

He was out of breath by the time he reached the elevator, pager still clasped tightly in his hand and heart beating wildly within his chest. The numbers ticked down like a crawl from the upper level as the elevator made its descent down to him, and when it had arrived, he rushed inside. Moments after the last person has disembarked he'd hit the floor number and the non-stop button, breathing out as the doors closed in front of him.

The faint hum of the elevator was drowned out by the hard breathing the boar was doing, not daring to look down at his pager. His arms felt numb, his legs felt like they would give out from underneath him, vision blurring slightly as he tried to focus. Everything was hitting him hard and fast and the elevator had only gone up one story of three. By the second story he'd gotten his breathing down, by the third and right as the doors opened he felt he was ready for whatever was going to be happening on the other side of the doors.

He was wrong. As he stepped out into the chaos of people running about, he could hear the sound of machines ringing out for attention, the wailing cries of what parents were watching in horror as not nearly enough doctors were hurriedly trying to resuscitate what children hadn't already passed on. It took getting shoved for him to start with the first room he could reach and start charging the defibrillator. Deep down he knew it was fruitless though, this shouldn't have been the response from the medicine and if it was happening across the whole floor something had to have happened.

Attempt after attempt, child after child, death after death, until the floor was silent. All the nurses and doctors that were present had corralled the families elsewhere, Oswin meanwhile sat against a wall on that very floor shaking. It was his fault. Every one of these children were dead because of him, because of something he'd made. In direct violation of the oath he took upon obtaining his degree, again when he finished his residency, and the oath he made to himself when he decided he wanted to become a doctor.

Tears fell freely from his face, too much in shock to bother wiping them away, far too hurt to figure cleaning his face was worth the effort. There was a spot on the floor he'd decided to focus on, as looking up even a little bit to the room in front of him made him sick to his stomach. One of many rooms with multiple dead children in it, one of many he'd have to pass to even leave the floor he was on, so staying in that one spot was what he decided to do.

Movement on the floor barely registered to him, a single set of footsteps carefully wandering the floor. He had half a mind to tell them to leave out of respect for the dead, but found the words catching in his breath before he'd even had the chance to figure out if the new arrival was still present.

"Ozzie...?" Florencia's voice called out to him quietly, the quiver in her voice clear. Oswin didn't move though, barely even looking in the direction he assumed that she'd appear from and waited. She called again, quieter even if she was further away but he could hear her gasps and quiet horrified mumbles as she no doubt saw the many beds and the state they were in.

Oswin was looking her way as she rounded the corner. His fur was a mess, glasses askew, cheeks wet with tears even now still trickling from his eyes and he broke again upon seeing his sister. "It's... It's all my fault..." Through his sobs he heard his sister come closer, and with a grunt of pain she joined him on the ground. "Flora... I failed so... Reggie he's..."

“Hey...” She gently removed his glasses and then cradled his head. Like a child he clung to his sister for comfort and she lightly stroked the back of his head in turn. “Reggie’s...” She thought her words through carefully again before continuing. “We’ll think of something.”

“I let them all down... I was in charge of them and...” He pulled back to look at his sister, eyes wide in terror, whole body trembling as he began to hyperventilate. “I killed them... I couldn’t... so they...” His body started to fight against him, he felt faint and soon after did. Only for a second but it was enough to fall to the floor with Florencia unable to keep him upright.

“I’m calling Benson.” She breathed out, patting down her gown for her phone. “He’ll know what to do.”

“What... do I do?” Oswin curled up, cowering and covering his head. “I can’t go down there... I can’t face those families.”

“No one’s saying you have to, not now anyway.” They made eye contact for a second before Florencia looked away sadly. “But this isn’t going to be easy to sweep under the rug, Ozzie.” She pulled out her phone while her brother rolled gently on the spot.

Back on the mountain, Benson was reading a book by the phone with a cup of tea. Something felt off about the day. He didn’t know what exactly, but he felt it best to trust his intuition and be on call just in case. The laundry could wait, the other chores for the most part could wait as well, especially with Oswin not planning on being home for a few days yet at least.

But then the phone rang, drawing his attention. Carefully reaching out to it, setting his book down, he answered. “Hammond residence. May I ask who’s calling?”

“Benson, we have a problem.” Florencia had moved a little ways away and decided to pace, idly playing with her hair. “Are you able to come here?”

“Is everything alright?” The otter recognized the voice and sat up straighter with a frown. “Are you and the baby well?”

“We’re both fine.” The reply came quick, almost too curt but Florencia wasn’t in the headspace to care. “It’s about Ozzie. Something bad happened at the clinical trial.”

“I’m on my way, though how bad specifically is the situation my dear?” He was already making a move to stand up though his fur was starting to bristle in worry.

“He... Um...” Rarely was she one to hesitate, and she could hear Benson’s worry start to grow on the other side of the phone. “It went bad.” She flinched when the connection was cut suddenly and pocketed her phone. “Ozzie? Can you help me back downstairs?”

She wandered over and offered out her hand, watching as her brother picked himself up. As he stood, she had a look at his features and saw his eyes were sunken, gaze unfocused, and had a slight wobble. In truth she didn’t need his help to get back downstairs but he needed to be removed from the floor. “Flora... Can we go see Reggie?”

The sudden question made her eyes widen. “Reggie? Are you sure?” The question was answered with a slow nod, and her hand was taken. While she was the one that had said she needed help, she led the way towards the elevator. Once inside, they rode it down in silence. While it didn’t take long to get to the floor they were looking for, time stretched out in the low hum of the elevator breaking up the quiet.

The walk to Reginald’s room was just as quiet, though Oswin had moved his hands inside his pockets, keeping his eyes down. People were rushing about, something that until that point he’d

paid no mind to; but now after what happened upstairs, every passerby caused some level of alarm. Was the next person going to confront him about his mistake? When was the unruly mob going to accost him and hang him out to dry?

When they stepped into Reginald's room, it took Oswin a few moments to notice that they'd arrived. His brother still in the bed just looking out the window as Florencia wandered closer. They hugged before both of them turned to their younger brother still standing awkwardly by the door and gestured him over. "Hey Reggie."

"Flora tells me..." He looked to their sister, then back to his younger brother with a concerned look. "That things have happened." Oswin immediately hung his head and looked away. "Did you need to talk about it? We're here for you, Oswin."

"There's... There's nothing..." His voice sounded hollow, barely a whisper. His shoulders began to shake and in turn did his head as the tears started to fall. "Because of me..."

Reginald looked to Florencia for some guidance, but the tired expression his sister wore as she stared off into space only made the worry grow. "Is... my nephew alright?"

The question made Florencia jolt slightly and she quickly looked to her bedridden brother. "He's fine, yes."

"Then... what could be so bad that's gotten you both like this?" He looked between them with a nervous smile but couldn't get them to look his way. "Come on, you can tell me. It's fine." He sighed, resting back in his bed and settling that smile into one of resigned comfort. "You're about to tell me that the medicine didn't work and I'm about to die, right?" He chuckled slowly, shaking his head. "I don't believe for a second you are going to give up now, are you Ozzie?"

Oswin dropped into the chair beside his brother's bed, face buried in his hands. Through the sobs he tried to get his breathing under control to speak, and only when the tears stopped falling he was able to offer anything at all. "They're all gone. All of them."

"Reggie... Oswin's experiment, it..." While she wasn't crying, it was clear that Florencia was distressed. If her voice wasn't enough already, it was how her eyes were staring straight ahead unfocused but intense. Her fur was bristled and beyond the exhaustion a new mother was expected to have, something a lot darker lingered on her.

"It... what?" He sat up, concerned. At first he thought it was just going to be a small bump of bad news. "Did something else happen?"

"I killed them." Reggie's neck couldn't turn fast enough to look at his brother. Now wearing the same expression as his sister though tainted with fear. "One hundred children, now all dead. I did that to them. I couldn't save any of them."

"This isn't a funny joke guys." Florencia was the more likely of the two to joke around and drag Oswin into it, but the longer they didn't break out laughing or apologize it started to sink in. "You're serious...?"

"I don't know what's going to happen to Oswin, Reggie. This is bad." She rubbed her eyes, and went for her phone. "Not only for his career, but this has affected so many families and will continue to ripple out for who knows how long?"

"And we can't just fix it? There's really no way to do that?"

"I killed one hundred children, brother!" Oswin stood suddenly, teeth bared and fists clenched. "How can you possibly make that better!?" Reginald shrank slightly as his brother yelled, brow raised in surprise and shock. "Money? Incarceration? Should I die too, so it's fair?"

His bravado broke and he started to crumble back into his chair. "I'm more dangerous to children than our father ever was."

"That's *not* true." Florencia and Reginald spoke together, looking at one another unsure of who should be the one to talk next. Though Oswin continued without them getting another word in.

"I woke up today nervous about trying to do so much good and instead did so much damage." His head rolled to the side, defeated. "I shouldn't have even tried."

Florencia went to berate her younger brother for belittling himself but couldn't find the words. Reginald struggled to find what to say in his own way, half starting sentences in his head but never voicing even the first word. As Oswin got up and started to walk away, they asked where he was going, greeted with a half-hearted shrug. Reginald called to him as he reached the door, making Oswin pause. "Promise me you're not going to do anything dumb. You have to still introduce me to your son, you know."

But that promise never came. Instead Oswin just left the room, closing the door quietly behind him. He wandered the halls and found himself in a small, quiet on-call room. Without even thinking about it, he lay down and rolled onto his side. It was nothing like the lavish bed at home, but he felt this was all he deserved. Not that he was able to fall asleep, the tiredness he was feeling was different to that of just needing sleep.

Hours passed and he listened and waited for anything to happen. Occasionally the door would open, and then close again. Later the person that had entered would leave and he'd be alone again. Beyond that, there was no wave of grieving families looking for blood, no one looking for any sort of compensation or to find out what happened, nothing. Even he didn't know where his calculations would have gone wrong, just that they had.

One particular time the door opened, it didn't close. Instead, a familiar voice called out to him and he rolled over to show he wasn't sleeping. Though upon seeing the concerned face of the family butler, he broke down and cried. "Hey now, m'boy. It's alright." Benson placed a hand carefully on Oswin's cheek, rubbing his head and continuing to speak to him in calming tones.

"Theodore, I...!" He was hushed by the otter and continued to whimper as Benson pulled away.

"I've been told what happened." His voice was quiet, a little uncertain, but still held a measured pace. "Arrangements have been made, though you're coming home with me now."

"Okay..." Oswin wiped his face on the back of his sleeve, pushing himself up to a sitting position and then on shaky legs stood.

"We'll just need to check in with your siblings before we do." Despite being smaller, he gestured for the larger boar to come in close and offered him a hug, patting him lightly on the back of the head while he was hugged back around the middle. "You'd do well to have a bath drawn for you so you can relax, though you may find yourself dozing in the car on the way home."

With plans of some self care in mind, the two of them wandered towards Florencia's room. When they arrived, they did not find Florencia, but instead her husband passed out in a chair next to the bed. Beside him was a crib with a just as asleep baby inside. Benson gestured for

Oswin to stay by the door and wandered quietly inside, looking calmly down to the baby, then to the unconscious father.

“William, are you awake?” Benson tapped him lightly on the shoulder, pulling back as the rabbit began to stir.

“Huh? Who?” He yawned, stretching and rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Something that immediately made him yelp as he used his bandaged hand out of habit.

“Where is your wife? Oswin and I will be leaving shortly.” Benson quirked a brow as William seemed to be a bit slow on realizing who he was talking to. “You also should keep a closer eye on that child if he’s been left in your care.”

“Oh, the little one? He’s fine. As for Flora, she should be with her brother.” He rested back, reclining in the chair not really made for it. “When do you think you’ll be back?”

Benson looked to Oswin for the answer, though that answer only came back as a mumble from the large boar. “Don’t know yet.”

“...Fair enough.” Benson narrowed his gaze towards the rabbit as he spoke, his tone seeming laced with something other than just an affirmation. “If you run into Flora for me, tell her to hurry back when she can. I miss her.”

“I shall endeavor to remember.” Benson turned on heel and grabbed Oswin by the sleeve, guiding him out of the room and closing the door.

“Thank you for doing the talking.” Oswin continued to mumble, eyes pointed at the floor.

“While I understand the deep-seated beliefs at play, for better or worse, he’s not going to hurt you.” Benson kept the pace for the two of them as they headed for Reginald’s room. “Or anything else for that matter. There will be a day you’ll need to speak with him.”

Oswin grunted and left it at that, saying nothing until they reached their destination some minutes later. Though the mood in the room seemed to be different. Even with the sun filtering in through the open window, Florencia was standing next to the window looking out of it, much like Reginald seemed to be from his bed. Neither were saying anything, and neither moved as he or Benson entered the room.

“Brother? Sister?” Oswin edged forward though neither moved. “Benson’s here to take me home...”

Florencia turned slowly, mouth pulled back tight and eyes watery. “I know.”

It was Reginald’s turn to turn to his brother, though despite only hours having passed he looked ragged. A smile played on his face though, and he gestured to Oswin to come closer. “Heading home, brother?” He breathed in deep as Oswin came to stand beside him, watching as his fingers played over the bed sheet. “So when am I going to meet my little alien of a nephew, huh?”

“He’s... um... He’s with William at the moment.” Oswin shook his head, having already decided something that made him feel even worse.

“*He* still needs a name.” Reginald chuckled, looking over to Florencia. “Hey, can I name him if Ozzie isn’t going to do it?” The question caught Florencia off-guard, and she struggled to answer in the time it took for Reginald to continue his thought. “At the very least... can I be his godfather? Y’know, so that way I’m more than just the uncle?” Another chuckle though his labored breathing cut it short.

Oswin flinched as his brother took his hand. "Reggie, I'm sorry I..."

"Don't be, Oswin." Reginald rubbed his finger across the back of Oswin's hand. "Maybe the kid will be luckier than I am." When the comment did cause his brother to chuckle, he tried again. "Maybe he'll be so lucky he'll win the lottery and somehow have more money than his dad." Again, silence. "Ozzie, you might not think it, but that kid is already the luckiest kid in the world having you as a dad."

"Me?" Oswin looked at his brother, eyes wide and confused.

"Yeah. Assuming you ever give him a name." One last ditch effort to get Oswin to laugh failed and Reginald sank back into his bed and closed his eyes.

Florencia walked over and took up Reginald's free hand and looked over to Oswin, worried. "He's right though, you need to give him a name. Otherwise I will let your brother name him something weird."

"Something *really* weird, too..." Reginald's breathing was measured if slow, a calm smile on his face. "Aphelion maybe, or Quark..." With a sigh he seemed to think on things, gently squeezing Oswin's hand. "Maybe Apollo..." His breathing continued to slow, eyes opening fully to look upon his brother and giving him a gentle smile directly. "Maybe something closer to home would be better, huh?"

"Maybe, yeah..." It was all Oswin would get out, and watched as his brother lay back to chuckle. "Flora, what... do you think?"

"I think you should stop worrying about picking the wrong name and just decide." She razzed him with the same gentle smile, holding his gaze. "Or I really will let him pick for you."

"What about Robert? Is Robert fine?" Florencia's expression to the suggestion immediately ruled that as a no, though he couldn't figure out why. Still, he kept thinking.

Benson wandered closer to stand next to Oswin, looking between the three of them. "I hate to rush this along, but if what you said is true then an extraction sooner rather than later is likely needed." He checked his watch, nodding slightly. "And William wishes to know when you'll be back, as he misses you."

"Ah, Billy being his own silly self as usual I see." Florencia chuckled to herself.

Oswin's attention went to the model that Reginald had been building and rebuilding since he was put in hospital, looking it over properly for the first time. "What is this a model of, anyway? A spaceship?" The plaque on its base read 'First Contact: Roswell', and nothing else.

"The first UFO to land here, Ozzie..." Reginald whispered, his grip slackening in Oswin's hand. "You know... Aliens..."

"Oh..." Oswin gave his brother's hand a gentle squeeze and pulled away from the model. "I'd be willing to believe we landed on the moon before the odds of aliens arriving, though." He chuckled, half expecting his brother to do the same but trailing off when he was quiet.

"Reggie...?" Florencia's tone made Oswin look at her suddenly, seeing her staring down at Reginald laying perfectly still. The seconds ticked by before Reginald breathed out once more and was perfectly still again. "Reginald?" Oswin didn't register the slack grip against his own, watching as Florencia started to shake her head and then cry.

"No... It..." Oswin looked to Benson who had his head solemnly hung. Then to Reginald who looked peaceful but still despite the protests being raised by their sister. "No..." In vain he

gave Reginald's hand a squeeze hoping to feel it squeeze back but nothing, and he carefully pulled his hand free and watched as his brother's arm fell limply to his side.

"Oswin, we can't afford to stay any longer if you wish to have any chance against the coming storm. Though if you wish to stay, I shall do my best to assist." Benson placed a hand on Oswin's shoulder and looked to Florencia as she straightened.

"Take him home, Benson. I'll... I'll settle things here." She had her eyes closed and sat down quietly in a chair on that side of the bed. "I don't... I don't want to risk losing both brothers today."

"I understand." Benson made to turn Oswin though paused and asked quickly. "And the child?"

"I don't know, Benson. That's..." Florencia looked to Oswin, shell shocked and staring at Reginald. "That's not something he needs to worry about right now."

"Roswell..." Oswin mumbled, shaking his head slowly as he turned to the model. "This... And Aliens... And..."

Benson, having seen Oswin's state, nodded slowly. "Forgive me for not being in a position to help you both."

"He needs you more than I do. I have William, so..." Florencia looked at Oswin, still staring at Reginald. "Go home, Ozzie. It'll be alright."

Benson removed Oswin from the room and they made for the car. An hour later was when Oswin became cognizant of what had happened, where he was, and where they were headed. All at once he realized that his son was at the hospital with his sister, his brother was dead, and his crowning achievement had instead become his biggest failure. He wanted to cry, but the tears just wouldn't start up again. Instead he just sat quietly in the back seat.

Things were no different when they got home, Oswin withdrawing into himself and not speaking much. The days ticked by without much happening until one day a knock on the door alerted them to some unexpected guests. Knowing full well the fallout from the trial, Benson was ready if not expecting legal representation looking to come searching for Oswin. But standing there when he answered the door was a familiar rabbit.

"William, to what do we owe the pleasure?" Benson stood firmly in the doorway, brow raised.

"Flora sent me on up to get Oswin sorted for court." William puffed out his chest, confident if not downright smug. "Already started greasing the wheels, so it shouldn't be too bad."

"Compared to what?" He blocked William from entering as he made to do so, looking none too impressed with the rabbit's claim.

"Look, we both know that his mistake was made when what he was doing already wasn't very legal. You can't go killing that many kids and hope to get off without a lifetime conviction before even taking that into account." The statement made Benson step aside and William entered, whistling as he looked around the foyer for the first time. "Fancy place. Flora must have had a fun time as a child living here."

"Quite." Benson gestured to the dining room and got William seated while he prepared tea. "Might I ask what your intention is as far as 'preparing' Oswin?"

“Getting his story straight, seeing how we can spin this.” He shifted the briefcase he brought with him onto the table and clicked it open, rifling through some papers.

For the next week Oswin was quiet, with Benson doing most of the talking between the three of them whenever William came knocking. Sure enough the calls started coming in and the police did come knocking in an attempt to detain him; but it wasn't anything that enough money couldn't make go away. He'd still need to face trial, but at least he could do so from home. At the end of that week was the funeral, the whole day being a blur and Oswin barely saying a word to anyone that offered their condolences.

Weeks passed and the trial came, Oswin was forced into court to listen to expert professional and witness testimony explaining his gross negligence. Some of the families testified as well, claiming that he promised things he couldn't deliver. William meanwhile showed no sign of worry, a knowing look on his face as he cross examined witnesses and appealed to the jury. If Oswin wasn't already aware of the fact that most people in the room had been bribed to ensure he didn't suffer a jail sentence, the outcome would have come as a shock. Though in order for it to look somewhat convincing, something had to give. A deal was struck to keep it just to repeal Oswin's medical license; he'd be a doctor in name only from that point on.

Weeks turned into months, then into years with him rarely if ever leaving the mountain. The furthest he found himself wandering one day was to the end of the driveway to look out at the sprawling landscape before him, if only to turn around and head back inside and spend weeks in the dark parts of the house. He spoke less, walked with a slouch and Benson in particular found it saddening that he was less able to provoke a smile from the boar.

“Oswin, we have company today. Go change.” Benson cleared the breakfast plates away from the table, pausing when the boar made no effort to get up from the table. “They'll be here within the hour, if not sooner.”

“Tell them to go away. I don't want to entertain guests.” Oswin sighed, looking over his glasses to his butler. “It's always just... more bad news.”

“I promise this visit is a tad different than normal, m'boy. I'm not about to have you disgrace yourself by answering the door in your underwear either.” The otter's eyes narrowed, followed quickly with a raised brow. “Run along, Oswin.”

“...Fine.” With a groan, he got up and wandered through the house to his room. Down into the basement, through the secret passage that led into the more private parts of the house, to his bedroom. A simple room, a far lot less extravagant than what his siblings had chosen, but he preferred the proximity to his lab, as undeveloped as it was from years without use.

He emerged from the side corridor as Benson was answering the door, half expecting it to be some other person looking for their pound of flesh. What he didn't expect was that when the door opened he had a second to react as a small boar raced across the foyer towards him, Florencia standing still beyond the threshold of the home. “Big man!”

Oswin looked between the child and Florencia as she entered, setting down a large suitcase. “Um... Flora?”

Shooting her brother an innocent smile, Florencia gestured wide. “Sure feels good to visit home, Ozzie. Been keeping out of trouble?” The question earned her a deadpan stare, but



she continued on as if having not noticed by hugging Benson. “And good to see you too, Benson! You look well!”

“Yes, well... Sorry for not paying a visit sooner, Florencia.” Benson returned the hug lightly and stepped back, looking over to the child staring awestruck up at Oswin. “Though I imagine that... This has been a rather long time coming.”

Florencia’s tone was unimpressed, punctuated by how she had her hands on her hips. “Fleeting instances of those two interacting isn’t going to cut it. For either of them. As it just so happens, William is out for a while and I saw no better time than to come stay. Assuming that’s alright?”

“Of course it’s alright.” Benson offered with a polite nod and a smile.

“Was I going to be asked about this?” Oswin huffed, taking a step back from the child and finding that for every step back, the little one took two steps forward to keep pace.

“No? Obviously, Ozzie. If we had you would have said no. Besides, you’ve missed enough of his birthdays and Christmases already.” Florencia closed the door behind her, looking to Benson. “May we have tea?”

“I shall start a fresh pot immediately.” He gestured towards the dining room and Florencia made her way on without need of further guidance. “Play nice with Master Roswell, Oswin.”

“Roswell...?” Oswin offered as the other two wandered away, confused.

“Yes?” The small boar offered to him.

“Yes, what?” Oswin replied back.

“Roswell!” The little one hopped lightly on the spot, arms raised. “Me!” Oswin lowered himself, kneeling to properly look the child over. Immediately his narrowed frown went to shock and realization. “You’re a big man!”

“Oswin.” He offered out his hand for a handshake, Roswell looking at the hand confused in turn. “You shake it.”

“I don’t wanna.” The comment threw Oswin for a loop, watching as Roswell hopped up and down on the spot again. “Mom says that you’re like a big version of me!” Lines of worry started appearing on Oswin’s face as it sunk in just who he was talking to. “Uncle Oz? Are you like a wizard?”

“Uncle...? Wizard?” He struggled to keep eyes on Roswell as the young boar ran a full circle around him.

“Yeah! Like the movie!” Roswell looked hopeful and excited, leaning in close to his uncle, though it was clear the older boar had no idea how to respond. “Do magic!”

“I... don’t know magic. I’m not a wizard.” Oswin showed that his hands were empty, unsure exactly how to interact with a child.

“Oh...” In front of him, Roswell deflated and sat down on the floor, lightly kicking his feet.

The silence stretched out with Oswin growing more and more uncomfortable as time ticked by. He looked to the dining room where Florencia and Benson were idly chatting over tea, then back to the saddened boar in front of him. “Hey, listen...” Upon speaking, the small boar looked up at him. “Maybe... I know a little bit of magic, *maybe*.” Roswell tilted his head slightly, curious but still remained sitting on the floor. “Come on, Roswell.” Oswin stood and offered his hand out to the small child, trembling slightly.

Carefully, Roswell stood up and took his uncle's hand. "Can we have chocolate?"

"Sure." Oswin found himself cracking the smallest of smiles. "I think I've got some chocolate we can share."