According to Rumors

by skeleton_twins, thekeyholder

Summary

Jim Gordon and Mayor Cobblepot find themselves the subjects of Valerie Vale's articles, claiming that they are secretly dating. The whole media picks up the juicy subject, until the two men decide to pretend to date in order to get rid of the pesky journalists.

Notes

Hello! As promised, here's our new collaboration for Day 5 of Gobblepot Week - Fake relationship.

Thank you so much for the beta Nekomata58919!

We hope you enjoy it!
When Valerie’s boss had sent her to the press conference held by Mayor James that morning, the young journalist thought she would have a rather dull day. Instead, she was currently recording Oswald Cobblepot’s announcement of candidacy to become Gotham’s next mayor. How intriguing, someone was finally challenging that old, corrupt worm’s tyranny. Even though that someone was an infamous crimelord...

The gangster had just finished his speech, basking in the cheers and applause of his supporters. With a curt nod and satisfied smile, he left the podium. Valerie quickly snapped a few pictures of the crowd, and tried to get through the masses, in order to take a few close-ups of Oswald, and if possible, ask him a couple of questions as well. By the time she got through, though, the gangster had disappeared, but Valerie thought she’d seen a coat tail just flash behind the corner.

As she got closer, she was sure she was on the right track, the wind carrying some voices. It looked like part of the gathering had moved to this side of the building. She scanned the area until her eyes were caught by a silver glint - the metal head of Mr. Cobblepot’s cane reflecting the sunshine. Valerie was about to approach him when she noticed Cobblepot’s conversation partner. It was the recently reinstated Detective James Gordon, whom she’d had the ‘pleasure’ of meeting when they had both hunted Arkham escapees.

The two talking struck her as an odd happening, but even odder was their closeness: Gordon was towering over Cobblepot, very much in the gangster’s personal space. Even though Valerie tried to eavesdrop, the two must have been whispering, for she couldn’t make out a single word. However, even a blind man could see that their conversation was heated, but not in an inimical way, as one would expect. It was tense, charged with electricity, and Valerie automatically brought her camera to her eye, zooming in and taking a few pictures.

Just then, Detective Gordon raised his right hand, and it looked like he was either about to punch Cobblepot or drag the mobster against him. However, his hand stopped mid-air, as if he’d suddenly remembered that they were in public, and with a last glare left the place. Mr. Cobblepot was standing there, still slightly leaning forward, his eyes burning with a ferocity that honestly scared Valerie a bit.

Soon, Cobblepot left as well, but the journalist didn’t mind that she didn’t get to ask her questions. Her photographs were so much better than anything she had hoped for. She was already writing the article in her head; she thought these pictures and new piece of information would serve as a bomb ending to her article about the gangster’s surprise announcement.

“Perhaps even more surprisingly, Mr. Cobblepot was seen in a very intimate position with Detective Gordon... does this mean the GCPD supports him?”
“Bullock… Gordon… My office! *Now!*” The Captain barked, voice carrying through the entire precinct.

Jim had been expecting this, anticipating the Captain’s negative reaction since this morning after reading the newspaper over breakfast at his apartment. His little argument with Cobblepot had been front page news – he wondered when the news had stopped reporting and become so trivial – only it hadn’t appeared as an argument, instead it had come across more like lovers having a tête-à-tête. When he first arrived at the precinct, he thought that he was in the clear since other than a couple of looks, the article went unmentioned by everyone other than Harvey, of course. That maybe, just maybe, the Captain would miss the latest edition of the Gotham Gazette.

But this was Gotham, there was no such thing as catching a break.

“Sounds like the Captain doesn’t approve of your… what did they call it? Oh, right, intimate moment with Penguin.”

Red-faced, Jim threw his partner a glare, but Harvey just grinned at him, enjoying this far too much. The distance to the Captain’s office was a short one, but with the weight of the stares digging in his back from the other officers, it felt like eternity as he walked to what Jim could only describe as his own execution.

He couldn’t get fired over a fallacious article… right?

The Captain had his chair turned to the side, not looking at the two figures entering his office. Jim wondered whether the Captain did this on purpose, because the next words coming out of his mouth were done so as he spun around to face Jim directly.

“Do you know what I dislike, detective?”

Jim wasn’t expecting this question, didn’t quite know how to answer, opened his mouth, but thought better and kept it shut firmly.

“Interruptions.” The Captain told him, pointing to the untouched coffee and a small breakfast bagel with a chunk missing from it, set aside on his desk, “especially during my meal time.”
“Every morning I have five minutes to myself, to sit down right here and eat breakfast. Do you know why I do this?”

“Because you’re a workaholic?” Harvey supplied.

“Because I’m always here, right in this office, doing my best to protect Gotham and her streets. I don’t have time to go home.”

Jim thought that this was bit of an exaggeration, but wisely kept this to himself.

“So imagine my dismay when I sat down to eat my bagel, and twenty-three different reporters call, asking me if the GCPD is backing Oswald Cobblepot’s decision of running for Mayor?!”

Each word the Captain spoke, his voice grew louder and louder, until he was shouting the last part of that sentence.

“I can explain, sir… It’s not what it looks like-” Jim tried.

The Captain jabbed a finger in Jim’s direction, “What it looks like is that the GCPD is flirting with a known criminal. I know you and Cobblepot have history.”

“We don’t.”

Harvey coughed, making it very loud and clear that he disagreed with this statement. “For the record, might I just add that I knew this was going to happen, I knew that snitch would be causing Jimbo, here, trouble.”

This only fueled Barnes’s suspicions, “How long has this… been going on?”

“There is nothing going on between Cobblepot and me!” Jim could feel heat rushing back to his face, he never thought he would need to utter such a statement.

It was clear that Barnes didn’t believe him, not for a second, and proceeded to lecture him on how
his actions and associations reflect on the precinct.

There was nothing Jim could do, other than take the spittles flying and nearly hitting his face as the Captain chewed him out. A rant mixed between GCPD’s reputation and something about bagels thrown in there as well.

Finally, Jim saw the end to his long-winded speech as Barnes gave one last reproachful look and ordered Jim to ‘fix this immediately’.

“I’ll take care of it, Sir.” Jim promised, not quite sure how he’d fulfill said promise. Right before he left, he added, “Enjoy your breakfast, sir.” He ducked right in time, narrowly missing the newspaper being tossed at him.

There was only one person who could fix this, much to Jim’s chagrin. The one person who started this mess in the first place. Jim didn’t like it, but was forced to admit that Oswald had some sway with the people. This entire mess could be righted with one word from the new candidate, clearing up any misconceptions about where the GCPD’s loyalties lay, along with Gordon’s.

He arrived at Oswald’s mansion that night, slamming his car door with all the anger he could muster. He had to be as stern as possible when facing Cobblepot, to let him know that this was not a joke. Jim was instantly led to the living room, where the gangster was having dinner.

His eyes lit up, and he gingerly patted his mouth with a napkin, gripping the table as the detective entered. “Jim! What a surprise! Come and have dinner with me! Gabe, bring a plate for the detective.”

“Not necessary, I won’t stay long,” Jim grumbled, not even taking the seat Oswald had pointed at. “I came to ask you to have that shameless article in the Gotham Gazette retracted. Or at least the part about me and the GCPD. I don’t support you in your candidacy.”

“Yes, you made that perfectly clear yesterday.” Oswald said, cutting his steak with more vigor than necessary. “As for the article, don’t worry about it, Jim. It’s not even worth mentioning.”

Jim exhaled with relief. “You’ll have it retracted then?”

“No, Jim. The best course of action is not to react to it. You’ll see, no one will pay attention to it.
Things are changing, there’s always something else in the news. People forget.”

Jim didn’t looked convinced, so the gangster added: “Trust me on this one, Jim. Just ignore it.”

The detective closed his eyes for a moment, and looked away from Oswald’s distractingly green eyes. “Fine. But if there’s one more article like that…”

“Have no worries, I’m sure Ms. Vale has better things to write about than our ‘intimate position’,” Oswald rolled his eyes as he made the air quotes, but Jim thought there was also a glimpse of smugness. “It must have been a slow news day.”

He didn’t have the energy to argue that Oswald’s candidacy was anything but a slow news day. Jim left quickly, refusing Oswald’s offer to drink something. He was so wrapped up in his thoughts that he didn’t see the glint of a lens, or hear the fast clicks of a camera.

That night Jim fell asleep with ease, convinced that he had overcome a ridiculous hitch. He didn’t know the printers were working fervently to have the new front page of the Gotham Gazette reprinted with surprising pictures.

The next evening, Oswald was sitting in the darkest booth of Raul’s Bar or whatever the place was called. Naturally, this wasn’t the type of place he frequented, but a certain detective had called him to meet in a very discreet location. Apparently, the mansion wasn’t safe anymore, not with lurking paparazzi around.

“Detective James Gordon had once been engaged with Barbara Kean, former wealthy socialite and patient at Arkham Asylum. The similarities between his old flame and alleged current lover begs the question if Detective Gordon has a certain type: rich dangerous ex-criminals.”

Oswald had been distracted, examining the not too impressive state of the bar he had been summoned to, to hear the bell at the door chimed, following the angry footfalls of one James Gordon.

A loud bang of a fist slamming down on the table in front of Oswald shook the salt shakers. Underneath the hand splayed was the latest Gotham Gazette, headline reading in bold letters: “MYSTERIOUS VISITOR - DET. GORDON SEEN LEAVING COBBLEPOT’S MANSION” with a clear as day photo of Jim leaving Oswald’s manor from the night before.
Oswald’s gaze followed up the leather jacket-clad arm to the furious expression the detective was sporting, furrowed brows and that one loose strand of hair escaping and falling across Jim’s wrinkled forehead. Oswald always had the urge to lean forward and brush it back. He squeezed his hand tight into a fist, ignoring it.

“Detective! How nice it is of you to show up! You know, when you called and asked me to come here… this wasn’t exactly the place I had in mind,” Oswald said with a hint of amusement dancing behind his eyes.

Jim ignored him. “Did you see this?”

Oswald glanced down at the article between them, tilting his head as he studied the picture. “You’re a very photogenic man, detective. I must applaud the photographer, getting such a nice shot, especially in the middle of the evening – an impressive feat.”

The detective slid his eyes shut, gritted out, “Did you read the article?”

“I did.” Oswald leaned back in his seat. “I particularly enjoyed the subtle implication of you being a gold digger. Vale certainly has spirit.”

Jim turned bright red at that. His embarrassment quickly transformed into anger. Oswald’s insouciant reaction towards the articles vexed him, dissolving whatever attempt at diplomacy Jim was trying to maintain with the gangster.

“You told me that I should trust you.” Jim spitted the word out like it left a bitter taste in his mouth. “Of course, I should know better than to believe you. I told you! Had you just gone and had the article retracted like I asked-”

“I was under the impression that discretion was the intention of this little meeting; screaming at me in public, however, proves otherwise. Do sit down, detective, making a scene will only cause more attention.”

Jim quieted immediately after that, scowling more at the gangster for having a valid point, and slid into the seat across from Oswald. He watched with growing amusement as the detective glanced around, looking for any signs of cameras.
“Relax, Jim. I doubt anyone would ever consider this as a spot where my lover and I would dine at.”

Jim flushed again at his words, more so with how teasing and unbothered the mobster seemed. “Why aren’t you more worried about this?”

The first time Oswald had seen the article, he was concerned with the public’s reaction, how it might affect their vote. However, his worries were unfounded, the articles had no negative impact on the public support.

“It hasn’t damaged the campaign in any way. There’s no need getting upset over mere rumors.” Oswald shrugged.

“It doesn’t reflect badly on you, but on me…” Jim growled, and rubbed his face as he leaned forward. That was when he noticed a big, bald guy staring at him from the bar, who quickly looked away when he realized Jim was aware of his stare.

“Oh, fuck. You’re right.”

“Maybe try growing a mustache for our next meeting.”

It was only then that Jim noticed Oswald’s tongue-in-cheek tone, and he got up instantly, his eyes flashing with anger. “There will be no next meeting, Cobblepot.”

Oswald snickered as he watched the retreating detective, rolling up the newspaper he left behind and putting it away in an inner pocket of his coat.

Fortunately, Jim didn’t get to see Oswald for weeks after their secret meeting. He was busy with
police work, Gotham’s criminals never sleeping, while Oswald was heavily campaigning. The detective heard about Oswald winning by a landslide while he and Harvey were driving back to the station after they managed to catch two Arkham escapees.

“So, your boyfriend won,” Harvey said with a grin, clearly enjoying his partner’s annoyance. “Exciting times ahead.”

Jim grunted, not rising to the bait. Even though most of his colleagues forgot about Valerie’s insolent articles, Harvey was still teasing him about them. He was exhausted, he’d worked overtime way too much in the past weeks. For the first time in forever, Jim was glad for the days off the Captain had promised him.

Surprisingly, Jim managed to sleep seven hours without the interruption of nightmares or phone calls from the GCPD. He decided to clean his apartment of empty bottles and takeout boxes, and made the place look more presentable. He even made a trip to the supermarket, and bought actual food, intent on proving himself that he got everything under control. His life was great, he cleaned, he was going to make an awesome meal, in short, he was a proper adult. He got this.

Jim was cutting a red chili when his phone rang, cursing as he hurried to the living room.

“Gordon.”

“Detective. Mayor Cobblepot has requested a police escort for his inauguration. Well, specifically you,” the officer said, amusement clearly coloring her voice. “His car will be there in thirty minutes.”

“What?!” Jim exclaimed. “No one told me anything about this. It’s my day off!”

“Sorry.”

“Fuck!”

Jim threw his phone on the table, and kicked his sofa. What did Cobblepot think to just summon him, as if he were his underling?! What kind of game was he playing? He understood the need for a police escort since unexpected things could happen, but why did Oswald insist on his presence? Jim rubbed his eyes vigorously.
Oh.

Oh shit.

Oh fucking hell.

The detective ran to the bathroom, while he tried not to scream too loudly as his left eye felt like it caught on fire. How could he be so dumb as to rub the chili in his eye?! He tried to wash it with cold water as much as he could, but it burned badly, and he knew he had to hurry if he didn’t want to miss his ride to the stupid inauguration. Otherwise, he knew Oswald would retaliate in some way. He hoped the ceremony wouldn’t last too long.

Jim put on his suit with only one eye open, the other one producing tear after hot tear. Someone rang the door just as he was putting on his tie. “Coming,” he grumbled.

The detective was convinced that it would be one of Oswald’s men, but it was the big boss himself, clad in a dark purple suit and black leather gloves.

“Jim! So nice to - What happened to your eye?!”


“Certainly not with your tie being crooked like that.” Oswald huffed and reached out to set Jim’s tie straight. “I can’t have my escort looking like a slob.”

Jim tried to shoo away Oswald’s hands, but the gangster didn’t let him, so Jim just stood there, his face burning with embarrassment. He hoped no one saw this scene. Luckily, Oswald soon led him to the limousine, making a big show of opening the door for Jim.

“It really looks bad, Jim,” Oswald commented, and Jim hated how he could hear the worry in his tone. “You should have it checked.”
“It’s fine.”

Jim couldn’t see shit as he got out of the car. He sauntered behind Oswald, trying to look alert – it would be rather unfortunate if something were to happen to Oswald at the inauguration, because the GCPD would be blamed for it.

Thankfully, the inauguration went off without a hitch. There were no attempts made on the new mayor’s life, much to Jim’s relief. It wasn’t like Jim could whip out his gun and shoot the potential threat, not in his current state. He was practically blinded, and adding a firearm in the equation only heightened the chances of missing and firing at the wrong person. Jim internally cringed at the mere thought of accidentally shooting Oswald instead of his hypothetical attacker. The press, like the piranhas they are, would go crazy. Jim could already picture the headline: “Lover shoots partner during mayoral inauguration. How did this blossoming romance become a nightmare?”

Jim sent a glare towards the reporters, or at least, he hoped that the blurry shape crowded around the steps were the journalists. They were, after all, the reason he was in this mess. He didn’t pay any attention to the ongoings of the ceremony, instead focused on watching the crowd, looking for any threats. He missed the occasional glance from the new mayor, looking back at Jim with an almost prideful expression.

It turned out the biggest threat there was the wind.

The strong wind irritated Jim’s eyes, causing them to start to water. He attempted to ignore this, thinking that one leaky eye wouldn’t matter too much. It was not until he felt a tear hitting his cheek that he unwisely wiped at his eyes, not realizing that it appeared that he was crying.

After Oswald got sworn in, Jim was pushed along the stage, shoved to stand beside the new mayor. It was here where Jim began to question how his life ended up to this point. Jim’s vision was momentarily blinded by the several flashes of light coming from the bloodthirsty reporters and photographers’ cameras, as they wildly snapped photos.

Jim stood there, blinking rapidly, as his eyes teared up once more. It was not until after a few minutes of sounds of camera shutters clicking that Oswald took mercy on him. Oswald waved one last time to the crowd before they could finally leave. Jim was grateful that Oswald was heading back to the limousine and not toward the crowd of hungry reporters waiting to pounce with endless questions.

They were halfway to the car when Oswald stopped and turned to face the detective, “Jim… Are you sure you’re alright?”
“Peachy,” Jim dryly responded. At this point, tears were streaming down his face.

Oswald’s mouth dropped into a frown, but a look quickly passed over his face, like he was suddenly hit with an idea. His hands patted down his suit, apparently seeking something. A handkerchief suddenly appeared in one of Oswald’s hands, and before Jim knew it, the small distance between them vanished. The new mayor reached up and with tenderness Jim hadn’t been aware Cobblepot was capable of, gently wiped away Jim’s tears.

Jim was too stunned to slap Oswald’s hands away, too distracted by the way they shook slightly. His body went on autopilot, head dropping to accommodate the height difference, so that Oswald could dry his tear-streaked face with ease. It was not until Oswald cupped his face with his other hand that Jim realized what he’d done.

“Be still.” Oswald insisted when Jim started to squirm under his hold, scolding him like he were a misbehaving child.

Jim grumbled, “This is completely unnecessary. I am a grown adult.”

“And yet, here you are complaining like a teenager.”

“Listen, the only reason I’m here is to protect you.” Jim gladly reminded him. “Shouldn’t insult the man whose job is ensuring the safety of the new mayor. I have a loaded gun.”

Oswald snorted, “Yes, had there been any threats, I’m sure you would have been completely capable of resolving them.”

His sarcastic tone was hard to miss.

“Yeah, well, I was just trying to have lunch. If you want your personal escort to be in tip-top condition, maybe give a few days notice before springing it on a person.”

Oswald pulled the handkerchief away from Jim’s face; he didn’t remove his hands, though, still holding Jim’s face in place as he examined his eyes. “My apologies, detective. Next time I’ll be sure to give an advanced notice a few days ahead.”
“Next time? What, you planning on running for mayor in another city too? Let me check my calendar before you go announcing your candidacy just yet.”

Jim was mesmerized by the way Oswald’s mouth curled up into a smile. He’s never seen a genuine smile from the gangster, always the sly manipulative ones.

Oswald’s hand dropped from his face as he stepped back. “How’s the eye?”

“Better.” Jim answered reluctantly and didn’t miss the way Oswald’s face brightened, like he was overjoyed at the mere fact of having provided any relief for Jim.

The hand that had cupped Jim’s face was now wrapped around the crook of Jim’s elbow. Jim glanced down at Oswald’s hand, slim pale fingers splayed against his dark jacket. He started to object before he realized that Oswald was directing him back towards the vehicle, probably under the impression that Jim’s vision was too impaired to see properly. A kind, and frankly surprising, gesture on the mobster’s part.

Both of them had failed to notice the lone reporter following them after the crowd at the ceremony had dispersed, having witnessed their entire interaction from a distance.

Jim had forgotten to set an alarm the previous day, so he was running late. He didn’t even have time for his morning coffee, hoping that he could get some in a break at the precinct. He was ready with several excuses for his lateness; however, it seemed like no one was working at the GCPD. They were all gathered in the middle, laughing loudly at something.

“Oh, look, Romeo is here!”

Jim didn’t realize the statement was referring to him, his colleagues letting him go to the front with rather smug expressions and grins. It was then that Jim noticed Harvey perched on their desk, glasses on as he was reading from the newspaper. Jim thought his knees would give out when he saw the front page: it was a picture of Oswald cupping his face and wiping his eyes with the headline ‘MAYOR COBBLEPOT INAUGURATED AS WEEPY BOYFRIEND LOOKS ON PROUDLY’.

“Jimbo, glad you could make it!”
“What’s going on?”

“I was reading Ms. Vale’s very amusing article.” Harvey made a show of clearing his throat, then resumed his reading.

“This newspaper has already revealed the very intimate relationship between the two men which was confirmed yet again at the inauguration. Det. Gordon was wearing an indigo tie exactly the color of Mayor Cobblepot’s elegant suit.”

“Aww, Jim you’re matching clothes already? How sweet!” Harvey mocked, their colleagues snickering.

“What?” Jim said, utterly confused.

“Since they are dating now, maybe Mayor Cobblepot should give some fashion advice to Det. Gordon. He needs to up his game in order not to embarrass his dapper beau.”

The GCPD let out a collective ‘ohhh’ at the hard blow delivered to Jim’s fashion sense.

“Stop, Harvey,” Jim grunted, the back of his neck burning. He lunged forward to snatch away the paper, but his partner jumped off the table with surprising agility, and went on the other side where Jim couldn’t reach him anymore.

“Ah ah, I’m not done yet.

“The most touching moment occurred when Mr. Cobblepot was sworn in – the detective watched the ceremony with tears in his eyes, clearly proud of his partner’s achievements. How progressive of him to show his emotions so publicly!”

“This is a lie, I was not crying!” Jim tried to yell over the noise, the policemen and women talking at once, electrified by the article. “I was preparing lunch when I got the call to escort Cobblepot. I accidentally rubbed chili in my eye.”
“That’s the fakest story I’ve ever heard, partner. Don’t try to bullshit a bullshiter,” Harvey shook his head, and continued reading with pathos.

“Although he tried to discreetly wipe away his tears, Detective Gordon was so affected that his newly inaugurated boyfriend had to console him afterwards. Admire their tender and blossoming romance in these exclusive pictures for the Gotham Gazette. We wish good luck to Mayor Cobblepot in his new position, and of course in his private life as well. Maybe this relationship will finally bring a much needed alliance between City Hall and the GCPD.”

Jim buried his face in his hands in an attempt to block out the whistles and naughty comments.

“Damn it, this brought tears to my eyes too. What a beautiful love story,” Harvey sighed, then smirked when he saw the misery on Jim’s face.

“Alright, enough with the circus,” the Captain’s voice boomed in the building. “Get back to work.”

Jim was glad that he was saved for the moment, but during the day his face heated every time he remembered the nasty article and the inappropriate comments his colleagues had made.

He had to put his foot down and force Oswald to have the articles retracted. This had gone beyond a joke now.
Valerie Vale was in for a treat when she arrived at City Hall earlier that morning, waiting for the new mayor to show up. She had been waiting all morning, and Cobblepot had yet to appear. She wondered if this was one of the perks of being mayor. When he finally materialized in the entrance of City Hall, she had been prepared to ambush him with questions regarding his romance with a certain detective. That was until said detective burst in right after Cobblepot.

“Cobblepot!” Jim Gordon’s voice rang out, causing heads to turn as he stormed into City Hall.

The new mayor stopped mid-route to his office, spun around to see what the commotion was about. Cobblepot must have practiced his poker face, because his expression remained inscrutable, except for the unmistakeable amused glint that sparkled in his eyes as the detective approached him.

“We need to talk.”

The detective moved closer to the mobster, invading his personal space.

“Jim, visiting me at work now?” Oswald made a tsking noise, “What will the papers think?”

“That’s what I’m here about.”

Oswald sighed. “You’re here to ask me to have the articles retracted? There are some things out of my control-”

“Bullshit.”
An offended noise slipped out of Oswald’s mouth. “Enlighten me then, what would be the point in calling and demanding them to have all the papers about our fictional relationship removed from the stands? The damage is done, you cannot erase a lie once the public’s convinced of it being the truth.”

“That’s not the point!” Jim shouted.

“That is what you think? I will tell you what the point is, Jim. You care about your reputation, don’t you?” Oswald countered. Jim’s mouth fell open. Oswald could tell that Jim was at a loss for words. “You care about what people think of you. When someone comes to you and says you’re not being a good mayor, you get pissed off. When your partner, who’s also your boss, says the same thing, you get even more pissed off. Why? Because you want to be liked, Jim, you want people to look up to you. You want to be the shining light in Gotham. But you can’t be a good mayor if you’re not honest with the people. You have to be willing to admit your mistakes. You have to be willing to change.”

Jim scoffed, “Of course not!”

“Could have fooled me. I didn’t take you to be homophobic, detective.”

Jim stumbled back at Oswald’s accusation, like the words were a slap to the face.

“I am not homophobic,” Jim started, grabbing the mayor by the arm and pulling him to a more private area away from the eyes watching them. “I don’t care about being seen with a man. What I care about now that people are convinced we’re together is that your actions as mayor reflect on me. My reputation — the GCPD’s reputation — is on the line now. You’re not interested in making Gotham better, you never were. All you care about is power.”

Jim’s words stung. Oswald loved Gotham, more than most of Gotham’s citizens did. And while it was true, being mayor gave him a lot more influence. It also involved him in Gotham’s innerworkings. He could now claim that he was one of the cogs in the machinery keeping this city running, and he couldn’t think of anything to be prouder of. Still, he understood Jim’s point. Oswald wanted to change Jim’s mind, wanted him to see that Oswald being mayor could be a good thing for this city.

Oswald looked down for a second, forcing calmness in his voice and a polite smile on his lips. “Alright, Jim. Name one cause or organization, and I will raise awareness for it and donate for it.”
Jim had to blink a few times, because that was not the reply he’d expected. “Okay, how about the ODIVET? The Organization for Disabled Veterans.”

“Good choice, Detective Gordon. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a meeting to attend.”

Jim watched the new mayor retreat hastily, then turned to leave. However, he was soon stopped by Valerie.

“I need to get back to work,” he grunted, but the journalist stood in his way.

“That seemed like a heated discussion. Trouble in paradise?” the journalist asked with a smile.

“I don’t have time for your phantasms. Go bother someone else.”

“Detective, how do you comment on your relationship with the mayor?”

“There’s no relationship. Goodbye, Vale.”

“Will you finally acknowledge your relationship publicly now that Mr. Cobblepot has a respectable position?”

Jim didn’t deign to answer, but that did not stop Valerie from writing yet another successful article.

At least this time Jim was prepared for it – after their brief meeting, it was evident that she’d be publishing another blatant lie. Nevertheless, he was surprised at the ridiculous description of what she’d witnessed.

"Even when they are arguing, it looks like they are just dancing with each other, providing the soundtrack with their raised voices."

What a shame that Vale’s literary talent was wasted on gutter press.
However, Jim wasn’t prepared for the Captain’s announcement.

“In order to strengthen the ties between the GCPD and City Hall, a new purging campaign against drug dealers will be established. Since you’re the city’s best known detective, you will lead it together with the mayor.”

“Why me? Why not someone from narcs?!”

The Captain just sighed. “You’ve been quite popular lately, and the GCPD needs to improve its image. Work well with City Hall, and we’ll reestablish our good reputation. I’m putting my trust in you, Gordon.”

Jim grimaced; he knew very well that this was all Oswald’s scheming. “I’ll do my best.”

That was how Jim found himself standing beside Oswald at a press conference a couple of days later. Luckily, it was Oswald doing the talking; Jim was just supposed to represent the GCPD and look at least somewhat glad to be part of the project.

“Gotham against drugs is the newest campaign we’re doing in collaboration with the GCPD. The safety of our citizens is our number one concern; therefore, we pledge to clean the city of the drug cartels. Moreover, we will raise awareness of the perils of drug use in schools and colleges.”

Applause broke out and Oswald smiled proudly at Jim.

“Thank you. We’ll be taking questions now,” Oswald announced, and Jim raised one eyebrow. We? Surely not.

Oswald pointed to a tall, older woman with red hair. She was interested in the school programs, so Jim heaved a sigh of relief. The next two questions were also addressed to Oswald, but then he picked Vale. Oh no. Oh god no.

“I’d like to ask Det. Gordon the next question, if possible.”

“Of course,” Oswald exclaimed, eyes lighting up. He put his hand on the small of Jim’s back, and
gently pushed him to the microphone.

“You said this is a collaborative effort; did Mayor Cobblepot and you come up with the idea together?”

Jim narrowed his eyes, and leaned in towards the microphone. “No, umm, I believe this was solely the mayor’s idea, but the GCPD is happy to help him in this endeavor.”

“Thank you.”

Unfortunately, the next reporter also addressed his question to Jim. “How will you work together with Mayor Cobblepot? Will you be here during the campaign?”

“We decided that it would be most effective if I joined City Hall for this period on relevant days,” Jim said slowly, wiping his palms against his trouser legs. “I will take part in the meetings and school campaigns, as well as coordinate attacks on the drug cartels with my fellow officers.”

The next reporter was a young, blonde woman with big, curious eyes. Her voice became high-pitched with excitement as she asked: “How do you feel about spending more time with Mayor Cobblepot? What do you think about him? Is he capable enough for this position?”

Jim frowned, his head started spinning. What was the first question? “This is a very good initiative for the city, and if it requires me to collaborate with the mayor, then I will do it.”

A few flashes went off, and Jim forced his brain to concentrate as he felt a drop of sweat trickle down his nape. “Umm, Mayor Cobblepot is very popular with the people, and he’s satisfactory,” Jim remembered the Captain’s command to behave, so he corrected himself, “no, he’s uh, great in every position.”

Silence settled on the reporters as they took in Jim’s words, until the young journalist exclaimed: “Excuse me?”

It was only then that Jim realized the double meaning of what he’d just said, and his face became incredibly red. He tried to correct his mistake as the reporters broke out in millions of questions, but Oswald snatched the microphone from him.
“We’re finished with questions! Thank you for your attendance!”

The mayor led Jim off the podium very quickly, and let him sink in one of the comfortable armchairs in his office.

There were no words to be spoken as Oswald and Jim stared at one another. Jim’s face was still burning with embarrassment at his own slip-up.

Of course, Oswald wasn’t going to drop it. He looked as if he struggled refraining from laughing at the situation as he leaned against the edge of his desk.

“I suppose I should be flattered with tomorrow’s headline. An exposé revealing how satisfactory I am in bed.” Oswald paused before he added, “And in every position? Thank you, detective, your words did wonders to my ego.”

Jim spluttered, “OSWALD!”

“Careful, James. We don’t want anyone to overhear you choking out my name. What would they possibly think we’re up to?” Oswald impishly teased, clearly enjoying this opportunity of torturing the detective.

Oswald tossed his head back as a loud laugh reverberated deep in his chest after watching Jim’s eyes widen and a scandalized expression pass over his face.

“Relax. I’m merely teasing.” Oswald assured Jim as he limped around to take a seat behind his desk.

Jim’s shoulders slumped with relief, glad that Cobblepot hadn’t kicked him out after his fumbling up on stage. He was already worried about Captain Barnes’s reaction, he didn’t need to completely destroy the single thread holding City Hall and GCPD’s relationship together.

“Although, we definitely need to practice your public speaking. Let’s try to avoid any more revelations about our sex lives, agreed?”
Heat once more rushed to Jim’s cheeks, at this point he was certain he looked like a tomato. He couldn’t maintain eye contact with the grinning criminal, had to avert his gaze to stare at the suddenly interesting carpet lining the floor of the mayor’s office.

Jim nodded his agreement.

“Good.” Oswald sounded pleased. “Now, let’s talk about drugs.”

If Jim thought Vale’s articles had been bad before, the ones published after his botched press conference were downright catastrophic. Surprisingly, her articles were tame compared to some others, but the Gotham Gazette was still the most read newspaper in the city. His lovely coworkers loved to remind of his fiasco by gluing said articles to his locker.

SEX SCANDAL AT CITY HALL?

DETECTIVE GORDON LOVES THE MAYOR IN EVERY POSITION

MAYOR COBBLEPOT - GOTHAM’S NEWEST PLAYBOY?

Before, it was only Valerie writing about her ridiculous fantasies; now, it seemed that the whole media believed in it, and the journalists tried to outdo each other. Unfortunately, Jim couldn’t blame anyone but himself, and at this point it was most certainly impossible to have everything retracted.

At least Oswald didn’t mention them or tease Jim over them, even though the articles mostly snooped around the mayor’s private life, so he would have had enough reasons to annoy Jim. In fact, he was very diligent and hardworking when it came to the campaign, and Jim had to admit, albeit reluctantly, that he and Oswald worked pretty well together. They had managed to draw up the major plans for the campaign in just a few days, and they were preparing the necessary documents to be presented for the City Council meeting that would take place in a few days.

“Oswald, do you have any statistics on drug-related crimes? It would definitely help if we had solid facts to present, and also to measure the effectiveness of the campaign.”

“Certainly, I just need to retrieve them,” Oswald said, and went to the adjoining room that was a kind of archive, housing files from floor to ceiling.
Jim noticed that Oswald was about to get on a ladder, so he offered his help as he approached the mayor. “Would you like me to…”

“It’s fine, I’ll get them. Besides,” Oswald huffed as he got on the fourth step, “the categorization system is a bit wacky. The files we need are not consecutive. We need this, and those two, and that one,” Oswald reached for a file that was too far away.

Jim saw that Oswald would lose his balance, and fortunately, he got there in time. He managed to wrap his arms around Oswald before he could fall, and the mayor clung to Jim’s arms tightly. They were so busy staring at each other that neither had heard the knock at the office door.

“Are you alright?” Jim asked with worry after he placed Oswald safely on the ground.

“Yes, fine.”

“How about your leg? I hope it doesn’t hurt?”

“No, it’s fine, Jim. Thank you,” Oswald said, squeezing Jim’s biceps as he smiled at his savior. His heart skipped a beat when Jim reciprocated his gesture.

Just then, a flash went off, and Jim’s smile wilted. He took his hands off from Oswald as if they had been burned. Oswald turned his murderous look towards none other than Valerie who was smiling innocently at them.

“Well, gentlemen… I see you’re... hard at work.”

“Get out, Ms. Vale,” Oswald growled.

“But Mr. Mayor, I have some questions.”

“I said get out,” Oswald repeated, his low voice doing funny things to Jim’s stomach. “You were warned before for your indiscretion, but you crossed the line now. You are banned from entering
“City Hall from now.”

“Mr. Cobblepot -”

“Goodbye, Ms. Vale,” Oswald said loudly, and turned his back to her, adjusting his tie.

“Just go,” Jim mouthed to Valerie, then closed the door. He felt a lump in his throat at the sight of Oswald with slumped shoulders.

“Hey, Oswald, it’s okay,” Jim said slowly. “It’s not like this picture is anything new, right? She’s already caught us in each other’s arms.”

Oswald snorted, and Jim breathed in with relief. “True. I’m just… so tired of her sticking her nose in our business. Let’s just get back to work.”

Jim nodded and followed Oswald into the office with the files under his arm.

“It appears that Det. Gordon is settling in quite well at City Hall, working alongside Mayor Cobblepot. And while an interview was denied, it’s been noted how harmoniously the two work together. We were able to capture another sweet moment between the lovebirds. The Mayor relying on his partner because of his disability, using the detective as a crutch.

We have to wonder, however, whether his true intention behind the campaign was to strengthen the bond between City Hall and the GCPD, or if he’s just using his boyfriend to try to cover for his deficit.”

The City Council meeting was that day, and when the detective arrived at City Hall, he could tell there was something wrong with Oswald. The Mayor had showed up with tension clearly written across his face, lips drawn tight together and wrinkles blemishing the usually smooth skin on his forehead.

Jim watched as one of Oswald’s assistants came up to him. Before the poor man opened his mouth, Oswald waved his hand in a zipping motion, cutting him off before he could even begin. “I have yet to have my coffee this morning. Whatever it is, it can wait. I don’t want to hear it.”
“But sir-"

Oswald had started to move on, but sharply turned back around, hands flying up in the air. “What is it?”

The man blanched at Oswald’s tone, but continued on, “Some people thought it might be a good idea after reading Ms. Vale’s article to install some equipment to make it easier for you to move around. Perhaps we could have a meeting to discuss what would best suit your disability…”

Jim suddenly realized why Cobblepot had come in so angrily. Usually, the articles about the two mainly poked fun at something Jim had done. This time, however, it focused on Oswald’s old injury, clearly hitting a sore spot for the gangster. Jim crossed the room quickly, noticing how Oswald had started to lift his cane as if he was planning to strike the young man. Jim grabbed the Mayor’s hand and pushed it back down.

The murderous expression seemed to have melted away when Oswald tore his eyes away to look at the hand covering his own. His noticeably green eyes lifted, and met Jim’s warning gaze.

“The meeting’s about to start. Why don’t we go prepare?”

“Right…” Oswald said in a daze. “Of course. Lead the way, detective.”

For some inexplicable reason, witnessing Oswald upset had left a bad taste in Jim’s mouth. He was unable to explain why the encounter between Oswald and his subordinate had bothered him so, but he couldn’t shake it. Besides, Jim thought it was a hit below the belt from Vale to retaliate against Oswald’s ban with an attack on his injury. She could have gone for his criminal activities, but no, she chose something personal, something Oswald couldn’t help. If there was anything Jim hated, that was unfairness.

For the moment, the two of them had the room to themselves, waiting for the other City Hall council members to arrive. Cobblepot still looked unsettled, fingers tightly gripping the top of his cane. Jim raked his brain for something to distract the mayor with, a funny story or anything.

“You know how yesterday I had to leave sooner because Harvey called about a case?”

Oswald looked up at Jim with his eyebrows raised, as if he’d just realized he wasn’t alone. He
nodded slowly.

“It turned out that it was a date emergency actually,” Jim added with a smile. “His lady friend took him to a – I’m quoting him directly here – ‘weirdass, freaky Japanese restaurant’ where they only served sea urchins and other stuff from his worst nightmare.”

Oswald snorted, shaking his head. “Detective Bullock’s palate is underdeveloped, he has no idea what gourmet food is. Did you have to save him from this terrible date?”

“Yes, Harvey made me call him and act as if the GCPD was not coping without him. Then we also went out for burgers, because he was starving.”

“Of course, he was. So I guess Harvey is still single?”

“He is. Why, you interested?” Jim asked, and laughed loudly at Oswald rolling his eyes.

“But, James, I couldn’t cheat on you.”

Oswald and Jim looked at each and broke out in laughter, just as the City Council members started filing into the meeting room. Jim had never met these people before, but they looked quite serious. Some of them measured the detective with suspicious looks, others smiled benevolently. No wonder Oswald had everything planned in the smallest details: it was evident that these people expected to be impressed.

Luckily, Oswald proved his argumentative skills, and answered every question with patience and conviction. He emphasized the importance of the program and the benefits it would bring to the city. Then it was Jim’s turn to explain the tasks the GCPD would carry out. He thought the discussion was going well, and Oswald looked less tense than at the beginning.

“This all sounds very well put together, it is clear you two worked a lot on it. However, we,” and the old council member looked around at this, “have debated this, and feel that this campaign might be overwhelming for you, Mr. Mayor. It requires a lot of work and... running around. We’re not sure you could do this with your, umm, disability.”

Jim was appalled at how many members nodded in agreement. Had these people never seen their mayor in action?! He could probably take the lead in a running competition with any of them.
Besides, his intelligence was doubtlessly the highest in the room. Jim looked at Oswald, and quickly assessed that he would soon lash out very badly. He didn’t want the new mayor to already make enemies with the City Council.

“I apologize for interrupting, but this campaign is not just the mayor’s responsibility – a whole team will be working on it, as well as a lot of police officers. Mr. Cobblepot is the head of the operation, he will ensure that everything goes smoothly, and you should help him in this task instead of criticizing him,” Jim made sure to look at each member sitting at the round table.

Some looked back defiantly, others stared at the desk in embarrassment. However, Jim forgot about everything when his eyes met Oswald’s – the detective forgot to breathe for a moment by all the feelings he saw in there, feelings that he was afraid to even think about.

With a small smile, Oswald looked down, and continued the meeting, saving Jim from embarrassment yet again. “Alright, I think we can talk finance now.”

After that, the discussion flowed well again, and Oswald’s injury wasn’t brought up. When the meeting was over, Oswald and Jim shook hands with every Council member.

“Jim, would you mind coming to my office for a minute?”

When they were inside the office, Oswald seemed a bit nervous which confused Jim.

“I just wanted to thank you for your intervention at the meeting,” Oswald said quietly, and took Jim’s hand in his. When he saw that Jim wasn’t averse to the gesture, he smiled up at him. “It was very nice of you.”

“I couldn’t let them be assholes to you,” Jim replied, and promptly didn’t think about the pleasant thrill that ran down his spine as Oswald squeezed his hand.

“They don’t really like me,” Oswald said with a sigh, and limped to the window. “And now, thanks to Ms. Vale’s article, they think me incompetent.”

“That’s not true. But anyway, you’ll show them with this campaign,” Jim said confidently, and was relieved to see Oswald smile.
Even though Vale had been banned from entering City Hall, that didn’t stop her from trying. Ever since the last article, Oswald had refused giving anymore statements, so Vale was stuck with catching the mayor outside City Hall, waiting for him to make an appearance. Jim had to laugh every time Oswald had one of his men escort Ms. Vale off the property.

But Vale was bold and persistent. She approached Jim outside the precinct steps while Cobblepot had disappeared for a second.

“Det. Gordon! Might I have a moment of your time, I’m working on a new article-”

Jim turned around, hands on his hips. “Don’t you think you’ve done enough with your last article?”

“Merely asking questions regarding the Mayor’s competency.” Vale smiled, held up her hands innocently. “But it seems you’re clearly offended by it. Would you like to make a statement, defending your partner?”

Jim narrowed his eyes, but before he had a chance to retort, a familiar tapping approached the two of them.

“How convenient, Mrs. Vale, showing up right outside the station. Would you like to go inside and watch as I file a restraining order against you?”

“Mr. Mayor, I’m only trying to get a statement.”

Oswald seemed to ponder her words, and for a second Jim thought he might actually considered giving her one.

“Well, how about this for a statement… Det. Gordon and I will no longer be granting any more interviews with you or the Gotham Gazette. So, if I see you lurking around City Hall or anywhere near pestering Jim, I will have you arrested for harassment.”

Oswald glanced at Jim, “I’m certain Detective Gordon won’t have any qualms with arresting you.”
Jim snorted in agreement.

“Good day, Ms. Vale. I’m sure you’ll find another trifling subject to write about. That’s what you’re best at, after all.”

If Oswald’s words were meant to frighten Vale away, her expression appeared otherwise. Instead she looked emboldened more than anything else.

It was after that particular incident that Jim began to notice the cameras. Anytime Oswald and he were out, there was always someone snapping a photo. At first, Jim didn’t think anything of it, but after repeated instances, he realized that it wasn’t just professional paparazzi, but regular citizens trying to get a picture of Oswald and him together.

They had been out following a potential lead to Gotham’s main drug cartel supplier when they noticed someone trailing after them.

“Oswald…” Jim lowered his voice, placing his hand on Oswald’s forearm, stopping him from continuing walking. He tugged him closer, not wanting anyone to overhear their conversation. From an outside perspective, it appeared that the two lovers were hugging, whispering sweet nothings into each others’ ears.

“I think we’re being followed.”

Oswald tilted his head, carefully scanning the area with an expertise that made Jim wonder if this was a common thing Cobblepot had to do.

“You think it’s someone from the cartel?”

A slow smile crept over Oswald face before he let out a snort. “No, detective. I do not.”

Jim was confused, frowning when Oswald took a step backwards without explanation. Oswald simply pointed, and Jim turned around to see what had caught his attention. He found not just one, but seven different people with their camera phones out aimed in their direction.
“What the hell?” Jim uttered, watching the spectators scatter once they realized they had been caught. “These people are way too young to be involved in any cartels.”

“I wouldn’t be so certain of that. They’re precisely at the right age to get recruited by the mob,” Oswald said absently.

Jim paused at that, turning to look at Oswald with a curious air, but Oswald didn’t notice it, his focus elsewhere. He didn’t know how Oswald got involved in his criminal ways, but he had to start somewhere, hadn’t he? Jim wondered if someone had recruited Cobblepot when he was just a kid. The thought was perturbing, and Jim was left unsettled by it.

“Although your assumption is correct, they’re not from the cartel, they lack finesse. Come, detective, this has Vale’s name written all over it. I’m sure a purchase of a Gotham Gazette newspaper will tell us everything we want to know.”

Oswald had been right.

They had tracked down a newspaper stand and bought the latest paper from Gotham Gazette, took it back to Oswald’s office to look it over.

“While the mayor and Det. Gordon refused to give a statement, our sources tell us that during the City Council meeting regarding the drug campaign Cobblepot and Gordon initiated earlier this month, Det. Gordon gave an impassioned speech about his partner.”

Oswald’s eyes narrowed, appearing quite vexed, but Jim couldn’t blame him. They had a mole. One of the council members had spilled their guts to Vale after the meeting.

“Since we are unable to get any interviews with Gotham’s hottest couple, we more than encourage photo submissions from the public. Contact Valerie Vale from the Gotham Gazette for more information.”

“Are you kidding me?!” Jim was angry now. “This is a huge invasion of privacy.”

Oswald appeared to be thinking, eyes moving back and forth in thought before his eyes widened. “This is Vale getting back at us, but we can beat her at her own game.”
“How?” Jim crossed his arms.

“How?” Jim crossed his arms.

“How?” Jim crossed his arms.

“Let’s give the people want they want,” Oswald offered, smiling with a mischievous glint in his eyes.

Jim shook his head, “Oswald, stop being vague, explain. What are you suggesting?”

“The only reason people are interested in this story is because they don’t know whether it’s true. It’s the suspense that keeps people reading. If we put on a show, pretend that the rumors are true, people will grow bored and Vale loses readers.”

“You want to pretend to… date?” Jim spluttered.

“I want Vale to get a taste of her own medicine. The faster people lose interest, the faster our personal lives will stay out of the newspaper.”

Jim considered Oswald’s words. He had to admit, Oswald made a valid point. If he had to endure a few uncomfortable dates with the gangster in order to put this mess behind them, then Jim was more than willing to put up a charade for the public. Plus, Jim was going to jump at the chance to get back at Vale since she had made a fool out of both Oswald and Jim.

“Allright…” Jim nodded, feeling more than ridiculous as the words left his lips. “Let’s pretend to date.”
Chapter 3

Chapter by thekeyholder

Chapter Notes

As always, many thanks to our wonderful beta Nekomata58919!

We finished the story, so the last chapter should be up soon. :)

The campaign had been going on for almost two weeks now, and everyone involved was working hard. The GCPD managed to capture a large cartel and bust their headquarters, so Jim had been very busy and worked till late. That was one reason why Oswald had invited him over to the mansion to discuss the school talks, the other one being privacy. Jim was going mad from everyone taking pictures of him.

Oswald and Jim had been talking for a while when the gangster asked whether he’d like a drink. Jim denied, since he came by car, but Oswald poured one for himself.

“I think someone is lurking in the garden,” Oswald announced.

“What? Who?”

“One of our admirers, no doubt.”

Jim got up and stood behind Oswald, peering at the foliage. “Well, I only know one person with a shiny head like that.”

Oswald was still trying to process Jim’s proximity, so his answer came a bit late. “Yes, it’s Victor. I didn’t think he’d join in the craze. What do you say, would you like to fool him?”

“What did you have in mind?”

Oswald looked at the shadows on the wall and smirked.
“You’re insane.”

“Come on, Jim, we’re just pretending. Victor can’t see us from here, but our shadows are visible. So just...”

Jim put his hands brusquely on Oswald’s arms, squeezing them almost painfully.

“Don’t be a savage, detective. A lover should be gentle,” the gangster said, and to demonstrate this, he put his right hand on Jim’s face, caressing it. “Now lean in.”

The detective gulped as he followed Oswald’s command; there were barely a few inches between their faces.

“A bit closer,” the gangster whispered, Jim’s skin reddening where Oswald’s fingers caressed it.

“This is ridiculous, Cobblepot,” Jim growled.

Oswald chuckled, and the detective could feel the hot air on his lips. “I admit, it is, but you’ll enjoy that headline tomorrow, I’ll guarantee it. Our shadows are just sharing their first kiss.”

“Wonderful,” Jim grumbled, then ‘broke the kiss’.

“Don’t run away yet.”

“I didn’t plan to,” Jim answered, his hands traveling up to Oswald’s shoulder. “I hope this won’t backfire.”

“It won’t. We’re taking back control,” Oswald said with a smile, but both men felt quite the opposite.

Victor’s pictures were all over the newspaper and social media the next day. People went absolutely berserk over them; Jim and Oswald were proclaimed Gotham’s power couple. Everyone wanted an
interview with them. Jim blushed furiously as he read the article in the morning.

MIDNIGHT KISSES

“Thanks to a keen-eyed reader, we got these absolutely astonishing pictures. Our mysterious photographer insisted that this is the lovebirds’ very first kiss, and that Det. Gordon stayed until almost midnight. No doubt they got up to very naughty things…

We’re still accepting picture submissions from our readers, but now we need your help with something special! Mayor Cobblepot and Detective Gordon – as every famous pair – should have their own couple name. Thus we’re inviting you to vote whether you prefer Gobblepot or Jimwald. We’ll post the results next week.”

“What the…”

Jim knew that their little shadow makeout session would backfire on them. The whole point of embracing this fake relationship scheme was to drive it out of the newspapers, not to encourage it even more. Now Jim had been forced to read with his own two eyes Cobblepot’s and his own name jumbled and mashed together.

He couldn’t feel victorious, didn’t think their plan of striking back at Vale was working. This round, Vale clearly won. He could picture her, manically grinning, pleased with this article and the ridiculous outpouring of responses.

Hell, even Jim started debating which couple name to go with. Personally, he thought ‘Jimwald’ sounded better, then realized what he was doing. Frustrated with Vale, with the citizens who ate up her articles, with himself, he decided to just head to work. Hopefully, that would distract him from thinking any more about the blasted articles and shadowy kisses or Cobblepot for that matter.

That was not the case. As soon as he walked straight through the doors of the precinct, he almost considered walking right back out. He thought the people on the streets were bad with their gawking – it was nothing compared to the way his fellow officers were looking at him. Jim could feel heat rush to his face as he moved towards his desk. He wasn’t expecting this big of a reaction. Hushed voices and smirks, he could endure; it was the Captain that unsettled him most. Watching disappointedly at Jim through the blinds of his office, shaking his head, chewing on a bagel.

“Looks like someone finally decided to show up! What, late night at Cobblepot’s?” Harvey’s voice
seemed to echo throughout the station, and Jim slid further into his seat.

“Harvey!” He hissed, trying to get his partner to be quieter.

“I knew Cobblepot and you were banging! ‘First kiss’, my ass, whoever took those pictures of the two of you was wrong. I saw those pictures, and that didn’t look like no first kiss.”

Jim wished nothing more than the sweet, sweet embrace of death at that moment. A swift death would be merciful compared to this onslaught. He’d faced criminals less dangerous than Harvey’s boisterous mouth.

But, unfortunately, the Grim Reaper had other plans, Jim didn’t suddenly croak and Harvey kept on talking about how sensual and intimate the photos were.

Harvey punched Jim’s shoulder with a little too much pride. “Good for you, buddy. I mean, Penguin wouldn’t have been my first choice, but you’ve always been a weird one. Didn’t know you had it in you, Jim.”

Jim thought that this will be the worst brunt of it, but like always, he was mistaken. The couple name ‘Gobblepot’ had won the poll, much to Jim’s dismay and even more how popular the use of the term had become around the station. It all started when Jim came into work the day after the polling results and Harvey shouted, clear and loud, in front of the whole precinct:

“Looks like one half of Gobblepot has arrived!”

It started a craze; now even the campaign Jim and Oswald had been working on was dubbed as the Gobblepot Campaign. It was mortifying, which was why Jim found himself on the steps of Oswald’s manor once again later that evening, agitated. The door swung open, and Jim was expecting one of Oswald’s employees to greet him at the door, not the Mayor himself.

“Jim! I didn’t know you were stopping by-”

“I thought you said this would work!” Jim interrupted, stomping inside. Luckily, Oswald stepped back in time as Jim brushed passed him into the living room.
Oswald let out a sigh before following after his guest. He knew a frustrated Jim Gordon when he saw one. “Would you care for a drink?”

Jim nodded, started to pace as Oswald poured himself and Jim a glass of Bourbon.

“It only made things worse.” Jim gulped down the alcohol in one go, and Oswald watched with some amusement. “The pictures of… us. It only caused a bigger reaction.”

Jim dug around in his pocket and grabbed the newspaper with the headline: “GOBBLEPOT WINS!” before throwing it onto Oswald’s coffee table with a loud smack.

“I know patience isn’t one of your strong suits, but we’re playing a long game here, Jim.” Oswald pointed at the paper. “This is to be expected.”

“I have patience.” Jim argued, breaking the silence.

“Of course you do,” Oswald said with a lifted brow, not convinced in the slightest.

Jim narrowed his eyes at Oswald’s skeptical tone.

Oswald filled Jim’s glass once more, hoping that the alcohol will take effect and calm the detective. “Why don’t you take a seat?”

Jim accepted the second glass eagerly, and Oswald couldn’t help but compare it with the many refusals he had gotten from the detective in the past, the always “I’m on the job” response.

Oswald was momentarily distracted by the long expanse of Jim’s throat being bared to him, as Jim leaned back against the couch, his Adam’s apple bobbing as he took another swig of his drink.

Swallowing with a grimace, “Not sure how you convinced me to go for this, Oswald.” Jim’s fingers moved to the base of his throat, loosening his tie.

“It’ll be worth it, I assure you.” Oswald promised, moving to take a seat next to Jim on the sofa,
making sure to sit not too close, far enough away for the detective’s comfort.

“While it may be uncomfortable at times, it will pay off.”

Jim snorted, working on his fifth drink. “It’s ridiculous. The whole thing. Even our couple name is stupid.”

Oswald finally teared his eyes away from Jim’s neck. “Hmm?”

“Do you know how many times in a day I hear ‘Gobblepot’? Too many. Don’t understand how it even won… Jimwald is the better choice of the two.”

“Are you drunk?” Oswald asked, amused at Jim’s ramblings.

“No…” Jim shook his head. “Maybe a little bit.”

Oswald chuckled, “Even so, don’t think it would be a good idea for you to drive.”

“You’re probably right.” Jim moved to stand, swaying slightly.

“You can stay here for the night. I have more than enough space for you to sleep here tonight. Take one of the guest rooms.”

Jim accepted his offer with ease, much to Oswald’s surprise, expecting a resounding no from the detective. But Jim let Oswald direct him to one of the guest rooms.

“We’ll talk in the morning. There still are things we need to discuss about the… Jimwald campaign.”

The wide grin he was rewarded caused butterflies to flutter in Oswald’s stomach.

“Get some rest, Jim.”
“Good night, Oswald.” Jim sleepily nodded, right before he closed the door.

The next morning, Jim was trying not to cry at Oswald’s breakfast table. How could he have been so stupid as to get so drunk? His head was splitting and he just wanted the ground to open up and swallow him, he was so embarrassed, especially since Oswald seemed to be in an awfully cheerful mood.

“Come on, Jim, eat up. The bacon and eggs will help. There’s also a pill beside your cup, your headache will be gone in fifteen minutes.”

Jim didn’t really feel hungry, but he knew from experience that the greasy food would help. He tried to push away the thought of how domestic the situation was, or how pleasant it would have been if his head hadn’t been throbbing so painfully. Or how when Oswald received a message on his phone and he smiled, Jim’s heart clenched with an ineffable gentleness.

“Good news?”

“Indeed.”

“Care to share?” Jim asked before he downed his coffee with the pill.

“I will, very soon. How about you come to my office later today? Then I can give it to you.”

“Give me what?”

Oswald smiled mysteriously. “It’s a surprise.”

“Alright, I should get going. Need to drop home first,” Jim announced, and got up. “Thanks for… uh, everything. We have the first school talk today, right?”

“Yes. No worries, we only have to attend this one as an official opening, Mrs. Leroy can manage the rest alone.”
“Okay, I’ll come by your office, and then we can go together to the school.”

“Perfect. See you later, Jim.”

The detective just raised his hand, shaking his head at the absurd idea that they sounded like an old married couple making plans. When he exited the mansion, he heard the now familiar camera clicks, and he made sure to glare extra evilly at the journalists who dared to spy on him. He was sure the garbage press would have a field day yet again.

Back home, he showered, shaved and put on clean clothes, so his coworkers didn’t pick on him – well, not more than usual. Jim was working diligently on some paperwork, when Harvey leaned in:

“So, partner, what’s on the Gobblepot agenda today?”

Jim rolled his eyes. “Talk at the Gotham City College at two.”

“Want to go out grab some lunch and then I can drive you there?” Harvey offered.

“Oh, I need to go to City Hall first for some stuff.”

“I get it, you’ll go with Penguin from there. Already abandoning your friends for your shiny new boyfriend.”

“He’s not my boyfriend!” Jim shouted way too loudly, so the whole precinct was watching him.

He looked into the files, pretending that his face wasn’t burning with shame. “Harvey, we’re…” Jim almost confessed then, that it was all fake, but he remembered Oswald accusing him of being impatient. He’d prove to the mayor that he could do it by any means.

“It’s still fresh, I get it,” his partner helped him out. “Don’t worry, Jimbo, I understand.”
By the time Jim arrived to City Hall, he was feeling much better, not just because his headache had faded away, but Harvey stopped terrorizing him, at least for that afternoon. Oswald received him with an even brighter smile than usual, and told him to take a seat while he disappeared for a moment.

When he returned, he pressed an envelope into Jim’s hand.

“Your surprise,” Oswald said when Jim looked at him with confusion.

The detective had absolutely no idea what to expect, but he stopped breathing for a second when he read the card.

_City Hall cordially invites you to the ODIVET Charity Ball which will take place on the 12th of February. All proceeds will go to the organization to help the brave veterans of our city. Please RSVP by the 5th of February._

“You… you really did it.” Jim looked up with wonder and newfound respect at Oswald.

“I said I would, silly.”

Jim looked away, unable to utter anything else.

“Come, we don’t want to be late for the talk,” Oswald beckoned him from the office doorway, and Jim followed him after he slid the invitation carefully into his coat pocket.

The talk was alright, despite Mrs. Leroy dragging it on a bit. However, Jim didn’t realize that there would be another press conference at the end. He was fairly certain that his nightmares from then on would be some kind of variations of these events. Mrs. Leroy was anxiously awaiting the questions about the school campaigns; instead, the press was more interested in the mayor’s private life yet again.

“Det. Gordon, is it true that you spent the night at the mayor’s manor?”

“No.”
“But you were photographed this morning coming out from there!”

“Early visit to discuss the details of today’s talks,” Jim managed to grit through his teeth.

“Mr. Edmond, is it?” Oswald asked. “Do I need to file a restraining order against you? I have already warned all of you that I will not stand by as you breach our privacy.”

“Mr. Mayor, do you and Detective Gordon have any plans for Valentine’s Day?” Vale asked suddenly from the back of the room.

Jim thought he would get an aneurysm; this woman turned up everywhere like a bad penny. He looked at Oswald helplessly. How on Earth did they think that their fake relationship would get less attention?! Sadly, even the otherwise loquacious gangster seemed at a loss.

“I-I don’t… we haven’t talked about that.”

Even though Oswald had told Jim to try to stay out of public statements, the detective grabbed the microphone to himself. “How about you ask questions about relevant things, like the Charity Ball organized by the Mayoral Office.”

“Indeed,” Oswald turned to Jim with sparkling eyes, grateful for the saving. “I believe my staff has already made a press release, but since you’re all busy with frivolous rumors and speculations, you probably haven’t even noticed it. There will be a charity ball for the ODIVET on the 12th of February. You’re all welcome to make donations. Thank you.”

With that, Jim and Oswald stormed out of the room, leaving the journalists feeling rather uncomfortable.

“Good job scolding them,” Jim said once they were in Oswald’s limousine. “Hopefully, they will leave us alone for a while.”

“If you were photographed leaving my house this morning, then I’m sure there will be articles about how we spent a passionate night together.”
“And how you were satisfactory in every position,” Jim added, smiling when Oswald let out a surprised noise and then laughed for several minutes.

For the first time, Jim felt that maybe since they were the only ones knowing the whole truth, they were on the winning side of the game. He let the thrill of power wash over him, and leaned against the leather seat with a content smile.

The day of the ball came sooner than Jim expected, and while he was looking forward to it, he wasn’t sure his attire would be good enough. Indeed, as soon as he entered the ballroom, the grandeur and elegance of the place and people overwhelmed Jim. This wasn’t his world.

He was offered a glass of champagne by a waiter, and Jim gladly took it, even though the drink didn’t have enough alcohol for him. He was scanning the room for some familiar faces, when there was a tap on his arm.

“James, I’m so pleased to see you,” Oswald greeted him, shaking his hand.

“Thank you again for organizing this.”

“Of course.”

“Very… selfless of you,” Jim admitted quietly, leaning in so only Oswald could hear him.

The mayor smiled, looking down at his drink. “One could argue that it’s selfish, in fact, since I did it in order to prove something to a certain detective.”

Jim and Oswald stared at each other, neither quite sure how to continue the conversation, when one of Oswald’s staff members approached them.

“Mr. Mayor, Colonel Thomas is here with the other veterans.”

“Thank you, Melissa. I’ll be right there with them,” Oswald said to his employee, then turned
towards Jim. “I am so sorry that I cannot stay with you, but I have to greet them. The Colonel is the head of the organization. But I made sure that you have a seat at my table.”

Jim nodded. “Good, otherwise people might wonder if we had a quarrel.”

Oswald left him shaking his head, but not before sending Jim a wink over his shoulder. The detective quickly grabbed another glass of champagne, feeling suddenly hot under his collar. No, he mustn’t let himself carried away by foolish daydreams; Oswald wasn’t interested, he was just playing his role as boyfriend, and if Jim thought there was anything beyond it, he deserved the title of Gotham’s biggest idiot.

As the night progressed, Jim realized that something had changed between him and the gangster. The longer Jim watched Oswald floating around the room, moving from one guest to the next, and how attentive he seemed listening to the Vets’ stories they were honoring that night, the more Jim found himself lost in his reverie. Longings for Oswald that he didn’t quite comprehend.

While Jim attempted to drink such feelings away with a good amount of champagne, there was no mistake the way his heart fluttered when Cobblepot caught his eye from across the room or the widening smile Oswald would send in Jim’s direction.

“Relax, James.” Heat pooled at the bottom of Jim’s stomach at the way Oswald’s breath tickled the back of his ear.

Oswald circled Jim, shoulders brushing against his own as he moved to stand in front of the detective, straightening his bow tie.

“Stop fidgeting so much. You look fine.” Oswald promised.

Jim raised his eyebrows, “Just fine?”

“Forgive me, I meant very handsome,” Oswald corrected, grinning.

Jim knew Oswald was merely teasing, but the words still had an effect on him, causing heat to rush to his face.
Luckily, Oswald didn’t comment on Jim’s rosy cheeks; instead, he placed a firm hand on Jim’s lower back and directed him to the table where Colonel Thomas and the others were already seated at. Oswald sat down across from Jim, smiling warmly at him before turning his attention to the Colonel.

It was not long before Oswald was called to the stage, and once he was up there, Jim was unable to tear his eyes away, captivated by Oswald’s speech.

“And while I know the struggles of life with a disability and the ableism that follows, I cannot claim to know the battles of war. That’s why tonight we are bringing awareness to a cause that recognizes our honorable and noble veterans who fought so bravely.”

Jim was speechless. He knew that Oswald never talked about his injury, but to bring it up tonight, addressed it in front of a crowd was something Jim didn’t take light of.

An applause broke out once Oswald finished and made his way off stage.

Oswald headed straight towards Jim after his speech. He was a touch out of breath, not from exertion, but from nerves. “How did you think that went? You didn’t think it was too long, did you?”

“No, it was fine.”

“Just fine?” Oswald repeated Jim’s words from earlier.

“You did great.”

“Thank you, Jim.” Oswald breathed out, relieved. “I need a drink.”

Oswald managed to nab a champagne flute from a passing waiter, afterward dragged Jim to a corner of the room, seeking more privacy away from the guests.

“There, I was starting to feel claustrophobic.”
“Would have thought you’d enjoy these sort of events,” Jim said, watching Oswald sip his drink.

“Certainly not. The whole affair makes me rather nervous.” Oswald shook his head. “Never gets easier.”

“Really? Could have fooled me. The man I saw up on that stage tonight didn’t appear to be nervous.”

Oswald smiled, and for a second Jim was convinced his heart stopped.

“Well, I was inspired by you,” Oswald admitted.

That was when Jim got the ridiculous notion to confess his feelings, somehow thinking that it was a good idea.

“Oswald… I…” Jim started.

Oswald turned to him, meeting his eyes as he waited with patience for Jim to continue.

Jim swallowed, “I just wanted to thank you again for doing this. I know how busy you are and...it means a lot.”

His gratitude was waved off by the mobster.

“No need to keep thanking me, Jim. It was something I wanted to do, for you. I’m afraid we can’t spend the remainder of the evening here. People are bound to grow suspicious of our motives of hiding out.”

Jim accepted the fact that this charade of theirs had completely blown up in his face. That somewhere along the way, after spending so much time with Oswald, he had begun to develop feelings for the gangster. As he held out his arm for Oswald to take, Jim knew he was doomed.
“I must admit, you two looked very smart,” Harvey said from behind his copy of Gotham Gazette whose headline was ‘CHIC LOVERS AT THE GALA’. “See, even Vale says that you finally took some lessons in style.”

“No that I care in the least about her opinion, but I’m glad my clothes aren’t the object of derision anymore,” Jim grumbled, and resumed eating his lunch. “I’d hate to bring down the renown of Jimwald.”

“You mean Gobblepot?” Harvey asked with a grimace.

“I’m not fond of that term.”

“No one cares, Jimbo. Everyone uses Gobblepot if you haven’t noticed.”

“Shouldn’t we have been asked, though? After all, it is about us. Oswald agrees with me, you know.”

“Does he?” Harvey peered at Jim curiously; his partner rarely mentioned Cobblepot in his private role. “So what did you get for him?”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s Valentine’s Day today, or have you forgotten?!”
“We’re having dinner at La Pieuvre,” Jim confessed with a blush.

Harvey whistled. “I’ll be damned… I guess it has to be the perks of dating a rich man. So what did you get him?”

“I-I...”

“Jesus Christ, Jim, haven’t you learned anything from me?!”

“I’ll think up something,” Jim promised, but he’d never been as out of ideas as in that moment.

Jim was eyeing the restaurant fearfully: the place seemed even fancier than he’d imagined. As soon as he entered, the maître d’ greeted him.

“Detective Gordon. Let me lead you to your table.”

The only thing stopping Jim from running out from the opulent restaurant was seeing Oswald’s bright smile. He got up to greet the detective, though he limited himself to a handshake.

“Jim. A sight for sore eyes after such a long day.”

“Are you sure you want to spend your evening with me?” Jim asked, suddenly very nervous.

“Of course!” Leaning in so that only Jim heard him, Oswald whispered: “Did you make sure that the paparazzi followed you?”

“Yes, they took a few pictures as I entered the restaurant.”

“Good. A few more after we leave the restaurant, and we’ll be done,” Oswald smiled at Jim. “Now, I hope you don’t mind, but Chef Renoir insisted on cooking a special menu for us.”
“I see,” Jim gulped, his eyes widening when he noticed the several pieces of cutlery. Wasn’t one knife, fork and spoon enough?! He started sweating already, and he’d barely been there for five minutes.

The waiter soon arrived with a bottle of white wine.

“2011 Bouchard Pere et Fils Chevalier Montrachet, Sir,” he presented before pouring a bit in Oswald’s glass for him to taste.

“Would you also like to taste it, Detective?”

“Oh no, Mr. Mayor is the expert,” Jim replied.

Judging by the name alone, Jim knew the wine must have cost a fortune. He fidgeted, feeling like a fish out of water. This was a crazy idea, they should have gone to a less luxurious place.

After Oswald's approval, the waiter poured wine for both of them. “I’ll bring the hors d’oeuvres soon, gentlemen.”

“Are you alright, Jim?”

“Yes, perfectly fine. How was your visit at the retirement home?”

Oswald licked his lower lip before smiling. “Well, some of the old ladies were terribly curious about us, and wondered where I left the handsome police officer. But they did appreciate the Valentine’s cards.”

The waiter brought their appetizers, and Jim could barely control his face when he saw the contents of his plate. He reckoned that the three tiny hors d’oeuvres on it were enough for an ant.

“Bon appetit.”
Jim had the appetite, but he doubted it could be satisfied. He looked at Oswald for some hints as to which set of cutlery he needed to use, and blushed when the gangster caught him ‘cheating’. He knew there was no shame in not being familiar with this sort of things; his family could never afford to dine at such expensive restaurants. Jim was quite certain that Oswald too could only afford it since he climbed so high on the mobster hierarchy, but he seemed so comfortable with it, which Jim doubted he’d ever be, even if he learned the proper etiquette.

“You’re awfully quiet, Jim. You never told me what Detective Bullock thinks about us. If I may be frank with you, I’m rather surprised he hasn’t burst into my office yet to yell at me.”

“He’s shockingly okay with it,” Jim said as he cut in half a piece of pate. “He’s enjoyed the articles. Too much, if you ask me.”

“Oh, so he’s a gob-,” Oswald cut himself off when Jim looked up sharply. “That is, a Jimwald supporter?”

“Well, he did congratulate me.”

“Interesting. He’d be the last person I’d expect to do that,” Oswald mused as he finished his appetizer. “At least he’s not pestering you about it.”

“That’s where you’re wrong. He’s teasing me every time a new article comes out,” Jim complained, but then he saw the waiter bringing the next course.

“Braised baby octopus on an arugula and valerian bed, drizzled with a lemon-garlic dressing and sprinkled with lemon chapelure. Enjoy.”

The one word that made it to Jim’s brain was ‘octopus’, and he became very pallid suddenly. When the plate was placed in front of him, he thought he’d excuse himself to the bathroom, but he forced a smile on his face instead. Oswald kindly pointed to the right cutlery for this course, though Jim started with a large sip of his wine.

He pushed aside a piece of octopus; he’d never really enjoyed seafood, and he found octopus the most disgusting. Those tentacles were just too weird for him. The salad was great, however, and Jim tried to eat that only without being too conspicuous about it.
“How do you find it?” Oswald asked, and Jim thought it’d be better to lie.

“Very… um, interesting.”

Jim forced a piece of octopus in his mouth, and tried not to be sick when he chewed the rubbery texture. He was considering spitting it out in his napkin, when Oswald briefly touched his hand to get his attention.

“Not fond of it, are you? You don’t have to eat it, James, I don’t want you to have food poisoning. How about we go somewhere else?”

“Really?” Jim exclaimed.

“Yes, I can see you’re very uncomfortable, and that’s not my intention at all. I want you to have a good time,” Oswald smiled, and Jim had never been more relieved.

They got up, and after Oswald informed the waiter of their decision, the two men looked at each other with shy smiles.

“I know the perfect place we could go to. It’s not that far from here,” Jim informed him.

“Then lead the way, detective,” Oswald replied, and slid his hand into Jim’s as they exited the restaurant in the flashing light of cameras.

Ignoring the photographers and Jim’s fast heart rate, they continued down the sidewalk. Jim hoped that the nighttime would hide how flushed his face was. It was ridiculous how holding Oswald’s hands had such a strong effect on him.

Jim’s shoulders dropped with relief once they saw the glowing pale blue neon lights in the window as they reached the small diner. The buzzing from the open display, the familiar smell of brewing coffee and apple pie filled his nostrils as they entered. This was the atmosphere Jim could ease in the most. There was no proper etiquette to fret over and certainly no octopus on the menu.

The woman behind the counter greeted Jim with warmth and crinkled eyes as she smiled at him. She
wiped her hands on the apron she was wearing, and with an unexpected speed for a more elderly lady, quickly circled the counter to embrace the detective.

“Jimmy! It’s been too long.”

Jim blushed, snuck a glance at Oswald to see his reaction. Oswald lifted a brow at the nickname.

“Hi, Ms. Margo.” Jim knew better than to correct her. Even though it’d been only three weeks since he’s last saw her. “I’ve been busy.”

“Yeah, yeah you have. Heard all about in the paper.” Her attention moved onto Jim’s guest. Warm brown eyes scanned over Oswald, with a knowing smile.

“Oswald Cobblepot-” Oswald held out his hand, suddenly feeling as if he was meeting someone important to Jim and wanted to make a good first impression.

“I know who you are, Mr. Mayor. Pleasure to meet ya. Now, I know you didn’t stop by to show off your new boyfriend. You hungry?”

“Starving,” Jim admitted, making Oswald roll his eyes with the hint of a smile.

“Go take a seat, I’ll be right with you.”

Jim avoided his regular booth, traded it for one by the window, providing a better angle of the two for the swarm of photographers no doubt snapping pictures of them outside.

“I assume you come here often?” Oswald asked, watching Jim shrug off his suit blazer and fold it across the back of the booth seat.

Jim nodded, “Usually when I’m stuck on a case. The coffee’s the best in the city.”

Oswald slid into the seat across from Jim, grinning. There wasn’t a chance he was going to let this little tidbit go. “Jimmy?”
Heat flooded back to Jim’s face just when he thought he had it under control. “Margo is a friend of the family. She knew me since I’ve been a kid, used to come here a lot with my dad.”

The significance of Jim’s choice on where to dine at dawned on Oswald. He realized how the detective was offering insight, a rare opportunity for Oswald to learn more about Jim.

Grabbing a menu from the table, Oswald studied over the food options. He looked up, frowning. “Is there anything here that won’t result in giving me a blood clot?”

“Trust me, Oswald. They serve the best hamburgers and fries in town.”

“I’ll trust that it will raise my cholesterol levels.” Oswald mumbled to himself.

When the food arrived, Oswald looked even more uncertain. Jim didn’t waste any time digging into his burger, satisfying his rumbling stomach once and for all.

After a while of eyeing his food, Oswald finally reached over and plucked a fry from their plate. Nibbling thoughtfully, he took a second bite before continuing.

“You look surprised,” Jim said, closely watching Oswald’s reaction.

“It’s not… completely terrible.”

Jim laughed, “Here, try it with some ketchup.”

Oswald seemed to grow more relaxed as the two of them shared the fries, fingers often brushing against one another, but neither one mentioned it or were bothered to move to keep it from repeating.

“Aren’t you going to try the hamburger?” Jim asked after a while.

The frown returned as Oswald lifted the hamburger bun, peering at the meat and other toppings
“I know it’s not octopus—” Jim teased, and soon after a wadded up napkin — that Oswald had been using to wipe at the corner of his mouth — smacked Jim squarely in the face.

“Hush, you.”

As if to spite Jim for his teasing, Oswald lifted the burger from his plate and took a bite.

After chewing and swallowing, “It’s not the worst thing I’ve eaten. Would you like the rest?” Oswald asked, shoving his plate forward.

“You forget, I actually did eat at the other restaurant, unlike yourself,” Oswald explained before Jim could asked his questions. “You’re much hungrier than I am. Besides, I’m saving room for dessert.”

Jim was hungry, polishing off his own burger before eating Oswald’s as well.

It wasn’t long before dessert arrived, one small plate with a slice of apple pie for the two to share. While cutting into the slice of pie, Oswald’s slid his hand, the one not occupied with a fork, across the table to grab Jim’s hand.

Jim jolted at the touch, and Oswald whispered “The cameras.”, reminding Jim that they were still being watched. Disappointment rushed through Jim. He had completely forgotten that the only reason they were doing this was for the sake of tricking the public.

All his thoughts though seemed to vanish when Oswald leaned over the table causing the air to rush out of Jim’s lungs the moment Oswald’s thumb reached out and brushed over the corner of Jim’s lips.

“You had some whipped cream,” Oswald explained, pointing at his mouth before popping his thumb in his mouth and sucking the cream off.

Jim gulped, “We should probably call it a night.”
After leaving a sizable tip, they left. It had grown darker and the night air had more of a bite to it. Jim draped his suit jacket over Oswald’s shoulder, before they began their walk back to Jim’s apartment. With an appreciative smile, Oswald once more intertwined their fingers.

While they walked, Oswald filled the conversation and Jim found himself participating much more than he normally did. Both of them walked too close, arms touching and constantly bumping into one another.

When they reached Jim’s apartment, he could feel disappointment swell in him once more. Jim actually had a good time tonight with the gangster, and he wasn’t too sure that he wanted the night to be over just yet.

It was quiet as Oswald walked along with Jim, stopping at the limo parked outside of Jim’s apartment. Jim wondered just how long Oswald’s driver had been sitting here, waiting for the mayor.

“I’m going to kiss you now,” Oswald kept his voice low, loud enough for Jim’s ears only.

Before Jim had a proper chance to react, Oswald leaned forward, lips soft, kissing Jim on the cheek. It was a simple peck, but enough for Jim’s heart to race at Oswald’s proximity.

Oswald’s lips moved to Jim’s ear, his breath warm on his skin. “Apologies for the short warning, but we have to keep appearances if there are any cameras about.”

“If we’re still keeping up appearances… shouldn’t you stay over at my place then?” Jim offered. “Since it's Valentine's Day, that's what couples tend to do...”

"But we're not like most couples.” Oswald smiled and started to turn away.

“I should go anyway, I have an early meeting tomorrow morning.”

Oswald headed toward his vehicle, but before he was able to reach the door, Jim’s hand shot out, wrapping around Oswald’s arm to tug the gangster back to him. Jim’s lips captured Oswald’s in a kiss.
Jim’s hands reached up to cup Oswald’s face, kissing him slowly and gently. Instantly, Oswald’s body reacted. His head tilted backwards, allowing Jim to deepen the kiss. Oswald started to sway, completely melting as Jim’s lips moved against his own. Quickly, Jim wrapped an arm around the gangster, pulling him even closer, steadying him. Oswald collapsed against Jim.

They finally parted when both were too breathless to continue, but Jim still hadn’t let Oswald go, still had his arm loosely around the mobster. Oswald’s chest was rising and falling rapidly as he stared at Jim with wonder.


“Besides, if we were a couple, wouldn’t I try anything to convince you to stay?” Jim asked, eyes still fixed on Oswald’s lips.

Oswald was still breathing hard, “I-I suppose you would…”

Reluctantly, Jim let his arm drop from Oswald’s waist, stepped back. “Good night, Mr. Mayor.”

Although they had made no appointments, Jim went to the City Hall the next morning, fighting a smile all along the way. He was about to greet the mayor when he heard Oswald snap at someone, then he saw Melissa exit the office crying. It seemed like Oswald was in one of his moods, so Jim made sure to knock before he opened the door.

“I told you already that I don’t want to talk to Mr. Rogers before the speech!” Oswald shouted from the adjoining room.

“How about Mr. Gordon?” Jim peeked in, his eyes landing on Oswald who was just putting on his vest.

“Oh, Jim ,” Oswald said and his eyes lit up as he watched in the mirror Jim enter the room. “I do apologize for yelling, I thought it was Melissa terrorizing me again.”

Jim noticed Oswald’s hands shaking as he reached for his suit coat. “What’s wrong, Oswald?”
“Well, I’m having a press conference about the Charity Ball in about fifteen minutes, and I can’t seem to remember my speech, even though I’ve practiced it for quite some time,” the mayor confessed.

“Oh, come on,” Jim said, stepping closer to Oswald and taking his hand. “I’m sure you could come up with a speech on the spot, if needed. Besides, can’t you take your notes with you? No one expects you to learn everything by heart.”

Oswald squeezed Jim’s hand, gratefulness clearly written on his face. “Thank you so much. I, well, I was wondering if you could stay there? For my speech? I mean, you don’t have to, of course, just-”

“I’ll stay if you want me to,” Jim reassured the gangster.

His gaze landed on the newspapers spread on the table, all relating Det. Gordon and Mayor Cobblepot’s incredibly romantic Valentine’s date.

“Have you read them?” Oswald asked, giggling.

“I did, some of them. Not sure how they managed to get such a detailed account of what we ate and did, though.”

“Well, the wonders of modern cameras…” Oswald retrieved his cane, then turned towards Jim with innocent eyes. “Speaking of cameras… none of the newspapers published pictures of our kiss. Thought you’d said you saw some.”

“Better safe than sorry,” Jim replied calmly, but his smile was rather smug as he descended the stairs behind Oswald.

“I am pleased to announce that the Charity Ball organized in honor of our brave veterans has been a roaring success,” Oswald smiled and glanced at Jim as the gathered journalists and crowd applauded. “Thanks to our generous guests, we managed to collect 26,600 dollars. I will donate the rest so that the sum is 30,000.”

Amid the new round of applause, there was commotion on the left side with shouts of ‘Liar!’,
‘Cheater!’ and ‘Murderer!’, and suddenly, several eggs were flying towards the podium, one landing on the right shoulder of the mayor. People were screaming and more eggs landed on the pavement, though not even close to their target. Jim made a move towards Oswald, but the mayor held up his hand in order to stop him. Meanwhile, the people responsible were caught by the guards of City Hall, and taken away.

Oswald continued his speech as if nothing had happened. “Colonel Thomas, the president of the Organization for Disabled Veterans, assured me that the proceeds will be used for very good causes…”

Jim noticed that Oswald’s voice quivered slightly, and he didn’t really dare to look at the crowd anymore.

“Good causes, such as programs which try to get veterans back on the employment market, and offer professional psychological and financial support.”

Jim’s heart clenched as Oswald’s voice became quieter and quieter with each word. He wanted to reach out, do something to soothe the gangster, who pressed on, despite the egg bits trickling down on his expensive suit.

“Therefore, I would like to thank everyone who donated for this noble cause. That is all.”

With that, Oswald turned around and disappeared into the building with surprising speed, so that none of the journalists managed to ask him any questions. Jim was the first one who moved, pushing a few people out of the way, and running up the stairs after the mayor.

Jim found Oswald in his bathroom with his back to the detective as he took off his ruined jacket, and threw it on the floor. The pain from earlier returned to Jim’s chest; he really couldn’t stand seeing Oswald so defeated.

“You were right, James,” Oswald said quietly as he turned around and started rolling up his sleeves. “The people of Gotham hate me.”

It didn’t escape Jim’s notice that Oswald’s hands were shaking; he knew he had to offer comfort to the mayor since he’d been deeply humiliated in front of the whole city, basically. Knowing how proud Oswald was, it must have hurt his dignity deeply.
Jim entered the bathroom, then wetted a towel, and gently raised Oswald’s chin with his index finger. “They don’t hate you, Oswald. Not everyone. You’ve barely started, but you’re doing an incredibly fine job.”

Oswald’s eyes were downcast as Jim rubbed at the drying egg on the side of his face.

“You already proved to me that you’re not doing this for the power, or not for that alone. I know you love this city which is the most important thing if you ask me,” Jim added and squeezed Oswald’s shoulder, provoking a sigh to escape the gangster.

“But being targeted with eggs? That’s so bad, Jim, so common and humiliating,” Oswald complained, trying very hard not to let tears escape his eyes.

“Listen, this is one of the toughest jobs in Gotham, and each of your predecessors had to endure some pretty awkward moments. Remember Mayor Green? His trousers split on live television.”

Jim smiled as Oswald snorted. “You’ve also seen Mayor James’s drunk interview, and the list goes on and on, so honestly there’s nothing for you to worry about.”

The two man stared at each other, Oswald’s eyes wide as his hands involuntarily gripped Jim’s hips who gulped.

“Just a second, you still have some egg yolk on your hair,” the detective breathed and rubbed away the sticky substance as much as he could.

He dropped the washcloth in the sink, his hands returning to caress Oswald’s cheeks. The mayor set his adoring eyes on Jim, who suddenly forgot how to breathe.

“This is not for the cameras anymore, is it?” he asked, just to make sure, and when Oswald shook his head with a smile, Jim finally leaned in and captured his lips in a long-desired kiss.

It was just as wonderful as the first time, but now it was real and honest, making Jim shiver violently as Oswald opened his mouth slightly, his tongue licking Jim’s lower lips before he bit it playfully.
“It never was for the cameras, not from my part,” Oswald confessed breathlessly, and he hugged Jim, the detective’s arms encircling Oswald’s waist and bringing him closer.

Suddenly, Jim started laughing, Oswald feeling the vibrations in his whole body. “What?” he asked when he looked at the detective.

“I can’t believe that we went through all this trouble, only to be proved in the end that Vale was right all along.”

“Mayor Cobblepot seems to be doing much better after his humiliation on Thursday afternoon when an angry protester targeted him with several eggs. He was spotted strolling arm in arm with Det. James Gordon, who wasn’t shy to cheer him up with many kisses. The sudden display of intimacy between the couple makes the Gotham Gazette question the legitimacy of the relationship.”

Just when Jim thought Vale’s articles were a thing in the past, he found himself staring at the latest headline during breakfast: GOBBLEPOT SCAM?

“Are you kidding me?!” Jim angrily mumbled to himself, throwing the newspaper aside.

While he got ready for work, he dialled Oswald’s number, wanting to see the gangster’s reaction to the article.

“Did you read Vale’s article? She’s now saying our relationship’s fake.”

Oswald let out a breathy chuckle, “I mean, she’s not completely wrong.”

“What should we do?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?” Jim frowned.

Oswald reassured him, “We have nothing to prove. We know the truth and that’s all that matters.”
Besides, with us being a ‘scam’, we’ll no longer be Vale’s writing subjects.”

Jim’s fingers stopped on his tie. This was what he wanted. No more articles about them being in the papers. No more headlines. However, he was uneasy.

“James… you’re not talking, what’s wrong?”

“I…” Jim started. “I don’t want people to think we’re not real. You’re important to me, Oswald. Our relationship’s no one’s business, but I’m not ashamed of us.”

The other line grew silent for a moment before Oswald cleared his throat. “You’re important to me, too.”

“Don’t worry about a thing, Jim. I’ll take care of it.”

Jim shook his head before he hung up. He trusted Oswald would have the article retracted. When he arrived at work, the other officers were looking at him with judgmental eyes. Great, he thought, now everyone believed he was a liar.

Harvey was the first to greet him. “Hey, Jimbo.” Pulled him aside. “Are the rumors true? You and Penguin have been faking this entire time?”

Jim sighed, he had already been expecting this. “I like him, Harvey.”

“Yeah, I know that, but everyone else isn’t too convinced.”

“I don’t care what they think.”

Harvey looked doubtful. “Sure you don’t.”

Jim ignored the stares, going straight to his desk to get some actual work done unlike his fellow officers. He didn’t know how much time passed, but after a while the whole station grew silent, which was an anomaly. There was usually always something going on: a loud fight, phones ringing,
the Captain chewing someone out.

It was quiet. Even Harvey was noiseless; most of the time Jim’s background noise was Harvey’s snores, after falling asleep on his pile of paperwork. It was much too quiet.

Jim glanced up, looking to find why the room had gone still, and discovered everyone’s eyes were on him. Confused, he turned to Harvey who merely tilted his head in the direction of the entrance.

Standing in the middle of the precinct was Oswald. He smiled wide when he caught Jim’s gaze. Jim was reminded of a similar moment when Oswald had waltzed right in the station, announced he was alive and went straight back out.

“Oswald?” Jim stood, moving towards the gangster. “What are you doing here?”

His answer came in the form of a kiss – Oswald grabbed Jim’s tie and tugged him closer. Jim moaned into it, eyes fluttering shut as Oswald slipped his tongue inside Jim’s mouth. He loved the way Oswald tasted, sweet like vanilla. Jim lost himself in the kiss, the precinct melted away and it was just them.

Oswald pulled away and Jim found himself trailing after him, wanting another taste. A hacking cough alerted Jim that they weren’t alone, and a quick glance around showed him that he’d just made out with a notorious gangster in front of the whole station.

Both their attention was caught by the Captain, who was wheezing, holding a bagel in one hand. Oswald didn’t look an ounce guilty having caused Jim’s boss to choke on his breakfast. But Jim guessed he was every bit as culpable as Oswald was.

“Is that your method of ‘taking care of it’?” Jim asked.

Oswald didn’t respond, his roguish smile answer enough. “Have a good day, dear.”

With a pat on his cheek and a wink, Oswald walked straight back out, turning heads and causing dropped jaws, everyone’s eyes following him as he left.
Harvey wolf-whistled, loud. “Damn, Jim. Guess the rumors aren’t true.”

“Guess so.” Jim smiled a bit smugly to himself; he could still feel the sensation of Oswald’s lips on his.

"Gordon, we got your message. Loud and clear.” Barnes told him once he got his coughing fit under control. He turned his attention to the rest of the officers, “Enough of this dilly-dally, and get back to work!”

Barnes didn’t go straight back inside his office, instead he leaned closer to Jim. "I swear to god, if your love life interrupts my bagel time..."

Jim blinked at the Captain’s index finger pointed in his face before Barnes walked away, leaving the unsaid threat hang between them.

The charade was finally over. Jim breathed with relief. No more gossip, no more pretending, Jim didn’t have to tell lies to Harvey anymore or pose for any flashing cameras. He could just be with Oswald under no false pretences.

Jim knew that there would be another article recounting Oswald’s bold declaration of affection here today – he could already see the headline. The last few weeks these articles had tormented Jim, nothing but ridiculous wild notions, spewing on about Oswald and Jim’s great romance. Although Jim knew there were some truths underneath the layers of exaggerated descriptions and commentary of their relationship. According to rumors, Gotham’s Mayor had Det. James Gordon wrapped around his fingers, and that was the truest thing Jim ever read in any of those articles.

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