

“Pointless Riots Lead to Too Many Feelings”

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Wiring over seventy-seven billion US dollars from a multitude of private investors and miscellaneous business people, wasn't the worst idea he's ever had. Taking that money and separating it into hundreds of different inconspicuous offshore accounts was also not the worst idea he's ever had. Writing down all of the account information in a notebook, then losing that notebook and going back to being broke wasn't a completely terrible idea either. However, being caught over a year later by the police for walking by a riot, being unable to pay bail, then getting thrown in jail for rioting was *definitely* a horrible idea. But, in all honesty? It was the most hilarious thing to happen to Ares in a long time. He was the one all over the news, rumored for having stolen state secrets, and he was sitting in a county jail for a couple days due to a public disturbance that he wasn't even a part of?

Ares laughed the entire time he was getting arrested.

He was laughing while the policeman interviewed him, and he continued to laugh even after being transferred to a nearby prison due to overcrowding. He was doubling over with barely concealed chuckles even after he had walked through the halls to imprisonment. He was snickering even as he got to the door of his cell. Obviously, there were people who thought he was insane, but it wasn't like Ares cared. He was going to be gone in a couple of days anyways.

Inside of his cell was a bunk bed lined up with the front right corner, a sink on the back wall, and toilet directly opposite the bed in the back left corner. In front of the toilet was a floating table with two chairs, presumably for the prisoners to sit and write, draw, or whatever else prisoners did with their free time. The bars extended from the floor to the ceiling with a door in front of the table. In terms of conditions to be locked up in, this wasn't the worst thing in the world to be staying in. Ares would be here for about 6 months, so getting comfortable and riding out the sentence would be paramount. Though, it wasn't as if he had anybody waiting for him when he got out. He didn't have a job, he didn't have any friends, and he certainly didn't have anyone to love. This was entirely his fault, but Ares really didn't care. He was too abrasive and careless for any form of a significant other, and it wasn't as if anybody could really put up with his bullshit. It was the same for his friends; after they all grew up, he kept acting immature for the hell of it and they all disappeared one by one. Who could blame Ares for wanting to spend his life having fun? He partied, drank, and had fun with anybody who would spread their legs for him. It was a good life, and he was smart enough to maintain it. He was never in debt, and did his best with well paying odd jobs here and there.

The guard shouted at him to stop laughing and get moving, snapping Ares back into focus. He looked up at the man in the top bunk and took in his appearance. The other man was lying across the top bunk with a book laid open on his face. Vaguely recognizing him, Ares thought a little harder about where he had originally seen the man. It dawned on Ares that this was the man who was standing on top of the car shouting about justice, the leader of the riot. Ares didn't really remember his name. The door slid open and into the floor, making way for Ares to step inside the room and get a better look. Inside of the room, he still couldn't see the other man without climbing up into the bunk, and that was a bit too much work. Regardless, Ares threw something

out there as a form of introduction, "Wow!! Fancy meeting you here! This is quite the pleasant change in scenery, don't you think?"

"It's a prison cell." The man mumbles from underneath his book, clearly displeased to have Ares as his roommate. It didn't matter, Ares would just have to try harder. He liked a challenge, and the man was exactly his type, tired and not paying attention to him.

"I was being sarcastic. And anyways, I was hoping that we'd be friends, but I can see that you're going through your 'bad boy' phase." Ares shrugs then throws his stuff onto the bed, some of it clatters to the floor, but Ares ignores it and sits down.

Ares really didn't care about his personal effects as he didn't have any emotional attachment to them; he had never been a materialistic person. He brought with him a deck of cards, a book, and a pad of paper. He would have to find a pencil or pen somewhere else for his paper, because someone had stolen it during the transfer. Maybe the guards would be kind enough to let him borrow one, or more likely, he'd end up stealing it.

Growing up, he was taught three different things. The first, brains were better than brawn in every situation. Second, it was better to just take what you want rather than floundering around and struggling. And finally, constantly staying in motion just worked out better for everyone. His father, being a hulking giant of a man, had always regretted not being able to study harder and get better grades in school. He ended up working a low paying low effort factory job where he wasted the rest of his life away, unable to pay for gifts, vacations, or pretty jewels for his wife. He was a calm man, more often lost in his own head daydreaming about a better life, than getting into drama and fights. In contrast, Ares' mother was a woman who was too smart for her own good and who got herself tangled up in far too much trouble for comfort. When she was old enough to run after boys like candy, she flew too close to the sun chasing after walking red flags and got burned in the process. By the time she was in college and her chasing days had burned out, she stumbled across a man with no direction in life, but one who was willing to give her anything she wanted. They fell in love, one thing led to another, and she got pregnant, forever destroying her prospects at college and her career. Ares doesn't think that she ever forgave either him or his father for destroying her life.

"I'm going to get out of here soon." The man grabbed the book and moved it off of his face. He looked over the edge of the bed and looked Ares up and down, before flopping back down onto the bed and putting the book back over his face. "We shouldn't get close to each other because it'll just end badly. Not to mention, I have no idea what you did or who you are."

Ares smiled and sat down on the bottom bunk, picking his notebook off the ground. He set the notebook on top of the small pile at the end of his new bed, brushing away the memories that flashed in front of his eyes. Once settled, he flopped onto the bed and scooted back until his back was flush with the wall. This lasted for about a minute before he grabbed at his fraying blanket and fiddled with the fibers coming loose. "You're probably going to be here for a while, and you should take the chance to get to know me. Who knows, I might be a great friend!"

"Yeah, right. Be friends with a criminal? I'd rather not get involved with some murderer or pedophile, no thank you." The man scoffed at him, shifting his weight in the creaky bed.

Once he settled down on the edge of his bed, Ares pondered the question for a bit before deciding to answer. "Aren't you a criminal too?" Ares could almost hear the offense dripping off of his new friend's voice like a thick sludge.

"Me? A criminal?? *Please*. I'm not a criminal. If anything, the ones who are holding me captive here, for exercising my constitutional rights, are the criminals. They're violating my first amendment right to peacefully assemble!"

"Weren't you the one involved in multiple different riots?" Ares liked his new friend, more specifically he likes messing with him. "What's your name, anyways?"

"I am not involved in riots. We are *protesting*, making a difference in this awful system!" Ares imagines what the man might look like based on his voice. He finds it really funny to form what he thinks a person might look like before figuring out what they actually look like. "It's our first amendment right to protest, but I'm sure you know that."

"Really? And what difference do you think you're making?" Ares thinks that he's probably medium height around 5'6-5'9, with brown hair and brown eyes. Under the assumption that his new friend is white, though he really couldn't tell because of the lighting, Ares figured that the friend must have come from a middle class family with a decent education and strong beliefs. "And you never told me your name."

"If the government hears its people's cries, change will be made. I guarantee it." The man's voice gets determined while Ares wonders why he was so sure of the change. Ares certainly didn't think that the government could change. He thought that there were too many aristocratic bureaucrats who acted like they ruled the world just because they had a bit of money. "I'm not going to tell you my name, idiot. I still don't know what you did to be here."

"Well obviously, I was walking around in public naked. Didn't you realize?" Ares smoothly answers, not missing a beat.

"Excuse me?!"

Ares chortles as the immediate reaction. He really liked messing with his new friend, it was the most hilarious thing. Other than his circumstances, of course. "No, I'm just kidding. I was walking by your riot and they thought I was a part of it."

The man snaps back at him, completely brushing off the previous statement, enraptured by Ares' taunts. "They aren't riots, they're peaceful protests. And you shouldn't have gone near them if you weren't a part of the cause. Of *course* you're blaming a peaceful protest for your imprisonment."

"It's not my fault that you people were right in front of the supermarket. What are you 'protesting', anyways?" He's really more distracted by the new thought experiment on the

government and its systems, but indulging his new friend was easy and simple and as an added benefit, he liked hearing his friend talking.

"Well, as you know there've been many new bills and laws implemented after the tech robberies, and they've negatively impacted the lives of many different people..."

The man trailed off into a ramble about his cause, why he was imprisoned, and how unfair it was for the police to jail him. Ares stopped actively listening after he delved into an excessive amount of court cases. He chose instead to space off and think about his parents again. Ares pondered to himself how much his childhood and parents actually affected him today. He wondered if him being in jail right now could be blamed on them; how much of his entire life and choices could be blamed on them. He felt as though his personality and his lack of care towards others stemmed from his parents, and it was his responsibility to change that. But, he also really didn't care. In his mind, if other people didn't want to interact with him, they didn't need to. Ares could mind his own business, and they could mind theirs. It wasn't as though he went around purposefully offending people, he just did what he wanted. It wasn't as if Ares had anybody who told him right from wrong, his parents had given up on him from the beginning.

During the pregnancy, there was a peaceful, but ephemeral happiness. While the struggle to survive still existed, the euphoria of pregnancy lifted both of his parents up. After he was born, there was a year of continual peace before things started to fall apart and before Ares turned one, the couple had grown distant. While both people drifted further and further apart down their own paths, Ares was left behind, abandoned and alone. With his father's meager salary, he could barely afford to pay the bills every month, much less take his family out to amusement parks or around the world. Feeling snubbed by her husband, Ares' mother grew distant from both of them and by the time Ares was 9, she had already fallen into old habits. Ares got used to seeing random men around the house and bruises littering his mom's body. He would take care of her hangovers, injuries, and would hold her while she cried. Ares didn't understand it at the time, but as he grew up and watched his father work himself to death, the rift between him and his mother increased until they were practically strangers. After Ares' eighteenth birthday, he inherited forty-nine thousand dollars from his father. Neither he nor his mother had known that his father was saving up his money, and upon finding out about the inheritance, his mother left him for a rough and quiet man with too much time and too much money. She didn't think he needed her anymore, and from Ares' point of view, she didn't need him either. They parted without fanfare or struggle, Ares heading off to college while she packed up the house and moved away. He came back months later to an empty house for sale and a note left with a realtor directing him to his own apartment, a parting gift from the woman he'd never see again.

"Hey! Hey, are you listening to me?"

Ares cringed and snapped back to reality, coming back to his newest friend leaning over the bunk and staring at him. His new friend looked significantly different than what Ares had imagined him as. Rather than having brown hair, he had wavy, dirty blonde hair. It reminded Ares of the fluffy golden clouds that he could see on airplane flights. His eyes were a lovely light green, almost gray; they were sharp and clear, eyes that Ares couldn't help but get lost in, as cheesy as it was. His skin was clear and radiant; it was practically glowing in the light. His friend

was so handsome that Ares couldn't help but stare and admire every little detail of his face. But after a moment passed, Ares realized that he had been staring for too long and his friend was frowning at him. "What? Oh. I think it's fascinating that in Jefferson v. State they ruled in the State's favor."

His friend's eyes light up and he smiles, "Precisely! Despite how clearly in the wrong the state was, and how much of an infringement on the 4th and 14th amendment there was, the judge still ruled in the state's favor. Isn't that ridiculous!? The argument made was fucking horrible, and it still worked! I feel so bad for Jefferson because he never got justice." The adorable way that his friend was practically glowing with excitement made Ares' mood improve greatly, even more so than the funny imprisonment had.

Ares nodded in agreement, continuing the conversation with ease. He was lucky that he had found this particular case interesting. "Oh, I completely agree. The judge's handling of this case was completely out of line. There are plenty of rumors that he was drunk during that case, and probably a lot of others too. I read that he got fired a few years after that."

"Seriously? I didn't know. When?"

Ares was pleased at being able to share something with the man, he leans and brings his arms back to rest behind his head against the wall, closing his eyes slightly before responding, "Yeah, it was a couple years after the initial trial, when he drifted out of the limelight that he got fired. When we get out of here, you should look up the article, 'Judge Harkness Versus Fair Judgements'. It's the article with the most accurate information, at least from what I've found."

His friend didn't miss a beat, jumping to respond to Ares, "Who wrote it? Which newspaper released it? Some of the newspapers in this city are extensively controlled by the government. Most of them are fine, but there are a couple you have to watch out for. Ugh, hanging upside down is giving me a headache, give me a minute."

After a bit of creaking, the head above him disappears and Ares waits as the other man clammers his way down the ladder. When his friend gets to the bottom and brushes himself off in front of Ares, he has to stop himself from laughing. The man is significantly shorter than what he had imagined. Rather than being around average height, or even a bit below it, he was around 5'4. His new friend was about the same height as a *Lego sword*. After a second of attempting to muffle the oncoming bout of snickers, Ares can't hold back the laughter that tumbles out of his mouth and fills the room, and when the other man looks like an indignant kitten who wasn't getting its way, Ares laughs even harder.

"What's so funny!?" His friend crosses his arms and comes closer to Ares, standing a foot away from the edge of the bed. Ares is turning a bit red with how hilarious his friend looks.

"Nothing-!! Nothing-! Oh my- I- I just didn't expect- Why are you so short?" Ares throws his hands up in a mock defense. He keeps finding more and more amusing things. It's greatly improving his mood and makes the whole getting arrested thing so worth it. If he had known that being detained was so enjoyable, Ares would have walked by a riot years ago.

His friend rolls his eyes and steps back, letting out a cute little hmph and looking away from Ares. "I'm not *that* short. My mom was short, and I picked up her genes. Look I'm going back up there if you keep laughing."

"Sorry, sorry I'll stop- I'll stop-! Oh my god, this is *hilarious*. Sorry! Sorry, you looked a lot taller on top of that car." Ares' laughter dies down and he gets a proper look at his friend. He was lean but muscular, a bit like a ballet dancer. It was a sharp contrast to Ares' build, who had taken more after his father than his mother. "I really didn't expect you to be... small."

"You are being absolutely ridiculous. Hmph!" His friend relaxes into his stance before looking off to the side, outside of their cell. Ares wondered where everyone else in the prison was and why they were allowed to just talk like this. It wasn't as if he was going to complain, but curiosity was a natural instinct and he loved chasing after it.

"Really? High praise from the person who thinks that the government is controlling everything. Are you so sure that *I'm* not a government spy~"

"They're controlling a lot! You can't deny it. For example, have you ever noticed the way that newspapers that tell extremely left sides or extremely right sides always get their voices silenced? If you study the government's movements regarding those businesses, you'd start to realize that there's a certain line that neither side can cross, and when they do, they automatically get torn down. And-!"

His friend goes into another vent about how evil the government is. Which Ares can agree on because it wasn't like he was completely wrong, but Ares is more focused on the way that he's gesticulating his hands. With every statement the man throws his hands around as if he's painting a picture, or weaving a tapestry. It's entralling. And for Ares, who had never paid attention to something as ridiculous as hand movements, it was a completely new attraction that he welcomed enthusiastically. The arm motions made a floaty feeling overtake his mind, and he couldn't help but nod and smile along to whatever his friend was saying.

The funny thing was that Ares had never felt or acted this way before. He wondered what made this person so much different than all the rest, and why he stood out to Ares. Maybe it was the passion. Maybe it was the way he reacted to Ares' taunts. Maybe it was how handsome he was. But no matter what the reason was, Ares didn't care. The reasons never really mattered. He had never been scared of change, no, instead he had learned to run directly at it. Growing up in an environment that was prone to change at any minute, he had learned to just go with the flow and follow his instincts. It had led to a lot of poor decision making over the years, but it wasn't like it really mattered. The only thing that mattered to Ares was moving forward and moving on, and if he liked his new friend, he was going to pursue him until said friend said stop.

Ares didn't really want to focus on the future, though. He still had a long time to become actual friends with his friend and maybe go even farther. First things first, he had to listen to his friend speaking, which wasn't too hard because his friend had a nice and invigorating voice. His friend was still venting about the government's downfalls, and was bringing up some very good points.

Despite all of the technical jargon muffling the impact of his message, his friend was highlighting how their society had replicated many different aspects of a dictatorship. The government had a hand in controlling both the press, and the general public's viewpoint. Some of the commercials that Ares saw on the television felt a lot like propaganda. The commercials didn't even try to hide that fact. "Yeah, I can agree with the silencing thing. There was this one time that I tried to publish a public letter to our leader, but he completely ignored it and I was almost sued for defamation and arrested for tyranny. It was completely ridiculous. I wasn't trying to threaten the guy, I was just stating an opinion.

His friend closes his eyes and shakes his head disappointedly, "That's absolutely terrible. Completely terrible. No matter how wrong some people can be, they still deserve to have their voices heard. Are you...?"

"Am I?"

"Ah, well- Do you lean more left, or right?" Ares had to think about the question for a bit. On one hand, he did lean particularly 'left', but on the other he had some 'right' policies. Overall, he didn't really agree with narrowing down politics into simple lefts and rights, and believed more in having a wide range of beliefs that formed a person, not a side. The other man interrupts his musing with a slight shuffle and a small cough, "If it helps, I lean left."

"Oh, well I don't really think that I believe in either 'left' or 'right'. There are too many labels, and honestly, I'd rather not narrow down all of my beliefs into one side. It's easier to vilify either side from either point of view and lead to fighting, I guess." Ares does his best to explain his ideas, though he had never been forced to justify his own ideals to himself. "I don't know, I guess you could say that I don't like picking sides or making decisions, really."

"...That's a valid point, I guess. Not that I like it."

Ares chuckles and goes back to leaning against the wall with his hands behind his head, "It's a wonder you don't like it, Mister Protest."

"Hey! I have beliefs that I do believe in. Unlike you, apparently."

"I have beliefs, I just don't believe in specific and very narrow sides."

This stumps his friend, who walks closer to him and sits down on the bed. It's a strange scene, especially one taking place in the middle of a prison. Not that Ares could complain, being close to his friend made his heart skip a beat. It was so... Cliché and ridiculous, that his stomach was fluttering like some lovesick middle schooler over someone he had met that day, and yet Ares adored it. He had sexual experiences with men before, but never *romantic attraction*. It was a new feeling that was just entertaining enough to hold his attention while also keeping him coming back for more. No matter what red flags he saw, or what a strange meeting they were having, Ares was ready to chase after this man until he got bored.

"Yeah, you really aren't that bad. Still, I won't tell you my name until you tell me what you *actually* did to be here. I'm not really keen on murderers." His friend leans back on his outstretched arms, lightly swinging his feet together over the edge of the bed. "Or child pedophiles. Or any sort of criminals, really."

"I was being serious earlier. I'm in jail because I was walking by your protest and the police thought I was a part of it."

He turns around to look at Ares, eyes wide in surprise. With the eye contact, his friend's full attention on him, and the close proximity, Ares' heart beats a lot faster. Even the way his friend speaks holds onto Ares' mind, "Wait- Really? I thought you were saying that just to get a rise out of me, or that you were just blaming me to blame me. I hadn't realized that- Well, never mind. I don't really know what I was thinking."

Ares tries his best to quell his beating heart, clearing his throat, "No, I was being serious."

"Ah, sorry about that..." Ares internally smacks himself, he didn't mean to come off so abrasively. He wanted to befriend this man, not make him feel bad.

"No! No- It's not your fault, it's a prison, you can't take everything at face value, and- well- yeah." He tries to play it off smoothly, but, well it fails. He can't seem to find anything else to say, so he just shuts up and waits.

Both of them drift into an awkward silence that seems to last forever before his friend interrupts it, "So... Well, I did say that I would tell you my name. My name is Elijah."

"Really? How old are you, Elijah?" Ares plays with the new name on his tongue and in his throat. It's a nice name, Elijah, one that sounded very... nice. Ares didn't know how else to put it, just that Elijah was an interesting name. "If you want to tell me, anyways."

"Well, since you really didn't do anything wrong, and since I did get you into this mess- I should be honest with you. I'm twenty-four and I'm a college student. I like to stand up for my opinions and make my voice, and the voices of my friends, heard." Elijah shifts into a different position at the head of the bed. He brings his knees up to his chest and rests his elbows on them. Ares turns his head to look at Elijah then tries to stay as still as possible. The sun is coming in through the bars just behind Elijah and enveloping him in light. When he speaks, Ares vaguely wonders if he's an angel, "What about you?"

"I..." Ares trails off as he gets distracted by Elijah's frame before coming back into focus, "Right. I'm twenty-two, turning twenty-three in a couple of weeks. I'm not in college, but I do work a couple of odd jobs here and there."

"Damn. It sucks that you're turning twenty-three in prison." Ares nods and Elijah leans back into the headboard, looking away from him. "It's a bit weird that you're younger than me. You have way more muscle, and you're taller than me."

“I guess. I mean being 5’4, isn’t everyone taller than you? What are you studying?”

Elijah scoffs at the remark, ignoring it and moving on to the question, “I wouldn’t call it studying. The school is shut down due to the ‘riots’, and most of my teachers are too stuck up their ass to teach us anything anyways. If it really matters, I’m double majoring in psychology and law.”

“That’s interesting. Studying to become a lawyer who’s really good at psychology? Or trying to become a psychologist with the law behind you?”

“Neither. I’m majoring in law because I find it really interesting, and I’m majoring in psychology because I want to get my doctorate and be a Psychiatrist.”

"Isn't that what I just said?" Ares glances over to see Elijah rolling his eyes. Still, he's smiling and clearly amused by Ares' statements; Ares can feel his heart fluttering. He wonders what Elijah thinks of him, if Elijah likes him even as a friend.

“We’ll say that’s what you said.”

“Well what was wrong, o great psychiatrist?”

Elijah laughs, a sound that Ares will give anything to hear over and over again. It fills him with a warm feeling that he’s bound to get addicted to. The dopamine rush that he receives from a *laugh* is more than he’d ever get drinking the finest liquor. “I’m not a psychiatrist yet! I still have a lot of studying to do. You are so ridiculous!”

“Sure I’m ridiculous, but I made you laugh, right? Yet smet, go on, tell me what horrible mental illnesses I have. Or- Or wait- Tell me what terrible traumatic backstory lies behind my *dark eyes* and smoky eyeliner~” To punctuate his statements, Ares combs his hair in front of one eye and changes his position on the bed to be as 'casual' as possible. He deepens and flattens his voice, "Tell me what my secrets are."

More adorable laughter echoes around the cell, and Ares absolutely *adores* it. He's losing his mind with the dopamine that's rushing to his brain. Making Elijah laugh makes Ares feel like he's on top of the world. He loves making Elijah happy, even for just a few seconds. Elijah's face turns a bit red with how hard he's laughing, and he laughs for so long that a guard comes by and smacks the bars to get Elijah to shut up. He flinches and Ares has it half in his mind to shut the guard up instead, but maintains his seething anger under a tight lock and key. Elijah's laughter dies down quickly, and when he speaks it's in a much quieter voice than before.

"You're ridiculous, it doesn't work like that. I have to talk to you for months, if not years to really understand you like that. I can't just diagnose you whenever I want."

"Can't even take a stab at it?"

"Nope!"

Ares pouts a bit, giving his best puppy eyes to Elijah. When that doesn't work, he dramatically deflates into the bed. While groaning, he flops down on the space near the end and stares up at the top bunk. After a second, he sits back up and faces him again. "That's too bad... Tell me about yourself then! What secrets lie hidden away under that pretty face of yours?"

"I really don't have that many secrets! I'm very honest!" Elijah flushes pink, a pretty blossom of color that starts from his nose and spreads across his cheeks. Ares stares, maybe he's staring too hard, but he just doesn't care. The blush is endearing and adorable, though at this point Ares is finding every part of Elijah cute. "I'm not hiding anything dark or crazy."

"Really? Well that's where we differ, I suppose~" Ares winks at his friend before turning away, "But I wouldn't tell anyone but my psychiatrist."

Ares had intended his statement as a joke, but a quick glance over at Elijah said everything that he needed to. Elijah was interested in Ares, if not for his lovely personality, then for that statement. Ares didn't know what was so attractive about his secrets, but from what he could tell, Elijah was the type of person who wouldn't let a secret lie still.

"Well, I'm going to be a psychiatrist!" Elijah perks up and looks at Ares expectantly, as if waiting for all of the secrets to come spilling out.

Ares grins at Elijah's waiting enthusiastic face. He boops him on the face and lets a teasing lilt take over, "Oh so *now* you want to be my psychiatrist? I thought it was unethical."

"Yeah it definitely is, but it's not like it matters- We're in *prison*." Elijah refuses to back down, challenging Ares. "Come on, these are services people pay for, you know."

"Really? But I thought you'd have to spend months with me to find out all of my secrets."

"Well I guess we'll just have to spend more time together, right?"

"I guess you'll have to!" Ares matches the beaming grin and holds his hand out. "Does this mean we're friends now, mister protestor?"

Elijah scoffs but takes Ares' hand anyways, shaking it once and agreeing to his suggestion. "I guess we are."