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Category: Short Story

The Golden Coins

Dmitri Ivanov was sprawled out on the ground, his mouth slightly open, while blood ran down his skin. The ancient musky stench of his cell was like a bear trap to the nose. His eyes looked down at butchered hands and he felt the blood dripping from his face. His square jawline showed no fear, no emotion. He was beaten to a pulp, and yet he showed no sign of tears. He heard a scream, and another, and another. His heart jumped with every second, having only his hands to block the ear-piercing screams away. He had been thrown into a hole, that could not be reached by the world. He was imprisoned in the deep depths of Falaise Barbel. The iconic name came from the skin-splitting barbed wire surrounding the prison.

Dmitri picked himself up off the ground, and buttoned his white button-down shirt. It was now stained with crimson red blood that matched the colors on his hands. His heart hurt and he wanted to cry out, but he didn't. He had convinced himself that he would see his brother soon. It had been over fifteen years since he had seen him, but he felt that he was near. He closed his eyes with agony, picturing him in his mind. Dmitri opened up his eyes to the black cell as he heard footsteps approaching his cell and he stood up at attention. His knees weak, he opened his mouth, "Sir!"

"On the ground soldier!"

Dmitri lay on the ground, his face plunged into the dirt. The tension in the room was immense. The man walked around him in circles to make sure he was not moving.

"At attention!"

Dmitri pushed his hands on the ground to lift himself up. The beauty and style of his attention stance captured the essence that he was ready for anything that the general asked. The general slapped him and screamed,

"Why are you here, sir!" Dmitri stared at him with no expression and said,

"I did not do anything wrong, sir."

"Yes you certainly did! I would call killing a Russian officer a crime!"

"Sir, I did not kill that officer, sir! I was trying to save my brother, sir! He is in the military s-" The officer cut him off, and he said in a whisper,

"Do you have any proof that your brother is still alive, sir? Do you have proof that you even had a brother, sir?"

"No, sir!"

"Then that is it. You are sentenced to death in one day."

Dmitri did not respond, he just stood there, motionless. There was nothing more to say, and the officer's decision had been made. The officer started to walk out the door,

"I have but one question sir!" Dmitri yelled, "Do you know what really happened sir?"

The officer only answered with one phrase, "Dmitri, your brother is dead."

Dmitri stood up straight as he saluted the general and tears ran down his face. He was overcome by the horrors in his head. *Why? How? When? Who had killed him?* Dmitri was more than confused. His brother had been drafted, but he was a good soldier! He remembered the scar on his brother's chin, black from a sword that had rusted and he had barely survived the wound. He had been through the worst. How did he die! How could he die? The pain was immense in Dmitri's bloody head, but he was able to hold himself together for a few more seconds. The general knocked on the steel door twelve times and was let out of the cell. As soon as the general left, Dmitri collapsed, not able to hold his own weight. He was petrified, and he began to scream like the ones he had heard before. He looked at his hands, now dried with blood. He sobbed for hours and hours on end.

Dmitri's screams stopped as another officer came into his cell. He stood there for a minute nose to nose with Dmitri. Again, there was no emotion in Dmitri's eyes, just the lingering tears from the ones he had cried. Dmitri stood taller so as to seem as strong as he was. Dmitri towered above the officer at only five foot eleven, and though beaten, Dmitri could escape with his life in an instant. *There was no point now,* Dmitri thought. Dmitri stood there looking

down at the officer. Dmitri stared into his bloodshot eyes, these eyes that had seen things nobody had ever seen before. Unlike Dmitri who just heard the screams from the cells, this officer had seen the horrific acts that caused the screams. The officer spoke,

“My name is Pavel Turgenev. Take this draught, officer’s orders.”

Dmitri said nothing as Pavel pulled a small flask out of his pocket. Dmitri held out his hand and grasped the small flask and took a swig of the liquid. He peeled his mouth off of the lip of the flask and showed his yellow-stained teeth. Pavel screwed the top onto the flask and left the cell, knocking twelve times as he left. Pavel smiled a sweet smile as he walked down the damp corridors of the prison. Dmitri felt very faint and sat down on the ground. The dirt cradled his body as he sat. Soon, a loud sound was heard from Dmitri’s cell, as his body collapsed into the dirt, and a puff of dust could be seen flying up around the cell.

Dmitri opened his eyes and felt refreshed, and a little bit sick feeling. As he clutched his stomach, he realized his old cell looked cleaner and brighter. He was lying on a white-sheeted bed with new clothes on. He lay clothed in pajamas of the finest silk and at the foot of the bed lay a crisp new tuxedo. There lay a table beside him, on which was placed a bowl of potato leche soup and a plate full of bread and butter. Dmitri sat up, bewildered by the new surroundings he faced. He heard a buzzing sound and saw a huge glass window lift up into the ceiling. Pavel was pictured in the glass window wearing a tuxedo much like Dmitri’s. He was buttoning on his cufflinks, his hands clasping the gold pieces together. He left the window and was soon entering his room.

“Hello Dmitri!” said Pavel, “You’re finally awake! Did you have a good sleep, the beds here are the finest in the country!”

Dmitri stared at Pavel. He was thankful, yet still shocked and had so many questions.

“A-um-bu--”

“Hush now Dmitri, I know you have many questions. Why don’t you get dressed and have your dinner and then come downstairs.”

Dmitri nodded his head, and Pavel left as elegantly as he came. Dmitri felt as if he wasn’t where he was supposed to be. His head spun as he tried to think about it. As he thought, a speaker came on overhead,

“Would you like help getting dressed sir?”

Dmitri just sat there in shock as he looked around. There were cameras in the room, so he nodded.

“Excellent sir!”

There was a huge puff of smoke and the image of the walls of his old cell vanished and pearly white doors and windows replaced them. A couch came out of the floor and a closet was opened, leading to what seemed like thousands of shoes and clothes of all sorts. After a few minutes the room was finished and twenty men came out of the closet. They were all dressed in tuxedos and leather shoes. They wore hats that were midnight black with foam tips. Dmitri screamed,

“PAVEL!”

The men were immediately stunned and stood at attention like Dmitri had stood before. A tear ran down one of the men’s faces, and quickly and quietly he wiped it away. Dmitri stood there wanting to know what was the matter, but as soon as he was going to speak, Pavel entered the room.

Pavel stood there looking calm and the slightest bit upset.

“Dmitri! What in God’s name do you want? You were supposed to get dressed. Were these men bad to you?”

Dmitri stood there, in front of all the men shocked by the sight in front of him. Pavel stood up straighter and lifted his chin up, showing a scar black as night. The men behind him started crying and fell to the ground. The men suddenly lost half their height as Dmitri saw that they were really only small children.

“Boys! I am disappointed go to your mother!” Pavel screamed.

His sons ran into the closet and begged for mercy as they shoved their faces into the silk suits and disappeared.

Pavel smirked at their small bodies as they disappeared. Pavel turned back to Dmitri and opened his mouth. He yelled at Dmitri,

“What are you looking a--”

Pavel stopped mid-sentence and his eyes opened wider and wider as he realized who he was talking to. Dmitri’s blue eyes blinked and a small tattoo on his inner wrist showed as he fell onto the bed. As he collapsed the dust of the bed shot up like bullets piercing the skin. His head hit the glass wall behind him, busting his head open. Blood ran down the wall slowly and elegantly. The glass cracked and blood ran through the deep crevices. Pavel screamed in terror, coming to a realization far beyond comprehension. Pavel shoved his hand into his pocket and pulled out two glass flasks from one of which he had given Dmitri before. One of the flasks held a sleeping draught, and one held poison. Pavel had given Dmitri the poison. A reflection off the glass showed Pavel clutching his brother’s head as guards rushed in. Pavel raised his arm and shattered the flask on the floor making the poison flow out onto the ground.

“Dmitri, my brother!” he screamed. “Dmitri Ivanov? I received a Dmitri Smirnov! Dmitri Ivanov was my brother! This cannot be! This CANNOT be!”

The glass room was soon filled with silence as they dragged Pavel down the corridors. The closet door slightly opened and six sets of eyes were seen.

“Uncle?” one of them whispered.

Tears formed on all of their eyes and the tears seemed to fall in slow motion to the floor. Everything went silent as the boys closed the door with no sound. A few of the boys walked over to Dmitri and fixed him in a crossed-arm position on his bed. The red blood had already soaked through to the mattress beneath. The boys looked into his eyes. They were at peace knowing his brother was alive as they put two gold coins over his eyelids.