

## Inside Out

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# Inside Out

by [monsterkiss](#)

## Summary

He has dedicated his life, every second of it, to serving the Boss. To protect him from any threat, shield him from any harm, and strike down anyone who might oppose him. It's the only thing he knows how to do, the only thing he *can* do.

Diavolo, underboss of Passione, takes his duties very seriously.

And he is always being watched.

## Notes

Day Four: roleswap/out in the ~~sun~~

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

“This could all be very brief and very simple. You need only answer my questions.”

The man barely moves, as much as the ropes binding him to the chair would allow him to in any case. His head is low on his chest and his shoulders tremble with every breath. But he does not speak.

Diavolo watches him sit in stubborn silence, a frown beginning to form on his own face.

“You had to know that this was a possibility. Did you believe that you could parley with traitors so brazenly? That you could continue for so long without arousing suspicion?” He takes a step forward, leaning over the figure as his voice drops to a snarl. “Did you think that the Boss wouldn’t find you?”

Silence, still. Diavolo’s hands twitch, frown deepening to a sneer as he leans closer, slowing every syllable to a contemptuous growl. “Do you understand the nature of your transgression? It is unforgivable. I won’t lie to you and say that you can go free unharmed. But the conclusion could be brief and... *relatively* painless, or it could be slow and... I trust I do not need to elaborate?” Evidently he does; the man continues to sit in silence. “You may yet survive, if somewhat... diminished, and that, too, could be a relief or a far greater punishment than death, depending on just where we chose to begin diminishing you.” The contact revolts him, but he circles the man to drag a hand thoughtfully over his bound fingers, along his arm, pausing at each joint, over the shoulder and pressing briefly into the neck before glancing over the jaw and ear to settle with a thumb pressed lightly over his right eye. “You are running low on opportunities to be involved in that decision-making process.”

He feels the eye squeeze shut, the face still hanging low, and increases the pressure ever so slightly.

“Names. That is all. Such cheap little things, but each one might buy you a finger, a handful of teeth, a few inches of skin...” He leans his own head as low as he dares, feeling his heart beginning to race. It’s not his preference, this kind of close, personal work, but the Boss entrusted it to him. The Boss will know if he doesn’t do his best. “The exchange rate is getting more unfavourable by the second.”

Nothing. He is so close that he can feel the warmth of the man’s breath and he’s getting *nothing*. His ears are straining now not merely for an answer but for the sound of a ringtone. A signal that his performance is being found wanting.

He is never not watched.

“Who came to you?” he hisses, pressing harder. “We already know what they wanted -what *all* you pathetic, pitiful, avaricious creatures want- but we need the names. Now!”

His bark is loud in the little room and he feels the man flinch at it. A small, wordless sound emerges, and for an instant Diavolo feels the tension begin to subside. He’s done it. He’ll speak, he’ll spill it all, and the Boss will be pleased with him. The Boss will be *safe*, and Diavolo will be the one who made him so, and the Boss will be so...

Then something moves under his hand.

“Please...”

The man tilts his head up, shivering where Diavolo still has a hand on him. He snatches it back, wiping it on his trousers in disgust but unable to turn away. He can feel the eyes scrolling over his body as the man angles his face up towards him, can feel him absorbing every centimetre of his form.

He fails to stifle a gasp. “Don’t-”

“They said... Listen, they said they’d hurt my wife, my kids. They came to my *house*.” The man’s eyes are wide and watery and they don’t blink. “They know where I live. I’m not a traitor! I wouldn’t have done anything but they came to my *house*!”

He’s babbling freely now, but Diavolo struggles to pick the words out. His mouth is dry and his hands are trembling at his sides as the man’s gaze meets his own.

“I told you-”

“I didn’t have a choice!”

The man stares up at him, searching and fearful. He’s already struggling not to cry, blinking rapidly. His pupils dart over every detail of Diavolo’s face. He can *feel* it.

“They only wanted to know- and I wouldn’t have told them if they hadn’t been there! He knows that, right?”

“Names,” Diavolo mutters, frozen to the spot, trying to remember his script. His mission. If it’s for the mission, he won’t break under those eyes. “Names, or I’ll rip out your tongue.” He can hear the tremble in his voice, hates it.

The man *is* crying now, tears forming at the edges of his eyes as they stare relentlessly into him. “Please! Tell him I had to, I had to get them out of there! I didn’t even know why they wanted it, I’d never do anything to betray Passione, but, but tell him! Tell the Boss I didn’t want to do it!”

“Enough!” He summons his part of King Crimson for emphasis, remembering too late that this one isn’t a stand user. His eyes remain locked onto Diavolo, imploring, oblivious to the hulking arms now hanging over him. “You think you are in any position to make *demands*-”

“But if you just tell him- Let *me* speak to him! I’ll do anything, I’ll beg, just- Please, if I can just explain it to the Boss-”

His head cracks to the side with an unpleasant sound, words choking out in a whimper, accompanied by a splatter of red.

“How dare you? You think you have any right to ask anything of him?”



Another blow, this time almost tipping the chair and its occupant over, had Diavolo not grabbed his shock of wavy blond hair in the other fist.

“To even speak to him? To pollute him with your pitiful, craven, selfish demands? To have something like you even stand in his presence would tarnish him.”

The next strike crunches.

“You! Of all people! The lowest of the low! You have no right to mercy! You don’t even have the right to beg for it!”

He draws back the other fist, its white fingers already stained the same bright, vibrant, beautiful red of its skin.

“You betrayed him, and for that you are less than nothing. Vile, toxic, poisonous, and you expect me to allow you to so much as hear his voice? I would tear you to pieces before you had uttered one... single...”

The head hangs limp in the hand gripping it. The hair is matted with red, now, the whole face stained with it and... significantly less substantial than it had been several blows before. Diavolo releases it at once, darting back, but it only falls to the floor without so much as a flinch, chair clattering down with it. The one eye that he can still make out in the mess does not even blink, continuing to stare relentlessly towards him.

Diavolo stares back, his chest tightening as though someone had placed his lungs in a vice.

“Shit,” he mumbles under his breath.

He half-steps forward, one hand reaching out to the body, then stops, shaking. His mouth feels very dry and his body trembles, mind stalling as he tries to understand what he needs to do next. The body stays where it is, stays stubbornly dead.

Then the ringing begins.

Diavolo flinches, almost raising his hands to cover his ears. The Boss always knows, he always, *always* knows, but for just a few seconds he wonders if he can just shut out the sound and close his eyes and, somehow, make it all stop. Let this mistake fade into the past before it can bite him in the present.

They never do. A headache begins to form in his skull, low and grinding.

When he answers, hands shaking, he can’t even speak. He has to swallow several times, palm sweating under the plastic, before any sound comes out at all.

“H-hello.” He tries to wet his lips. “Boss?”

“Diavolo,” the Boss says, and the sound of his name in that tone makes him want to curl up and die. “So, uh... What happened to our snitch?”

“He’s... He...” Diavolo swallows, voice low. It’s not a literal question; the Boss always sees. The real question hidden behind it is one that they both already know the answer to. “He insulted you, Boss. He would’ve done worse. He said-”

“I know what he said!” Diavolo winces, shutting his eyes tight. “I was kinda hoping he’d say a lot more stuff! That was kind of the whole reason you were *talking* to him.”

He turns away from the body, even with his eyes shut, as though he might yet be able to erase his mistake. “Yes, Boss.”

“What the hell are we gonna do? We don’t have any idea who the other traitors are! They’re gonna notice that he’s missing soon and the second they do... Fuck, how are we gonna find them now?”

Diavolo shrugs, shaking his head, helpless as the Boss’s voice washes over him like a tide of knives. He wants to tell him that it was just a mistake, a slip of the hand, and he wants to tell him that he meant every blow, that he would have pulverised the man into paste before he let him whisper a single poisonous word to the Boss, tried to play on his pity and his kindness and all the better parts that he has and Diavolo never will. The parts that make him so...

But he can’t. He doesn’t have the right to say anything. Not now.

The Boss gives an irate sigh. “We need to get rid of this... The body, we gotta deal with it.”

He swallows hard. “Of course. At once, Boss.” He turns back towards it, flinching at that dead-eye gaze. Touching the body is worse, but he forces himself to haul it up with his free arm. The contact makes his headache burn. For the Boss. He can do it if it’s for the Boss.

No, that’s not true. If it were true he would have done this mission right in the first place. He’s no better than this carcass, fit only for its vulgar company. He drags the body out of the insulated interrogation room and into the bathroom built adjacent to it for just these purposes, expecting the Boss to hang up on him with every step.

“We could’ve ended this whole thing right here.” Instead he keeps muttering down the line, his normally gentle tones rough and edged. “Now they’re gonna know we’re coming for them. They might even be able to track you back to him. Did you *wanna* get caught or something?”

He shakes his head, mumbles a soft, “No.”

“If they find you, I’ll... Why’d you have to hit him so hard? Didn’t I explain what I wanted you to do?”

“You did, Boss. I didn’t misunderstand.” He lets the lump of former-human fall into the tub and raises a hand to his face. “Your orders were correct. They always are. I just... I didn’t...”

“Then why’d you freak out again? Did he have a weapon or a stand I didn’t see?”

The way the man fumbles for an excuse for him makes him want to lie down and rot into nothing on the floor. “No. I knew that you... wouldn’t let me get hurt. You never do.” The

Boss tells him he is too valuable to lose. Diavolo wonders how much longer he will entertain that lie.

“Then why?” He doesn’t even sound exasperated anymore. His voice is almost pitying- the Boss has *so* much pity for lesser creatures. So much patience. “What *happened*?”

Diavolo shakes his head, not trusting himself to speak. The Boss can be sharp, edged, but only in the way ice is sharp and edged. At the slightest warmth it melts away, and he is kind and concerned and soft again.

Not like Diavolo. Diavolo is *all* sharp edges, jagged breaking points that shear away and leave only more, cutting himself just as often as he cuts others. He is a brute, violent and base, capable only of threats and lashing out. It shouldn’t be a problem; in their business there is often need for violence and ample need of threats. Many palms are greased with sweat, the insinuation of oncoming pain or death that gently herds the victim into line.

“I don’t know. I don’t know why I did it.”

But Diavolo is not made for insinuation. Most threats are not meant to be made good on; if violence were the true end goal then it would only be a waste of time to threaten. The snarling and spitting is never quite a ruse with him, even when a ruse would by far be more profitable. He has no subtlety, only raw, honest brutality, again and again, crushing out the delicate plans the Boss tries so hard to build around him.

“Did he scare you? I wouldn’t have sent you if I thought he would, but since he was all tied up and everything...”

The Boss knows what he is, down to the last crude centimetre of skin. He is the one person whose gaze Diavolo can never escape, never crush or bludgeon away. And yet...

“Please,” he chokes out, though he doesn’t know what he asks.

“Diavolo...” The sound of his name in any other mouth puts him on edge, but the Boss has a way of saying it that makes him feel so *warm*, as if he were treasuring each and every syllable like a precious gift, and the fact that it still feels that way now seems utterly wretched. Undeserved. “Hey. Go to the mirror.”

He freezes up, shaking his head. “I can’t.”

“You need to wash up anyway, and I wanna check that you’re okay.”

The reflective glass above the sink looms up in his peripheral vision, pale and hungry. “I’m... I’m fine.”

“You’re not.” The Boss’s voice is so soft, so unbearably kind. “I wanna know what’s wrong. Diavolo, I’m not angry with *you*, not really. You know that, right?”

And he sounds as though he’s worried that Diavolo might not know it, and as if that would hurt him terribly. That breaks him too far and he slumps down on the edge of the tub, heaving an ugly breath. “Please... Please don’t send me away. I know I have failed you today, but

I..." He's ashamed of the way he shakes and trembles, the way that the Boss must be able to see it. "I can wash it away. Tomorrow, *tomorrow* I'll do better." That's not true. He knows it. What was today, if not one of the countless tomorrows he has already promised would be better? How many times will he have to beg the Boss to consign his weaknesses to the past? "If you won't have me... I have nowhere else to..."

"Hey! Who said anything about that, huh?" The Boss's tone is light and edgeless again, but there's an undercurrent of concern that he hates knowing is his doing.

"I've... failed you. You gave me a mission and I understood it and yet I still could not... This is my, my very *purpose* and I have... I've-"

"You haven't! This is just a little... *You're* the one who's gonna figure out how to fix this." He can hear a smile he doesn't deserve in the words, a faith he has never earned. "C'mon, you're super smart. Tell me how we're gonna use this to find the other traitors."

He shakes his head. "I can't. I'm... you should ask someone else." It's almost painful to say it. It's a stone in his heart to even know that the Boss *has* others who serve him, even if they all rank below himself, but he can't fail him twice in the space of a few minutes. Better that he ask another in his gentle, kind voice than that, no matter how fervently Diavolo wishes he could have it all to himself. "I'll only... I'm not fit."

"I don't *want* anybody else, Diavolo."

That shakes him deep in his core, almost sweeter than he can bear.

The Boss has always been sweet to him and he has never been able to understand why. He has abilities that Diavolo can only guess at, and holds power over all of Passione despite the youth he can clearly hear in his voice. A young, vibrant prodigy, when Diavolo pictures him in his mind he looks the way that he sounds, slight and soft, warm and full of life and enthusiasm. Holding the world on his palm with a touch so light most never even notice just how firm a grip it truly is. Oh, there's ferocity there, when he needs it, but the Boss puts it on and takes it off again like an overcoat. It never seems to seep into him, to stain the inherent tenderness of his soul.

Nothing like Diavolo. A great, hulking, graceless thing, ageing and wearing out, dull-eyes that show no sign of quick intellect. He looks like the brute he is, dangerous and coarse, full of an anxiety that he externalises onto others far too often. Slouching like a caged animal, barbarous and cruel. A monster so vile that his own daughter flinches when she looks at him...

Diavolo pauses, glances back down towards the body.

"What is it?" The Boss misses nothing, his curiosity keen and bright.

He feels something almost like performance anxiety, but swallows it down. The Boss believes he can rectify this, so perhaps it is true. "He mentioned... that the co-conspirators came to his home. To threaten his family." He forces himself to take steady breaths. "If one

of *them* saw him... they may be prepared to talk. Even if they can only offer physical descriptions without names, that would narrow the list of suspects substantially.”

“Oh, that’s a great idea!”

In spite of everything, that buoys him. He plucks up the body, examining it in more detail. “If we can make them believe he is still alive, they may answer us in the hopes of releasing him.”

“What if they try going to the cops?”

The question is not a criticism, there’s no doubt in it. The Boss only prompts his thoughts, shepherding him gently into something useful, productive. Diavolo clings to that as he splays out the fingers of one of the man’s hands. He selects one with a gold band wrapped around it. “This should make a significant implied threat, I think. If we remove and store a few more parts *now*, before the body begins to rot, and maintain them... A medical examiner might be able to tell they were taken post-mortem, but if they never go to the authorities... they will never learn that.”

“Yeah! Oh, I bet they’ll cave right away. Civs don’t have that kinda nerve. It’s a shame the face isn’t exactly fit for a photograph right now.” Diavolo tenses, ever so slightly. “But a few fingers ought to be enough. Does he have any tattoos or anything? I guess we could clean him up and stick a bag on his head if we have to put on a show.”

“Yes.” Diavolo lets the hand drop, his own fidgeting in his lap. “That might... Then, you think it’s a good idea?”

“It’s brilliant!”

He’s being sweet again. He’s being generous. Diavolo’s mistake is still sitting in the tub beside him and it will be days before they find out just how fatal it was. Still, he leans forward, letting his hair fall over his face and hoping that the Boss can’t detect his expression “Have I... been useful to you? In spite of my... my error?”

“Diavolo.” Oh, he could *sink* into that sound. “You’re always useful. See? I told you you’d figure out how to fix it for me! You always do. That’s why you’re my favourite, y’know?”

He shivers, mumbling out a soft affirmation. He doesn’t trust himself with anything more.

“It’s all gonna be fine. I’ve got a really good feeling about it. Now... Can you check for me?”

Diavolo swallows, nods. It is still some effort to draw himself up, drag his body to the glass, but he manages it on the authority of that soft instruction. He hates mirrors, the way that they always seem to pick out a new part of him to churn over. The way he can see his own disgust with himself so clear. But the Boss asks him to do it often when he’s worried, in a way that makes him wonder if it is part of his ability. He knows there is someone else in the gang who uses mirrors in some way, but the Boss’s power, of course, must eclipse them all.

There are a few droplets and splatters of blood on his skin, which he wipes off. Underneath that he can see only himself. He can't quite meet his own gaze.

"There. Do you feel better now?"

He so hates to be looked at. He can't explain why, it is an impulse that has been with him as long as he can remember. The sensation of eyes on him, picking him apart, feeling out the things beneath. It feels as though even a stranger can find the foulest dregs of him and pluck them out in seconds. Only the mere thought of being observed is enough to rile his pathetic aggressive responses into gear.

"You really won't... discard me?"

But the Boss is always watching him. The Boss's eyes follow him at all times, seeing him in every moment of his life, every lofty peak and every wretched valley. When the Boss looks at him, it's different. It's not that he does not feel the discomfort, that sense of being stripped down to his most delicate, loathsome parts. No, if anything the Boss's constant attention makes him feel all the more exposed, vulnerable beyond belief.

"Of course not. I need you, you know that."

But when it's him... He feels as though he's being held. Being clasped so close and with such infinite patience and tenderness, in a way that could only come from being seen so fully and accepted so wholly. The Boss sees everything that he is and does not turn away. Only looks deeper. Asks more.

"You don't." He sighs, closing his eyes for a moment before forcing himself to stare into them. His head still aches, but he only knows it by the slight twitch in his left eye. "You are... so much more than I could ever..." He swallows hard, hates the way that he can see it, but he keeps staring straight into himself. "But I *know*... I feel as if I have *always* known... that my only purpose in this life, my only goal, is to be at your side. To fight for you and protect you, Boss. You are so... so delicate, so kind, *too* kind for such a foul world, but I will not permit any of them to harm you. If you only allow me. If you can only have... patience with me."

"Aw... You don't have to say all of... You're the only one I could ever rely on, you know? I want you here, Diavolo. I *need* your help."

He feels all the tension fall out of his shoulders, his forehead almost resting against the glass. He lets his eyes fall shut again. "You have it. You have it. I'm sure- I'm *certain* that I was born for-" you "-this."

"Heh." The Boss's voice sounds warm in his ear. He presses the phone closer, as though he might be able to press the man himself against him. That thought, and each of the thousand ones hiding below the surface of it that even he has never had the nerve to unpick, burns in him like a torch. "You're so sweet sometimes. I know you get scared, and I know I get mad, but... don't ever worry about stuff like that, okay? I know you'll always figure it out with me. You take care of me and I'll take care of you, deal?"

He lets out another, shaky breath. “I am not... built for care. You know that I’m...” A dozen unpleasant words march through his mind, making him wince, and the Boss must be able to tell because he shushes him before he can speak a single one. He takes another breath, tries again. “But for you... I will do all that I can. My only goal, my only purpose is to serve you.”

Even that feels like more than he deserves. To be allowed to sit at the foot of the throne of the world, to lay his head there like the Boss’s personal guard dog. But why else would someone like him ever be allowed to have the Boss’s attention? Why had he been built so full of rage and violence and bile if not so that the Boss did not have to dirty his own hands?

And even a guard dog could be a beloved pet, soothed and held and treasured in those soft, clean hands.

“Diavolo,” the Boss says, as if every syllable were a gift, “you really don’t know how much I...” A long pause, ending on an almost wistful sigh.

“Boss?”

“Let’s get back to work.”

“Ah, of course. At once, Boss.”

The call ends and Diavolo goes back to the sad little body in the tub, and works until his hands are bright, bright red.

## End Notes

I won't lie, I've been looking for an excuse to do this for a While. I do adore this concept just because it fixes absolutely nothing, but creates a whole bunch of fun, entirely *new* issues <3

My [twitter](#).

My [tumblr](#).

My discord: motheaten#3093

Partner's big Aro/Ace/Trans/Non-binary/Intersex media server where we talk about various anime and games and fanart/fic and physics and birds and sometimes watch stuff together:

<https://discord.gg/WbdEqFQ>

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