“Mister Bani Karl?” Said the receptionist from her opulent wooden desk in front of the doors of the most powerful penguin in the city. She was pretty, the only detractor being the patch she wore over her left eye and the scar running up her temple and onto her head. She shuffled papers as another penguin in chains got led up to the doors. This one had a few more scars than the receptionist. Several smaller ones ran up his flippers like the filigree you might find on a door, curling shapes that melt into each other. The other obvious one is on his chest, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the scar is his chest. A twisted and angry red sea of scar tissue that seems thickest in the area right above his heart. The two penguins handling him are not so transparently dressed, they have on a significant amount of armor and each carry two swords, one for each hip. They jerk the penguin in chains further along, he doesn’t resist, in a moment they are through the heavy wooden doors.

“Good to see you Bani.” Says the penguin seated at the desk. He is unremarkable save for his well-tailored suit and his position, a low-ranking government official who happens to be the head of the lucrative Atlas Fishing Co. There are rumors that he uses his fish packing houses as a cover for the illegal silver trade, rumors which the penguin in chains before him has been investigating on behalf of the Pingwinese government.

“You want a cigar? Maybe pour you a glass of vodka?”

The penguin in front of him continued stayed mostly silent.

“Come on, there’s gotta be something you want, that I can give you sweetheart.”

The penguin in chains raised his head for a moment. “Freedom would be nice.”

“Sorry kid, but I let you fly the coop and you’ll be telling Mother Hen all about my business dealings, the ones that ain’t on the books, can’t have that.” The other penguin’s head dropped back down again. “Awww, chin up kiddo, you’ve got a bright future ahead of you.”

“You’ll forgive me if I don’t believe that.” The penguin said, rustling his chains.

“Maybe not as a big bad government assassin, I can’t let you just go back out there and get yourself hurt after all. You’re a sweet kid, I gotta keep you safe, and what place is safer than in Atlas’ pocket?”

The chained penguin grimaced hard enough that it was visible even to the suited one standing at his desk.

“Or I could always get you a nice cottage so you could settle down somewhere, be nice to settle down and stop causing your buddy Atlas trouble, wouldn’t it?”

“Would it?”

“Don’t be giving me the guff like that sugar, I may not be able to kill you without causin’ a ruckus big enough to inconvenience me but that don’t mean I can’t rough you up a little bit.”

“Just because you can rough me up a bit doesn’t mean I have to give half a damn.”

“It’ll be an adventure for both of us then. Cabot, Chauncey, give him the works, use whatever you want but for your sake you better lay down a goddamn tarp down, you know blood is a bitch to clean outta shit.”

The two armed and armored penguins dragged the chain laden one away, his feet dragging on the floor and leaving a contrail of disturbed carpet as he left.

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Sometime later, after getting bored of doing actual bureaucratic work, Atlas decided to check on his two subordinates. He moseyed along through the corridors of his office until he found the door with the sounds of a beating in progress reverberating from it. He went to find a drink tray with ice and a bottle of cold gin before he let himself into the room. Steel clad flippers made wet contact with the chain clad penguin’s face and sent strips of his cheek flying through the air, there may have even been some chips of bone mixed in with the blood at this point. The penguin in chains struggled to stand in the face of the brutal assault and he eventually slipped to the ground, his back pressing into the damp surface of the tarp around him. Atlas sat the drink tray down on a nearby table with a clink of settling glassware.

“Hey there boyo, you’re looking a little green around the gills.” Atlas reached out and picked up the glass of chilled gin. “You ready for a little refreshment? Or are you still set on getting the shit beat outta ya?”

The penguin in chains mumbled something. Atlas quirked an eyebrow. “Afraid I can’t quite make out what you’re saying, shoulda told the boys to be a little more careful with your chatter box.”

The penguin in chains hacked a wad of blood onto Atlas’ suit. He looked down at it and let out a hearty chuckle. “I suppose that’s a good enough answer boyo.” Atlas took the glass stopper out of the gin bottle and passed it under his beak, swishing it around and letting the smell of it cover the stench of iron in the room. “Lemme get you a drink.” He said as he used his free flipper to drop some ice into the glasses with the tongs, it clinked pleasantly with the promise of booze. He gently poured the gin into both glasses as the penguin in chains laid in his own blood, the pool spreading slowly even now as more red fluid oozed from open flesh. Once both glasses were full Atlas walked over to the center of the pooling blood and upended the gin bottle, pouring the stinging contents of the bottle onto the penguin at his feet. A few grunts and what could have been a mumbled curse were the only immediate reaction her garnered, but after a few slips on the slick surface of the tarp the chained penguin managed to get back onto his feet.

“Now then, we ready to make a decision? Or am I going to have to make up your mind for ya?” Atlas said, dropping the gin bottle to the ground with a muted thunk and walking back to the table to retrieve the two glasses of gin on the rocks. “Cause there’s only so much of you we can mash up before we hurt something important, and nobody likes damaged goods.”