The Floor Is Cold

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/1145.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Rape/Non-Con
Category:	Slash (M/M)
Fandoms:	CountryHumans, Geography (Anthropomorphic)
Relationships:	NATO/Serbia (Countryhumans), Russia/Serbia (Countryhumans)
Characters:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Countryhumans), Serbia (Countryhumans), Russia (Countryhumans), Montenegro (Countryhumans)
Additional Tags:	Kinktober 2026, Originally Posted Elsewhere | Cross-Posted, Cross-Posted on AO3, Public Sex, Public Rape, Public Humiliation, Forced Nudity, Sexual Violence, Power Imbalance, Abuse of Power, Degradation, Forced Orgasm, Crying, emotional breakdown, Rape Aftermath, Hurt/Comfort, Post-Rape Comfort, Complicated Relationships, romantic undertones, bystander guilt, Family Issues, Past Character Death, Yugoslavia (Anthropomorphic) Is Dead, Historical References, Historical, 1999 NATO Bombing of Yugoslavia, Kosovo war, Angst, Dead Dove: Do Not Eat, POV Third Person Limited
Language:	English
Series:	Part 18 of Kinktober 2026
Stats:	Published: 2026-11-03 Words: 6,919 Chapters: 2/2

The Floor Is Cold

by Nesher

Summary

1999. The nameplate still reads JUGOSLAVIJA. The chair was made for his father, and Serbia has spent years pretending it fits. He has never been very good at surrendering. The room is full of countries who know that. Not one of them seems particularly interested in what happens when he refuses. Russia is there, too. He sees everything. He does nothing. And somehow, when the room is finally empty, he's still the only person Serbia wants to reach for.

Notes

Originally posted on AO3. These fics were written some time ago, so I didn't write them all today! I'm reposting them here because of the great AO3 shutdown of 2026. We'll get through this together <3

Kinktober 2026, Day 19.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

The chair was uncomfortable. That was what Serbia kept thinking about, which was stupid, because it was the same chair he'd been sitting in for days, the same polished wood every other country's ass was parked on, except his was wider. It had been built that way, broad in the seat and tall in the back, for someone who used to take up a lot of room, and the brass plate on the desk in front of it still read JUGOSLAVIJA in heavy block capitals that nobody had bothered to change.

Serbia hadn't asked them to. He sat a little forward on the edge of the seat so the empty space behind his shoulders didn't press against him, and today the grain felt like it was digging straight through his trousers into the bones of his hips.

His father had filled this chair. Tata had sat in it like it was a throne and dared anyone in the room to say otherwise, and nobody ever had, and now the old man was a few years dead and the name was a coat hanging off his son's thin frame.

He hadn't eaten since yesterday. Maybe the day before. His mouth tasted like the cigarette he'd smoked on the steps outside and the coffee somebody had handed him that he'd drunk too fast, scalding the roof of his mouth so it felt raw and papery every time he swallowed.

His eye tracked the room in quick, restless arcs, mapping who was where, who was looking at him, who was pretending not to, and he hated that he couldn't stop doing it, the way a dog that's been kicked keeps checking the boots in the room.

Albania, three rows to his left, hadn't stopped staring since Serbia walked in. That red face with the black eagle spread across it like a brand, his whole wiry body a clenched accusation, knee bouncing like he'd drunk six coffees and wanted to throw the cups. Serbia looked away from him and found Croatia instead, which was worse in a different way, because Croatia wasn't staring at all.

Croatia sat with his arms loosely crossed, composed, that red-white-blue face with the checkerboard shield tilted slightly to one side, like he was watching something mildly interesting on television that he'd already seen the ending of. It had been a few years, only a few, and the prick sat there like the whole thing had been a minor traffic dispute.

Serbia's jaw tightened. Somewhere behind Croatia, Germany held his back so straight it looked painful, glasses catching the overhead lights, gold chin lifted, looking at nobody. Russia was off to the right, too big for his seat, that battered ushanka on his white hair and his green eyes half shut like he was falling asleep, which he wasn't, Serbia knew he wasn't.

And Kosovo was across the hall. Serbia could feel the direction of him without looking, the way you feel where a bruise is without pressing it.

Montenegro was three rows back and to the right. He'd moved there on the second day. On the first day he had sat in the smaller chair beside Serbia's, the one that went with the nameplate, the one he'd sat in for years, and on the second morning he'd taken a seat further

back and said it was because of the draft from the window. There was no window. Serbia had checked.

Now the little chair at his elbow stood empty and Montenegro sat back there with his red hair combed flat and the gold arms spread across his red face, his gold hands folded on the desk in front of him like a schoolboy trying to look like he belonged to a different class. Brate, Serbia thought at the back of his head, and then didn't finish the thought, because he didn't know if it was going to be a plea or an insult.

NATO stood at the front, reading aloud. Terms, conditions, provisions, the same things they'd waved in his face at Rambouillet rewritten in fresher ink, and Serbia had stopped listening to the actual words several minutes ago because every sentence landed the same way: bend, or we will break you.

NATO's voice was steady and unhurried, the deep resonance of it filling the hall the way weather fills a valley. He was enormous. Serbia had known that, obviously, had stood near him before, but today the scale of him seemed almost grotesque, the breadth of those shoulders beneath the dark uniform, the way the podium looked like children's furniture in front of him.

The white compass rose across his blue face caught the light whenever he turned his head. Everything about him was controlled, pressed, buttoned, aligned, and Serbia wanted to rip one button off that coat just to see something on him be out of place.

Serbia interrupted him. He didn't plan to. Or maybe he did, maybe the words had been building behind his teeth for hours and he'd been waiting for a pause that felt like an opening, except NATO never paused, and Serbia simply couldn't hold it anymore.

"You have no mandate," he said, too loud, his voice cracking at the edges because his throat was dry and he hadn't warmed it up for shouting. "You stand there like you're the law. You're no law. You're a thug in a suit who got big enough that nobody tells him to sit down."

A murmur went through the hall, low and sour, the sound of a room quietly deciding against someone. Serbia kept going anyway, because stopping would mean acknowledging the silence, and he couldn't sit back down and let the quiet swallow what he'd said and make it small.

He said something about sovereignty that came out uglier than he meant it to, something about NATO's members being lapdogs who'd traded their spines for the privilege of standing behind someone else's legs, and even as it left his mouth he could feel it landing wrong, landing everywhere, splashing across seats where countries he might have needed were sitting very still and watching his face.

He threw a glance backward over his shoulder, quick, hating himself for it. Montenegro's gold hands hadn't moved on the desk. Montenegro's eyes were on the nameplate in front of Serbia, the one with both their names hiding inside it, and not on Serbia at all.

The hall went quiet the way rooms go quiet around a bad smell. NATO looked at him. He set the papers down on the podium with a soft, precise sound, squared the edges with his thumbs,

then straightened and gave Serbia the full weight of that enormous blue face and the compass rose and the pale, steady eyes beneath it.

Serbia's heartbeat did something unpleasant. His hand on the armrest wanted to grip the wood, and he wouldn't let it.

"Serbia has rejected every term," NATO said, addressing the hall while still looking only at him. The nameplate said Jugoslavija, and NATO's eyes went right past it like it was a coaster, and that small thing stung harder than it had any right to. His voice hadn't changed. Hadn't risen.

"He has broken the October agreement. He has refused each ceasefire. And now he has made his position clear to everyone present."

A pause, and the acoustics carried the silence the way they carried everything else. "I think a demonstration is appropriate. So that no one here mistakes what refusal means."

Serbia expected a declaration. Airstrikes, operational language, the bureaucratic choreography of military force delivered through euphemism.

He was already composing his answer, already stacking the wall of defiant words he'd throw back, when NATO stepped away from the podium and walked toward him, and the distance between them closed so much faster than it should have because NATO's stride was enormous, each step eating the floor, and then the shadow fell across Serbia's face and he had to tilt his head back to keep eye contact and the angle alone was humiliating before anything else had even happened.

He looked up and up, and NATO's shoulders blotted out the ceiling lights, and Serbia's mouth opened to say something, anything, and NATO's hand closed around the back of his neck.

The grip was firm without being painful, and somehow that was the worst part. It was the way you'd hold a suitcase you meant to move somewhere, and the distinction made Serbia's stomach lurch, because it meant NATO didn't think of him as a threat.

Serbia grabbed his wrist with both hands, fingers scrabbling at the dark sleeve, and NATO simply pulled him forward out of the chair. Serbia's boots scraped the polished floor, a loud squeaking drag in all that silence, and somebody in the hall sucked in a sharp breath, and he couldn't tell whose.

He twisted his head and caught the chair behind him, his father's chair, wide and empty with the brass plate glinting at the room, and for one stupid second he thought nobody had ever dragged Tata out of that seat. Tata had been big enough that men like NATO thought twice before walking up to him. Serbia was not his father. Everyone in the room had known that for years, and now they were going to watch him learn it.

NATO brought him to the open floor at the center of the chamber, the space where speakers stood, the space built so every seat in the house could see whatever happened in it. "Pusti me," Serbia snarled, or tried to, but his voice had gone thin and high and the words bounced

off the walls and came back to him sounding like what they were, which was fear wearing fury's jacket.

"Get off me, jebem ti, get your hands off me."

He twisted and drove an elbow backward and felt it connect with something that might as well have been a wall. NATO didn't flinch. His other hand found the collar of Serbia's military jacket and dragged it back and down off his shoulders in one efficient motion, the way you'd skin a rabbit, and Serbia heard the seam tear and felt cool air hit his collarbones and made a sound he hadn't meant to make.

The jacket hit the floor. Then the layers beneath it, one after another, NATO's hands steady and impersonal as they stripped him, and Serbia fought for every piece of fabric with the frantic gracelessness of someone who knows he's losing and can't make himself quit.

His undershirt ripped. The sound of soft cotton tearing was obscene in that quiet hall, and then his torso was bare and white and too thin, the shadows sitting deep between his ribs, months of bad sleep and skipped meals laid out under the lights for the room to look at.

He heard Croatia shift in his seat, heard him murmur something to whoever sat next to him, dry and mild, and someone gave a short huff that might have been a laugh. Serbia couldn't look. He couldn't look at any of them.

"Months of this," NATO said, almost conversationally, one massive hand pressed flat between Serbia's shoulder blades to hold him still. "All that noise. And look at you." His thumb traced a rib and Serbia flinched like it had been a lit match. NATO's voice carried without effort, and every country in the room heard it. "You can barely stand."

The trousers came next. Serbia kicked and caught nothing, and then the fabric was around his ankles and NATO peeled him out of the rest of it with the bored efficiency of someone who had decided this would happen and considered Serbia's opinion on the matter about as relevant as the furniture's. Serbia stood naked at the center of the congress hall, his white body shaking in a way he couldn't stop, his cock soft and small-looking between his legs, the red and blue and white of his face burning past anger into somewhere he didn't have a word for.

His eye skidded across the rows. Albania was leaning forward, hands strangling his armrests, his face caught somewhere between vindication and something rawer that Serbia didn't want to look at. Kosovo. Serbia's eye found Kosovo and jerked away so fast it almost hurt, because the expression on that blue face was something he refused to name.

Russia hadn't moved. Russia sat with his heavy hands on his knees, ushanka on his head, green eyes open now, fully open, and he did not stand up.

And Montenegro was looking at the floor. Just at the floor, at the space between his own polished shoes, his gold hands gone from the desk and pushed down between his knees where nobody could see them shake. He hadn't stood up. He wasn't going to stand up. Serbia knew it the way you know a bridge is out before you reach the river, and the knowing went into him somewhere soft under the ribs and stayed there.

NATO sat down on the edge of the speaker's platform, the heavy wood groaning under his weight, and hauled Serbia backward against his chest like he was pulling a child onto his lap to read him a story. Serbia's bare back pressed into the fabric of NATO's uniform, dark and pristine and still buttoned to the throat, cool brass buttons biting little cold circles into his spine, and the lopsidedness of it made him want to throw up. NATO still dressed. NATO still composed. NATO still wearing the war like it was a dinner jacket while Serbia had nothing left on him but the patch over his eye.

Then those enormous hands slid under Serbia's knees, lifted, and spread them wide, wider, until his thighs burned at the hinge and he was folded open in NATO's lap facing the whole hall like something in a butcher's window.

Serbia made a sound, a raw cracked thing with no word in it, dragged up from somewhere behind his sternum, because he understood now. He understood what the angle was for. His legs were held apart and pointed at the rows of seats and every country in the room had a clear, lit, unobstructed view of his cock and his balls and the tight pink furl of his hole between his spread cheeks, everything, all of it, and NATO adjusted his grip and tipped him back a little further so the front rows could see better.

Serbia wrenched his head sideways, eye squeezed shut, chin jammed so hard against his own shoulder his neck popped, trying to burrow into himself, into nothing. His legs trembled in NATO's hands. He could feel the room looking.

It was a physical thing, heat on his skin like sun through a car window, dozens of gazes settling on his thighs and his cock and his ass, and his face was on fire, the red band across his forehead going dark with blood and the white of his jaw blotching pink and ugly.

"Ne," he said. "Ne, ne, nnh, don't," and he hated the begging shape his mouth made around it, hated that it came out wet.

NATO shifted underneath him. Serbia felt it before his brain caught up: the blunt fat head of a cock, cold with something slick, nudging against his hole, and his whole body locked up like a fist.

His hands flew back and clawed at NATO's sleeves. His thighs tried to slam shut and didn't move a centimeter, because NATO held his knees apart the way a vice holds a board, without effort, without interest. Then NATO pushed in.

"Aagh, hhh, f-fuck, Bože," Serbia choked, and it split open and hit the vaulted ceiling and fell back down on him, his own voice raining over the whole room. The stretch was blinding. NATO was thick, grotesquely thick, built in proportion to the rest of him, and Serbia's ass fought it with every clench and spasm it had and it made no difference at all.

NATO sank into him slowly, steadily, with the patience of something that had already decided exactly how deep it was going and had no need to hurry there. Serbia could feel his rim stretched white and burning around the girth, could feel that cock shoving his insides out of the way, pressing against a spot that made his thighs jump and his stomach drop through the floor, and his own cock twitched.

A small, humiliating little jerk. The front row saw it. He knew the front row saw it, because somebody in it made a soft noise like a held-back laugh.

NATO started to move. Long, slow thrusts that rocked Serbia's whole body forward and back in his lap, and it hit Serbia with a wave of nausea what it must look like from the seats: that massive blue cock sliding out of him glistening and shoving back in, his hole clinging to it on every pull, his spread legs framing the whole thing like a stage. The hall's acoustics were made for speeches, made to carry a single voice to the back wall, and they carried this instead.

The wet squelch. The slap, slap of NATO's hips against his ass. The creak of the platform. The obscene little suck every time NATO dragged out to the head and pushed home again. His balls swung with it. His cock bobbed, filling now, half-hard in the worst betrayal his body had ever pulled on him, and a thin string of precome stretched off the tip and caught the light and broke and dripped onto his stomach, and Serbia wanted to die, honestly and simply, the way you want water.

He locked his teeth together. Bit down until his jaw throbbed. Swallowed every noise he could catch, his throat working like he was choking on something, because if he couldn't stop this then at least he could keep them from hearing it, keep the proof in his mouth where it belonged.

A grunt leaked out anyway. Then another one, "hnn, hngh," jolted loose on the thrust. Then a sound that started as a grunt and cracked down the middle into something higher and wobbling, and his eye stung and the hall smeared, and he blinked hard, stupidly, as if the wetness on his lashes might be sweat.

The first sob came out like a cough, short and hitched and bitten off so hard he tasted blood. The second was worse. The third was the one he couldn't stop, the one that kicked the door open for everything stacked up behind it, and then he was crying with his whole chest, hiccuping, gasping, "hh, hhk, hhaa, nnh," ugly noises getting fucked out of him on every stroke, snot running down over his lip, tears sliding down the blue band of his face and pooling on the white, his mouth stretched into a shape he had no control over, lips peeled back off his teeth like a snarling dog that had forgotten how to bite.

He was still being held open. Still being fucked in front of everyone. His cock was still standing up and leaking and on display and he was bawling like a little kid in a supermarket, and the whole hall could see every piece of it at the same time.

He opened his eye without meaning to, looking for something, anything, and it went straight to the third row on the right like a tongue to a broken tooth. Montenegro was still looking at the floor. His shoulders were up around his ears and his gold hands were jammed between his knees and his face was turned so far down that all Serbia could see was red hair and the top of the eagle's crowns, and he did not lift his head. He did not lift his head once.

Two seats from him Russia sat with his jaw working and his hands gone to fists on his knees, and he didn't get up either. Serbia's eye slid off both of them and back to nothing, and the next sob came out of him so loud it squeaked.

"You had so much to say," NATO said against his ear, quiet, almost tender. The microphone on the speaker's stand was a meter away and caught every syllable and carried it to the back row. "In France. At the table. Up there in your father's chair, all those speeches." A hard thrust punched a wet, hiccuping yelp out of Serbia's throat, "ahk," and NATO waited for it to finish echoing before he went on. "And this is what was under it the whole time. Listen to yourself."

"M-molim te," Serbia sobbed, and he didn't even know what he was asking for anymore, and NATO's hand shifted on his left knee to get a better grip, and his thumb dragged up the side of Serbia's face on the way and caught the strap of the eyepatch. Serbia felt it go. The elastic snagged on his ear for half a second, tugging, and then it slid free, and the patch dropped onto his chest and slid down his sweaty stomach and landed on his thigh.

The double-headed eagle lay face up on his skin, and his blind eye was open to the room, milky and dead and rolling loose in its scarred socket, that pale wrong iris staring at nothing.

The noise that came out of Serbia was something an animal makes caught in a fence, a howl dragged up from the bottom of his lungs, because this was the thing. This was the one thing he never showed anyone, more private than his skin, more private than the soft stupid insides NATO was currently fucking open, and the whole hall was looking at it while he sat impaled on NATO's cock with his legs spread and his face running.

NATO caught his jaw. Turned his face forward. Held it there, square to the rows, so everyone could get a good look. Serbia's good eye was screwed shut and streaming and his dead eye hung open and empty and his mouth was a wrecked wet hole, gasping "nnh, nnh, hnnh, nnh" on every thrust, and the pace was faster now, NATO's hips driving up into him hard enough that the slap echoed off the walls like somebody clapping slowly at the back of a theatre.

Serbia's cock bounced against his belly, fully hard, slapping wet against his skin, dribbling, his body's treachery complete and total and lit up under the chandeliers for the entire assembly to admire.

He came without any warning at all. His spine bowed, his thighs locked rigid in NATO's hands, his cock jerked and spurted up across his own stomach and chest in thick white streaks on white skin, and the moan that tore out of him was long and broken and wrecked, "aaah, ahhh, haaah, hhh," and it echoed, Bože, it echoed.

NATO gave a few more deep, deliberate strokes through it and then pushed in to the root and held there, and Serbia felt him finish, felt the hot thick pulse of it flooding him, filling him, and that was what set him off again, a fresh wave of sobbing so hard his chest seized and he couldn't get air.

It leaked out around NATO's cock. He felt it slide hot down his crack and drip onto the wood, pat, pat, and that small wet sound was the loudest thing in the room.

NATO lifted him off. The cock slid out of him with a filthy sucking pop and come gushed after it, and NATO set him down on the platform the way you'd put down a file you'd finished reading, then stood and tugged his cuffs straight and smoothed the front of his uniform with one flat palm.

There was a damp patch on the dark cloth over his thighs and he looked at it like it was a spilled drink and nothing more. Nothing on his face looked like guilt. Nothing on his face looked like anything.

Serbia lay on the floor of the congress hall naked and shaking, wet with come and sweat and snot and tears, his legs still trembling open in the shape they'd been held in because his hips didn't remember how to close. The hall was silent, the thick kind of silent that sits on your eardrums like water.

Somewhere in the rows Germany sat with both fists pressed into his thighs, knuckles bone pale against gold, jaw locked, staring at a fixed point on the far wall like it owed him money. Croatia had uncrossed his arms. Albania had sat back. Nobody moved. Nobody said anything. Nobody came down to the floor.

Serbia's hand crept across the polished wood. His fingers bumped the eyepatch where it had slid off his thigh, and he dragged it to him and pressed it back over his dead eye with hands shaking so badly the elastic kept slipping off his ear, again, again, until it finally caught and held crooked.

Then he lay there under the empty chair with the brass plate still shining JUGOSLAVIJA at the room, one eye covered and the other still leaking, breathing in shallow hitching gulps, and curled slowly onto his side with his knees drawing up toward his chest.

Chapter 2

The hall emptied the way water drains out of a crack in stone, slow at first, a murmur of chairs shifting and fabric rustling and the careful, diplomatic footsteps of countries who suddenly remembered they had somewhere else to be, and then faster, little clusters of movement, voices held deliberately low, as if talking at a normal volume anywhere near him would be admitting they'd been watching at full attention the whole time.

Serbia lay on the floor and listened to them go. The polished wood was cold against his hip and his ribs and the side of his face. His knees were pulled up to his chest.

The position hurt his lower back and the inside of him, a dull, deep, throbbing ache with real weight to it, like something heavy had been left behind his navel and forgotten there, but straightening his legs would mean uncurling, and uncurling would mean opening his body to the room again, and he would have happily died on that floor first. So he stayed where he was.

His skin was tacky. The come on his stomach and chest had cooled into a tight, itchy film that pulled every time he breathed. Between his thighs it was worse, still warm and still wet, sliding out of him in slow, humiliating little pulses he could feel and couldn't stop, soaking into the wood under his ass.

His whole body shook with a low, constant tremor that had nothing to do with him deciding anything, a shiver that came from somewhere deeper than muscle, like whatever part of him normally held everything level had been yanked out and nobody had bothered to put anything back in the hole.

His eyepatch was on. He'd managed that much. The elastic sat crooked over his ear and the patch had slipped a little off center so a sliver of scarred lid showed at the edge, and he knew it, and he couldn't make his hands go fix it.

His good eye was open. He stared at the leg of the nearest chair, dark polished wood maybe an arm's length from his face, and gave it the blank, stubborn attention of someone who'd decided that if he looked at one small stupid thing hard enough, the rest of the world might get bored and leave.

Above the chair leg, if he tipped his eye up even slightly, he would see the underside of the desk and the edge of the brass plate, and he didn't tip his eye up. He knew what it said. A drop of something, sweat or a tear he hadn't felt start, ran down the bridge of his nose and hung off the tip and fell, and he watched it darken a tiny circle in the varnish.

Most of them were gone now. He could tell by the way the room sounded, the way footsteps rang differently off empty seats, the missing hum of an audience breathing together. Heels clicked sharply across the far side of the hall and a door opened and swung shut. Another followed. A voice that might have been Albania's went past the doors, tight and clipped and too fast, getting smaller down a corridor.

He heard nothing from Kosovo at all, and the relief of that was almost a physical thing, a loosening under his ribs, because if Kosovo had said anything to anyone where Serbia could hear it, any reaction in that voice at all, it would have finished off whatever part of him was still managing to hold a shape.

Then he heard Montenegro. He'd have known those footsteps anywhere, quick and light and a little too careful, the walk of somebody who'd spent his whole life being the smallest one in the house and learning how not to get stepped on. They came down the aisle on the right. They came closer than they needed to, close enough that Serbia's eye slid sideways and caught the gold of a hand at the edge of the platform, resting on the corner of the desk, the desk with both their names folded up inside one word.

The hand stayed there. Serbia heard him take a breath, the kind you take right before you say something, and he lay very still and hated himself for how hard he was listening. "Brate," Serbia said, or his mouth said it, cracked and barely there, and the gold hand lifted off the desk.

The footsteps went on. They hitched once near the door, one little stutter in the rhythm like a skipped stair, and then the door opened and closed behind them with a soft, well-oiled click, and Serbia shut his eye and kept it shut for a while.

When he opened it again there were boots. These had come up on him without him noticing, which should have scared him and didn't have the energy to. Heavy boots, dark and scuffed and wide, planted near his head, and he didn't need to look any higher.

The tread had been heavy and slow and sure of itself in the way of somebody large who'd been large his whole life, a long way off from NATO's floor-shaking stride, and Serbia knew it the way he knew the ache in his back teeth before rain. Something old in him. Something too deep to dig out even on the days he wanted to.

Russia stood over him for what felt like a long time. The hall was nearly empty, just a few shapes lingering at the edges, figures in doorways who weren't quite leaving and weren't quite staying, and Serbia could feel Russia looking down at him and he hated it, hated the angle, his naked body balled up on the floor and Russia's boots at the level of his skull like he was something somebody had dropped. He waited for words. Some soft diplomatic nothing about the situation, or the process, or tomorrow. Russia didn't say anything.

Heavy fabric rustled, and then a weight came down over Serbia's shoulders and back, warm and rough and smelling of wool and cheap tobacco and outside air, a coat so big it covered him from his neck to his shins like a blanket off somebody's bed.

Serbia's hand came up before he told it to and fisted in the collar and dragged it tighter. He hid in it. The wool scratched his bare skin everywhere it touched, and it was the best thing he'd felt in hours.

Russia crouched down beside him. His knees cracked going down, the particular popping sound of a big man folding himself lower than he was built to go. From the corner of his eye Serbia caught the ushanka, that battered old fur hat sitting on white hair, and below it the face in its white and blue and red, and those half-lidded green eyes.

He'd been braced for pity. Or guilt, or that careful empty face Russia was so good at putting on when he didn't want to commit to having a feeling about anything. What he got was tired.

Russia looked tired and old in a way he hadn't a few years back, or maybe had and Serbia just hadn't been looking, the skin under his eyes gone bruised and papery, his mouth set like a drawer somebody had slammed. He looked like what he was, a man in his dead father's hat crouched next to the result of something he'd decided not to stop.

"You were here," Serbia said. His voice came out wrecked, hoarse and thick from crying, barely above a whisper, every consonant dragging across his throat like a rasp. "You were in the room."

Russia's jaw shifted. The red band across his lower face pulled tight, some muscle working underneath. He didn't deny it. He fixed the coat around Serbia's shoulders instead, tucking the edge in under his arm the way you'd tuck in someone in a hospital bed, and the gentleness of it sat so wrong against everything else that had happened to Serbia's body in the last hour that something gave way behind his breastbone.

His eye burned again. He clenched his teeth against it, because he was done crying, he was finished with it, he'd decided.

"You sat there," Serbia said, and his voice snapped on the second word, broke clean down the middle, and what came out of the break wasn't anything he'd want written down. "You sat there and you watched him. You watched him do it. You, you didn't, you just." He couldn't get to the end.

His hand shook inside the coat, gripping the wool so hard his knuckles hurt, and he pushed his face harder into the floor because looking at Russia's boots was easier than looking at Russia's face.

His teeth had started chattering, a fast stupid clicking he couldn't control, and he bit down on the inside of his cheek to stop it and tasted old blood where he'd already chewed through it earlier.

Russia's hand settled on his head. It was heavy and warm and covered most of Serbia's skull, the fingers curling around to rest at his temple just above the eyepatch strap, and the weight of it pressed his cheek into the wood the way gravity presses on things, without any push in it. It was just there.

Serbia's breath snagged. A wet, strangled noise squeezed out through his teeth, "nnhh," and he hated himself for leaning into it, hated how his body turned toward warmth like a plant toward a window, toward any hand that wasn't cold or clinical, like a dog rolling over for someone who'd never once stood up for it.

"Da," Russia said. He said it low, in the voice of someone who knows he has nothing to say in his own defense and isn't going to waste anybody's time pretending he does. He didn't explain.

He didn't bring up channels, or what he'd said in private, or the veto he'd have waved around if anybody had bothered to ask him first, which nobody had. He let the one word sit there between them, bare and useless, like a stone somebody had put on a grave.

"You could have," Serbia started, and stopped, because the truth was messier than that sentence wanted it to be and he knew it, even through the fog. Russia was big. Russia was still strong on paper, in theory, in what people remembered his father being, and everybody still flinched a little at the hat.

But NATO was bigger, NATO was a whole crowd of countries poured into one body and buttoned into a uniform, and Russia right now was a man rattling around in a house that had shrunk overnight, still trying to fill a coat that used to belong to someone huge, still broke, his money gone to paper barely half a year ago, still grieving in ways he'd sooner die than admit to.

Serbia had known all of that during the talks. He'd known it when Russia made his big low rumbling noises in NATO's direction and NATO had looked back at him with the patient, tolerant face of a man watching a large dog try to look scary.

He'd known it the night Russia turned his plane around over the ocean and went home in protest, which had felt like something for about a day, until the bombs fell anyway and the gesture turned out to weigh exactly as much as a plane full of air.

Russia couldn't have stopped this. Probably. Maybe. Serbia didn't know. What he knew was that Russia hadn't tried, and the gap between couldn't and didn't was a cut that wasn't going to close.

"Vstavay," Russia said, gently enough. His hand moved from Serbia's head to his shoulder and gripped through the wool. "The floor is cold."

Serbia didn't move. Maybe he couldn't. His body had locked itself into the curl, and the idea of straightening out, of standing up, of being upright and seen and having to walk past whoever was still hanging around in the corridors was so big his brain just slid off it.

"Ostavi me," he mumbled into the floor, and didn't let go of the coat. He lay under it breathing in short little hitches and stared at the dark smear on the boards where his own mess had pooled and started to dry.

Russia didn't leave. He stayed crouched there on the polished floor with one big hand on Serbia's shoulder, the ushanka knocked a little crooked, green eyes drooping half shut. He didn't rush him. He didn't say anything hopeful or useful or about the future.

At one point Serbia felt him shift and knew without looking that Russia had turned his head toward the desk, toward the wide empty chair and the brass plate shining its old name at a room with nobody in it, and Russia looked at it for a long moment and made a small sound in his nose that wasn't quite a laugh. "Big chair," he said. That was all.

Then he looked back down at Serbia, and his hand stayed put. He sat in the wreck with him like somebody who knew, somewhere in his bones where he never went looking, what it was

to lie on a floor that used to be yours, in a room that had rearranged all its furniture around the gap where you used to be.

His thumb moved once, a small absent stroke along the ridge of Serbia's shoulder through the wool, and that did it. Serbia's eye screwed shut and his whole face folded in on itself, jaw and chin and mouth collapsing like a tent with the pole kicked out, and a sob punched up out of him that he'd sworn was over, he'd sworn it, and his body didn't give a shit what he'd sworn.

He pressed his forehead into the floor and cried with his mouth hanging open, no sound at all except the gasping, "hhh, hhk, hhh," and Russia's hand stayed exactly where it was, heavy and steady and not enough and there.

"Tikho, tikho," Russia murmured, rough, the way you'd talk down a horse. "Nu vsyo."

It wasn't over and they both knew it. The planes would go up again tonight, and the night after, and Russia wasn't going to stop those either.

When the shaking finally eased into something Serbia could almost live inside, Russia picked him up. He didn't do it fast. He gathered Serbia against his chest the way you'd lift something that might come apart in the middle, one arm under his shoulders and one across his back, and Serbia's face ended up mashed into the rough wool of Russia's shirt, tobacco and cold air filling his nose, and his hands came up on their own and grabbed two fistfuls of fabric and hung on with the dumb, desperate grip of fingers that had forgotten how to open.

Russia straightened up with a grunt, lifting him clean off the floor, and the coat stayed wrapped around him and hid everything, and Serbia's bare feet dangled and he hung against Russia's chest like something fished out of a river.

Russia turned toward the side door, away from the main corridor where voices still murmured and footsteps still rang. Serbia felt them pass the desk. He felt the edge of the brass plate go by somewhere near his feet, the wide empty chair sitting behind it with nobody to fill it, and he didn't lift his head and he didn't look back.

His face stayed buried. His blind eye throbbed under the crooked patch. His body ached in places he didn't have names for, deep bruised places that pulsed along with his heart, and between his legs the slow, filthy leak kept going, cooling as it crept down the inside of his thigh.

Russia's arms tightened around him as he shouldered the door open, and the ushanka brushed the top of Serbia's head, the old fur soft and worn and carrying the faintest smell of someone who had been much, much bigger than either of them, and Serbia twisted his fingers deeper into Russia's coat and held on.

End Notes

Translations

- **JUGOSLAVIJA**: Југославија — Yugoslavia.
- **Tata**: Тата — Dad.
- **Brate**: Брате — Brother (vocative, said directly to someone).
- **Pusti me**: Пусти ме — Let me go.
- **jebem ti**: Јебем ти — A crude Serbian curse, roughly "fuck you" (literally "I fuck your...", usually followed by something like "mother").
- **Ne**: Не — No.
- **Bože**: Боже — God (as an exclamation).
- **M-molim te**: Молим те — Please / I'm begging you.
- **Brate**: Брате — Brother (said directly to someone).
- **Da**: Да — Yes.
- **Vstavay**: Вставай — Get up.
- **Ostavi me**: Остави ме — Leave me (alone).
- **Tikho, tikho**: Тихо, тихо — Hush, hush / easy, easy.
- **Nu vsyo**: Ну всё — There now / that's enough, it's over.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!