

## THE END OF DARIUS ALEXANDER V

Every morning, Darius rose from a bed saturated with clutter. There were 10 pillows of outrageous size, 2 blankets with outrageously lavish duvets, pre-heated sheets that adapted to the room temperature and, worst of all, a half-dressed woman he didn't even recognise. He arose on the right side of the bed, to an alarm he didn't set, and stared blankly at an extravagant painting he couldn't understand. The painting was created by the daughter of an "acquaintance" whom he had likely spoken to once, by accident, and gifted to him as a gift for one of his birthdays.

"Which birthday?" was a great question. Darius hadn't a clue, nor could he even recall how old he was now. The painting was a delicate and abstract landscape, almost the size of the bed. It had strong hue's of teal and amber, descending into what looked like a chasmic abyss. "At least...that's what it looks like" he told himself.

"Whah?" murmured the woman. Darius slowly pivoted his neck to look at her. Seems he had said that part aloud. She was in a rigid position, laying on her back, hands by her side and legs extended straight with her eyes stuck to the ceiling. She was certainly "awake" in some manner of the word and she was breathing, albeit unnaturally slow. Darius still didn't recognise her, and he still wasn't bothered to answer. She didn't seem to mind.

Returning to the painting, he'd lost his train of thought. Now it looked like less of a chasmic abyss and more of akin to a welcoming void. Darius stood up and made his way to the opposite end of the room towards the wardrobe. Problem. There was no wardrobe. Wondering if this was always the case, he scanned the room around him. It was the same as he remembered, nothing crazy about it unless you count an en suite as noteworthy, but he was clearly forgetting things. He walked to the door to leave, wearing naught but a t-shirt and underwear.

Said door opened to a wide, pale and sterile hallway doused in a dim orange tint with a mustached man in a fitted charcoal suit sat upright on a stool near a counter.

"Sir Alexander! Good morning, shall we get dressed?" boomed the man. Darius' eyes twitched at the peak in every vowel. He didn't say a word as the man began to rush to an outrageously large closet practically the length of the room. There was a door on the other end of the hallway, he easily could just walk right through and ignore this fool. The man flung open the many doors of the closet and posed his arms in a manner to present numerous suits and styles to Darius.

"Which are we feeling today, my good Sir!?" the man sang. Darius took his eyes off the door ahead of him and hovered them towards the man. Trying his best to decipher the differences between the suits, he gently nodded his head in the general direction of *something* in the closet. "Excellent choice! This one's new!"

The man began to forcibly dress Darius into the supposed suit of his choice. It's a jet black jacket and trousers, with a white shirt and a blue tie exactly the shade of 00a8e8. Darius didn't know why he knew such an exact detail but he was damn certain he was correct. Now that it was around his neck, he was moderately more at ease. The room didn't feel like it was trying to kill him anymore. The man had finished and returned to his seat.

"Have a wonderful day, my good Sir!". Darius' eye still twitched, the tie could only help so much.

Looking at the man's name tag, he recognized the name as Fredrick yet didn't recollect anything about "Fredrick". Darius practically bee-lined it for the door at the other side.

Opening the door into yet *another* hallway, he is greeted by yet *another* person in a suit. This time, the hall is baked in a near blinding white light attached to a much taller ceiling. There was also more than one person wandering the hall, there were dozens all clearly going about their day while all dressed similarly and talking about seemingly the same thing. Darius was confused but caught the eye of the person standing two feet in front of him. A short lady with unkempt, long black hair was clearly waiting for him to notice her. She had visibly woken up two minutes ago, and yet her voice betrayed this notion.

"Good morning! First up we have a meeting with the board members regarding the introduction of the new user accounts. Then you're set to be in your office for the rest of the day. Please follow me!" she declared to a barely present Darius. He glanced at her nametag which had the name Li engraved in it. Once more confused at the lack of remembrance for his supposed associates, he figured it was best to just do as she asked. At the very least, his eyes had stopped twitching.

He followed her as she dragged him down numerous corridors and through a collection of large and stylishly decorated foyers, none of which Darius recognized. The windows allowed him a view of some of the distant stars of space, the rest blocked out by other buildings attached to the orbit station. Blinking lights were stuck in a void covered up by static ones attached to large, hulking silver metal glowing in the light of the pale sun. There was writing on the sides of the station, a name probably, in a language he didn't understand. On his way he glanced at countless workers, none of which dared glance back at him. They all seemed either incredibly busy or terrified by his presence. Eventually the two stopped at a door in a quiet hallway that was oddly larger than the rest. 'BOARD ROOM 001' was stencilled on the flat, metallic wall in large cream writing. Li swiped a card through a small card reader next to the doorframe. As the door opened, she ushered him in and closed it behind him, locking herself out.

Darius stood where he was left, feeling a sudden mix of stage fright and disgust. Before him was a room, dimly lit with far more space than necessary, centered with a large oak table surrounded by 13 seats. 12 of those seats were on opposite ends of the table and were occupied by people in lavish yet boring black suits. The remaining seat at the far end of the table was empty.

"Darius! Took you long enough. Sit down." Ushered one of the attendees. These were clearly the Board members. Darius strolled over to the empty chair while the others bickered and gossiped amongst themselves and took his seat. He noticed the name tags in front of everyone on the desk. Realizing he too has one, he flipped it around.

'DARIUS ALEXANDER V - CEO'

"Oh shit" he muttered. Nobody heard him, likely because his end of the table was uncomfortably distant from everyone else. Hell, since he had arrived, everyone was acting like he didn't even exist. They were gossiping, bickering, and cackling maniacally. They all had this same *insidious* grin that practically hurt to look at. Darius listened carefully, trying to pick out what they're saying.

“There’s no point in caring, he doesn’t need to!”  
“It’s fine! We’ll get it sorted, these things fix themselves.”

“What’s next after this one”

“How much do you think we’ll get”

“He’s taking his sweet time”

Laughs and chuckles drowned out the rest, frustrating Darius.

“Would you shut up?” he croaked weakly, unable to raise his voice. Nothing changed. Darius meekly stood up and left, returning to the hallway he had entered from. Li was still there waiting for him.

“Finished already? Right this way Sir!” she immediately said upon seeing him. She drags him to yet another door, this time unlabelled. Once again, he was shoved inside with the door locked behind him. This room was a perfect square of white surfaces. The whole thing was reminiscent of a furnished padded cell. A chair and desk sat dead center of the room. They were rather simple in their design and yet they stood out from the room like a sore thumb. Darius took a seat at the desk and quickly realized there was nothing at all on the desk, not even a pen and paper. Rather fatigued, he tilted his head to the left and noticed that the room had a small porthole window. The porthole gave him an entrancing view of the deep void known as space, despite its relatively small size. An insurmountable amount of time had passed before Darius had freed himself of it’s gaze. His neck hurt from looking to the left for so long.

In an attempt to ease his pain he painstakingly rotated his neck to the other side of the room. A mirror of equal size and directly opposite to the porthole hung at the exact height as Darius' head. It was the first time today that he remembered what he looked like. He was a sickly pale middle aged man with short, dark, kept and greying hair and a 5 o'clock shadow. He ruffled a hand into his hair, unsure if that was always there. He didn’t always look like this...did he? He looked into the eyes of what was supposedly “Darius Alexander V”. They were scared eyes, lost and helpless. His eyebrows clearly hated all of this. Physically snapping himself out of it, he jerked his head to face forward at a clock on the wall. The short hand pointed to IX. “Is that AM or PM?” He contemplated. Darius arose from his seat and walked to the door. To his surprise it was open. Even more surprising, nobody was in the hallway ensuring he stayed there. Darius began to argue with himself over the precognition he seemingly had of his environment. “Why would they ensure I stayed there?” he thought to himself. “Would that be a problem?”, “Why shouldn't I be able to?”. With his newfound powers in freedom, an exhausted Darius decided to retrace his steps back to his room.

Having eventually made his way back, he entered his room to find a new woman in his bed, albeit in the exact same pose as the other one was. Strangely, he wasn’t awfully surprised by this. He also didn’t bother saying anything to her and she herself replied with naught. Despite his best efforts, he couldn’t sleep. Something was...wrong about all of this. With neither hesitation nor understanding, he drifted his way towards the bathroom. Not sure what to do, he poured himself a glass of water.

“What does water even taste like? Why can’t I remember what this tastes like” he thought to himself. Darius stood there with a glass of water and noticed his reflection once more. He realized he hadn’t even taken his suit off. Not only that, but his reflection was that of someone

else. It was the same suit, the same tie, the same glass of water, only... this person was bald. Bald, clean shaven and his eyes were sharp, staring daggers of determination. Without hesitation, both Darius and the reflection dropped the glass of water, ignoring the glass that exploded across the floor. He couldn't steer his eyes away from the stare the reflection enforced. The environment around them receded into a familiar black void. He witnessed the reflection pull something from its suit pocket. A machine pistol. The reflection held it out, presenting it to Darius. Finally breaking free of its vice, he looked to his hand and saw the very same pistol.

"It's been 10 years, how about we celebrate"

The next morning, a new Darius emerged from the oversized closet. He was, once more, greeted by Li. She looked no more awake than last time

"Good morning! First up we have a meeting with the board memb-"

"Lead the way." Darius interrupted.

Immediately perturbed, her face buffers a bit before she begins to lead him to the same boardroom as always. Darius' walk was far more pronounced and upright, walking with newfound confidence, like he was right where he meant to be. Some people even sent him greetings, all of which were ignored. Upon their arrival, he didn't give Li a chance to speak.

"Leave" he ordered, snatching the keycard from her hand and opening the door.

"A...are you su-" she attempted to respond.

"Take a half-day, you've earned it!" He answered with an exaggerated smile.

He ignored her hesitation and entered the board room. The same bloated, hideous goons described as "the board" infested the table. Darius did everything in his power to not wretch as they all turned to him once he made himself obvious.

"Darius! Your hair! Did the courts give her that too!?" Yelled one nearest to the door before exploding into a cacophonous laughter with the rest, bumping elbows and pointing to their heart's content. Darius shot a stare towards the self-proclaimed comedian, who suddenly quietened down a bit. Advancing to his vacant seat, the meeting continued as usual without Darius's input.

Once more, he made the grave error of actually listening to what these freaks were saying.

"How many survivors? None? For the better"

"It's pitiful that they don't know but it's simply better for the economy"

"Did you hear they located another shipment, could be worth something"

"I wonder if she knows"

Darius' eye twitched once more but chose not to leave this time. Instead he carefully stood up from his seat and leaned forward slightly onto the table. The conversation died down abruptly as the board began to look puzzled by Darius' awkward change of stance. He thought of picking a sole target for now would be smart, but unfortunately for them he was growing impatient.

"Do you pissants ever shut the *fuck* up"

Delivering the verbal equivalent of spitting at the room's attendees, the mood tanked.

"E-Excuse me Dar-" squeaked one.

"I asked a question, fucking *answer it*"

"Darius come now-" crowed another.

“YES OR NO!” boomed Darius.

“For the love of- Darius you can’t expect us to answer such a trivial nuisance” spluttered the comedian, now the center of attention for the poor fools desperate for some modicum of sanity. He stood proud with confidence that he could diffuse this ticking bomb of an episode. Darius remained unaffected.

“What matters here is that you are kept in a safe environment. We’ll do the rest of the work. All you need to do is remain calm and watch the show”

The comedian turned back to the rest with utmost confidence.

“Now where were w-”

In a flash, half of the fool’s head was now missing. Viscera flung itself across the desk as the upright corpse began to drop like a tree. Darius stood at the end of the table, clutching the handle of the pistol in one outstretched hand with dagger-sharp eyes now absent.

Screams and cries erupted from the freaks yet alive in the room. For Darius, time felt frozen. He pondered what he had just done and what he should do now. He didn’t really think of what would come next, but frankly, he didn’t care. He *did* have more than one bullet, may as well keep going.

Time resumed and Darius, without any further hesitation, began to spray the remaining magazine of the machine pistol into the rest of the freaks. The muzzle flickered and blood splashed the room in a fashion that would make a sprinkler jealous. Miraculously, Darius only got a small spray on his shoulder. The corpses of the “board” lay strewn about in various positions that he found almost comical.

Suddenly, one of them moved and bolted for the door. That was odd. Darius strode through the door and into the hallway to see the last remaining freak trying their damndest to survive this episode. Darius couldn’t have that, not because he didn’t want to be found out or anything, he just really didn’t want them to live. Unfortunately for her the corridor that housed Board Room 001 had been elongated to give it a “sense of worth”. Darius took his sweet time taking out the current magazine in the pistol and checking how many bullets he had left. Five more. Plenty enough for the amount of lives she had remaining.

He raised his arm and centered his view right on her back. With one last flash, she was down.

The noise of the shot echoed down the corridor and certainly alerted *someone*. He didn’t really care though. Four bullets left, he’d manage just fine. Taking a brief intermission during his breakout symphony of carnage, Darius lowered the gun, closed his eyes and took a breath.

Opening his eyes, he saw the window opposite the door to the board room and stared once again at the stars. For the first time in years, that faint reflection of his smiled back. His magnum opus had just begun.