

**Isaac Parker**  
**Kerberos R&D Facility**  
**Gravehurst, Flufftail**  
**September 2nd, 582 ED**  
**8:52 a.m.**

---

Fired.

Three years of Isaac's life had been spent working for Kerberos, three whole years working tirelessly on his most promising design. Yet, in a short 15-minute video call with his boss, the metaphorical rug had been pulled right from under him.

Fucking fired.

The prototypes were nearly complete, and Harlow *seemed* happy with the results, but this morning apparently proved otherwise. The middle-aged gray wolf had cut him off from his only source of income, and brought his ambitions to a freezing halt.

Isaac hunched over the sink of his floor's restroom, groaning as the stress and anxiety set in. He splashed some water on his face, then looked at the mirror.

A chubby twenty-three year old badger stared back. Sapphire blue eyes carrying bags from exhaustion, unkempt black and white fur, a patch of gray from the neck down, and a thick scar exposing flesh on the top of his snout. This was the face of Isaac Parker. This is the face of someone shit out of luck, he thought to himself.

Unless he found a new job quickly, he would only be able to afford rent for a few months with his savings, and that wasn't even factoring groceries, car payments, insurance, and many, many other things needed to live.

Isaac stood up straight and took a deep breath. He tried to calm down and take the situation gracefully, but the more he thought about it, the more his temper grew.

"That fucking dog thinks he can fire me after *three years* of blood, sweat, and tears!?"

The badger slammed his fist on the sink and sulked out of the restroom, his frustration mixing with... darker thoughts. Catching himself at that point, Isaac picked up the box containing his things. There wasn't much. His research notes and the prototypes belonged to Harlow now. What could he do?

Nothing. There was nothing to do now. He had been royally screwed.

Isaac walked down to the first floor and turned in his ID, not making eye contact with the iguana receptionist who he never spoke to. That was a frequent trend for the badger, most of the other engineers at the facility hardly ever spoke to him, and none seemed to care he was leaving.

As he walked out the front door, he was greeted with the gray skies and brick buildings of Gravehurst, an industrial city within the northern country of Frostwreath.

Isaac squinted and pulled out a pack of **Blue Moon Cigarettes**, his brand of choice. He stuck a cigarette in his mouth, then tried to no avail for a full minute to get it lit with his cheap green lighter.

"C'mon, you piece of-"

A droplet of water collided with his snout, then another, and another, and it wasn't long before rain began to pour in at a steady rate, drenching the badger and soaking his cigarette.

"Great. Sure do love Flufftail weather..."

He tossed his cigarette and stomped off towards his apartment, grumbling as the cold rain splashed against his jacket hood.

A few minutes passed before he realized a taxi was following him, a mustachioed weasel drove while a bear of some kind wearing aviator sunglasses watched intently.

That was... odd. Why the hell would someone want to follow him? The possibilities rushed through his head until the bear rolled down the window.

"Let me out here, thanks."

The bear handed the weasel a roll of blue bills, opened the passenger door, then unfurled a black umbrella as he stepped out.

Isaac could see the bear clearly now. A male polar bear around his own age, dressed in a classy black suit, a white undershirt, and a dark green tie. He had a stocky build with a noticeable gut hugging his suit jacket. Most noticeable of all was his chiseled face, much more pretty than the usual macho jawlines of most bears.

The bear's handsome visage elicited a brief blush from the badger, before he blinked and pushed the intrusive thoughts away.

"Isaac Parker?", the polar bear asked in a warm, deep tone of voice.

"Who's asking?", Isaac replied gruffly. He had to stay on his toes, as attractive as the bear in sunglasses was, something in Isaac's gut said not to trust him.

The bear chuckled warmly before speaking, "A businessman with a proposition, *and* an umbrella."

"Whatever you're selling, I ain't buying. I'll just walk home on my own, thanks.", the badger said with a grimace.

"Buying? No, I'd like to pay you for information.", the polar bear said with a grin.

"What could I possibly tell you that's worth money?", Isaac replied.

"Let's start with any and all information you can give me on the *Advanced Infiltration Suits*."

The badger froze in his tracks, how did this sleazeball know about Isaac's project at Kerberos? Isaac turned around, and walked back to the polar bear, taking solace in the reprieve the umbrella granted from the rain.

"First off, how do you know about that? Second... how much is my information worth to you?", Isaac said with his eyebrow raised. There was little point in protecting Kerberos' secrets now, especially when Harlow gave him the boot.

"I have very good sources, and your information's value depends on how much you're willing to give. Although, I wasn't expecting you to be so compliant this quickly. No loyalty to your canine overlord, eh? Not bad for a corporate stooge."

"I ain't a stooge, and he ain't lording over me now. Fucker fired me this morning."

The polar bear's walk slowed and his brows raised in surprise, he seemed deep in thought, "Ah... I should have expected that. This changes the situation quite a bit."

"So what? Deal's off now?"

"No, it just means I need to change my pitch. How about we get out of this rain first?", he said, glancing at a nearby café, "You like coffee?"

"Yeah, but that place is outta my budget range."

"It's my treat, Isaac."

"We ain't on a first name basis, pal. In fact, I don't even *know* your name.", Isaac growled. Despite his lofty offer, the badger still didn't trust him.

The polar bear stopped under a canopy and turned to Isaac, then smiled warmly. He gently removed his aviators, allowing Isaac to see beneath them. The bear's eyes were a brilliant emerald green, containing a twinkle of... something. Mischief? Hope? The badger was never good at reading people, especially when they were making him blush with their stupid handsome face.

"My name is Dimitri. Dimitri Alexeyev, entrepreneur, confidence man, and all-around dashing rogue~" Dimitri said with a wink, "It's a pleasure to meet you, Isaac."

Isaac sighed, brushing his short black-and-white hair back with his paw, "I'll take that coffee, just don't expect me to hold out 'cause you're treating."

Dimitri cocked his head and grinned, "By all means, get whatever you want. We've got a lot to discuss."

---

The badger and the bear sat down at a booth and made their orders. Isaac breathed in the calming scent of coffee beans as he looked around the interior of the upscale Lontano style café. A brick and dark wood interior paired with soft lighting created a cozy atmosphere that quelled Isaac's nerves.

He pulled another cigarette out of the pack, and fortunately the cheap lighter actually worked this time. Lighting up the cigarette as he took a long puff, Isaac blew out the smoke into the air above himself and Dimitri.

"That's a bad habit, you know, could kill you one day." Dimitri remarked.

"We've all gotta die of something. Now are we here to talk about my choice in vices or can we get down to business?"

"Right, right. So what can you tell me about the suits?"

"Plenty, but first you're going to tell me why you got that look on your face when I said Harlow fired me."

"Fair enough, I was going to tell you anyway..." Dimitri replied with a shrug, "Alistair Harlow, he's famously known for inventing the Icarus body armor that helped Shinchoku kick Facheux's ass during the Red Petal War."

"Everyone knows that. It was pretty much his magnum opus."

"That's the official story. The truth of the matter is that he stole the idea from someone else, his old partner. Armadillo guy by the name of Phillip Haines."

Isaac recognized the name, Haines' daughter had tried to sue Kerberos two years back, only for Harlow's legal team to tear her a new one and effectively silence her for good.

The badger took a long drag of his cigarette, and brushed his short black-and-white hair back with his paw, a frequent tic when his anxiety flared up. He held the smoke in for a brief moment, then blew a ring over Dimitri's head, in an attempt to seem composed in front of the handsome polar bear when he was in fact quite disturbed, as he put the puzzle pieces together.

“That old fuck was playing me, wasn’t he?” Isaac grumbled.

“Like a fiddle, I’m afraid.” Dimitri said while scarfing down his third blueberry scone, “Harlow’s made a habit of taking in brilliant young minds, squeezing them dry and then kicking them out when he doesn’t need them anymore. From what I’ve been told, he’s quite selective with his prey, singling out loners and doormats with little to no family and antisocial tendencies, like you! Eh... no offense.”

Isaac was too occupied with processing all this information to take any offense. Harlow had manipulated him, roped him into thinking of him as a trustworthy person who respected his skills. Every pat on the back, “well done, Parker”, thumbs up, and word of encouragement was a long con to groom him into an eager and dedicated slave to Kerberos and its continued success. Isaac slammed his fist against the table in frustration and disbelief, his mug of lukewarm coffee rippling and nearly spilling over from the impact.

“That son of a bitch... I dropped out of college for him! I put my heart and soul into those damn suits! I-”

Dimitri held up a paw and smiled, “Simmer down there, badgerbuns. I get that you’re pissed, but I want you to channel all that into helping me bankrupt that grimy wolf.”

Isaac’s irritation fizzled out, and he sat back more casually as he stared at the beige ceiling, “Tch... fine, just continue... also what did you just call me?”

“Don’t worry about it. Besides, it’s *your* turn to talk. My sources tell me that your Advanced Infiltration Suits are quite high-value items.. that name is a mouthful by the way, you might’ve considered something more catchy.”

“Your sources would be correct. The Advanced Infiltration Suits are the peak of stealth technology.” Isaac replied with a proud smirk, “The suits are made with a state of the art material I call nano-fiber, it’s an incredibly durable substance that is also more flexible than any garden variety armor.”

“So... it’s kevlar on steroids?” Dimitri asked, cocking his head to the side.

“*Hijueputa*... that’s one way of putting it, I guess. That’s not the whole package though, aside

from being virtually bulletproof, the suits can change shape, color, and density depending on how much extra fiber is held within it's extra storage. My second favorite feature is its absorption capabilities. The fiber can gather energy to maintain the suit from heat, sunlight, movement, and best of all, sound! By turning soundwaves into power, any body movement from the wearer becomes silent, aside from vibrations from the vocal cords at the default setting."

"Damn... that sounds like some impressive tech. Could fetch millions on the black market, but... second favorite feature? What's the first?"

"Hm?" The question snapped Isaac out of his little ego trip, and the badger began to twiddle his thumbs out of mild embarrassment, "O-oh uh... it has an emergency feature, complicated stuff, lots of tech jargon that'd go over your head."

He didn't need to know about *that* particular feature, perhaps he'd even set it off by accident. That would be *very* entertaining, Isaac thought to himself.

"I'll take your word for it... all in all, I like what I'm hearing! Me and you, we're gonna make a mint~", Dimitri said excitedly, his emerald eyes glimmering at the prospect.

"Huh? I thought my part was done, pay me so I can go home."

"Don't you wanna get back at your boss?" Dimitri said with a devious grin.

Isaac grumbled and scratched his scarred snout, "Fffffuck it what have I got to lose?"

"That's the spirit! Meet me at Room 417 in the Gold Dragon Continental Hotel later this evening!" the bear exclaimed, "Oh, and give me your phone number."

"Wh-what? But w-"

"So we can keep in contact, obviously."

"Right. Obviously... so uh... see you then, I guess."

"Au revoir Isaac, we'll go over the finer details later~" The polar bear said with a wink.

“Yeah, yeah...”

The badger and the polar bear parted ways for the time being, leaving Isaac to ponder this strange situation and the eccentric, unfortunately handsome person who had strolled into his life. Doubts and uncertainty still plagued him, but the prospect laid before him was too good to pass up. It was a chance to strike back at Harlow and set himself for life, provided Dimitri could be trusted and this wasn't some overly elaborate scheme to screw him over royally.

As Isaac stepped out into the rainy outdoors, he noticed Dimitri's umbrella stuffed in one of the pockets of his backpack. Left by mistake, or on purpose? He assumed the former, but a muffled little voice deep within his heart hoped it was the latter.

“Pull yourself together, Parker. He doesn't give a shit about you, no one does.” he mumbled to himself, unfurling the umbrella and walking back to his apartment.

---

**Dimitri Alexeyev**

**The Gold Dragon Continental Hotel, Room 417**

**Gravehurst, Flufftail**

**September 2nd, 582 ED**

**11:47 a.m.**

Dimitri sighed and shuffled into his hotel room, his headache persisting despite his best efforts. The meeting with Isaac Parker had gone well, the badger heard what he needed to and nothing more. If things went well, he'd have a new partner in crime. Dimitri had a hunch there was potential hiding behind that prickly exterior, and going with his gut rarely failed him.

Speaking of, the bear tossed his jacket aside, then unbuttoned his shirt. His supple belly was freed as he sighed in relief, doing so again after removing the all-too-tight belt around his waist. Now topless, the polar bear flopped into bed and flicked off his dress pants, leaving only his black boxers, patterned with green aliens and UFOs.

“Note to self, get a tailor...” Dimitri remarked to himself, bemoaning the ill-fitting clothes that ensued via the conflict between his sense of style and his body type.

Here's an idea, you could try not eating like a damn pig everyday. Maybe even work out more than once a fuckin' month.



“Gods... please not right now...” Dimitri groaned, already getting that unsettling feeling in his spine, like he was losing control. His “headache” was getting worse by the second.

D’aww, what’s the matter? Did I hurt your feewings~? Good. Gotta tell ya, that was a pathetic display out there. That badger guy was lapping up your every word, he doesn’t know what you really are.

“Shut up.”

A liar, a snake, a two-faced asswipe, among many other things... I could be cliché and say you only need me but I don’t wanna be here either. By all means, make your little crew, live out the heist movie dream! Then toss them aside, like you do with everyone.

“Shut up! I swear all you do is complain!”

Aww, what’s the matter, runt? Did I hurt your widdle feewings? C’mon now, we both know this is all because you can’t go crying home to mo-

That was the last straw for Dimitri. The polar bear wordlessly chucked a lamp full force at a nearby mirror. Some would think it overkill, but it was one of the few ways to shut *him* up. He sat there, breathing heavily and trying to collect his thoughts as the shattered remains of the mirror lay scattered about the carpeted floor.

Focus. Breathe. The plan was coming along fine, it would all be fine. Alexei be damned.

**KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.**

Dimitri’s head spun as heard the knocking at the door, that was probably Parker. He took one more deep breath before tossing the mirror and lamp into the nearby closet, then shoved the glass under the mini-fridge. Smooth. Composed. That was all Dimitri needed to be, no further emotions would be required.

Cooly and confidently, Dimitri opened the door to see the cute badger engineer with bags under his eyes. He took a little bit of pleasure in seeing him reel a bit upon seeing a nearly naked polar bear.

“Hey I- WHOA! What the hell is wrong with you!? Put some damn pants on your pervert!” Isaac exclaimed in flustered shock, covering his face in an almost comical manner and turning away.

“Nice to see you too, Mr. Parker. Do come in, we’ve got a few things to discuss.” Dimitri replied curtly, “Any day now, big guy.” He added coyly.

Isaac grumbled as he wandered in, “Expensive place, usually only business bigwigs can get a suite at the Gold Dragon.”

“I choose to live luxuriously, is that a crime?” Dimitri deflected, Parker didn’t need to know how much he was pulling in every score yet.

“Whatever.” The badger said in an attempt to sound aloof. He slumped down onto a nearby desk chair and spun around, clearly waiting to get the juicy details on this prospective job.

Dimitri slicked his hair back and leaned against the wall with a confident smile. “I can warrant a guess and say you just want to get down to business. Boring, but alright. The first thing you need to know is that this first job will actually be pretty easy, since my client is a Kerberos insider.”

The desk chair squeaked to a halt. “You’re working *with* a Kerberos employee? Another one?”

“I don’t know much about them, other than they’re a shareholder in the company who wants its price to plummet. Maybe planning to buy it out themselves, it’s not my business to know. Either way, he’s given me everything I need to waltz in there and take the suits out.”

“That’s it? What the hell do you need me for then?” the badger said incredulously.

“Oh, that’s the fun part! You’re giving the sales pitch to our buyers, this’ll be your first dive into the life of a full-time confidence man~”