Perhaps," Oswald agrees, the smile clear in his own voice, and Jim is already pulling on his shoes, doesn’t care that it’s gone two in the morning.

He’s going to prove it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Commissioner Gordon had been shot, that was the word buzzing around the city, and it took everything Oswald had not to drop everything. Not to let his guard down and reveal just how afraid he was that the situation really was serious, and not simply a story that had grown in the telling.

Any hopes he had on that score were dashed when his best men hmmed and hesitated, fixed their gaze on some point over his shoulder, hoping against hope that he wasn’t in the mood to shoot the messenger,

"It doesn’t look good, boss," one said, and the other backed him up, nerves just audible as he confessed,

"The docs’ say he won’t last the night. There’s nothing they can do for him."

It couldn’t be true, it just couldn’t, and when he stood nobody dared mention that his evening was already booked solid. Didn’t question his intentions, not at his own club, and not as the urgent tap of his cane echoed down the sterile corridors of Gotham General.

Jim’s bedside was far from deserted - for all the tragedy he had suffered, for all those who had been taken from him, Jim had touched too many lives for it to be otherwise.

If Oswald were a better man he would stay in the shadows. Catch one last glimpse of the man from the sidelines, and let Jim’s friends and family mourn him without the complication of the ghosts of Jim’s past. Without any hint of a stain to blacken Jim’s memory. But he had always been selfish, had founded his empire upon it, and he ignored the silence which fell when he entered the room. Kept his spine straight and his head high, and determined to let the others think what they would of the way he took Jim’s unresponsive hand in his own.

Of the chaste kiss he pressed to the other man’s forehead.

"What will Gotham do without you?" he whispered, not caring who overheard. "You’re not supposed to get killed. You’re the hero."

There was no response, nothing but the blip of the monitors, and Oswald left as abruptly as he had arrived, vision blurring.

How was he meant to reconcile himself to a world without James Gordon?

The funeral was a media circus, the GCPD and the current Mayor making all the right noises about doing justice to the legacy of a fallen comrade. Old friends reminisced about Jim’s passion, old colleagues about his bullheadedness. Bruce Wayne gave a speech about Jim’s role as a formative
influence, and throughout it all Oswald said nothing, too lost in another time, replaying all the
c chances he had squandered.

Because hindsight was like that. Highlighted all of the missed opportunities and the untapped
potential. Haunted his dreams and his nightmares with what ifs and what might have been, had he
only been less proud and Jim less stubborn.

It haunted his waking moments too, endlessly, over the weeks which followed. Jim had always
been just out of reach, always unobtainable, but it hadn’t stopped him wishing. Hadn’t stopped him
wanting. To make up for it his temper was shorter than usual, his punishments more brutal. With
Jim gone, there was no point in holding back - nobody’s disappointment he cared about.

So when the man sidled up to him at the club, all dark lashes and knowing smile, Oswald’s first
instinct was to make him regret his insolence.

"You’re thinking about someone you’ve lost," he said, whispered, and the urge to inflict pain grew
stronger. Oswald knew how that game worked, how easy it was to prey on the grieving and the
vulnerable. His own dear Mother had been taken in, over and over, desperate for a message of
comfort from the other side, back when he had been too young to protect her.

Not that he had ever been very good at that, not really, and a long ago scene came to mind, his
Mother smiling, proud of him, happy for him, as Jim took her hand - as polite and as charming as
any prince in a fairy tale.

"She never thought he was good enough for you, but that’s how mothers are, isn’t it?"

"What?" Oswald stared at the man, not much more than a boy really, in shock, vaguely aware that
he was gaping.

"People call me the Fixer," he said, eyes cold in spite of his winsome smile. "Perhaps we could talk
somewhere a little more private."

And just like that Oswald was leading this stranger to his private rooms, waving away his minders
and his flunkies, and not even cutting them down to size for the snide looks they gave each other,
as though he were indulging in the services of some over priced rent boy. That was what it looked
like, probably, and he decided that it didn’t matter. They could think what they wanted of him.

"I have a proposition for you," the Fixer - and what a ridiculous moniker that was - said without
preamble, the instant they were alone, "I’ll give you a chance at something you’ve always wanted
and, in return, you will make me heir to everything you’ve worked for."

Oswald scoffed, amazed at the man’s audacity, but he held a hand up, and for some reason Oswald
found himself startled into silence.

"You get 24 hours. 24 hours to fix your mistakes and enable things to pan out differently. If you do
it right, you get a new beginning and I," he grinned, teeth flashing, "well, I get to stay here and
make what I will of it. If you fail, I still get your position. I just have to wait a little longer.
Sometimes I like it better that way; I like to see people suffering."

"You’re mad," Oswald said, shaking his head, because he’d lived long enough in Gotham to
recognize the signs of it. "I’ve no idea what you’re talking about."

"24 hours," the other man repeated, slowly, as though he thought Oswald an imbecile. "24 hours to
make Jim Gordon love you."
"Jim Gordon is dead," Oswald snapped in response, the truth of it making his chest ache, but the Fixer was already moving, and the ache was suddenly a sharp pain. He gasped for breath, the burn spreading out from his heart, excruciating.

"Help me," he tried to say, because he was having a heart attack, he had to be. But no sound emerged from his lips, and now the flames were at his throat, searing at his temples. And then - then there was nothing.

When he opened his eyes it took a long moment for his brain to catch up with whatever the hell had just happened. He wasn’t in his office, nor his private rooms at the club, that much was obvious. Because while there was a mattress beneath him it was narrow and lumpy, and a deep inhale through his nose was enough to tell him that he wasn’t in hospital, either.

The scent was familiar though, tugged at something deep inside of him. It hit him then, the force of it disorientating.

He knew exactly where he was: buried beneath the blankets of his childhood bed at his mother’s apartment. Sure enough there was a soft rap at the door, followed by its instant opening, and his mother was stood in the doorway whole and alive, hair wild around her head, like a golden halo.

If this were death, it was so much less fearful than he had thought it would be.

He hugged her close, clung to her in a way that during her lifetime he would have actively resisted. Listened to her excited babble, and appraised himself in the nearest mirror. He looked so young, scarcely recognizable, and even with the ever present throb in his leg he felt freer, easier, than he had in such a very long time. It was only when a long forgotten lacky arrived at the front door, to tell him that the car was ready, that Oswald was forced to rethink how dead he was. Because he remembered this day, had often looked back upon it. This was the day Falcone gave him the nightclub.

He dressed quickly, mind caught somewhere between disbelief and amazement, and events unfolded exactly as they had a quarter of a century ago, with Falcone leaving him in charge of attempting to scrape away the hideous layers of Fish’s influence. She had had no class, no decorum, and even for everything she had given him he couldn’t forgive everything she had taken.

So many of his worst memories centered on this club, this place which no matter how he tried, what he did, had always reeked of Fish Mooney. But it was also where he had met Jim. Where Jim had charmed his Mother and where, years later, Jim had demanded an audience, too drunk and too maudlin, and then wanted to forget everything in the morning.

Oswald had never forgotten a minute of it because, for Jim it might have been a drunken mistake, but for him, well, it was too pathetic to dwell on. Especially when Gabe pulled him out of his reverie to inform him the invitations were back from the printers.

Perhaps this was a fever dream, maybe he was laying helpless in a coma somewhere, but all he could think of was the strange man’s words - and the hypnotic way the clock on the wall was counting down the seconds. He let history repeat itself. Got one of his men to drive him to the GCPD, too well aware of the way his stomach had churned the first time, nerves and excitement warring with each other. He had left his umbrella in the car, determined that he would stand on his own two feet, that Jim wouldn’t need to feel sorry for him.

By the time he reached the precinct he couldn’t stop his hands from shaking. Walking up the stairs to the entrance really was like walking back in time, dimly familiar faces everywhere. He marveled
at the quaintness of it all, at the shocking lack of security as he walked straight into the heart of the building, frustrated to find Jim’s desk deserted. It was then he realized that somebody had noted his arrival, and he had to look twice because while he recalled the encounter, he hadn’t associated it with this day, not in his memories.

"Nothing," he said, the instant Edward Nygma came to stand beside him. "The answer is nothing, and I have nothing more to say to you."

Ed frowned, thrown off kilter, and Oswald didn’t try to hide the satisfied smile which tugged at his lips. It was divine justice for everything The Riddler had put him through. The confusion and the blackmail, the wrath of the Batman and the heartache which still rankled, so long after the initial flame had flickered and expired. He turned to observe Ed properly then, because this had been their first meeting. If things had been different, he had often told himself. If he had known what to look for.

But it wasn’t there, the spark he had always imagined must have burned bright between them. Then he couldn’t think of anything at all, not the way Ed made himself scarce, and not his failed attempts at winning Ed’s interest, because there was Jim, so young and so beautiful it stole his breath away.

"It’s good to see you, old friend," he managed, wanting nothing more than to reach out and touch, prove that Jim was real, alive and breathing. Instead he pressed the invitation into Jim’s hands, his palms suddenly damp, "I wanted to invite you to a party I’m hosting."

Jim raked his gaze over him, brow furrowing. Jim had told him once that in the early days he had never been able to work him out, couldn’t understand what it was he had wanted from him. Or, at least, hadn’t wanted to believe it.

"No thanks," Jim said, tone certain, and it hurt just as much as it had the first time.

"I hear you, too busy I suppose. Are you on a tricky case, anything I can help you with? It worked so well the last time."

Except it hadn’t. He was delivering a speech that had failed spectacularly. Jim had never shown, had fallen further into Lee’s clutches.

"I don’t want your help. It was a mistake to ask." Jim looked so guilty, so anguished, "I don’t want you coming here."

"I don’t want to make you uncomfortable," he said, off script now. "You’re my friend, you always will be."

"We’re not friends," Jim said, hissed, like he was afraid somebody might overhear them.

"I know you don’t mean that," Oswald said in turn, and he couldn’t quite bite back the hint of anger. "Some day you will regret saying it."

Jim just stared, hands on his hips, the whole encounter tense and awkward.

"Walking with a friend in the dark," Oswald quoted again, for lack of anything more convincing, "is better than walking alone in the light." He took Jim’s hand, and the warmth of it, the vitality, made his throat ache. He thought of how Jim’s hand had felt that night in the hospital, cool and unresponsive. "If you need me you know where I am. Please reconsider my invitation, it won’t be the same without you."
The truth of it clawed at him, made his eyes sting and his breath catch. Jim’s gaze was caught in his own, nothing in the world but the two of them. Then the spell was broken and Jim moved his hand away. Oswald inhaled shakily and turned on his heel.

He had to get out of there.

After his encounter with Jim he wandered the streets aimlessly, alternating between black despair and hope so intense he felt feverish. If he pulled this off he would get a second chance at everything.

His Mother was alive, safe, and somewhere out on the edges of the city so was his Father. He could reintroduce them - could make his Mother happy. He could forewarn Jim of Loeb, of Strange, of everything. Jim could save the city the way he always should have, and be heralded by everyone as a hero.

Jim would be grateful - how couldn’t he be? - and this time Jim wouldn’t push away from him in the morning, horrified. Instead he would pull him closer, would smile and hold his hand, and Oswald wouldn’t have to humiliate himself by begging Jim to stay, silently willing Jim to stop pretending he didn’t know how much he loved him.

No, this Jim would confess to him, all tender kisses and reverent whispers. They would be so in love it would be disgusting, like a Hallmark made for TV movie, and he’d repeat his stint as Mayor with a beaming smile that never faltered, because at the end of each day he’d go home to Jim and their house full of rescued puppies and adopted children.

He laughed then, helpless and hysterical, at the absurdity of his own imagination. He didn’t care that he was stood in the middle of the street, and that people were staring at him. There was even more than one hissed "freak" and in his own time he wouldn’t hesitate to kill them for it. Here, swept away by his own sickly sweet fantasies, he simply searched his pockets for his cell phone.

It took him a few moments to get the hang of it - how had humanity ever managed with technology so clunky and outdated? - and then he had found Jim’s number and it was ringing. There was no answer, not after a few rings, so he hung up and rang again immediately, in the hope it might make Jim take the call seriously.

"I told you not to contact me," Jim snapped, and in response Oswald could see his own gormless grin, reflected in a shop window.

"I have something to tell you. Something important."

"I don’t need your help," Jim reiterated, stubborn as always.

"You’re the only person I can trust," Oswald wheedled, knowing which buttons to press. "Together we could save a lot of lives, make a real difference. You just need to trust me." There was silence on the other end of the line, the wait unbearable. Then, finally,

"I’ll try to be there. I’m not promising."

"Of course, of course. Thank you."

Jim ended the call and Oswald simply stared at the screen for a moment, thrilled with the change in
direction. It was enough to spur him into action. To hail a cab and get back to the club, to bark orders for its hasty redecoration, completely beside himself with anticipation. The turnout was still going to be dismal, he hadn’t spent years building the Iceberg Lounge up from nothing without learning how the business worked, but it didn’t seem especially important.

So long as there was drink flowing, and he couldn’t see Fish’s mocking face in every detail, all the evening needed to be deemed a roaring success was Jim’s presence.

Still time trickled by without any sign of him. The doors opened, the few customers he was going to get scattered about the place, and Maroni arrived to put him in his place, visibly annoyed that he wasn’t more frightened. He had seen things and done things that Maroni couldn’t even dream of, the idea he would genuinely shiver and quake was simply too laughable.

When that was over there was nothing left to do but wait, and he drank a glass of champagne too many and fidgeted with his cell, wondering if it would help or hinder his objective if he gave in and called Jim. He played cards with Gabe, won a hand for the first time ever, and sat at the piano, fingers instinctively picking out some sentimental love song.

Finally he couldn’t take it any longer. It was gone midnight, already, and for a nightclub owner he had been up obscenely early. That only gave him a few hours to somehow convince Jim to love him.

Or, when that inevitably proved impossible, only a few hours longer that he could ever spend in Jim’s company.

The club was almost empty anyway, and he took one of the most expensive bottles from behind the bar and left his staff in charge of closing up. If Falcone didn’t like it, well, it wasn’t likely to be his problem. Oswald took a cab to Jim’s apartment building, cursed when the elevator proved to be out of order, and gritted his teeth as he climbed the stairs, his leg making its uselessness known.

He had to lean against the wall when he reached Jim’s floor. Wait for his legs to stop trembling, and the cold sweat to stop dampening his forehead. He was still catching his breath when footsteps sounded behind him.

"Oswald?" The word sent warmth flooding through him, his heart clenching just the same as it always did when Jim said his name. "What are you doing here?"

It was obvious, or at least it ought to be. Oswald held the bottle up anyway and gave Jim what he hoped was a winning smile,

"You didn’t come to the party, so I’m bringing it to you."

Jim was silent for a long moment, his blue eyes betraying a thousand warring emotions. Oswald stared back, drinking in the sight of him, and Jim finally nodded, more to himself than to Oswald, and lead him down the corridor to his apartment.

It was cold and bare. Spartan. Jim switched on the light and, under the electric glare, Oswald could see the state of his suit and how unsettled he was. He felt a twinge of conscience, something he had almost forgotten he was capable of.

"If you want me to leave," he faltered. It was gone one, at best he only had some six and half hours.

Jim scrubbed a hand across his face and dropped to sit on the threadbare sofa.
"We were working a case, a man got killed."

Oswald moved to sit beside him, Jim’s obvious distress taking immediate precedence.

"He’d been using his own kid as a guinea pig, injecting him with a fear serum. Even if he makes it they say he might be like that forever, trapped in his own mind. Terrified. He’ll spend the rest of his life strapped down in Arkham Asylum."

A shudder worked its way down his spine at the mention of Arkham, at the memory of Jim abandoning him to Strange’s experiments. But that hadn’t happened, not yet, and Jim was still talking, suddenly desperate to share his jumbled thoughts with someone,

"I’m - I joined the force so I could make a difference. But I never get there in time. It’s never enough. And you - you’re part of the problem. Why are you here? I don’t understand what you want from me."

The words wouldn’t come. The pretty explanations he had planned out in his head, all the carefully crafted things he was going to say to open Jim’s eyes to the possibility that he wasn’t such a monster. All he could do was reach for Jim, try to show what he couldn’t tell, and then Jim was clinging to him, face buried in his shoulder.

"It’s all right,” he soothed, fingers petting at Jim’s hair, torn between delight that Jim was in his arms and torment that Jim seemed to be on the verge of crying.

Except Jim was pulling back, sucking in a fortifying breath as he struggled to regain control of himself, and Oswald knew that if he didn’t say something now there would never be another chance for it. That it didn’t matter how bad he was at this, how badly it might go, he had to take the risk. Had to tell Jim what he couldn’t on his deathbed.

"I want whatever you're willing to give me. I want everything. I want to wake up to your face every morning, and I want to spend every night wrapped around you. I want you to care back, and I want...” he trailed off, swallowed even as Jim shrank backwards, fear written clear across his features. He shut his eyes, to better sort through his own feelings, and suddenly it was as though the clouds had parted and he could see clearly. Had never been more certain of anything, though it hurt so much worse than Fish shattering his kneecap, "Most of all I want to make you happy. And if that means walking out the door and never seeing you again. Then," he clenched his hands together, to prevent them betraying him, "Then that's what I'll do, Jim."

There was no answer, nothing, and Oswald did his best to keep it together. To retain some dignity as he moved to stand. But this time Jim reached for him, took hold of his hand and admitted shakily,

"I don't want you to go. I don't want to live my whole life without you."

They kissed, nothing more, though that alone felt like a miracle. Jim was wrung out, exhausted, and Oswald settled for holding him close as he slept, pressing kisses into his hair, and murmuring all the confessions he had been saving for Jim's gravestone. All his regrets and his triumphs, and how Jim had made him a better man, and how almost every selfless act he had ever carried out had been because of him.

He didn't want to fall asleep himself. Didn't want to waste precious time, not when he could spend it memorizing Jim's scent, the exact colour of his hair, and the comforting weight of him. As the hours passed it became more difficult, his eyelids growing heavy and his awareness starting to drain away. It caught up with him, eventually, and when he awoke he was alone, with nothing but
the pain in his leg and his own tears for company.

Oswald let the tears fall, didn't try to stifle them. What was the point? There wasn't anyone around to think less of him.

When they had run their course, finally, he pledged to pull himself together. To get up, to shower and dress, and show Gotham just how bad he could be. If he had to suffer, why shouldn't his city bleed in sympathy?

Except, when he moved to sit, to look around him, he wasn't in his rooms. He was still in Jim's apartment.

He hauled himself out of bed, hobbled to the mirror. His heart stalled for a moment, pounded twice as hard to make up for it, made him worry that he really was having a heart attack. There was a hastily scrawled note on the nightstand - *I had to go to work, I didn't want to wake you* - and a text message waiting on his phone - *You were right yesterday, I do regret saying it*. And another - *That you weren't my friend, I mean* - because only Jim could aim for romantic and overreach with vaguely insulting.

Oswald smiled to himself. Washed and dressed, and plotted out a thousand and one things he was going to do with the chance that had been given him.

But first there was something he had to do, even as he hoped the Fixer was enjoying his side of the bargain, and picked up the phone again,

*I'm glad, because now there's no getting rid of me.*

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much to everyone who has kudosed and / or commented, you guys are just amazing. <333 As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :) (Because you see the kind of weirdness I come up with when left to my own devices!)
Chapter Summary

A little ficlet for the prompt 'Jim feeds Oswald chocolate covered strawberries' :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“It’s too hot.”

Jim looked up and took in the sheen of sweat across Oswald’s forehead. The loosened wing collar and what looked awfully like sunburn creeping across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. It was cute he thought privately, adorable even, and if he was the type of guy with a death wish he might even have pointed it out to the other man.

As it was he only offered a smile and tugged at Oswald’s hand until he gave in and sat next to him, far enough in the shade that his pale skin wasn’t going to lobster, but close enough to Gotham’s brief answer to summer that the air was still warm and comfortable.

“Maybe if you weren’t wearing so many layers,” Jim suggested, tone casual, and he could see the cogs whirring. The endless battle between Oswald’s love of proper dress decorum and the stifling heat his suit jacket was doing less than nothing to help him deal with.

He bit back a smile when Oswald’s elegant fingers went to his jacket buttons, then gave in and beamed when Oswald let him help push it from his shoulders. Didn’t protest when he leaned in close and plucked at Oswald’s neat bow tie, the silk rustling as Jim pulled it free and let it drop beside the jacket.

“You’re loving this, aren’t you?” Oswald groused, meaning the heat, the lethargy, everything. Jim shrugged and glanced over his own concessions to summer. The t-shirt and the bare feet. The iced pitcher and the genuine determination that he wasn’t going to get called back to the precinct that afternoon, not for anything.

He was determined he could get Oswald to love it too. Tolerate it, at the very least, and if he had been planning for this moment for the last couple of hours it didn’t matter. Oswald was only going to see the end result. Raised one perfectly groomed eyebrow as Jim passed him a cold drink, and didn’t comment when Jim watched too obviously, mesmerised by the sight of his throat muscles working.

Smirked a little, knowingly, when Jim brought out the rest of the supplies and had the gall to lick his lips as Jim set the bowls in front of him, though he knew exactly what it would do to him.

Because Jim’s reaction was completely predictable - the shiver he couldn’t control, and the way his pulse picked up. The way he fumbled with the fruit in front of him, and smeared melted chocolate against his fingers as he tried to get decent coverage.

Oswald was willing to help him out in apology, at least, because when Jim brought the strawberry to his lips, cheeks burning worse than any sunburn, he took hold of Jim’s wrist to keep his hand
steady. Licked at his fingers, delicately, and Jim could do nothing to stop the embarrassing sound that left his mouth.

His next attempt wasn’t much better, his limbs refusing to co-operate. Oswald didn’t seem to mind, not overly, and Jim’s breath grew short when he made a show of eating it. Drew the process out and licked his own fingers afterwards, as though he couldn’t get enough of it.

Jim couldn’t either, and he could do nothing as the tables were turned and Oswald dealt with the fruit himself, eyes going dark as he watched Jim watch his movements. He undid his cufflinks and rolled up his shirtsleeves. Popped open the first button of his shirt and, after taking a long swallow of his drink, trailed the cool condensation clinging to his fingertips down the length of his pale neck, smirk spreading across his face as Jim’s composure broke apart in front of him.

Jim had to touch him, had to kiss him, and he was only distantly aware that he was spilling things all over the place, focus too intent on closing the space between them and pressing their lips together. On curling his hand around the back of Oswald’s neck and chasing the sweet taste of the chocolate. He moaned when he tasted Oswald underneath it, and he could feel the back of his neck flushing. The tips of his ears too, and before he knew it he was pressing Oswald back against the patio furniture and kissing him like his life depended on it.

His finger of his other hand were working at the buttons of Oswald's vest, and when he pulled back to focus his attention on getting the layer out of the way, Oswald took the opportunity to whisper into his ear,

“It’s still too hot.”

“Yeah?” He questioned, voice rough to his own ears, because this probably wasn't the best place, true, but he was struggling to think clearly.

Oswald had that effect on him.

“Yes,” Oswald agreed, but gave him a smile that was all promise. “Perhaps we should go and see if it's any cooler in the bedroom.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Oswald writes bad erotica

Chapter Summary

For the prompt - Oswald writes erotica featuring him and Jim. Jim finds it and is so dismayed at how terrible it is he determines to show Oswald how things should really play out.

ETA: Check out the awesome gifset to accompany this HERE. It's wonderfully cracktastic! :D

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim should have left the journal where he found it. He should have handed it in as potential evidence.

He shouldn’t have slid it into jacket pocket and taken the damn thing home with him.

Now the Mayor of Gotham was missing and he had the man’s private diary sitting on his coffee table. Jim ran a hand through his hair and poured himself a measure of whiskey. Looked back at the battered little hardback and added another glug to the glass for good measure.

He had found it in Oswald’s office, in a secret compartment in his desk, and that had to make it important. Was probably going to land him with a disciplinary if anyone found out he had taken it. Just because his name featured again and again - just because it was his face staring up from carefully folded press clippings - didn’t give him the right to start acting like the kind of cop he had sworn to push out of the department.

Jim thumbed through the pages again, unfamiliar words written in an all too familiar hand, before snapping it closed and downing the whiskey. Perhaps if he got a few pages translated it would prove to be nothing but an ode to how much Oswald wanted him dead and, as twisted as it seemed, he could stop worrying.

With the official route out Jim went for the unofficial, lifting a name from Harvey’s ancient Rolodex and making for the warehouse district. The day was cold and wet, all gray skies and palpable misery, and as Jim approached he couldn’t help but think of another dreary day when he had pushed a wannabe mob boss and left him to sink or swim.

It gave him hope, the reminder that Oswald was stronger than his sickly appearance suggested. If there was any chance of survival, no matter how small, Oswald would cling to it.

Jim was sure of it.

“Bullock sent you?” a woman with haunted eyes asked him when he reached the right address, and he nodded with what he hoped was authority. It wouldn’t do to fall at the first hurdle.

Julia only took a deep drag from her cigarette and held her hand out.

“Cash first, then we can discuss what you’re looking for.”
He did as he was told, then forced himself not to fidget as she flicked through the journal. Struggled not to snatch it back when her lips quirked, because perhaps this wasn’t such a good idea after all.

Oswald was a public figure now, and he had his own reputation to think of. God only knew what kind of filth Oswald had been writing about him.

“I can translate it,” she said finally, the smirk still in place, “I think you’ll find it very interesting.”

Julia was true to her word and Jim had barely found a moment to replace her card on Harvey’s desk when she called him to say the work was finished. When he went to collect she handed him the book, along with the translation, in a nondescript brown envelope and he felt like a naughty school boy as he made his way to the car, caught out with something he shouldn’t have been looking at.

Tearing open the envelope and starting to read did nothing to dispel the notion.

It began innocuously enough. A description of himself as a potentially useful contact. A neatly transcribed education and work history, some of which Jim was sure wasn’t even in his GCPD file.

Oswald did like to be thorough.

Next up were lists of his personality quirks, and ways in which Oswald might go about trying to win his friendship. It made Jim’s stomach squirm uncomfortably, seeing it all laid out so transparently. He supposed it ought to make him angry, black and white proof of how Oswald had been hoping to use his better nature against him.

It didn’t.

The thing just read so pathetically. He thought of Oswald turning up at the precinct, eyes glittering with excitement, to invite him to his club opening. The devastated look on the other man’s face every time he knocked him back with open disgust and harsh words.

Not that it had it stopped Oswald wanting.

Clearly, because as Jim made his way through the next few pages of translation he could feel his cheeks heating up. Could feel the blush creeping down the back of his neck, so that he suddenly wished he had waited until he was in the privacy of his apartment before he had began prying into Oswald’s private thoughts.

One thing was certain, at least. The journal was going to be of no use as an aid to pinpointing Oswald’s current whereabouts.

Over the next few weeks there was still no word of Oswald. Harvey had been forced to deploy every resource they could spare on the case, but all to no avail.

Oswald had simply disappeared.

In Jim’s mind however he was a constant presence, his written words an echo he could never get rid of.

He took to re-reading the translated pages in bed at night, matching them up with Oswald’s flowing scrawl on the pages of the notebook. It made it more intimate somehow, a window into what Oswald had been feeling as he splotched ink across the paper.
Most of the scenarios were childishly naive and tentatively written, as though even in his own head Oswald didn’t dare imagine it was possible to get what he wanted.

It only made the more elaborate stories worse. Here the Jim of Oswald’s dreams was a gentleman. He didn’t slam Oswald up against walls or call him a monster. Instead he held his hand and gazed into his eyes. Smiled at him, sincerely, and kissed him close lipped, like a prince sweeping in to rescue some swooning damsel.

Afterwards, after Oswald penned breathless tributes to the blue of his eyes and his supposed kindness, this dream Jim kissed him again. Held him close and tore the buttons from Oswald’s shirt in a scene lifted straight from the worst kind of bodice rippers. Pushed him face down into clean sheets - not because it was how Oswald wanted it, but because even in his own damn fantasies the object of his affections was scarcely able to bear looking at him.

It was awful, terrible, the prose so purple it made him cringe and the acts described so vague it ought to have been laughable. Jim had a good imagination though, was more than capable of filling in the gaps, and for all that he was ashamed of himself he couldn’t help himself one night, his own hand sneaking beneath the sheets as he envisioned showing Oswald how it would really work.

He could play the gentleman, really kind of enjoyed it, and if Oswald wanted him to destroy a dress shirt or two to prove there was more to him, he wasn’t averse to the idea.

Had dreamed of it himself, once or twice, back when he would have claimed himself too moral and righteous to even think of being unfaithful. Back when the conflicting emotions Oswald engendered in him were simply frightening, and had him pushing harder lest Oswald realize that he had ever been thinking of pulling him closer.

He was a different man now though. Just as stubborn but less blinkered.

More willing to bend the rules when the situation called for it.

If Oswald ever came back, perhaps he would show him.

He had been right about Oswald. The man was tough - a fighter. He pulled himself up from the ground all over again, inch by hard won inch, until he was standing tall and the city had little choice but to answer to him.

Jim was impressed, even if he wasn’t going to admit to it.

He still had Oswald’s journal and the well read translation in the drawer of his bedside table, known only to him and Julia who leered and winked when Harvey insisted on using her talents for a case of suspected trafficking.

“I think you’re in there,” Harvey nudged him later, lips curled into a lewd grin of his own, and Jim only rolled his eyes.

Harvey didn’t know the half of it.

His path crossed Oswald’s with disturbing frequency, both on official business and otherwise. He kept it professional. Kept his wits about him. He had heard all kinds of gossip since Oswald’s return about what had happened between him and the Riddler, and Jim wasn’t stupid enough to get between two villains.

Wasn’t dumb enough to lose himself in Oswald’s clear blue gaze, or to feel his heart pound, his
breath catch, when Oswald smiled at him in thanks, just the way he imagined he would have in the story that lead to him declaring his undying love to the other man.

Except for the times when that was exactly what he did, of course, and Oswald placed a gentle hand on his arm and came over all hesitant concern as he asked,

“James, are you feeling quite well? Can I help you?”

Jim shook his head.

He was in too deep for it to make any difference.

“Why does it keep coming back to this?”

Oswald stared back at him, confused, and Jim dropped his biro to the interrogation table and sighed.

“Me and you. You and me. You didn’t need to bring this information to me. There are dozens of police officers out there.”

“None of them are like you.”

From anyone else Jim would have interpreted it as sarcasm. Another criminal trying to get a raise out of him. Else it would be false flattery, designed to get him to let his guard down. But Oswald was telling the truth as he saw it, tone breathy and earnest, and Jim wished he was still the hotheaded rookie dead set on cleaning up the department.

That Jim Gordon wouldn’t have had any problem walking away from this. That Jim Gordon would tell Oswald to quit being so transparently desperate for his company, and then gone home to his beautiful fiancée.

“What happens next then?” He asked instead. “If this were your story, if I was going to do whatever you wanted - what would it be?”

Oswald’s eyes widened, the incredulous fear on his face almost comical. Almost, because the journal had never been meant for his eyes, and Oswald had to know it was missing. Perhaps had spent sleepless nights worrying where it was and who had taken it.

“Go on,” Jim encouraged, and it felt strangely freeing. It had been building for so long that it was a relief for something to finally be happening.

“I would ask you to dinner, to celebrate the imminent arrest of those miscreants,” he gestured at the files on the table, speaking slowly and deliberately as though overcoming a stutter, “and you… You would agree to accompany me.”

This was it, this was the turning point. Jim focused on gathering his statements together.

“I finish at 7pm.”

It was 7:20pm by the time Jim finally left the precinct and he opened the door to find Oswald hovering just to the side of the entrance, umbrella up but head down, his body language more like a nervous teenager than the King of Gotham.

The sight pulled at something within him. Fired up all his protective instincts and it must have shown on his face, been audible in the tone of his voice, because Oswald smiled at him when he
approached. Beamed at him like this was his dream come true and Jim felt his heart thump extra hard at that thought.

It was, he had read about it often enough.

Dinner was surprisingly easy; they went somewhere quiet and discreet and entirely out of Jim’s price range.

“In my story,” Oswald said breezily from behind his menu, neatly sidestepping his burgeoning argument about splitting the bill, “you didn’t want to insult your host by talking about money. It’s really quite vulgar, Jim.”

Jim made to protest at that, felt the familiar surge of anger, but Oswald was smiling at him ever so slightly, eyes gleaming, and he couldn’t help but smile back. Began to relax, lulled by good food and plenty of wine, and by the end of the main course he was actually laughing at something Oswald said, unable to remember the last time he had been on a date that had gone so positively.

The last time he had been on a date, period, and then he found himself simply watching Oswald for a long moment and thinking about what he would be doing if this were a real date and not some sort of strange death wish.

He’d be leaning in close, perhaps, and reaching his hand across the table to stroke his fingertips over the exposed skin of Oswald’s wrist. He’d be making the most of the blush staining Oswald’s pale cheeks, and offering over a spoonful of his dessert.

He did it anyway, telling himself it was time he regained control of the situation.

Oswald’s reaction threw him for a loop. Had him shifting in his seat because the way he looked at him was something straight out of his own late night fantasies. The touch of his long fingers against his own he he took the spoon had him shivering, as undone as he had ever been.

“What happens next?” Jim asked, voice coming out lower than he expected.

Oswald just licked the spoon clean, the action sending an unexpected thrill through him, and said, “Why don’t you tell me?”

They went back to his apartment without ever once talking about it. It just happened, the same way Jim rounded on Oswald almost the moment he had the door closed, hand finding the angle of his jaw as he searched the other man’s face for confirmation that was really going to happen.

That this was really what he wanted.

Oswald gazed back at him, hopeful and adoring, and Jim had spent too long thinking about this moment. Had fantasized about it at night, refusing to dwell on the finer points of what it meant, and daydreamed about it during particularly boring shifts, looking up to find Oswald’s Mayoral portrait directly in his line of vision.

“I’m not going to pretend you’re someone else;” he said, the words sticking in his throat but needing to be out in the open. “I want to look at you.”

Oswald flushed still harder, knowing full well what Jim was referring to, but it was to his credit that he maintained eye contact.
“If it was anyone but you who found it, I’d have killed them.” The statement ought to make Jim feel sick. It didn’t.

“I had to get it translated.”

“I know. Bullock isn’t the only one with contacts.”

The realization hit him hard. Oswald had known he had had that journal from near enough the beginning of his reappearance, most likely, and he hadn’t done anything. Hadn’t pushed or threatened.

Oswald trusted him not to use it against him and that, more than anything, eroded any remaining doubts Jim had about the situation.

It gave him the confidence to lean in close and brush their lips together, light enough that Oswald could pull away should he choose to, hard enough for Oswald to be sure of his intentions. They stayed like that for a long moment, simply breathing each other in, scarcely moving, and then Oswald made a breathy sound of desperation and Jim pressed forward eagerly, Oswald’s hands coming up to clutch at his shoulders.

The kiss escalated quickly, better than it had any right to be, given Oswald’s inexperience, and Jim had to remind himself not to get carried away. Not to lose himself entirely, and go too far too fast.

It would be so easy, so very easy, because Oswald was kissing him desperately, moaning and gasping as Jim ran his fingers through his dark hair and detoured, periodically, to suck at the soft skin of his throat. He was going to leave a mark, he thought, as he scraped his teeth lightly across a bruise he had been working on, and the idea thrilled him in all kinds of ways it probably shouldn’t.

“Please, Jim,” Oswald whined as Jim kissed up to his ear, as he sucked and nibbled and simply breathed, hot and heavy, “please do something.”

Oswald looked wrecked already, eyes dark and a little unfocused, and Jim noted the clothing that was already strewn around them. His shirt and Oswald’s jacket. Coats and ties and Oswald’s vest.

“Jim,” Oswald begged again and Jim lacked the willpower to resist it. He hitched Oswald up, arms under his thighs as Oswald wound his own arms tight around his neck, and walked him the short distance to his bedroom. Dropped him down onto his bed and followed without hesitation, breaking off from kissing only long enough to untie their shoes and rid them of their trousers.

He worked at Oswald’s shirt buttons, considerably more carefully than his fictional counterpart, and Oswald panted with excitement as he dropped kisses to each new patch of bared skin, fixing him with the very same worshipful look he had written about.

Oswald was so loud, so genuine and unrestrained in his responses, and Jim could scarcely think for it. Was yanking away the last of his own clothing and falling into Oswald’s kiss all over again, shuddering helplessly at the way Oswald nipped at his bottom lip.

He needed more, they both did, and he slid down the bed just far enough to pull Oswald’s underwear down and out of the way. To lick teasingly at the head of Oswald’s cock, the desperate sound he made in response so hot that he pushed forward without thinking. It had been a long time since he had last done this, but he made up for the lack of practice with enthusiasm.

Figured that Oswald wasn’t too disappointed, not if the sobbing pleas filling the air were anything to go by.
Oswald tugged at his hair when he got close, harder and with more purpose until Jim got the idea and surged back up to kiss him, his own heart racing wildly as Oswald reached for him with his elegant fingers and rasped,

“I need more, Jim. I want to feel you inside me.”

He had to close his eyes for a few seconds and concentrate on breathing steadily. On not embarrassing himself right at the outset.

It didn’t matter what Oswald had done, what Oswald would go on to do. It didn’t matter that they ought to be enemies, or that they had both hurt each other in the past - and would likely do so again in the future. In that moment they were simply two people who wanted to be together.

They kissed and clung close, his hand scrabbling for supplies and then his slick fingers reaching between them. Oswald tensed and gasped, but Jim knew what he was doing. Kept it slow and gentle, and crooked his fingers, searching, until Oswald arched up from the bed and started rambling nonsense as he rocked back into the sensation.

“It’s nothing like I imagined,” Oswald whispered to him, too far gone to care about pride or secrets. “Please - please - don't stop, Jim.”

Perhaps it was his ego, perhaps it was something else entirely, but his heart lurched in his chest and he pressed tender kisses to pale flesh as he manoeuvred Oswald’s bad leg into position.

Jim looked into Oswald’s eyes when he pressed himself against him. Stroked his damp hair out of his eyes and then began to move forward, careful and steady, and the intensity in Oswald’s gaze combined with the tight heat made him groan brokenly. Had him pushing close enough to share oxygen, one hand bearing his weight and the other wrapping around Oswald’s erection.

It wasn’t going to take long, it couldn’t, and Oswald swallowed down the sounds spilling from his own mouth, his hands tangled in his hair.

“Jim!” Oswald cried as he came, head tipping back and neck arching, and Jim had to keep moving, hips snapping frantically, and then he was following, his own limbs shaking with the tension.

They held each other in the aftermath, trading soft kisses and soothing touches, silent until Jim asked, quietly, unaccountably nervous,

“You never wrote about what happened after this part. Were you still there when I woke up in the morning?”

Oswald looked at him sharply, frowning slightly as he set about deciphering his meaning. Jim tried not to look too hopeful. Tried not to look too apathetic, either, and worried that he just looked like an idiot. Oswald smiled though, and relaxed back into the mattress, fingers trailing winding patterns up and down his arm so that his skin tingled pleasantly.

“I have manners, Jim,” Oswald said haughtily, for all the playfulness creeping in at the edges, “so it rather depended on whether or not you asked me to stay the night.”

Jim smiled to himself, covering it with a chaste kiss to Oswald’s temple.

That was exactly what he had hoped Oswald would say.

Chapter End Notes
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwih or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
For a Tumblr ask - Prompt from the OTP Prompt tumblr- Imagine your OTP as roommates. Person A gets hyped up on coffee one night and Person B just wants some God damn peace and quiet so they can sleep, but Person A wants attention. Gobblepot?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Go. To. Sleep.”

“I can’t. There’s too much to do. I’ve got too much caffeine in my system.”

Jim groaned and buried his face in his pillow. It was late, he was tired, and he had Oswald Cobblepot sat on the bed of his hotel room, poring over what looked like accounts ledgers in the far too bright lamplight.

He had no idea why he was doing this. Why he hadn’t just left Oswald to face the music alone when upstate requested his presence, and why he hadn’t simply turned around and gone home when it turned out the only hotel for miles was fully booked, and they were going to have to share a room.

“Maybe if you try lying down and closing your eyes,” Jim suggested, tone snappish, “you might find it easier to get to sleep.”

“I won’t,” Oswald said easily, so infuriating Jim had to grit his teeth together. “The only thing that works is wearing myself out.”

Jim rolled over at that, better to glare at the man. He had some ridiculous dressing gown on, complete with tassled hat and full length pajamas, while Jim had to make do with his under shirt and boxer shorts, shivering beneath the thin blanket.

At least if Oswald got into bed he wouldn’t be cold any more.

At least if he gave up on all pretence of sanity now, he might not regret saying what he was about to say in the cold light of the morning.

“I can think of a more effective method.”

Oswald frowned at him, the fingers of one hand tapping against the ledger in an unconscious rhythm. Then the meaning of his words seemed to sink in and Oswald’s eyes wide. He gaped for a moment, mouth moving but no sound escaping, and then he was looking at him accusingly, tone harsh as said,

“I thought better of you, Jim. It’s cruel to taunt people.”

The sane thing to do at this juncture would be to roll with Oswald’s assumptions. To just roll over
and count convicted villains in his head until he finally passed out from exhaustion. He had already forsaken sanity though, and hauled himself up into a sitting position.

Raked a hand through his hair for an attempt at dignity, and met Oswald’s gaze, holding eye contact,

“I’m not taunting you.”

Oswald licked his lips, a nervous gesture that Jim couldn’t help but follow intently. It hadn’t been his plan, he hadn’t gone into this thinking anything would happen, but now the opportunity was there Jim couldn’t pretend he had never thought of it before.

Couldn’t claim he had never stroked himself imagining Oswald’s pale skin and adoring gaze, and he couldn’t deny that his body wasn’t taking interest already, because it had been so long, and because he simply wanted it.

Wanted it badly, he was quickly realizing, and he waited impatiently as Oswald closed the ledgers and moved them onto the nearby desk. As he slid the strange looking hat from his head, and then hesitated, fingers tangled in the belt of his dressing gown.

“Come here,” Jim heard himself say, and Oswald’s obedience sent a guilty thrill through him. Had him manoeuvring the man down against the pillows, one hand cupping the back of his head and the other taking his weight as he pushed up enough to look down into Oswald’s face.

They simply stared for a long moment, so like the times they had squared off to each other in the midst of some argument or other, and yet so entirely different. There was the same heat there, the same want, even the same hint of fear in Oswald’s eyes that this time Jim would go too far and really hurt him.

Jim didn’t want to though. The anger, the terror, he usually felt in those situations conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps this was what it had always been building to, why Oswald had always made him feel so lost and off center.

“Jim,” Oswald breathed, unable to bear the uncertainty, and then Jim was kissing him. Was losing himself to it, completely and utterly, and Oswald kissed back eagerly, hands clutching at his shoulders.

He slid the gown off Oswald’s shoulders, the chill of the air no match for the heat between them, and started on the buttons of his pajama top. Oswald tentatively reached his own hands up and under the cotton of his undershirt, and Jim moaned in appreciation. Enjoyed the firm but gentle exploration, and bit back a curse when long fingers latched onto his nipples.

Oswald had always been a fast study, pinching and rubbing and rolling, and Jim kissed him deeper with every torturous touch bestowed upon him. Broke away only to kiss and suck at Oswald’s throat, and ground his aching dick into the flesh of Oswald’s thigh, unable to remember the last time he had been so desperately turned on from nothing more than kissing.

“Oh, Jim,” Oswald gasped, head tipping back as he rocked his own hardness up into Jim’s stomach, frantic for contact, and suddenly Jim was overcome by the need to show what he could do. To prove to this man that he had been worth every favor, every act of forgiveness.

Every moment Oswald had waited.

He shifted down the bed, tugging Oswald’s pajama pants and underwear with him, and then he was spreading Oswald’s pale thighs, watching the way his dick twitched in fascination.
For once Oswald was patient, watched him with dark eyes, the flush on his cheeks doing all kinds of things to Jim. It was spreading down this neck, over his chest, and Jim had to drop his head and taste him, determined to see that color travel still further.

The sounds Oswald made were almost sobs, fevered little gasps and cries of his name, and Jim could hardly breathe, could hardly think, it was so much of a turn on.

They fit together in the strangest ways, he thought, like two sides of the same coin, and he surged back up to kiss Oswald even as he debated with himself over the wisdom of trying what he knew he was going to ask for.

“Oh God, oh yes,” Oswald whimpered in response, pupils blown so wide he looked drugged, and Jim scrabbled along the floor for his bag, thanking all that boy scout training for drilling the necessity of always being prepared into him.

Oswald did as Jim directed him, his fingers slow and careful, and Jim couldn’t keep quiet. Couldn’t keep still, squirming back against the intrusion while Oswald groaned like he was dying. Like he was going to come just from the sensation of tight heat around his fingers.

He should take it slower, should think more about how long it had been, but he was too eager. Too desperate. Too awed by the agonised pleasure on Oswald’s face, and he was holding Oswald tightly, knees planted firmly into the mattress as he sank back onto him.

It was so good, too good, and Jim could only imagine what he looked like, frantic and wanton, head arching back and unintelligible noises spilling from his lips.

Oswald didn’t seem to know what to do with himself, hips bucking helplessly and hands everywhere. He wound his arms around Jim’s neck finally, pulling him down enough to complete the link, and licked up into his mouth, even as Jim rocked back against him.

“I can’t,” Oswald managed when Jim found the rhythm that worked best, “it’s too much, Jim.”

He looked wrecked, ruined, and Jim supposed he wasn’t looking much more in control of himself, because Oswald’s thumbs found his nipples again and he was falling apart, his hand desperate around his dick as Oswald shook and shuddered and gasped his name over and over again.

Jim all but collapsed atop him afterwards, his own legs quivering, and Oswald nuzzled into him in a way that probably should have been but wasn’t at all disturbing.

“I don’t know if I’ll be able to sleep now,” Oswald said eventually, stretching and squirming, and Jim responded by pinning him in place with one arm and laying his head on Oswald's chest for good measure, warning seriously,

“If you don't let me sleep I will never let you up.”

“Generally speaking, when you make a threat it should be something its intended recipient would actually be unhappy about.”

Jim just snored in answer.
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serewib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 50

Chapter Summary

So the prompt was for Oswald to tie Jim up in his secret sex dungeon. Then feelings got involved...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Penguin?”

Jim looked around the deserted club expecting the other man to creep out from some darkened corner at any moment. The lackeys out front had waved him on in, clearly following orders, and Jim didn’t want to dwell on the fact he apparently still had an open invitation even after everything that had passed between them.

“Cobblepot?” He tried again, making for a doorway he knew from past experience lead to the club’s back rooms. It had been Barbara’s club then and she had alternated between screaming and sneering at him, demanding to know why he thought she would lift a finger to help him.

How he had the nerve to show his face after turning his back on her.

The things he had done to the club’s present owner were still worse, and Jim couldn’t help but dread the upcoming confrontation. Slipped quietly down a darkened hallway and rapped against the first door he found, giving in and finally going with,

“Oswald? You in here?”

There was still no answer, so Jim pushed the door open. Felt his jaw drop with shock even as his cheeks burned in reaction to the sight in front of him. Swallowed thickly, helplessly, and couldn’t get his brain and his mouth to co-operate, instead standing there dumbly as a man he had never seen before withered and arched and begged for mercy.

Oswald turned to him then, his suit perfect and his hair immaculate, and flashed him a smile that made Jim clutch at the door frame.

“Hello, James,” he said, like he was hosting a tea party instead of standing in the middle of some kind of kinky sex dungeon, “it’s so nice of you to join us.”

Jim did his best to forget about it. To act as though he had seen nothing, heard nothing, and when Harvey asked what information the Penguin had been able to give him, Jim outright lied rather than admit that he had been too shaken up to ask him about the murder in the first place.

Because Jim wasn’t some sheltered innocent. He had seen things, done things. It was just that the things he had seen had been on a computer screen, or else a GCPD charge sheet. The things he had done were less bondage and blindfolds and more embarrassingly awkward attempts to try things Barbara was interested in.
He had never been much into it, had never gotten much out of it, and he didn’t understand why the fact it had been Oswald Cobblepot meting out the punishment should make such a difference.

The memory haunted his dreams and his fantasies. Accosted him at the most inopportune moments, and had him bucking up into his own fist in the shower, imagining himself in the place of the nameless guy who had been so far gone he didn’t care who was watching his humiliation.

It couldn’t have been the way he was remembering it, that was what Jim told himself. Oswald was insane. A murderer and a mob boss who, so rumor had it, had kept his previous love interest displayed in a block of ice in his private rooms for months when things didn’t work out for them.

Jim should not be considering seeking Oswald out, ever, for anything that wasn’t directly work related.

“There’s been a break in at the Iceberg Lounge,” uniform informed him a few days later, “Penguin is requesting your presence.”

Jim nodded, once, and made a decision.

He was going to make sure Oswald understood that he wasn’t interested.

Oswald dismissed his bodyguards and his hangers on when Jim got there, and Jim sent the pair of uniform officers back to the precinct, telling them that he would handle things.

Jim followed him through a set of doors, and then another, and felt his heart rate pick up as he found himself back in that darkened hallway.

“I was surprised,” Oswald said conversationally, “by some of your ex-fiancées interior design choices. I must confess, it did make me wonder about what you two got up to behind closed doors.”

“I didn’t,” Jim tried, uncertain why he was still there. Why he wasn’t running in the opposite direction. “We never.”

“I know,” Oswald soothed and, instead of flinching away, Jim shivered when the other man put a hand on his arm. When he steered him into the same room that had been filling his increasingly filthy daydreams, and Oswald leaned in close enough to press his nose to the heated skin of Jim’s throat, inhaling deeply. “I went over every inch of your swanky penthouse. Do you remember my first visit?”

Jim shuddered at the proximity and the implication. At the idea of somebody breaking into his one time home and breaching his privacy.

“I don’t know what you want from me,” he managed, and his voice sounded nothing like the angry growl he had turned on Oswald all those years ago when he thrown him up against the wall of Barbara’s apartment building, warning him not to come near either of them ever again. He simply sounded lost, hopeful, and Oswald encouraged him to take a step back by splaying a hand across his chest.

Pressed lightly so that he took another, and still another, and then he was binding Jim’s wrists and ankles with quick, practised movements, Jim scarcely able to breathe with the mixture of fear and excitement.

“I don’t want to hurt you, Jim,” Oswald told him, looking over his own handiwork with a critical
eye. “I just want you to realize which of us is in control here.”

Jim struggled at that. Fought against the bonds because it was like the spell was lifting and reality was washing over him. Oswald could kill him down here. Could destroy him, torture him, and part of Jim panicked that perhaps it was no more than he deserved, for the things he had done - the things he had condoned - since arriving in Gotham.

Except Oswald didn’t do much of anything to him. Bound him more securely and gagged him with his own tie. Told him that it didn’t suit him anyway, and promised to send him on his way with something more fitting. Sat in a chair opposite and read the newspaper. Glanced up at him occasionally, gaze raking over him, until the anticipation had Jim so on edge he couldn’t think for it.

Couldn’t bite back the whimper when Oswald finally deigned to touch him, fingertips cool against the flushed skin of his face, and he couldn’t hide his disappointment when Oswald simply untied him and told him he had better let him get on, as he had real business he needed to attend to.

Jim was a mess when he reached his own apartment. Was too wired to sleep and too confused to make sense of what he was feeling. He tossed and turned and fell into surreal, fractured dreams, and in the morning there was a neatly wrapped package outside his door containing a pure silk tie and a handwritten note reading only,

‘Until next time.’

He stayed away from the club for almost a week. Forced himself to concentrate on the job, and his paperwork, and literally anything other than being tied up and then ignored by Oswald Cobblepot.

Then a case fell to pieces, with three dead and another fighting for their life in the intensive care unit, and he ran his fingers down the length of the tie Oswald had given him. Pushed a hand through his hair and understood, suddenly, what it was Oswald was offering.

He didn’t want to be in charge for a while. He didn’t want to be Jim Gordon, Gotham’s saviour. He just wanted to be, to exist, for a couple of hours without the constant stress and the burden of responsibility.

Oswald’s face lit up when he saw him, just for a moment, before the mask was back in place. It was too late though, Jim had already seen it, and he remembered that same smile from their early association. Recalled Oswald looking up at him, adoring and breathless, and he followed willingly where Oswald lead, and didn’t interrupt or ask questions when Oswald stripped him to the waist this time, trailing feather light touches all over his torso.

He was shivering after just a few minutes. Was gasping and squirming when Oswald brushed his lips against the spots brought to life by his fingers and, when Oswald reached his neck, lips and tongue working the skin usually hidden by his shirt collar, he tipped his head back and almost sobbed, because it felt so good and there was nothing he could do to either halt or prolong it.

He was so hard by the end of it that he would have offered anything. Would have said or done whatever Oswald wanted, if only he would touch him, but it was never presented as an option. Instead Oswald buttoned his shirt and fixed his tie, expression solemn, and offered him a drink from an expensive looking decanter.

Jim shook his head, overwhelmed and movements clumsy, and when he hesitated in the doorway, not knowing how to express what he was experiencing, Oswald tilted his head to the side,
considering, and said softly,

“It’s what friends do, James. They help each other.”

Jim went back again and again. Hated himself for his weakness but was addicted to the way it made him feel. The thrill of handing over control, and the comfort of knowing that Oswald wouldn’t abuse it.

That made no sense, not when his knowledge scarcely scratched the surface of the crimes Oswald had committed, but he knew it all the same. There had been no promises, no verbal exchange between them. It just was, and that was as close as Jim could get to an explanation.

Oswald beat him sometimes, when he wanted to be punished. Slapped him and bit him, and attached clamps to his flesh that left marks Jim pressed his fingers into in the days that followed, for proof that it had really happened. More often, Oswald simply touched him. Stroked him and sucked him, and seemed to know when it was too much, letting him come and then petting softly at his hair afterwards.

“Kiss me,” Jim begged during one such session, floating with sensation and needing something to anchor himself to. “Please, Oswald, kiss me.”

Oswald froze, just long enough for the fact to puncture the haze, and Jim didn’t dare ask again. He got the message.

Contented himself with what they had, the things Oswald did to him, and absolutely didn’t feel hard done by and rejected when he and Alvarez made routine enquiries at the club, and Oswald acted as though they were nothing more than distant acquaintances.

“I thought he was your inside man,” Alvarez asked when they were back in the car, and Jim didn’t answer.

He didn’t know what they were to each other.

Oswald was more thorough than usual the next time they met under cover of darkness, and Jim wished that his hands were free so that he could reciprocate. Wished that he could have more, offer more, and that night he dreamed of waking up next to Oswald in his own bed, the other man smiling at him - kissing him - like there was nowhere he would rather be.

That was never going to happen though. Was never going to be anything but a pitiful fantasy, yet he found himself recounting it to Oswald anyway, begging him to keep his eyes open and stay focused as Jim unknotted the expensive silk from around his neck.

Tied it tight around Oswald’s leg in an effort to staunch the bleeding, and it wasn’t until the paramedics had Oswald loaded onto a stretcher - until the flashing lights and the sound of the sirens surrounded them - that Jim realized his face was wet with tears.

He didn’t visit Oswald in hospital. Didn’t send a card and didn’t buy flowers.

Was waved in by the bouncer on the door the very first night Oswald returned to the club, and Oswald looked up at him with wide eyes when he was shown to his private office, like he was never expecting to catch sight of him again.

“I can’t tonight, Jim,” he said, seeming smaller somehow. Pale and vulnerable. “Please accept my
apologies.”

“I don’t want you to,” Jim responded, nothing if not stubborn, and noticed for the first time the strip of bloodied silk neatly folded on Oswald’s desk. Oswald followed his gaze, something akin to fear on his face, and Jim thought that perhaps he had been drinking because Oswald’s voice wasn’t steady as he said,

“You’ll always have the upper hand. No matter what I do, what I try, you’re always going to be here, aren’t you?”

He had his fingers pressed to his chest, over his heart, and Jim remembered his own hand in the same place, blood stained and shaking as he pushed Oswald down, trying to get him to stay calm and lucid as he prayed for somebody to respond to his call for back up.

“I can go,” Jim heard himself say, already resigned to the rejection. “I just - I was only. I would have gone to the hospital, but I didn’t want to overstep my welcome.”

Oswald blinked up at him, startled, but said nothing. Turned back to his ledgers as Jim walked away and that night Jim drank too much, straight from the bottle, until he was too numb to feel hurt, and passed out on his uncomfortable sofa.

He woke with a crick in his neck and a marching band playing off key in his head. Winced as he slowly washed and dressed for work, and almost missed the package on his doorstep entirely. His breath caught as he picked it up, hope speeding up his pulse rate even as pragmatism warned him not to get carried away.

But there, in the neat wrapping paper, was another tie. Just as expensive, just as soft against his fingertips. The accompanying note was familiar too, written in the same hand on the same card stock.

The message was different though and Jim didn’t care that he was going to be late.

Went back into his apartment and exchanged his tie out with sure, steady movements. Appraised his reflection for a moment, a smile curling across his face, and slid the note into his wallet, because only he and Oswald were ever going to understand the significance of it.

*For you x*

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr [@serenwib](http://serenwib.tumblr.com) or Twitter [@falsteloj](http://falsteloj.tumblr.com). :)
Jim Gordon had terrible taste in literature.

That wasn’t him being petty or snobbish, that was completely objective. Oswald knew because he had been making use of Jim’s sofa and Jim’s bookcase while the other man was out at work for years now.

If Jim truly didn’t want him there, he would have invested in some better home security measures. Changed the locks at the very least, Oswald reasoned, because breaking in to Jim’s apartment really was ridiculously easy.

Because it wasn’t as though he went out of his way to hide his tracks, either, the scent of his cologne doubtless lingering in the air long after he departed, and the book he had been reading replaced out of order on Jim’s bookshelf.

It wasn’t that he made a habit of it, not exactly, it was just that Jim’s apartment was like the man himself. Clean, light, silent. There were no lackeys or hangers on wanting his attention, and no staff watching his every move so they could gather later and gossip about it.

No overgrown children demanding to know when he had last eaten, and no sworn enemies cluttering up the place and reminding him of all his failures.

Instead he could just sit for an hour or so, content to be surrounded by Jim’s scent, Jim’s belongings, and if his visits had become more frequent in recent weeks, it was only because running a nightclub and regaining control of Gotham’s underworld was kind of stressful.

Some days he used the time to snoop through Jim’s things. The pages and pages of notes for the cases he was working, and the mementoes of Jim’s family which proved that, underneath the gruff exterior, even Jim Gordon could be sweet and sentimental. Other days he simply lost himself to his own thoughts, plotting and scheming, and making plans for the days and weeks ahead.

Mostly he simply sat and read through Jim’s shockingly bad collection of paperbacks, wondering if the attraction for Jim was the white knights or the distressed damsels.

He had imagined himself in the role of the latter once, helpless and vulnerable, waiting for Jim to charge in on his steed and vanquish Fish, and Maroni, and the guards at Arkham. Jim had left him there to rot though. Had seen what was happening, had known how bad things were, and still hadn’t cared enough to lift a finger to help him.

On days when the memories were at the forefront of his mind - when his sleep had been interrupted over and over again by the nightmares - he took it out on Jim’s possessions. Poured his whiskey down the kitchen sink and smashed up his crockery, as though it could ever make up for
the wrongs Jim had done him.

Then there were the days when it all fell to pieces. When nothing went right and the rain fell in sheets. When his leg ached and he curled into the cushions of Jim’s sofa, treacherous tears sliding down his cheeks because this was as close as he was ever going to get to what he really wanted.

As close as he was ever going to get to Jim’s company - Jim’s friendship - because no matter what Jim did, no matter how badly he was treated, Oswald couldn’t stop clinging to dreams every bit as stupid and unlikely as the stories Jim turned to for escapism.

The insipid little tales where good never failed to triumph over evil, and where the leading man got the girl, the two of them riding off into the sunset to live out their happily ever afters.

He was always going to get caught in the act eventually, that went without saying, but he had hoped it would be a day when he was looking suave and sophisticated. He had imagined it, occasionally, the way Jim’s jaw would drop, just for a moment, before he set it fast and shoved him up the nearest wall, forceful and threatening.

Jim would demand to know what he thought he was playing at, temper flashing in those big blue eyes, and Oswald would raise an eyebrow, cool and collected, just to infuriate Jim further.

Of course Jim returned home early from work the day he resembled a drowned rat, his hair plastered to his forehead and his suit still dripping wet from inconsiderate motorists and the puddles filling all the cracks in the sidewalk. His leg throbbed, the pain sharp and scarcely manageable, and instead of anger or outrage, when he looked up it was to find nothing but concern etched across Jim’s handsome face.

It riled up his own temper, had him pushing to his feet, teeth bared with the rage and the white hot flare of agony. There had been a time, once, when he would have taken it. When he would have gladly accepted any acknowledgement from Jim, no matter how humiliating, desperate simply to enter the other man’s orbit. Now he wanted Jim to shrink away from him. To think of what this scene meant - the power he had wielded over Jim, when the other man was in bed at night, believing himself safe and secure behind his locked door.

“I ought to arrest you,” Jim said, calm and reasonable, and stepped with him when he attempted to pass, blocking his exit.

“Do it then,” Oswald snapped, the entire situation overwhelming. Jim was so close, so immovable, and he shoved at Jim’s chest in exasperation, though its effect was almost completely negligible, “Go on, detective. What are you waiting for?”

“Just get out,” was what Jim went with, a low growl that spoke of danger but contrasted poorly with the way he handed him his coat and his cane, before steering him out into the hallway.

“Is that it?” Oswald demanded, spoiling for a fight he knew he couldn’t win, but Jim always had to have the last word. Always had to make him feel foolish, nothing but a naive umbrella boy all over again, and it wasn’t until he was trudging homewards that it dawned on him that he could call someone to collect him.

That he should have stuck a knife in Jim’s gut when he had the chance.

He still went back though, not more than two weeks to the day, and the door was just as easy to open. The place was just as woefully under-defended, and he made a point of making himself at home, laying his coat over the back of an armchair, and pouring three fingers of Jim’s decent
whiskey.

It couldn’t be called good, not by any stretch of the imagination, but it would do the job. Was better than nothing, and he savoured the burn of it down his throat before attempting to move again, his leg dragging badly with the cold and the wet and the fact the elevator had been out of order.

There was a title he hadn’t seen before, not in all the time he had been going there, and Oswald hesitated for a moment lest it be a trap or a warning. In the end curiosity got the better of him, and he pulled it free to find a lurid crime novel, all darkened streets and the promise of violence.

‘I thought this would be more your scene,’ Jim had written, quick but legible on a slip of paper folded between the pages, and Oswald couldn’t help but smile to himself.

It was almost enough to put him in the mood for one of Jim’s badly veiled romances.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
'Water Bottle'

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'water bottle'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Community events and charity fun runs had never been Oswald’s scene. Not when he was a lonely child, fettered by his mother’s fears of the outside world, and not when he was a self-reliant adult, operating forever on the periphery of other people’s social circles.

Now, as Mayor, he had no choice but to put in an appearance. To pretend to be happy about it, even, and he shifted uncomfortably in his dress shirt and jacket, thinking wistfully of the air conditioning in the back of the limo.

Instead he was stuck out in the midday sun, shaking hands with the great unwashed and forcing a smile to his face for every bore who wanted to attempt small talk. He was just nodding politely through some complaint about the city’s policy on street lighting - an increase of which would surely wipe out crime, so his current companion claimed, as though Oswald wasn’t an expert on the subject - when he made the mistake of allowing his gaze to wander over to where the runners were assembling.

To where Jim was swigging from his water bottle, head tilted back and adam’s apple bobbing, looking like he was about to shoot a scene for something x-rated, not restore some honor to the GCPD while his colleagues huffed and panted around him, already worn out from the warm-up. Jim had barely broken a sweat, the muscles in his limbs shifting as he stretched, and Oswald only realized he was staring openly when his PA cleared her throat for the third time.

In an ideal world he wouldn’t have spared Jim another thought from that moment. He would have remembered all the awful things Jim had done - all the offers of friendship he had rebuffed and the second chances he had squandered - and gone about the rest of his day without so much a single glance in the other man’s direction.

In the world that was he could scarcely tear his gaze away. Accomplished it only to look back every few moments, proof that he was just as enamoured of Jim’s blue eyes and strong jaw now as he had been years ago, when Jim’s voice had first broken through the haze of anger Fish’s demands for subservience had always inspired in him.

“You’ll be presenting the winners with their medals,” his latest PA explained as she lead him towards the finish line, “then they want you to pose for a few photographs.”

Oswald nodded distantly and didn’t do anything embarrassing like turn around and make eye contact, brief as it might have been, with detectives named James Gordon.

Sometimes he truly was his own worst enemy.

After that he forced himself to face forward, the lingering heat in his cheeks a reminder of why it
was necessary, and some new bore chattered insufferably in his ear, outlining the many and varied reasons why the city council’s decision to cut their core grant was really a false economy. It was a relief when the race finally got started. At least it was until the moment it became clear Jim was going to be up on the winners’ podium.

He considered inventing some emergency - feared that Jim might cause a scene and refuse to accept anything from him. Then it was too late and he was grimacing his best false smile for the cameras, determinedly not watching the way Jim was upending the rest of his water bottle over his head.

Gave it up as a bad job and stood, transfixed, as Jim stripped out of one t-shirt and changed into another, unruly strands of hair still dripping over his forehead. Jim glanced up at him, no doubt feeling the weight of his gaze, and Oswald swallowed thickly and told himself that any smile playing about Jim’s lips was only a figment of his over-active imagination.

He lingered over the other medals, prolonging the inevitable, and did his best to look interested as what sounded like their entire life story was sketched out for him by the event organizers.

“This is Detective Gordon of the -” they started finally and Oswald felt the back of his neck burn with the sudden proximity, even as Jim interrupted,

“The Mayor and I go way back, isn’t that right, Oswald?”

His name on Jim’s lips had always done things to him. Left him weak kneed and defenceless, because Jim meant is as mockery, as sarcasm, and he had to whet dry lips before he could respond with,

“Right back to the beginning, wouldn’t you say, Jim?”

Jim’s eyes flashed at the implicit challenge but he held still as the medal was placed around his neck. Smiled obediently for the photographs and didn’t complain about having to stand closer when he was told to. Put a hand on his shoulder, heavy and controlling, and it should have had his own temper rioting at the familiarity.

“You put on an impressive display,” he managed instead, imagining he could feel the outline of Jim’s palm even through all the layers of clothing, “I’m sure your brothers in arms are very proud of you.”

They looked half done in, last he’d seen them, but Jim rose to the bait regardless.

“Not as proud as they will be when I put a sitting Mayor in the station holding cell. I’m not the kind of guy who just gives up, Oswald.”

The last was said into his ear, too quiet for the bystanders - too intense to hold back the shiver it sent through him. It was a threat, a warning. A pledge, a promise. It put a smile on his own face because he had been right about Jim.

“Could you send a couple of copies to Detective Gordon via the GCPD?” He asked the photographer before they left, pressing a few folded bills into his hands. “Tell him they’re a gift from an old friend.”

He never gave up, either. It was just one of the many things they had in common.
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'Summer Job'

Jim’s method of raising some quick cash comes back to haunt him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A picture was worth a thousand words, so they said, but it lacked their subtlety to Oswald’s mind. Steamrollered all over the nuance and the context, and if his preference for literature - for something which could at least claim to have been created for artistic merit - made him some kind of snob, well, so be it.

He had no desire to start trawling through the sordid images and lewd videos that entertained the men in his employ. At least not until a certain rumor started circulating, and even then Oswald handled the tape with distaste, letting it sit on the dresser for almost a week before finally giving in and loading it into the player.

The picture quality wasn’t great, as though he were watching a copy of a copy of a copy, and Oswald couldn’t help but sneer at the awful music and the shoddy work of the cameraman. It didn’t take a genius to hold the thing steady, surely, and then his thoughts were stuttering on a loop because it hadn’t been an exaggeration.

The man on screen really did look an awful lot like Detective James Gordon.

Oswald didn’t know what he had been expecting from it, hadn’t really married the two concepts together in his head, but all he knew was that one moment he was thrilling with the potential for blackmail and humiliation, and the next he could scarcely draw breath, lost to Jim’s big blue eyes gazing heatedly into the camera, one hand pushed beneath the waistband of his boxer shorts.

He stopped it there, had to, because it wasn’t Jim. Couldn’t be Jim, there was no way, and the sooner he forgot about the very notion, the better things would be for everyone.

The problem was that perhaps the visual held something over the written word, after all. It was more immediate, more distracting, and he felt the flush steal over his cheeks every time it came to mind, unbidden but unshakeable.

He watched the whole thing through, on the basis it would get it out of his system, and it was the worst mistake he could have made because it wasn’t just the sight of Jim - it was the sounds he made to go along with it. The breathy moan when the other man kissed up the side of his throat, and the desperate gasps when he was pushed to his knees, a hand twisted tight in his hair as his mouth was filled over and over again.

It haunted his dreams and plagued his every waking moment. Was driving him out of his mind, slowly but surely, until eventually - finally - he reasoned that it wouldn’t be so very wrong to use the tape for its intended purpose and touch himself. To buck up into his own grip, teeth digging
deep into his bottom lip as the frantic sounds on screen reached their crescendo.

Jim was never going to know, was never going to have the slightest idea, because the man on tape was a professional and Jim Gordon, at least in the days before Gotham, had been an insufferable goody two shoes.

Except the more Oswald played the scene, the less certain he was that Jim knew nothing about it. He studied Jim when their paths crossed, stared at the tilt of his nose and the angle of his jaw, then compared it to the boy in the video, making allowances for the passage of time and the poor lighting.

He did his own research into the subject, tracing where the tape had come from, and tracking down a slightly better quality copy. That one only confirmed his suspicions, put paid to the last of his doubts, and the next time he watched it through he shivered with the weight of Jim’s heavy lidded gaze, the knowledge that it was Jim he was watching enough to send him over the edge before any of the real action even started.

Jim was out of his league, he had always known that. Had accepted it that very first day, when Jim looked him over with such revulsion, and he had had it confirmed again and again, Jim’s fall from grace doing nothing to make him more obtainable. It had never stopped him wanting though - had never stopped him hoping - and the tape became the one piece of Jim nobody could take away from him, not even the man himself.

It was always there, a secret playing on his conscious, when Jim came to him, bitter and reluctant, to ask him for a favor, and when he went to Jim, unable to stay away, to feed him information he could have given anyone.

He had other officers on his payroll. Officers who knew how to keep their heads down, and how not to ask questions, but Jim was different - Jim was special - and as time passed they came to an uneasy truce. Not friends, exactly, but not something so very far away from it.

Jim came to him one night, beaten and bleeding, because it was closer than the hospital and he was working off the clock on this one. Oswald patched him up, put him to bed, and lay awake for long hours debating the ethics of watching one’s most cherished acquaintance in the throes of passion on, at least, a thrice weekly basis.

By rights, he shouldn’t give it a second thought. That was what Jim would expect of him, doubtless, and it was that knowledge alone which kept it twisting over in his mind, the desire to prove to Jim that he was just as human - just as worthy - as anyone else overriding his sense of reason.

It must have done because a few months later, after a few more late nights spent nursing the other’s wounds and drinking their whiskey, he found himself on Jim’s doorstep, a little inebriated and a lot anxious.

“What happened this time?” Jim asked without looking more closely, already making for the first aid kit, and Oswald launched unsteadily into the speech he had been preparing, about how Jim ought to have the tapes, and how he didn’t think any less of him.

He didn’t, truly. Couldn’t, if their past history was anything to go by, and Jim’s cheeks flared with color as the realization set in.

“I needed the money,” Jim said stiltedly, cutting him off mid-sentence, “they made it all sound so easy.”
“You don’t have to justify yourself,” Oswald tried, uncomfortable, then wished he hadn’t when Jim met his eye and asked determinedly,

“Did you watch it?”

He could lie, he supposed, but if it was really an option he would never have been stood there, awkward and shame-faced, in the first place. He nodded, helpless, and something clicked into place then, something he had felt since the very first time he had laid eyes on Jim - something Jim had been fighting perhaps just as long.

“Did you get off on it?” Jim asked, voice low and eyes dark, and suddenly there wasn’t enough air in the room. He could hardly breathe, scarcely think, and when Jim demanded ‘did you?’ it was all he could do to stutter out an affirmative.

Jim nodded at that. Put the tapes down and nodded again, as though convincing himself to go through with his own decision, and before Oswald could backtrack - before he could escape into the night, into the privacy of his own company, Jim was so close he could feel his body heat, and see the way his fingers trembled as he touched them to his cheek.

“Why is it always you who sees me at my worst?” Jim asked in little more than a whisper, “Why is it your forgiveness I’m asking for?”

“We’re bound together,” he said in response, voice strained with everything Jim wasn’t saying, “it doesn’t matter whether we like it or not.”

Jim sucked in a shuddering breath at that. Pressed their foreheads together for a moment and then stole anything further he might have said on the subject from his lips, the kiss deepening, growing frantic, until Jim had one hand in his hair, the other possessive against the side of his face, his own clutching tight at the fabric of Jim’s shirt, needing some kind of anchor.

They kissed until the rest of the world didn’t matter, until there was nothing but the two of them, and when Jim gasped for air, overwhelmed, he twitched at the sensory memory, picturing the way Jim had tipped his head back, mouth hanging open, when he was on the brink of orgasm.

It was the hottest thing he had ever seen - faded into insignificance when contrasted with the real thing, because Jim started pushing the jacket from his shoulders and tugging at the buttons of his dress shirt. Trailed kisses down the side of his neck and just kept on going, until he was looking up at him, cheeks flushed and lips kiss swollen, and Oswald was the one tipping his head back against the wall of Jim’s living room, panting with just the anticipation of what was about to happen.

Then Jim’s mouth was on him, hot and wet and so very eager, and the sounds filling the air were torn from his own lips - the pleas for more and the appeals for mercy. Jim took him to the very edge in short order, held him there with his hands braced against his hip bones, and then gave him a smile that made his heart stutter even as Jim redoubled his efforts, so that he had no choice but to lose himself to it.

Jim looked very pleased with himself afterwards, so smug that Oswald had to have him move just enough to push him back against the cushions of the sofa. Had to kiss him all over again, loving the way Jim gasped when he manoeuvred a hand between them to begin returning the favor. The way he outright whimpered, hands pulling him closer, when he made full use of his unfair advantage and sucked at the skin of Jim’s throat, because he had always known that Jim wasn’t that accomplished an actor.

“Don’t stop,” Jim whined out, though the marks would be visible for all to see, and Oswald chose
to take him at his word, biting down as Jim jerked and spasmed and made a mess of the both of them.

He licked over the spot he had just bitten, soothing, and Jim shuddered all over again, so responsive he couldn’t help but do it again, and again, until Jim simply wound a hand into his hair and hauled him into a real kiss.

“Where do we go from here?” Jim asked when his heart-rate was approaching normal, sounding more vulnerable - less sure of himself - than he ever had in all the time he’d known him.

“Did you ever once think you’d end up here, back when you were filming that video?”

Jim frowned at him. “No, of course not.”

“You can’t see the future, Jim, nobody can. But if you don’t give something a chance, you’ll never know what it could become. Will you?”

Oswald shot him a half smile, and hoped against hope that Jim would reach the conclusion he wanted him to.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'sunglasses'

Jim gives in and asks for a favor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The cameras had never worked in interrogation room three, not in all the time Jim had worked for the department. It was where unscrupulous officers accepted bribes, and where too trusting spouses were cheated on. Illicit cigarettes smoked and dodgy powder snorted. Hip flasks drained and service weapons traded.

Where he marched Oswald Cobblepot without bothering to check in at the front desk, telling himself all the way that it was to prevent rumors spreading rather than any desire on his part to ensure the arrest flew under the radar.

“You’re making a mistake, Detective,” Cobblepot told him, eyes shielded behind his sunglasses, when they passed the disinterested night shift, every inch the disgruntled dignitary. “Can’t we talk about this, James?” He tried when their feet echoed down the deserted hallway, the sunglasses relegated to a jacket pocket and the self-serving criminal shining through.

“Jim, please,” he begged finally, too reminiscent of the trembling umbrella boy who had pleaded for his very life at the dockside, and Jim set his jaw, determined not to let on how badly it rattled him.

“Start talking, Penguin,” was the line he went with, the door clicking shut behind him. They were alone now - wouldn’t be disturbed by anyone for anything, perhaps not even if he pressed the panic button. The idea sent a shiver along the length of his spine, too powerful to be written off as a simple chill.

“I can’t tell you what I don’t know. Even an officer of the GCPD has to understand that.”

Jim sat back in the uncomfortable metal chair and searched for where the front ended and the truth began. Oswald likely didn’t know about the case he was investigating, all things considered, but he had been up to something. Had been loitering with no good alibi, and Jim was still bitter about having the man’s portrait in his line of sight for months on end, as though he should have to swear allegiance to a deranged killer.

As though he should have to be reminded every moment of every working day of what he had done for this man. What he had done for himself, he acknowledged reluctantly.

Perhaps, in some ways, they weren’t so very different after all.

It did nothing for his temper, the recognition, and maybe it was always destined to come to this, right from that first time a shameful thrill had sparked through him, Cobblepot’s trembling fingers and beseeching gaze getting to him in ways he refused to think about.
“What you have to understand,” he heard himself say, sick with the effort of trying to do the right thing - to be the right kind of person, “is that even an officer of the GCPD can’t simply let you walk out of here.”

Oswald scrutinized him carefully. “What, exactly, are you suggesting, old friend?”

This was it - he was standing at a precipice, at a crossroads, and all he needed to do was take a step backwards. Choose the right direction.

“I’m suggesting,” he said instead, tongue swiping over suddenly dry lips, “that if you want to get out of here you had better offer me something.”

Oswald’s eyes widened, just slightly, and then the surprise was hidden away, buried beneath a mask or two. In its place was a cultivated confidence. A raised eyebrow that made Jim’s pulse quicken, the tension - the anticipation - enough to leave him breathless.

“A favor in exchange for a favor? I seem to recall you having a problem with the arrangement.”

“Things change,” Jim managed, still not entirely sure he could really go through with it. Still not certain he was ready to let go of the blue eyed rookie who had filed reports on every officer who used this room. “People change, Oswald.”

The name felt strange on his tongue, for all that he had used it before. It was different this time. It was a confession now. An invitation.

Oswald studied him, gauged his sincerity, and a sly smile curled across his face at whatever it was he saw.

“That they do. Jim.”

He moved first. Had Oswald pressed up against the door, just the same way all their encounters ended, except this time he wasn’t trying to reign himself in. Oswald wasn’t cowering away from him. Long fingers twisted in the back of his jacket instead, pulled him in still closer, and Jim teased a kiss once, twice, three times before Oswald succeeded in closing the gap between them.

It was frantic and undignified. So good he could scarcely control himself, not when Oswald gazed up at him, too knowing, and not when he pushed the other man back across the interrogation table, tugging at buttons and yanking at fastenings, desperate to return the favor.

They went through favor after favor, his spit slick fingers buried in tight heat, Oswald crying out as he kept his own mouth busy, leaving behind mottled marks of passion everywhere he could manage it. He liked the idea of it, loved the sight of it, and when he finally replaced his fingers Oswald fisted a hand tight in his hair, forcing him to hold eye contact until he physically couldn’t.

Until he was lost to the darkness that had been threatening to overwhelm him since the moment he set foot back in Gotham.

Until he stopped fighting, stopped struggling, Oswald’s name on his lips and Oswald's own mark on his soul, where he would never be rid of it.

“What the hell was he doing here?” Harvey demanded later, incredulous as Jim lead the king of Gotham's underworld out the side entrance, but Jim was accustomed to playing the part. Stood up straighter and challenged anyone to contradict him,

“Helping with enquiries.”
People changed.

Who was to say whether it was for the better?

Chapter End Notes

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'Shorts'

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'shorts'

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

There was only one thing better than the sight of Jim Gordon in standard issue GCPD uniform, and that was the sight of him in standard issue GCPD summer uniform.

Jim himself looked less convinced on the subject, glaring at him every time their eyes met, as though challenging him to say something about it.

He had plenty to say about it. Wrote an effusive thank you to the department for stepping up to the mark and sending out all their community engagement officers in uniform - it made the public feel so safe, ensured the children knew who to head for - and he beamed all across his face when he saw a copy of it pinned up on one of the precinct notice boards, directly across from Jim’s line of vision.

“What do you want?” Jim demanded, lacking the most basic of manners and swathed in one of his ugliest suits into the bargain, “I have nothing to say to you.”

“I’d love to stop and chat, old friend,” Oswald said in turn, enjoying having the upper hand for once, “but I have a meeting scheduled with your esteemed acting captain. I’m about to make him an offer he can’t refuse.”

Jim tried to look indifferent, succeeded only in pouting sulkily, and Oswald didn’t wait for Bullock to offer him a seat, loving the feeling of power Fish’s cowed umbrella boy could never even have imagined.

He laid it on the line, spelled it out clearly, and though Bullock cursed and whined and generally dragged his feet on the issue, he finally agreed to sign off on Jim being the lead contact for the department’s summer outreach.

“I should be solving real crimes,” Jim complained the very first chance he got, hot and bothered even in his shorts and his short-sleeved uniform shirt, “I don’t know what game you think you’re playing.”

“You are solving real crimes,” Oswald soothed, casually looking over the crime report on stolen garden ornaments Jim had been filling out, “I hear you tried to ticket my car only this morning.”

“It was obstructing an exit,” Jim ground out, jaw twitching, and Oswald just smiled at him sweetly.

The truth was that summer had never been a happy time for him. Too much loneliness, too many reminders that nobody wanted or appreciated his company. Even his Mother would shoo him out of the door eventually, to skulk around the outskirts of the city park and the shopping precinct, watching on as other people his age laughed and joked and basked in the sun with their friends.
All the sun had ever done for him was make him first burn and then peel, and on the hottest day yet of the year he could feel the tell tale heat spreading across his face, in spite of the sun lotion and the way he was doing his best to stick to the shadows.

Everybody else was feeling it too, at least, women waving programs in front of their face in hope of some relief, and young children screaming their displeasure at being overheated and uncomfortable. He saw Jim in the midst of one such gathering, the expanses of golden skin on display, showing off his shapely calves and the strength of his forearms.

The point of the exercise had been to humiliate Jim. To punish him in a way that was legitimate and above board, for all the times he had rebuffed his offers of friendship. For the cavalier treatment, and the lack of gratitude.

For the way he had left him to rot in Arkham, his every waking moment a living nightmare, while Jim walked free, un tarnished by the crime they had both committed.

It hadn’t worked, of course, because Jim wasn’t some scrawny pale freak who needed layer upon layer of armour. He looked good, toned and healthy, and even when he had been forced to wear the department’s mascot costume, people had still flocked around him, posing for photographs and congratulating the GCPD on the high profile arrests his information had netted Bullock.

He couldn’t hate Jim, could never seem to get anywhere near it, and as he watched Jim crouch down to kindergarten eye level, let himself be poked and prodded as he filled out and attached GCPD issue identity wristbands, his heart rebelled on him fully, clenching up in his chest and mocking him with just how desperately he wanted.

Was always going to want, he thought, glumly, because even with the scuffs and the tarnish, Jim was still a hero. A shining beacon in a city of filth and darkness, and suddenly he couldn’t breathe with the knowledge that Jim was never going to see him as anything other than a monster.

Just couldn’t breathe, period, and the world was spinning, his pulse racing, and then - then Jim was with him, supporting him away from prying eyes and helping him out of his jacket. Getting him to sip from a bottle of water and telling him earnestly that he was okay, that everything was going to be all right, it was just the heat and the ridiculous amount of clothing he was wearing.

“People have certain expectations of a Mayor,” he countered, hating the whine in his voice, but Jim just carried right on loosening his collar,

“As they do police detectives, but I’ve had to have my knees on display for three weeks now.”

The tone was accusing, but light, and when Oswald did his best to look threatening rather than hard done by, Jim smiled - a tug of lips that transformed his whole face and made Oswald’s stomach flutter.

“They are nice knees,” he offered, meaning it as an olive branch, and Jim laughed, the reaction clearly startled out of him.

“I think you’re alone in that opinion.”

Oswald doubted it, doubted it immensely, but he couldn’t help but revel in the easy banter and the smile on Jim’s handsome face. Regretted it the moment he saw the realization in Jim’s eyes, the recognition of what he was thinking, because Jim’s hand was still splayed against his chest, and he was kneeling in front of him, so close and too intimate.

Jim pulled away and cleared his throat. Rubbed a hand across the back of his neck, awkward, and
Oswald choked out a line about how he was fine, and how Jim ought to get back to whatever it was he had been doing, grateful that his voice scarcely wavered.

“I can stay a while longer,” Jim said in turn, and moved only to sit beside him. Leaned back a little, casual, apparently not minding the fact that it meant their thighs brushed ever so slightly. “Yates is better with the kids than me anyway.”

“It didn’t look that way from where I was standing,” Oswald countered, helpless, and Jim relaxed a little further. Gave him the smile again, the one that never failed to get his brain short circuiting, and said,

“It’s probably my knees, I hear they’re my best feature.”

Oswald snorted, unable to stop the reaction, and Jim nudged his shoulder, companionable, and the two of them spent a few minutes enjoying the shade and the quiet.

“Thank you for your help today,” he said later, when things were winding down and his own meeting and greeting was finally over.

“I was doing my job,” Jim said in response, so that the rejection burned bright all over again. Had him feeling sick and wretched, desperate to go lick his wounds and take it out on someone. But Jim wasn’t done with the conversation, was dumping the piles of stickers and leaflets back into their boxes, and then falling into step beside him. “I’m off duty now though if you want to show your gratitude.”

Oswald blinked at him in shock, rendered silent just long enough for Jim to start backtracking, to stutter out something about it being a joke, and how he wasn’t good at them, and Oswald had to silence him with a hand on his arm, the simple contact sending an electric thrill through him.

“I’d be honored,” he breathed, formal but eager, and Jim beamed at him in relief.

Perhaps this summer wasn’t destined to be yet another wash out, after all.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Sunburn

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'sunburn'

Quick doodle of Oswald just being fed up of the sun. :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'Lifeguard'.

Oswald meets Jim pre-show. Then proceeds to stalk him in the way only Oswald Cobblepot can...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Such a handsome boy!” His Mother had beamed, clapping her hands together and making him turn a full circle in the living space of their cramped apartment. “So grown up you look.”

It had been bad enough there, fighting back the urge to wrap his arms across his bony ribcage, and it was still worse now he was actually in public, taking one last longing look at his daywear before closing the door of his locker.

The doctor said that swimming would help. It was going to strengthen the muscle without putting pressure on the spine, and normally his Mother would have disregarded all of it as lies and trickery but Dr. Popescu had been so charming, so convincing, and had hailed from the old country into the bargain.

What Dr. Popescu said was law, or might as well have been, and Oswald had no choice but to traipse down to the public pool three times a week until school did the decent thing and started up again.

It was embarrassing, boring, and he was just wondering yet again if word wouldn’t reach his Mother that he had been skipping session when something happened to attract his attention. Someone, more truthfully, because a man in a suit was showing an older boy with floppy hair around the side of the pool. Was gesturing up at the lifeguard station with his clipboard and pointing out the fire exits and the water safety posters.

The guy nodded in response, solemn and serious, then almost got trampled by a couple of kids in armbands and shot a good natured smile after them that transformed his entire face. That made Oswald’s heart stutter in his chest, just for a moment, and had him watching transfixed as the pair made their way back towards the changing rooms.

Perhaps he could put up with swimming for a few weeks longer.

Because the very next day the new boy was already a permanent fixture, whistle hanging against his toned chest, and blond hair slicked attractively back from his forehead. Oswald took to staring at him as openly as he dared. Loitered about until he learned his name and what had inspired him to spend his summer reminding spoiled brats to walk not run en route to the diveboards.

Jim Gordon, the staff rota said. “I can’t just sit around playing videogames all summer,” Oswald overheard him telling some girl with a fake tan and faker credentials, “I’m starting basic training in the fall.”
She fawned all over him in return, so that the back of his neck and the tips of his ears went red, and Oswald felt the news like a blow to the gut because Jim was too nice for war, and because only an institution as cold and uncaring as the US Military would want to shave Jim’s hair off.

He imagined how it would feel beneath his fingers sometimes. Followed Jim home from work, and watched the way Jim pushed a hand through it, visible through his bedroom window as he fixed it in the mirror, before he went back out again. At night he lay alone in his narrow bed and imagined Jim’s fingers in his own hair. Jim’s lips, pressed against his own, and his breathing inevitably grew unsteady, excitement coursing through him at imagined scenarios in which Jim noticed the fact he existed, and decided he wanted to get to know him better.

It was stupid, Oswald knew. Pathetic, even, because Jim was done with school and he was still a dumb kid. Jim was breathtaking, beautiful, and he couldn’t stand to look at his own reflection, nevermind what anybody else said about it. Jim was a fantasy, and he was stuck firmly in reality.

There was nothing to be done about it, all the same. Nothing he could do but carry on watching, carry on dreaming, until the afternoon a gaggle of teenage girls were sat on the opposite side of the pool doing the exact same thing, and Jim was busy chastising one kid for pushing another. Oswald wasn’t sure what to do at first, could see that the girl wasn’t moving, wasn’t pretending, but knew he couldn’t move quick enough even if he had the strength to haul a dead weight to safety in the first place.

He yelled Jim’s name in the end, the kid’s older sister still too busy giggling with her friends over Jim’s biceps, and he saw the fear in Jim’s big blue eyes right before the shrill blast of the whistle had the place descending into pandemonium.

Everyone stood around watching, shocked and helpless, as Jim got the kid out of the water and laid out on the poolside. The sister was crying, insensible, and Oswald watched on in a kind of detached fascination, observing the frantic notes to Jim’s seemingly calm movements, trying to force air into the the girl’s lungs.

Jim went kind of limp when she finally started breathing, coughing up water even as professional help arrived on the scene. Sank back against the wall, complexion paper pale, and Oswald thought again about what a terrible career choice Jim was making.

His own knees almost went out from under him a week later, even so, when he was fastening the last button on his shirt, getting ready to go home and listen to his Mother’s latest groundless accusations about what the people who lived across the street from them were doing. Because he looked up and Jim was there. Jim was right in front of him, only more handsome than he looked from afar, and Jim’s hand was on his arm, the touch burning through the thin material.

“I wanted to say thank you, for the other day. If you hadn’t - If I hadn’t - Seriously, thank you, yeah?”

Oswald blinked up at him dumbly. Nodded, slow and stupid, like his heart wasn’t pounding so fast he was getting light headed. Jim smiled at him - smiled for him - and then he was gone and Oswald had to sit on the bench for long breathless moments, not trusting his legs to carry him.

Jim left not long afterwards, proud to be off serving flag and country, and Dr. Popsecu finally managed to insult his Mother’s sensibilities and he was let off all forms of physical activity just in time for the new school year.

He didn’t forget about Jim though. Not in the weeks which immediately followed, and not three years later either. There had been a connection between them, a brief moment of understanding that
he had never shared with anyone other than his Mother, and Oswald pasted the newspaper article about the hero lifeguard into a scrapbook, alongside the mentions of Jim’s heroics overseas, and the medals he had been awarded for them.

Oswald followed his own path. Fought his way through the nothings and the nobodies to gain the attention of Fish Mooney herself, then set about making himself indispensable. Cowered and simpered and skimmed her profits while he sold her secrets to anyone willing and able to pay for them. He was in the process of selling one such trinket, sipping cheap champagne at one of the pretentious downtown art galleries, when his gaze fell upon a familiar face.

He had known Jim was back, of course. He kept tabs on all of the people he was interested in, no matter how long ago that interest had been sparked. He hadn’t seen Jim though, not in the flesh, and for a moment he was 15 again, gazing into the eyes of the most beautiful boy he had ever encountered.

Then he was in control once more, soothing away his associate’s concerns, even as he watched the way Jim frowned at a spectacularly ugly painting, like if he just concentrated hard enough it would become the work of a master. A woman in a slinky dress and expensive perfume put a manicured hand on his arm, Jim’s frown melting away into a smile, and Oswald pledged to himself that their paths would cross again.

He just needed to find the perfect opportunity.

It never came, for all the hours he spent tailing Jim’s movements. The times they passed in the street, seemingly casual but painstakingly arranged, and the occasions he simply sat and took photographs of Jim, pasting them dutifully into the scrapbook he had hung onto all those years.

Eventually events overtook him, and he couldn’t stop the smile that curled across his face, even as he dropped the baseball bat to the filthy floor.

There was no recognition in Jim’s gaze, no real reason why there should be, and Oswald chose to see it as a challenge. Gambled his own life on what he knew of Jim’s better nature, and fell hopelessly back into the embrace of an obsession that had never truly gone away. He turned up on Jim’s doorstep and, after being warned off, returned when the place was empty, fingertips trailing reverently over Jim’s possessions.

He rifled through Jim’s closet, shut his eyes as he breathed in the scent of him, and pocketed one of Jim’s ties on his way out though it wasn’t something he would want to be seen dead wearing. Back home he hung it in his own closet, its colors garish and cheap in contrast, and pledged that somehow, someday, he would have the man himself to go with it.

The turning point came years later, after he had attempted to quit Jim over and over again. After he had set fire to his scrapbooks only to tamp the flames out frantically, hugging the things to his chest and cursing the cruel twist of fate that first brought Jim to his attention. He didn’t mean it, never could, and even after everything that had happened between them he still lost his senses every time Jim was in his line of vision.

Still hoped, and still dreamed, and hated himself for hanging on Jim’s every word, for savouring every moment they spent together, when Jim began to see him as a lesser evil and started approaching him for assistance.

It was one such greater evil that he underestimated. Didn’t see how desperate they were, how far they were willing to go, and he found himself out at the docks for a third time, a hysterical laugh bubbling in his throat at the bitter irony. It was the depths of winter this time, a storm raging, and
with the water as rough as it was this time he didn’t expect to live through it.

Perhaps it was better that way, really. Perhaps that was what should have happened all those years ago, when he had believed fate was delivering him Jim when really it was attempting to rid the world of the suffering the Penguin would wreck on it. It made sense, was simply the universe righting itself, and the cold of the water burned, lights and sounds at once muted and overbearing.

For once he didn’t fight it. Breathed out and accepted what was coming.

And then his lungs were protesting, his head forced above water level, strong arms dragging him against the current. It took Jim three attempts to get them out, the weight of their suits acting against them, and then Jim’s hand was on his cheek, Jim’s eyes flashing as he warned him not to even think of dying on him.

“You always have to be a hero, don’t you, Jim?” He said, or something approaching it, and the last thing he saw was the way Jim frowned before the darkness pulled him back under.

He woke up in his own bed. Could have dismissed it all as some ugly nightmare were it not for the sharp pain in his side, and the rough texture of the bandage when he tentatively pressed his fingers to it.

“Don’t try to move,” a voice warned - Jim warned - and he turned his head helplessly, drinking in the sight of Jim in his own bedroom. The clothes he was wearing were ill fitting, his own doubtless soaked through, and his hair had dried in a mess, reminding him of the tousled style he had sported along with his lifeguard uniform.

Oswald swallowed, the action not as painful as he had expected, and he guessed he had been given something. Must have been because he couldn’t muster up the appropriate panic at the sight of the scrapbook in Jim’s hands, nor the other two stacked neatly on the bedside table.

“I didn’t even know your name,” Jim said, a good enough detective to follow his gaze. “I noticed you though. You were always looking at me.”

He shifted again, just enough to gaze up at the ceiling. Just enough that maybe - just maybe - Jim wouldn’t see the treacherous water in his eyes before he could blink it into submission.

“You still do,” Jim said, voice rough. “I don’t mind it.”

The anger came at that, overriding the caution and the knowledge he ought to lie still and recover more. That this wasn’t a good time, or a good place, but Jim was at his side in a moment, pushing him back to lay against the mattress and warning again about the damage he would do to himself if he wasn’t careful.

“I don’t want your pity,” he spat, as though his vehemence could hide the truth of the matter, but Jim didn’t rant or rave in return. Didn’t turn on his heel and disappear back to the good and the righteous, and didn’t even go back to his chair and pretend the outburst had never happened. Instead he sank to the floor right where he was, pale and anxious like Oswald hadn’t seen him since another near death experience.

“Maybe I want yours. I don’t even know who I am anymore.”

He reached for Jim’s hand blindly. Jim squeezed at it too tight, the fear writ all across his face, and Oswald had to whet dry lips. Had to squeeze back with everything he had, everything he had ever wanted from the man in front of him, and told him simply,
“You’re not as good as you want to be. You’re better than you think you are. You're still the closest thing this city has to a hero.”

“I wish I could save you,” Jim whispered finally, the medication mixing with the sentiment to leave him feeling as though he were floating. Lost in a dream somewhere, with Jim's hand in his own, and Jim's head resting against the side of his mattress.

“You're welcome to try,” he offered up, words slurring, and perhaps he only imagined it - or perhaps Jim's lips really did brush his hand in silent promise.

Jim always did have to be a hero.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'ice cream'.

Just some established relationship feels.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You’re doing it on purpose.”

“Doing what?” Oswald asked, playing the innocent even as he swirled his tongue around the ice cream cone in his hand. Jim flushed harder, managed to glance away for a moment before giving in to the urge to stare openly, and Oswald smirked happily to himself.

It was all Jim’s own doing. He was the one who had insisted on not wasting the opportunity to be outside in the sun doing something together, those big blue eyes twisting his heart up in knots no matter how many times Jim turned them on him. He was the one who had suggested Oswald sit in the shade and cool down rather than them simply giving up and going home again.

“I love the great outdoors,” Oswald went on. “Why would I want to spend my day off in the air conditioned comfort of my own home when I could be here, slowly expiring of heat exhaustion?”

He punctuated it with another long swipe of his tongue, enjoying the strangled sound Jim made in response. The way Jim shifted in his seat, awkward, like people weren’t already pointing and staring at the sight of the Penguin and the Deputy Police Commissioner.

“When I could be here, partaking of the best ice cream our fine city has to offer?”

So the weathered sign behind them proclaimed anyway. It was perfectly acceptable as the stuff went, cold and sweet - and proving yet again that Jim was ridiculously predictable. Except he was just gearing up for some truly exaggerated appreciation when Jim’s hand clamped around his wrist.

When Jim met his gaze with an expression that made him want to quit playing around. Made him wish fervently that they were at home, away from prying eyes, where he could go ahead and do exactly what he wanted, without the worry of being arrested for public indecency.

“I don’t want to have to hide away indoors,” Jim said solemnly, the grip on his wrist loosening but no less intense for it, “I’m not ashamed of what we’re doing.”

The words were enough to take his breath away. Enough to have his own cheeks burning because perhaps that had been part of his reluctance, along with the heat and the general discomfort. He didn’t want to embarrass Jim. Didn’t want to push too far at the boundaries of what they were building together.

“If you let that ice cream drip over my suit I’ll be forced to murder you,” was what he said aloud, too aware of where they were, and who might be listening out for signs that the Penguin was going soft in his old age.
Jim just used the hand at his wrist to bring the thing to his own lips, tongue moving in broad
sweeps over the dessert, eyes bright with amused challenge.

Apparently two could play at that game.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter
@falsteloj. :)}
Fan

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'Fan'.

Future fic with Jim desperate to be a good uncle.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Barbara never asked for much. She didn’t nag, and she didn’t cajole, and when other parents of teenagers - Alvarez, mostly - told him he didn’t know how lucky he was, all Jim could think was that he’d gladly take the temper tantrums over seeing a carbon copy of the miserably serious kid he had once been.

Because he knew better than most what she was going through. Understood what it was to lose the people you loved most, and the pressure you could put on yourself to grow up quicker. Barbara was already older than her years, too earnest and too solemn, and if there was any way in the world he could get his hands on tickets to this dumb pop concert he was going to go for it.

He was kept on hold for hours only to be told it was a no go. Queued through his lunch hour every day for a week to no avail, and chased up endless adverts and rumors of friends of friends who had actually managed to get hold of an extra ticket. Finally, he handed over an obscene amount of money only to see the same guy at the precinct the following day, Yardley beside herself to be bringing in such a notorious forger.

“There please tell me you didn’t pay the cash up front,” Harvey said, in a tone that suggested he was never going to see that money again. Put a hand on his shoulder in a gesture that said that he knew it had been more than he really could afford in the first place. “Babs will understand,” Harvey offered, the hand lingering, and Jim nodded stiffly.

That was the problem.

“I don’t like them that much anyway,” Barbara told him later, exactly as predicted. It might have been convincing, even, if her bedroom walls weren’t literally covered floor to ceiling in posters of the decade’s biggest selling boyband. They were, he knew, because it felt like he had sat through every television appearance, every radio interview, every behind the scenes vox pop that could possibly exist of them.

He knew all the lyrics by heart. Could name their pets and their favorite brands of soda. Dreamed about them sometimes, which was the worst of all, waking up afterwards covered in cold sweat, horrified by the vision of a world in which he accidentally handed Harvey reports with initialled little love-hearts in the margin.

Harvey, for his part, pulled every string he could. Awkwardly told him that it was his own GPU anti-corruption initiative that was proving the stumbling block and, when Jim sighed and suggested aloud he take Barbara to the cinema, or the arcade, or something for the evening, Harvey hurriedly added that he ought to know that the Commissioner had suspended all leave, like it was the Pope
not a few spotty teenage boys who were paying the city a visit.

“She wants every officer in the department on security,” Harvey sighed, “I’m expecting her to have Tuttle dragged out of his hospital bed at any minute.”

Tuttle did actually report for duty the following morning, though both of his legs were still in plaster cast. “Cheer up, it might never happen,” he advised, and Jim hoped it was just the painkillers talking because he couldn’t take being lectured on the benefits of a positive outlook from the most maudlin man he had ever encountered.

The truth was that he felt like a failure. Roger would have got hold of tickets somehow, he didn’t doubt it, and his stomach twisted up in knots when he heard Barbara crying beneath the sound of the latest hit single, curled up on her bed with a framed photograph of her parents.

It was that moment he thought of when he personally delivered the news that the Penguin’s none too vague tip-offs had been acted upon, that his business rivals had been denied bail, and Oswald gave his usual response, asking if there was anything he could do for him. He thought of the catch in Barbara’s voice when she told him she was fine, and he thought of his own sense of helplessness, watching her try to pretend that she was being honest.

He thought of how much he was probably going to regret this, then went ahead and did it anyway.

“You don’t want much, do you, Jim?” Oswald said in turn, raising an eyebrow as he poured a finger of expensive whiskey into a tumbler and held it out to him. Jim took it, biting back the urge to refuse lest it ruin his chances, and Oswald drummed his long fingers against the desktop. “You might as well be asking me to stop the world spinning.”

Jim drained the glass. Put it down in one smooth motion and opened his mouth before he could think better of what he was about to do.

“I could make it worth your while.”

Oswald just gazed back at him, expression revealing nothing. He had come a long way from the days when he was Fish’s umbrella boy - the days when Jim knew for certain that it would be an offer Oswald wouldn’t be able to refuse.

These days he wasn’t sure at all. Oswald was no longer an enemy, but he was nothing approaching a friend either. They worked together when it was in both of their interests. Shared information when it seemed a lesser evil, and occasionally shared something from Oswald’s cut glass decanters, because it suited the other man’s twisted sense of propriety.

“It sounds like you’re offering me a blank check,” Oswald said finally, tone and posture still unreadable.

Jim swallowed thickly and wondered how much the fresh faced rookie he had once been would hate the man he had become.

“It sounds about right then.”

He didn’t tell anyone what he had done, ashamed on the one hand and afraid of building Barbara’s hopes up on the other. Oswald might not deliver, he told himself. Oswald might not care enough to even bother trying. But two tickets arrived three days before the concert, addressed to Barbara, and the sheer delight on her face was enough to overwhelm the fear the accompanying note inspired in him.
‘From an old friend,’ Oswald had written, simple words in careful copperplate, and Jim pushed it roughly from his mind, determined not to give Barbara any reason to worry. To not just be a regular kid for a few hours.

She took a friend from school, the two of them so excited it was infectious, and he kept his safety lecture to the bare minimum, finally getting interrupted at around the 20 minute mark.

“We’ll be fine, Uncle Jim, I promise. You’re going to be there, anyway.”

He wasn’t, not quite. Instead he was stationed outside on crowd control, Harvey stressing out to all of them over their radios and warning them that it would only take one overexcited teenage girl to get through the cordon for the Commissioner to look long and hard at their funding settlement. It was almost a relief when the screaming started and he could no longer hear it.

Almost.

Because it went on and on, fever pitch excitement that only served to set his teeth on edge. Unrelenting boredom as the thing actually got going, and bewilderment when the tears started flowing.

“It was the best night of my entire life,” Barbara told him later, without any trace of irony, and even if there was no accounting for taste Jim was beyond happy for her.

Was ready to uphold his end of the bargain, and a few nights later he was stood nervously in Oswald’s office, equal parts relieved and afraid that Barbara was at a sleepover and nobody was going to miss him until morning.

Nobody was even going to know, maybe, what degrading things the Penguin wanted to see him do for him.

Except, Oswald didn’t seem in any hurry to get started. Invited him to sit and poured him a drink, and asked him casually if Barbara had enjoyed the concert.

“I don’t want to talk about Barbara,” he ground out, instantly on the defensive, but Oswald just sighed melodramatically.

“It doesn’t matter what you want, Jim. Or have you forgotten our bargain already?”

He forced himself not to lose his temper. Took a deep breath and started talking because he had been an idiot, truly, to bring his niece to the attention of a mob boss. He kept going when Oswald asked questions, sipped at his drink when Oswald refreshed it, and suddenly looked up to realize he had been there over an hour and Oswald was simply watching him, a fond smile playing about his lips.

“So you’re a pseudo-fan yourself then?” Oswald teased, pulling him back into the flow of the conversation. He ended up a little drunk and a lot amused, startled into laughter when Oswald told him the tale of one of his employees, a lumbering mountain of a man Jim had run into time and again at the precinct, who had tied himself into linguistic knots attempting to claim that he had only camped outside the ticket office on behalf of a non-existent girlfriend.

“I did consider it,” Jim admitted. “If I hadn’t been working I can’t swear it wouldn’t have happened.”

Oswald laughed in turn, the sound surprisingly appealing, and he was shocked when Oswald eventually told him quietly - reluctantly - that it was late, and that he probably needed to be going.
It was gone 1am and the decanter was approaching empty, and that had to be the reason why he was so confused - why he felt so disappointed.

“You didn’t get what you wanted,” he frowned as he was about to leave, thinking of the dangers of unreturned favors, and perhaps it was his imagination but Oswald’s expression softened as he said,

“Didn’t I? I’ve been trying to tell you for years, Jim - all I’ve ever asked from you is your friendship.”

It was the drink, definitely, that had the words twisting this way and that as he processed them. The late hour, obviously, that had him searching Oswald’s face intently, his own voice not quite steady as he questioned,

“And is that all you want? My friendship?”

It wasn’t just him who could feel the tension in the room, couldn’t be, and Oswald finally confirmed it with the slow smile that spread across his features and set Jim's pulse to racing.

“I think it would be an agreeable starting point.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'sunset'.

For an ask on Tumblr - 'Riding Crop. "Hit me," said Jim.' I was inspired by the pics of Sofia Falcone in her horse riding get up. :D

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You never learn, do you, Jim?”

Jim scowled, gaze snapping from Sofia’s retreating form back to Oswald. Gone was the cowering umbrella boy, along with the sycophantic social climber. In their place stood a man at the top of his game.

A man who knew exactly what he wanted and was confident he was going to get it.

Oswald picked up the wine glass Sofia had abandoned, holding eye contact as he drained it. There was something about the sight - Oswald’s glittering eyes and Sofia’s lipstick smears - that sent a thrill of fear down his spine.

They were alone out here. Far away from listening ears and prying eyes, and Oswald didn’t miss the way he watched the swipe of the other man’s tongue against his lips. Didn’t bother pretending that they didn’t both know exactly what it signified.

“She can’t give you what you need. You know that, don’t you?”

Jim looked away, the righteous anger warring with his shame at the truth of the statement. He wasn’t cut out for romance. Wasn’t built for the rosy cheeked children and the white picket fence.

He was a virus.

A monster.

What he needed was somebody who understood. Somebody who didn’t want more from him than he was able to give - no promises, and no tomorrows.

When he looked back he saw that Sofia had left her riding crop on the table; he swallowed at the sight of the needlessly expensive embossed leather, a symbol of power every bit as potent as Oswald’s carefully tailored ensemble. Oswald followed his gaze and trailed his pale fingertips along the handle.

Took it in hand and cracked it through the air, subtle glee playing across his face as Jim shuddered, helpless.

“I can. I can give you exactly what you need - all you have to do is ask me for it.”
He couldn’t. Wouldn’t. Opened his mouth anyway, his voice scratched up so bad as to be almost unrecognizable.

“Hit me.”

“I’m not sure I heard you correctly,” Oswald said, smirk suggesting otherwise, and Jim gave into the darkness everyone had always been able to see him. The weakness that had always been destined to ruin him.

“Hit me,” he snarled, pressing in closer. “I want you to hit me.”

Oswald didn’t shrink away. Didn’t react at all, not visibly, though Jim’s chest was heaving with the enormity of it.

“Follow me,” Oswald said finally, and the sun was setting now, the soft glow of the sky jarring with the raging of his emotions. The light failed as Oswald lead him to some kind of guest house, disappeared entirely as Oswald directed him to remove his suit jacket.

It made sense, was only right really, because what they were about to do was best suited to the shadows. It was where he belonged, that was what Oswald had been trying to tell him all along, and he hissed through his teeth as the first blow landed.

He was bent over some ornate desk, hands braced against its surface, and Oswald hit him so hard the whole thing jostled. He couldn’t help it, the smack of the crop pushing him forward, and when he groaned aloud, lower lip bruised and swollen from his attempts to keep quiet, Oswald only hit him harder.

“You’re going to feel this for days,” Oswald told him, breathless but authoritative, “every time you try and sit down you’re going to think of who did this to you. How much you wanted me to do it to you. How much better I am at it than she’s ever going to be.”

It was the final humiliation, the proof that Oswald truly knew him better than anyone, and when Oswald let up he was so close - so far gone - that he fell against the desk, hips jerking at the contact, desperate, as he humiliated himself still further.

His knees gave out from under him when he was done, so that he had to gaze up at Oswald through the tears clinging to his eyelashes. Oswald simply smiled at him in turn, high spots of color in his cheeks but otherwise seemingly unmoved by the entire scenario.

“I think I’ll keep this as a memento,” he said calmly, hand stroking along the length of the crop in a way that made Jim shiver. “Feel free to tell your little girlfriend exactly where it’s gone though, won’t you?”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'Beach Ball'

Fanmix! Because the prompt was a ball, like a dance, geddit? Sigh, I know…

Still, here are eight new wave-ish songs that make me think of Gobblepot. And, yes, I totally reused the Gotham cityscape back cover I made for the [Gordlock fanmix](#) I did. I’m that lazy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

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1. Pity Party - Melanie Martinez [LINK]

   Did my invitations disappear?
   Why’d I put my heart on every cursive letter?
   Tell me why the hell no one is here.
   Tell me what to do to make it all feel better.

   Kind of sums up S1 Oswald for me. He just wants Jim to like him!

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2. Lucky Number - Lene Lovich [LINK]

   I never used to cry ‘cos I was all alone.
   For me, myself and I is all I’ve ever known.
   I never felt the need to have a hand to hold. …
   The rearrangement suits me now, I must confess.
   The number one was dull and number two is best.
A weird jarring song about going from not caring about romantic entanglements to being obsessed with a newcomer. Could it be more Oswald?

3. *Hide and Seek* - Martha and the Muffins [LINK]

Run while you can  
I'm behind you  
I'll find you  
Wherever you hide  
It's no secret  
I can't be denied.

The obsession continues to grow…

4. *Merry Go Round* - Susan Fassbender [LINK]

Everywhere you go, whoever you meet.  
Standing in a shop, walking in the street.  
Rushing to the office, riding underground.  
I’m another face on the merry go round.

And grow…

5. *Spellbound* - Siouxsie and the Banshees [LINK]

And don’t forget  
When your elders forget  
To say their prayers  
Take them by the legs  
And throw them down the stairs.

Oswald’s method for getting to the top.

6. *Never Say Never* - Romeo Void [LINK]

I might like you better,  
If we slept together.  
But there's somethin'  
In your eyes that says,  
Maybe that's never.  
Never say never.

The honeymoon period is over.

7. *Words Fell Down* - Kim Wilde [LINK]

Never say you’re sorry, never show emotion.  
Never show a good hand, never give a notion.  
Don’t you feel it’s obscene?  
Do you feel a thing at all?
Post-Arkham blues.

8. Numb - Marina and the Diamonds [LINK]

Forgo family, forgo friends
It’s how it started, how it ends
I can’t open up and cry
‘Cause I’ve been silent all my life
I feel numb most of the time
The lower I get, the higher I’ll climb.

The thing about Gobblepot for me is that on the surface they have absolutely nothing in common, not beyond moving in the same circles. But, beneath it, they’re both messed up people on a constant search for validation. Jim sees so much of himself in Oswald it terrifies him.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'tan'

For the prompt: ‘Oswald remains insecure about his leg because he sees Jim as perfect. Jim decides to share his own struggle with a disability (e.g., dyslexia).’

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It had been six months since Jim had first said ‘I love you’ and Oswald was still waiting for the punchline.

He trusted Jim, adored Jim, but he wasn’t blind to the differences between them. Jim was one of the good guys - a war hero with movie star looks - and he was never going to be anything approaching it. He was a freak, that was what people said about him. An ugly twisted man with a twisted ugly soul.

There was no way Jim was going to settle with that for the long haul.

Rather than smooth the rough edges and make the going easier, Oswald couldn’t help but live up to his reputation. Tested Jim with snappish, irritable behavior, and went out of his way to prove to him that it wouldn’t work, that he would never change, because if he pushed Jim perhaps it wouldn’t hurt as much as if Jim simply pulled away of his own accord.

The problem was that Jim refused to rise to the bait. He got moody sometimes, sure, and even stormed off once, leaving Oswald feeling sick and shaky with the hollow victory. Occasionally he was hurt, Oswald could tell, and the memory of tears in Jim’s eyes, sighted before the other man could turn away and hide them, never failed to make his heart seize up in his chest.

Generally speaking though, Jim took everything he threw at him without comment. Told him once, calm and earnest, that he knew exactly what he was trying to do, because he had been ruining relationships with people he loved all his life.

“I want this,” Jim said in the dark intimacy of Oswald's own bedroom, “I’m not playing games with you.”

It was true in more ways than one because Jim wasn’t content to be perfect on the inside, he had to strive for it on the outside too. He went running, and spent time in the gym, and played tennis with Ivy on the neglected courts of his father’s estate, his tanned skin only more gorgeous when contrasted with the crisp white of his t-shirt.

For his part, Oswald struggled with the stairs most days. Wore his expensive tailoring like armour, and grew frustrated at the way his bad leg dragged, the pain of it nothing compared to the bitter humiliation.

“It’s my fault,” Jim offered, contrite, as he clung to the railings of the city park with a death grip, the warm summer weather only adding insult to the injury.
“Of course it’s your fault,” he griped in turn, because he was hardly likely to have chosen to go out walking for fresh air of his own volition, and because he didn’t want Jim close enough to see what a useless mess he was.

Jim stepped in closer anyway. Slid an arm around his shoulders and guided him over to a bench, all without uttering a single word. Oswald did his best not to let on how bad it was. Clenched his hands into a fist and pressed it into ruined muscle, eyes stinging with the effort of holding back shameful tears.

Suddenly Jim was pressing something into his hands. Was handing over his own sunglasses and, though they were cheap and ridiculous, Oswald put them on anyway, more grateful than he would ever be able to say.

“I’d carry you if I didn’t think you’d try to murder me,” Jim said quietly, and the undignified snort of laughter escaped him before he could do a thing about it. Jim quirked a smile at him in response, like he couldn’t help it either, and he leaned heavily on Jim all through the walk back to the car, torn between wanting to collapse into Jim’s arms and crawl rather than accept help from anyone.

Later, after he had taken his pills and soaked in a hot bath, he felt better. Well enough to face Jim again, and his breath caught as he hesitated in the doorway, certain Jim hadn’t heard his approach. If he had he would be acting the broad shouldered cop, not sitting with his face buried in his hands, shoulders slumped and elbows braced on his knees.

He looked lost, miserable, and for once Oswald didn’t care about leaving himself exposed and vulnerable. He couldn’t bear to see Jim suffer.

“What’s wrong?” He asked, tone soft, though Jim jolted as though he had shouted. He scrubbed a hand across his face, like it could erase what he had already seen, and shrugged as he tried to claim it was nothing. Saw the dubious look in his eye, must have, because when Oswald sat beside him on the chaise Jim put a hand to his cheek and leaned in to kiss him.

It was focused and passionate. Meant to be distracting, if Oswald was any judge of Jim’s repertoire, and he let himself get swept away by the intensity. He was so lost to it that it took a moment for his head to clear enough to work out what Jim was doing, why he had pulled away, and then it all became clear because Jim was sinking to his knees and tugging at his necktie.

This was the juncture where Oswald usually stopped him. Claimed concern on behalf of his wardrobe, so he could deal with his own cufflinks and tie pin, before diverting Jim’s attention. Jim was something to see naked - someone worth worshipping - and Oswald liked to moan wantonly in his ear, begging him to peel off his suit while he clung to as much of his own clothing as he could manage.

This time Jim whispered heatedly against the skin of his neck, “Please, I want to see you.”

When Jim got insistent Oswald liked to turn to the cover of darkness. Relied on the shadows to hide behind, because while Jim might be able to feel all the imperfections beneath his fingers, at least he would still have plausible deniability.

“Please,” Jim breathed again, reading his mind. “Let me see.”

It was the way Jim’s voice didn’t stay quite steady, maybe, or the red tinge still visible around his eyes. It was the medication, perhaps, or the lingering swell of fond devotion that had washed over him out at the park. Whatever the reason, Oswald found himself nodding, stiltedly, and Jim distracted him anew by reaching up for a kiss that had his head foggy and his skin tingling.
Jim undressed him slowly, carefully, and he had to fight back the urge to wrap his arms around himself when Jim succeeded in stripping him to the waist. Jim’s fingers were reverent however, his touches sweet and gentle, the sensation surpassed only by Jim’s mouth following along the path they had laid.

He had never let Jim drag it out like this before, afraid to lose control while Jim was still dressed and coherent, but Jim met his gaze when his fingers finally strayed to the waistband of his trousers. Looked up at him with those big blue eyes, soft with emotion in a way he had never allowed himself to dream of, and his own fingers trembled where they tangled with Jim’s, unbuttoning his fly and giving Jim permission to go further.

“Does it hurt?” Jim asked when he had him stripped to his underwear, fingers hovering just above his calf. He knew the answer, had to after the events of that afternoon, and Jim clarified, “Will I make it worse if I touch it?”

Oswald shook his head, unable to even look at the mangled mess of his leg. It was part of him, nominally, but the sight still made him sick. It was a symbol of failure, of weakness, and he didn’t know what to do when Jim bent his head to kiss along the scarring, overwhelmed at the trust he was placing in Jim - and the increasing certainty that Jim wasn’t going to abuse it.

That perhaps Jim wasn’t simply paying lip service when he told him that he loved him. That he wanted him. That the view he was drinking in was getting him worked up and desperate.

They kissed again, Jim pressing closer and closer, until he couldn’t deny the truth of the statement. Until Jim lurched to his feet and held a hand out. Until they fell into his bed, for once the lights still blazing.

“You’re overdressed, Jim,” he managed, voice rough, and Jim finally shrugged out of his shirt. Stripped naked with none of the care he had taken over Oswald, then removed the last of Oswald’s barriers only to go back to lavishing attention on his bad leg. Kept at it until he was squirming with need, helpless, and couldn’t keep quiet when Jim quit teasing and really touched him.

When Jim went down on him, hot and wet and eager, even as he worked two fingers into him. It was always good, Jim always knew what he was doing, but it felt more intense than he could ever remember. Was overlaid with emotion, buckets of it, and he had to tug at Jim’s hair until he got the idea and surged up to kiss him. He didn’t want it to stop, didn’t want to let go, and somehow Jim managed to co-ordinate everything well enough that he didn’t have to.

Jim looked drunk when he braced himself up a little, when their eyes met as Jim rolled his hips forward, and there was something about knowing that he had done that to a man like Jim that had him arching and pleading. He felt frantic, desperate, and it seemed that even Jim’s reserve of self-control wasn’t inexhaustible.

“Please,” he whined out, far gone enough not to care what he sounded like, and Jim gripped at one of his hands, too tight to be strictly comfortable. Made breathless sounds of his own, moving without any semblance of rhythm, spurred on by the fingers he clawed down Jim’s back in encouragement.

Jim clung to him afterwards, because maybe it wasn’t just his mind he had managed to blow. Oswald stroked the sweat slick hair back from Jim’s forehead, coddled him in a way he had never really let himself before, and Jim soaked it up happily. Brought his hand to his lips to press a kiss to it, eventually, and said scratchily,

“I don’t know how else to show you that I mean what I say. I’m not good with words, I don’t know
how to explain it any better. I just love you, Oswald. Even the parts you think I shouldn’t.”

His head told him to stay silent and let the conversation end there. Jim loved him, everything was wonderful, why rock the boat at all? His heart, on the other hand, demanded more. Was through being thought aloof and uncaring, and it was the latter which won out when he petted delicately at Jim’s hair, admitting,

“I know. I know you do. What I don’t understand is why, Jim. You’re - you’re you. You’re perfect. I’m… Well, I’m not.”

“You’re clever,” Jim shot back instantly, like it was something worth noting, and he could feel the frown pulling at his brow as he countered,

“And? You’re hardly a dunce, are you, Detective Gordon? Although, looking at your colleagues, perhaps it doesn’t count for much.”

He meant it as a joke. Never once imagined that Jim might take it personally, but Oswald could feel the way he tensed up in his arms, and this wasn’t about badmouthing the rest of the department. Jim complained about their incompetence often enough. This was about him, specifically, and Oswald shifted until he could look Jim in the eye, genuinely surprised by the self-doubt he saw there.

“You’re not a dunce, Jim. Trust me, I’ve had plenty of experience with them.”

“I’m not good with words,” Jim reiterated, like that was supposed to symbolise something other than his poorly polished social skills. “I’m not good with numbers. I failed the GED. Twice. If it wasn’t for the army I wouldn’t even be able to read a crime report, let alone write one.”

The shock must have shown on his face, in spite of his best efforts, and Jim shrugged a little - a hint of color in his cheeks - and explained,

“I’m dyslexic. Dyscalcic. Growing up everyone just thought I was stupid or lazy, or both.”

“But that’s not your fault,” Oswald pointed out, his own brain stumbling over the idea of Jim really struggling at anything. Jim not wanting to go to school, feeling useless, blaming himself. It felt far too close to his own experience.

“That’s not the point,” Jim said, interrupting that line of thinking. “It’s still part of me - like your leg is part of you. It just is. We can’t change it.”

The emotion clogged in his throat. Had him pushing closer to Jim, had him accepting Jim’s embrace, Jim’s kisses, and trying to offer comfort in return.

“I’m not perfect,” Jim said against his jaw bone, his hand stroking down the awkward curve of his spine that had caused him problems long before his leg was broken, “nobody’s perfect.”

“Perfect’s overrated, is that what you’re saying?”

Jim grinned at him, eyes suspiciously bright, and confessed,

“I was going to say I think you’re pretty close to it, but I already told you words aren’t my strong point. Yours are better.”
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Trip

Chapter Summary

#GobblepotSummer2017 - 'trip'

I went for the super literal interpretation. ;)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Running a nightclub wasn’t as glamorous as he had once imagined. He remembered it all well enough from last time - the late night punch ups and the early morning deliveries. The endless paperwork and the unmarked little envelopes for the police and the inspectors from the city council.

He had cracked down on that, during his time as Mayor, and now he was living to regret the decision.

At least he had better cash flow this time around. Money to pay staff to get on with the mundanities of the thing, and the status to not need to worry about the bulk of would be trouble makers.

Jim Gordon couldn’t resist, all the same, and Oswald smoothed down his jacket and waistcoat after being told Jim was out front again, for the third time that week. Oswald had already told him it was pointless. He wasn’t going to slip up, and surely Jim had more worthwhile things he could be doing.

Other club owners to be annoying.

Jim was stubborn though, ridiculously so. When he scented a bone he just kept digging, and when there were reports of foul play on the premises he was determined to be the one to make the arrest and see Oswald’s name dragged through the papers.

Either that or he just couldn’t resist the draw of the place. Actually wanted to sip iced mineral water with a sour expression on his face, the furrow in his brow only deepening when Oswald was inevitably called from his office to entertain him.

“You’re spoiling me, Jim,” he greeted under the dim club lighting, refusing to acknowledge the effect the sight of Jim had on him, even after everything. “Tongues will start wagging about this blatant favoritism.”

“I was just passing,” Jim said gruffly, and Oswald hurriedly schooled his face into neutrality. This wasn’t police business.

“In that case,” he gestured expansively around at the place, “please enjoy yourself.”

Jim scowled still harder, so hard Oswald felt like commenting that he ought to hope the wind didn’t change, and then Jim was turning to storm out of the place in a full blown display of ill temper. At least that was what Oswald assumed he would have done, had the idiots on his pay roll not been
too busy doing God only knew what to pick up the empty glasses laying around the edge of the stairwell leading down from the raised seating area.

Because it was as though the scene played out in slow motion - slow enough that he was aware it was happening, but not slow enough to do anything about it. He cried out, at least, Jim’s name torn from him, and he limped down the stairs with as much haste as he could manage.

Jim was out cold on the floor, leg twisted at an ugly angle, and Oswald didn’t over-think the situation. Just demanded somebody do something, quickly, and when help arrived clambered into the back of the ambulance alongside Jim.

“You hit your head,” Oswald explained when Jim came around enough to make sense of what he was saying, “your leg is broken.”

Jim riled at that, attempting to sit up and get out of bed like he might be lying, and Oswald had to put a hand on his shoulder and encourage him to relax back against the pillows. There would be more than enough time for Jim to get acquainted with the restrictions of the crutches and the plaster cast.

“This is your fault,” Jim told him, angry as usual. “I ought to sue you.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Oswald countered hurriedly, and it was less that he feared litigation, and much more that he was completely willing to make suitable recompense. “I’m sure we can come to some kind of arrangement.”

Jim sulked and pouted, looked far too rumpled and adorable for it to be effective, and somehow the offer was requested, made and received that Jim was going to look over his books. Was going to sit in his club, and go through his ledgers, and Oswald wasn’t going to try and weasel out of it.

“I wouldn’t dream of it, Jim,” Oswald said, fingers itching to comb Jim’s dishevelled hair back into place, and he did his utmost to keep the smile off his face when Jim agreed to his suggestion that his driver drop Jim home, rather than wake Bullock up in the early hours of the morning.

“He’s probably drunk too much to drive by now anyway,” Jim confessed, the painkillers loosening his tongue. They must have been playing havoc all over, because Jim let him help him into the building, into the elevator, and even into his apartment.

“I’ll be around tomorrow to look at those ledgers,” Jim warned him, grunting as Oswald helped him into bed, and Oswald just took a moment to soak in the sight and the scent and the atmosphere, before nodding,

“Until tomorrow then.”

Tomorrow rolled around and really did bring Jim with it. Brought all his frustration and impatience too, because he was struggling with the cast, had been told to take a few days off from the job, and because Oswald always ensured his accounting was above reproach.

He wasn’t stupid.

“You’re more than welcome to stay,” he said when Jim finally gave up on the ledgers. “Ask for whatever you want, it’s on the house. Unless that will affect your number crunching.”

Jim glared but was either too stubborn to back down, or too exhausted to get up and leave. Whatever the reality of the situation, he found himself a booth, drank a flashy cocktail Oswald had often daydreamed about serving Jim back at Mooney’s, and didn’t even argue when, again,
Oswald gave him a ride home when it got late and saw him up to his apartment.

“I know you’re up to something at that place,” Jim told him, perhaps a little tipsy - Oswald had gone for generous measures. “I will find out what it is.”

“I wish I could help you,” Oswald said in turn, but the truth was that he was keeping his ventures separate, because who knew when it would pay to appear nothing but a legitimate business owner.

Jim kept returning regardless. Sat at the corner of the bar night after night, or else in some tucked away booth where he drank water or nursed a single whiskey. Drove his staff to distraction because cops weren’t good for business, especially ones that were striving for teetotal.

Oswald told them bluntly that if they didn’t like it they could look for work elsewhere. They ought to be thankful they still had jobs, anyway, and he went from watching Jim up on the balcony, to sitting beside him. To making small talk and touching his arm, daringly, Jim neither snatching his limb away or glaring in retaliation.

It was confusing, exhilarating, torture. It made him feel like Fish’s umbrella boy all over again, breathless at just the thought of Jim’s proximity.

He didn’t know what he would have done, then, at the reality of being offered a drink and a seat in Jim’s very own apartment. Because Jim kept accepting his lifts home. Didn’t question why Oswald kept accompanying him and, finally, the unthinkable happened and Oswald heard himself suggest that perhaps Jim ought to play host one evening.

That perhaps the Iceberg Lounge could manage without him for a few hours, because the cast was due to come off any day, and this was his final chance before Jim returned to whatever it was he previously did to fill his evenings.

To his surprise, Jim agreed to the idea. Opened the door to him when he arrived, and ushered him inside to find the place looking as though it had been specially cleaned and tidied for the occasion.

“Why were you in the club that evening?” He asked two full wine glasses in, when Jim finished confessing how eagerly he was looking forward to being able to wear his favorite suits again.

Oswald was looking forward to it too - Jim might not have the best dress sense, it was true, but he cut a fine figure in his work suits all the same - and the question seemed a safer bet than that admission.

Jim frowned just a little, considering rather than angry, and said eventually,

“I guess I just wanted to see what everyone was talking about. It’s a nice place, you’re doing a good job with it.”

Oswald flushed with the praise, could feel his cheeks heating up though he wished they wouldn’t, and Jim just kept going, every bit as stubborn as Oswald had always known him to be.

“I didn’t just want to see the club - you see, what I’m trying to say -”

Jim was working himself up into linguistic knots. Was fidgeting with the stem of his wine glass and looking handsomely flustered. Was about to do something that Oswald had scarcely dared dream about, even alone in the privacy of his own bedroom.

“Thanks for putting up with me the last few weeks. I would have hated to be stuck here, and Harvey was adamant I couldn’t stay at the station every evening.”
He nodded, throat thick with the strain of not giving in to disappointment. Jim Gordon had just thanked him. Jim Gordon was sat next to him, had eaten dinner with him, and if he had been hoping for still more, that was just his own selfish nature.

It always got him into trouble. It had destroyed what he could have had with Ed, before it had chance to get started, and it had seen him knocked back and humiliated, punishment for being weak and soft hearted.

He was still at it, even now. Jim was trying to inch close enough to the coffee table to put his glass down on it, the bulk of the cast making his movements awkward. Oswald reached out to take it from him, his own leg at least not trouble enough to prevent him managing that small service, but his fingers brushed against Jim’s own and somehow the glass ended up on the floor, red wine sinking into the carpet.

He opened his mouth to say something, made to do something, but Jim had seen it happen and just didn’t care. Couldn’t do, because he leaned forward instead, fingers tangling with his own, and pressed their lips together. Kissed him, properly, and Oswald could only kiss back in turn, the wine only tasting better on Jim’s tongue.

His head was spinning by the time they pulled apart. His pulse racing and his thoughts foggy. Jim just kissed him all over again, hands in his hair this time, and Oswald thought later that it might have ended up going a lot further, the two of them helpless in the face of it, had Jim not broke off into a curse when he tried to maneuver his leg, and Oswald not yelped in pain when the movement jostled his own limb.

Jim rested his forehead against Oswald’s, his eyes shut as he attempted to catch his breath.

“I’m sorry,” Jim whispered, stirring up all kinds of fear in his gut. Cold rejection and the lingering pain of a broken heart, because in the sanctity of his own mind he wasn’t above admitting what he felt for Jim. But Jim only brushed a chaste kiss to his cheek before sitting back to look at him.

“What are you sorry for?” He managed, pleased that there was no outward sign of his inner turmoil, and Jim gave him a smile that lit up his whole face, something soft and fond in his big blue eyes.

“Going too fast, not going fast enough? I’m getting this off tomorrow,” he gestured at his leg, “is that too soon to ask if we can do this again?”

“I don’t know,” Oswald said slowly, the words sinking and a thousand wonderful possibilities forming, “tonight you’d be rather at my mercy. I like the idea.”

Jim flushed up beautifully, his mouth hanging open for a moment before he nodded, over eager.

“That could work.”

Oswald drained the last of the wine from his own glass. Stood as smoothly and gracefully as he could, too aware of the open door of Jim’s bedroom in his line of vision, and put a steadying hand on Jim’s arm when he made the same effort, and didn’t let go until they reached their destination.

The last thing either of them needed right now was another accident.

Chapter End Notes
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Complicated

Chapter Summary

For the prompt - 'Discovering Oswald's secret love for stockings/heels/panties awakens something in Jim.'

Just some PWP.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim had never considered himself a particularly complicated kind of guy. He tried and he failed. He wanted and he didn’t get. That was life, that was simply how it was, and he didn’t understand how he had come to be here, fingertips trailing up the length of Oswald Cobblepot’s stocking clad calf.

He was on his knees, his arousal throbbing against the confines of his zipper, and he concentrated on keeping his touch careful and delicate. It wouldn’t do to snag the silky material with his ungainly fingers. Instead the contact was barely there, light as a whisper, and Oswald made a bit off sound when he skirted the back of his knee, teasing.

Jim looked up at that, his own breath coming fast and shallow, and the high color in Oswald’s cheeks combined with the dark want in his eyes was enough to make him shiver.

“I suppose you believe me now?”

He nodded, obedient and eager, afraid that if he opened his mouth the spell would be broken. Because their relationship had shifted over the last few months, it was true. They had become, if not friends, then willing to work together when circumstances encouraged it.

When there were worse enemies at large, greater evils to scheme against, and if Jim had taken to occasionally accepting Oswald’s hospitality, there was nothing to it.

It simply made sense, kept the other man amenable, and part of Jim wished he had turned down the whiskey tumbler with a frown - even as the rest of him thanked deities he had never believed in for their guidance.

Stockings had always done it for him. They had reduced to him breathless shudders as a teenager, staring at pictures of almost wholesome cheesecake models, and had left him an incoherent wreck as an adult, undone by permission to trace his tongue along the back seam, or dip the very tips of his fingers beneath the denser weave of the stocking top.

He had never done a very good job of hiding it, either. Had earned himself a reputation in the army, one that made him a laughing stock, and even the guys at the precinct had their suspicions, always keen and observant for gossip where they were blind and indifferent to their actual case loads.

It had been one of them who had first mentioned, offhand, the rumor he had heard about their former Mayor and current crime lord. Jim had done his best to dismiss it, to put the idea completely from his mind, and then he had found himself sitting opposite Oswald in the other man’s private
“Sock garters press into the muscle so terribly,” Oswald breathed, unsteady, back in the present, “and I never could abide elastics.”

Jim made a sound that could have been agreement. Was more likely pure desperation, and he couldn’t stop the way his leg twitched, helpless, when his fingers caressed over the straps of the garter belt. It wasn’t lacy or coquettish, not like the kind Barbara had sometimes worn for him, enjoying the way he got himself worked into a frenzy before she ever deigned to let him touch her. Instead it was serviceable, functional yet elegant, and Jim fell forward a little, his cheek pressed against the soft fabric covering Oswald’s abdomen.

He breathed in deep, the scent of musk and soap leaving him still harder, and Oswald’s own fingers slid tentatively into his hair, the touch gentle torture.

“Tell me what you want, Jim,” he said finally, doubtless able to feel the way he was trembling with just how badly he wanted it, “What do you need from me?”

It was too much, entirely overwhelming, and he pushed his nose into Oswald’s stomach. Attempted to regain enough control to speak, then managed stiltedly,

“I want to touch you. I want - I need. I need you.”

He couldn’t say it aloud. He was worshipping at the man’s feet, salivating like a dog, and he still couldn’t bring himself to give names to the things he wanted to do to him.

With him.

This time it was Oswald who nodded, nerves just visible beneath his control of the situation, and they moved until he was leaning against the wall, to help take some of the pressure off his bad leg. Jim shuffled forward on his knees, too far gone for dignity, and he revelled in every bit off gasp and stifled whimper he pulled from the other man’s lips, his own devoted to cataloging the slender limbs in front of him.

He breathed against responsive skin, hot and damp even through the silk, fascinated at the minute tremors of the muscles beneath it. He kissed, soft and reverent, and let his tongue dip into the recess behind Oswald’s other knee, palms finally sliding up and over quivering flesh, to assist in holding Oswald steady.

“Oh,” Oswald gasped out, unfettered, when he reached bare skin, licking across it until his progress was halted by the garter strap. He kissed at it. Sucked tenderly at the skin alongside it, and Oswald’s legs started to shake fully, the sensation such a turn on Jim had to seek out the jut of Oswald’s arousal. Had to take his time edging his fingers across the black silk surface of his underwear, something that looked like french knickers to his mind, but without the lace trimmings he tended to associate with them.

It had him half out of his mind, either way, the flat of his tongue following the same path as his fingers. Oswald outright groaned at the sensation. Tipped his head back against the wall and put a hand back in his hair, firm but not forceful, and Jim’s hips snapped helplessly forward into nothing.

This was what he wanted, what he needed, and he raised his own hand to press against Oswald’s for a moment. To explain, silently, that it was okay - that it was more than okay - and when the grip tightened just slightly Jim couldn’t bear it any longer. Pulled Oswald’s erection through the
placket of his underwear and took a moment to simply feel the heat of it pressed against his cheek before opening his mouth and getting his first real taste of him.

“Jim!” Oswald cried out, hoarse and frantic, and Jim only redoubled his efforts. Only sank lower, let his mouth flood wetter, and his hands moved ceaselessly, now curled possessively around the back of a thigh, now feathering over the twisted muscle of Oswald’s injured leg. Now splayed out against one sharp hip bone while the heel of the other hand pressed down hard into his own neglected dick, the cursory stimulation threatening to have his eyes rolling back in his skull.

He swallowed around Oswald in renewed eagerness, needing to feel useful, need to know he was wanted, and Oswald pulled hard at his hair and demanded,

“Touch yourself, Jim. Please. Come on, do it for me.”

Jim made the mistake of looking up. Made eye contact he could never have been ready for, dark and intense and shadows of every moment they had ever spent in the other’s company. Every moment they had ever spent thinking about each other.

He scarcely managed to get his fly undone. Groaned, desperate, around the hardness in his mouth, and slid the fingers of his free hand underneath a garter strap and the stocking top, the feel of it against his skin driving him still higher. Then, finally, there was skin on skin contact on his dick and he was lost to it.

Couldn’t stop, couldn’t hold back, and Oswald seemed just as affected by his reaction, trying to warn him even as Jim breathed through his nose and swallowed.

“I need to sit down,” Oswald croaked, eventually, and this time Jim did succeed in hauling himself to his feet. Got both of them over to the low sofa, and Oswald really was struggling, not voicing a word of complaint when Jim pulled him in close though he was a mess, his shirt sweat sodden and his pants bearing all the signs of what they had just been doing.

Instead Oswald just buried his face in his shoulder, calming by degrees as Jim rubbed his hands across his back, lips pressing chaste kisses into his ruined hairstyle.

“I don't make a habit of this, you understand.” Oswald said by way of explanation, the faintest tinge of hysteria, and Jim didn't want to examine the hows and whys. Didn't want to make it complicated, not until he was left with absolutely no choice on the matter.

“You could do,” he said, tongue swiping across suddenly dry lips, “if you wanted to.”

Oswald tensed in his arms, relaxed again through an obvious force of will, and said quietly,

“I suppose I could, if the opportunity were to present itself.”

Jim smiled in spite of himself. Perhaps Oswald wasn't interested in over-complicating things, either.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

For the commentfic prompt: Gotham (TV), Jim Gordon/Oswald Cobblepot, I fought the law and the law won.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Why do you do this? Why do you keep pushing me?”

Jim shoved Oswald up against the wall to better punctuate the statement. Heard the satisfying crack of skull against brick, and pushed in still closer.

The anger surged in his head, the constant frustration making him want to hurt something.

Someone.

It hadn’t been like this before the Tetch Virus, that was what he liked to tell himself. He had never wanted to rip somebody limb from limb, or start punching and just not stop, until his target crumpled at his feet and his fist came away bloody.

The truth was that it had always been there. Simmering just beneath the skin, driving him to distraction, at high school, and basic training, and even at police academy.

He wasn’t good and he wasn’t just.

He wanted to be the cause of suffering.

Oswald turned his head to the side, cowering the way he did in all of Jim’s favorite memories, and Jim realized belatedly that his teeth were bared. That his hands were around the other man’s throat, squeezing, and the barely human snarl was emanating from his own mouth.

He let go and took a step backwards. Ran a shaking hand through his hair and watched as Oswald struggled for both breath and composure.

“Because I’m your friend,” Oswald said finally, in response to his earlier questioning, “because you and I, we’re cut from the same cloth.”

Jim thought of the blood on his hands - the evil things he had done and the evil things he would go on to do.

“We’re not friends,” was all he said aloud, and forced himself to keep his stride even as he walked away.

Refused to allow himself to look back over his shoulder.

Jim was a monster, maybe, but he and Oswald were not the same.

He was never going to be proud of it.
Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

For the commentfic drabble prompt: *Gotham (TV), Jim Gordon/Oswald Cobblepot, deep breath.*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It makes a twisted kind of sense, really.

The icy water at the dockside is what first bound them together.

He doesn’t have time to think about things rationally - doesn’t get chance to do more than shed his overcoat and suck in one last fortifying breath.

It’s sink or swim, that’s what his father always told him.

Oswald is a dead weight in his arms - an anchor tethering him to a place neither of them should want to be.

He fights it, even as he welcomes it.


Gotham is the real winner, either way.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr [@serenwib](http://serenwib.tumblr.com) or Twitter [@falsteloj](http://twitter.com/falsteloj). :)

Chapter 67

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: gobblepot pwp involving Tetch virus infected!Jim? It doesn't necessarily have to be a pwp, just a story where they do the do and Jim shows off his amazing strength.

TW for dubcon elements / rough sex.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Don’t.”

It had always been Jim’s very worst fear, to lose complete control of himself. To become more animal than human. To fall back on the part of his own psyche he pushed down deep - the part that had helped him act the perfect soldier.

A man who struck first and thought about it later.

Oswald was past all caution. Wanted him to suffer and knew just where to stick the knife, and how hard to twist it.

“Can’t you handle the truth, old friend?” His lips quirked, a mockery of a smile, “You are a monster. You always have been.”

It all happened too fast for him to have a chance. One moment Jim was as far away as he could get in the small room, hands balled into fists, and the next the red haze was clearing and he had Oswald shoved up against the wall, his teeth bared in a snarl.

His chest was heaving, panting for breath with the force of his own anger, and his gaze fixed on first the rapid fluttering of Oswald’s pulse at his pale throat, and then the flash of fear in his ice blue eyes. It reminded Jim of their first real encounter, Oswald begging him for mercy.

It sickened him how much he wanted a repeat performance, even as his blood boiled in his veins. Even as his grip on the other man tightened. Even as he pressed closer still, because it had always been inevitable.

Because Oswald had promised him once that he could have anything he wanted from him.

“Go on,” Oswald taunted, “why don’t you prove what a good guy you are?”

“Shut up,” Jim ground out in turn, his thigh pushing between Oswald’s legs. He could feel how much Oswald wanted it - proof that the other man was just as sick as he was, if not more so. He could see the rising color in Oswald’s cheeks, and the way his long lashes stuttered against his cheek when Jim shifted his leg slightly.

When he kept one hand firm around Oswald’s throat and slid the other down the front of his expensive tailoring.
“This is what you’ve always wanted from me, isn’t it?”

Oswald tried to turn away. Embarrassed, maybe. Disgusted, more likely. Jim increased the pressure on the other man’s throat, the darkness coiling tight in his gut and thrilling outwards.

“Isn’t it?”

He had the upper hand, finally. Wasn’t having his life turned upside down and tilted sideways by a man he should have put behind bars long ago.

“Keep telling yourself that,” Oswald choked out, defiant as ever, “It’s never you, is it, Jim?”

The kiss - assault - which followed was vicious. His teeth nipping at Oswald’s lip, sharp enough to bruise, and Oswald’s fingernails digging into the back of his neck. His own hands tearing at Oswald’s clothing, spurred on by the breathless gasps as Oswald attempted to give just as good as he got.

As the two of them crashed together, lost in the madness that shrouded Gotham.

Oswald whined when Jim’s hand found bare flesh, arched his head back and hissed out a curse as Jim pushed a spit slick finger into him. As he crooked it, hard, and bit into the crook of neck and shoulder, desperate to leave his mark.

It was rough and messy. Fevered and way too good. His hands underneath Oswald’s thighs, hitching him higher, their clothes hanging half off them as the tight heat stole what was left of his sanity.

“Come on,” Oswald demanded, one hand twisted so tight in his hair his scalp stung, “come on, Jim.”

He didn’t hold back. Couldn’t. Scraped Oswald’s bared shoulder against the brick of the wall even as he bucked up into him, sweat dripping down his face as a result of the strain and the awkward angle.

Oswald clung to him. Scratched and clawed and bit into the skin under his jawline, so that Jim had to fuck him still harder, aware of nothing but the need for relief. The lust thick in the air around them, and Oswald’s cock smearing pre-come over the skin of his stomach.

“Don’t stop,” Oswald begged when he wrapped his fist around it. Sobbed, almost, when he started jerking him, hard and fast without finesse or any semblance of sophistication. He cried out Jim’s name, broken, when he came, body tensing and twitching, and Jim’s movements only grew more brutal, until there were tears on Oswald’s cheeks and he was grunting out his own climax.

He came back to himself slowly, the shame and the guilt creeping in as the sweat and the come dried on his skin. As he took in the bite marks and the bruises, and the torn shirt hanging from Oswald’s shoulders. The way his legs shook as he attempted to stand unaided. To take all the weight off the bad leg Jim had shown no consideration for.

“Was it everything you hoped it would be?” Oswald asked him, voice scratched up and tone sarcastic, and after everything the virus still prickled beneath his skin, wanting him to show Oswald just what he was capable of.

Wanting to ruin him all over again.

“I told you not to push,” he countered, too plaintive, and pulled his soiled clothing into some sort of
order.

He walked away without looking back. Cut up his knuckles on the wall outside rather than give Oswald the satisfaction of seeing him lose it. Of knowing for certain just how far he had fallen.

He had always been a monster, it was true. The only difference was that now they both had proof of it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 68

Chapter Summary

For the prompt: Gotta prompt this, but I understand if it's not your thing. Jim/Oswald & Sofia, seduction and voyeurism. Jim is trying to seduce Oswald. The twist: They've bugged the room and Sofia is watching everything. Bonus: Jim's wearing an earpiece and she's directing him/talking him through the hard parts.

My contribution to #gobblepotweek2018 prompt - ‘arranged marriage/fake relationship’.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jim had done a lot of things he had never thought he would do since coming back to Gotham. Sleeping with a mob boss’ daughter was one of them, without doubt, and stabbing his best friend in the back so he could continue to do so was certainly another.

Harvey said that he no longer knew him, that perhaps he had never really known him in the first place, and for all Jim didn’t want to admit it he knew it was true.

The man he wanted to be, the great reforming crusader, had little enough in common with the man he was deep down inside.

Because he really was his Father’s son. He played the part well, did the things he was supposed to do, but behind the mask his soul was stained with darkness, so badly that when Sofia suggested a way of breaking through the Penguin’s defences his protests were nothing more than a token.

She knew it too, could see straight through him, and the dark promise - the cruelty of it - excited him so much they never even made it to the bedroom.

“It will be so easy,” Sofia assured him afterwards, her fingernails raising goosebumps as she traced them down the length of his spine, “you only have to see the way he looks at you.”

“But what if -” Jim started, less certain now that the heat in his blood had subsided, but Sofia only reached for him, fingers forcing all thoughts of compassion from his mind, and told him that he needn’t worry.

She was going to be right there with him.

Would be guiding him through it, a sultry whisper in his ear, even as she watched him follow her directions.

Oswald fell for it completely. Eyed up the hand on his arm with suspicion, demanding to know what Jim thought he was doing. Then shivered helplessly when Jim leaned in close enough to breathe into his ear that he couldn’t help himself.

Gazed up at him with wide eyes when Jim touched his fingers to Oswald’s jaw, tender just the way Sofia suggested, and in less than a minute all the man’s self-preservation instincts were thrown...
aside, his whole body trembling as he told Jim he had been waiting an eternity for this moment.

It was pathetic, really.

Sickening.

It didn’t stop him though, only made him more eager, and Jim had to tip his head back against the wall, fighting for composure, as he put a hand on Oswald’s head and listened to the sounds he made as he gagged on his cock.

“Tell me how much you want it,” he said when he had Oswald laid out for him, repeating Sofia’s instructions, “come on, tell me, Oswald.”

The other man keened at the sound of his name. Told him he needed it, begged him shamelessly, and Jim lost himself to the tight heat and the blunt fingernails raking across the skin of his back, sucking livid bruises up the length of Oswald’s throat as he sobbed and cried out for more.

“I shouldn’t have done this,” he said afterwards, feigning regret as he kept his downcast gaze on the fingers tackling his shirt buttons, and wondered - not for the first time - if Sofia really knew what she was doing.

If the Penguin would ever really fall for it.

“It can’t happen again,” he went on, “I won’t let it.”

He stood to leave, didn’t expect the results to be immediate, but a bony hand clamped around his wrist at the last moment, Oswald’s eyes full of panic.

“You haven’t done anything wrong, Jim,” he croaked, looking up at him like he was the kind of man Jim had always wanted to believe he was.

Like he couldn’t fathom that Jim would ever have dubious motives.

“I’ve only ever wanted to work with you. I can make it worth your while.”

Jim nodded, clipped and silent. Let his gaze flicker from eyes to lips and back again, as though he couldn’t help himself, before pulling himself away and saying that he needed time to think about it.

Felt the weight of Oswald’s desperate hope all the way out into the cold night air.

Sofia was right.

It really had been easy.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falst eloj. :)
Chapter 69

Chapter Summary

For the prompt: *A fun prompt for Gobblepot, maybe? “I understand the whole sleep talking thing but what I don’t understand is the princess dragon dream and why I’m in it.”*

My contribution for the #gobblepotweek18 prompt - ’bed sharing’.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim Gordon talked in his sleep.

It was something Oswald hadn’t expected, something he took great delight in, and the awkward flush that fanned across Jim’s cheeks and up to the tips of his ears when he talked about it only made the trait more endearing.

“I’ll try not to,” was Jim’s only verbal response, gruff and stilted, and Oswald did his best to smother a smile.

Jim could be so very touchy.

Hadn’t wanted to agree to the arrangement, quite reasonably, but half of Gotham was baying for Oswald’s blood at the moment, and what kind of public servant would Jim be if he didn’t offer his personal protection?

What kind of big tough hero would leave Oswald to die of hypothermia in their secluded little safe house, when the bed was more than big enough for both of them?

That night Jim tried to stay awake, probably thought that he could avoid further embarrassment if he simply didn’t sleep until they went back to the city at the end of the week, then lost the battle anyway, the furrow between his brows soothing out as he finally gave in and relaxed a little.

It made him look so much younger. Only highlighted the fact that he was so very handsome.

Oswald stroked the pad of his thumb across it, pulse fast and fluttery with the acknowledgement that it was Jim he was touching, and then lay as close as he dared and watched Jim as he slept peacefully.

He was still watching when Jim began twitching and squirming a little. When the frown returned, Jim slurring out the odd word into the silence. Something about dragons and swords and princesses, ever more insistent, until suddenly Jim was blinking up at him with wild eyes and touching fingers to his face as he mumbled in obvious relief about how he had saved him, hadn’t he?

The implication was obvious, was far more charming than it had any right to be, and the sleepy haze was leaving Jim’s face even as Oswald admitted, too raw and too honest, that Jim really had.
Had spared him, that very first time, and given him hope when he had needed it most.

When those he had deemed trustworthy had turned their backs on him.

They ended up kissing, heated and frantic, Jim’s hands clutching him closer even as they rocked together, the air around them thick and heavy with the impact of what they were doing.

“This is what you do to me,” Jim panted in his ear as his movements grew increasingly erratic, “this is what you’ve always done to me.”

The words struck him full force, white hot and devastating, and he hid his face in the crook of Jim’s neck - the scent of Jim’s aftershave surrounding him - as he shook and trembled through his climax, Jim wasting no time in following him.

He pillowed his head on Jim’s chest afterwards, listening to the steady thump of Jim’s heartbeat.

“That dragon,” Oswald mused, playing the innocent even as his lips curled in satisfaction, “I wonder if it represents a person of our mutual acquaintance?”

Jim only sighed, kind of long suffering, and told him as sternly as he could with gentle fingers busy petting at his hair,

“Shut up, Oswald.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 70

Chapter Summary

For the prompt: Based on the below pic, Jim has to explain some safety regulations while Oswald is watching him and snickering when Jim drops the doll and the parents get mad. :)) Maybe even saves Jim from the overzealous parents.

Also my contribution for the #gobblepotweek2018 'free day' slot.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim hated flu season. Half his officers were off sick, and the other half were wandering around coughing and sniffling. The Department was stretched thin, to the absolute limit, and that meant he had to step up to the plate and go and keep the appointment at one of the local community centers.

He had delivered plenty of lectures on home security and the importance of reporting crime back when he was in uniform.

How hard could it be?

Except when he finished up in his office for the time being and had chance to actually look at the agenda, he realized that he might have miscalculated.

What did he know about child car safety?

He knew it was a good thing, was completely in favor of it, but that was about as far as it went. His personal experience of the subject was more about what happened when it went wrong, and how many months of physiotherapy it took before a boy could even begin to think about running track again.

Worse, when he arrived his gaze settled on a too familiar shock of black hair.
“What are you doing here?” He asked, none too politely, because he had been expecting parents and toddlers, not the criminally insane and their bodyguards.

“Jim,” Oswald chided, like they were indulging in a spot of friendly banter, “I’m the former Mayor. People expect me to play an active role in my community.”

The man’s business was located close by, Jim supposed, and besides it wasn’t as though there was anything he could do about it. This was an open meeting, after all.

Oswald smiled over at him as he was introduced to the room, just to put him on edge, and then Jim was left to bluff his way through the presentation, rambling on for a few minutes about the role of the police and some broadly accurate MVC fatality rates.

It was going okay, he was really going to survive this, and then the time arrived to demonstrate strapping the baby safely into the car seat. The doll was uncooperative, limbs sticking out at awkward angles as he attempted to shove them through the straps, and he could feel the nervous sweat gathering on his forehead.

He had never dealt well with failure.

Finally the kid was in, the ordeal was over, and he heaved a sigh of relief as he straightened up to address his audience.

Picked the seat up, to show how it ought to be carried out to the vehicle, and everything fell apart, him desperately trying to recapture the thing as it slipped through his fingers - so that the doll dangled by its ankle for one moment, two, before hitting the floor head first and slumping into a lifeless heap on the ground.

Someone gasped in shock. Somebody else rose half out of their seat as though they could have halted the doll’s descent. A baby started crying, screaming, and Jim looked out at the gathered members of the public hopelessly, wishing that the ground would swallow him whole.

Because people were mumuring and muttering. Judging him and finding him wanting. Wondering if he had any kids of his own, and thinking it a blessing that all his hopes and dreams on that score had been stolen from him.

“Thank you, Captain Gordon,” Oswald piped up suddenly, limping towards him and taking charge of the situation, “for reminding us how important it is to pay attention.”

Jim just stood there uselessly. Watched on as Oswald made out he had done it on purpose, to shock them all into vigilance, and strapped the doll in with quick, efficient movements that only served to leave Jim wondering where and when he had got the practice in.

“That was good of you,” Jim tried when it was all done and dusted, having to force the words out, “you didn’t have to.”

“I know,” Oswald said, the damnable smile back and eyes glittering, “but, as I told you earlier, at heart I am forever a humble public servant.”

Jim raised an eyebrow, suspicious, and Oswald just leaned in closer, conspiratorial, to pat at his chest and say, so very pleased with himself,

“And, of course, friends don’t owe each other favors but, Jim, as you keep insisting that we are not friends, you can expect to hear from me shortly.”
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 71

Chapter Summary

For the prompt: Gobblepot class reunion AU. Bonus points if Oswald used to have a crush on Jim in school too.

Also my contribution to #gobblepotweek2018 prompt 'heart'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oswald wasn’t too proud to admit that there had been a time when he had dreamed about this. Used to lay in bed at night, bruises aching and the playground taunts stinging, and think of the day when he would face them all with his head held high.

When they would envy the man he had become, the things he had achieved, and look at their own sorry excuse of a life and know that they had peaked in high school.

Now the moment was finally here, his hair carefully sculpted in place and his suit tailored perfectly, and still the nerves were churning in his gut. He was a successful businessman, a man to be reckoned with.

He had even served as Mayor of Gotham City.

Yet he still hesitated in the hallway that seemed so much smaller than it did in his memories - his nightmares - with the echoes of his classmates' laughter ringing in his ears.

He even thought of turning around and going home. Of slinking away like a coward and pretending he had never come here in the first place. But then there were footsteps sounding behind him, and the idea of someone seeing, someone knowing that he hadn’t been able to face it, had him squaring his shoulders in determination.

His foot dragged a little, painful as always, but he refused to be held back by it.

Was never again going to be made a figure of fun for something that it wasn’t in his power to change.

People turned to stare at him as he made his entrance. The gossipy chatter of the people stood closest to the doors fell silent. They all remembered him at least - how could anybody forget the Penguin?

He heard the hated nickname more than once as he made his way to the refreshment table, having to focus on keeping his hand steady as he filled a glass from one of the bottles laid out in readiness. He wanted to look completely in control, entirely nonchalant, and then he was just raising the glass to his lips when his hand faltered, his heart skipping a beat at the sight in front of him.

Jim Gordon.

School had never had much going for it. It was something to be endured, a necessary evil, and
Oswald had never been able to decide whether Jim was an additional torture or one of the few things that made the place bearable.

Because Jim Gordon had been one of the golden boys. All blond hair and blue eyes, and long lean limbs Oswald couldn’t help but stare at in the changing rooms, something hot and desperate coiling inside him as Jim clambered in or out of his gym kit.

He had watched Jim every chance he got. Out on the bleachers when Jim was running track, and stolen glances in the showers when Jim was tipping his head back and rinsing the soap from his hair. In class, constantly, wishing that Jim didn’t have to be clever enough to be called upon for answers.

To be put into the same study groups as himself, so that instead of acting haughty and aloof he was reduced to breathless flustering. Wishing hopelessly - pathetically - that Jim would somehow lose interest in his popular friends and his pretty girlfriends, and ask him if he wanted to hang out some time.

What he had actually gotten was one of Jim’s dumb jock buddies trying to play tricks, cornering him after the final bell had sounded and telling him that Jim had a crush on him. That he totally wasn’t joking, and that he ought to speak to Jim, and a whole array of other bullshit designed to leave him hurt and humiliated.

Needless to say he had done none of those things.

Jim found himself some giggly cheerleader he had ended up going to prom with, and Oswald resolved not to stare at Jim so much. He didn’t want to go giving any of Jim’s other idiot friends ideas.

Now he was right back to square one, gazing open mouthed at Jim as the other man approached him. His hair was darker now, jaw stronger and face less boyish, but the eyes were the same. Still made him feel as though he couldn’t breathe when they met his own, for all that he was a grown man now, not a lovesick teenager.

“I didn’t think you’d come,” Jim said when he was finally stood before him, “I wasn’t sure that I was going to.”

“I should think you have plenty of memories of this place you’d want to relive,” Oswald said, harsher than he had intended. Sharp and cutting the way he always was when it felt like it might hurt less if he attacked first.

“Some,” Jim said simply, “I have plenty of regrets too though.”

Jim had done well. Won sporting trophies and academic accolades, then gone off to a good college before signing up for the army. After that Oswald had lost track a little. Had forced himself to, really, because the kind of man he was working to be didn’t keep scrapbooks of the high school crush they had never exchanged a word with outside of working on some compulsory project or other.

He still had them though, even if he hadn’t added to them. Even if he had refrained from clipping out the news story he had seen in the evening paper about Jim’s devotion to duty being recognized by the police commissioner, complete with a photograph of Jim shaking the man’s hand in his neatly pressed patrol uniform.

“What do you regret, Jim?” He asked, amusement battling it out with incredulity, and Jim just
downed the contents of his glass - the slight flush in his cheeks suggesting it wasn’t his first one - and said,

“Not having the guts to tell you I liked you. I just - I wanted you to know. I wanted to say that you’ve done well for yourself, Oswald. I always knew you would.”

Jim made as if to walk away then. Was just going to drop a bombshell and saunter off as to leave him to deal with the fallout.

“What are you doing after this?” He heard himself ask, as though his heart wasn’t hammering up in his throat, terrified that somehow he was reading it wrong. That when he didn’t fall for it the first time they determined to simply try again twenty years later, all so Jim could point at him and laugh.

“Nothing,” Jim confessed, and he looked as afraid as Oswald felt. Like it was too good to be true. Like he didn’t dare get his hopes up.

“How do you feel about going to get some food which is actually edible?” Oswald asked, gesturing at the rather dubious looking platters on the table.

If Jim said no, it wouldn’t be the end of the world.

He wasn’t some lonely kid with ill fitting clothes and a bad haircut anymore.

“I’d like that,” Jim said, bestowing him with the same boy scout smile that had used to make his heart clench up tight and painful in his chest, so that Oswald couldn’t help but smile back.

It seemed like they had a lot of time to start making up for.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 72

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: You know what would be good, something with Oswald and Jim having to face what happened in the S3 finale involving Fish since I doubt they are ever going to talk about it in canon.

Also my contribution to #gobblepotweek2018 prompt 'soulmates'.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I am a monster.”

Oswald thinks it might be the first honest thing Jim has ever said to him. Because Jim plays at being a hero. Wants the world to believe that he cares about doing the right thing.

He doesn’t.

Jim cares about one thing and one thing only - Jim Gordon.

That was where Oswald went wrong before. Where he’ll never go wrong again in future.

Fish might not have been the mentor he wanted, but she was what he needed. She had shaped him into the man he would become, the man who was destined to rule Gotham, and so he takes a few pages from her book, pretending to care a damn about a washed up mess of a cop like Bullock.

“Jim never needs to know,” he soothes, already knowing he has won, and Bullock looks like he can’t decide whether he’d prefer to press a gun to Oswald’s temple or his own as he slinks out of there.

Jim will never forgive Bullock for it, that’s the reality, because Oswald would be willing to wager big money that Jim has never bothered to ask why a Captain of the GCPD can’t afford to put gas in the tank some mornings.

Has probably never thought about it, never will unless it inconveniences him in some way, and when the truth outs Oswald has no doubt that Jim will blame Bullock for accepting the cash rather than admit to himself that he’s a large part of the reason Bullock is left with no choice but to take it.

He is proven correct, of course, and Jim only sinks lower in his estimations.

Only demonstrates, over and over again, the chasm between the man Jim could have been had he compromised on the things that didn’t matter, rather than the hypocrite he has become for turning his back on the things that do.

“I won’t rest until justice is done,” Jim tells him during one showdown, “you’re a murderer.”

“As are you,” Oswald says, as calm as he can manage, “why don’t you let a court decide what
punishment you deserve?”

Jim pales, just for a moment, then pulls his masks back in place. Points the finger of accusation and acts the role of the good guy.

Oswald knows better though. Can see straight through him.

There was a time when he believed that he and Jim were soulmates, kindred spirits fated to transform Gotham together.

Now he realizes that he was wrong because his soul is tarnished. Tattered and ragged in places, and entirely beyond repair in others. Jim though - Jim’s soul can never be a match for anyone.

He sold it long ago.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)}
Jim Gordon was no stranger to risk.

He knew all about making stupid decisions.

This was something else though, recklessness on an entirely new level, because instead of the discovery cooling his ardour - driving home a moment of common sense, no matter how fleeting - all it did was make his dick throb that touch harder.

“I told you to shut up,” was all he actually said, a low growl that left his throat raw, excitement mounting and mounting, “You're not in control here.”

Oswald laid his palms flat against unforgiving brick and glanced at him over his shoulder.

Raised one of those too groomed brows, challenging, and demanded,

“Get on with it then.”

There was a time when Jim would have attempted to deny he could find any of this a turn on. Not the dank surroundings, no real cover but the shadows of a Gotham night, and not the man he found himself with, all angular features and scarred skin.

Now there was no point in lying, not within the sanctuary of his own head.

He wanted it too badly. Needed it with an intensity that was almost frightening.

Loved the bruises he raised on Oswald’s pale skin, fingers digging deep into the flesh of his hips, and mouth leaving its mark along the elegant column of his throat.

Oswald was exposed like this. Vulnerable. Not enough to be truly at Jim’s mercy, perhaps, but close enough to secure the same feeling of victory. For his own part he undressed only as much as was necessary. Insisted on this position so that Oswald would never be able to see exactly what he did to him.

Because his fingers shook with anticipation as he unbuckled his belt, and the noise Oswald made when he sank those same digits - spit slick and impatient - into him made his whole body ache from the jolt of lust sent through it.

Oswald was never quiet. Never did what Jim told him to. Whined frantically when Jim pulled at his hair, and cried for mercy when he refused to let up the pressure against his prostate.

Gasped out his name when Jim couldn’t wait any longer, the grasping heat robbing him of the last
vestiges of his self-control, and cursed him for more even as Jim swore and threatened him with harsh words in his ear if he didn’t keep his mouth shut.

It was all part of the game. The complex give and take of the strange relationship they had constructed. It was his name on Oswald’s lips when his muscles clenched, climax torn from him, and it was Oswald’s name he had to bite back as his own peak followed, his thrusts rough and far from careful.

“Look at you now,” Jim hissed when it was done, tucking himself away and willing the tell tale flush from his cheeks. Looked at the obscene state of Oswald’s clothing, rumpled and sweat sodden, and let his hand linger across the smooth skin of his backside before plunging two fingers back into him, something primal taking great delight in the easy slide - the evidence of his own enjoyment.

Twisted them, unrelenting, just to hear the helpless moan wrenched from the man who was fated to be his own personal nemesis.

“You will never call the shots,” Jim warned when he pulled his fingers free. Swiped them clean on Oswald’s expensive tailoring and pretended not to hear the other man’s parting blow,

“Until next time - you know where to find me.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 74

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: *I need some cheer up, so how about Jim and Oswald raising Martin together after defeating Sofia?*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He had known from the very beginning that he and Jim were meant to be together. He had felt it, a breathless sense of certainty, and though the road hadn’t been smooth - though they had both faltered along the journey - their coming together was always inevitable.

Jim fought it, of course. Acted stubborn and foolish and made them both miserable until he finally had no choice but to come to him for help.

To confess that he had messed up. Miscalculated what Sofia was capable of, and misjudged how much Bullock was capable of forgiving.

“What do I get out of this?” he had asked, careful to betray none of the warring emotion raging within him, and Jim just looked up at him with those big blue eyes that had already stolen his heart away,

“You said, once, that friends don’t owe each other favors.”

It had been a risk to trust Jim. A calculated risk, maybe, but he had known exactly what it was he stood to lose.

Braced himself every time they met for the sting of humiliation.

The agony of rejection.

Instead his heart stuttered in his chest, cold fear washing over him when he walked in on the sight of Jim reading something Martin had written him, the boy himself anxious but determined.

“You did this,” Jim said, except in place of accusation - of disgust or revulsion - there was something that sounded suspiciously like awe. Something that came from the nine-year-old boy pulled from the wreckage of a car crash that killed his father, only to be released into the care of a mother who could no longer bear to look at him.

That, he would reflect later, was the turning point. It was the moment Jim willingly let him see beneath the surface for the first time, and the moment Jim was forced to really see the depths to his own character.

To admit to himself what he had known, deep down, for a long time.

Oswald knew because Jim told him, halting and stilted even with a few empty champagne flutes, one anniversary when their opposing career choices had been threatening to drive a wedge between them.
“I’m not used to relying on other people,” Jim confessed, the words serving as an apology, as though Oswald didn’t understand completely.

As though Oswald’s trust in others hadn’t served as his downfall over and over again.

But Jim had proved more insightful than he had initially given him credit for. Had touched his hand, discreet yet open, and admitted that his real fear wasn’t being betrayed.

It was that he would end up the one committing the betrayal.

They both knew from experience that it was no idle fear. Had both borne witness to the hurt Jim had wrought, and the enemies he had made through his own actions.

‘I know you won’t let me down on purpose,’ Martin wrote on behalf of both of them, when Jim proved reluctant to make promises about attending school events he may well have to break, ‘that’s what it means to be family.’

Jim hugged him tight at that. Clung to Martin even as he met Oswald’s gaze, and though they hadn’t talked about it - though he had been too cautious to attach labels to what they were doing - it fit so perfectly that neither of them wasted any time protesting.

Quit lying to themselves about what they wanted this to mean to each other.

Jim made the concert, bruised and bloody but beaming with pride, and after it they all went to dinner together, smiles and banter like the wholesome TV families Oswald secretly envied during his own childhood.

“I don’t understand how it works,” Jim told him later still, whispering into his ear as they lay entwined together, talking of the relationship they had forged in spite of all the odds.

“You don’t need to understand it,” Oswald assured, pillowing his head on Jim’s chest, “the important thing is that it does.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 75

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: *I would love a gobble pot fill where harvey bullock somehow ends up a voyeur while jim and oswald go at it, but instead of witnessing hellacious hate sex like he expects it's actually really gentle and sweet and kind of makes him rethink his opinion on their relationship.*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It wasn’t that he wanted to watch - it was just that he couldn’t look away.

Because it was supposed to be something ugly. Rough and impersonal, with Jim growling out commands for Penguin to keep his mouth shut while he pressed finger shaped bruises into the pale flesh in front of him.

Harvey had been planning to talk Jim out of it. To point out that it wasn’t just his career he was jeopardising, but the precarious peace of the entire city. All for a few minutes of stress relief he could get anywhere.

Instead Jim was on his knees, fingers reverent as they stroked over expensively tailored fabric. Trembling, almost, with the want that was visible on his face, and gentle even as they fumbled with buttons and fastenings.

What really made him feel sick was the look on Cobblepot’s face. The tenderness in a murderer’s eyes, and the flush that spread across his pallid cheeks. The way his lashes fluttered, helpless, and the sound he made when Jim finally quit teasing and took his dick in his mouth.

This wasn’t some filthy alleyway fuck. It wasn’t even a passion borne of hatred.

The scene playing out before him was like something out of his own pathetic fantasies.

This was how he had once dreamed things would be between himself and the man he had given everything for.

Jim was his partner - his best friend.

The love of his worthless life, and rather than let him worship at his feet, Jim preferred to play make believe with Gotham’s premier nut job.

That was all it could ever be because there was no future for an honest cop and a mob boss. There was no way they could forge anything long lasting.

And yet.

The expression that he initially struggled to place on Jim’s face, the strange edge to all his recent actions - Harvey saw for the first time what it meant. Jim was happy, really and truly happy, and no matter how much it hurt to acknowledge it was Cobblepot and not him who had accomplished it.
It was Penguin Jim wanted.

“Was it worth your while?” Harvey asked later when Jim returned to the precinct, hair combed back into place but lacking the customary tension in his shoulders, “Did he have what you needed?”

“He was helpful,” Jim said gruffly, the barest hint of a flush painting his features.

Harvey forced a brittle smile. Swallowed back the pitiful urge to ask Jim where it was he had gone wrong.

It was Jim’s decision to make - all he could do now was back him up on it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

Chapter 76

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: *Given the weather conditions these days, how about a snowed in gobblepot story? Especially if Jim "hates" it at the beginning, but then warms up to it.*

Just a little bit of future!fic. Consider it my entry for the 'free space' prompt for #gobblepotspring2018 too. :)

Chapter Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr [@serenwib](https://serenwib.tumblr.com) or Twitter [@falsteloj](https://twitter.com/falsteloj). :)

“I think it’s getting worse.”

“Jim,” Oswald sighed, exasperated, “will you please sit down and eat your dinner. The snow will still be there after the dessert course.”

He had worked hard on this. Spent hours sourcing ingredients and planning out each and every detail. All Jim had to do was quit frowning out of the window and try actually enjoying himself.

The problem was that Jim pulled an expression like it pained him. Kept glancing back over, roughly every twenty seconds, and only shoveled a few haphazard forkfuls into his mouth before getting to his feet again and peering out into the rapidly descending darkness.

“We really ought to get started. If it keeps up we’re going to be stuck here.”

“Would that be so terrible?” Oswald asked, watching Jim carefully. Taking note of the dark smudges under his blue eyes, and the painful looking tension in his shoulders.

Jim didn’t know how relax. How to take a step back and delegate for a few hours - and that really had to say something when he was the one advocating not micromanaging every single aspect of one’s workload.

“It’s just,” Jim began, awkward, “I’m the Deputy Commissioner now. If something goes wrong I should be there. That’s what they’re paying me for.”

Oswald softened at the raw quality to Jim’s tone. Smiled despite himself at the proof of Jim’s commitment to a city that gave him nothing but grief at every turn. The idiots at the Gotham Gazette, the ones who had thought Jim’s private life so ripe for exposé and public comment, didn’t have the first clue what they were talking about.

He hoped they were paying for it suitably slowly back in Gotham, and rose to his own feet as elegantly as his bad leg would allow him.
“They’re not paying you to work yourself into the ground.” It was true; by Oswald’s reckoning they were scarcely paying him at all. “What good will you be to anyone when you’re laid up in bed with exhaustion?”

Or worse.

That was the real reason he had gone as far as enlisting Bullock’s help in getting Jim to agree to this getaway. Jim needed to be calm and controlled. Alert to the very real dangers all around him - the same dangers that had Oswald visiting him in the hospital three weeks out of every four - and not so tired he was falling asleep at his desk and drooling all over his paperwork.

Even if the surveillance photos Oswald had in his own desk drawer were kind of adorable.

Jim closed his eyes for a long moment, his long lashes sweeping his cheek in a way that never failed to make Oswald a little envious, and pressed closer willingly when Oswald reached for him.

“I don’t want to mess it up,” Jim confessed, scarcely more than a whisper, “It feels like everything is going in the right direction. That’s when it all falls apart, usually.”

Jim gave a little huff of a laugh. Sounded physically drained and emotionally wrung out, and Oswald only spared a single glance for the expensive meal he had so carefully prepared for them.

“I’m not going anywhere. You’re not going anywhere either.”

Not now, with the blizzard increasing in intensity beyond the window, and not in the future either. Jim was too stubborn and determined, and Oswald was not at all above fighting dirty to get what he wanted.

Like stroking his thumb over the side of Jim’s hand, with the symbolic promise that never failed to change the quality of Jim’s breathing, and suggesting quietly that, as they were snowed in for the duration, they might as well get an early night.

“Is it going to involve much sleeping?” Jim asked, gaze full of gratitude, and Oswald simply smiled smugly.

“That’s for me to know and you to find out, isn’t it?”
Chapter 77

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: A college AU prompt here from HERE. ('My roommate just told me to stop growing my beard because if I get any hotter he's gonna have to f*ck me, but what he doesn't know is that I want that.') Gobblepot please?

Also my contribution to #gobblepotspring2018, for the 'sunshine' prompt.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He and his roommate were as different as night and day, what with him doing his best to blend in the shadows, and Jim turning heads everywhere he went like a ray of brilliant sunshine.

Right from the very first day the distance between them had been obvious. He had scarcely said a word of introduction, nerves fraught with memories of the sticks and stones and nasty words of high school, while Jim just politely stuck his hand out.

Heaved up the boxes he had been struggling with as though they weighed nothing, and exchanged phone numbers with some girl out in the hallway even as Oswald’s mother clung to him and sobbed and begged him not to let any of the hussies on campus get their claws into him.

Oswald cringed and blushed, and thanked God that she wasn’t speaking English.

When the time came for Jim’s own mother to say goodbye the two just stared at each other awkwardly. Shook hands eventually, less like mother and son than business partners, then she said she would see him at Christmas, and he pledged he would make the most of this opportunity.

Kept to his word too, in the most disgustingly earnest fashion.

Because while Oswald worked hard and attended classes, Jim just had to go above and beyond. Drew himself up a neatly color coded timetable, marking out class and library and athletics practice, and stuck garish post-it notes to the corner of the mirror when he went out running at the crack of dawn, exhorting the world in general - and Oswald in particular - to make the most of each and every moment.

To never give up and never give in, and to smile when life knocks you down, because when you got back up you were going to be so much stronger.

The worst thing was that Oswald couldn’t even hate him for it. Couldn’t sneer at his goody two shoes attitude, or mock his boy scout mentality. It was all he could do not to act like a complete and total idiot, his breath catching in his throat every time Jim so much as glanced in his direction.

His only solace was that Jim didn’t hang about much. He was always busy doing something - volunteering for a good cause, or at a meet with the rest of the track team. Making enemies for reporting infractions of the rules to the powers that be, or getting himself beat up down a darkened shortcut, because he had already been warned to keep his mouth shut.
Jim’s buddies were all out drinking and fraternizing, and when Oswald suggested he go straight to
the infirmary Jim freaked out, sounding afraid that their advice would get him temporarily
suspended from the sports field and looking absolutely terrified that they might call his mother to
let her know what was happening.

“I don’t want to worry her over nothing,” Jim said, and Oswald got the impression that what Jim
really didn’t want was the confirmation that she just wouldn’t worry, period.

So he patched Jim up with the first aid kit, had more than enough experience with it, and Jim
thanked him so sincerely Oswald felt light hearted at being the focus of Jim’s attention.

After that they became, not friends exactly, but something more than two strangers who happened
to share a room. Jim asked how his coursework was going, and Oswald asked him how his day had
been, and occasionally they even ate lunch together, Jim gazing kind of longingly at food with
actual flavor as he chewed dutifully at his own carefully balanced nutrients.

They both went home for winter break, Jim to attend glittering Christmas parties and obediently
dole out roast dinners at his mother’s not-for-profit, and him to show his face at synagogue and be
quizzed ceaselessly on every female he had interacted with, regardless of age or marital status.

Oswald loved his mother, truly he did, but it was a relief to go back to college. At least until Jim
turned up, weighed down with new sports equipment and sporting the fledgling beginnings of a
mustache.

It ought to have looked ridiculous. Had absolutely no right to be anything other than mildly
amusing. But when Oswald found himself unable to tear his gaze away, it wasn’t because he had
any intention of laughing about it.

“What do you think?” Jim asked self-consciously, fingers reaching up to stroke at it in a way that
made Oswald’s stomach tie itself in knots, “My mother’s not a fan at all.”

That only made the thing more appealing, made Oswald still more interested in watching its
development, and over the following days and weeks it only became more and more difficult not to
let on the effect it was having on him.

Not to reveal to Jim the full extent of the hopeless crush he had on him. Because it was hopeless.
Pathetic too. Jim could have anyone he wanted - always supposing he didn’t talk too much -
whereas the only people interested in him existed solely in his mother’s imagination.

He poured it all out to the pages of his diary. Noted what Jim did, and how Jim smelled, and his
perfectly valid fears that if Jim didn’t shave the stupid mustache off Oswald was going to end up
completely humiliating himself. Telling Jim how he felt, or attempting to kiss him one evening
when they were sat close, studying together.

Knocking his diary from its hiding place in a manic rush to leave for class in the morning, and
spending hours holed up in the library, so that even Jim got back before him. Picked the book up
from the floor, incapable of allowing mess or disorder to remain where it was, and caught sight of
his own name.

Read enough to get the gist of it, to ensure that he was about to become the campus laughing stock,
and Oswald yelled at him in fury when he caught him with the book, the hot burn of anger
overriding every other consideration.

“Nobody’s going to laugh at you,” Jim offered, frown furrowing his brow, “I’m not going to tell
anyone.”

Somehow that hurt worse, stung like Jim had just gone right ahead and shot him, and it must have shown all over his face because it was Jim’s turn to falter now, awkwardly attempting to explain that he didn’t mean it like that.

That he just didn’t want to tell anyone anything Oswald didn’t want them to know. Not that he didn’t want people to know, and that wasn’t because he wanted to make things awkward for Oswald.

“What I mean,” Jim tried again, working himself in circles, “is that I’m sorry for reading it, but I’m not sorry about what it says. I really - I like the way you look at me.”

Oswald listened to the whole thing in silence. Went from anger to disbelief to something that felt an awful lot like excitement. He took pity on Jim, finally, and shut him up in the most effective way he knew how.

Pressed their lips together, heart hammering with the surreality of the moment, and in return Jim just kissed him back eagerly, hands clutching him closer.

“It’s not scratching or anything?” Jim asked when they pulled back a little, concerned, and Oswald simply huffed in exasperation and kissed him all over again.

The talking could wait until later.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 78

Chapter Summary

A little ficlet for an ask on Tumblr: Established relationship, Oswald-centric POV, Oswald Cobblepot and Jim Gordon grow old together.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

His leg had never been the steadiest, even before Fish did her best to shatter his kneecaps, but these days it was Jim who really struggled, relying heavily on his cane during those times he insisted he could do without the wheelchair.

That was Jim all over, Oswald reasoned. He was still just as headstrong and stubborn now as he had been all those years ago.

Still thought he could handle the workload of ten younger men, and make the city a better place through sheer force of will.

It was startling then to see Jim’s shoulders slumped like that. To see the doubt on his face, the uncertainty in his tone as he looked out across the streets they had each worked, in their own way, to bring order in place of chaos.

“Do you ever wonder if any of it was worth it?”

The newspaper was laying open on the coffee table, the headlines screaming about police corruption and the election of the new Mayor, a distant relation of the Falcones they had once known.

Jim’s hands shook as he spoke, worn and twisted with time, “Did any of it really make a difference?”

Oswald moved to stand beside him. Pulled one of Jim’s hands into his own and wondered at the way the simple touch sent a thrill through him. Because even now, even after everything they had gone through, he still looked at Jim and saw the same shining hero he had decades previously.

The righteousness and the bravery, and the obstinate idiocy that blinded Jim sometimes to the things that really mattered.

“You gave people hope, Jim. You saved lives.”

Jim glanced over at him, lips quirking in the slightest tilt of a smile.

“You saved my life,” Oswald admitted, referring not just to that day out at the docks, but to countless days thereafter. Days where it had felt like everything was in tatters, and long nights haunted by the ghosts of people who could never forgive him.

Jim shuffled a touch closer. Swallowed audibly, and squeezed at his hand tight enough to still the tremors.
Spoke softly, but sincerely,

“Whatever I did achieve, I couldn’t have done it without you.”

Jim’s gaze was tender, the blue of his eyes blurred by the treacherous dampness gathering in Oswald’s own,

“You saved my life too.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 79

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: *Jim has to treat Oswald like dirt in public but this time, after leaving Oswald stranded in the blimp and the lack of real gratitude expressed for saving the city, he has some serious grovelling to do behind closed doors.*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m busy, Jim.”

Oswald was drumming his fingertips against the armrest of his chair, the sound loud in the otherwise silence. Jim resisted the urge to shift from foot to foot. Clenched his jaw tight and, when Oswald made no move to take them from him, placed the bouquet of flowers he had brought with him down on the side table.

It had seemed a good idea when he was buying them. It always worked in the movies.

Here, now, they just looked pathetic. Wilted and drooping, his funds not stretching far enough for anything that might look passable in the opulent surroundings of Oswald’s latest hideaway.

He supposed that he didn’t look much better, a fresh bruise blooming at his temple and mud splattered up his trousers.

“I -” He paused, took a moment and started up again, “I just wanted to give you those. I guess I’ll be going.”

Oswald glared at him, eyes dark with anger. Jim understood the reasoning. All he had to do was say he was sorry.

It wasn’t rocket science.

He couldn’t do it, all the same, the words clogging in his throat, and he thought of being forced to stand up straight for countless hours back at military academy, because it was better to always be aloof and alone than to give in and have everyone see his failings.

“I could have died in that thing,” Oswald called when he reached the door, “You wouldn’t have had to apologize at all then.”

That hurt. Hit him somewhere deep in the chest, the sting of it so sharp that it literally took his breath away.

Had him reaching out a hand for the door frame, to support himself, and suddenly the choices in front of him were starkly clear. He walked out now, dignity intact, and went home to his cold empty apartment where he would lay awake until the early hours, blinking back tears. Or he took a risk, the kind that seemed so simple when it was his safety rather than his heart at stake, and admitted that he wanted this to last the distance.
“Go on,” Oswald yelled, voice cracking, “What are you waiting for?!!”

Oswald stood his ground when Jim stormed across the room. Went a little pale, like he expected violence, but didn’t flinch away from him. Made him feel worse that that was the impression he gave to those who most mattered, so that he had to reach for the lapels of Oswald’s jacket a touch too roughly and pull him in closer.

“I am sorry,” he ground out, gruff and uneven. Hoped Oswald could hear how sincere he was, the confession wrenched from deep inside himself, “I don’t know how to deal with it.”

It was true, always had been, and rather than try to explain with more faltering words he went with action and kissed Oswald. Couldn’t let up once he’d started, heated and desperate, and Oswald clutched at the back of his jacket, giving every bit as good as he got.

He was panting by the time he pulled back enough to gain some measure of composure. Pressed his forehead against Oswald’s and realized that he was trembling, just slightly, with the force of what he was feeling.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered again, the words coming easier now they had a precedent, “I’m so sorry.”

“I don’t want you to be sorry,” Oswald said, face flushed and eyes intense, “I want you to stop closing yourself off from me. I’m on your side, Jim.”

He knew. Had known it from almost the very beginning really, right back when they were total strangers, and he couldn’t work out why thoughts of Oswald’s pitifully eager smile kept accosting him.

“Sometimes I just need a reminder,” Jim murmured in turn, nose nuzzling into the skin of Oswald’s neck, seeking out the addictive scent of his cologne, and shivered hard when Oswald’s fingers tangled tight in his hair.

“In that case,” Oswald said, smooth and controlled and inciting more shivering, “I suggest we move this discussion somewhere more comfortable.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 80

Chapter Summary

Double drabble for an ask on Tumblr: Have you ever thought of/would be willing to write a fluffy/comfort Gobblepot prompt fill for an Post-Apocalypse rebuilding AU (no zombies plz)?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In the world that was, it could never have worked. Jim was too stubborn, too concerned with his reputation, and Oswald couldn’t have given up all of his dreams and ambitions.

In the world that is, they have nothing and no one to cling to but each other. No past and no future, not when they take the time to truly consider it.

The answer is to live in the moment. To steal whatever contentment they can find as the world they had once known crumbles away into memories.

It isn’t what Jim would have hoped for himself. The life they lead isn’t something he would have wished on anyone. It’s what he has though, the very best that can be expected, and sometimes when he wakes wrapped around Oswald he can almost imagine himself safe and whole and secure.

Happy.

Some days the feeling lingers, even as his joints ache and his fingers bleed, sheer force of will all that stands between death and eking out an existence.

He has more than he deserves, he knows, and for as long as he can he’s determined to hold on to it.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

Chapter 81

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: *Supernatural Creature AU, Pre-romance, friendship-build AU; Det. Jim Gordon is secretly a Nixie/Nokk (Shapeshifting Water Spirit, similar to merfolk but with minor magic powers sometimes and much more fishlike features). Oswald is still human, up to you how he finds out or reacts.*

I kind of went with ambiguity on whether or not it's all in the eye of the beholder...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

His mother had told him strange tales, sometimes, when he was feeling particularly lost and lonely, the world outside their thin apartment walls proving to be cruel beyond endurance.

She would transport him with her words, from the grimy high rises of Gotham to the woodland of the old country. The lakes and the rivers, and even the still and silent ponds, glittering silver in the moonlight.

They were all home to the Nixie - water sprites who longed for human companionship. Because they were beautiful in their own way, features blunted but eyes clear and pretty, windows to the void where their soul ought to be.

That last had frightened him as a boy. Had made him shy from the edges of the canal, the industrial hangover that wound its way through their district, and hesitate for a moment out at the lakes, the first time he was given an assignment by one of the local gang leaders.

He threw the knife as far out as he could manage, breath misting in the cold winter air, and thought of the ripples on the surface of the water when he returned home, submerging his head in the bath and imagining a life where sights and sounds were muted and distorted.

“The Nixe call men to their death,” his mother told him once, reminded of long ago stories by the faded pictures in her scrapbooks, “they wish for somebody to stoke their vanity. They drain the life from a man so they can pass as human.”

“What do they offer in return?” Oswald asked, morbidly fascinated, and his mother only sniffed delicately and said,

“You mustn’t trust in their promises. They speak only lies. All they do is deceive you.”

Oswald read more of them in his own time; the time that wasn’t dictated by duty, or work, or ambition, trailing his fingers along the musty pages of leatherbound tomes and feeling the pull of a kindred spirit.

The Nixe were a tragic race, forever wanting and lonely, and Oswald dreamed one night that he was sitting at the water’s edge, fingers dipping just below the surface, when a hand reached out for him.
It was stronger than he had expected. The skin pale and the fingers elegant. For a moment he didn’t even put up a struggle, gaze lost in a blue that was as pure as it was beautiful. Then he was pulling away, all of his strength behind the motion, and woke with a start in his narrow childhood bed, drenched in sweat and heart racing.

That was how he knew that miserably overcast day behind Fish Mooney’s nightclub. Jim was good, perhaps, but his presentation wasn’t perfect. His gaze was too blue - too yearning - and as the drizzle hung in the air Oswald wasn’t blind to the slightly unnatural hue of Jim’s skin, underneath the droplets of water.

He tried to make Jim understand. Attempted to explain to Jim that he knew what he must have worked so hard to keep secret.

Jim only pushed him away, displays of anger to mask how much he was frightened, and Oswald pledged in harsh whispers that he would keep trying.

Their meeting had been destiny.

His mother knew it too. He saw it in her eyes, the concern and the fear, and he heard it in her tone when she finally met Jim Gordon in person.

“You must stay away from that man,” she told him afterwards, hands clasped around his own solemnly, “You must not let him take you away from me.”

“He’s different to the others,” Oswald offered in turn, because Jim saw as a curse what most would see as a blessing, “our paths are wound too close together.”

It didn’t matter how desperately Jim attempted to deny it.

How much he suffered - how they both suffered - because Jim was stubborn and difficult, and jerked away whenever they made physical contact, the crackle of sensation proof that they were meant to draw closer to each other.

Jim was the light, and he was the dark, because unlike the innocent hearted maidens of his mother’s fairy tales, his soul was already blackened enough that Jim would be unable to claim the entirety of it. He wouldn’t end up twisted and changed by Jim’s proximity, not like Barbara and Lee and Vale.

Life had done that for him, both before and after Jim’s arrival in it, and he drew bitter strength from the loss of his mother and the torture of Arkham, because he was being tested just as surely as any of the foolish girls in the storybooks.

“I’m a virus,” Jim confessed to him finally in the aftermath of the Tetch virus, when all the good he had worked for had been on the cusp of draining away into nothingness, “I destroy everything that I touch. It doesn’t matter how hard I try not to.”

“You’re not a virus,” Oswald said, breathless as his own anger dissipated in favor of reaching for Jim’s hand, “all you need is somebody to guide you through the shadows.”

Jim didn’t pull away from the kiss Oswald pressed to his palm. Stood stock still and wide eyed when Oswald pressed another to the clammy skin of his wrist, over the fluttering pulse point. Then Jim was kissing him, tender but demanding, and Oswald surrendered himself willingly, the way he had always known he should.

“I’m not the man you think I am,” Jim admitted, voice unsteady as Oswald buried his nose in the
crook of Jim’s neck, breathing deeply to capture the scent of water on his skin, “I can never be what you want me to be.”

“I know exactly what you are,” Oswald countered, lips brushing against Jim’s throat as he spoke. Jim didn’t need to worry anymore. Would never have to hide that part of himself in his presence. Oswald squeezed at the hand he still held in his own, reassuring, “you’re everything that I knew you would be.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)


Chapter 82

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: Sometimes it amazes Oswald that Jim has insecure emotional baggage buried somewhere inside him [Jim] too, it shouldn't but sometimes it does.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Jim, the party started ten minutes ago.”

Oswald was all in favor of making a fashionably late appearance, had no doubt he could pull it off with the requisite flair, and it wasn’t as though Jim was known for his time-keeping. He was always working late or held up by some new and inevitably deadly crisis.

What he didn’t do, not in Oswald’s experience, was hole himself up in the bedroom and take over an hour to get ready.

It was concerning enough for Oswald not to bother waiting for an answer. To push on through into the space they had been sharing for years now, and to let the surprise show on his face, at the sight of just about the entire contents of Jim’s albeit meagre wardrobe strewn haphazardly across the bed.

Jim’s shoulders went a little stiff with embarrassment, even as a hint of color suffused his cheeks.

Oswald couldn’t help but note the way it really brought out the blue of his eyes.

“I booked this in six months ago,” was what he said aloud, exasperation overriding the concern he felt, “so don’t think you’re getting out of this.”

It wasn’t Jim’s scene, he knew, formal wear and after dinner small talk. But it was part and parcel of being a public figure. The only way Jim was going to convince the great and the good to part with enough cash for the good cause of Jim’s ambitious community outreach.

At least since Jim had made it clear there was to be no blackmail, threats or coercion used to elicit donations.

“It’s not,” Jim started, cheeks burning brighter as he trailed off. Focused on buttoning up his shirt with sharp, impatient movements, and started again with, “You look really nice. You always do.”

Oswald narrowed his eyes at that. Not because the compliment was less than stellar - coming from Jim that was practically a full blown sonnet - and not because he doubted Jim’s sincerity. Jim wouldn’t have taken the time to say it if he didn’t mean it. No, it was the way Jim said it. The downcast tilt of his head and the dejected edge to his tone.

It stillled the acidic response on the tip of his tongue. The instinctive attack before he was struck, mocking Jim for being big headed and fishing for validation when he had a face like that. When he had that build, and those hands, and generally looked like the kind of guy who ought to be gracing a magazine cover.
“I employ a good tailor,” he said instead, “the offer still stands if you want to take advantage of it.”

Jim’s lips quirked up into an involuntary smile, then faded away again. Fell back into the maudlin stoicism Oswald had once associated with Jim, in the days before he had been privileged enough to see how different Jim could be in private, and Oswald could see the battle taking place within Jim - the need to get the words out, and the decades worth of conditioning that had taught him that bottling things up inside was the only real option.

He moved to sit on the bed, pushing one of Jim’s better shirts aside to do so. He rubbed the collar between his finger and thumb, thrilling momentarily at the thought of the material against Jim’s neck, and waited for Jim to say something.

Do something, because chances were that Jim would decide on action, and they would soon be driving through the rain slick streets towards yet another civic function.

Jim met his eye in the mirror he was standing in front of and proved that he wasn’t as predictable as some people liked to make him out to be.

“It’s what’s on the inside,” Jim said stiltedly, gaze dropping away and fixing on some distant point in the past Oswald couldn’t follow him to, “sometimes it feels as though everybody can see. There’s nothing I can do to hide it.”

“Do you want to hide it?” Oswald asked softly, thinking of his successes and his failures. They were all a part of the whole. You couldn’t have light without shadow.

Jim let out a shaky breath. Turned to face him and admitted, “I wish I didn’t need to.”

It had been a long week for Jim, he knew. Harrowing and tense and stressful, and it shouldn’t be any surprise that Jim was struggling. It was though, in spite of everything, because he was still wont to put Jim up on a pedestal. To think him capable of handling anything. Perfect and unblemished and beautiful, as though it wasn’t the flaws in the design that had shaped him into the person he was.

That had made him so worth fighting for.

“You’re wrong, Jim,” he said simply, “about what people see when they look at you. You’re someone who cares. Who tries. I saw it from the very beginning.”

Jim tried to smile. Couldn’t quite manage it, so that he only looked paler and more tired. Exhausted, really, and Oswald sighed theatrically and slumped back a little into the pillows. Made a show of pulling at the knot of his bow tie and looked at Jim significantly.

“What are you doing?” Jim questioned, the frown creasing his brow, and Oswald figured that if he was going to sacrifice a night of seeing and being seen he might as well get something out of it.

Smiled at Jim, half fond and more than a touch heated,

“I think I’m about to find myself unavoidably detained. It’s an engagement that could last all evening.”

Jim cracked, the tension leaching from his shoulders, and Oswald welcomed his approach with open arms.

Sometimes, staying in had a lot to be said for it.
As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)

Chapter End Notes
Chapter 83

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: Prompt for fluffy Gobblepot NSFW smut - Jim riding Oswald because Oz’s leg is hurting but they’re both still running hot, and if you could somehow squeeze in Oswald discovering that Jim has a praise-kink (and Oz taking full advantage of it, heheh).

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Is there anything I can do? Do you want me to try rubbing it?”

A few months ago he would have given everything he had to hear those words fall from Jim’s mouth. To hear Jim speak to him in that tone of voice, all solicitous concern, or to simply soak up Jim’s proximity. He would have nodded, desperate, and gritted his teeth through the pain just to know how it felt to have Jim’s hands upon him.

Now he was sure enough of himself to glance from Jim’s beautiful blue eyes to his lips and back again, a smile curling about his lips as he leaned in close and suggested,

“IT’S NOT MY LEG THAT NEEDS IT.”

Jim looked startled for a moment. Impatiently eager a few moments later, and Oswald only paused long enough to swallow back a couple of pain pills before letting himself be lead to the bedroom they shared whenever Jim managed to pull himself away from the precinct.

Usually he did his best to go without for as long as possible. Hated the way the medication dulled his thoughts and slowed his response times, too aware of how many people in the city wanted him dead, and the kind of methods they might employ to accomplish it.

But Jim’s presence was comforting in the way little else was. Soothed away the worst of his fears and stilled his paranoia, so that he could allow himself to enjoy the time they spent together.

It helped, too, that he was paying handsomely to keep some of the country’s finest marksmen on his payroll.

Jim pulled him in as soon as the door was closed. Kissed him with his patented brand of focused intensity, until it wasn’t just the throbbing ache in his leg that made him want to get horizontal.

Had him undoing his cufflinks and his collar studs, and settling back against the soft pillows as he watched Jim make short work of his own shirt buttons. Oswald didn’t tend to talk much during these encounters. Was still afraid, perhaps, that making it too real - reminding Jim of who he was and what they had been to each other - would only lead to heartache.

But the meds were already working their way into his system. Were relaxing his tense muscles and loosening his tongue, so that he was as surprised as anyone to hear himself say,

“COME HERE, JIM. LET ME LOOK AT YOU.”
Jim was gorgeous, breathtaking, and the scars littered over his torso only made Oswald’s fingers itch with the urge to reach out and touch them. To trace the proof that Jim had survived - was a born fighter.

To make him understand that each and every one of those blemishes was a mark of Jim’s success, not of his failure.

He splayed his hand across Jim’s abdomen in reward for his obeying. Pressed in a little, to feel the muscle beneath the skin, and felt the flush rising in his cheeks as Jim watched him with dark eyes.

The excitement sparking through him as he said brazenly,

“I want you to ride me. I want to see how good you look when you’re full of me.”

It was crass, maybe. The kind of thing he used to hear men say in Fish’s sordid back rooms. Jim twitched at the sound of it though. Sucked in a breath, pulse racing, and then it was a tangle of clothing and limbs as Jim straddled his hips and started kissing him.

Nipped at his lower lip and tugged a little too ardently at his tailoring. For once Oswald couldn’t bring himself to care about it.

He slid his fingers into Jim’s hair instead, loving the feel of it, and set about some nibbling of his own while Jim struggled with the last of the clothing, adoring the way Jim clutched at him and groaned helplessly.

It was reason enough to keep at it. To suck tender kisses up the length of Jim’s throat, and then whisper in his ear that he needed Jim to touch him.

Jim was wild eyed when he pulled back. Pushed him gently down into the bed and maneuvered himself so as not to touch his bad leg. Traced a careful caress along it with his fingers, feather light, then gazed up at him so that he shivered and ached, before taking him in hand and licking at the head of his shaft.

Guiding him into his furnace of a mouth, slow and steady, so that Oswald couldn’t help but bite back a gasp at the sensation. Cursed in a frantic hiss when Jim took him all, and then anchored a hand in Jim’s hair when his tongue tickled at the underside just so, so perfect that he had to say as much.

Jim moaned around him in response, movements growing faster and wetter, his reactions a little more frantic with every scratchy word of praise Oswald bestowed upon him. It was too much, too exquisite, and when he looked down to see Jim working at himself with fevered motions, he tugged at Jim’s hair and told him that he couldn’t stand it.

He wouldn’t last, wouldn’t be able to hold back much longer, and Jim just surged forward to kiss him, knocking an expensive cut glass tumbler to the carpet as he rooted one handed through the bedside cabinet.

Oswald didn’t chide him for it. Put a hand on his cheek to prevent him diverting his attention, and when Jim found what he was looking for Oswald only helped him spill it over their fingers. Worked a finger into Jim, even as Jim reached behind himself, and the knowledge that Jim wanted it so bad, that he was desperate not to wait a moment longer, had him so worked up that his hips were shifting of their own volition.

“Now,” Jim said finally, tone brokering no arguments, and Oswald watched him slack jawed as he moved into position, his hands tracing up Jim’s thighs and back over his abdomen.
He had to tip his head back as Jim sank down onto him. Cried out something that wasn’t intelligible in either English or Hungarian, and held Jim’s hips in a death grip, attempting to regain control of himself.

Jim did nothing to help matters. Started moving, tiny motions as sinfully hot little breathy noises spilled out of him, Oswald pushed into being more demanding with each and every one of them. To telling Jim what to do, and how to do it, and panting out that he was a good boy when Jim went right ahead and did it.

He worried for a moment that it was a step too far, even in the heat of the moment, but Jim only made a strangled, frantic sound, and told him in a rush that he used to think of this, late at night, when it felt like he’d go mad if he didn’t touch himself.

The confession twisted his heart into knots, combined with the catch in Jim’s voice and the way he gripped at his hand. Got him burning up with want, looking at the sweat streaking Jim’s handsome face, and the swollen jut of his dick, flushed and desperate.

Jim tensed and shook as he came. Panted for air and collapsed half atop him, face pressed into the crook of his neck as Oswald held him tight and shuddered through his own climax, not wanting to let go again.

Not when he remembered too clearly how it was to lay there alone and unloved, certain that he would never know anything different.

“How’s your leg?” Jim asked eventually, when his grip had let up enough to allow Jim to shift into a more comfortable position.

“I haven’t had chance to think about it,” Oswald answered, truthfully, and Jim just squirmed enough to press a clumsy kiss to the underside of his jaw.

“I knew there had to be a reason you kept me around,” Jim murmured, trying for what passed as a joke with his sense of humor, so Oswald kissed him back and said knowingly,

“It’s one of many.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 84

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: Could you write something where pre relationship Jim and Oswald are hanging out together and Jim breaks down with all the stuff that’s been happening lately and Oswald comforts him awkwardly while he cries on his shoulder? Jim’s just going through a lot lately and I need him to be comforted.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oswald had never been much good at dealing with emotional displays - at least not when the emotion being displayed was something other than anger - but then he supposed that Jim wasn’t exactly an expert at it.

Jim was a doer not a thinker. Pushed on through, buried his head in the next task to be accomplished and, for all that he was falling apart inside, went out and faced the world as though there wasn’t anything the matter.

He understood because it was how he had learned to cope with many of his own problems.

To wear a mask, and play a role, and hope that nobody could see how much of a mess he really was beneath the brittle surface.

Jim had reached the end of his tether - was so clearly a man at breaking point.

Sobbed again, curling in on himself as though to try and hide from the expected judgment, and Oswald could do nothing but move to sit beside him.

To ignore the sharp twinge of pain from his bad leg and finally allow himself to put a hand on Jim’s shoulder.

Jim couldn’t control it, could scarcely breathe through the outpouring, and Oswald only pulled him closer as Jim turned towards him, tear sodden face buried in his expensive tailoring.

“You always saw through me,” Jim choked out, the tentative fingers Oswald touched to the hair at the nape of his neck seemingly causing him to cry harder, “you always knew that I’m a monster.”

That wasn’t it at all. Never had been. Barbara had said once, back when they had been play acting as bosom buddies, that Jim had a darkness inside him. An ugly truth that he wanted hidden. Oswald had known that she was wrong because the only thing wrong with Jim was his overdeveloped sense of guilt.

If he learned to compromise, to accept that there were some things he could not change without first loading the dice in his favor, his most viciously fought war would no longer be with himself.

“You’re not a monster, Jim,” he said quietly, swallowing around the emotion clogged in his throat as Jim continued to sob himself into submission. “You’re a man in need of a friend. Just like the rest of us.”
It took a lot to admit that. Made him feel exposed and vulnerable, even with Jim completely broken down before him.

“And what will it cost me - your friendship?”

Jim swiped at his eyes with the heel of his hand. Struggled to get his breathing under control as he made to move away. Oswald stroked his thumb back over Jim’s nape, soft and soothing, and released a breath he hadn’t realized he was holding as Jim relaxed back against him, just for a moment.

“The going rate,” he said, proud of the way his voice didn’t waver, and met Jim’s gaze evenly when he pulled back slowly to look at him.

Answered Jim’s unspoken question, the hint of a smile on his face revealing little of the breathless hope gathering in his chest,

“Next time you call by, perhaps you’ll finally accept the drink I offer you.”

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 85

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: *Jim has unrequited feelings for Oswald, who's in a relationship with Ed (maybe during the mayor era) and they're made all the more painful for Jim when he realizes that their relationship is actually very genuine/loving/healthy, totally unlike he would have assumed.*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jim had never been any good at getting what he wanted.

What he thought he should want, that was a different issue. At school he knuckled down and got good grades. At basic he received glowing reports from all his superiors. By the time he got his honorable discharge he had earned his sergeant’s stripes, and he rejoined the civilian world with a fistful of medals and not a soul in the world he could call a friend.

He tried the things he read in the advice books. Joined a book club and drank too much coffee. Went to a lecture on the history of Gotham, and the opening night of some gallery showing or other.

It was there that he met Barbara, on paper the perfect woman from the perfect background, and when it all fell apart the horror of it was only heightened by the relief he felt.

Because, in the end, he couldn’t live a lie - at least not inside his own head.

He couldn’t pretend to himself that making his mother proud was ever going to fill the emptiness he felt.

The excruciating loneliness.

He wanted something that nobody could give him, not even Harvey, because even friendship would never be enough. He wanted to share his life with somebody who could accept the man he had grown to be.

The man who wanted to be washed clean in the light even as he was drawn inexorably to the darkness.

He didn’t believe the rumor when he first heard it. Perhaps he simply hadn’t wanted to.

But then he had no choice but to accept the proof flaunted in front of his face. The secret smiles and the lingering touches. The genuine affection and the sincerity of the concern they showed for each other.

It wasn’t right, he thought when he saw them together at official engagements.

It should have been him, he reasoned when Oswald bestowed the kind of look on Nygma he sometimes imagined in his bed at night, shrouded in the silence.
“Anybody would think you were jealous,” Nygma said once, in the aftermath of yet another humiliating press conference, and Jim had to push his way through the crowd blindly, the indifference on Oswald’s face seared behind his eyelids.

He had never been any good at getting what he wanted.

The best he could hope for was nobody ever knowing how much that hurt to acknowledge.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
There had been a time when Jim had pictured himself a real detective after leaving the army. He would power through the Academy, determined to hit the streets and make a difference, and he would put so much of himself into the job that he couldn’t fail but to be fast tracked out of uniform.

That was before things had gone wrong, before his entire life had fallen apart, and now even if by some miracle he were to gain acceptance into the Academy, his shattered nerves wouldn’t last a single round out on the firing range.

Instead he lived vicariously through the pages of his books.

Imagined himself a hardened private eye, or a dashing consulting detective. An armchair sleuth, even, deducing personal details about the family history researchers who gathered on the back table, and the moms who brought their kids in once a week to pick out some easy escapism.

The doddery senior citizens who asked him too loudly for the latest titles on audio book, and the well tailored young man who seemed as afraid to meet his eye as Jim was his sometimes, as though keeping his gaze on the counter would hide the bruises on his face.

His name was Oswald Cobblepot.

Kapelput, so the genealogy registers he was learning to use said, and Jim booked himself a slot on the microfiche machine when his volunteer shift was over, disappointed to find dead ends and incomplete records.

The other option was to actually open his mouth, to work past the constant paranoia, and though he worked himself into a wreck the following week, Oswald failed to put in an appearance.

It left him feeling on edge and uncomfortable. Depressed and frustrated with himself. He had a nightmare that night, the worst one for a long time, and he spent most of the following day staring blankly at his living room wall, unable to understand what had happened to the soldier who could deal with anything the enemy might throw at him.

He debated not going to his next shift. Thought of burrowing beneath his covers and simply waiting for the day - the week - the year - to be over.

Forced himself to move at the last possible moment, and agreed with Isabella’s assumption that he had been sick in bed with flu since she had last seen him. Tried to hide his face this time, ashamed of his failure to make progress, but couldn’t help but look up when Oswald asked him to check on a title's availability for him.
Smiled back, awkward but genuine, and though the effort of conversation was enough to make his heart pound, when it was done he couldn’t quit smiling.

Felt more like himself than he had in months, at the very least, and as the weeks crawled past they made it from stilted comments about the weather to real - whispered - discussions while he was on his break, or returning books to the shelves.

Maybe one day he would ask Oswald out for coffee.

Perhaps they would make it to a real dinner.

Then Oswald handed him an envelope containing an invite to a club opening - his club opening - and told him that it wouldn’t be the same without him.

Jim tried to explain that he couldn’t. Tried to express that it wasn’t that he didn’t want to. Succeeded only in sounding judgmental and superior, and he cried hot angry tears in the shower for the life he should have been living.

For the person he was supposed to be.

In their place he tugged at his hair and scratched at his arm. Threw his dog tags from their place on his mirror at the opposite wall, then shook and trembled and stuck his head between knees until he was once more in control of himself.

Decided for then against, over and over again, and finally buttoned up his shirt and swallowed back his medication.

Walked past the place once, twice, three times. Loitered in an agony of uncertainty, fingernails digging deep into the flesh of his palms. He could do it.

Couldn’t do it.

Couldn’t do anything at all, really, and he was just throwing in the towel when he heard his own name delivered in soft breathy tones.

“You came.”

Jim swallowed around the lump in his throat. Blinked back the confusing swirl of emotion and ducked his head a little.

“I tried to.”

Oswald smiled at him, like he couldn’t help it, and somehow it was easier to make it over the threshold with a friendly presence at his side. With Oswald’s careful touch on his arm, and the way he stuck close, though there must have been a hundred more important things for him to be doing.

“I thought you’d be a writer,” Jim said later, the night now the early morning, and the words falling from his mouth with the help of the champagne, “I wouldn’t have made a very good detective.”

“I knew you were someone I wanted to know better,” Oswald confessed in turn, as though Jim’s conversation was making perfect sense, and pressed a fluttery kiss to his cheek like he truly thought him something special.

“There are things you don’t know about me,” Jim blurted, frightened of what it might mean but needing it to be out in the open.
Heard the same sentiment in return, something in Oswald’s gaze suggesting that it wasn’t said out of simple courtesy.

Something so worried, so miserable, that it gave Jim the courage to say that he was willing to take the risk if Oswald was. Regretted his choice of words almost immediately, wishing he were better at this. Wishing he were better in general.

“There is nothing I would like more,” was what Oswald said, looking so pretty Jim could hardly stand it, making it his turn to echo the sentiment.

His turn to press a tentative kiss to Oswald’s smooth shaven face.

“I look forward to it,” he managed, hoping his smile offset the formality.

He didn’t need to be a detective to be certain of the answer.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: *Would you consider a gobblepot prompt about them being WW2 or Vietnam soldiers and having a secret illicit moment - Inspired by the flashback of Jim and Oswald as soldiers that Jim had?*

(I went WW1)

Chapter Notes

Historical notes - I went WW1 because I know next to nothing about the Vietnam war, and my knowledge of US involvement in WW2 is only really decent in terms of D-Day and troops stationed in the UK.

The US didn’t declare war until 1917 but obviously lots of men enlisted with their countries of origin / parents’ origin, or crossed the Canadian border to sign up. I had Jim fighting on the Western Front with the CEF (Canadian Expeditionary Force) because, well, that’s where most of them ended up. Most of the Austro-Hungarian troops were fighting on the Italian and Eastern fronts but some units did fight in France, especially in 1918 when US troops started arriving in huge numbers.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

His mother had told him not to go. Had urged him to think of his studies and his future. Of the beautiful Miss Barbara Kean, and the life they might build together if only he could convince her father he was son-in-law material.

In turn he thought of his favorite photograph of his own father, dashing and distinguished in his army uniform, and when Wilson refused to enter the fray he signed his name on the dotted line at an enlistment office across the Canadian border.

Was caught up in the imagined glamour, and the mass excitement, and only truly realized what it was he had agreed to when the first of the men he had trained alongside went down and never got up again.

When his drab field uniform crawled with lice, and he couldn’t sleep for the frozen stiffness of his toes and the stench of the dead and the cries of the dying wafting across No Man’s Land.

He should have listened to his mother.

That was what he thought when the first bullet tore through his shoulder. The second brought him low, explosions ringing in his ears, and though he tried to get back up in the end there was nothing for it but to lay there and stare up at the smoke obscuring the rain clouds.

To wait for the screams and the sobbing to wane, and the rain to start falling all around.
He couldn’t make sense of what was real, and what only existed inside his own head. Because the insignia visible in the pale moonlight wasn’t any he wanted to see, but the hands that raised his head and held a canteen to his lips were too gentle to be that of an enemy.

The man said something, muted and distant because of the insistent ringing, and in a foreign tongue besides. Repeated it, more urgently, and the last thing Jim remembered thinking was that he had looked strangely ethereal, like an angel, with the light of the moon haloed behind his dark head of hair.

He came to at a field dressing station, one of their own, where he was told that he was a frightfully lucky fellow. That the bullet wounds had kept him out of the worst of the bomb blast, and that he must have been taken for dead during the opposition sweep of the battlefield because his dog tags were missing.

They shipped him off to the clearing station and then on to a base hospital. From there he was sent across the Channel to convalesce and write his mother not to worry if she received a letter of commiseration from the other side - he would be fighting fit again before she knew it.

Was told in return that Barbara was engaged to be married, and that if he were to make it back alive how was he going to support a wife if he were maimed or gassed or disfigured like the unfortunate souls she read about in the newspapers.

Maybe he didn’t want a wife at all, that was what he wrote back in a fit of bitterness. Tore the letter to pieces before he could make the mistake of sending it, and forced himself not to look away from the faces of men who had been rendered unrecognizable by shell damage.

The news filtered through as he was issued with orders to return to his unit that Wilson’s neutrality had been rescinded.

He wondered if the men they sent would all be as unprepared as he was.

If they would pity his war weary appearance, the lice returning in their swarms back out at the front while the rats gnawed at his bootlaces. If they would shudder at his increasing indifference to everything and anything but making it through alive.

There was no time to mourn and no room for hope either. All they could do was keep pushing forward, the dead laying where they fell, swallowed whole by the mud that made up so much of their existence.

His comrades cheered when the first American troops marched past them, clean and upright and buttons gleaming in the sunlight. He couldn’t muster enough feeling to do anything, not then and not when he saw the horror in their eyes when their paths crossed again.

Instead he lay awake, curled on his side in a dugout, thinking of the angular features of his guardian angel and why he had come to save him from physical peril but left his mind to disintegrate.

Because he didn’t know how much more he could take. How much longer he could pretend to be coping.

Found himself facing down the enemy at close quarters a few scant weeks later, finger frozen against the trigger of his rifle even as bullets flew all around him. He had a man in his sights. Could take him down if only he could make himself move.

Swallowed thickly as the stranger kept advancing, the men at his side busy with their own battles,
and he lowered the gun slowly waiting for fate to run its course.

Jolted his head up in shock at the sound of his name on the man’s lips, and took in the dirt and the grime streaked across the features that had been featuring in all his daydreams. They were sharper now. Emaciated. Pinched with the strain of fighting, and fearing, and wishing for it all to be over.

It was, in its way.

They picked their way over to the abandoned farmhouse they had been using for shelter. Sat in strangely companionable silence waiting for somebody to find them and demand to know what the hell they were doing.

He didn’t know, that was the answer. Observed, silent, as slender fingers touched the fabric of his tunic, over the spot where a bullet had been dug out of him, and felt his breathing grow quick and shallow, the language barrier nothing when faced with the intensity in the other man’s eyes.

The tentative way they shifted, closer and closer, and the brush of lips against his cheek.

It was the first time in months that he felt something other than numb.

That he wanted something more than to simply carry on existing.

They kissed like the world was ending.

Like today had been the last tomorrow they would ever see.

Left him panting and ragged, and when footsteps approached they scarcely broke apart in time.

It was a handful of men from his own unit. He never knew if they believed him when he said that he had captured the man as a prisoner of war. Perhaps they too were beyond caring. They marched the man back to base all the same, and Jim nodded, just slightly, as he was led away, the man’s identity disc clenched tight in his palm all the while.

Somewhere, somehow, he didn’t doubt that he and Oswald Kapelput would meet again.

Chapter End Notes

As ever, feel free to chat / hit me with prompts over on Tumblr @serenwib or Twitter @falsteloj. :)
Chapter 88

Chapter Summary

For an ask on Tumblr: character A's ex is an hooker enters in A's home dressed as a sexy fireman because of a wrong address, for Jim/Oswald. I know it's pure crack but crack is good for the soul.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jim Gordon was a do-gooder. An insufferable by the book boy scout who was always going to choose doing the right thing over what made him happy.

Duty over desire.

Presenting a picture of the perfect son and the perfect beat cop over a lover with too intimate links to the city’s underworld.

A male lover, to make things more complicated.

Oswald had known all this and taken the risk anyway. Had hardened his heart against the inevitable and ended up torn apart by Jim’s rejection anyway. He hadn’t been able to quit dreaming.

He had never been able to stamp out the embers of hope entirely.

Now all he had was another evening spent home alone, eating fine food and drinking fine wine, and pretending that he wasn’t going to cling tight to the new pillow on his new bed - in this fresh start of a mausoleum he had found for himself - when he finally gave in for the night.

Refusing to admit how well he had slept with his head resting above the steady thump of Jim’s heartbeat.

It had been almost four months now. It wasn’t supposed to hurt so badly.

Nothing was meant to hurt like this, his heart twisted like his mangled leg, broken and bleeding because of yet another of his bad decisions.

The pity party was in full swing when the knock sounded at the door. Oswald trailed his fingers along the stem of his wine glass and listened to the lumbering steps of his latest hire. Zsasz was too… unpredictable to make a good doorman.

They exchanged words at the door, too low for him to make out the conversation, but then Larkin was hovering in his line of vision, stumbling over apologies for disobeying his orders to be left alone.

“He says it’s an emergency, Boss,” Larkin whined plaintively, “he says he can’t be kept waiting.”

Oswald huffed in annoyance. Pinched at the bridge of his nose but bid Larkin to let the man enter.
Resolutely faced his dinner plate, catching a fleeting glimpse of work boots and Gotham Fire Department issue turnout pants.

“Is there a problem?” He started, a tug of fear settling in his gut as he turned in his seat. His club was just beginning to pay its own way. His office in the city center was prime real estate.

“There is,” a gruff voice said, face turned away as strong hands fumbled with the fastenings of his jacket. “It’s entirely too hot in here.”

That was when the world tilted into the surreal. When he rose halfway out of his seat, unthinking, because the guy in front of him was suddenly shirtless. Tanned and toned and gorgeous, the suspenders only highlighting the broadness of his shoulders.

The flush in his cheeks only highlighting the beautiful blue of his eyes.

“Jim?” Oswald croaked out, helpless, and Jim’s eyes widened in horror, voice little more than a squeak as he managed,

“You’re not having a bachelorette party?”

Oswald shook his head.

“This is 115 Brickell Street?”

He shook his head again.

“151. This is 151, Jim.”

Jim sank down onto the nearest seat. Looked like his legs were going to buckle otherwise, the color draining from his face so fast it ought to have been comical.

It wasn’t.

Nor was the way Jim raked his hand through his hair, adam’s apple bobbing as he swallowed. The way his long lashes swept along his cheek as he gazed up at him and whispered a plea for him not to tell anyone.

To not let it get back to the precinct.

He’d be a laughing stock. Would lose what little respect he had managed to garner.

“I just - I needed. I wanted.”

Jim stopped again, clamping up, and Oswald did the only thing he could.

“Where did you get that? You’ve already got a uniform.”

It was the worst thing he could have said. Jim was hardly likely to besmirch the name of the venerable Gotham Police Department.

Except Jim sucked in a startled breath. Snorted gracelessly, an awkward smile curling across his features.

Downed the glass of wine Oswald offered, for courage, and looked him full in the face as he stumbled over a confession. About the colleague who had suddenly had a better offer and about he had needed the money.
How he had been planning to use it to book a restaurant. A swanky upmarket one whose price list already happened to be one Oswald was already well versed on. It hurt like a knife to the gut.

He was well placed to make the comparison.

Jim had moved on. Had found someone he was willing to risk his reputation for.

“I made a mistake,” Jim said, voice scratched up and strained, “I wanted to show you I could do better.”

Oswald gripped at the back of the chair. Pressed his other hand to his mouth, fingers trembling. He was going to be sick. He was so angry he could scarcely think straight.

Could scarcely see for the stinging burn of humiliated tears.

Because Jim was obtuse at times. Infuriating and self-righteous. He had never known Jim could be so willfully cruel.

Had never imagined Jim could break his heart any harder.

“I wanted to prove to you I can be worth it,” Jim went on, like he was the one suffering, “I want you to know how sorry I am. I am sorry, Oswald.”

Jim’s hand reached for his. Caught it before he could pull away. Stroked his thumb over his bruised and swollen knuckles - an occupational hazard - then took hold of the other. Pulled it away from the pocket with his flick knife.

The steak knife on the table.

“I love you.”

That wasn’t what he had been expecting. Was something he itched to fight back against. To scratch and claw and have Jim prove that it was all a lie.

Except Jim just stood there, eyes glistening. Gazed at him with unmasked hope and whispered again,

“I love you, Oswald.”

It couldn’t be that easy. It wouldn’t be.

“I don’t want you to take me to dinner, Jim.”

“Can I take you somewhere else?” Jim asked, stubborn as ever. Recognized the double entendre the same time he did, a stupid smile stealing across his face even as Oswald felt his own composure cracking.

Even as a less than threatening giggle bubbled out of him.

“You’ve got to make it up to me,” Oswald said, breathlessly solemn, “You’ve got to earn my forgiveness.”

It was a start. A beginning.

Enough for Jim to beam like the sun itself, swooping him into his arms like he wanted to live up to the ridiculous costume.
Like he never wanted to let go again.

“There are some very disappointed bachelorettes out there right now,” Oswald chided, grinning wide.

Jim shrugged, no mistaking his happiness, and told him simply,

“They’ll get over it.”

Chapter End Notes

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Works inspired by this one: Art for tunglo's Shades of Gray by lord_garbage, High Noon by lord_garbage

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