

## Parent Trap

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# Parent Trap

by [thekeyholder](#)

## Summary

Jim Gordon and Oswald Cobblepot become good friends after Gotham is saved from destruction. Thirteen years in the future, they are bonding over their parenting issues, unaware that their children are getting tired of their ceaseless flirting. Or, the story where Barbara Gordon and Martin matchmake their dads.

## Notes

This is my very late contribution for the Gobblepot Summer 2019 event! It was inspired by a scene in the first ep of S3 Stranger Things where Hopper catches El and Mike kissing. :))

I love older gobblepot with all my heart, hope you will enjoy this silly story! :)

Many thanks to Nekomata58919 for the beta and genmitsu for the advice!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

With a cold beer in his hand and a bag of chips, Jim Gordon finally settles in his favourite armchair in front of the TV. It's been a hard week, and he's ready to relax and possibly fall asleep to whatever silly game show is on. He's just starting to get comfy, that sweet stupor about to settle in, when he hears giggles over the muffled music.

At first he thinks it's just Barbara on the phone with one of her friends, but then Jim remembers that she asked if Kevin, her boyfriend, could come over.

Barbara's room is just next to the living room, so driven by his detective skills and parental concern, Jim tries to tip his chair back for a quick look. He almost falls back when he sees through the ajar door Barbara and Kevin making out.

"Hey, hey!" He yells and scrambles to get onto his feet, stumbling the short distance to Barbara's room.

Jim's blood is boiling and he's ready to blow his top when he suddenly makes it to the door, and sees both Barbara and Kevin lying on their stomachs and reading comic books, as if nothing has happened. They look up innocently at a gaping Jim. "What?"

"I uh..." Jim struggles to reply.

"Did you need help with anything, Mr. Gordon?" Kevin asks and Jim could swear there's mischief underneath the innocence, but he can't prove shit.

"I've told you to keep this door open," he rebuffs. "Three inches minimum."

The teenagers don't seem concerned as they return to their reading, but Jim is brimming with suspicion and badly-masked irritation. He sits back onto his armchair, but his plans to relax and to catch up on sleep flew out of the window. He's sure the kids kiss after that, but he can't spy on them without making an ass of himself.

When Kevin finally gets up to leave, Jim bores holes in the back of the kid's head with his glare. He's about to open his mouth and comment something to Barbara, but she just closes the door to her room in his face.

Jim stewes all night and the next morning, unable to get rid of his frustration. He looks at the pile of files in front of him, but he can't concentrate. His salvation comes – as it often does – through Harvey, though the detective looks troubled.

"Remember the double homicide last week? No fingerprints, no names, nothing. Absolutely no clues. I have no idea how to continue," Harvey rakes a hand through his hair. "Unless..."

Jim knows what's coming next, they've played this game many times, and his heart leaps a tiny bit, but he doesn't let it show. Instead, he sighs wearily and leans against his chair with a displeased expression.

"Your pal, Penguin, might be able to help."

Jim makes a show of rolling his eyes, but he's excited to go. "If there's no other choice..."

"Thanks, buddy. I'll owe you one."

Jim leaves as soon as he can, which is not soon enough for him. His relationship with Oswald has always had its ups and downs, but after Gotham's revival, it seemed to mostly be on the good side: Oswald got involved in a lot of legal businesses (or well, legal on the surface), so Jim had no trouble staying out of his way. He supposes that bringing Martin back to Oswald had also helped with his name being kept out of his bad book.

Oswald receives him with a tired, but kind smile. He's in the Iceberg Lounge, overseeing the preparations for a cocktail party, his minions carrying in all kinds of deliveries.

"Mario! What are you doing? The hydrangea bouquets need to be hung from the ceiling!" Oswald yells at a scared underling, his cheeks reddening.

"Is it a bad time?" Jim asks, looking around curiously.

"Not at all," Oswald says, schooling his features and inviting Jim to have a seat at the bar.  
"How can I help you today?"

Jim slides the folder to him. "We have no leads. Thought you might know something."

Oswald takes a look at the picture inside and frowns, Jim watching every minute reaction. They've known each other for over two decades and he'd like to think that he can read his expressions. Jim reckons Oswald doesn't have any information, but he's not worried.

"I'll look into it and let you know."

Jim nods in thanks and smiles to himself; it's a bit funny that the man he can rely on most is a (reformed) mob boss.

"What's the other issue?"

Jim looks up surprised. "There's no other issue," he negates, even though he's been dying to spill the beans.

Oswald tilts his head, a meaningful look in his eyes. "Come on, James. I can see that something is troubling you."

Jim realises that just as he knows Oswald, Oswald also knows him, and it catches him by surprise, but somehow it feels right.

"What can I get you? You can have anything you'd like from the top shelf."

"No, I'll have to go back to work."

Oswald smiles. "A coffee then? I just got something that I think you'll like," Oswald says and beckons Jim into his office.

Jim is grateful for the privacy and familiarity of the space. They'd spent so many hours here over the years, sometimes nursing a glass of fine whiskey. As Jim takes a seat on the chair Oswald offers, he feels like even the piece of furniture has taken his shape after all their meetings, offering him maximum comfort.

Oswald tinkers with the pot for a few minutes, then gives Jim a big cup of coffee. The detective takes a slow sip and closes his eyes involuntarily, the damned drink is so good. Oswald always has the best things. Oswald *is* the best thing, his mind helpfully supplies and Jim shushes it.

"So, who's been upsetting you, Commissioner Gordon?"

A flash of warmth goes through Jim at that; he remembers a time when Oswald would spit his name or title like a curse, and he doesn't want to go back to those old, hateful days. This, now, is familiarity and friendship, a term of endearment maybe, and it's so easy to give in, even though some might not think it advisable to willingly share personal details with a known gangster. But it's too late for Jim, a decade too late, and anyway, why would he hide this from the one man who knows him inside and out?

"It's Barbara. Or rather, it's Kevin, that troublemaker she's going out with."

"What did they do?"

"Kiss."

Laughter bursts out of Oswald. "That's all?"

Of course, Oswald's mind would go to criminal activities. "Yes, but it's constant. And they have no shame, even though I told them to keep the door open three inches at all times."

"They're teenagers, James," Oswald says with an amused smile, which widens even more when Jim scowls at him.

Really, he thought Oswald would support his stance in the matter! Jim's gaze falls on the framed picture on Oswald's desk. It was taken a few years ago at his son's high school graduation. Oswald looks the same; in fact, Oswald barely changed at all, stylish and handsome, just rounder around the middle, but Jim never thought that was a bad thing. Quite the opposite.

"I bet you didn't have issues like this with Martin."

"Well, no, not really. He was always more preoccupied with his studies, though he was a big troublemaker in his own way. If you remember, he almost blew up my kitchen once."

Jim snorts. "Yeah, his science experiments. I'm surprised he didn't end up studying chemistry."

"I never told him not to. I let him study whatever he wanted," Oswald says with a sigh. "To be honest, I feel as if he's living his teenage phase now. He doesn't really write, he's secretive, always out with his new friends."

"Exploring the world."

"Hmm. I guess we're just growing old, aren't we? Our kids forgot about us..."

"Who are you calling old?" Jim pretends to be offended, then they both laugh.

"Look, you just need to be honest with them," Oswald finally says. "Talk to them as if you were their friend, not a cop."

"Maybe I should just kill the kid. I'm the Commissioner, I could cover it up."

That startles a laugh out of Oswald, and Jim is lost to the sound, so sincere and joyful and mischievous. Oswald's shoulders shake even when he gets up to pour more coffee for him.

"Oh, Jim... so hot-headed and protective. I heard you make speeches to hundreds of people fighting for their lives, surely you can address boundaries to two teenagers."

And then Jim realises that the man in front of him is known for his silver tongue and way with words. "I have a great idea," he says as he advances on Oswald. "Why don't you come over for dinner tonight and talk to them yourself?"

Only when Oswald starts gaping at him does Jim realise that he practically asked Oswald on a date. A weird and quite possibly unromantic one, but it still qualified as a date. In a way, Jim wants him to say yes, and not just to get him out of the pickle with the teenagers.

"Uhh, I'm busy tonight," he says, saving Jim from embarrassment. "But I have an idea: let's write it down to make it easier."

Oswald takes a seat by his desk, looking over the regal figure as he takes a blank page and starts writing in beautiful, studied cursive. Jim steps behind him and leans over his shoulder, trying to read the text. "Circle of trust... establish b-, what's that?" And under the pretence of not being able to see, he leans forward, against Oswald's side. "Establish boundaries."

The mob king stutters for a moment, but Jim doesn't move, doesn't want to give attention to this, so as not to make it weird. After a second of hesitation, Oswald carries on writing and soon presents Jim the finished text. The detective then casually leans against the desk and starts reading it out loud.



"... where we can talk openly about our feelings. Ugh," Jim groans and cringes, which makes Oswald snicker.

"I know how hard that is for you."

"Shut up, Oswald." Jim says with no heat, hardly suppressing a smile. He flutters the paper. "This doesn't sound like me at all. Are you sure you you can't come over?"

Saying it once can be reckoned as a slip up, a silly mistake that both can forget. But reiterating it for a second time is no coincidence, and cannot be overlooked so easily. Jim knows he's an idiot; they have found such a perfect balance that taking even the slightest step might cause years' worth of careful diplomacy and compromise to crumble to nothing.

Oswald looks surprised and pained, gaze drifting at the door, to what's behind it. "I really can't, Jim." His hand drifts to Jim's, and they don't acknowledge it, but hold on to the other. "I need to have everything ready for Martin's party."

Oh, right. Martin's graduation party. He remembers Oswald telling him about it a while ago. Jim feels like a right jerk. "Yes, sorry. Of course. I shouldn't have intrud-"

Oswald tightens his hold, effectively trapping Jim from leaving. "Jim, you never intrude. In fact, I'm glad you came so I can give you this."

Oswald lets go of Jim's hand to retrieve an envelope from the top drawer of his desk. "I'm sorry it's so late, but I wanted to hand it to you personally."

It's an invitation to the party, and Jim smiles to himself as he reads it. He can't believe Martin has already graduated from college. Jim still remembers how the boy clung to him when he brought him back to Gotham, and his run into Oswald's embrace. If he ever had any doubt about Oswald's role as a dad, they melted in that moment.

"Of course. I'll come."

Oswald's face lights up. "Splendid. Do bring Barbara too!"

"Yeah, if I can drag her away from kissing that toad."

Oswald laughs and Jim bids his goodbye, returning to the office with a much lighter heart, a speech and an unexpected invitation.

However, the day is tiring and Jim's enthusiasm slowly dwindles away. There's only so much shit he can take before being worn down. He's not surprised to find Kevin there again, but he can't do the speech yet. Jim's hiding in his room, keeps practicing the text Oswald wrote for him, repeating key phrases.

Finally, when Jim thinks he knows most of the speech, he gets up and saunters to the living room. There's music coming from Barbara's room, soft talking and laughing. Jim takes a deep breath, shaking off his agitation. Talking to two bratty teenagers shouldn't feel like such a scary thing to do, especially with his police experience, and yet his voice trembles.

"Hi, you two."

He stands awkwardly there in the door until Barbara and Kevin finally acknowledge him.

"Hey, Mr. G. What's up?"

Jim tries not to show any annoyance, but anyone who knows him better would see a muscle jump in his jaw. Mr. G, how dare this little brat, the eggshell is still on his behind! Jim sits down on a chair opposite to the two kids who are sitting on Barbara's bed, looking at him expectantly.

"Uh, we need to talk about something," Jim tries to think of the first words in his speech, but this is worse than his hardest exam, and he forgets everything. The teenagers get bored, so Kevin leans in and whispers something in her ear. Barbara laughs, but Jim is most irritated by Kevin's smirk. "Oh oh, Barbie," because that's what he calls her, the little jackass, "I think we're in trouble."

Jim wishes he could punch the kid. The plan including Oswald's text flow out the window as soon as Jim's anger rises to dangerous levels. Fuck talking to this disrespectful brat as if he were an adult.

"Your mom called."

"What? When? What did she say?"

Jim is doing a joyful dance internally. Aha, so this caught his attention.

"Is it about Nana?" There's a concerned edge to his voice, and Jim decides, perhaps with evil pleasure, that this is how he's going to get rid of him.

"Yeah, uh, she's not well. I'll take you home," Jim says, avoiding Barbara's eyes.

Kevin goes to the car with Jim, asking him questions ceaselessly, and Jim almost feels guilty. "What did mom say? Is Nana okay?"

Jim didn't intend to tell him anything until they're well away, but Kevin is just annoying and he bursts out. "Your Nana is fine, okay? Just shut up."

"What? You lied to me?"

"Yes, I want you to stay away from Barbara! You're nothing but trouble!"

“You can’t do this!”

“Yes, I can, I’m her father and you’re a bad influence on her!”

Luckily, they get to Kevin’s place quickly, and Jim is so ready to be done with the drama. He’s too old for this.

When Jim gets home, it's Barbara who assaults him with questions. "Is Kevin okay?" is asked at least a hundred times and Jim tries to be calm and appear concerned.

"Yes, his Nana is at the hospital, but she'll be released in a couple days. Kevin will probably not be available tomorrow, or the next couple of days."

Barbara slides onto a chair in the kitchen, and Jim decides to make pancakes for her, since they are her favourite food. It's good to have her company back to himself, so Jim feels less guilty.

"We're invited to a party on Friday," he announces nonchalantly, hoping it would pique her interest.

"What party?"

"To celebrate Martin's graduation."

Barbara hums. "Ah yeah, I saw his pics online. Not sure I want to go."

"Why?"

Barbara only shrugs.

"You know, life is more than just boys," Jim says in the least I'm-giving-you-a-dad-lecture voice he can muster. "You should hang out more with friends."

"Who invited us anyway?"

"Oswald." It's strange saying his name in front of Barbara, always has been. She only knows him as Martin's dad, as her dad's friend and occasional helper. But somehow Jim knows that she knows.

"Oh, *Oswald*," she says with a wide smile and a mischievous glint in her eyes that makes Jim flushed with embarrassment. "Then I guess we must go."

Jim sends her to her room, tells her he'll wash the dishes, just so he won't be teased about this. It's ridiculous anyway. It could be just friendship, it is a really good one, so why risk it? But then his phone beeps with a new message, and he practically pounced on it, knowing it's from Oswald.

*"How did the talk go?"*

*"Not as planned, but still okay. I guess."*

Oswald is calling then, just as Jim wanted.

"What happened? Did you tell them the text we wrote?"

Jim hums, barricades himself in his bedroom so Barbara can't hear him. "Not quite. The kid annoyed me, so I said his mom called and he needed to go home. He gave me the perfect

excuse with his Nana. I told him to stay away from Barbara."

"James..." Oswald says his name with a sigh, that one word encompassing so many emotions.

"Not like forever, but at least a little while. They don't need to spend the rest of the summer holiday joined by their hips."

"You're all bark and no bite, Jim."

"I can bite if you want to," Jim says in a low tone, and Oswald gasps and then laughs, and Jim wants to die at his attempt at flirting, even though he really wouldn't mind having a bite of Oswald's juicy – no, he needs to focus.

"How are the preparations going?" He asks instead.

Oswald lets out a weary sigh, a creaking sound coming off as he sits down on his bed.  
"Mostly done, just some details to fix. Had an argument with Ivy about the flowers."

"I'm sure Martin won't mind if you have tulips instead of roses," Jim teases. "Everything will be fine, you should relax tonight."

"Yes, I suppose you're right."

There's shuffling and fabric sounds coming through, and Jim realises that Oswald must be taking his suit jacket off, and his mind irresistibly provides the image, and he's suddenly very hot.

"If there's anything I can help with," he says, swallowing.

"No, thank you, though. Just come to the party. It wouldn't be the same without you," Oswald echoes words from the beginning of their relationship, and Jim smiles.

"Of course. Barbara said she'd come too."

"Perfect, we haven't seen her in a while. Well, have a good night, Jim."

"Good night, Oswald."

The next day, Jim looks at his watch more often than usual, impatient to leave. Time passes slowly, but at six sharp – unlike any day before – he's out of the building. He hurries home, conscious that he needs to change and probably wait for Barbara to be ready too. Of course, when he makes it, she hasn't started the preparations, hanging onto her phone and texting ceaselessly.

"Hurry up, we need to be there by seven," Jim urges her, but Barbara just rolls her eyes.

"Ugh."

In the end, it is actually Barbara who finishes first, and comes to glare at her dad. Jim, unfortunately, is undecided which tie to pick with his light blue shirt. He holds up two of them for Barbara.

"Neither," she says. "You don't actually need a tie for this event. It's not like you're attending the president's inauguration."

So Jim puts the ties away, even though he's nervous about Oswald's reaction. The man is always so elegant, he might consider Jim too dressed down for the occasion. Driven by boldness, he undoes the top button. If he's going casual, then he might as well commit to it.

Barbara is still texting in the car, her replies laconic whenever Jim tries to ask her something. He resorts to the radio to fill the silence.

"So what were you up to today?"

"Nothing much. Is it true you told Kevin to stay away? How could you do that, dad?"

"What? Who told you that?"

"Kevin, obviously. It was suspicious that he didn't reply to my messages. And then I called their landline, and his mom didn't know anything about his Nana being ill."

"Okay, that wasn't true about his Nana," Jim admits, and he can see from the corner of his eye that Barbara's fuming.

"Look, you two have been spending way too much time together. I get it; it's new and exciting."

"Do you? You've been single for ages."

Jim can't help the pain flaring up in his chest. He hasn't had a serious relationship ever since Lee. He told himself that taking care of Barbara was his main duty, and with work on top, he neglected that aspect of his life. Besides, maybe the person he actually liked was unavailable.

"All I'm saying is, don't build your whole life around a boy, because you might get hurt. Badly."

Barbara looks at him for a moment, as if she could see all his past heartache.



"It doesn't mean that it will end badly for me, just because it didn't work out for you."

Jim wants to say that it most probably will, that this is just a crush and they will soon get tired of each other. But he cannot tell that to his only child, cannot flood her with his pessimism and bitterness, so he gives her a different reason.

"You're too young, Barbara."

"Others have been going out since they were ten."

"I don't care about others," Jim states, his expression serious as he parks in his usual place, somehow still empty despite the many guests attending the party.

Barbara slams the car's door closed, while Jim tries to focus on the present. There's not much he can do to appease his daughter; they probably need a long talk at some point. This is why Jim doesn't do emotional talks.

At least Barbara waits up for him by the club's door, and Jim puts his arm around her shoulders, squeezing gently. She huffs as if annoyed, but Jim is hopeful that they will get through it. Fortunately, his daughter didn't inherit his ridiculous stubbornness, and she has a kind heart.

Whatever they were about to say, however, is forgotten once they get a glimpse of the venue. It's like something out of a fairytale, with lights and flowers hanging from everywhere.

"Wow," Barbara whispers, and Jim echoes the sentiment, looking around with wide eyes. Oswald surely didn't spare any expenses.

They barely make it inside when Martin and Oswald already spot them. Jim congratulates Martin with a firm handshake and a hug – weirdly, he feels very paternal towards him, probably because he's watched Martin grow into a fine young man. It's funny how much

taller he is than Oswald, but that rogue spark is present in his eyes as well, their family connection undeniable.

Jim wants to reach out to Barbara, an automatic gesture, but also a grounding one, but she frees herself and heads with Martin towards some friends. Jim watches after her silently.

"I take it your alternative talk didn't work out," Oswald says sympathetically, placing a hand on Jim's arm. He waives to the barmaid who serves them top shelf whiskey. "This will help."

"That little weasel told Barbara that I want them apart, and now she's upset with me."

Oswald leans in close. "Do you want me to talk to him?" His grin suggest a completely different discussion than their original plan.

Jim stares at Oswald's lips, then looks back at his eyes. "I'm almost tempted to say yes."

Oswald's grin widens, and they watch each other over the rim of their glasses until Oswald's host duties call him somewhere else. Jim follows him with his eyes, replaying their flirting in his mind, and imagining what would have happened if he'd leaned in. But he pushes that fantasy away, into the large collection where he keeps all the other ones.

A familiar flash of dark blue catches his eye, and Jim sees Barbara walk to one of the tables laden with appetizers. Jim goes there, standing away a bit awkwardly, unsure what to say. He spots a plate full of jumbo shrimp, and picks it up.

"Shrimp?" He asks innocently as he offers it to his daughter.

Barbara looks upset still, pouting, but instead of just taking one, she takes the whole plate.

"Don't be so *shellfish* ," Jim cracks, and earns a snort from Barbara, as well as an annoyed "*Daaaaad* ".

"Little Bee, listen," Jim starts, using Barbara's old nickname. "I'm sorry I spooked Kevin, I was just afraid that he was going to take you away from me. I was jealous that you suddenly spent more time with him than your old man."

He's not used to saying things like this, but Jim knows he has to be open. He's messed up so many relationships in his life, he has to make sure that at least his one and only child won't hate him.

Barbara's face softens at his admission, and she leans against Jim as a sign of her forgiveness. He kisses the top of her head, though he can barely reach it anymore, the duality of his little girl growing up breaking his heart.

"What do you call a shrimp with a tie?"

Barbara is already rolling her eyes.

"Sofishticated."

"Oh god."

Jim laughs at his own joke; he truly believes that making his offspring groan at one of his dad jokes is the height of his career as a parent. She's about to tell him something about Martin when someone clinks a glass to gather the attention of the party.

"Good evening, everyone, and welcome to this party, celebrating my son's graduation," Oswald sounds incredibly proud and the Gordons clap with enthusiasm, Oswald smiling at them. Jim feels Oswald's gaze on him and then sliding for a second onto Barbara, and his smile widens, because he's probably already realised Jim's attempts at reconciliation.

"Martin was a curious child, always interested in everything around him. I often used to wonder what he was going to study, as he was good at every subject. When he was around seventeen, I was convinced he'd choose chemistry – he nearly blew up my house with his experiments."

Laughter erupts around the room, and Martin joins in, throwing his head back. Oswald waits for the room to quiet before he speaks up again.

"Then the college letters started coming in, and this boy surprised me again, by picking a business degree. He graduated summa cum laude, so I have no doubt that his next degree will go just as well, and then he can take over my business."

People are clapping again, though Jim hears Barbara hiss. He doesn't understand until he looks back at Martin, who doesn't seem happy at the prospect. He starts signing something. Although Martin mostly uses an electric pad to communicate, he resorts to sign language if he doesn't want most people to understand what he's saying.

"Oh no..."

"What is it?" Jim turns towards Barbara.

"He's giving Oswald the news about that thing I wanted to tell you earlier."

"Which is?"

"He's not going back to school. He wants to have a gap year and travel or something."

Jim knows how important his son's education is for Oswald, most probably because he never got the chance to go to college. He had to join the mafia to earn money to keep his mom and himself afloat.

"No!" Oswald exclaims and is signing furiously, Martin matching his frenzy.

It soon ends with Martin shaking his head and leaving, and luckily someone has the sense to play some songs, so that the crowd can be otherwise entertained. Oswald looks as if he's on the verge of an aneurysm, and he soon storms out too at surprising speed.

Jim looks after him, not sure if he should catch up with him until Barbara pushes him.

"I'll go and find Martin." And with that, she disappears into the crowd.

Jim hurries in the opposite direction. He's quite certain that Oswald sequestered himself in his office. He knocks on the door, only hard enough to be heard over the music.

"Go away!"

"Oswald, it's me."

The door opens immediately. "Sorry, James, I thought it was someone else."

Jim closes the door behind him, and watches Oswald pace in his office.

"Oswald..."

"Do you want a glass of whiskey, Jim? Yes, let's have some, it's a really good one, just the right time too."

Jim goes over and takes the crystal decanter from his trembling hands, pouring two glasses and giving one to Oswald.

"Thank you. I'm sorry, I'm just-"

"It's okay. Drink up."

Oswald obeys, takes a sip. He leans against his desk, and Jim is concerned by the anger that keeps bubbling up.

"Backpacking through Latin America! This boy has gone completely mad! Someone with his brilliant mind just leaving his studies like that and going off into who knows what kind of dangers. Of course, he thinks it's perfectly safe since he'll be building houses for the poor. Why can't he do that here? He could very well just go and work in a soup kitchen for a day. But nooo, he has to go thousands of miles away! And he says it's a final decision! He already bought his one-way ticket to Lima!"

At this point Oswald is downright shouting, releasing the storm of indignation he couldn't let go of in front of his guests. This Oswald has really matured, because his younger version would have definitely not cared about an audience.

Jim gets closer, unbothered by the outburst, familiar with Oswald's reactions. Sometimes, he gets so much into his own thoughts that he just keeps spiralling out of control. Jim knows just what Oswald needs: grounding.

"Oswald. Oswald, look at me," Jim says, as he gently places a hand on his shoulder.

The soft words attract Oswald's attention, his eyes focusing on Jim. The Commissioner awards him with a smile and a squeeze of his shoulder. "That's alright, you're alright. Just breathe in."

Oswald follows his slow breathing, and Jim can feel tension seeping out of him.

"I know this is all very new, but there's no need to get yourself worked up, yeah? We all know Martin is so intelligent, always had the best grades. And, of course, it would make sense to study further, and build his career, take over the family business. But we also know he has a big heart. He knows there are a lot of people suffering out there, and he just wants to help."

Oswald looks up, eyes wide, hanging onto each of Jim's words.

"You can't fault the boy for trying to be good. To make the world a better place," Jim says with a smile and Oswald's face lights up, thoughts directed towards a perspective he hasn't considered before.

A minute or so passes by, but Jim doesn't move, his hand still firmly planted on Oswald's shoulder. "Remember what you told me? To talk to the teenagers as if they were adults? That's exactly what you need to do too. Sit down with Martin and discuss things. Let him explain his motivations and plans. I'm sure it will help you understand."

Oswald nods, his coolness slowly coming back to his expression. He even manages a self-deprecating smile. "You probably think I'm crazy, lashing out like that."

"No. Not at all. You're a protective father, and of course, you want what's best for Martin. You didn't get to go to college, so obviously you want him to do it, and have a better life, have more opportunities. But the kid's fine, he's just as tough and smart as you are."

Oswald looks down for a moment, blushes sweetly. He puts his hand over Jim's, the one that's on his shoulder, and holds it tight. "Oh Jim. What would I do without you?"

They look at each other, both startled by Oswald's question, but neither backs away. Quite the opposite, Jim is leaning in, and he maybe doesn't dare, it's been twenty long years, his nose touches Oswald's cheek and they're both breathing hard and with closed eyes.

Their lips finally touch and Oswald has to hold onto him, and Jim is intoxicated with this small touch already when Oswald's tongue teases him and Jim welcomes it, while his hands explore Oswald's sides, his softness so maddening. Then the gangster's hand is suddenly in

Jim's hair and he seems fascinated, even the kiss is broken as he brushes the soft greying blond strands of hair.

Jim loves the treatment, but he wants to give back just as good, so he kisses Oswald's neck, bites it playfully and then licks his marks, his heart filled with the sweet laughter and moans coming from Oswald.

It is like this that they are caught, the knock and subsequent opening door not heard by the two men.

"Oh my god, dad! You're lecturing me about dating while you're going out with Oswald? Eww!" Barbara exclaims, and that's when Jim remembers that she was supposed to go and find Martin.

Which she did, Martin standing next to her and laughing so hard he has to hold onto the doorway. Oswald and Jim disentangle from each other, and Martin collects himself for long enough to type 'FINALLY' on his pad.

"You can d-discuss here," Oswald says, not looking at either Barbara or Jim. "We can go somewhere else." He then drags Martin out of the office who looks way too smug for Jim's liking.

But then he's yet again faced with an indignant teenager. His own indignant teenager.

"Barbara, it's not-"

"I don't care that you like him, dad. I mean, everyone knows."

Jim feels his legs wobble, and he needs to sit down. Barbara follows easily, sits on Oswald's desk, and Jim almost tells her not to, to just take the other chair, because Oswald wouldn't like it, but he's too embarrassed.



"I didn't... plan this, it just happened," Jim starts, flustered as if his mom had caught him.

"Yeah, yeah. But seriously, dad, everyone knows you have it bad for the mob king of Gotham."

"He's not-"

"Not publicly, but he's no saint. Your boyfriend's a gangster," Barbara states with a cheeky grin.

Jim is ready for the ground to open up and swallow him. It just won't hold being lectured by his own kid. "Now wait just a second. First of all, he's not my boyfriend."

"Not yet."

Jim glares at her. "Second, he's not into shady business. Not as much," Jim concedes.

"Dad, it's okay. You like him, he likes you. It's that simple, see?"

Jim huffs, knowing that he can't really preach when he's necking Oswald.

"I think we should lay down some rules about your say in my relationship with Kevin. One, don't lie to us about his Nana. Or anything else."

Jim admits that's a very good one. "Promise."

Barbara nods. "Two, try to be nicer, dad. Kevin is a good one. He's a really good student and he helped me with my Science project."

"Okay, I'll be nicer. But he can't hang out at ours every day when school starts.

"Alright."

Jim nods and gets up, hugs Barbara to himself. "Let's go back to the party, alright?"

Barbara joins some of the youngsters on the dance floor. Jim is surveying the area, but there's no sign of either Oswald or Martin. He wonders if they are fine, but knows that they need to talk about several things. Jim sits down by the bar and the barmaid pours him the whiskey Oswald gave him at the beginning of the party.

He can't help but let his thoughts drift towards Oswald and their kiss. He seemed to have enjoyed it, but will he want to do anything with Jim? Or maybe it was just an old indulgence, something they both have been wondering about. After all, they had been good friends for years now, without any major fallout, so why change anything now? Why risk to ruin it when things are great?

Jim's thoughts are spinning, and he takes another sip, hopes it will take off the edge. He almost jumps out of his skin when someone touches his biceps.

"It's just me," Oswald whispers, taking a seat next to Jim.

"Sorry, I was just deep in thought."

"About?"

"You," Jim says quietly, satisfied with Oswald's blush. "How did it go with Martin?"

"I heeded your advice – or actually my original advice to you. I let him talk. Well, when he could after all the laughing."

Jim and Oswald smile at each other.

"He said it should have been the other way around, me catching him."

"You'd think that's the more likely scenario." Jim laughs. "Next time we need to lock the door."

"So, you want there to be a next time?" Oswald asks, trying to be nonchalant, but burning with hope, and Jim is only a man, and a very smitten one at that, so he takes his hand.

"Yeah. Very much. If you'd like to, of course."

Oswald nods eagerly and they share a sweet kiss, though they can't help but linger, and Jim decides to kiss him again, even if other guests could be watching. They stay close after that, Oswald's arm around Jim's waist, and they watch Martin and Barbara have fun with their friends on the dance floor.

"I almost feel inclined to join," Oswald says with a sigh.

"I'm not a good dancer, but we could try."

"I'm pretty bad too..."

"We could get back at the kids," Jim says with a mischievous glint in his eyes, and Oswald catches on quickly.

"And embarrass them with our dancing? Deal!"

Jim takes Oswald's hand and leads them to an empty spot, farther away from the crowd and attention. It's like being teenagers again, covered by semi-darkness, neither of them able to stop smiling. Jim puts his hands on Oswald's waist, chest inundated with joy at the sight of Oswald's blush when he puts his arms around Jim's neck.

This closeness allows Jim to become intoxicated with Oswald's cologne once again – a cologne that has been tantalising him for way too many years. He remembers how he once described it as part dandy, part snake – meaning it as a slight offence, but not really, coming off teasing instead. Because what he really wanted to say was that Oswald smelled exquisite and dangerous and he was afraid that he would give in. Which he would have done, had their city not been on the brink of destruction.

The aftermath was dedicated to healing and rebuilding, and taking care of their little ones. Although their relationship reached new levels, Jim never thought they would ever get close. He didn't want to give himself false hope that Oswald still had feelings for him, but here they were, dancing in each other's arms and kissing whenever they wanted.

"I thought you didn't like me anymore when you refused my dinner invitation," Jim confesses with a pout.

Oswald snorts, as if the thought is utterly ridiculous. "How could I? I thought it was a mistake! You looked so panicked with those big eyes of yours!"

"I might have questioned my invitation for a second there, but I definitely didn't panic!"

"Sure, Commissioner Gordon, whatever you say," Oswald says with a grin, and Jim now knows how to distract Oswald with his lips.

They lose their sense of time, happy in their little bubble, until Oswald looks up from Jim's shoulder where he's been lying so comfortably. "Where's everybody?"

"What?" Jim asks, a little dazed, too enraptured with the way Oswald's hair is tickling his cheek.

"Everyone's gone."

Jim looks around then, and indeed, they are the only ones in the club, everything else just as it was, though. He notices something on the counter. "I think that's a note there at the bar."

They hurry to read, still holding hands. Oswald takes a pair of glasses from his pocket, and Jim can't take his eyes off of him, feels suddenly hot.

"What does it say?" He manages to ask.

"We thought you should get a room," Oswald reads, not without a roll of his eyes. "So we decided to take the party to Oswald's other club. Toodles".

Jim laughs, because of course their kids would do this, like the little shits they are. He has no idea how they managed to get everyone out without either of them noticing it, but he reckons they were too busy making out. Oswald is shaking his head, but he seems amused.

"So, what should we do?"

Jim pretends as if it's a difficult decision, puts his arm around Oswald with a pensive expression. "Hm, it's a tough call, but I'd say we should listen to their advice and get a room. If you want to."

Oswald stares at him, then smiles. "Lucky for you, I have plenty of those upstairs."

Jim takes Oswald's hand. "Lead the way then."

Following advice turned out to be a great thing, after all.

## End Notes

Yes, Jim says dad jokes. Sorry, I don't make the rules.

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